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### **Intuition and Concrete Particularity in Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic (2006)**

By *transcendental aesthetic*, Kant means “the science of all principles of a priori sensibility” (A 21/B 35).<sup>1</sup> These, he argues, are the laws that properly direct our judgments of taste (B 35 – 36 fn.), i.e. our aesthetic judgments as we ordinarily understand that notion in the context of contemporary art. Thus the first part of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, entitled the Transcendental Aesthetic, enumerates the necessary presuppositions of, among other things, our ability to make empirical judgments about particular works of art. These presuppositions are sensible rather than intellectual because on Kant's view, all intellection that considers objects of any kind, whether abstract or concrete, must at base connect to actual, material objects with which we come into direct contact; and this we can do only through sensibility (A 19/B 33). Thus the following discussion explores what Kant claims must be true of us in order to make the sorts of aesthetic judgments we make, rather than any particular class or quality of aesthetic judgments itself. On Kant's view, what must be true of us in order to make aesthetic judgments is not different from what must be true of us in order to make any other kind of judgment about empirical objects.

This last point is worth emphasizing, in order to correct an interpretation of Kant's account of aesthetic judgment in the *Critique of Judgment*<sup>2</sup> that wrongly reads Kant as claiming that aesthetic judgments do not have to satisfy the same basic requirements of judgment that any other kind of judgment also must satisfy, such as the synthetic subsumption of such objects under certain necessary and hard-wired concepts of understanding, the internal coherence of such judgments with other, non-aesthetic ones of a more abstract and comprehensive character, the unified consciousness within which such judgments are intelligibly made, and the like. Of course Kant recognizes the special character of aesthetic judgments and unpacks it in the

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third *Critique*. But as we see above, he also states clearly, in the very first paragraph of the first *Critique*, that aesthetic judgment is merely one species of judgment, all of which must satisfy the necessary conditions he enumerates in the subsequent sections of this chronologically prior work. Examination of those subsequent sections shows that Kant does not think it is possible to make judgments of any kind unless these conditions are satisfied. I focus on the implications of these conditions for aesthetic judgment specifically. But it will become clear in what follows that these implications certainly are not confined to aesthetic judgments alone.

Kant begins the Transcendental Aesthetic with the claim that through intuition, we stand in unmediated relation to objects (A 19/B 33). In Kant's technical vocabulary, *intuition* is a precognitive, sensory process through which we situate ourselves spatiotemporally in relation to objects, both internal and external (A 23/B 37). In the case of internal objects, we organize sense data linearly in time, ensuring that our internal mental representations of objects and the parts of objects we represent proceed in systematic succession. For example, I remember the living room of my old house by calling up successive images of the west wall, the north wall, the east wall, then the south wall; and then the east wall once more, if something of interest there then returns to my memory. In the case of external objects, we also organize sense data spatially, by projecting and locating the object we construct from them at some particular point outside of ourselves, and thus defining a spatial relation between it and us. Every such external, spatial relationship is also implicitly a temporal one of duration or change, according to the enduring or temporary state of the objects we thus locate; whereas internal relations are only temporal, because we locate them inside rather than outside of our own material and sensory boundaries as subjects. *Unmediated* means, roughly, that there is no intermediary between us and the object with which we are in direct contact. The subject-object relationship is in the intuitive sense direct and unmediated in that we do not interpose any concept or theory or interpretation of the object between ourselves and it; we come into direct contact with it as it is, not as we might identify, interpret or describe it.

In intuition, the subject and object thus related are both what contemporary philosophers of language would call *concrete particulars*, i.e. actual, specific, concrete *things*, rather than examples of concepts or members of classes or subjects of interpretation or theory. They are the metaphysical kind of thing we can physically grab – or, in the case of particularly vivid objects of imagination or memory, that can grab us. So the unmediated quality of our sensory relationship to such things is interdependent with their concrete particularity: it is because such things, as intuited, are only themselves and not any further property or conjunction of properties that we might then ascribe to them that no such further concepts, classes, or interpretations interpose themselves as mediators between us and them.

Kant argues that intuition alone is insufficient for knowledge (A 51/ B 75), and even for consciousness (A 99 – 104). Kant's claim that intuition is insufficient for knowledge follows directly from his definition of knowledge, which requires conceptualization, i.e. the ability to ascribe properties to concrete particulars (A 106). On Kant's view, we cannot be said to know something unless we can identify it conceptually in some way. However, Kant also thinks that unless we can thus conceptualize a concrete particular as being of a certain basic kind – i.e. at least minimally as an object, it cannot enter a subject's unified consciousness at all; but instead must remain "nothing but a blind play of representations, that is, less even than a dream." (A 112). Kant's idea here is that in order to be conscious of a concrete particular, we have to be able to recognize it as in some way familiar to us – in shape, or color, or texture, or function, or role, or *something* that enables us to connect it with the rest of our conscious experience, not only spatiotemporally, but also at higher cognitive levels.

This thesis is not implausible. It often happens that we can be looking right at something without seeing it, in case we are not primed to see it, and sometimes even if we are. This happens often enough with familiar, pedestrian objects such as keys or pencils. It happens even more frequently with conceptually unfamiliar or anomalous concrete particulars that are foreign to our conceptual scheme. This is the kind of thing such that, in order to visually cognize it at all, we first must be educated to see it, or – literally – to *re-cognize* it: We must be introduced to it; its defining properties must be

verbally pointed out to us with considerable fanfare; we must have its function or significance explained to us – so that the concrete particular that literally did not exist for us before this process of acculturation now becomes recognizable – as a sculpture, or a scalpel, or a cloud chamber, or a person – minimally deserving of our attention. Once we become familiar enough with the thing to situate it within our pre-existing conceptual scheme, and extend our pre-existing conceptual scheme sufficiently to accommodate it, the presence of this concrete particular then calls forth the relevant concepts, relations, and associations which in turn enable us to register it in consciousness and behave appropriately toward it. From Kant's thesis it would follow that without that familiarizing and acculturating process that enables us to conceptualize the concrete particular in recognizable terms, we cannot be aware of it at all.

Kant's thesis thus implies an interesting trade-off. Through intuition we can have direct and unmediated contact with a concrete particular, as it is, without the interference of any form of conceptual indoctrination – so long as we are prepared to relinquish the ability to theorize about it, to analyze and explain it in such a way as to situate it as an object of knowledge within our conceptual scheme. Alternately, through understanding we can perform all of these discursive functions that enable us intellectually to comprehend the object – so long as we are prepared to relinquish our direct and unmediated contact with it. But we cannot do both at once.

Traditional practices conjoined with such Indian philosophies as Yoga, Samkhya, Vedanta, or Buddhism illustrate how we might do each successively. The ancient philosophy of Samkhya that provides the metaphysical foundation for Yogic meditation offers a particularly rich and rigorous account of how, through the discipline of intensive meditation on a concrete particular at increasingly advanced levels, we gradually learn how to dismantle the rigid conceptual indoctrination that interferes with our direct and unmediated grasp of the reality that lies beyond the boundaries of the individual self.<sup>3</sup> But it rightly cautions that in the process of achieving this brand of insight into the true nature of concrete particulars, we eventually must leave the familiar activities of intellective conceptualization behind; and warns us not to undertake this advanced practice until we are physically and

psychologically ready to do this. Ordinarily this does not occur until we are fully comfortable, at the deepest psychological level, with the reality of our own imminent death. I shall return to this point later.

At the other end of the chronological continuum, we celebrate childhood precisely for its as yet relatively unencumbered access to that reality, and to the creative imagination and insight into concrete particulars that as yet porous and inchoate boundaries of the individual self afford. In such fables as "The Emperor's New Clothes," we enshrine the value of an intuitive contact with material reality that is so immediate and uncorrupted by the conceptual indoctrination of culture, politics and hierarchies of power and control that unvarnished empirical observations which issue from such intuition carry more power and authority than any attempt at indoctrination could ever achieve. But the price of such innocence is, of course, the ignorance of these more complex social relationships that it precludes. Our natural curiosity to learn more about them, combined with the more or less automatic forces of acculturation and maturation, compel us to leave this intuitive immediacy behind as we develop – rarely if ever suspecting, until it is much too late to retrieve it, the Faustian bargain into which we have implicitly entered.

For the most discontented and ambitious of truth-seekers, neither alternative is enough. It is not enough to enjoy intuition and understanding, or understanding and intuition consecutively, in either order of succession. Those of us who work at spinning a theory of everything crave unmediated intuitive contact with the concrete particulars that will confirm it, and full scholarly respectability for that theory demands some such empirical verification. Similarly, those of us who work at shedding our theories of everything in order to achieve that direct and unmediated contact crave an explanation that will make the resulting experience rationally intelligible, and full psychological adaptation to that experience requires *this*. These are the two horns of a dilemma: Each end of the continuum between intuition and understanding impels us toward the other; and each approach to the other impels us to try to recover what we have had to sacrifice in order to make the journey. We instinctively want, and need, both; yet each makes the other impossible in principle. Or so it seems.

Contemporary artistic practice poses an interesting case against which to test the soundness of Kant's thesis and the dilemma it appears to engender. Contemporary artists bear a special relationship to intuition itself, in Kant's technical sense, because they have unmediated intuitive access to the material objects they create. Artists conjure spatiotemporally discrete concrete particulars in thought and in reality that need not depend on any specific conceptualizations of them; and that may simply come up in consciousness, present themselves fully developed with respect to detail, with an urgency that demands their physical realization in advance of any conceptual interpretation that might enable one to explain, even to oneself, why one feels driven to do so. Or one might conjure such an object through an entirely spontaneous and unplanned physical process of exploring the potential of a material or configuration of materials, such that the end result may have the same degree of urgency and importance for its maker, independent of her ability to verbalize why it does or how she arrived at it.

One way of resolving the dilemma in this case is simply to conclude that, at least according to Kant's technical definition of knowledge, artists do not know what they are doing. They just do it, and allot to the critics and art historians the task of figuring out what it means and why they bothered. This comforting interpretation, too, has some plausibility: Many artists do, indeed, find it extremely difficult to theorize about what they are doing while they are doing it. It may take years, if ever, before an artist can put together an intelligible commentary about his work that helps it to make sense to everyone else; and surely this is in part to be explained by precisely that direct, intimate and unmediated relationship between the artist and the concrete particular he fashions. That particular is too complicated and overwhelming, too cryptic and multifaceted in its connections and associations, to be captured accurately in even the most fine-grained analysis – simplistic text-book descriptions and classifications of it notwithstanding.

Yet the purposeful character of the artistic process belies such a facile resolution, and demands, at the very least, Russell's distinction between knowing that and knowing how – i.e. between knowledge by description or propositional knowledge on the one hand; and practical or applied knowledge by acquaintance on the other. The counterclaim then would be

that although artists may not have propositional knowledge about the objects they make (at least not right away), they do have practical, hands-on knowledge of precisely the sort in which the intuitive relation to concrete particulars consists.

However, this distinction will not resolve the dilemma engendered by Kant's thesis, for several reasons. First, Kant rejects the distinction between knowing that and knowing how, and in fact reduces the first to the second. Propositional knowledge of facts, for Kant, is equivalent to the practical ability to do things – specifically, to do things mentally with concepts: to organize sense data and the representations of objects and properties in a certain way and according to certain rules that ensure their objective status as objects of third-personal empirical investigation. In fact, concepts for Kant just are rules – or “functions” to use his term – for organizing the representations supplied by intuition systematically (A 68/B 93 – A 70/B 95, A 76/B 102 – A 80/B 106, A 106).<sup>4</sup> Second, it is part of Kant's thesis that we cannot even be aware of such bare intuitive processes. Concrete particulars that do not fit the familiar categories by which we make the world and ourselves intelligible have nowhere in consciousness to land, and therefore float around outside it, unmoored in one's unconscious.

Third, Russell's distinction does not explain the purposive character of artistic production, i.e. that one works long and hard and *deliberately and reflectively* to produce a spatiotemporally discrete concrete particular that has precisely the form it ends up having, independent of its compatibility with prevailing conceptual schemes or theories. This is a matter not merely (and sometimes not at all) of practical skill, but rather of vision – of a kind of knowledge that acquaints one directly with a concrete particular to which one has a form of access that is intuitive without necessarily being either conceptual or practical in any behavioral sense. When one is engaged in the process of bringing a work to material realization, there is something that one knows: not necessarily *that* something is the case, and not necessarily *how* to do something, but rather *when* the work is truly finished, when its final form has been achieved. This involves both knowing that it at a particular moment satisfies one's implicit criteria for completion, and also knowing how to edge it to the point at which it does.

I propose that a deeper understanding of the dilemma that Kant's thesis implies lies elsewhere in Kant's architectonic – specifically, in a closer look at the conditions Kant enumerates for the unity of the self. This will take us to those parts of the Transcendental Analytic, and in particular of the Transcendental Deduction in A and B, in which Kant effectively rethinks the independence of intuition and understanding and finally offers an account in which the two are interdependent. From here I go on to question the extent to which these enumerated conditions of subjective unity can be said to hold – in the process of artistic production on the one hand, and in yogic meditation on the other. I conclude that Kant's thesis and its implications are consistent and correct, and that neither contemporary artistic practice nor yogic meditation provides a counterexample.

At A 89/B 122 to A 91/B 123, Kant entertains the possibility that concrete particulars might appear in consciousness without being subject to the hard-wired categories of understanding that construct the objective empirical world of nature for us. This thought experiment is consistent with his mode of exposition in the Transcendental Aesthetic, for there he has developed an account of space and time as forms of our intuition, and of the objects we situate therein, that seems to make no reference to any requirements of conceptualization. It would seem that we could directly and consciously intuit a concrete particular as spatiotemporally discrete, independently of any further cognitive conditions it might have to satisfy in order to register in our awareness, and independently of any further judgments we might or might not make about it.

If it were the case that we could be directly aware of concrete particulars without first having to exercise our capacity of judgment and understanding even in order to register them in conscious awareness, it might then seem possible to subject them, once there, directly to judgments of taste. Such judgments then would have a very unusual character indeed. They would be able to subsume a concrete particular as it was in itself directly and disinterestedly under concepts of beauty, form, balance, dimension, and the like, without the intervening necessity of first identifying it with regard to quantity, properties, material status, causal relations, or any more abstract theoretical concepts with which these are interconnected (A 651/B 679). If

judgments of taste functioned in this way, they would not only fail to connect the concrete particular object of aesthetic judgment with the empirical and social context of relationships and associations within which it was identifiable as a plausible candidate of such judgments, i.e. as a work of art. They would fail even to identify the concrete particular as an object. Judgments of taste of this kind would be not only very peculiar. They would be incoherent.

Kant's Transcendental Deduction of the Categories is intended to, among other things, demonstrate why this thought experiment itself is ultimately incoherent: In order for something even to constitute an identifiable empirical object of consciousness of any kind, whether mental or physical, we must understand it as, for example, a certain *quantity* of thing (one, many, everything); it must have certain sensible *qualities* that enable us to fix its type and degree of existence (Kant identifies the existence of the object with the fact that we can intuit sense data from it at B 138-139); it must stand in certain basic *relations* to other things (its own properties, its causes and effects, its causal interconnections with other bearers of properties); and it must have a specific *modality* (as a possibility, an actuality or a necessity) (A 80/B 106). No concrete particular that fails to satisfy any of these four requirements is recognizable as an empirical object at all, at least as we understand that notion.

Accordingly, we find Kant in both the A and B Deductions qualifying and revising the account of spatiotemporally discrete objects he offered in the Transcendental Aesthetic (A 99-100; B 136 fn; B 144 fn; B 150-152; B 154 and fn; B 156; B 160 fn; B 160-162<sup>5</sup>), and it is clear why he must. For even the notion of spatiotemporal discreteness presupposes satisfaction of the category-class of quantity. Even the notion of spatiotemporal location presupposes satisfaction of the category-class of relation. Even the notion of the object as sensible presupposes satisfaction of the category-class of quality. And even the notion of our bearing a direct and unmediated relation to it presupposes satisfaction of the category-class of modality. Hence the forms of intuition, space and time, are not independent of our ability to identify, conceptualize, and theorize about concrete particulars after all; and Kant's

claim that we stand in direct and unmediated relation to the objects we intuit has more complex implications.

Of these implications, the most important for present purposes is that our relation to such objects is, indeed, unmediated by contingent, empirical concepts; but it is not unmediated by transcendental ones. The distinction, roughly, is this: *Empirical* concepts, are the contingent and socially acculturated concepts by which we identify a particular empirical object, event or state of affairs relative to the particular local context we ourselves inhabit. Other empirical concepts define that equally contingent and socially acculturated context itself. Empirical concepts must instantiate transcendental ones, because the objects and events they identify must meet the same necessary preconditions for experience. Those *transcendental* concepts or *categories* (Kant uses the terms interchangeably) are the ones enumerated above. These are the innate, hard-wired concepts that any concrete particular must instantiate in order to count as an empirical object for us in the first place. By describing these categories as *a priori* and *necessary*, Kant means to call attention to certain basic features of them. They are *a priori* in the sense that they are hardwired preconditions for having coherent experience of any kind. And they are necessary in two senses: first, they are necessary for coherent experience of empirical objects; and second, they are logically necessary.

Because Kant draws the Table of Categories at A 80/B 106 from scholastic Aristotelian logic and tinkers idiosyncratically with them even more, these categories have a somewhat arbitrary and anachronistic character that lead most Kant commentators to regard them as an embarrassment in Kant's architectonic that it would be better to ignore. But it is not necessary to ignore all of them; and even if it were, it would be a mistake to ignore the kernel of Kant's insight that there are certain basic logical principles that any coherent object of empirical experience must satisfy: First, there must be properties that can be ascribed to it; and second, it cannot both bear and not bear those properties at the same time in the same respect. That is, any such object must satisfy the law of non-contradiction as formulated in predicate logic:

$$(x)\sim(Fx.\sim Fx)^6$$

As Kant expresses it,

the categories ... are concepts of an object in general, by means of which intuition in regard to the logical functions of judgment is seen as determined. Thus the function of the categorical judgment was the relation of subject to predicate, for example "All bodies are divisible."

(B 128)

The law of non-contradiction can be made out most easily in terms of Kant's first category of relation (inherence and subsistence) but the others are not irrelevant. The significance of Kant's claim that the transcendental categories are necessary in this second sense is that it is in this second sense that the connection between the necessity of these concepts and their empirical objectivity is clearest: For good reason, we do, indeed, recognize the objectivity of the law of non-contradiction as valid independent of our wishes, our will, or our existence. Kant's claim for the objectivity of the transcendental categories is based on their fidelity to logical form, and it is this that enables him to propose them as the foundation for Newtonian science, and so for objective judgments about its objects of investigation. Hence there are certain kinds of judgments we are able to make about art objects in particular that have objective status as well.

To then claim that in intuition we stand in direct and unmediated relationship to objects is to say, first, that we stand in direct and unmediated relationship to the empirical objects that intuition, with the help of the transcendental categories of understanding, has enabled us to construct; and second, that no contingent, socially acculturated empirical concepts, theories or interpretations stand between us and them. The objects themselves are the result of the mediation by the transcendental categories of the sense data that intuition supplies; but there is no further empirical conceptual intermediary between those resultant objects and us. On this reading, one can have a direct and unmediated relationship to such objects, and they can also find a place in consciousness. Intuition provides the direct access to them, and understanding locates them as objects in one's unified awareness. One's relationship to such objects contains elements of both.

With this clarification in hand, let us now reconsider the case of artistic practice. What kind of unmediated access do artists have to the material objects they create? And what is the nature of the intuitive knowledge artists have that allows them to conjure spatiotemporally discrete objects in advance of any conceptual identification or interpretation of the object that might be invoked to explain, either to themselves or others, the significance of doing so? Both questions have the same answer. For reasons depending on idiosyncrasies of personal development or social and historical circumstance, artists are deficient in socialization in at least one creatively useful way: they are able to see through the contingent empirical concepts by which we are taught to make sense of our social environment, and they choose to specialize in and develop this capacity. These contingent empirical concepts are the ones that are instilled in most of us so deeply that, other things equal, we lose the capacity to recognize the potential of objects, materials and states of affairs to transcend them. Socialization this deeply rooted leads us to assume unquestioningly that the rules, roles, relationships and functions of objects we learn in the process of acculturation are necessary ones: that a urinal can have only one function; that a target has only one role; that a skin color can have only one signification. The contingent empirical concepts in accordance with which we assign these unidimensional properties to objects of our experience mediate them not merely by interposing a conceptual scrim between us and them. They also constrain our thinking, about every aspect of our surroundings, to the familiar, mundane and conventional.

Contemporary artists are both blessed and also cursed by their willfully insufficient indoctrination in these conventional empirical concepts (perhaps another symptom of the demise of family values). The blessing is to be able to see the anomalous or nonconventional potential of objects, materials and states of affairs that is hidden to those who are blinded by them. The curse is to be able to see it and indicate or actualize it, without being able to communicate it in familiar terms and concepts one's audience can be expected to understand; to have to stand by, inwardly groaning and writhing, while one's audience first ignores it; then flails about wildly, grabbing futilely and erroneously for some such familiar concepts with which to pin it down; and, finally, compresses those erroneous concepts into a

twenty-five-words-or-less aphorism with which the work can be catalogued and dismissed. If any such configuration of familiar concepts and principles were in actual fact sufficient to communicate what an artist intuits, she would have no motive for producing the work. Because there is none, the work is destined for misunderstanding so long as her audience relies on them – as they must, in order to communicate with one another about the work. In this conversation, however, the artist is always a reluctant participant at best, having already said what she has to say by other means.

Thus the case of artistic practice does suggest an account of the type of knowledge involved in artistic practice: An artist's knowledge of the empirical object he creates is not propositional, but neither is it necessarily practical in any full-blooded sense. Rather, it is intuitive. That means that it is conscious and reflective, but nevertheless nonconceptual. It is the kind of knowledge one can have only when one's access to the empirical object is direct and unmediated by culture-bound empirical concepts or theories.

However, this account of artistic knowledge does not resolve the dilemma implied by Kant's thesis, i.e. the mutual interconnection and simultaneous incompatibility of intuition and conceptual knowledge. For even if we confine our focus to contingent and culturally specific empirical concepts and theories, it remains true that either we invoke those concepts and theories to explain the concrete particular objects we intuit, in which case we lose the direct and unmediated access to them that intuition affords; or else we divest ourselves of those concepts and theories in order to recover it, in which case we lose the ability to make discursive sense of the resulting contact; this is the way many artists experience the dilemma.

But the dilemma has even more profound dimensions than this. For in order for intuition to bring us into unmediated relation to concrete particulars independent of *any* such conceptual knowledge, that relation itself must reach beyond the transcendental concepts with which even an artist's intuitive knowledge is saturated. That is, it must reach the concrete particulars of which it is, according to Kant, true that, although we are in direct and unmediated intuitive contact with them, we nevertheless cannot have even the most minimal knowledge of them as objects; i.e. we cannot be consciously aware of them at all. These are the concrete particulars that Kant describes as

*noumena*, or *things in themselves*. In order to dissect the dilemma at this level, we need to examine more closely Kant's account of in what unified conscious awareness of objects consists.

Kant's conception of the basic structure of a unified consciousness – or *transcendental unity of apperception*, as he calls it – is grounded in his view of sense data – or, as he calls it, the *transcendental manifold of intuition* – as consisting in singular representations. Were we to provide no systematic organization of the representations we receive in intuition from things in themselves, we would have no awareness of them. For to have awareness of anything, be it mental or physical, is to be able to distinguish the thing we are conscious of from ourselves; i.e. the object of consciousness from the conscious subject who is aware of it. But in order to make this distinction, we first have to organize the representations we receive into an object distinct from us; and this, as we have seen above, requires that we arrange those representations according to the rules supplied by the categories of understanding (A 106, A 126). This process of organization Kant calls *transcendental synthesis*; and the essence of this notion is that we combine individual representations into a non-arbitrary linear sequence that is given by the categories. So, for example, we situate representation  $r^1$  before  $r^2$ ,  $r^3$  to follow  $r^2$ ,  $r^4$  to follow  $r^3$ , etc., thus producing the linear sequence  $r^1, r^2, r^3, r^4, \dots$  and so on. However, this much gives us only a temporal sequence of representations in inner sense. Because this sequence need not meet any requirements of external spatial order, it can be, or seem, arbitrary, in exactly the way that so-called “free association” often is: thus a representation of dinner leads to a representation of my mother cooking, which leads to a representation of campfire marshmallows, which leads to a representation of a drive-in movie I want to see, and so on.

In order for this sequence to be non-arbitrary, such that it constructs an external object of outer sense and situates it within the stable spatiotemporal matrix, we must further sort these representations into kinds according to the rules which the categories provide. So, for example, we retain representation  $r^1$  in mind while situating  $r^2$  next in line, and recognize it as *the same as*  $r^1$ ; we retain  $r^2$  and  $r^1$  in mind while situating  $r^3$  next in line, which we recognize as *the same as*  $r^2$  and  $r^1$ ; and so on. In so doing, we are using the category of

substance (inherence and subsistence) to construct out of these multiple representations a single object that is the same at each moment, i.e. that persists through time (A 99-102).

The representations that we thus synthesize into objects of consciousness can have either of two origins. They can originate within us, in sensory reaction to our own mental processes (B 153-155); or they can originate "from elsewhere in intuition" (B 145). Because we can have no unmediated access to things in themselves, including us as we are in ourselves, we can have no way of knowing whether these two origins are mutually exclusive or mutually equivalent – i.e. whether or how many things in themselves there are. But what we can know is that these representations thus combine into identifiable mental content (B 103); that Kant uses the terms "content" and "matter" interchangeably (A 6, A 58/B 83); and that the "transcendental matter of things in themselves" is what corresponds to sensation in the subject (A 143/B 182). Thus the representations we receive in intuition from those things, and organize systematically in understanding, bring us into direct intuitive relation to noumena, or things in themselves, even though, according to Kant, we can have neither awareness nor understanding of them.

Now Kant assumes that we can have no consciousness of things in themselves because he ascribes consciousness solely to the coherently organized experience of a unified subject, i.e. of an individual ego (B 134 fn.). If this assumption is correct, then of course it would follow from the further assumption that this unity is a hardwired *conceptual* unity that such a unified subject can have no direct contact with such things that is unmediated by any such hardwired concepts. However, Samkhyan philosophy disputes the ascription of consciousness to unified subjecthood; and to dismantle the conceptual hardwiring that makes such contact impossible is precisely the goal of advanced yogic meditation.

Samkhya contends that consciousness is a function, not of the unified conceptual structure of the individual subject, or ego; but rather of the data that individual subjects may or may not receive in intuition as representations and then subject to that structure. In order to appreciate the Samkhyan thesis, it is useful to compare its form of dualism with Cartesian dualism:

	BODY	MIND	PURUSHA
<b>Cartesian Dualism</b>	Material Nature Unconscious Causally determined Unintelligent Transient Inanimate Instrument Personal Object of Consciousness	Non-material Spirit Conscious Free Intelligent Enduring Animating Agent Personal Subject of Consciousness	
<b>Samkhyan Dualism</b>	<i>Bhûtas, Tanmâtras:</i> Material Nature Unconscious Causally determined Unintelligent Transient Inanimate Instrument Personal Object of Consciousness	<i>Ahamkâra, Buddhi:</i> Material Nature Unconscious Causally determined Unintelligent Transient thoughts + Persisting tendencies Inanimate Instrument Personal Object of Consciousness	Non-material Spirit Conscious Free Intelligent Eternal Animating Agent Impersonal Subject of Consciousness

Both Cartesian and Samkhyan dualism make a sharp distinction between body and mind. Both regard the body as inherently insensate, and as animated by consciousness. However, whereas Cartesian dualism locates consciousness in the mind, Samkhyan dualism identifies the mind with the same mechanical and insensate matter of which the body is constituted; and instead locates consciousness in a state for which there is no analogue in Western philosophy, namely *purusha*. The difference between the Cartesian concept of mind and the Samkhyan concept of *purusha* is that first, Cartesian dualism regards the mind as nonmaterial and conscious, whereas Samkhyan dualism regards it as material and unconscious; and second, Cartesian

dualism regards consciousness as subjective and personal, whereas Samkhyan dualism regards it as objective and impersonal. It is because consciousness on the Samkhyan view is objective and impersonal, i.e. not a function of the individual subject's ego-unity, that Samkhya can dispute Kant's ascription of consciousness to the unified subjecthood of the individual ego. On the Samkhyan view, the individual ego is part of the apparatus of the mind; and the mind, in turn, is not inherently conscious at all. Only its animation by purusha makes it appear to be so.

This is the illusion that advanced yogic meditation attempts to penetrate; and perhaps it is now clear why it is best not to undertake it unless and until one is comfortable with the imminence of one's own death. For the process of penetrating the illusion of individual ego-awareness is the process of dismantling the conditions that purport to provide its subjective unity: the stable and coherent organization of its experience; the underlying conceptual functions that provide structure and intelligibility both to an external world and also to one's self; and the synthetic unity of the representations that simultaneously constitute both. In order even to undertake such a project, one must take for granted that the dismantling or death of the ego is not equivalent to the death of consciousness, and therefore that the individual self and the consciousness that animates it are nonequivalent. One must also take for granted that the meditative practices by which the conceptual structure of the ego is dismantled will, in the end, lay bare precisely that direct and unmediated reality with which intuition connects us, which remains inaccessible to us so long as that conceptual structure remains in place.

In this undertaking Kant's account of synthesis at A 99-102 provides a detailed roadmap in reverse for both dismantling the conceptual structure of the individual ego, and thereby achieving direct and unmediated contact with things in themselves – i.e. things as they are in ultimate reality; because the two projects are in fact one and the same. We have seen that in these paragraphs of the Subjective Deduction in A, Kant describes in detail how we construction an enduring object out of intuitional representations that we situate in a non-arbitrary linear order, according to the rules provided by the transcendental conceptual functions. At A 109 he goes on to state explicitly that the very same rules that provide objective structure to an object of

consciousness and situate it in an external world of spatiotemporal and causal relations also provide structure and unity to the subjective consciousness that contemplates it. This should not be surprising, since all along Kant's account has treated of only one set of intuitional representations, not two. It is not as though there were one set of representations that, properly systematized, constituted the subjective unity of the self, and a different set that, similarly systematized, constituted the objective and enduring structure of the object. Kant's whole point is that there is only one set of representations that, properly systematized, simultaneously and interdependently constitute both. Tersely put, there are subjects if and only if there are objects of consciousness; dismantle the one and you automatically dismantle the other.

This is why yogic meditation begins at the most elementary level with concentration on a physical object, and progresses to more advanced levels *only* once this one has been mastered. It is also why the familiar seven-seconds-per artwork standard viewing time is so deeply entrenched in the viewing habits of the contemporary art audience. Looking, really looking at any object is hard work, and not just because we have so much else on our minds. It elicits enormous psychological resistance because the more deeply we penetrate into the hidden structure of the object, the more deeply we penetrate into the hidden structure of the self. The more fully and vividly we unpack the complex properties of the object, the more fully and vividly we take apart the complex structuring of the self. And the more intensely we are confronted with the concrete particularity of the object, the more we are brought face-to-face with the boundaries and limitations of an individual ego beyond which we rightly fear to venture. So in the end, no, there is no solution to the dilemma Kant's thesis engenders. The reason we cannot have both direct intuitive contact with and conscious knowledge of the ultimate reality of concrete particulars in themselves is that we would have to sacrifice our concrete particular ego-selves in order to enjoy it. That is a price that most art viewers are unwilling to pay.

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft, Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, herausg. königlich Preußischen bzw. Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, 1911; New York: Walter de Gruyter), Vols. 3 [B Edition] and 4 [A Edition]; *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*, Herausg. Raymund Schmidt (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1976). Page citations are in the text, and follow the standard A and B Edition paginations. Translations from the German are mine.

<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft, Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, herausg. königlich Preußischen bzw. Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, 1911; New York: Walter de Gruyter), Volume 5; *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, herausg. von Karl Vorländer (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1974).

<sup>3</sup> *Samkhya Karika of Isvara Krsna*, trans. Swami Virupakshananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1995). A particularly faithful appropriation into Yoga psychology can be found in *Yoga Philosophy of Patanjali*, trans. from Sanskrit Swami Hariharananda Aranya; trans. into English P. N. Mukerji (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), but this commentary is hard going. A more reader-friendly but less rigorous approach can be found in *Yogasutra of Patanjali with the Commentary of Vyasa*, trans. Bangali Baba (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982). Two very friendly popularizations are *How to Know God: The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, trans. and commentary by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood (New York: Mentor, 1969) and *Yoga, Discipline of Freedom: The Yoga Sutra Attributed to Patanjali*, trans. Barbara Stoler Miller (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> I discuss Kant's notion of a concept as a function at greater length in "Kant on the Objectivity of the Moral Law," in Andrews Reath, Barbara Herman and Christine M. Korsgaard, Eds., *Reclaiming the History of Ethics: Essays for John Rawls* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 240-269; and at even greater length in *Kant's Metaethics: First Critique Foundations* (in process), from which both this article and the present discussion are excerpted.

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<sup>5</sup> One reason for my preference for the A over the B Deduction is that in the former, Kant makes clear the interconnection of intuition and categorial synthesis at the outset, whereas in the latter he must resort to a series of footnotes to make this crucial point – which he apparently so took for granted that he forgot to mention it in the main text. The other problem with the B Deduction is that the “I think” that there has pride of place cannot possibly have the role in transcendental synthesis that Kant claims for it, since in order even to conceptualize it, transcendental synthesis must be presupposed. This is what comes of too great an enthusiasm for Descartes.

<sup>6</sup> I discuss the logical status of Kant's categories, and the distinction between transcendental and empirical concepts, at greater length in “Xenophobia and Kantian Rationalism,” *Philosophical Forum* XXIV, 1-3 (Fall-Spring 1992-93), 188-232. Reprinted in *Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant*, Ed. Robin May Schott (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 21-73; and in *African-American Perspectives and Philosophical Traditions*, Ed. John P. Pittman (New York: Routledge, 1997).