

# Kant on Self-Consciousness and Object Cognition

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## 1. *Kant's Bold Theses*

Kant believed that it would require powerful arguments to convince skeptics that cognition was combination—a *Zusammengesetztes*—of *a posteriori* and *a priori* elements. In the course of his long argument for the necessity of *a priori* concepts to Empirical cognition, he argued for two other bold claims: object cognition requires self-consciousness or apperception (A103, B133) and self-consciousness requires object cognition (B134). Today, his bold epistemological claims enjoy very different levels of support. Many, though not all, contemporary epistemologists embrace some version of his final conclusion. Cognition involves a variety of *a priori* concepts without which it would be impossible. On the other hand, even Kant specialists have found his intermediate conclusions about the necessity and sufficiency of self-consciousness for object cognition unpersuasive and even unintelligible.

For example, Hansgeorg Hoppe suggests that we replace Kant's strong claim about the necessity of self-consciousness to object cognition with a weaker and more plausible claim. His proposal is to skip the 'I-think' theory, the 'Egologie' as he calls it, of §16 of the B Deduction, and turn immediately to the unity of apperception required for object reference in §17 (1983, 119-121). Hoppe takes the Empiricist tradition to have erred in believing that representations can occur singly and yet refer to objects. The difficulty is that

In jeder, auch der vereinzelt, Wahrnehmung eines Gegenstandes liegt so der Hinweis auf andere Wahrnehmungen, z. B. desselben Gegenstandes, die die erste näher bestimmen können, sie allerdings auch als Trugwahrnehmung oder bloße Einbildung erweisen können (1983, 84).

In Strawson's terminology, the concept of objective cognition requires the possibility of the 'corrected view' (1966, 250) and that requires the possibility of different representations of the same object belonging to the same subject.

Hoppe's topic was 'synthesis' and he argued that 'synthesis' should not be thought of as a process or procedure for uniting representations, but as the (united) condition in which representations must stand to refer to an object (1983, 121). Similarly, despite Kant's assertion that representations must be brought to the unity of apperception (A108) that unity should not be thought of as something achieved, but as a presupposition of the complex representations required for objective reference:

Für Kant in erster Linie vielmehr jene durchgängige und ursprüngliche Einheit der Apperzeption der einheitliche Rahmen, der all Einzelsynthesen im voraus umfaßt und möglich macht. Im aktuellen Urteil wird nicht jeweils erneut diese ursprüngliche Einheit wieder hervorgebracht ... (1983, 171).

That is, there must be a common 'place' in which the different representations that refer to a common object can co-exist. Finally, although Kant describes the unity of apperception in terms of 'self-consciousness,' the necessary unity across representations is not that of a subject, but that of an object. It is the unity that is necessary for reference to an object (1983, 128).

On Hoppe's reading, the fact that a representation belongs to the unity of apperception means only that that it belongs with others to the same cognizer or to the same 'unitary frame.' He muses about how the tautology that 'all my representations belong to me' could have any consequences. How could it imply the necessity of the categories to the unity of apperception? (1983, 22-23). For that matter, how could the truth of a tautology be a necessary condition for objective reference? Hoppe expresses the converse worry. How could the truth of a tautology be a sufficient condition for objective reference?

Wolfgang Carl also raises the worry about how the unity of apperception can be a sufficient condition for objective cognition in his brief commentary on the B-Deduction:

Es ist merkwürdig, daß Kant sich diese Frage gar nicht stellt, denn er glaubt aus dem Umstand, daß die Synthesis von Vorstellungen zu einer Erkenntnis von Objekten 'eine Einheit des Bewußtseins in der Synthesis derselben' voraussetzt, ableiten zu können, daß diese Einheit schon dafür hinreichend ist, 'was allein die Beziehung der Vorstellungen auf einen Gegenstand ... folglich daß sie Erkenntnisse werden, ausmacht. (1998, 197).

He also mentions the issue briefly in his book on the A deduction:

That the reference of a cognition to an object should be the unity of apperception is hardly comprehensible (1992, 185).

Carl maintains that Kant does not offer any ground for transcendental apperception (1992, 178). Under these circumstances, he thinks that the best a commentator can do is clarify the relations among that assumption and related key assumptions. This effort leads him to make the same suggestion for explaining the necessity of the unity of apperception that we have just encountered in Hoppe:

How does Kant arrive at this thesis [that the identity of the consciousness of our self is a necessary condition for all representations]? ... A subject who is capable of acquiring knowledge cannot therefore possess only one representation. But why is their combination a necessary condition for representing something? One assumes that one can only represent something if it is possible that different representations can represent the same thing, only then can the relation of a representation to its object be made comprehensible, if several representations allow of being referred to the same object (1992, 201).

Carl agrees further with Hoppe that it is a mistake to take Kant at his word that different representations are brought to the unity of apperception. This is just a colorful way of putting the point that they must all belong to the unity of apperception for cognition to be possible (1992, 182).

Despite the debts that we all owe to Hoppe's and Carl's efforts to clarify some of the most difficult aspects of Kant's *Erkenntnistheorie*, I think that they are wrong in this case. I will try to show that Kant offered plausible arguments for taking the unity of apperception to be necessary and sufficient for object cognition and that the resulting position is intelligible and may even be correct. I'll be concerned with some of the implications of that position for understanding the Paralogisms chapter in the next lecture. In lectures 3 and 4 I'll consider some of the implications of Kant's arguments for contemporary approaches to self-consciousness and self-knowledge. In those talks, I will also try to deal with some very obvious objections to Kant's views. Today my goals are largely interpretive. I'll present my interpretation of Kant's arguments about the relation between self-consciousness and object cognition.

## 2. *The Cognition at issue in KRV*

To figure out why Kant maintained that the unity of apperception was necessary and sufficient for empirical cognition, we need to consider more closely how he understood cognition. One well-known thesis of the *First Critique* is that cognition requires both intuitions and concepts. The *Critique* is also explicit that intuitions are singular representations that relate directly to objects; by contrast, concepts are general representations that relate to objects only through relating to intuitive representations. Although the *Critique* presents concepts as higher representations that unify cognition, it is not explicit about an aspect of concepts that is highlighted in the *Logic Lectures*. Here I cite some of the handwritten notes from which Jäsche composed 'Kant's' *Logic*.

Das menschliche<sup>i</sup> Erkenntnis ist von seiten des Verstandes discursiv, d.i., es geschieht durch vorstellungen, die das, was mehreren Gemein ist, zum Erkenntnisgrunde machen, mithin durch Merkmale as solche. (R 2288, 16.300)

Concepts are 'marks' or grounds of cognition, representations through which things can be known, because they represent what is common to many things.

Jäsche's published version has Kant using an analogy to explain how a ground of cognition works:

So wie man von einem **Grunde** überhaupt sagt, daß er die **Folge** unter sich enthalte: so kann man auch von dem Beriffe sagen, daß er als Erkenntnißgrun all diejenigen Dinge unter sich enthalte, von denen er abstrahirt worden, z. B., der Begriff Metall das Gold, Silber, Kupfer, u.s.w. halt (9.96).

'Metal,' for example, is a ground of cognition of copper things, because it classes them together with other metals from which the concept was abstracted.

Kant elaborates his account of marks to include marks that belong to complex concepts (again in his handwritten notes):

Ein Merkmal ist nicht immer ein Begrif der Sache, sondern oft nur von einem Theile der Sache ... Eine Partialvorstellung als Erkenntnisgrund der ganzen Vorstellung is ein Merkmal. (R 2282, 16.298)

Merkmale als Erkenntnisgründe zum inner Gebrauch [der Ableitung, R2283, 16.299]: um dadurch das Ding zu erkennen, oder zum äußern: um es zu vergleichen.. (R 2284, 16.299)

Because some marks are parts of other concepts (e.g. 'extended' is part of 'body' [A106]), marks can be used in two ways. The outer use involves comparison: With respect to sameness and difference, copper things should be classified with the metallic as opposed to the non-metallic. Since 'extended' is a partial representation of 'body', 'x is extended' is derivable from 'x is a body' and in some cases (where the conditions are sufficient), the reasoning can also go in the other direction, from 'x is extended,' etc. to 'x is a body' (R2281, 16.298).

These readings are, I believe, uncontroversial. But Kant goes on in the Reflections to make a further claim:

Das Merkmal wird erstlich als Vorstellung an sich selbst, zweitens als gehorig wie ein theilbegriff zu einer Andern vorstellung und dadurch als Erkenntnisgrund des Dinges betrachtet. (R 2285, 16.299)<sup>ii</sup>

How should we understand Kant's claim? *Who* considers a mark as a representation and as a ground of cognition—logicians/philosophers or ordinary cognizers? Although *caveats* are needed, the answer must be ordinary cognizers, because it is cognizers make the two-fold use of marks, using them to indicate sameness and difference and to make inferences.<sup>iii</sup> Of course, ordinary cognizers would not describe what they do with terms like 'mark,' 'ground of cognition,' 'concept' or the very general term 'representation.' Still, they understand that, when they describe a copper pot as 'metallic,' they are saying that it is similar to other things they have called by that name. Ordinary cognizers would not say that their concept 'extended' is part of their whole concept 'body,' because they would not use these technical terms. Still, they realize that when they call something a 'body,' they are saying that it takes up space.

The interpretation that Kant takes ordinary cognizers to be aware of marks as representations, as parts of other concepts, and as grounds of cognition (though not in those terms) is given further support by his criticism of the claim that animals have concepts:

Ein Ochs, heist es, hat in seiner Vorstellung vom Stalle doch auch einer klare Vorstellung von seinem Merkmale der Thüre, also einen deutlichen Begriff vom Stalle. Es ist leicht, hier die Verwirrung zu verhüten. Nicht darin besteht die Deutlichkeit eines Begriffs, daß dasjenige, was ein Merkmal vom Dinge ist, klar vorgestellt werde, *sondern daß es als ein Merkmal des Dinges*

*erkannt werde*. Die Thüre ist zwar etwas zum Stalle Gehöriges und kann als Merkmal desselben dienen, aber nur derjenige, der das Urteil abfast: **diese Thüre gehört zu diesem Stalle**, hat einen deutlichen Begriff von dem Gebäude, und dieses ist sicherlich über das Vermögen des Viehes.

Ich gehe noch weiter und sage: es ist ganz was anders Dinge von einander **unterscheiden** und den Unterschied der Dinge **erkennen**. (2.59-60, my italics).

Because the ox has a representation of its door, he can make a differential response to his stall. But that does not mean that he recognizes the door as a mark of the stall or, more generally, that he recognizes the differences between things as means of differentiating them.

Kant goes on to offer a hypothesis about why animals cannot have concepts. They lack an inner sense:

Meine jetztige Meinung geht dahin, dass diese kraft oder Fähigkeit nichts anders sei als das Vermögen des innern Sinnes, d. i., seine eigene Vorstellungen zum Objekte seiner Gedanken zu machen. Dieses Vermögen ist nicht aus einem andern abzuleiten, es ist ein Grundvermögen im eigentlichen Verstande und kann, wie ich dafür halte, blos vernünftigen Wesen eigen sein (2.60).

He will change his mind about inner sense and argue, instead, that the active faculty of apperception is the key to 'higher' cognition. The important point for my interpretive purpose is why he thought that inner sense could be the key faculty: Through inner sense, cognizers make their own representations objects of their thinking. Oxen cannot possess concepts, because they cannot recognize something that is a mark as a mark—because they lack the capacity to think about their representations. By contrast, human cognizers can have concepts, because they can recognize a mark as such. They can recognize it as a representation that enables them to differentiate objects by what they have in common or as a representation that belongs to 'larger' representation; they recognize that they can derive the mark or partial representation from the whole one or can use it as a ground of cognition for the whole representation—although they would never put matters in these philosophical terms. They might say instead, e.g., that they take a kettle to be similar to other things they have called 'metallic' or that part of why they call something a 'body' is that it takes up space. This more complete account

of Kant's view of concept use will be helpful in following his argument that the unity of self-consciousness is necessary and sufficient for *conceptual* object cognition.

Before we turn to the arguments for that thesis, it will also be helpful to have three pieces of background. The first is what happens to 'inner sense' between this early essay and the *Critique* that might have led Kant to replace it by apperception, the second is the then current debate about the priority of self-consciousness versus object cognition, and the third is the state of the then current discussion about self-consciousness and self-unity.

### 3. *Three Pieces of Background*

Just to have it available: here is Locke's well-known introduction of inner sense.

The other Fountain, from which Experience furnisheth the Understanding with Ideas, is the Perception of the Operations of our own Minds within us, as it is employ'd about the Ideas it has got; which Operations, when the soul comes to reflect on, and consider, do furnish the Understanding with another set of Ideas, which could not be had from things without: and such are Perception, Thinking, Doubting, Believing, Reasoning, Knowing, Willing, and all the different actings of our own Minds . . . (Locke 1690/1979: 105)

Although the notion of an internal sense was, I think, novel, one phenomenon that underlies its introduction was familiar. Many in the logical tradition maintained that people are aware of the cognitive acts they perform. Taking the most prominent example, the Port Royal Logic (1662) assumes that anyone can tell when he is judging, inferring, remembering, seeing, and so forth.

Since this phenomenon is not often discussed today, I will try to make it vivid with an example. Consider the premises of a simple inference:

All men are mortal.

Caius is a man.

Therefore, Caius is mortal.

Normal humans are aware both of the conclusion and of a movement of their minds from the premises to the conclusion. They can distinguish acts of inferring from cases where they see no relation and have to be told what follows from the premises.

The phenomenon of mental act awareness does not justify Locke's assumptions. It implies neither that being so aware supplies thinkers with a concept of 'reasoning' nor that the awareness is best modeled by analogy with the 'outer' senses. I highlight mental act awareness not to support Locke's introduction of 'inner sense', but to draw attention to one phenomenon that it was meant to illuminate, a phenomenon that is central to Kant's theory of thinking.

As we have seen, Kant was once a fan of inner sense. The hypothesis of inner sense was, however, not straightforward. The psychologist J.N. Tetens wonders how the representations of inner sense could be understood as *representations* in the same sense as representations of outer sense (1777, 1. 7.45). He answers his own question as follows: As objects cause impressions on sensory organs that give rise to sensations that represent the objects, (mental) acts that result in changes in representations cause impressions on the organ, the mind or brain, and those impressions give rise to sensations—which represent the actions. Later I will suggest why Kant might have demoted inner sense—as Tetens explained it—to a 'lower' faculty.

To understand Kant's claims about the relations between object cognition and self-consciousness, we need to consider the priority debate over these two forms of cognition that played out in the decades prior to his writing. The opening move was Descartes' famous claim that the first items of knowledge anyone could have concerned himself: 'I think', 'I exist'. Christian Wolff began the *German Metaphysics* with what appears to be a straightforward endorsement of the Cartesian position:

Wir sind uns unserer und anderer Dinge bewusst; daran kan niemand zweiffeln ...Denn, wie wollte er mir etwas leugnen, oder in Zweifel ziehet, wenn er sich nicht seiner und anderer Dinge bewusst wäre? Wer sich nun aber dessen, was er leugnet, oder in Zweifel ziehet, bewusst ist, derselbige ist (Meta. §1).

But the small difference with the *cogito*—conscious also of other things—is crucial. On Wolff's view, cognizers come to self-consciousness in differentiating other objects. No cognition is possible without singling out the object that is known. But to single out such an object requires an act of differentiating that thing from others.

Dieser Unterscheid [between ourselves and other things] aber zeigt sich so gleich, so bald wir uns der anderen Dinge bewusst sind. Denn sollen wir uns dessen was wir durch unsere Sinnen



erkennen, bewusst sein; so müssen wir den Unterscheid [sic] desjenigen, was wir in ihm wahrnehmen, bemerken, ja auch die Sache, die wir dadurch erkennen, von andern Dingen zugleich unterscheiden. Allein sowohl die Vorstellung der Dinge, als auch ... dieses Unterscheid ist eine Wirkung der Seele, und wir erkennen demnach dadurch den Unterscheid der Seele von denen Dingen, die sich vorstellt, und die sie unterscheidet. Und demnach sind wir uns auch unsererer bewusst. (Meta. §730).

On Wolff's view, self-consciousness cannot precede consciousness of objects, because the self-consciousness is made possible by the processes involved in object consciousness. Since the soul differentiates objects, it is possible to differentiate the soul from the objects it differentiates. If thinkers can discern themselves only in the act of differentiating between other things, however, then they can have knowledge neither of their thinking nor of their existence prior to having representations of objects.

Wolff's position was criticized by Johann Bernhard Merian in a small essay that Udo Thiel (1996) has helpfully brought to the attention of scholars. One focus of Merian's essay is what he takes to be Descartes' anti-skeptical *cogito* argument.

Alles was denkt, existiert.

Ich denke.

Folglich existire ich. (1749/1778, 98)

Merian's argument is very simple. In presenting knowledge of one's existence as a conclusion, Descartes is incorrectly making it mediate. Merian replies with his own syllogism: either consciousness of the self is direct or indirect, since it cannot be indirect, then it must be direct (1749/1778, 96ff.).

Merian lays out the theory of apperceiving through differentiating and then argues that differentiation presupposes apperception:

Es mir widersprechend, daß man unterscheiden könne, ehe man apperzipirt hat. Denn, wenn man in diesem Fall fragen sollte: was unterscheidet man den? So glaube ich nicht, daß man je darauf wird antworten können. Ein deutliches Merkmal, daß man gar nicht unterscheidet. A von B unterscheiden, heißt apperzipiren, A sei nicht B, und B nicht A; wenn ich gleich weder A noch B apperzipere. Ist das nicht en offenbarer Widerspruch? (1749/1778,127)

Merian's point is that differentiating A from B requires first that one attend to A and on B. But then if a cognizer can answer the question of what (things) are to be differentiated,

A, B, then he must already take them to be objects of his consciousness—he must already have apperceived them. Although Merian's argument seems convincing, he has ruled out a third possibility by fiat. Perhaps apperceiving and differentiating are mutually dependent.

I take Kant's great insight in the transcendental deduction to be his recognition of the significance of the phenomenon of conceptual cognition for the problem of the unity of self-consciousness. To appreciate that insight, we need a third crucial piece of background: the state of the discussion over personal identity. I will not cite the familiar first move offered by Locke. Locke rejects the scholastic notion of 'substantial form,' and settles instead on the 'consciousness that accompanies thinking and can access previous mental states through recollection' as the criterion of personal unity/identity. This theory was much discussed both by followers and by opponents. Hume notes the change in the intellectual agenda as follows:

We now proceed to explain the nature of personal identity, which has been so great a question in philosophy, especially of late in England where all the abstruse subjects are studied with ardour and application (1739/1978 259).

Hume's own ventures into this abstruse subject lead him to the notorious conclusion is that there is no continuing self. Kant does not refer to Hume's no-self theory and scholars believed for many years that he was unaware of the view. I think the evidence that he was so aware is now overwhelming, so the current question is whether his knowledge of this position had any effect on his views or his arguments for them. I think that it did, in particular, through a discussion that he would have read in Tetens's *Philosophische Versuche*.

Tetens tried not just to criticize Hume, but to provide an alternative way to ground the belief in a self, an alternative that would reveal where Hume had erred. Tetens claimed that Hume had underestimated the materials available for solving the problem of continuing identity:

I feel a representation; and another one, also an activity of thinking, an expression of will and so forth, and these feelings are different and actual. However, I also feel still more (1777/1979, 1.393).

Whenever someone feels or senses a representation and is directly conscious of it, she is also conscious that this feeling of modification is merely a noticeable landmark in a much larger, extended, stronger, although for the most part obscure or, perhaps, somewhat clear, feeling. The concept of the identity of the I arises from the comparison of the present feeling of our I as a subject with a similar feeling in its previous property, a feeling that has been reproduced (and so can be compared) (1777/1979, 1.393-94).

After presenting his alternative account of the origin of the concept of an 'I' in terms of 'same feeling' in one section, Tetens begins the next by observing that it is radically incomplete. As it stands, the concept of a subject and its properties is not yet a complete concept of a thing as an object; it is even further from the concept of a substance. In particular, the concepts of being or actuality, subsisting [*Bestehen*] or continuing [*Fortdauern*], and subsisting for itself need to be added to it (1777/1979, 1.395). Tetens was not a Rational Psychologist, but a follower of Locke. What he notes in this section, however, is that the I-representation that he has managed to extract from experience falls far short of the metaphysically rich subject concept of Rational Psychology. This is significant because Empirical Psychology was supposed to be the foundation on which the doctrines of Rational Psychology about the substantiality, simplicity, personality, and so forth of the soul were built. Even assuming it is correct, Tetens's empirical derivation of the 'I-representation' yields far too little to support Rational Psychology. He recognized that and, presumably, so did Kant.

#### *4. The A and B Edition Arguments Connecting Object Cognition and Apperception*

The necessity of the unity of apperception to object cognition is introduced in the A Deduction in the discussion of the third synthesis, that of recognition in a concept. Kant uses the example of counting to explore the requirements of concept application. Although helpful, the example involves some special features that will need to be bracketed. He maintains that concepts are associated with rules (e.g., A106). Since mathematical concepts are usually understood as having definitions, the example suggests that the associated rules are necessary and sufficient conditions for the applicability of the concept. In fact, he is clear that neither empirical concepts nor categories can be defined (9.141-41, A727/B755-56). The associated rules are not

definitions, but 'expositions,' i.e., incomplete analyses that give the marks of the concept (A728-29/ B756-57).

Once the suggestion of necessary and sufficient conditions is rejected (and if the rules are allowed to be probabilistic), Kant's assumption that concepts are associated with rules is not particularly problematic.<sup>iv</sup> It is a version of the standard contemporary view that concepts stand in inferential relations to other concepts and can be used only by individuals who recognize those relations. The rules indicate some of the relations. In the case of concepts that are either simple or unclear (where the subject doesn't know the inferential relations), the rule would be the rule for the external use of marks: the concept stands for a feature that is common to this object and to others.

Let's now turn to Kant's extended discussion of the example:

Vergesse ich im Zählen, daß die Einheiten, die mir jetzt vor Sinnen schweben, nach und nach zu einander von mir hinzugethan worden sind, so würde ich ... nicht die Zahl erkennen ... (A 103).

Das Wort **Begriff** könnte uns schon von selbst zu dieser Bemerkung Anleitung geben. Denn dieses **eine** Bewußtsein ist es, was das Mannfaltige, nach und nach Angesehene und dann auch Reproducirte in eine Vorstellung vereinigt. Dieses Bewußtsein kann oft nur schwach sein, so das wir es nur in der Wirkung, nicht aber in dem Actus selbst, d. i., unmittelbar, mit der Erzeugung der Vorstellung verknüpfen: aber unerachtet dieser Unterschied muss doch immer ein Bewußtsein angetroffen werden, wenn ihm gleich die hervorstechende Klarheit mangelt, und ohne dasselbe sind Begriffe und mit ihnen Erkenntnis von Gegenständen ganz unmöglich (A 103-104).

Kant makes two points. The first is that a subject could not count the members of a set if she keeps losing the information. The second point will be the key for his claim about apperception. It is not enough that the information is preserved and accessible. In the act of applying the concept, e.g., 'nine,' the subject must be conscious of uniting the contents in the representation. He agrees that thinkers do not have to pay attention to each step, adding up the items little by little. Nevertheless, they must be conscious in judging or applying the concept 'nine' of doing on the basis of carrying out these steps. If they could not be so conscious, then would be unable to use concepts and would lack all cognition of objects.

This is a strong claim. Given his theory of concept use, however, we can see why he makes it. 'One,' 'two,' *etc.* are partial representations that belong to the whole representation 'nine.' To cognize through concepts humans must not merely have representations that lead to other representations, they must also recognize those partial representations as such, as the grounds of cognition of the whole representation (judgment). This point is especially clear in the case of counting: the cognizer knows the set to contain 'nine' members in part because she knows to contain, e.g., at least two members. If cognizers were not conscious as they combine partial representations in complex ones, however, then they could not recognize 'two' as part of the ground of cognition for the set of 'nine' and so would fail to be concept users.

Although the example makes this relation vivid, it also involves further features that can be misleading. The units that 'hover before the mind' are intuitive representations that are united with others by the partial (conceptual) representations 'one,' 'two,' *etc.* They are also the intuitive basis—the sensory evidence—on which the cognizer makes the judgment 'nine.' But the identity of the intuitive basis for the judgment and the intuitive representations of *marks* and is an accidental feature of the case. Kant maintains that humans can judge that something exists without perceiving it, as long as it is connected by laws to what they do perceive (A225/B272). A subject could judge, for example, that a heavenly body exists without having an intuitive representation of its mark, 'extension.' Further, in the case of mathematics, the cognizer does not have to wait for sensory evidence. She can give herself sensory representations of the marks. So in this case there is no question of whether or how she knows that an intuitive representation presents something that is similar to items that she has labeled with the concept/ mark 'one.'

Because of these special features, Kant can roll two conditions into one: Cognizers must be conscious of uniting the sequence of intuitive representations in the representation or judgment 'nine.' Separating the conditions, the cognizer must be conscious that her partial representations correctly unite sensory representations (e.g., the sensory representation that she gives herself for 'one' [automatically] presents something that is similar to other things she has called 'one') and she must be conscious of applying the concept 'nine' on the basis of her partial representations. A

cognizer must be act-conscious in judging, because, if she were not, then she could not recognize e.g., the partial representation 'one' as (part of) the ground of her cognition 'nine' and could not recognize her partial representation 'one' as a ground of cognition that stands in this case for something that is relevantly similar to the things she has called 'one.' And in those circumstances she would fail to be a concept user.

In his published Anthropology lectures, Kant characterizes consciousness of mental acts in terms of 'apperception' and relates that faculty to the understanding; he contrasts 'apperception' with 'apprehension,' a consciousness of particular mental states through inner sense (7.134n.). We can get a clearer picture of Kantian apperception if we consider why he would have rejected inner sense, as Tetens understood it, as the crucial faculty for conceptual cognition. According to Tetens, inner sense is a sense, because it records acts of thinking. But a mere record of a representation, 'nine,' would not make that representation a concept/mark that is understood as such. To use a concept/mark the cognizer must be conscious of applying it on the basis of its rule, either an internal rule relating to marks or the external rule of comparison. Failing this, conceptual cognition of objects would be impossible.

After the counting example, Kant moves to a more abstract level, introducing the idea of the concept of an object as providing a rule for what makes something an object (A104-105). The concept of an object in general would be the genus for particular object concepts. Then he makes the equation that Carl finds unintelligible:

Die Einheit, welche der Gegenstand notwendig macht, nicht anders sein könne, als die formale Einheit des Bewußtseins in der Synthesis des Mannfaltigen der Vorstellungen. (A105).

Since he was describing the unity of an object (the general rule is that the representations of an object of cognition must not be haphazard or arbitrary but determined in a certain way), it does seem strange suddenly to introduce the unity of consciousness.

Against the background of the disagreement over the priority of object cognition and self-consciousness, however, Kant's move is comprehensible. How can one claim that object cognition comes first? To engage in (conceptual) object cognition, the subject must be conscious of uniting sensory representations in partial (conceptual)

representations and (with complex concepts) of uniting partial representations in the complex representation (in a judgment.) The counting example spells out how this works. The cognizer must be conscious of making the judgment through partial representations that correctly unite current sensory representations with sensory representations that present common properties. In that case, however, the act-consciousness that makes object cognition possible essentially involves recognizing a relation across the subject's sensory representations, partial representations and judgmental state—namely the relation of necessarily belonging together. In being conscious of her partial cognitions as the ground of her judgment 'nine,' she is simultaneously aware that that judgment could not exist without the partial representations. In being aware of the partial representation 'one' as uniting a current sensory representation with others that present the same property, she is simultaneously aware that it would not exist in the absence of the current sensory representations.

Of course, ordinary cognizers would not describe their concept applications using the philosophical concept of 'necessity'—or the notion of 'concept application.' They would say instead something like 'how could I have known the number if I hadn't counted? But the lack of philosophical vocabulary does not change the fact in applying concepts a cognizer recognizes—and must recognize—her judgmental state and her partial representations as depending on her current sensory states and so as necessarily connected to them.

Kant can move directly from his analysis of conceptual cognition to the unity of apperception, because he does not have a metaphysically loaded account of a unified consciousness. He takes the 'unity of self-consciousness' to indicate only relations of necessary connection across mental states. Once he has shown that conceptual cognition requires that some faculty (or faculties) consciously combine some mental states in others and recognizes the relation of dependence thus produced, he has also shown that it requires the unity of apperception, the necessary connection across mental states that makes them states of a single 'I-think.' (Kant argues that cognizers must have an *a priori* representation of an 'I-think' as a being whose states are necessarily connected, since they could not acquire this representation from experience

[A107, B133].) So he makes the *prima facie* odd claim that necessary or objective cognition is nothing other than the unity of consciousness.

So far, I have tried to explain only why Kant thinks that the unity of consciousness is a necessary condition for object cognition. But he begins his argument for why object cognition is also necessary for the unity of consciousness. He considers and criticizes the possibility that self-consciousness could arise empirically, through the operation of inner sense.

Das Bewußtsein seiner selbst nach den Bestimmungen unseres Zustandes bei der inneren Wahrnehmung ist bloß empirisch, jederzeit wandelbar, es kann kein stehendes oder bleibendes Selbst in diesem Flusse innerer Erscheinungen geben. Das was **notwendig** als numerisch identisch vorgestellt werden soll, kann nicht als ein solches durch empirische Data gedacht werden. Es muß eine Bedingung sein, die vor aller Erfahrung vorhergeht, und diese selbst möglich macht, welche eine solche transzendente Voraussetzung geltend machen soll.  
(A107)

He is pointing out that no Empiricist can make sense of the necessary identity of the self across time. In the Paralogisms chapter, he will also criticize the standard Rationalist arguments for the substantiality, simplicity and identity of the soul through time. Putting these two together, he argues that neither of the two dominant systems of philosophy—Empiricism or Rationalism—could explain the obvious fact that there are continuing persons or continuing cognitive selves. By contrast, he has shown that the assumption of the necessary identity of the self across different representations is a necessary condition for the possibility of cognition.

The B edition also stresses the inadequacy of introspection or inner sense in establishing the existence of a continuing self. His particular target seems to be Locke:

Das empirische Bewußtsein, welches verschiedene Vorstellungen begleitet, ist an sich zerstreut und ohne Beziehung auf die Identität des Subjekts (B133).

His objection is that Lockean consciousness—the consciousness which is inseparable from thinking (Locke, 1690, 2:27.9)—is momentary or episodic. As such, it could not establish the existence of the same self through time.



On the other hand, engaging in object cognition forges the necessary connections across states that make them states of a single subject. Although the discussion is more abstract, in B as in A, the key is conscious acts of synthesizing.

Diese Beziehung [to the subjects' identity] geschieht also dadurch noch nicht, daß ich jede Vorstellung mit Bewußtsein begleite, sondern daß ich eine zu der andern **hinzusetze** und mir der Synthesis derselben bewußt bin. Also nur dadurch, daß ich ein Mannigfaltiges gegebener Vorstellungen in einem **Bewußtsein** verbinden kann, ist es möglich, daß ich mir die **Identität des Bewußtsein in diesen Vorstellungen** selbst vorstelle ... (B 133, my underscoring).

Through cognizing objects, a subject creates and recognizes the relations of dependence and so necessary connection across mental states that make them states of a single subject. In Kant's terminology, he brings those representations under the unity of apperception (B136-37).

Once he has completed his case against rival theories in the Paralogisms, Kant notes that that his 'object cognition' account is the only possible explanation of self-identity.

Die Einheit des Bewußtseins, die wir selbst nur dadurch kennen, daß wir sie zur Möglichkeit der Erfahrung unentbehrlich brauchen. (B420)

Although this also seems to be a strange claim, the background of the difficulties of explaining human cognition of their own identities through time makes it more comprehensible. The unity of self-consciousness of cognitive selves proved to be extremely elusive. Kant's view was that it could be understood only by seeing how it functioned in cognition.

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<sup>i</sup> These citations are drawn from a section in which Kant is discussing clear and distinct concepts. Given their location, the discussions may seem to be narrowly focused on academic issues. On the other hand, his terminology—human (not scholarly) cognition—strongly suggests that his claims are about ordinary human cognition in general.

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<sup>ii</sup> Jäsche capture combines the content of this Reflection with that of others in his rendering of Kant's logic as follows:

From the side of the understanding, human cognition is discursive, i.e., it takes place through representations which take as the ground of cognition that which is common to many things, hence through marks as such. Thus we cognize things **through** marks and that is called **cognizing** [*Erkennen*], which comes from being acquainted [*Kennen*].

A **mark is that in a thing which constitutes a part of the cognition of it**, or—what is the same—a **partial representation, insofar as it is considered as a ground of cognition of the whole representation**. All our **concepts** are marks, accordingly, and all **thought** is nothing other than a representing through marks (9.58).

<sup>iii</sup> This reading is supported by the *Critique's* brief account of the use of marks in connection with Kant's denial of the possibility of defining empirical concepts. He explains that

in the concept **gold** one person may think, besides the weight, color, and ductility, also the property of not rusting, while another person perhaps knows nothing of this property. We use [*man bedient*] certain marks only as long as they are sufficient for distinguishing ... (A728/B756)

Those who use marks are clearly ordinary cognizers.

<sup>iv</sup> I make no effort to defend Kant's appeal to rules associated with concepts. On Kripke's (1982) interpretation of Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following (1953), it makes no sense to say that concept-users follow rules for or associated with concepts.