

# Kant's Account of Cognition and Experience: the Issue of the Togetherness Principle

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**Nikolić, Roni**

**Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad**

**2020**

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište u Rijeci, Filozofski fakultet**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:186:790397>

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*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2025-01-25**



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Sveučilište u Rijeci  
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Roni Nikolić

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**Kant's Account of Cognition and Experience:  
The Issue of the Togetherness Principle**  
Završni rad

Studij: Preddiplomski studij Engleskog jezika i književnosti i Filozofije

Mentor: prof. dr. sc. Predrag Šustar

Student: Roni Nikolić

Rijeka, 2020.

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## Abstract

This paper will focus on Kant's ideas of cognition. The first part of the paper will be a kind of glossary with commentary on the most well-known issues behind the terms themselves, going from the simplest to most complex.

The central issue will be one known as *The Togetherness Principle*. Kant has, contrasting the rationalist and empiricist traditions of having only one cognitive faculty, argued there are (at least) two distinct ones; (1) The faculty of understanding and (2) the faculty of sensibility. The respective keywords integral to these faculties are (1) intuitions, which belong to the faculty of sensibility, and (2) concepts, which are part of the faculty of understanding. *The Togetherness Principle* (hereafter TP), which is going to be in the focus of this paper, is one of Kant's most basic concepts upon which he builds his theory of cognition, followed by his theory of judgment and finally, his big proposal - Transcendental Idealism. The ideas concerning TP, its interpretation and issues, will be largely based on Robert Hanna's supplement to the "Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy" article on Kant's *Theory of Judgment*, which I believe captures the essence of the issues surrounding the TP beautifully. The principle itself stands for the interdependence of intuitions and concepts, or, to put it differently, it reflects an idea that neither concepts without intuitions nor intuitions without concepts are capable of yielding a cognition. Kant words it superbly in one of his most famous passages from *The Critique of Pure Reason*:

*Thoughts without [intensional] content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. (...) The understanding is not capable of intuiting anything, and the senses are not capable of thinking anything. Only from their unification can cognition arise. [Kant, 1998; 193-194]*

However, Kant seems to imply differently in some parts of his work, suggesting that there really can be such a thing as a non-conceptual cognition.

*objects can indeed appear to us without necessarily having to be related to functions of the understanding* (Kant, 1998; 222)

In other words, he states that we can, in fact, form rational cognitions that are objectively valid through intuitions and without the need of concepts.. The thesis in question is what Robert Hanna calls “the independence of intuitions from concepts”. [Hanna, 2018]

Having observed these seemingly contradictory readings with far-reaching implications, I will present the positions which arise from the debate. Those are (1) Kantian conceptualism and (2) Kantian non-conceptualism. Kantian conceptualists, in short, argue that without conceptual capacities, one is not able to make use of any representational content yielded by intuitions and thus, not able to form objectively valid judgments. Kantian non-conceptualists argue, more or less, the opposite. According to non-conceptualists, the faculty of sensibility is able to provide us with empirical, non-conceptual content and is capable of forming objectively valid judgments without the “help” of our conceptual capacities. Also, Kantian conceptualism and non-conceptualism have its “strong” and “weak” variants for both sides, which will be covered in the text.

Finally, I will present two more arguments which will complicate the issue of conceptualism and non-conceptualism even further while possibly endangering the coherence of Kant’s philosophical system as a whole. The aim of this paper is to better our understanding of Kant’s theory of cognition and the hierarchy of its faculties while simultaneously showing how the conceptualism versus non-conceptualism debate could be considered a dead end and possibly be abandoned.

**Keywords:** cognition, intuitions, concepts, conceptualism, non-conceptualism

## 1. Introduction

Reading and analyzing Kant's philosophical texts, one may run into obstacles, many of which are of semantic nature. In other words, by using "everyday" words with slightly altered meanings, Kant invites us into his world but with a fair warning - that we give him our undivided attention while making way through his texts and, if we fail to do so, we will have a hard time grasping his ideas. The motivation for this topic comes from having always been fascinated by Kant's capacity to create such an elaborate and complex system while being (mostly) coherent throughout. Also, his ideas were revolutionary for the time, his predecessors were mostly of empiricists and rationalist tradition. Kant, on the other hand, offered us a new perspective on most of the best known and traditional philosophical issues.

Kant's work is also what could be called a "last punch" thrown by enlightenment tradition: the enlightenment being an optimistic idea that human life and activity can be made better with the use of reason. In other words, in order to take control of nature and bring the quality of life up, one's best bet is to rely on one's intellectual capacities. As a consequence, religion and politics were dethroned as an authority on, for example, morality and natural law, while natural sciences took their place. Enlightenment is also about thinking for oneself instead of letting others do the thinking for you. It is important to note that enlightenment was not a radical approach; one was not invited to abolish all faith in religion or morality, but it was rather a call to replace the authority of politics and religion with the authority of the intellect. However, there was a problem with a part of the enlightenment culture; it relied heavily on the science of the times, which was Newtonian physics. Newton had an interesting approach, rooted in the empiricist tradition. In his *Principia*, he argues:

*In experimental philosophy, propositions gathered from phenomena by induction should be taken to be either exactly or very nearly true notwithstanding any contrary hypotheses, until yet other phenomena make such propositions either more exact or liable to exceptions.* [George, 2008]

Otherwise worded, he argues that hypotheses should not be able to trump arguments that rely on empirical induction. When proposing his laws of physics, Newton basically argues a causal chain of events – if A, then B. An example would be Newton’s first law which states:

*If no force acts on a body, the body’s velocity cannot change; that is, the body cannot accelerate.*  
[Resnick, Halliday, 2014; 95]

Causality, in turn, leaves little room for freedom, which was traditionally believed to be a requirement for morality. Also, the ability to be held accountable for your actions is also a requirement for morality. It is, thus, absolutely crucial to be free (to have free will) to be held accountable for your actions, good or bad.

To sum up, the basic principles of enlightenment started to be seen as posing a threat to the very cause they stood for - the advancement of our society. Kant’s goal with his philosophy was to reconcile these seemingly irreconcilable traditions; reason is to be given its sovereignty, while its precedence in forming judgments is to be consistent with traditional morality and religion. In order to do that, Kant needed a complete theory of the mind and its ability to relate to the outside world. In order to even attempt such a thing, Kant devised a number of devices (faculties) which the mind uses to relate to the phenomenal world. Cognition, according to Kant, is able to arise (exclusively) from the unification of two sources: the faculty of sensibility, which is responsible for the reception of representations (intuitions), and faculty of understanding, responsible for thought related to these representations (concepts).

In this paper, I will be working on a small part of Kant’s theory of cognition known as the issue of *The Togetherness Principle (TP)*. The TP stands for the necessary cognitive and semantic interdependence of intuitions and concepts. Intuitions and concepts are connected to the faculties mentioned above: intuitions with the sensibility, concepts with the understanding. When saying that they are interdependent, we argue that they are interdependent for the purpose of generating judgments, which, as we will see, is a crucial ability of the mind in Kant’s theory. The order in which all this is to be presented is the following: firstly, I will give a brief overview or a kind of glossary of the most important terminology needed to understand the issue. Also, along the way, I



will provide commentary on the most well-known problems concerning the usage and relationship between these technical terms, namely intuitions, concepts and their “brainchild” – judgment. After that, the relationship will be examined further, now in the context of the TP. The debate will then turn into a fiery Kantian conceptualism and Kantian non-conceptualism argument which we will then try to criticize by means of presenting two more arguments which, we argue, completely paralyze the debate and bring us to a dead-end.

## 2. General framework

To start off, one of the central areas of dispute in Kant's critical philosophy is concerned with his cognitive faculties. There are two distinct faculties according to Kant, (1) The faculty of sensibility and (2) the faculty of understanding or intellect. These faculties are probably the single most important piece of Kantian philosophy for at least two reasons: firstly, because they give insight into how exactly do we acquire experience; secondly, how do we determine the truth-value of representational content; and lastly, because these topics provide insight into the very nature of rationality and its connection to sensitivity to reasons.

### 2.1 Intuitions and concepts

It is important to note that these two cognitive powers are not reducible to each other, and each is assigned a specific task and allows for a specific representational output of sorts; sensitivity, specifically, has sensation and intuition, while understanding has concepts, judgment and inference. This paper will be mostly focused on two of those representational outputs - intuitions and concepts. There are two basic properties of both intuitions and concepts; intuitions are immediate and particular, while concepts are mediated and general. This is explained well in the following quote from Kant himself:

*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). 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. [Kant, 1998;193]*

In other words, intuitions are singular, while concepts are general representations. Both intuitions and concepts represent objects, properties of objects, state of affairs etc., but they do so in a different way while not being reducible to each other.

Let us make an example of a computer, on which I am writing text at this moment; my intuition of a computer represents only this very computer that I am using right now and not any computer as a general term. It is important to note that the faculty of sensibility is only capable of “pointing” to a particular (in this case, a cluster of electrical components) as being an object, framed by pure intuitions of space and time and a notion of substance, not yet processed by the faculty of understanding. This action of picking out particulars is immediate, or in other words, the ability to be doing this is not reliant on any other representation whatsoever. Concepts would, on the other hand, represent a computer by placing it into one (or more) classes it could belong to. An example of such a class would be plastics, electronics and other. The computer (or any object) is thus represented through other concepts, making it reliant or mediate. Kant also adds that both intuitions and concepts can be either empirical or a priori. We can imagine concepts being both ways, but a priori intuitions are a rather interesting topic which, sadly, will not be covered in the scope of this paper. For more on this topic, see Georges, 2018.

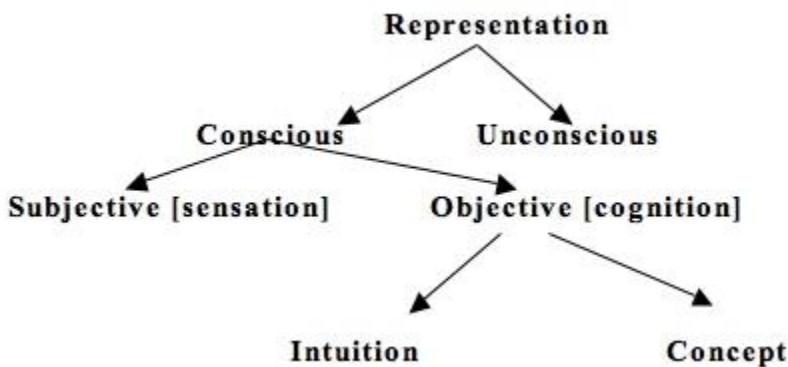


Figure 1. Schematic of types of representations [Janiak,2020].

This scheme that helps to differentiate forms of representations. Conscious representation can be subjective (representations that do not have empirical content and, therefore, do not tell us anything of the outside world, but instead inform us of the state of a subject’s body) and objective, which are in turn either intuitions or concepts. We can use the example of a computer that we used earlier. The computer is perceived in intuition as an object in front of me,

immediately, and in concepts, mediately, through other concepts such as grey, metal, plastic, electronic etc.

## 2.2 What is cognition?

Intuitions and concepts are crucial for our research because they are the building blocks, or rather, necessary elements for the generation of cognitions. Cognition is a tricky one, as there are a few ways in which Kant uses this term. A general definition of cognition, as given in the first *Critique*, is that “cognition is a conscious representation of an object.” [McLear, 2020;3] Here, the term cognition may be understood in a “broad sense”.. There is also a narrower understanding of the term, or, cognition “in a proper sense”. This “cognition in a proper sense” may be summarized as follows, an objectively valid judgment. Proper cognitions must fulfill three conditions: (1) consciousness, (2) agreement, and (3) real possibility. Firstly, a cognition must be a conscious connection with an object. Secondly, agreement relates to the truth-value of a cognition, or, that a cognition must be in agreement with its object. And finally, real possibility refers to cognitions always needing to be of a metaphysically possible subject matter. Metaphysically possible meaning subject to pure intuitions and understandable or thinkable. This is a quote from Kant that further explains this last thesis:

*To cognize an object, it is required that I be able to prove its possibility (whether by the testimony of experience from its actuality or a priori through reason).* [McLear, 2020; 3]

Furthermore, proper cognitions may be (1) pure, as in when synthesizing pure intuitions<sup>1</sup> with a concept, or (2) empirical, when synthesizing empirical intuitions with concepts. The latter case is often called experience by Kant. For example, a pure cognition may entail synthesizing a pure intuition (space and time) with a concept, and an otherwise empirical cognition may be seen as synthesizing an empirical intuition with a concept. Pure cognitions could also be called a priori knowledge, since the German term *Erkenntnis* could also be translated either as cognition or

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<sup>1</sup> There are two pure forms of intuition according to Kant, those are space and time. Space and time can be understood as necessary for any content we intuit, or in other words, as a priori conditions for experience in general [Kant,1998]

knowledge, and pure intuitions are interpreted as necessary (a priori) conditions for experience. As a result, pure cognitions, or a priori knowledge, are cognitions that do not require experience (*All bachelors are unmarried*), while empirical cognitions, or a posteriori knowledge, require experience and can be found in everyday speech examples (*John is a bachelor*).

Having now explained most of the concepts needed to grasp the idea of the TP, we move on to the next chapter, which will deal with the principle itself and implications it will have on Kant's whole body of philosophical work.

### 3. The Togetherness Principle

To start, we have to remember one of the most famous quotes from the *Critique of Pure Reason*: “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind”. This is our zero position, this is where we start our journey of grasping the concept of the TP. Togetherness implies a connection between two or more things, objects, or in this case, types of representational content. We are, of course, talking about the necessary cognitive and semantic interdependence of intuitions and concepts.

*Intuition and concepts ... 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. Thoughts without [intensional] content (Inhalt) are empty (leer), intuitions without concepts are blind (blind). It is, therefore, just as necessary to make the mind's concepts sensible—that is, to add an object to them in intuition—as to make our intuitions understandable—that is, to bring them under concepts. These two powers, or capacities, cannot exchange their functions. The understanding can intuit nothing, the senses can think nothing. Only from their unification can cognition arise.*  
[Hanna, 2018]

#### 3.1. The two interpretations of the power of intuitions

Some researchers believe Kant is trying to deny both the cognitive and semantic independence of intuitions. Intuitions without concepts are either non-existent or wholly meaningless, or if we put it in the context of conditions for a proper cognition, neither objectively valid (agreement) nor rationally intelligible (real possibility). This interpretation is supported by the following text:

*The understanding cognizes everything only through concepts; consequently, however far it goes in its divisions [of lower concepts] it never cognizes through mere intuition but always yet again through lower concepts.* [Hanna, 2018]

This quote further strengthens the belief that intuitions do not have the power to yield cognitions on their own. But the following muddies the waters a fair amount:

*Objects can indeed appear to us without necessarily having to be related to functions of the understanding. [Hanna, 2018]*

*Appearances can certainly be given in intuition without functions of the understanding. [Hanna, 2018]*

*Appearances might very well be so constituted that the understanding would not find them in accordance with the conditions of its unity.... [and] in the series of appearances nothing would present itself that would yield a rule of synthesis and so correspond to the concept of cause and effect, so that this concept would be entirely empty, null, and meaningless. Appearances would none the less present objects to our intuition, since intuition by no means requires the functions of thought. [Hanna, 2018]*

*The manifold for intuition must already be given prior to the synthesis of the understanding and independently from it. [Hanna, 2018]*

If we take into account these last four texts, we come to an understanding that intuitions are essentially cognitions without conceptual content, or that they are rational human cognitions that are objectively valid and exist without requiring concepts. This view is almost the complete opposite of our previous one, in which intuitions are meaningless or non-existent without concepts. The thesis that intuitions are sufficient for the production of objectively valid cognitions associated with that intuition is called *the independence of intuitions from concepts*. [Hanna, 2018] Furthermore, Kant is also committed to the existence of non-rational human and non-human (animal) cognizers. This type of cognizers are described as not having a faculty of understanding which is connected to concepts, yet are capable of making sense of the world around them, or capable of objectively valid empirical and pure cognitions.

Kant being committed both to the togetherness principle and this scenario that there are cognizers capable of intuitional or rather, non-conceptual cognitions that are valid without requiring concepts, or the very capacity that provides us with concepts, puts us in a confusing position. In hopes to reconcile these seemingly contradictory sets of Kant's texts, once again, we must go looking for answers deeper into the source texts.

### **3.2 Judgment and objective validity**

Before embarking on a mission to try and make sense of the issue mentioned above, let us take some time to go back and revise the two definitions of cognition as this will help us to understand better the line of argumentation which will be used later. There are, as we mentioned before, two definitions of cognitions that Kant uses in his work: (1) the "cognition in a proper sense" or *objectively valid judgment*, and the other, wider definition of cognition that is taken to mean (2) *a conscious representation of an object or a conscious objective representation*. [Hanna, 2018]

At this point, in an effort to clarify the picture, we need to analyze Kant's use of words such as *representation*, *judgment* and *objective validity*. *Representation* was mentioned, but never explicitly defined up to this point. Although not crucial, we will do our best to define it for clarity sake.

*Representation* is the most general term that is used to describe objects at certain levels of interpretation in the mind of a subject. Intuitions and concepts are types of representations. For more information, see Thorpe, 2015.

*Judgements*, on the other hand, are hopefully best described by the following quotes from Kant himself:

*A judgment is nothing other than the way to bring given cognitions to the objective unity of apperception. (...)* [Hanna, 2018]



*Judgment is ... the mediate cognition of an object, hence the representation of a representation of it. In every judgment there is a concept that holds of many [representations], and that among this many also comprehends a given representation, which is then immediately referred to the object. [Hanna, 2018]*

*All judgments are ... functions of unity among our representations, since instead of an immediate representation a higher one, which comprehends this and other representations under itself, is used for the cognition of the object, and many possible cognitions are hereby drawn together into one. [Hanna, 2018]*

It is, in other words, a power of the mind to use both conceptual and intuitional content and create propositional content which is then truth-valued, intersubjectively shareable and rationally communicable.

Finally, we will take a look at *objective validity*. It can be a property of all three types of representational material, namely intuitions, concepts and judgments. Since intuitions and concepts are necessary constituents of any judgment, their objective validity will be necessary for the validity of the judgments themselves. Intuitions are objectively valid if, and only if, (1) it directly refers to an individual object which is external, perceptible or possible or the subject's phenomenal inner conscious response to such a reference (empirical intuitions), or (2) it stands for a condition for such a intuition (pure intuitions). A concept, on the other hand, is objectively valid if, and only if, (1) it can be applied to a real or possible object of empirical intuition (empirical concept), or (2) it is representative of a necessary condition of empirical concepts (pure concept). As for *Judgments*, there are two properties that need to be fulfilled: form and content. As of form, it is crucial that they follow logico-syntactic rules and regulations, and that they are grammatically well-formed. A *Judgment* is, thus, objectively valid if, and only if, it is logically well-formed and all of its constituting concepts and intuitions are objectively valid. Kant sometimes refers to objectively valid representations that apply to really existing objects as *objective reality*. [Hanna, 2018] It, thus, follows that true judgments are objectively real propositions. *Objective validity*, on the other hand, is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of truth, and thus false judgments have the capability to be objectively valid.

Knowing that, we are able to conclude this part with the following: objective validity of a judgment is not equivalent to its propositional truth, but to its propositional truth - valuedness or, in other words, the proposition's "ability" to have a truth value. Objective validity is a very important piece of terminology for us at this stage. It is a necessary condition for forming objectively valid judgments, and consequently understanding the relationship and nature of intuitions and concepts.

### **3.3 Interpretative problems**

Going back to our original issue of Kant being committed to both The Togetherness Principle and the independence of intuitions from concepts, we find that when Kant talks about the interdependence of intuitions and concepts, he is thinking about their relationship in terms of the specific purpose of constituting objectively valid judgments. This corresponds to a narrower sense of cognition (objectively valid judgment) and is directly opposed to the wider definition of cognition (conscious objective representation). Unfortunately, from this it does not follow that we cannot have "empty" concepts or "blind" intuitions outside of the context of objectively valid judgments. [Hanna, 2018]

Remembering Kant's famous saying that thoughts without content are empty and intuitions without concepts are blind, you would say that intuitions without concepts and concepts without intuitions are useless, or rather, meaningless. They, in fact, simply are not. Empty concepts are not faulty concepts, empty for Kant means only "not objectively valid". There are more than a few examples of concepts that are not objectively valid, but still meaningful, even outside the context of an objectively valid judgment. An obvious example would be different kinds of noumenal concepts such as rational-agents-in-themselves and persons, which are empirically meaningless and truth-valueless and, thus, empty but still rationally intelligible or thinkable. On a similar note, "blind intuition" does not signify an intuition which is unimportant or meaningless, it means "autonomously and independently objectively valid intuition" or "non-conceptual cognition". It seems that, for Kant, the coexistence of these seemingly contradictory texts is not a problem.

Somehow, he wants to argue that you can be both, committed to the TP and the independence of intuitions from concepts.

But the idea that, according to Kant, there can be such a thing as intuition that is autonomous and independent from concepts and still objectively valid, has generated a fiery debate in the contemporary Kant interpretation, with implications that reach far into interpretation of Kant's *Theory of Judgment* and his transcendental idealism. At this point, we could say that the argument of the togetherness principle boils down to the debate of Kant's conceptualism versus Kant's non-conceptualism, which will be covered in detail in the next part of this paper.

#### 4. Kant's Conceptualism and Kant's non-conceptualism

The interpretation of Kant in the latter part of the twentieth century shows him either accepting or rejecting the thesis that intuitions may have conceptual content. Thus, we introduce two new positions that relate to this issue - *conceptualism* and *non-conceptualism*. Although conceptualism is defined in vastly different ways by different philosophers, we will try to think of it as being linked to the Kantian technical term known as “concept”, and thus define conceptualism as bearing the following meaning:<sup>2</sup>

*conceptualism is the two-part thesis (C1) that all rational human conscious objective representational content is strictly determined by conceptual capacities alone, and (C2) that non-rational human or non-human animals are not capable of conscious objective representation. [Hanna, 2018]*

And,

*non-conceptualism is the three-part thesis (NC1) that not all rational human conscious objective representational content is determined by conceptual capacities alone, (NC2) that at least some rational human conscious objective representational contents are both autonomous from and independent of conceptual content and also strictly determined by non-conceptual capacities alone, and (NC3) that at least some and perhaps most non-rational human or non-human animals are capable of conscious objective representation. [Hanna, 2018]*

Kantian conceptualists and non-conceptualists are further split into four camps with their respective supplements to the above-mentioned positions: we have *strong Kantian conceptualism* which will be marked as KC1 that states:

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<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of our present discussion, and in an effort to be as clear as possible, we will now present both conceptualism and non-conceptualism as suggested by Robert Hanna in his supplement to *Kant's theory of judgment* article on the “Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy”. [Hanna, 2018]

*that the rational human understanding and its innate conceptual capacities not only strictly determine all conscious objective representational content, especially including all objectively valid judgments, but also strictly determine the faculty of sensibility itself and all the intuitions yielded by it. [Hanna, 2018]*

Furthermore, *weak Kantian conceptualism (KC2)*:

*that the rational human understanding and its innate conceptual capacities strictly determine all conscious objective representational content, especially including all objectively valid judgments, as well as all intuitions, although the faculty of sensibility independently provides a necessary condition for conscious objective representation, and some empirical concepts or conceptual activities occur outside the context of fully explicit judgments or self-consciously articulated propositions. [Hanna, 2018]*

These two positions, argues Hanna, are both taken to follow directly from the TP, and each, in addition to the above-mentioned, asserts both C1 and C2 from the text above. The difference, while evident, needs to be explicitly noted. We have to say that while the weak variety at least minimally preserves the cognitive duality of faculties, at least a sort of semi-independent cognitive role of the intuition (even though it rejects the thesis that intuitions have different representational content from concepts), the strong variety of Kantian conceptualism does not hold to any of that and essentially reduces the faculty of sensibility to the faculty of understanding by making intuitions and intuitional content effectively meaningless.

Kant's non-conceptualism mentioned above, in addition to (NC1), (NC2) and (NC3), , asserts strong Kantian non-conceptualism (KNC1):

*that the rational human capacity for sensibility not only generates empirical intuitions and pure intuitions that autonomously and independently provide conscious objective representational contents, but also, by means of these autonomous and independent non-conceptual cognitions, the faculty of sensibility contributes directly to the justification of*

*epistemic and practical beliefs, by virtue of inherently normative and proto-rational factors that it builds into the essentially non-conceptual content of intuitions.* [Hanna, 2018]

Or else, the weak variety (KNC2):

*that the rational human capacity for sensibility generates empirical intuitions and pure intuitions that autonomously and independently provide conscious objective representational contents.* [Hanna, 2018]

The main difference between these two views is that the weak variety does not address the famous *Myth of the given*<sup>3</sup>, or a worry that nothing can be objective representational content if it does not occur within the essentially conceptual domain of “the space of reasons”. As argued by Sellars, only then can representational content contribute to the justification of epistemic and practical beliefs without having to enter the essentially conceptual domain of “the space of reasons”. In this way, only strong Kantian non-conceptualism is explicitly able to address *The myth of the given*. The difference in interpretation of Kant’s texts is, as evidence shows, quite big.

Kantian conceptualism and non-conceptualism are two radically different and opposing views on how to interpret not only Kant’s theory of judgment, but *The Critique of Pure Reason* as a whole. The issue here is not as benign as it may have seemed before we began this analysis. No matter which side you lean on, it seems that this question of the status of conceptual content has to be answered as quickly and elegantly as possible to preserve the integrity of a large part of our philosophical tradition.

#### **4.1 The two problems**

Unfortunately, and almost unsurprisingly, the question of the status of the conceptual content remains elusive and controversial. The textual evidence pulls in both ways and there seems to be

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<sup>3</sup> Wilfred Sellars’s famous myth of the given is an anti-foundationalist theory in epistemology which argues that perceptual experience is not able to justify our “knowledge” of the perceived world. In our case this would mean that Kant gives intuitions the “given” or the power to create beliefs about the objects in the phenomenal world only using empirical data acquired through intuitions. [DeVries, 2020]

no quick way to say which of the two views may be closer to a coherent answer. In the following section of the text, I will provide two more arguments in an effort to show how neither conceptualism nor non-conceptualism are able to provide a satisfying answer to the problem of the status of conceptual content. Both arguments will give a broader perspective than before and question how well conceptualism and non-conceptualism work in the context of Kant's process of forming objectively valid judgments.

The first of the two problems that play a part in the debate of conceptualism and non-conceptualism is one Hanna calls *the schmimagination vicious regress problem* and is an argument against the conceptualist thesis. [Hanna, 2008] Also see Dennis Schulting's *Kant's Deduction From Apperception*. This problem points at the following; if the faculty of imagination is supposed to be a mediator and unifier of the faculty of sensibility and understanding (to form objectively valid judgments) and yet the imagination performs an a priori synthesis while simultaneously, there is a different (intellectual synthesis) happening, then we would need another, fourth kind of synthesis to again unify and mediate between these now two kinds of a priori synthesis. This would lead into a vicious explanatory regress which, if we want to keep a conceptualist view, forces us to adopt a strong variant of Kantian conceptualism, reducing the original cognitive duality of faculties to a single faculty that, in turn, undermines Kant's plea for originality and defeats the standout feature of his philosophy that makes him lose his philosophical "advantage" over rationalism and empiricism. So, either we are stuck in an explanatory regress or we give up Kant's claim to philosophical originality, argues Hanna.

The second problem which we face is what Hanna calls *the TD (transcendental deduction of the categories) modus ponens/modus tollens dilemma*. What follows is Hanna's description of the problem:

The Kantian non-conceptualist argues that

*(1) if Kantian non-conceptualism is true, then autonomously and independently objective valid intuitions exist,*

- (2) *if autonomously and independently objective valid intuitions exist, then there is a serious gap in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories (The TD), in the sense that the cognitive scope of the sensibility thereby actually exceeds, or at the very least threatens to exceed, the cognitive scope of the understanding and its pure concepts, and*
- (3) *if there is a serious gap in The TD, then The TD is unsound, and finally*
- (4) *therefore, The TD is unsound.*

*But the Kantian conceptualist argues that*

- (1) *The TD must be sound,*
- (2) *if The TD is sound, then there is no serious gap in The TD,*
- (3) *if there is no serious gap in The TD, then no autonomously and independently objectively valid intuitions exist,*
- (4) *if no autonomously and independently objectively valid intuitions exist, then Kantian non-conceptualism must be false, and finally*
- (5) *therefore, Kantian non-conceptualism is false.* [Hanna, 2018]

In other words, the non-conceptualist's modus ponens is the conceptualist's modus tollens, and as such, there seems to be no way to resolve the dilemma. These two arguments hopefully show how neither a conceptualist nor non-conceptualist interpretation of Kant do not provide us with a good, coherent theory of the status of conceptual content in regard to Kant's ideas of cognition and need to, thus, be either abandoned or revised.



## 5. Conclusion

Immanuel Kant is one of the most influential thinkers in the history of human thought. Having combined his empiricist and rationalist influences, he created his own complex philosophical system that resists classification and is to this day studied and admired throughout. This paper has zoomed in on an issue which may in the future prove to be central for a better understanding of Kant's metaphysics and epistemology. The TP deals with the relationship and the nature of intuitions and concepts, or, more precisely, the role and interplay of the above-mentioned in forming objectively valid judgments. Intuitions and concepts are central types of representational content of, respectively, the faculty of sensibility and faculty of understanding. However, having delved deeper into the issue of the togetherness principle, we learned valuable new information, but at a cost of new issues arising in the process. These issues are rather major and shine a light of doubt on the very originality of Kant's cognitive dualism of faculties.

I will now deliver a brief overview of the issues covered in this paper. Firstly, we defined what is The Togetherness principle and which issues it raises. Next, we tried to define and clarify the terminology needed to understand the issue in the first place. Explaining the hierarchy of the faculties of cognition, we got to the main part of the paper, the difference between and the relationship of the intuitions and concepts, or else, the faculties of sensibility and understanding. After some more technicalities – establishing the two definitions of cognition and an understanding of what constitutes a judgment, we got to the problem of the togetherness principle itself. Here, we established that there are two main camps of contemporary Kant interpretation – Kantian conceptualism and Kantian non-conceptualism. At this point, we ran into more problems, two more, to be precise. Finally, using these two arguments, the schmimagination vicious regress problem and the TD Modus Ponens/Modus Tollens problem, I tried to show the implausibility of both Kantian conceptualism and Kantian non-conceptualism. Granted, strong Kantian conceptualism was not affected by the schmimagination argument, but the thesis itself reduces Kant's duality of faculties to a single faculty, which automatically makes it incoherent, according to any of the source texts provided (see chapter 2.1). Thus, a final and conclusive answer to which of the two positions is closer to being coherent with the rest of Kant's theory was unfortunately not given, and is arguably impossible to give, given the current state of the debate, as both were shown to not be compatible with the rest of Kant's body of work.

The Togetherness principle and its impact on Kant's theory of cognition remains mysterious. In order to further the debate, our best bet would be to have another deep dive into the source texts themselves. The arguments that go against both conceptualism and non-conceptualism hopefully come across as quite strong and will need an approach from a different angle to solve. The debate is still alive though, Dennis Schulting has done some great work on the schmimagination regress problem in his *Kant's Deduction From Apperception* book and is a recommended read for those interested in the continuation of this part of the debate.

## 5. Literature

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