

## Introduction

One of the main topics Kant is concerned with in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is the relation between thought and perception, or, in Kant's own terminology, between understanding and sensibility. Kant regards these as the two fundamental cognitive powers, and he takes it to be among his most important achievements in the *Critique* to have correctly determined the nature of these powers as well as their relation to each other. Indeed, he claims that it is this achievement which enabled him to advance over the philosophical positions of his most prominent predecessors, on both the Empiricist and the Rationalist side.<sup>1</sup> Yet exactly how the relation between understanding and sensibility ought to be conceived, according to Kant, is unclear. On the one hand, he claims that understanding and sensibility are distinct, and indeed *heterogeneous*, capacities. This claim is crucial to his critique of both Empiricism and Rationalism. On the other hand, he is concerned to show that intuitions, the acts of sensibility, themselves *involve* the understanding. This claim is no less crucial: Kant's justification of the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge demands it. How are these two claims to be reconciled? The aim of this dissertation is to propose an answer to this question by developing a new interpretation of Kant's conception of the understanding, the capacity of thought.

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<sup>1</sup> Thus, Kant says: "[...] Leibniz *intellectualized* the appearances, just as Locke *sensualized* all the concepts of the understanding [...]. Instead of seeking two entirely different sources of representation in the understanding and sensibility, which could judge about things with objective validity *only in conjunction*, each of these great men holds on only to one of them, which in his opinion is immediately related to things in themselves, while the other does nothing but confuse or order the representations of the first." ([...] Leibniz *intellektuierte* die Erscheinungen, so wie Locke die Verstandesbegriffe [...] insgesamt *sensifiziert* [...] hatte. Anstatt im Verstande und der Sinnlichkeit zwei ganz verschiedene Quellen von Vorstellungen zu suchen, die aber *nur in Verknüpfung* objektivgültig von Dingen urteilen könnten, hielt sich ein jeder dieser großen Männer nur an eine von beiden, die sich ihrer Meinung nach unmittelbar auf Dinge an sich selbst bezöge, indessen daß die andere nichts tat, als die Vorstellungen der ersteren zu verwirren oder zu ordnen) (A271/B327).

I will approach the problem of reconciling the two claims by discussing the theory of synthesis. In one of its uses, 'synthesis' is Kant's term for the act by means of which the understanding is involved in intuitions, the representations of sensibility. To understand the nature of this involvement, therefore, we must focus on the theory of synthesis. In what follows I will introduce the problem of how to conceive the relation between understanding and sensibility by explaining in more detail how this problem manifests itself in the theory of synthesis. I shall do so by considering a particular way of interpreting some of Kant's central commitments, which is shared by many commentators and which I call Propositionalism. Considering both the motivation for Propositionalism and the problems it raises will help us get a sense of the questions that an account of Kant's theory of synthesis needs to answer. As we shall see, there are both philosophical and textual problems that need to be considered. Against this background, I will then motivate my own approach to the theory of synthesis and lay out the strategy that I will follow in the body of this essay.

## 1. Propositionalism

As I use the term, Propositionalism is the name of a whole family of positions taken by commentators rather than a single worked-out interpretation. Accordingly, I will seek to characterize Propositionalism at a fairly abstract level. One way to motivate a Propositionalist position is to see it as a response to the following claims Kant makes:

- (1) Every intuition depends on an act of sensible synthesis.
- (2) Sensible synthesis is an act of the understanding.

(3) The understanding is a capacity for judgment.

I shall discuss these in turn.

Fundamental to Kant's position in the *Critique* is the view that the characteristic representations of sensibility, intuitions, are not merely a matter of receiving sense-impressions. Rather, intuitions exhibit a characteristic structure (or, as Kant calls it, a characteristic unity), which mere impressions lack. In virtue of possessing this structure, or unity, intuitions are sensible representations of objects. As Kant puts it, in an intuition an object is sensibly given to the mind.<sup>2</sup>

Sensibility is what Kant calls a receptive capacity. This means that it is a capacity to have representations in virtue of being affected by objects.<sup>3</sup> However, affection by itself yields only what Kant calls a manifold. It cannot account for the characteristic unity of intuitions. This unity, therefore, must be the work of the understanding, the second of the two fundamental cognitive capacities Kant recognizes. If we call the act of the understanding that accounts for the unity of intuitions 'sensible synthesis,' this consideration yields (1), the thesis that every intuition depends on an act of sensible synthesis.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to sensibility, which is receptive, the understanding is a spontaneous capacity. It is a capacity to bring forth representations from itself.<sup>5</sup> At a first pass, we can spell out what

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<sup>2</sup> "Objects are [...] *given* to us by means of sensibility, and it alone affords us *intuitions*" (Vermittelst der Sinnlichkeit [...] werden uns Gegenstände *gegeben*, und sie allein liefert uns *Anschauungen*) (A19/B33).

<sup>3</sup> "The capacity (receptivity) for acquiring representations through the manner in which we are affected by objects, is entitled *sensibility*" (Die Fähigkeit (Rezeptivität) Vorstellungen durch die Art, wie wir von Gegenständen affiziert werden, zu bekommen, heißt *Sinnlichkeit*) (ibid.).

<sup>4</sup> I use the label 'sensible synthesis' to leave open the possibility that there may be other kinds of synthesis, which are not connected to intuition in this way. Kant himself distinguishes between several different kinds of synthesis.

<sup>5</sup> "If the *receptivity* of our mind to receive representations, insofar as it is affected in some way, is to be called sensibility, then the mind's power of producing representations from itself, the *spontaneity* of cognition, is the understanding. (Wollen wir die *Rezeptivität* unseres Gemüts, Vorstellungen zu empfangen, so fern es auf irgend eine

this means in the following way: At issue is a distinction between two different types of capacity. In the Aristotelian terminology that informs Kant's thinking here, a capacity is the potentiality to take on a certain range of determinations. To say that a capacity is actualized is to say that it takes on a particular determination from this range. Capacities thus understood can be grouped into two kinds, in accordance with the way in which their actualizations are explained. Explaining the acts of a receptive capacity requires reference both to the nature of the capacity and to something other than the capacity. By contrast, explaining the acts of a spontaneous capacity requires reference only to the nature of the capacity. In this sense a receptive capacity is a capacity to be determined by something external, while spontaneity is a self-determining capacity.<sup>6</sup>

Since receptivity accounts only for the manifold of intuition but not for its unity, the unity of intuition must be due to an act of spontaneity. This is the act of sensible synthesis. Thesis (2) notes the spontaneous nature of this act.<sup>7</sup>

We have already seen that Kant identifies the spontaneity of the mind with the understanding.<sup>8</sup> An act of spontaneity, therefore, is an act of the understanding. The understanding is the power of thought, the intellect. It is natural to regard the power of thought as tied to the possession of concepts. Concepts, in turn, are closely connected to judgment.

Accordingly, Kant characterizes the understanding as a capacity for judgment, as the following passage shows:

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Weise affiziert wird, Sinnlichkeit nennen: so ist dagegen das Vermögen, Vorstellungen selbst hervorzubringen, oder die *Spontaneität* des Erkenntnisses, der Verstand) (A51/B75).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Dickerson, *Kant on Representation and Objectivity*, 35-37. I discuss Kant's views on the spontaneity of the mind in Chapters Three and Four.

<sup>7</sup> This leaves it open that there may be types of synthesis that are not spontaneous. For instance, one might think that a type of synthesis that is based on association is not spontaneous. Kant mentions such a synthesis at B139f and B142.

<sup>8</sup> See the passage quoted in footnote 5.

We can, however, trace all acts of the understanding back to judgment, so that the understanding in general can be represented as a *capacity to judge*. (A69/B94)<sup>9</sup>

Thesis (3), which says that spontaneity is a capacity for judgment, captures the view expressed in this passage.

Jointly, (1)-(3) seem to entail that all acts of sensible synthesis are acts of judgment. I call Propositionalism any view that is committed to this claim. Thus, we get:

**Propositionalism:** All acts of sensible synthesis are acts of judgment.

Propositionalism is widely accepted among Kant commentators.<sup>10</sup> However, I shall argue that as an interpretation of Kant's position in the *First Critique* Propositionalism fails. But before I consider the problems this view faces, I wish to expand on the motivation for it. As we have just seen, Propositionalism is strongly suggested by (1)-(3), and each of these clearly expresses a central Kantian commitment. But there is a deeper motivation for this view, I think, which can be brought out by the following consideration.

Whether or not one finds this attractive as a philosophical position, it is clear that Kant conceived of the *Critique* as charting a middle path between Rationalism and Empiricism. Any plausible interpretation of his view, therefore, ought at least to be able to show what features of his position made him think this. And the thesis of Propositionalism can be thought of as capturing the anti-Empiricist strand in Kant's thinking. Let Empiricism be the view that all our knowledge derives from the senses. By contrast, Kant holds that there is a set of non-empirical

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<sup>9</sup> Wir können aber alle Handlungen des Verstandes auf Urteile zurückführen, so daß der *Verstand* überhaupt als ein *Vermögen zu urteilen* vorgestellt werden kann.

<sup>10</sup> It is endorsed by, for instance, by Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, Bennett, *Kant's Analytic*, Bird, *The Revolutionary Kant*, Carl, *Die transzendente Deduktion der Kategorien in der ersten Auflage der Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, Henrich, *Identität und Objektivität*, Paton, *Kant's Metaphysics of Experience*, Pippin, "Kant on the Spontaneity of Mind," Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, and Wolff, *Kant's Theory of Mental Activity*.

concepts, the categories, which form the basis for a kind of knowledge that is substantive, yet does not derive from the senses. It is synthetic a priori knowledge.

One way of thinking about how Kant justifies his claim to synthetic a priori knowledge is roughly as follows: Anything that is a content of judgment instantiates the categories. Our sensory experience of the world takes the form of intuitions. But every intuition involves a judgment. Therefore, anything we can experience falls under the categories. The categories thus serve as a basis for knowledge of possible objects of experience that is itself not derived from experience and therefore a priori.

We can see that this abbreviated reconstruction of Kant's argument for synthetic a priori knowledge depends on the thesis of Propositionalism, that is, the identification of sensible synthesis with judgment. Therefore, one important reason why Propositionalism appears to be a plausible interpretation of Kant's position is that it allows us to make sense of Kant's anti-Empiricism.

We should note, however, that this interpretation depends on a particular reading of thesis (3). In my formulation above this thesis reads as follows:

(3) The understanding is a capacity for judgment.

Since the Propositionalist takes this to mean that every act of spontaneity is an act of judgment, the thesis might be better put by saying

(3') The understanding is the capacity for judgment.

This formulation makes explicit that Propositionalism reads (3) as an identity statement. By contrast, the original formulation leaves open the possibility that, among other things, spontaneity is a capacity for judgment.

## 2. The Heterogeneity Thesis

Propositionalist readings of Kant face a number of difficulties, both conceptually and textually. In what follows I shall discuss some of these and consider alternative strategies for addressing them. I will begin with what I call Kant's Heterogeneity Thesis.

**Heterogeneity Thesis:** Understanding and sensibility are heterogeneous.

As I said at the outset, exactly what it means to say that understanding and sensibility are heterogeneous is part of what's at issue. Still, I think we can safely say the following. For Kant, saying that the two capacities are heterogeneous implies that each has its own form. I take this to mean, first, that the exercises of each capacity have various characteristic features that mark them as exercises of the capacity in question. Second, the characteristic features of acts of the understanding (that is, concepts and judgments) are distinct from, and irreducible to, the characteristic features of exercises of sensibility (that is, intuitions), and vice versa. The relevant characteristics include at least the following:

Thought is essentially conceptual; it is what Kant calls discursive.<sup>11</sup> This means that (i) concepts are *general* (as opposed to singular) representations; (ii) concepts are *classificatory*: employing a concept in judgment involves sorting things – that is, it involves thinking of something as being an instance of a general kind, which can, in principle, have other instances; (iii) conceptual thought is *logically articulated*, where this means that it has a kind of structure that enables a thought to figure in inferences.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, exercises of sensibility have the following characteristics: (i) Intuition is *singular*: it is of individual objects, rather than of general kinds; (ii) intuition is *fully determinate*: it presents objects to us whose properties are

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<sup>11</sup> See A68/B93.

<sup>12</sup> See A320/B376f, as well as *Logik*, §1.

determinate, rather than determinable; (iii) intuition is *spatio-temporally structured*: the objects we perceive in intuition have a location in space and time.

Prima facie, the Heterogeneity Thesis presents a problem for Propositionalists. If sensible synthesis, the act that accounts for the unity of an intuition, is an act of judgment, it is hard to see how the heterogeneity of intuitions and judgments can be preserved. Propositionalism commonly takes one of two forms: Either an intuition is regarded as a component of judgment, or an intuition functions as the input to a mental process whose output is judgment.<sup>13</sup> The first alternative leaves open the possibility that an intuition may be an identifiable part of a judgment, the second does not. The first alternative threatens to undermine the heterogeneity of concepts and intuitions because in thinking of an intuition as a component of judgment it attributes to intuitions that kind of logical articulation which, according to what I just said, is characteristic of conceptual thought. If an intuition is simply a component of conceptual thought, then it partakes in the structure exhibited by thought. And if the heterogeneity of concepts and intuitions is in part a heterogeneity of structure, then the first variant of Propositionalism fails to preserve this heterogeneity.

The second variant of Propositionalism undermines the Heterogeneity Thesis because on such a view intuition is characteristically thought of as being something less than the singular representation of an object. Since intuition depends on sensible synthesis to be object-representing, a view on which intuition functions merely as the input to a process whose output are representations of objects has no room for the idea that intuitions are themselves

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<sup>13</sup> Examples of the first variant include Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, Bennett, *Kant's Analytic*, Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, and Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*. Examples of the second variant include Robert Hanna, *Kant and the Foundations of Analytic Philosophy*, and Patricia Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology*.

representations of objects. However, since this idea is an aspect of Kant's Heterogeneity Thesis as I have articulated it, the second variant of Propositionalism does not do justice to this thesis either.

### 3. The Synthesis of Apprehension

A second difficulty faced by Propositionalist approaches arises in connection with Kant's argument for the objective validity of the categories in the Transcendental Deduction. In light of the fact that this argument is subject to widely different interpretations, it will be best to focus on relatively straightforward textual issues in laying out what the difficulty is. I shall be concerned, in particular, with the B-edition version of the Deduction, where this difficulty comes out especially clearly.

The goal of the Transcendental Deduction is to show that the categories, the pure concepts of the understanding, have objective validity. For Kant this amounts to showing that the categories apply to every possible object of intuition. This can be shown, Kant argues, if it can be shown that it is not possible to represent anything in intuition without in some manner employing the categories. Simplifying somewhat, we can say that he attempts to prove the latter claim by arguing, first, that intuitions depend on sensible synthesis and, second, that the categories are principles governing sensible synthesis. The idea is that intuitions are representations of objects only if they exhibit categorial unity; and intuitions exhibit categorial unity only if they are subject to an act of synthesis governed by the categories.

The claim that intuitions are subject to synthesis is made in the following passage:

First of all I remark that by the *synthesis of apprehension* I understand the composition of the manifold in an empirical intuition, through which perception [...] becomes possible. (B160)<sup>14</sup>

The point here is clear: Empirical intuition depends on an act of synthesis Kant labels the synthesis of apprehension. Synthesis of apprehension is thus a species of what I call sensible synthesis.

The second move is more complex. To establish that the synthesis of apprehension is governed by the categories Kant appeals to the pure forms of intuition, space and time. He argues as follows: Space and time are represented as exhibiting categorial unity. Since space and time function as forms of intuition, every empirical intuition involves spatial and temporal representation. But this entails that every empirical intuition possesses the categorial unity exhibited by space and time. Therefore, nothing can be represented in empirical intuition that is not subject to the categories.

The part of this argument that matters for my purposes is given in the following passage:

We have *forms* of outer as well as inner sensible intuition a priori in the representations of space and time, and to these the synthesis of apprehension [...] must always conform, since it can itself only occur in accordance with this form. But space and time are represented a priori not merely as *forms* of sensible intuition, but as themselves *intuitions* (which contain a manifold) and thus with the determination of the *unity* of this manifold in them (see the Transcendental Aesthetic). Thus *unity of the synthesis* of the manifold [...] is already given a priori along with [...] these intuitions, as a condition of the synthesis of all *apprehension*. (B160f)<sup>15</sup>

This is a dense passage, but for present purposes it is not necessary to comment on every detail. The main point concerns the appeal to the forms of intuition, space and time. As Kant puts

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<sup>14</sup> Zuvörderst merke ich an, daß ich unter der *Synthesis der Apprehension* die Zusammensetzung des Mannigfaltigen in einer empirischen Anschauung verstehe, dadurch Wahrnehmung [...] möglich wird.

<sup>15</sup> Wir haben *Formen* der äußeren sowohl als inneren sinnlichen Anschauung a priori an den Vorstellungen von Raum und Zeit, und diesen muß die Synthesis der Apprehension [...] jederzeit gemäß sein, weil sie selbst nur nach dieser Form geschehen kann. Aber Raum und Zeit sind nicht bloß als *Formen* der sinnlichen Anschauung, sondern als *Anschauungen* selbst (die ein Mannigfaltiges enthalten), also mit der Bestimmung der *Einheit* dieses Mannigfaltigen in ihnen a priori vorgestellt (siehe transz. Ästhet.). Also ist selbst schon *Einheit der Synthesis* des Mannigfaltigen [...] als Bedingung der Synthesis aller *Apprehension* schon mit [...] diesen Anschauungen zugleich gegeben.

it here, space and time are themselves intuitions and therefore exhibit the unity characteristic of intuitions. As he makes clear shortly after this passage, this is the unity in virtue of which an intuition is the sensible representation of an object; it is what I just called categorial unity. What matters for our purposes is the reference to the Transcendental Aesthetic. What Kant seems to be saying is that the Transcendental Aesthetic already showed that space and time are intuitions which contain a sensible manifold and exhibit the characteristic unity of intuitions.

In the Transcendental Aesthetic Kant does indeed characterize the representations of space and time as themselves intuitions. He also makes it clear that this means that these representations possess a structure that cannot be represented by concepts. As we can put it for now, the kind of part-whole structure that is characteristic of any representation of space (and time) is such that the representation of space must be an intuition, rather than a concept, according to Kant.<sup>16</sup>

Again, the details of the argument are not relevant for now. What matters is that Kant's stated goal in the Aesthetic is to show that the representation of space (as well as that of time) possesses a structure, or unity, that is different from the kind of unity characteristic of concepts. By implication, the characteristic unity of space is different from the unity of a judgment.<sup>17</sup> If this is right, then the unity Kant appeals to in the argument concerning the synthesis of apprehension in §26 cannot be the unity of judgment. Accordingly, the act of synthesis that accounts for the possession, on the part of intuitions, of this unity cannot be an act of judgment, either. It follows that the synthesis of apprehension is a distinct type of synthesis from judgment.

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<sup>16</sup> See A24f/B39f; for the analogous point about time see A31f/B47f.

<sup>17</sup> I spell this out in Chapter Five.

In sum, Kant's argument in §26 of the B-Deduction presents a difficulty for Propositionalism because this argument appears to rest on an appeal to a distinctively spatial (and temporal) kind of unity. The main thesis of the Transcendental Aesthetic, that the representations of space and time are intuitions rather than concepts, suggests that the unity of space is distinct in kind from the unity characteristic of judgment. Therefore, the act of synthesis that is at issue in §26 appears to be an act of sensible synthesis that is distinct in kind from judgment.

#### 4. Understanding and Imagination

To further illustrate the difficulties faced by Propositionalism I wish to marshal another bit of textual evidence, also from the B-Deduction. In §24 Kant introduces a type of sensible synthesis he calls figurative synthesis. Figurative synthesis concerns the unity of pure intuition; specifically, the unity of the form of inner sense, time. Again, the details of Kant's doctrine here are not relevant for now. We can already see, however, that there is a connection between the doctrine of figurative synthesis and the argument given in §26. As I pointed out in the preceding section, the pure intuitions space and time play a crucial role in that argument, and this connects the topic of figurative synthesis with the concerns of §26.

What is significant for our purposes is that Kant characterizes figurative synthesis as a synthesis of the imagination. Imagination, he says, is "the capacity to represent an object in intuition even when it is not present" (B151). Given the heterogeneity of intuitions and concepts, this already suggests that figurative synthesis should not be construed as a type of judgment. But there is more to be said. Kant provides a more detailed characterization of figurative synthesis

which corroborates this point. As in the preceding section, the relevant passages, which I am about to quote, are very dense and we are not in a position yet to appreciate their full significance. Even so, they will serve to make clear that Propositionalist readings face a difficulty in accounting for these passages.

What makes the doctrine of figurative synthesis particularly significant for my concerns is that Kant attributes it not just to the imagination but, more specifically, to a capacity he calls the productive imagination. This capacity has two salient characteristics: On the one hand, it is a spontaneous capacity; yet, on the other hand, it is a sensible capacity. Consider the following passage:

Now since all our intuition is sensible, the imagination [...] belongs to sensibility. But insofar as its synthesis is still an exercise of spontaneity, which is determining and not, like sense, merely determinable, [...] the imagination is to that extent a capacity for determining sensibility a priori; and its synthesis of intuitions, in accordance with the categories, must be the transcendental synthesis of imagination. This synthesis is an action of the understanding on sensibility [...]. (B151f, emphases omitted)<sup>18</sup>

The first sentence of the passage characterizes the productive imagination as belonging to sensibility on account of the fact that it is a capacity for intuition; specifically, for the intuitive representation of an object that is not present. Yet, as the second sentence makes clear, the productive imagination is a capacity for a spontaneous act of synthesis, and in this respect it is not sensible. Rather, insofar as it is spontaneous it must be seen as belonging to the understanding. Accordingly, Kant says in the final sentence that the synthesis of the productive imagination is an act of the understanding, the spontaneous stem of the mind.

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<sup>18</sup> Da nun alle unsere Anschauung sinnlich ist, so gehört die Einbildungskraft [...] zur Sinnlichkeit; so fern aber doch ihre Synthesis eine Ausübung der Spontaneität ist, welche bestimmend, und nicht, wie der Sinn, bloß bestimmbar ist, [...] so ist die Einbildungskraft so fern ein Vermögen, die Sinnlichkeit a priori zu bestimmen, und ihre Synthesis der Anschauungen, den Kategorien gemäß, muß die transzendente Synthesis der Einbildungskraft sein, welches eine Wirkung des Verstandes auf die Sinnlichkeit [...] ist.

What we have here, then, is an act of sensible synthesis that is spontaneous and yet not an act of judgment. The doctrine of the productive imagination, therefore, suggests that Kant recognizes a kind of exercise of spontaneity in sensible synthesis which is distinct from judgment. This is made explicit in another passage, in which Kant characterizes spontaneity as operating in two different guises:

It is one and the same spontaneity, which in the one case, under the title of imagination, and in the other case, under the title of understanding, brings combination into the manifold of intuition. (B162n)<sup>19</sup>

Clearly, an exercise of spontaneity that Kant takes pains to distinguish from its exercise “under the title of understanding” (which, as the context makes clear, is judgment) creates a problem for a Propositionalist view, according to which all acts of spontaneity are acts of judgment.

## 5. Possible Alternatives

Propositionalism is the view that all acts of sensible synthesis are acts of judgment. In the preceding sections I have considered three aspects of Kant’s position that cast doubt on the accuracy of this view. These are, respectively, the Heterogeneity Thesis, the argument concerning the synthesis of apprehension that Kant gives at the close of the B-Deduction, and the doctrine of the productive imagination. Each of these suggests that Kant does not have a Propositionalist position. Therefore, we should consider what alternative avenues of interpretation are available. To facilitate this, I want to return to the three theses in terms of

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<sup>19</sup> Es ist eine und dieselbe Spontaneität, welche dort, unter dem Namen der Einbildungskraft, hier des Verstandes, Verbindung in das Mannigfaltige der Anschauung bringt.

which I characterized Kant's position in §1 above, and which made Propositionalism appear to be a well-motivated position. The three theses are as follows:

- (1) Every intuition depends on an act of sensible synthesis.
- (2) Sensible synthesis is an act of the understanding.
- (3) The understanding is a capacity for judgment.

I tried to capture the distinctive commitment of a Propositionalist reading of Kant by saying that this view regards spontaneity as exclusively a capacity for judgment and therefore reads (3) as an identity statement. This reading of (3) is expressed by

- (3') The understanding is the capacity for judgment.

But since this reading of (3) makes it very hard to see how those aspects of Kant's view that I just discussed could be accommodated, we should reject it.

The three aspects of Kant's position that I considered all appeared to support the idea that sensible synthesis is distinct from judgment. The challenge that we face, then, is to accommodate this idea. We can express the challenge by adding to our characterization of Kant's position the following thesis:

- (4) Sensible synthesis is distinct from judgment.

While not formally inconsistent, jointly theses (1)-(4) present a serious problem. For they attribute two distinct powers to the understanding: it is said to be both a capacity to judge and a capacity for sensible synthesis, and these are not identical. This is a problem if (3) is supposed to have the status of a definition. If the understanding is defined as a capacity to judge, then judgment constitutes its essence, and this means that every non-deficient act of this capacity must be intelligible as an act of judgment. But if sensible synthesis is distinct from judgment, as

(4) maintains, then the definition of the understanding is falsified by saying that the understanding is also a capacity for sensible synthesis. This seems to leave us with two options: Either the characterization of the understanding as a capacity for judgment does not have the status of a definition or the understanding is not a capacity for synthesis. I will say more about the second of these two options in a moment. But first let me briefly comment on the first option.

The first option is to deny that the understanding is *defined* as a capacity to judge. The idea is not, of course, to deny that the understanding is a capacity for judgment. It is only to deny that judgment constitutes the essence of this capacity and that, consequently, every exercise of it must be an act of judgment. If this is right, then we should expect that another, more fundamental characterization can be given of the understanding. The rationale for this idea is as follows. The problem we are facing is to explain how the capacity for judgment can *also* be a capacity for sensible synthesis given that, as we are now assuming, to sensibly synthesize is not to judge. I call this the Problem of the Unity of the Understanding (for short, the Unity Problem). The strategy for solving this problem must be to find an alternative characterization of the understanding, one that can explain how one and the same capacity can be both a capacity for judgment and a capacity for non-judgmental synthesis. I will consider this option in greater detail below. Let me now turn to the other option, which consists in denying (2).

## 6. The Imagination Strategy

The exegetical strategy I now want to consider takes as its starting point the remarks about the productive imagination I quoted in §4 above, along with similar comments Kant makes elsewhere. According to this strategy, Kant introduces the imagination as a third capacity in

addition to understanding and sensibility, and it is this capacity that is responsible for sensible synthesis. As a consequence, this strategy, which I will call the Imagination Strategy, denies (2), the claim that sensible synthesis is an act of the understanding, and replaces it with the thesis that sensible synthesis is an act of the imagination. Accordingly, it attributes to Kant the following position:

- (1) Every intuition depends on an act of sensible synthesis.
- (3) The understanding is a capacity for judgment.
- (4) Sensible synthesis is distinct from judgment.
- (5) Sensible synthesis is an act of the imagination.

Note that the Imagination Strategy agrees with Propositionalism that all acts of the understanding are acts of judgment. It differs from Propositionalism in that it does not attribute sensible synthesis to the understanding, but instead to the imagination.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the passages from the B-Deduction quoted above, there are a number of places in which Kant ascribes sensible synthesis to the imagination.<sup>21</sup> So there is good textual support for the claim that sensible synthesis is an act of the imagination. Still, I shall argue that the Imagination Strategy does not succeed. The reason is that the passages in question do not support the idea that the imagination should be treated as a third capacity, distinct from understanding and sensibility. Rather, insofar as the imagination is responsible for sensible synthesis it should be conceived as belonging to the understanding. If this is right, then we would

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<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the most well-known proponent of this strategy is Heidegger. See Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, esp. 127-155. Among contemporary commentators, it is endorsed by Bernd Prien; see Prien, *Kants Logik der Begriffe*, 102-108 and 161-167.

<sup>21</sup> One of these is the so-called Metaphysical Deduction, where Kant says the following: "Synthesis in general, as we shall subsequently see, is the mere effect of the power of imagination, a blind but indispensable function of the soul [...]" (Die Synthesis überhaupt ist, wie wir künftig sehen werden, die bloße Wirkung der Einbildungskraft, einer blinden, obgleich unentbehrlichen Funktion der Seele [...]) (A78/B103).

once again be faced with the Unity Problem, since it would again raise the question how a single capacity, the understanding, can admit of two distinct acts, judgment and sensible synthesis.

Both of the passages quoted in §4 emphasize the fact that the imagination, to the extent that it is the capacity that accounts for sensible synthesis, is a spontaneous capacity. This is the crucial point. But before I say more about it let me comment on a matter of terminology. In one of these passages Kant speaks of the imagination as one of two “titles” under which spontaneity operates, the other being the understanding.<sup>22</sup> This may seem to conflict with what I just said, viz. that the imagination is an aspect of the understanding. But this is merely a question of terminology. It is clear that the exercise of spontaneity under the “title” of understanding is judgment. Therefore what is at issue are the two acts of judgment and sensible synthesis.

Whether we say that both of these are acts of the understanding or, alternatively, assign the term ‘understanding’ exclusively to the capacity for judgment and speak of understanding and imagination as two aspects of spontaneity, we are expressing the same point. This is the point that there is a single spontaneous capacity which can be exercised in two different ways.

The problem with the Imagination Strategy is that it fails to do justice to this point. It attributes judgment and sensible synthesis to two distinct capacities. And while it is true that Kant sometimes speaks as if understanding and imagination are distinct capacities he also emphasizes that these two capacities must be understood as different aspects of a single generic capacity. This is no accident. Kant has deep philosophical reasons for emphasizing this point. In what follows I want to present these reasons, but this will require some stage-setting. So we need

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<sup>22</sup> “It is one and the same spontaneity, which in the one case, under the title of imagination, and in the other case, under the title of understanding, brings combination into the manifold of intuition” (Es ist eine und dieselbe Spontaneität, welche dort, unter dem Namen der Einbildungskraft, hier des Verstandes, Verbindung in das Mannigfaltige der Anschauung hineinbringt) (B162n).

to take a slight detour. However, the payoff will be significant, I think, since considering the reasons for Kant's insistence that judgment and sensible synthesis are acts of a single capacity will give us a better appreciation of the nature of the Unity Problem.

The overarching goal of the Transcendental Deduction is to provide the cornerstone in an explanation of how synthetic a priori knowledge is possible. The idea of knowledge is the idea of a non-accidental agreement between a representation and its object; and, in the case of synthetic a priori knowledge, of a non-accidental agreement between experience and the pure concept of an object of experience, as Kant puts it in the B-Deduction.<sup>23</sup> As he points out in the same passage, there are only two ways in which such a non-accidental (or, as Kant puts it, necessary) agreement can be made intelligible. Either the objects make possible the concepts, or the concepts make possible the objects. Since the first option would account only for empirical knowledge, the case of synthetic a priori knowledge must be an instance of the second option. To vindicate his claim about synthetic a priori knowledge, then, Kant must show that the pure concepts make possible the objects of experience. In the context of the Transcendental Deduction this issue takes on the form of showing that there is a necessary agreement between the concepts of the understanding, on the one hand, and intuition, on the other. Without discussing this shift in any detail, we may simply note that intuition here takes the place of the objects of experience because intuition is a finite mind's mode of knowing the existence of objects.

On a slightly more specific characterization, the goal of the Deduction is to show that intuition exhibits the unity that is thought in the pure concepts of the understanding. Kant's strategy for establishing this point is to argue that intuition exhibits this unity because it is subject to an act of synthesis that is governed by the categories. It is governed by the categories

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<sup>23</sup> Kant speaks of "the necessary agreement of experience with the concepts of its objects" (B166).

because sensible synthesis is an act of the understanding, and the categories are concepts that derive from the nature of the understanding. In a nutshell, then, the argument is that there is a necessary agreement between understanding and sensibility – between the pure concepts and empirical intuition – because the understanding itself generates this agreement. The underlying idea, of course, is that independently of sensible synthesis intuition would not exhibit the unity on account of which it is the sensible representation of an object.

Whatever the precise content of this idea may be, and whatever its plausibility, the point that matters is that the doctrine of sensible synthesis is designed to secure the necessary agreement between understanding and sensibility. If this is right and this is indeed the function of the doctrine of synthesis in Kant's argument, then it is clear that to attribute the act of synthesis to a third capacity fails to achieve the intended purpose. This is because, rather than explaining how there can be necessary agreement, such a move raises this question all over again. If sensible synthesis is an act of the imagination, conceived as a distinct capacity from understanding, then it is not clear how sensible synthesis could secure the non-accidental agreement between the categories and intuition. In other words, to attribute synthesis to the imagination is simply to move the bump in the rug.

It might be helpful to consider the structure underlying this point in schematic terms. The issue is this: If we try to show that B is in necessary agreement with A by appealing to the influence that some third thing, C, exerts on B, then we need to explain how the influence of C is in a position to do this. What is it about C that explains how its influence on B generates necessary agreement of B with A? If no answer to this question is forthcoming we have not explained the possibility of the necessary agreement between B and A. And the problem is that

the kind of answer that could do the job would, it seems, have to take the form of appealing to some kind of influence of A on C. But if that is right, then, at best, C does not make an independent contribution to the explanation. At worst, it simply drops out as explanatorily idle.

If we now remind ourselves of what Kant himself says about the possibility of demonstrating the necessary agreement between a representation and its object, it is hard to resist the conclusion that he would agree with this point and, quite generally, regard a strategy that rests on an appeal to some third thing as a non-starter. For, as we have just seen, he explicitly says that there are only two possible ways in which the necessary agreement of a representation and its object may be demonstrated: either the object makes possible the representation, or the representation makes possible the object. Moreover, in discussing this issue Kant explicitly rejects the suggestion that the agency of some third entity could ever explain the necessary agreement between these two. As soon as we adopt such a strategy, the upshot of his discussion seems to be, we will at most be able to show the agreement to be a contingent matter of fact. But we will never be able to show it to be necessary.<sup>24</sup> Since the Imagination Strategy is an instance of this kind of strategy, there is good reason to believe that it is not an accurate representation of Kant's position.

## 7. A Higher Concept of the Understanding

In the previous section I considered the strategy of attributing synthesis to the imagination, conceived as a self-standing faculty distinct from understanding and sensibility. Consideration of this strategy was motivated by the fact that it represents an alternative to

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<sup>24</sup> See the discussion of what he dubs the "preformation system of pure reason" at B167f. I quote the relevant passage in its entirety and give a more detailed discussion of it in Chapter Three, §8.

Propositionalism, the view that all acts of synthesis are acts of judgment. Since Propositionalism was shown to be problematic, we were confronted with a situation in which Kant seemed to be committed to the following four theses:

- (1) Every intuition depends on an act of sensible synthesis.
- (2) Sensible synthesis is an act of the understanding.
- (3) The understanding is a capacity for judgment.
- (4) Sensible synthesis is distinct from judgment.

While (1)-(4) are not formally inconsistent, taking all four of them to be true generates a need for further explanation. What needs to be explained is how it is possible for one and the same capacity, the understanding, to admit of two distinct types of act, judgment and synthesis. This is what I call the Unity Problem. The Imagination Strategy seeks to pre-empt the Unity Problem by denying (2). But if this is not a viable option, then the Unity Problem must be confronted head-on. This is what I aim to do in this dissertation. In the remainder of the Introduction, I will lay out my strategy for developing a solution to it.

To make a plausible case for conceiving of the understanding as a capacity that has two distinct kinds of exercise, judgment and sensible synthesis, we need a conception of this capacity that makes it intelligible that these are its acts. This must be a conception that stands to judgment and sensible synthesis as a genus stands to its species. Clearly, a conception of the understanding as the capacity for judgment does not meet this requirement. What we need, then, is a conception of the understanding that is more fundamental than this.

In what follows, I will argue that the doctrine of apperception provides the materials for such a conception. In support of this claim I will argue that a passage from the Introduction to

the Transcendental Dialectic contains an important clue. But to do this I first need to fill in some of the context. The passage employs a distinction Kant draws between two kinds of exercise of reason, its logical use and its real use.<sup>25</sup> And Kant makes it clear that the same distinction can also be drawn with regard to the understanding.<sup>26</sup>

This distinction is related to the distinction between Pure General Logic and Transcendental Logic. I discuss the latter distinction in detail in Chapter One, so let me simply state here what I take to be its salient features for the purpose at hand. Pure General Logic seeks to isolate the formal characteristics of concepts, judgments, and inferences without being concerned with the conditions that have to be satisfied for these representations to relate to objects and thus have empirical content. In light of Kant's doctrine that there are two stems of cognition, this implies that Pure General Logic is not concerned with the conditions on cognition that derive from sensibility. By contrast, Transcendental Logic takes these conditions into account and seeks to identify the general conditions under which the acts of the understanding – concepts, judgments, and inferences – amount to cognition; that is, the conditions under which these representations are valid of objects that have to be given in intuition.

With this rough characterization of the difference between Pure General and Transcendental Logic in hand we can lay out the distinction between the logical and the real use of the understanding. The logical use of the understanding is that use which is under consideration in Pure General Logic. In its logical use, the understanding is a capacity to give a certain logical form to representations, regardless of whether representations exhibiting this form amount to cognition. By contrast, in its real use the understanding is a power of cognition. To say

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<sup>25</sup> Kant first introduces this distinction in his Inaugural Dissertation; see *De Mundi*, §5 (*Ak.* II, 393f).

<sup>26</sup> For instance, at A67/B92 he speaks of “the logical use of the understanding in general.”

that the understanding has a real use is thus to say that representations exhibiting the characteristic logical form are valid of objects.<sup>27</sup>

Now, what matters for my purposes is that the real use of the understanding is closely related to its exercise in sensible synthesis. As my point about the non-accidental agreement between the categories and experience in the previous section implies, the understanding has a real use only if it can be exercised in sensible synthesis. The latter is a necessary condition of the former. Accordingly, what Kant says about the real use of the understanding bears on the Unity Problem, that is, on the question of how it is possible that the understanding is both a capacity for judgment and a capacity for a distinct kind of act, sensible synthesis.

Let us now turn to the passage from the Introduction to the Transcendental Dialectic. This passage lays out the strategy Kant pursues in order to identify what he calls the ideas of reason, which form the topic of the Dialectic. This strategy is parallel to the strategy he employs in the chapter of the Transcendental Analytic called the ‘Clue to the Discovery of all Pure Concepts of the Understanding’ (*Leitfaden zur Entdeckung aller reinen Verstandesbegriffe*), for short, the *Leitfaden*. In both cases, the goal is to identify a set of non-empirical concepts which,

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. the characterization of the logical use as “merely giving a certain form to given cognitions, which is called ‘logical’” at A305/B362 as well as the implicit characterization of the real use as “prescribing a law to objects” in the following passage at A306/B362: “But such a principle [viz., the maxim of unifying the cognitions of the understanding under ever more general concepts and laws] does not prescribe any law for objects, and does not contain any general ground of the possibility of knowing or of determining objects as such; it is merely a subjective law for the orderly management of the possessions of our understanding, that by comparison of its concepts it may reduce them to the smallest possible number; it does not justify us in demanding from the objects such uniformity as will minister to the convenience and extension of our understanding; and we may not, therefore, ascribe to the maxim any objective validity. In a word, the question is, does reason in itself, that is, does pure reason, contain a priori synthetic principles and rules, and in what may these principles consist?” (Aber ein solcher Grundsatz schreibt den Objekten kein Gesetz vor, und enthält nicht den Grund der Möglichkeit, sie als solche überhaupt zu erkennen und zu bestimmen, sondern ist bloß ein subjektives Gesetz der Haushaltung mit dem Vorrat unseres Verstandes, durch Vergleichung seiner Begriffe, den allgemeinen Gebrauch derselben auf die kleinstmögliche Zahl derselben zu bringen, ohne daß man deswegen von den Gegenständen selbst eine solche Einhelligkeit, die der Gemächlichkeit und Ausbreitung unseres Verstandes Vorschub tue, zu fordern, und jener Maxime zugleich objektive Gültigkeit zu geben, berechtigt wäre. Mit einem Worte, die Frage ist: ob Vernunft an sich, d. i. die reine Vernunft a priori synthetische Grundsätze und Regeln enthalte, und worin diese Prinzipien bestehen mögen?).

unlike empirical concepts, have their source in the capacity at issue, that is, in the understanding or reason itself. In the *Analytic*, these are the categories, in the *Dialectic*, the ideas of reason. In each case, these concepts constitute the forms of the capacity's real employment. The strategy Kant employs to identify these forms is to attend to the forms of the capacity's logical use and to derive from these the forms of its real use. This strategy is employed both in the *Analytic* and in the *Dialectic*.<sup>28</sup>

However, in the *Dialectic* there is an interesting twist, which I want to exploit for my purposes. Kant says that in the case of reason the forms of its real use cannot be derived *directly* from the forms of its logical use. So, in contrast to the *Leitfaden* of the *Analytic*, an additional step is required. What we need to do, Kant says, is to use the characterization of reason's logical use as a means to identifying the common genus of which the logical use and the real use are both species. Once the common genus is in view it will be possible to identify the forms of reason's real use. This claim is made in the following passage:

Reason, like understanding, can be employed in a merely formal, that is, logical manner, where it abstracts from all content of cognition. But it is also capable of a real use, where it contains within itself the source of certain concepts and principles, which it does not borrow either from the senses or from the understanding. The former capacity has long since been defined by logicians as the capacity of making mediate inferences (in distinction from immediate inferences, *consequentis immediatis*); but the nature of the other capacity, which itself gives rise to concepts, is not to be understood from this definition. Now since we are here presented with a division of reason into a logical and a transcendental capacity, we must seek for a higher concept of this source of cognition which includes both concepts as subordinate to itself. Following the analogy with the concepts of the understanding, we may expect that the logical concept will provide the key to the transcendental, and that the table of the functions of the former will at once give us the genealogical tree of the concepts of reason. (A299/B355f)<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> This is, obviously, a very rough sketch. I provide a more detailed discussion of Kant's strategy, at least as regards its employment in the *Analytic*, in Chapter Two.

<sup>29</sup> Es gibt von [der Vernunft], wie von dem Verstande, einen bloß formalen, d.i. logischen Gebrauch, da die Vernunft von allem Inhalte der Erkenntnis abstrahiert, aber auch einen realen, da sie selbst den Ursprung gewisser Begriffe und Grundsätze enthält, die sie weder von den Sinnen, noch vom Verstande entlehnt. Das erstere Vermögen ist nun freilich vorlängst von den Logikern durch das Vermögen mittelbar zu schließen (zum Unterschiede von den unmittelbaren Schlüssen, *consequentis immediatis*.) erklärt worden; das zweite aber, welches selbst Begriffe

The crucial claim for our purposes occurs in the final sentence of the passage. Kant says that the fact that there are two distinct uses of reason entails that there must be a characterization of this capacity that functions as the common genus of which the two uses are both species. We must seek, he says, a “higher concept of this source of cognition.”

I shall argue that there is a parallel move in the case of the understanding. Although Kant does not make this explicit, he provides a characterization of the understanding that functions as the “higher concept” which stands to the logical and the real use of this faculty as genus to species. Above I said that the use of the understanding in sensible synthesis is a necessary condition of its having a real use. As I will explain in more detail in Chapter Four, I take this to imply that the characterization of the understanding that functions as the genus of which its logical and real use are species also functions as the genus that allows us to comprehend judgment and sensible synthesis as two species of the same genus. Thus, the claim that I want to draw from the quoted passage is that the “higher concept” of the understanding, which comprehends both its logical and its real employment, serves as exactly that characterization of the understanding which will enable us to comprehend that this capacity admits of two distinct kinds of exercise, judgment and sensible synthesis.

This “higher concept” of the understanding is supplied by the doctrine of apperception, which is presented in the Transcendental Deduction. To provide some preliminary evidence for this contention, let me quote two relevant passages. Consider first a passage from §16 of the B-edition version of the Deduction. Kant says:

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erzeugt, wird dadurch noch nicht eingesehen. Da nun hier eine Einteilung der Vernunft in ein logisches und transzendentales Vermögen vorkommt, so muß ein höherer Begriff von dieser Erkenntnisquelle gesucht werden, welcher beide Begriffe unter sich befaßt, indessen wir nach der Analogie mit den Verstandesbegriffen erwarten können, daß der logische Begriff zugleich den Schlüssel zum transzendentalen, und die Tafel der Funktionen der ersteren zugleich die Stammleiter der Vernunftbegriffe an die Hand geben werde (A299/B355f).

And thus the synthetic unity of apperception is the highest point to which one must affix all use of the understanding, even the whole of logic and, after it, transcendental philosophy; indeed this capacity is the understanding itself. (B134n)<sup>30</sup>

In light of the preceding discussion we can, I think, take the claim that both logic and transcendental philosophy must be “suspended from” the synthetic unity of apperception to indicate that what is at issue here are the logical and the real use, respectively, of the understanding. The logical use of the understanding (and of reason) constitutes, after all, the subject matter of what Kant here calls simply logic, but which, as the contrast with transcendental philosophy makes clear, must be Pure General Logic. By contrast, transcendental philosophy is concerned with the possibility of pure knowledge. And the real use of the understanding is its use as a capacity for knowledge, including pure knowledge. If this is right, then the passage suggests that the synthetic unity of apperception functions as the “higher concept” of which both the logical and the real use of the understanding are species. Accordingly, we should expect that the characterization of the understanding in terms of the synthetic unity of apperception will allow us to comprehend how this capacity can be exercised both in judgment and in sensible synthesis. The fundamental characterization of the understanding, then, must be given in terms of the synthetic unity of apperception. Kant appears to be making just this point when he says that “indeed this capacity is the understanding itself.”

What the characterization of the understanding in terms of the synthetic unity of apperception amounts to will be the topic of Chapter Four, where I will argue that the understanding is fundamentally a capacity for apperceptive synthesis. For now, let me quote another passage in support of the strategy I am recommending. Also in §16, Kant characterizes

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<sup>30</sup> Und so ist die synthetische Einheit der Apperzeption der höchste Punkt, an dem man allen Verstandesgebrauch, selbst die ganze Logik, und, nach ihr, die Transzendental-Philosophie heften muß, ja dieses Vermögen ist der Verstand selbst (B134n).

the understanding as a capacity for the representation of combination and connects the notion of combination with the unity of apperception:

Combination [...] is solely an operation of the understanding, which is itself nothing further than the faculty of combining a priori and bringing the manifold of given representations under the unity of apperception [...] (B134f)<sup>31</sup>

The decisive claim occurs towards the end of the passage. The understanding is characterized as “nothing but” the capacity to combine a priori. Again, this suggests that we are dealing with the fundamental characterization of the understanding. This characterization is connected in the passage with the synthetic unity of apperception. Indeed, the suggestion appears to be that ‘capacity for combination’ and ‘capacity for bringing the manifold of given representations under the unity of apperception’ are equivalent expressions. If this is right, it implies that what the footnote at B134 described as the capacity of the synthetic unity of apperception is the capacity to combine sensible manifolds in such a way that they exhibit synthetic unity of apperception. So here we have evidence for the following three claims. First, there is a characterization of the understanding that is more fundamental than its characterization as a capacity to judge. Second, the fundamental characterization of the understanding makes reference to the synthetic unity of apperception. And finally, the doctrine of apperception is internally related to the claim that the understanding is a capacity for the representation of combination.

There is one additional piece of textual evidence that I wish to mention. Towards the end of the A-Deduction Kant lists several characterizations of the understanding he has given over the course of the Transcendental Analytic – as spontaneity, as a capacity to think, as the capacity

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<sup>31</sup> Verbindung [...] ist allein eine Verrichtung des Verstandes, der selbst nichts weiter ist, als das Vermögen, a priori zu verbinden, und das Mannigfaltige gegebener Vorstellungen unter Einheit der Apperzeption zu bringen [...].

of concepts, and as the capacity of judgments – and goes on to say that the understanding is best described as the capacity of rules (*Vermögen der Regeln*). “This characteristic,” Kant says, “is more fruitful and gets closer to the essence of the understanding” (A126).<sup>32</sup> The justification he goes on to provide for this claim rests on the fact that the understanding is a capacity for synthetic unity of apperception. In a nutshell, the idea seems to be that all rules presuppose the synthetic unity of apperception. The latter is “the transcendental ground” (A127) of the necessary regularity of experience. This point fits well with my claim, to be developed in detail in Chapter Two, that the categories function as principles of sensible synthesis, and that these principles serve to generate synthetic unity of apperception in the sensible manifold. The characterization of the understanding as the capacity of rules, then, is broad enough to encompass its exercise in sensible synthesis as well as its exercise in judgment. Therefore, I take Kant’s claim that this characterization is “more fruitful” to support my contention that it is Kant’s own view that there is a characterization of the understanding that is more fundamental than the claim that the understanding is a capacity for judgment.

We have, then, some *prima facie* evidence that the doctrine of the synthetic unity of apperception contains the fundamental characterization of the understanding that we need if the strategy for solving the Unity Problem which I am proposing is to be viable. This characterization is fundamental because it serves as the common genus of which both the capacity to judge and the capacity for sensible synthesis can be seen to be species – or, alternatively, it serves as a characterization of the capacity of which judgment and sensible synthesis are two different exercises.

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<sup>32</sup> Dieses Kennzeichen ist fruchtbarer und tritt dem Wesen desselben [i.e., des Verstandes, T. L.] näher.

## 8. Outline of Chapters

The aim of this dissertation is to develop a solution to the Unity Problem by showing that the fundamental characterization of the understanding, which makes intelligible both judgment and sensible synthesis as exercises of the same capacity, is that the understanding is a capacity for apperceptive synthesis. I proceed as follows. I begin with an account of Kant's theory of judgment, followed by an initial discussion of the notion of synthesis. Already in this initial discussion Kant's thesis that sensible synthesis is an act of the understanding makes an appearance. This leads me to ask what Kant's reason is for holding this thesis. Since the upshot of the thesis is that a capacity which belongs to the spontaneous stem of the mind is responsible for the unity characteristic of exercises of the receptive stem, this question is a question about the reasons Kant has for holding what I call the Spontaneity Thesis: the thesis that no representation of combination, whether conceptual or intuitive, is ever given. Accordingly, I proceed to discuss the Spontaneity Thesis and argue that it follows from Kant's conception of cognition as the non-accidental agreement of a representation with its object, in conjunction with his view that the unity of cognition originates in the understanding. I go on to discuss this last claim – viz. that the unity of cognition originates in the understanding – which is just another way of expressing the central thesis of Kant's doctrine of apperception. My discussion of this doctrine seeks to defend the claim that the understanding is most fundamentally characterized as a capacity for apperceptive synthesis. This claim forms the basis of my solution to the Unity Problem. I go on to connect it to my account of Kant's theory of judgment before returning to the theory of sensible synthesis in the final chapter. In this concluding discussion of sensible synthesis I show how the characterization of the understanding as a capacity for apperceptive synthesis enables us

to comprehend how the understanding can be a capacity for sensible synthesis as well as a capacity for judgment.

This outline of the whole breaks down into individual chapters as follows. In Chapters One and Two I develop an interpretation of Kant's theory of judgment. This interpretation will ultimately make it possible to see judgment as a specifically discursive mode of apperceptive synthesis. This will not be possible, however, without an adequate conception of the relation between judgment and intuition. For this reason, the first chapter is devoted to discussing a popular misconception of the role of intuition in Kant's theory of judgment. Seeing why this conception, according to which an intuition has a role analogous to that of a singular term in a sentence, fails will put us on the right track towards what I take to be the correct conception of the relation between judgment and intuition. Moreover, since this mistaken conception of the role of intuition lends support to Propositionalism about synthesis, bringing out its shortcomings will provide additional support for my rejection of Propositionalism.

I present my own account of the relation between judgment and intuition in the first part of Chapter Two. This leads, in the second part of Chapter Two, to a consideration of the categories. My conception of how judgment relates to intuition suggests an account of the categories that makes it intelligible why the understanding, conceived as a capacity to judge, gives rise to pure concepts. This account, however, does not yet consider the role of the categories as principles of sensible synthesis. The fact that it can be developed independently of the theory of synthesis is, I argue, another manifestation of the Unity Problem. To bring this out, I offer in the final part of Chapter Two a discussion of the Metaphysical Deduction, the part of

the Transcendental Analytic in which the categories are introduced as principles of sensible synthesis.

As I said above, the theory of synthesis raises what is arguably the central and most difficult question about Kant's account in the Analytic: the question of how the spontaneous stem of the cognitive capacity can be responsible for the unity exhibited by exercises of the receptive stem. To make progress on this question, I ask what motivates Kant to hold the Spontaneity Thesis, the thesis that combination is never given. Chapter Three is devoted to a discussion of this thesis. I focus on the question why sensible combination, in particular, cannot be given. In response to this question I argue that Kant's conception of cognition as the non-accidental agreement between a representation and its object requires that sensible combination be spontaneous, given that judgment is spontaneous. Because Kant holds that the unity of judgment has its source in the spontaneous capacity of the mind, he is committed to holding that the unity of intuition, which is the sensible analogue of the unity of judgment, has its source in this capacity as well. Appreciating this connection takes us another step towards addressing the Unity Problem, since it makes visible the fact that this problem arises from some of Kant's most deeply held commitments. What we still lack, however, is a characterization of the understanding that makes it intelligible how this capacity can be both a capacity for judgment and a capacity for sensible synthesis. In Chapter Four I argue that the doctrine of apperception contains the materials for a characterization of the understanding that achieves this. What Kant calls the principle of the synthetic unity of apperception is, as he argues in the Transcendental Deduction, the highest principle of cognition because the understanding is most fundamentally a capacity for apperceptive synthesis. I discuss the nature of this capacity and show how it is connected to the

concept of a finite intellect. In the concluding part of Chapter Four I argue that judgment must be understood as a specifically discursive mode of apperceptive synthesis. I argue that an appreciation of this point enables us to see the capacity for apperceptive synthesis as the genus of which both judgment and sensible synthesis are species. In Chapter Four I show why this is true of judgment. To show that it is also true of sensible synthesis is the task of Chapter Five.

Chapter Five, then, is devoted to a discussion of sensible synthesis. I focus on the doctrine of figurative synthesis sketched by Kant in the second half of the B-Deduction. The central contention is that this doctrine presents sensible synthesis as a specifically intuitive, or sensible, mode of apperceptive synthesis. I bring out the specifically sensible character of this act by relating it to Kant's theory of mathematical construction, which serves as the model for his theory of sensible synthesis. Showing how the act of sensible synthesis can be comprehended as an exercise of the capacity for apperceptive synthesis, then, concludes my argument for the thesis that this capacity constitutes the most fundamental characterization of the understanding, which allows us to see both judgment and sensible synthesis as exercises of a single capacity.