

Imaginative Synthesis and the Basic Function of the Second Part of Kant's Transcendental Deduction in B

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Abstract: Most recent commentators on Kant's Transcendental Deduction assume that the main purpose of the second part of the B-Deduction ("BD2") is to show that human intuitions must fall under categories for reasons connected with their spatio-temporal form. But there are good reasons to hold that the Deduction as a whole is concerned with pure categories, whose application to spatio-temporal objects is undetermined. If so, BD2 cannot establish a connection between the categories and the spatio-temporal order. I advance the alternative view that the basic function of BD2 is to explain in general terms why, abstracting from their specifically human forms, intuitions must fall under categories; and that Kant's explanation is that the forms of imaginative synthesis which yield the intuitions must correspond to the forms of intellectual synthesis involved in the functions of unity in judgement underlying the categories. This alternative interpretation accounts well for BD2's contribution to the Analytic, and an analysis of key passages shows that it can be used to make better sense of the core reasoning of BD2 than the standard assumption. Kant's remarks about space, time, and the spatio-temporal form of human intuition in BD2 serve heuristic purposes, and are not essential to this reasoning.

1. Introduction

Despite widespread disagreement in the philosophical literature about the proper interpretation of Kant's Transcendental Deduction ("TD"), most recent commentators assume that, broadly speaking, *the main purpose of the second part of the B-Deduction ("BD2")¹ is to show that human intuitions fall under the categories for reasons connected with their spatio-temporal form.*² These commentators differ considerably about further details of Kant's reasoning, but this should not mask the common ground between them, which I will refer to as *the standard assumption* ("SA").³

There are, however, three good reasons to be perplexed by the claim that the purpose of BD2 is to establish a connection between the categories and the spatio-temporal form of human intuition. First, it is utterly unclear from the text of BD2 what Kant is supposed to think the connection is and why it holds. This is manifest in the absence of significant convergence between interpretations which are committed to SA. Second, as I will show, there is evidence that the B-Deduction as a whole is concerned with pure categories, whose application to spatio-temporal objects is undetermined. So how could TD establish a connection between the categories and the spatio-temporal order? Third, Kant does not explain how the categories apply to spatio-temporal objects until after TD, in the Schematism. This raises the question of whether the real work of connecting the categories and the spatio-temporal order is done in

BD2 or, rather, in the *Analytic of Principles* — as implied by Guyer’s claim that BD2 is “just a promissory note, or, if this sounds better, the transition from Kant’s abstract or transcendental conception of the unity of apperception to his exposition of the conditions of the possibility of empirical consciousness of a world of empirical objects in real space and time” (2018, 203–4).

Rather than addressing this skeptical challenge directly, I will assume that BD2 is meant to make an important *contribution* toward establishing a connection between the categories and the spatio-temporal form of human intuition, and ask *what* it is meant to contribute toward establishing such a connection *if* we bracket-off the main contributions of other parts of the first *Critique*. I will refer to this limited purpose as the *basic function* of BD2. In this essay I advance a novel interpretation according to which BD2 is primarily concerned with a relation between categories and intuitions, *whatever the forms of intuition, forms of judgment, and categories may be*, rather than between the twelve categories introduced in the *Metaphysical Deduction* and the specifically spatio-temporal form of human intuition. In particular, I argue that the basic function of BD2 is to explain in general terms why, *abstracting from the specific, human forms of intuition, forms of judgment, and categories*, intuitions must fall under categories;⁴ and that Kant’s explanation is that the forms of imaginative synthesis which yield the intuitions depend upon the forms of intellectual synthesis involved in the functions of unity in judgment which are expressed by the pure categories. This explanation could be applied not only to human cognition, but also to the cognition of all “finite thinking beings” (B72) — i.e., beings with an understanding which is “not intuitive but discursive” (B93), and which therefore requires its objects to be given by sensible intuition (see, e.g., A19/B33, A51–2/B75–6, A68–9/B92–4).⁵

This interpretation is inconsistent with SA if, as I will assume, SA is meant to express the basic function of BD2 rather than the ultimate purpose toward which it is meant to contribute but which depends crucially on material in later parts of the *Critique*.⁶ Nevertheless, on my interpretation, Kant’s explanation in BD2 of why intuitions must fall under categories still implies that human *spatio-temporal* intuitions must fall under categories — but *not because of* their spatio-temporal form. And it is left to the *Analytic of Principles* to explain *how* human spatio-temporal intuitions fall under the categories. I do not claim to show that this alternative to SA is correct, but only that it is worthy of serious consideration.

An obvious immediate response to the alternative interpretation is that it conflicts with Kant’s many remarks about space, time, and the spatio-temporal form of human intuition throughout §§21–7. But this aspect of the text can be explained on the basis of the fact that Kant holds that we cannot conceive of any forms of sensibility other than our own (B139). It is therefore to be expected that in BD2, which is concerned with the application of categories to objects given in intuition, much of Kant’s discussion will focus on human spatio-temporal intuition. The alternative interpretation recognizes this, but claims that BD2 is of broader significance, and that the applicable remarks are not essential to Kant’s core reasoning, but serve important heuristic purposes, such as motivating this reasoning, illustrating it by means of accessible examples, and anticipating some of its most significant ultimate results when it is combined with reasoning in other parts of the *Critique* — including results about space, time, and spatio-temporal unity.

I proceed as follows. In section 2, I discuss some contextual considerations external to the core reasoning of BD2 that favor the alternative interpretation. In particular, I focus on the relationship between BD2 and other parts of the *Critique* (including BD1), and on Kant’s statements in the introduction to BD2 (§21) about what he is going to do there. In section 3, I discuss the core reasoning of BD2 as it appears in §24 and §26, arguing that it does not depend upon any distinctive features of space, time, or the spatio-temporal form of human sensibility, and showing how the alternative interpretation can make better sense of this

reasoning than SA. Finally, in section 4, I step back and make some brief and partly speculative remarks about advantages of the alternative interpretation.

2. Contextual Considerations

TD is meant to make an important contribution towards Kant's solution to what he calls "The real problem of pure reason" (B19), which is to explain how synthetic *a priori* knowledge is possible.⁷ TD does not pretend to solve this problem on its own, but only in combination with the Aesthetic and the other parts of the Analytic up to the end of the System of Principles. In order to isolate the distinctive contribution of BD2 to the solution to this problem, we must begin with a preliminary sense of the role of each of the main components of the *Critique* in which Kant addresses it.

From this perspective, the relationship between these components is, roughly, as follows. The Aesthetic argues that our synthetic *a priori* knowledge of space and time depends upon the spatio-temporal forms of our sensibility.⁸ The introduction to the Transcendental Logic emphasizes that all our cognition depends upon both sensibility, without which "no object would be given to us," and understanding, without which "none would be thought" (A51/B75), and it insists that these two capacities are distinct. The Metaphysical Deduction, begins with an account of judgments — the ultimate products of the understanding — according to which their constituents, concepts, depend upon sensibility for their application to objects, and then goes on to introduce the categories, or basic *a priori* concepts of the understanding, and gives an account of their source in the fundamental forms of judgment. TD aims to show that we have a right to apply the categories to empirical objects ("appearances") given by intuition (see A84–7/B116–19) — and to do so by displaying the categories as "*a priori* conditions of the possibility of experiences" (A94/B126). The Schematism, aims to show how it is possible for intuitions to fall under categories and thus how categories can apply to the appearances which the intuitions present. Finally, the System of Principles attempts to establish the fundamental synthetic *a priori* principles involved in the application of the categories to appearances.

In the Metaphysical Deduction, Kant explains the categories as concepts which express the logical functions of judgment (see especially §10). This explanation is silent on the spatio-temporal conditions of the categories' application. Kant calls categories as they are explained in the Metaphysical Deduction *pure categories* (see, e.g., A243–8/B301–05). Pure categories stand in contrast with what are often called *schematized categories*, which also incorporate the spatio-temporal conditions of the categories' application. Kant first presents these conditions in the Schematism, "which deals with the sensible conditions under which alone pure concepts of the understanding can be employed" (A136/B175) and the synthetic *a priori* principles presupposed by this application in the System of Principles.

Now, given that it appears after the Metaphysical Deduction and before the Schematism and the Principles, it is reasonable to think that TD must be concerned primarily with pure categories. This suggests that when Kant mentions schematized categories and spatio-temporal conditions of the categories' application in the text of TD, he does not do so in order to express its core claims, but for some other purpose, such as giving examples that exploit his readers' prior understanding of the application of the categories to illustrate and clarify his thinking, or pointing to connections between the core of what he is doing in TD and what he does in other parts of the first *Critique*.

The hypothesis that TD is concerned primarily with pure categories is also supported by Kant's summary explanation of and comments about the categories in a passage added to the B-edition at the end of the introduction to TD, immediately before the start of TD proper:

- (A) I will merely precede this with the **explanation of the categories**. They are concepts of an object in general, by means of which its intuition is regarded as **determined** with regard to one of the **logical functions** for judgment. Thus, the function of the **categorical** judgment was that of the relationship of the subject to the predicate, e.g., “All bodies are divisible.” Yet in regard to the merely logical use of the understanding it would remain undetermined which of these two concepts will be given the function of the subject and which will be given that of the predicate. For one can also say: “Something divisible is a body.” Through the category of substance, however, if I bring the concept of a body under it, it is determined that its empirical intuition in experience must always be considered as subject, never as mere predicate.... (B128–9)

This passage supports the hypothesis that in TD Kant is primarily concerned with pure categories in two ways. First, it follows the Metaphysical Deduction in identifying categories as “concepts of an object ... by means of which its intuition is regarded as **determined** with regard to one of the **logical functions** for judgments” without mentioning the spatio-temporal conditions of their application. Second, it confirms that Kant is not thinking of schematized categories by indicating that, in a categorical judgment combining the concepts *body* and *divisible*, it is at this juncture undetermined which of these two concepts is to fall under the category *substance*. Notwithstanding any initial appearance to the contrary, the last sentence in (A) does not change this. For all that it claims is that *if* we subsume the concept *body* under the category of *substance*, we thereby treat it as a logical subject. This does not imply or suggest that Kant has already provided resources to explain this subsumption. And, as we know, he does so only in the Schematism.

It is also evident that only pure categories are in play in the core reasoning of BD1 (§§15–20), which Kant sums up explicitly in §20:

- (B) The manifold that is given in a sensible intuition necessarily belongs under the original synthetic unity of apperception, since through this unity alone is the unity of the intuition possible (§17). That action of the understanding, however, through which the manifold of given representations (whether they be intuitions or concepts) is brought under an apperception in general, is the logical function of judgments (§19). Therefore all manifold, insofar as it is given in **one** empirical intuition is **determined** in regard to one of the logical functions for judgment, by means of which, namely, it is brought to a consciousness in general. But now *the categories are nothing other than these very functions for judging*, insofar as the manifold of a given intuition is determined with regard to them (§13).⁹ Thus the manifold in a given intuition also necessarily stands under categories. (B143, italics added)

The key implications of this passage are that intuitions belong to the synthetic unity of apperception if and only if they are brought to that unity by means of one of the logical functions of judgment; and that “the **categories** are nothing other than these very functions for judging.” Thus understood, the categories are clearly pure categories, and nothing crucial to BD1 requires the schematized categories.

Moreover, as (B) illustrates, the core reasoning of BD1 does not even depend upon the distinguishing details of the twelve categories introduced in the Metaphysical Deduction, but only on the nature of pure categories in general, namely, that they are concepts that express

logical functions of judgment. In fact, the only category Kant mentions explicitly in BD1 is the category of unity, and he does so merely to distinguish it from the concept of the synthetic unity of the manifold of combination (see B130–1).¹⁰ And the intuitions which, according to BD1, fall under categories are not identified as human, spatio-temporal intuitions, but could be intuitions of any finite thinking being, whatever the forms of those intuitions may be. Here I agree with Allison, who claims that BD1 applies to “sensible intuition in general” and makes it clear that this includes intuitions of finite thinking beings other than humans (2004, 160). But, unlike Allison, I claim that the same is also true of BD2.

Kant opens the first paragraph of §21, which introduces BD2, with a statement of what he claims to have shown in BD1:

- (C) A manifold that is contained in an intuition that I call mine is represented as belonging to the **necessary** unity of self-consciousness through the synthesis of understanding, and this takes place by means of the category. (B144)

A few lines later, referring back to (C), he proceeds as follows.

- (D) In the above proposition ... the beginning of a **deduction** of the pure concepts of the understanding has been made, in which, since the categories arise **independently from sensibility** merely in the understanding, I must abstract from the way in which the manifold for an empirical intuition is given, in order to attend to the unity that is added to the intuition through the understanding by means of the category. In the sequel (§26) it will be shown from the way in which the empirical intuition is given in sensibility that its unity can be none other than the one the category prescribes to the manifold of a given intuition in general according to the preceding §20; thus by the explanation of its *a priori* validity in respect to all objects of our senses the aim of the deduction will first be fully attained. (B144–5).

Taken in context, (C) and (D) indicate that Kant holds that BD1 shows that in order for intuitions to belong to the unity of apperception it is *necessary* for them to fall under categories, but not that intuitions considered in their own right *do* fall under categories. For BD1 does not show that intuitions are so constituted by “the way in which the empirical intuition is given in sensibility” that they must fall under categories. And (D) indicates clearly that Kant intends to make good on this in BD2.¹¹

What (D) tells us about the basic function of **BD2** hinges on the question of how the key phrase “the way in which the empirical intuition is given in sensibility” is to be understood. There are two possible readings. According to the first, the phrase signifies the form of intuition; according to the second, it signifies the way in which empirical intuitions are synthesized by the imagination. The claim that these readings are possible is validated by the fact that they correspond to two different ways in which Kant uses the word “given” in the following footnote to (C).

- (E) The ground of proof rests on the represented **unity of intuition** *through which an object is given* [1], which always includes a synthesis of *the manifold that is given* [2] for an intuition, and already contains the relation of the latter to the unity of apperception. (B144 fn., italics and reference numerals added)¹²

On the first use of “given” in (E), what is given is an object, and what an object is given by is a unitary intuition, which “always includes a synthesis of the manifold [of sensibility].” If “given” is used in this sense in the phrase “the way in which the empirical intuition is given in sensibility,” then the phrase as a whole signifies the way in which the manifold is synthesized into a unitary empirical intuition, or the form of its synthesis. On the second use of “given,” what is given is not an object, but the unsynthesized manifold of sensibility (which can constitute a unitary intuition only if it is appropriately synthesized). If “given” is used in this sense in the phrase, then the phrase as a whole signifies the form of intuition. The difference between these two possible readings of the phrase makes a crucial difference to the interpretation of what Kant says he is going to do in BD2 in (D).

If the phrase signifies the form of intuition, then Kant is saying that he is going to show that there is a connection between the form of intuition and the application of the categories to empirical intuitions. And in this context it is reasonable to believe that the form of intuition is the spatio-temporal form of human intuition, because the *Critique* does not attempt to establish a connection between the unspecified form of intuition of an arbitrary finite thinking being and the application of the categories to its empirical intuitions. If this reading of the phrase is correct, then so is SA. It is therefore unsurprising that several commentators who accept SA and refer to B144–5 are committed to this reading.¹³

If the phrase “the way in which empirical intuition is given in sensibility” signifies the way in which the unitary empirical intuition is synthesized, then Kant is not saying that he is going to show in BD2 that there is a connection between the form of intuition and the application of the categories to these intuitions, but that there is a connection between the way in which the intuitions are synthesized by the imagination, or the forms of these syntheses, and their falling under categories. This is in line with the alternative interpretation’s claim that Kant holds that they are connected inasmuch as these forms of imaginative synthesis depend upon the forms of intellectual synthesis underlying the categories.

There is textual evidence which favors the second of these readings. I begin with evidence within §21 itself. First, Kant does *not* say explicitly that he is concerned with the spatio-temporal forms of sensibility, which is what one would expect if this is what he had in mind. Indeed, the only place in §21 where he refers explicitly to space, time, or the spatio-temporal form of our intuition is in the last sentence, in which he suggests that we cannot explain “why space and time are the sole forms of our possible intuition” (B146; see also *Prolegomena* 4:318).¹⁴ Second, near the beginning of the second and last paragraph of §21, after remarking that “the categories would have no significance at all” with respect to an infinite understanding “that itself intuited” and “through whose representations the objects would itself be given” (B145), Kant immediately proceeds as follows.

- (F) They [i.e., the categories] are only rules for an understanding whose entire capacity consists in thinking, i.e., in the action of bringing *the synthesis of the manifold that is given to it in intuition from elsewhere* to the unity of apperception, which therefore **cognizes** nothing at all by itself, but only combines and orders the material for cognition, the intuition, which must be given to it through the object. (B145, italics added)

Given the remark that precedes it, this claim is clearly meant to apply to any finite understanding. This is confirmed by the fact that the phrase italicized in (F) is not restricted to human spatio-temporal intuitions, but applies to the intuition of any finite thinking beings. And

(F) makes it clear that Kant holds that in the case of any such beings there is a connection between imaginative synthesis and categories, as implied by the form-of-synthesis reading of the phrase “the way in which the empirical intuition is given in sensibility.” Indeed, by presenting categories as “rules” for “bringing the synthesis of the manifold ... to the unity of apperception,” (F) also suggests that the synthesis of the intuition is guided somehow by the categories. So the evidence within §21 favors the form-of-synthesis reading of the key phrase over the form-of-intuition reading. This evidence is not decisive, but, as we will see in section 3.2, Kant rules out the form-of-intuition reading in §26.

Note also that (F) is not the only place outside the core of BD2 where Kant commits himself to a connection between categories and forms of imaginative synthesis which does not in itself involve the spatio-temporal form of human intuition. In a frequently-cited passage in the *Metaphysical Deduction*, e.g., he says that “The concepts that give this pure synthesis [i.e., the pure synthesis of the imagination] **unity**, and that consist solely in the representation of this necessary synthetic unity, ... depend upon the understanding,” and he goes on to make it clear that the concepts he has in mind are categories (A79/B104–5). In the *A-Deduction* he claims that the categories “contain the necessary unity of the imagination in regard to all possible appearances,” which he introduced in the previous sentence as “**the transcendental synthesis of the imagination**” (A119); and a few pages later he claims that “all formal unity in the synthesis of the imagination” is “grounded” on the categories (A125). While the relationship between these abstract specifications of connections between the categories and imaginative synthesis is subject to interpretation, none of them crucially involves the spatio-temporal form of human intuition.

3. The Core Reasoning

The core reasoning of BD2 appears in §24 and §26, as indicated by their titles: “On the application of the categories to objects of the senses in general” (B150) and “Transcendental deduction of the universally possible use of the pure concepts of the understanding in experience” (B159). I discuss the texts of §24 and §26 in sections 3.1 and 3.2 respectively, arguing that the connections between intuitions and categories which they advance depend upon forms of imaginative synthesis rather than on the spatio-temporal form of human intuition.

3.1 §24: *Figurative Synthesis*

The key contribution of §24 to the core reasoning of BD2 occurs in the first portion of that section (B150–2), which Kant separates clearly from the remainder of the section (B152–6).¹⁵ Here the transcendental synthesis of the imagination appears as “figurative synthesis” or “*synthesis speciosa*,” which Kant explicitly distinguishes from the “combination of the understanding (*synthesis intellectualis*)” (B151). Figurative synthesis is the imaginative synthesis within sensibility which underlies what Kant refers to in (E) as “the ... **unity of intuition** through which an object is given” (B144 fn.), while intellectual synthesis is the synthesis of judgment. The distinction between figurative and intellectual synthesis is crucial to a proper understanding of the first paragraph of §24. This paragraph is significant because its references to human intuition could be taken to suggest that figurative synthesis applies only to spatio-temporal forms of sensibility, which would support SA.

The paragraph begins with a brief review of what Kant takes himself to have established — and not to have established — in BD1:

- (G) The pure concepts of the understanding are related through the mere understanding to objects of intuition in general, without it being determined whether this intuition is our own or some other but still sensible one, but they are on this account mere **forms of thought**, through which no determinate object is yet cognized. The synthesis or combination of the manifold in them was related merely to the unity of apperception, and was thereby the ground of the possibility of cognition *a priori* insofar as it rests on the understanding, and was therefore not only transcendental but also merely purely intellectual. (B150)

Setting aside the appositional clause “without it being determined whether this intuition is our own or some other but still sensible one,” what passage (G) clearly tells us that BD1 shows only that the synthesis by means of which the manifold of intuition is brought to the unity of apperception is intellectual synthesis, “through which no determinate object is yet cognized.” This implies that intellectual synthesis does not provide determinate objects for the categories.¹⁶ The clause I previously set aside merely reminds us that the intuition which provides the objects must be sensible intuition, and adds that it makes no difference whether this sensible intuition has the spatio-temporal form of human sensibility or some other form which applies in the case of other finite thinking beings.

In the remainder of the first paragraph of §24, Kant comments on how human understanding gets access to objects:

- (H) But since in us a certain form of sensible intuition *a priori* is fundamental, which rests on the receptivity of the capacity for representation (sensibility), the understanding, as spontaneity, can determine the manifold of given representations in accord with the synthetic unity of apperception, and thus think *a priori* synthetic unity of the apperception of the manifold of **sensible intuition**, as the condition under which all objects of our (human) intuition must necessarily stand, through which then the categories, as mere forms of thought, acquire objective reality, i.e., application to objects that can be given to us in intuition, but only as appearances; for of these alone are we capable of intuition *a priori*. (B150–1)¹⁷

This passage prepares the way for the key move in the first portion of §24 by advancing two crucially important claims under the *since*-clause in the first two lines. In (H) the second claim is embedded within the first, but for the sake of clarity I consider them separately and in reverse order.

The second claim, then, is that *pure categories* — which (H) identifies as “the categories, *as mere forms of thought*” (italics added) — apply to objects, and thus “acquire objective reality” through “*a priori* synthetic unity of the apperception of the manifold of **sensible intuition**.” Kant begins the paragraph immediately following (H) by saying that “This **synthesis** of the manifold of sensible intuition ... can be called **figurative** (*synthesis speciosa*)” (B151). Given the context, “This **synthesis**” must refer to the synthesis underlying the “*a priori* synthetic unity of the manifold of **sensible intuition**” in virtue of which categories apply to objects. So the key implication of the second claim is that the application of categories to objects depends upon figurative synthesis.

That brings us to the first of the two crucial claims in (H), which is that “the understanding ... can determine the manifold of given representations” only through the “*a priori* synthetic unity ... of the manifold of **sensible intuition**,”¹⁸ which clearly depends upon figurative synthesis. So,

while it is necessary for sensible intuitions to fall under categories in order to be brought to the transcendental unity of apperception by means of judgment (as argued in BD1), sensible intuitions can fall under categories only by means of figurative synthesis. This raises an important question: Given that figurative and intellectual synthesis are distinct, why should figurative synthesis yield unities in virtue of which intuitions fall under pure categories (which express forms of intellectual synthesis)? Kant presents his explanation in its most abstract and general form in a complex sentence in the middle of the third paragraph of §24.

Before we consider this explanation, it should be emphasized that nothing in the two crucial claims in (H) depends upon the spatio-temporal form of human intuition, and that everything in those claims is intelligible with respect to finite thinkers in general. The first part of the *since*-clause at the beginning of (H) might be taken to suggest that these claims hold because of the form of human sensible intuition, but the clause immediately goes on to highlight the *receptivity* of sensibility, which applies to the sensibility of any finite thinking being. And, as we will see, receptivity, unlike spatio-temporal form, is essential to Kant's key move. This reading is supported by the title of §24, "On the application of the categories to objects of the senses *in general*" (B150, italics added), which suggests that figurative synthesis applies to any possible sensible intuitions of finite thinking beings and is not restricted to spatio-temporal intuitions. Given these considerations, Kant's reference to the forms of human sensibility in (H) is best taken as a reminder that his ultimate concern is with human understanding, which depends upon human spatio-temporal sensibility, and therefore as an indication that in our case figurative synthesis has to apply to that form of sensibility. Nevertheless, it is often assumed that figurative synthesis is limited to and specifically concerned with spatio-temporal intuition,¹⁹ perhaps because this applies to the illustrative examples of figurative synthesis which Kant presents in the second portion of §24, on B154. But any examples accessible to both Kant and his readers would have to involve spatio-temporal intuitions because we do not have "the least concept" of any intuitions not "grounded in space and time" (B139). Moreover, Kant's general explanation of why figurative synthesis yields intuitions which fall under the categories says nothing at all about spatio-temporal form.

That explanation is as follows.

- (I) Now, since all our intuition is sensible, the imagination, on account of the subjective conditions under which it alone can give a corresponding intuition to the concepts of understanding, belongs to **sensibility**; but insofar as its synthesis is still an exercise of spontaneity, which is determining and not, like sense, merely determinable, and can thus determine the form of sense *a priori* in accordance with the unity of apperception, the imagination is to this extent a faculty for determining the sensibility *a priori*, and its synthesis of intuitions, **in accordance with the categories**, must be the transcendental synthesis of the **imagination**, which is an effect of the understanding on sensibility and its first application (and at the same time the ground of all others) to objects of the intuition that is possible for us. (B151–2)

This presupposes that intuition does not give us objects by means of receptivity alone, because its doing so requires unity of the manifold of sensibility, which depends upon imaginative synthesis (see B144 fn. and B154).²⁰ Passage (I) claims that this synthesis belongs to sensibility inasmuch as it applies to the manifold of sensibility to yield a unified intuition. And this intuition clearly does not belong to mere receptive sensibility (which Kant sometimes refers to as "sense" or "the senses") because it involves synthesis. So it must belong, rather, to

sensibility in a broader sense which involves both “sense and the *power of imagination*” (*Anthropology* 7:153).²¹ And figurative synthesis, Kant tells us in (I), “is an effect of the understanding on sensibility,” which is meant to explain why these intuitions fall under categories on the basis of the fact that the categories express forms of thought. So here, too, Kant’s account of the connection between intuitions and categories turns on the forms of imaginative synthesis (whatever they may be), not on the spatio-temporal form of human intuition.

3.2 §26: *The Synthesis of Apprehension*

Let me begin this section by noting that I am going to postpone discussing a passage in which Kant is often taken to advance the main argument of §26 — the paragraph straddling B161 and B162)²² — until the end of the section so that I can prepare the ground for this discussion.

Kant divides §26 — the heart of BD2 — into three portions, which are clearly separated from one another. He opens the first portion by reviewing what he has done in the Metaphysical Deduction and BD1, and then proceeds to tell us what must still be done to complete TD:

- (J) Now the possibility of cognizing *a priori* **through categories** whatever objects may come before our senses, *not as far as the form of their intuition but rather as far as the laws of their combination are concerned*, thus the possibility of as it were prescribing the law to nature and even making the latter possible, is to be explained. (B159–60, italics added to appositional clause)

Here Kant begins by stating that what is to be explained is the application of categories to sensible objects. The fact that he does this so soon after reminding us of the Metaphysical Deduction’s account of the categories in terms of the “logical functions of thinking” (B159) confirms that he is still concerned with pure categories (which is also supported by his description of the categories as “pure concepts of the understanding” in the title of §26 (B159)). Kant immediately goes on to say that the feature of sensible objects with respect to which the application of the categories is to be explained is *not* “the form of their intuition” but “the laws of their combination.” How this phrase should be understood is debatable, but it is clearly inconsistent with the form-of-intuition reading of the phrase “the way in which the empirical intuition is given in sensibility” as it occurs in (D). It is also inconsistent with the view that BD2 is crucially concerned with the spatio-temporal form of human intuition, which is at the heart of SA. As we will see, this is not the only place in §26 where Kant’s remarks cast doubt on SA.

While (J) indirectly supports the form-of-synthesis reading of the key phrase in (D) by excluding the form-of-intuition reading, it is not obvious whether (J) provides more direct support for the alternative interpretation. I claim that it does. The issue turns on how the phrase “the laws of their combination” is to be understood in (J), because this phrase is evidently intended to indicate the feature of intuitions in virtue of which, according to BD2, intuitions fall under categories. It may be tempting to think that these “laws of combination” are the *a priori* laws of nature alluded to in the last clause of (J), but this cannot be correct for two reasons. First, the *a priori* laws of nature are clearly Kant’s fundamental synthetic *a priori* principles (see, e.g., A184/B227, A216/B263, A227–30/B280–2, and *Prolegomena* 4:295), including especially the Analogies, which he advances and supports only in the Principles, two chapters after TD. Second, the “laws of combination” which (J) presents as pivotal to BD2 are meant to explain only how *a priori* laws of nature are *possible* (as signaled by the phrase “the possibility of as it were prescribing the law to nature and even making the latter possible”), not to identify or

support those laws. And it is reasonable to think that the “laws of combination” are meant to explain how *a priori* laws of nature are possible by explaining something which Kant’s *a priori* laws of nature presuppose, namely, that intuitions fall under categories.

According to the alternative interpretation, the phrase “the laws of their combination” concerns the synthesis of the imagination that combines the manifold of sensibility into a determinate intuition, and it applies to the principles (or “laws”) of combination which govern this synthesis. This reading not only makes good sense of (J), but also triangulates with the form-of-synthesis reading of the phrase “the way in which the empirical intuition is given in sensibility” in (D). In addition, it is in line with Kant’s claim in §10 that “synthesis alone is that which properly collects the elements of cognition and unifies them into a certain content” (A77–8/B103) — including the content in virtue of which empirical intuitions fall under categories and categories thereby apply to objects of those intuitions.

With the goal of explaining why empirical intuitions fall under categories, Kant introduces what he calls “the **synthesis of apprehension**” (B160) in the second paragraph of §26. He glosses this synthesis as “the composition of the manifold in an empirical intuition, through which perception, i.e., empirical consciousness of it (as appearance), becomes possible” (B160). This synthesis is obviously distinct from intellectual synthesis, so how can it be shown that the intuitions which it yields fall under categories? In the second portion of §26, while discussing a particular example, Kant claims that the unity of such a synthesis, “if I abstract from the form of space, has its seat in the understanding, ... with which that synthesis of apprehension ... must be in thoroughgoing agreement” (B162), and he adds this footnote:

- (K) In such a way is it proved that the synthesis of apprehension, which is empirical, must necessarily be in agreement with the synthesis of apperception, which is intellectual and contained in the category *a priori*. It is one and the same spontaneity that, there under the name of imagination and here under the name of understanding, bring combination to the manifold of intuition. (B162 fn.)

Kant has to “abstract from the form of space” here because he is discussing the perception of a house as an example, but the general point he is illustrating does not concern the spatial form of the intuition of the house, but an abstract relationship between the synthesis of apprehension and categories. This is a relationship which could apply between the intuitions and categories of any finite thinking beings (even though we could not appreciate examples which do not involve our forms of intuition). An exactly parallel point applies to the other example in the second portion of §26, namely, Kant’s perception of water freezing, about which he finds it necessary to “abstract from the form of **my** inner intuition, time” (B163). These abstractions also confirm that Kant is concerned with pure categories, because they set aside the spatio-temporal conditions of the categories’ application.

It is also noteworthy that when Kant says in (K) that the synthesis of apprehension is empirical, he implies that this notion is not exactly equivalent to what he calls “the synthesis of apprehension” in the A-Deduction, which applies both *a priori* and empirically (A98–100). This raises the question of why Kant claims in (K) that “the synthesis of apprehension ... must necessarily be in agreement with the synthesis of apperception” and hence with the categories. The obvious answer is that the synthesis of apprehension somehow involves the figurative synthesis of §24, “the transcendental synthesis of the **imagination**” which must be “**in accordance with the categories**” because it is “an effect of the understanding on sensibility” (B152). Following Allison (2004, 196–7), I understand figurative syntheses as fundamental *a priori* forms of the synthesis of apprehension. This conforms with Kant’s claim that the

transcendental use of the imagination “is concerned solely with form” (A94), and it implies that all cases of the synthesis of apprehension must exemplify and implement figurative syntheses. Given that figurative synthesis is “an effect of the understanding on sensibility,” this readily explains why, when discussing the perception of the house, Kant can claim that “the synthesis of apprehension ... must be in thoroughgoing agreement” with the understanding, “in which it has its seat” (B162).

After discussing his two examples in the second portion of §26, Kant begins the third portion by reiterating the problem he is tackling by asking “how it is to be conceived that nature must follow [the categories],” and he indicates that he is going to provide “the solution to this riddle” in the following paragraph, which ends §26. The key passage in the paragraph is this:

- (L) Now that which connects the manifold of sensible intuition is imagination, which depends upon understanding for the unity of its intellectual synthesis and on sensibility for the manifoldness of its apprehension. Now since all possible perception depends upon the synthesis of apprehension, but the latter itself, this empirical synthesis, depends upon the transcendental one, thus on the categories, all possible perceptions, hence everything that can ever reach empirical consciousness, i.e., all appearances of nature, as far as their combination is concerned, stands under the categories.... (B164)

Here again Kant implies that synthesized intuitions fall under categories because of a connection between imaginative synthesis and the understanding which does not in itself involve the spatio-temporal form of our intuition. More specifically, in (L) Kant claims that synthesis of apprehension depends upon the transcendental synthesis of the imagination — which he described as figurative synthesis in §24 — and “thus on the categories.” Kant does not say why the synthesis of apprehension depends upon the *transcendental* synthesis of the imagination, but this clearly must hold if figurative syntheses are *a priori* forms of syntheses of apprehension. Kant also does not specify the connection between the transcendental synthesis of the imagination and the categories which legitimates the conclusion that synthesis of apprehension “depends upon the categories,” but he must be thinking of his earlier claim that figurative synthesis must be “**in accordance with the categories**” because it “is an effect of the understanding on sensibility” (B152). In any event, there is nothing in these relationships which is limited to the spatio-temporal form of human intuition and which therefore supports SA.

I turn, now, to the paragraph in which Kant is often taken to advance the main argument of §26. This paragraph, which occurs at the end of the first portion of §26, invokes much more complicated considerations than (L) and may appear to support SA. I begin by discussing the paragraph in terms which might seem to favor SA before arguing that it does not in fact support it. The core of the paragraph is as follows.

- (M) [1] We have forms of outer as well as inner sensible intuition *a priori* in the representation of space and time, and the synthesis of apprehension of the manifold of appearance must always be in agreement with the latter, since it can only occur in accordance with this form. [2] But space and time are represented not merely as **forms** of sensible intuition, but also as **intuitions** themselves (which contain a manifold), and thus with the determination of the unity of this manifold in them (see the Transcendental Aesthetic). [3] Thus even the **unity of the synthesis** of the manifold, outside or within us, hence also a combination with which everything that is to be represented as determined in space or time

must agree, is already given *a priori*, along with (not in) these intuitions, as conditions of the synthesis of all **apprehension**. [4] But this synthetic unity can be none other than that of the combination of the manifold of a given **intuition in general** in an original consciousness, in agreement with the categories, only applied to our **sensible intuition**. [5] Consequently all synthesis, through which even perception itself becomes possible, stands under the categories.... (B160–1, reference numerals added)

In a well-known footnote attached to step [2] in (M), Kant applies the term “**formal intuition**” to the intuition of space referred to in the second clause of [2] and claims (among other things) that “the unity of the representation” of space is not given by the form of intuition but by the formal intuition, and that this unity “presupposes a synthesis” (B160–1 fn.). It has been argued that the unity Kant has in mind in the footnote must be the *singularity* of space, i.e., its being the one and only, all-embracing, objective space.²³ If this is the case, then an exactly analogous point must apply to the formal intuition of time, and the unities of space and time Kant refers to in (M) must be their singularity.

On this basis, step [3] could be explained as follows. Something is “represented as determined in space or time” only if it is represented as having a fully determinate spatio-temporal position, i.e., an identifiable position within a single, objective spatio-temporal framework. So, if the representation of this singularity involves a synthesis (as the footnote implies), then that synthesis must be a condition of all syntheses of apprehension which yield empirical intuitions, since empirical intuitions represent things as spatio-temporally determinate.

One further preliminary point should be noted before we try to make sense of the argument as a whole, namely, that the synthesis underlying the formal intuition mentioned in step [4] — “the combination of the manifold ... in agreement with the categories, only applied to our **sensible intuition**” — must be the figurative synthesis of §24, “the transcendental synthesis of the **imagination**,” the *a priori* synthesis of intuitions “**in accordance with the categories**” (B152).

Now, if we assume that (M) expresses Kant’s main argument for the claim that empirical intuitions must fall under the categories and we treat it fairly literalistically, we could paraphrase and to some extent unpack this argument as follows (for convenience, merging the spatial and temporal forms of intuition into a single spatio-temporal form of intuition, and the formal intuitions of space and time into a single formal intuition of the spatio-temporal framework).

- (a) Syntheses of apprehension yielding empirical intuitions “must be in agreement with” the spatio-temporal form of intuition ([1]).
- (b) In addition, these syntheses “must be in agreement with” the formal intuition of the spatio-temporal framework, which represents it as singular, to account for the fact that intuitions represent things “as determined in space or time” ([2] and [3]).
- (c) The unity of the formal intuition “presupposes a synthesis” (B160–1 fn.).
- (d) So (from (b) and (c)) the synthetic unity of the formal intuition is a condition of all syntheses of apprehension yielding empirical intuitions — even though this synthetic unity is “given along with (not in)” these empirical intuitions ([3]).
- (e) The synthetic unity of the formal intuition is the unity of figurative synthesis, i.e., synthesis “in agreement with the categories, only applied to our **sensible intuition**” ([4]).
- (f) So (from (d) and (e)) all synthesis, including syntheses of apprehension, “stands under the categories” ([5]).

We can reasonably assume that (f) in turn implies that empirical intuitions fall under categories.

On the face of it, it is not clear that this argument should be considered persuasive given the material covered earlier in the first *Critique*. Let me mention some concerns about it. To begin with, (b) seems questionable. Why should empirical intuitions of perception represent their objects as completely determinate with respect to their position in our spatio-temporal framework? Why is it not enough for them to be represented as locatable relative to the perceiver and other things perceived on the applicable occasion? And, if this is enough, why should the syntheses of apprehension yielding these intuitions be “in agreement with the formal intuition” if this means any more than *consistent with* it? Let us assume, however, that what Kant means is that syntheses of apprehension in some way *presuppose* the formal intuition and its synthetic unity (which he calls “conditions” of these syntheses), but that they do not themselves *incorporate* either the formal intuition or its synthetic unity — since these are “given along with (not in)” the empirical intuitions which the syntheses yield (see (d)). And let us accept, as we should, that the synthesis presupposed by the formal intuition is figurative synthesis “in agreement with the categories,” as implied by (c) and (e). Even so, it does not follow that syntheses of apprehension “stand under the categories,” as claimed by (f). For if one synthesis presupposes another distinct synthesis, we are not entitled to infer that the former must have any given property possessed by the latter. To illustrate, although the synthesis of apprehension presupposes figurative synthesis, it does not follow that the synthesis of apprehension is, like figurative synthesis, *a priori*.

But even if we set aside such concerns and assume that Kant intended to invoke an argument more or less like the above, it remains the case that the argument does not support the standard view. For the only features of space and time which make a difference to this argument is that they constitute our frame of reference inasmuch as they are represented by both our form of intuition and our formal intuition, the singularity of which depends upon synthesis. It is easy to see that this is the case by replacing the first two steps of the argument with the following.

- (a') Syntheses of apprehension yielding empirical intuitions “must be in agreement with” the form of intuition of the frame of reference.
- (b') These syntheses must also “be in agreement with” the formal intuition of the frame of reference, which represents it as singular, to account for the fact that the intuitions represent things in determinate positions within the frame of reference.

If the remainder of the argument is left unchanged, the force of the revised argument can be no different from that of the original, because all considerations from (a) and (b) which are at play in the remainder of the argument are covered just as effectively by (a') and (b'). The only property of space and time on which the argument turns is the *singularity* represented by the formal intuition, which depends upon imaginative synthesis. But singularity is no doubt required in any possible objective frame of reference represented by the form of intuition and the formal intuition of any finite thinking being. This is indeed suggested by Kant's claim in step [4] of (M) that the synthetic unity of the formal intuition “can be none other than that of the combination of the manifold of a given **intuition in general**,” which could be applied to the intuition of such a being. The upshot is that, although (M) reminds us that our frame of reference is spatio-temporal, it does not support the claim that there is a connection between the categories and space and time as such. This clearly favors the alternative interpretation over SA.

Even though my interpretation is supported by this aspect of the argument, I want to raise

the question of whether (M) does in fact advance the main argument of §26. Why should Kant think that he needs this complicated argument to support the claim that empirical intuitions must fall under the categories given that he has access to another, simpler argument which supports this conclusion on the strength of a direct (albeit rather abstract) connection between the understanding and imaginative synthesis which does not depend upon our spatio-temporal form of intuition? I am thinking in particular of the argument expressed by (L), appropriately supplemented by (I). And if we assume that Kant holds that empirical intuitions must fall under categories because of a direct connection between the understanding and imaginative synthesis, then he doesn't need to invoke the above argument for this conclusion. This suggests that (M) may not be meant to serve as an argument for the claim that empirical intuitions must fall under the categories.

And there is indeed textual evidence in §26 that (M) is not meant to perform this function. In particular, Kant tells us near the beginning of the first portion, in (J), what is still to be done, namely, that “the possibility of cognizing *a priori* **through categories** whatever objects **may come before our senses** ... is to be *explained*” (B159–60, italics added to “explained”). But although the conclusion of (M) *implies* that the categories apply to any objects of our sensibility, it definitely does not *explain why* they do.

There is, moreover, textual evidence that Kant means to advance the main argument of §26 in (L) rather than in (M). Recall that in (J), when Kant elaborates on what he still has to do in order to complete TD, he says that doing so will involve explaining “the possibility of as it were prescribing the law to nature and even making the latter possible” (B159). He does not, however, mention this possibility at all in connection with (M), but first refers back to it at the beginning of the third portion of §26, where he restates the problem he is tackling as that of showing “how it is to be conceived that nature must follow [the categories]” and indicates that he is going to provide “the solution to this riddle” in the following paragraph (B163), in which (L) is pivotal. Moreover, (L) itself concludes with the claim that “all appearances of nature, as far as their combination is concerned, stands under the categories” (B164), which signals that Kant has now done what he intended. Taken together, these considerations strongly suggest that the main argument of §26 appears in (L) rather than in (M).

But if (M) is not meant to advance the main argument of §26, what other purpose does it serve? I claim that it is meant to supplement the reasons why it is important to explain why the synthesis of apprehension “stands under the categories” (B161). For, while (M) asserts that we have a formal intuition of a singular frame of reference (which in our case is constituted by space and time), what it argues (albeit not very effectively) is that *if* this is the case, *then* synthesis of apprehension “stands under the categories.” By contraposition, this implies that if it is not the case that the synthesis of apprehension “stands under the categories,” then we do not have such a formal intuition, which Kant clearly cannot accept. So it is crucially important for him to validate the claim that syntheses of apprehension “stand under the categories” by *explaining why it holds*. Kant does not do this in (M), but he does try to do it in (L), as supplemented by (I).

In this light, we can make sense of the purposes of the three portions of §26 as follows. The first is meant to inform us that the goal of §26 is to show that synthesized intuitions fall under the categories, that this will be done by showing why the syntheses of apprehension which yields these intuitions are “in agreement with the categories,” and that it is crucially important to do it in order to accommodate the singularity of the formal intuition. The second illustrates how syntheses of apprehension are “in agreement with the categories” by means of two accessible examples concerning the perception of a house, which involves synthesis in accordance with the category of unity (which Kant calls “the category of **quantity**” (B162)), and

the perception of water freezing, which involves synthesis in accordance with the category of cause. And the last portion of §26 seeks to establish that the synthesis of apprehension does stand under the categories by explaining why it must on the basis of a connection between the imagination and the understanding.

4. Conclusion

As we have seen, then, Kant's explanation of why empirical intuitions must fall under categories is that the (empirical) syntheses of apprehension which constitute these intuitions are governed by (transcendental) figurative syntheses, which must accord with the categories because they depend upon the understanding. And, as the alternative interpretation claims, this explanation, which is cast in general terms, abstracts from the specific, human forms of intuition, forms of judgment, and categories. Unfortunately, Kant does not do much to clarify the nature of the dependence of the forms of imaginative synthesis on the understanding, and a careful investigation of this issue is beyond the scope of this essay. But I'd like to conclude with some very brief observations and speculative suggestions about it.

Kant's statement that the transcendental synthesis of the imagination is "an effect of understanding on sensibility" (B152) could be taken to suggest that imaginative synthesis itself involves the subsumption of intuitions under categories. This reading cannot, however, be correct, not only because it is inconsistent with Kant's view that objects of the understanding are given by sensibility, which is distinct from the understanding, but also because it simply assumes that intuitions fall under categories, which is what it is meant to explain. So it must be the case that, in Longuenesse's words, imaginative synthesis "is itself sensible and preconceptual" (1998, 64). And, without compromising the distinctness of sensibility and understanding, we can understand the dependence of the imagination on the understanding as a matter of its having the function of yielding intuitions which fall under concepts, including, in particular, categories.²⁴

One possible way to make sense of this functional dependence is to view the capacities of sensibility and understanding as distinct but interdependent parts of a unitary, holistic cognitive system which work together so as to make cognition possible²⁵ — in a way analogous to that in which the organs of a living animal work together to sustain it and make its activities possible. On this picture, a core function of the imagination involved in sensibility is to synthesize the raw intuitions given by mere sense into intuitions with determinate contents which explain why these intuitions fall under concepts, including categories, and thereby provide objects to which those concepts apply. Such an explanation of the application of categories to empirical objects is intelligible in its own right, but could also be supplemented and underwritten by an account of how human spatio-temporal intuitions fall under human categories. But even if one assumes that Kant does not intend to advance a functional account of the relationship between imaginative synthesis and the understanding in BD2, his claim that the former depends upon the latter provides at least the *form* of an explanation of why empirical intuitions fall under categories, which could apply to any finite thinking beings. And it is possible to transform this form of an explanation into a full explanation concerning human cognition by means of such supplementation. But Kant sets out to do this in the Schematism rather than in BD2.

Acknowledgements

[To be added]

Notes

1. Understood broadly, this covers §§21–7 of the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but the core reasoning of BD2 occurs in §24 and §26. Citations of Kant's works follow standard conventions. Quotations are from translations listed in References.

2. Almost four decades ago Guyer observed that “most contemporary commentators” hold that BD2 aims “to establish a connection ... between the conceptual forms of judgment [as expressed by categories] and the forms of human intuition” (1987, 77). This still applies, as illustrated by Onof and Schulting's assumption “that it is fairly well established ... that the second part, unlike the first, refers to the particular spatiotemporal nature of our human sensibility” (2015, 22).

3. Commentators who are committed to SA include Henrich (1969, 645, 646), Allison (1983, 133; 2004, 160; 2015, 329), Wagner (1980, 260–2), Robinson (1986, 404), Kitcher (1990, 157), Longuenesse (1998, 170), Pollok (2008, 329, 332, 334), Guyer (2010, 143–4), Gomes (2010, 129), Shaddock (2014, 52; 2018, 480), Rauscher (2012, 404–5, 410–12), Kaye (2015, 152), Schulting (2020, 294), and Matherne (2024, 209).

4. I use “falls under” exclusively for the relation between a representation and a more inclusive representation, such as that between “cat” and “mammal” or between my intuition of Felix and the concept *cat*. And I use “subsumes” as the converse of “falls under.” Kant sometimes uses “subsumes” in this way, and sometimes uses it for the relation between a representation and something it applies to, such as that between the concept *cat* and any particular cat. Examples of both uses appear on A137/B176.

5. This formulation leaves open the question of whether finite thinking beings other than humans may have different forms of judgment, and hence different categories, than humans. But my reasoning does not depend on the claim that Kant holds that they may, which is subject to dispute. See, e.g., Engstrom (1994, 379–80), Nunez (2019, 1167–70), and Gomes, Moore, and Stephenson (2022, 134–55).

6. This appears to capture the views of most of the commentators cited in note 3, who do not explicitly consider the question of what the basic function of BD2 is. Given his claim that BD2 is merely a promissory note, the most obvious exception is Guyer. If SA is taken to express only an ultimate purpose of BD2, then my interpretation is not inconsistent with it, but still fills a significant gap in the literature by providing an account of the basic function of BD2. To avoid needless complication, I set aside this possibility in the main body of this essay.

7. Kant expresses the problem by means of the question “**How are synthetic judgments a priori possible?**” (B19), but he must be thinking of knowledge as well as judgments because he is clearly concerned with scientifically valid judgments, as in mathematics, natural science, and scientific metaphysics (see, e.g., B20 and B22).

8. But this knowledge does not depend *only* on our forms of sensibility, for Kant holds that *all* our cognition depends upon the understanding. And it is arguable that, although some basic properties of space and time are represented by the forms of sensibility, this does not apply to their singularity, which also depends upon synthesis (see, e.g., Longuenesse 2000/2005, 34–5 and M. Pendlebury 2025).

9. Although Kant cites §13 here, the applicable passage (included in (A)) is on B128 in §14 (which was unnumbered in the second edition).

10. Note also that only three specific categories are mentioned explicitly in TD as a whole (including the introduction, the A version and the B version), viz., substance (on A94/B129 and B149), cause (on A90–2/B122–4, A 112, B163 and B168), and unity (on B130–1 and B162, where it shows up as “the category of **quantity**”). All explicit references to specific categories in BD2 occur in illustrative examples, which strengthens the case for the view that it is primarily concerned with categories in general.

11. So it is in **BD2** that Kant means to address a challenge pressed by Van Cleve, viz., that he fails “to show that the categories ... actually apply to objects of experience” (1999, 89). For further discussion, see Robinson 1986, 407–9, and Gomes 2010.

12. Although this footnote is attached to a claim about the proof of BD1, I am concerned only with its significance for the interpretation of Kant’s phrase “the way in which the empirical intuition is given in sensibility” as it occurs in (D).

13. Those who make it clear that they have this commitment include Longuenesse (1998, 70, fn.17), Gomes (2010 127-8), Kaye (2015, 151–2), and Guyer (2018, 196).

14. I set aside the Guyer and Wood translation of the adverb *zugleich* on B145 as “at the same time,” because it could just as well have been translated as “also” in this context.

15. Allison says that the remainder of §24 “constitutes a digression”(2015, 374), but it also includes illustrations of figurative synthesis which could be taken to support SA. I address this concern later in section 3.1.

16. This must be correct for two reasons. First, the understanding cannot supply its own objects, which must be given by intuition. Second, §20, which sets out the argument of BD1, does not imply that any intuitions fall under the categories, but only that, in order for intellectual synthesis to apply to intuitions, it is *necessary* for those intuitions to fall under the (pure) categories. This is confirmed by the title of §20, “All sensible intuitions stand under the categories, as *conditions under which alone* their manifold can come together in one consciousness” (B143, italics added).

17. As Allison observes, the phrase translated here as “can determine the manifold of given representations” should be rendered as “can determine inner sense through the manifold of given representations” (see 2015, 380 fn.7). On this basis, Allison assumes that “Kant limits his claim [about the application of categories] to inner sense and its a priori form (time)” (2015, 381), but Kant makes it clear within (H) itself that he means the claim to apply to *all* objects of intuition. In this light, inner sense should here be understood to include all the manifold of sensibility, which “as modifications of the mind ... belong to inner sense” (A98–9). So the Guyer and Wood omission of the reference to inner sense, although unfortunate, is not misleading.

18. I say *only* through the *a priori* synthetic unity of intuition because Kant claims in (H) that this is “*the condition under which all objects ... intuition must necessarily stand*” for categories to apply to objects (italics added).

19. See, e.g., Makkreel 1990, 29–31, Gibbons 1994, 37–8, Young 1994, 355, Longuenesse 1998, 70, 216–21, Pollok 2008, 333–4, Allison 2015, 374, 384, Shaddock 2018, 471, and Schulting 2020, 299–313.
20. For a defense of the claim that imaginative is required for intuitions to provide objects to our concepts, see Young 1994.
21. The claim that Kant is committed to the view that imagination belongs to sensibility is defended by, e.g., Stephenson (2015, 496–507) and Matherne (2024, 69–77).
22. See, e.g., Wagner 1980, 361, Longuenesse 1998, 214, Allison 2004, 193–4, and Matherne 2024, 203–4.
23. See, e.g., Longuenesse 1998, 214–25, 1998/2005, 67–73, and 2000/2005, 34–6 (in which Longuenesse calls the singularity of space *unicity*) and M. Pendlebury 2025. I regard this footnote mainly as an attempt to connect what is crucial to **BD2** with other parts of the *Critique* and thereby illustrate its significance. So I disagree with commentators who treat it as pivotal to the argument of §26 (see, e.g., Allison 2015, 408).
24. See, e.g., Longuenesse 1998, 12, 64 and Allison 2004, 188.
25. A version of such an interpretation of Kant’s account of cognition is advanced in T. A. Pendlebury 2022.

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