

THE CONCEPT OF TRANSCENDENTAL APPERCEPTION AND ITS ROLE IN THE SECOND EDITION OF KANT'S TRANSCENDENTAL DEDUCTION

Dr. Vera Lyubenova

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Abstract. The aim of this article is to trace the meaning that Immanuel Kant assigns to the concept of transcendental apperception and to present its role in the *second edition* of the *Transcendental Deduction* in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. It will be shown that the doctrine of transcendental apperception resolves some problematic features of the theories of consciousness in the traditions of Rationalism and Empiricism. In this regard, Kant's transcendental apperception will be examined in contrast with the concepts of inner sense (John Locke and David Hume), Cogito (René Descartes), and intellectual intuition (Gottfried Leibniz). This comparative approach will allow us to gain a clearer understanding of the meaning of transcendental apperception. Finally, its role in the justification of the pure concepts of understanding will be considered.

Keywords: transcendental apperception; empirical apperception; inner sense; Cogito; intellectual intuition; transcendental deduction; metaphysical deduction

The concept of transcendental apperception holds a specific and important place in the justification of knowledge as an argument of the *Transcendental Deduction* in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. It also provides a clear alternative to previous theories of consciousness and resolves certain theoretical problems specific to Rationalism and Empiricism. Hence, the aim of this article is twofold. Firstly, it seeks to clarify the meaning and content of the concept of transcendental apperception against the background of Kant's critique of concepts such as inner sense (Locke and Hume), the Cogito (Descartes), and intellectual intuition (Leibniz). This analysis will help us understand the meaning of transcendental apperception as a pure, non-empirical apperception (1), as an original (2), and as a formal (3) condition of knowledge. Secondly, the article aims to clarify the role of transcendental apperception as a key argument in the justification of the pure categories of understanding.

There are significant differences in the exposition and argumentation between

the *first* and *second* editions of the *Transcendental Deduction*. In fact, Kant devotes more attention to the concepts of inner sense and intellectual intuition in the *second edition*. For instance, he does not even share any thoughts on intellectual intuition in the *earlier edition*. Also, the *first edition* combines both the so-called *subjective* and *objective sides* of the argument, also known as *subjective* and *objective deductions*. The *subjective side* investigates the *cognitive faculties* with regard to the possibility of knowledge, while the *objective side* deals entirely with the *justification* of the *objective validity* of the pure concepts of understanding. The *second edition* entirely leaves the subjective deduction, focusing solely on the objective side of the argument¹). Given the differences between both editions, my analysis will focus on the *second edition* of the *Transcendental Deduction*.

Transcendental Apperception vs. Inner Sense

In the *Transcendental Deduction* Kant considers the concept of *transcendental apperception* as the transcendental unity of self-consciousness in contrast to the concept of *empirical apperception*, which he associates with the inner sense. The history of the concept of *inner sense* in the tradition of Empiricism can be traced back to Locke. He distinguished two sources of ideas: sensation and reflection. The difference between them is that while our senses are a source of ideas produced by external objects, reflection is a source of ideas produced by the mind's self-observation of its own internal operations. Thus, the self perceives its own internal actions in the act of reflection, which is why, according to Locke, "this source of ideas... might properly enough be called internal sense" (Locke 1997, p. 110). This *internal sense* Hume, in turn, called *impression of reflection*. It should be noted that, in both Locke and Hume, the act of reflection is intrinsically linked to sensations. It necessarily follows them, and when a given sensation reoccurs, the latter provokes in us certain emotions, passions, or affects, which Hume associates with the impressions of reflection. Correspondingly, the so-called *internal* (Locke, Hume) or *inner sense* (Kant) is an indicator of our inner perceptions and mental states. Therefore, Hume characterizes the self as "nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement." (Hume 1960, p. 252). However, given the absence of a necessary connection between our perceptions, it turns out that each perception is associated with a different self. This is why Hume rejects the idea of the (self-)identity of the self, defining it as an illusion.

By relating the concept of empirical apperception to the inner sense, Kant emphasises the passivity of the knowing subject in the tradition of Empiricism. In this regard, he calls our attention to a contradiction to which the topic of the inner sense seems to lead:

"This is a suitable place for explaining the paradox which must have been obvious to everyone in our exposition of the form of inner sense: namely, that

this sense represents to consciousness even our own selves only as we appear to ourselves, not as we are in ourselves. For we intuit ourselves only as we are inwardly *affected*, and this would seem to be contradictory, since we should then have to be in a passive relation [of active affection] to ourselves. It is to avoid this contradiction that in systems of psychology *inner sense*, which we have carefully distinguished from the faculty of *apperception*, is commonly regarded as being identical with it" (Kant 1929, pp. 165 – 166).

In fact, Kant reveals that this paradox is merely an ostensible one. If we take into consideration the difference between the inner sense and pure apperception, then the described contradiction disappears. The act of self-affection does not belong to the inner sense or empirical apperception, which is passive by nature. The object of experience becomes an object *for us* only in the combination of the manifold of intuition and thus provides the content of our senses. Hence, our senses receive their object as a result of the *original* capacity of understanding to combine "the manifold of intuition, that is, of bringing it under an apperception" (Kant 1929, p. 166), where apperception refers to pure apperception. According to this, Kant actually shows us that the empirical apperception becomes possible only under the presupposition of transcendental apperception.

In other words, the concept of empirical apperception embodies the idea of a passive cognitive subject. Similarly, Locke's inner sense and Hume's impression of reflection reveal their belief in the inherent passivity of the self in the process of cognition. Kant, actually, introduced a radical change with the idea of the Copernican turn in philosophy, transforming knowledge into an active process. However, the self becomes aware of its activity in the synthesis of the manifold of representations. Accordingly, as I will elucidate, the conscious awareness of one's own activity in the synthesis of the manifold of representations makes possible the consciousness of identical self. In this sense, Kant asserts the thesis that the synthetic unity of apperception is a precondition for its analytical unity in the statement "I think".

Transcendental Apperception vs. Cogito

In Kant's transcendental philosophy, the synthesis presents the active and spontaneous nature of the knowing subject. Hume demonstrated clearly that the lack of awareness of the self's inherent activity produces a variety of empirical selves. Conversely, the cognizing subject recognizes his own identity in the awareness of his own activity. In this sense, Kant says: "Only in so far, therefore, as I can unite a manifold of given representations *in one consciousness* is it possible for me to represent to myself the *identity of the consciousness in [i.e. throughout] these representations*. In other words, the *analytic* unity of apperception is possible only under the presupposition of a certain *synthetic* unity." (Kant 1929, pp. 153 – 154). According to this, the synthesis presupposes a subject of synthesis, and the con-

scious awareness of this synthesis gives rise to the consciousness of a *self-identical thinking self*. This is the reason why Kant presents the analytic unity of apperception through the representation of “I think”. However, there is a fundamental difference between Kant’s “Cogito” and Descartes’s “Cogito”.

We can notice in the works of Descartes a specific mood that penetrates his entire philosophy. Paul Ricoeur grasps this mood with precision, defining it as a fear of falling into error (see Ricoeur 2004, p. 30). If we pay attention, however, this fear regards the capacities of our senses and imagination, rather than the faculty of reason, which somewhat defines the internalist direction of Descartes’s philosophy. The well-known thought experiment in *Meditations on First Philosophy* describes an evil demon dedicated to deceiving us (see Descartes 1995, p. 15). The only possible solution in situation like this, according to Descartes, is to adopt a strategy of universal doubt. What is specific here, however, is that the universal doubt can be overcome through doubt itself. The act of doubting is the only unquestionable act which refutes itself. However, based on the fact that doubt is a form of thought, Descartes declared the first principle of his philosophy in the eminent stance: “I am thinking, therefore I exist”. Hence, he accepted the status of Cogito as a substance, although Kant and many scholars would later deny the legitimacy of the conclusion in Descartes’s first principle²:

1) “By substance we can understand nothing other than a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence” (Descartes 1985, p. 210).

2) “The concept of created substance that we have applies equally to all substances, i.e., both to the immaterial and to the material or corporeal. For to understand that these are substances, it is enough only to notice that they can exist without the help of any other created thing.” (Descartes 1647, p. 35 – 36)³.

In the *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes defines two different concepts of substance based on their degree of independence in order to distinguish between *divine* substance, which is completely independent, and *thinking* and *corporeal* substances, which are created (by God). However, in his *Meditations*, for example, Descartes is not so precise, providing more general definition of substance as “a thing capable of existing independently” (Descartes 1995, p. 30). The idea of material substance was first rejected by Berkeley, then Hume rejected the idea of mental substance. According to Kant’s position “That the ‘I’, the ‘I’ that thinks, can be regarded always as *subject*, and as something which does not belong to thought as a mere predicate, must be granted. It is an apodeictic and indeed *identical* proposition; but it does not mean that I, as *object*, am for myself a *self-subsistent* being or *substance*” (Kant 1929, p. 369). However, the fact that Kant denies the substantiality of the self does not mean that he denies the existence of the self as well:

“Now in order to *know* ourselves, there is required in addition to the act of thought, which brings the manifold of every possible intuition to the unity of apperception, a determinate mode of intuition, whereby this manifold is given; it

therefore follows that although my existence is not indeed appearance (still less mere illusion), the determination of my existence can take place only in conformity with the form of inner sense, according to the special mode in which the manifold, which I combine, is given in inner intuition. Accordingly I have no *knowledge* of myself as I am but merely as I appear to myself. The consciousness of self is thus very far from being a knowledge of the self" (Kant 1929, pp. 168 – 169).

Descartes's rationalism establishes a foundationalist model of knowledge. The Cogito embodies the idea of the first, supreme truth, from which the entire system of rational knowledge can be derived. Transcendentalism changes the status of the Cogito from the first truth of knowledge to the *original* condition of knowledge (according to this, Kant refers to pure apperception as "original apperception"). However, the self as the subject of thought is completely unknowable. Knowledge (including the determination of our own existence) requires not only thought, but an intuition of ourselves as well. Accordingly, the subject can know itself only as a phenomenon in the definitions of inner sense: "we must also recognise, as regards inner sense, that by means of it we intuit ourselves only as we are inwardly affected *by ourselves*; in other words, that, so far as inner intuition is concerned, we know our own subject only as appearance, not as it is in itself" (Kant 1929, p. 168). The latter also sheds light on why Kant defines Descartes's Cogito as an empirical proposition in the *Paralogisms of Pure Reason*.

Transcendental Apperception vs. Intellectual Intuition

The entire *Critique of Pure Reason* is guided by the idea of the limits of human reason. Rationalism places exceptional hopes on reason, assuming that "there can be nothing too remote to be reached in the end or too well hidden to be discovered" (Descartes 1985, p. 120). Kant was the first to raise the question of the conditions for the possibility of knowledge and our cognitive limitations. In the *Transcendental Deduction*, the concept of intellectual intuition outlines an intuition that transcends the limits of experience and actually presents Kant's criticism towards Leibniz's philosophy⁴). Kant himself divides intuition into empirical and pure intuition. However, pure intuition is not intellectual. It is pure because it is reduced to space and time as pure forms of sensibility. Hence, Kant distinguishes further between inner and outer sense, respectively, inner and outer intuition. The form of outer sense is space, through which "we represent to ourselves objects as outside us" (Kant 1929, p. 67), i.e., it refers only to appearances that are external to us. This limitation is not applied to the form of inner sense, in so far as every appearance (inner or outer) as a representation *for us* is determined in time. Knowledge of the self is introspective, i.e., it is directed inward towards the mind, which is why our self is a subject of inner sense, through which "the mind intuits itself or its inner state" (Kant 1929, p. 67) Therefore, according to Kant, "I have no *knowledge* of myself as I am but merely as I appear to myself" (Kant 1929, p. 169). Cognition

of the self as it is in itself, i.e., as a noumenal entity, presupposes an intuition of a different nature, which no finite rational being possesses.

In this regard, Kant distinguishes the concept of sensible intuition from that of intellectual intuition. The latter, as Kant states, “has none of the characteristics proper to sensible intuition; that it is not extended or in space, that its duration is not a time, that no change (succession of determinations in time) is to be met with in it, etc. But there is no proper knowledge if I thus merely indicate what the intuition of an object is *not*, without being able to say what it is that is contained in the intuition” (Kant 1929, p. 163). In this sense, Kant only hypothetically ascribes intellectual intuition to a divine understanding. He describes this as an “intuitive” understanding (see Kant 1929, p. 163), for which the manifold as a content of intuition is not given, but is created by its own representation. Thus, “For were I to think an understanding which is itself intuitive,... the categories would have no meaning whatsoever in respect of such a mode of knowledge.” (Kant 1929, p. 161). On the contrary, our understanding has as an object of its thought only what is given to it in experience. However, the manifold becomes an object *for us* only when it is brought under the unity of apperception through the application of the pure categories. In this sense, against the background of the concept of intellectual intuition, Kant, indeed, reveals the significance of the transcendental unity of self-consciousness as a *formal condition* of the possibility of knowledge.

In summary, so far, the comparative analysis of the concept of transcendental apperception with the concepts of inner sense, Cogito, and intellectual intuition, showed its specificity as a non-empirical, pure apperception (1) as well as an original (2) and formal (3) condition of knowledge. These definitions determine the pivotal place of the concept of transcendental apperception in the *Transcendental Deduction*.

The Role of the Concept of Transcendental Apperception in the *Transcendental Deduction*

Kant attributes the role of an argument to the concept of transcendental apperception in the *Transcendental Deduction* of the pure categories of understanding. He adopts the term *deduction* from the realm of law, where its meaning significantly differs from that in the field of logic (see Kant 1929, p. 120). Thus, the term *deduction* carries not the sense of *derivation*, but of *justification*. Accordingly, the goal of the transcendental deduction is reduced to justification of the objective validity of the categories, which is ultimately guaranteed by the concept of transcendental unity of apperception.

Hence, the entire exposition of the *Transcendental Deduction* deals with showing the necessity of using the pure categories of understanding in experience. Kant’s solution of this matter could be considered, at some extent, as an answer to Hume’s treatment of the concept of causality. Kant reveals his debt to Hume

in *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* and clarifies his motivation for developing the *Transcendental Deduction* as an attempt to solve Hume's problem (Kant 2004, p. 10). Indeed, it could be said, Hume was one step away from the so-called *Copernican turn*. His mistake lay in seeking the idea of causality entirely on an empirical level, and when he reached the concept of causality as an idea present in the mind, he failed to acknowledge its legitimacy, largely because he did not assume the cognitive activity of the subject. However, by developing the idea of necessity as a connection present in the mind, Hume literally paved the way for Kant's transcendental turn: "I freely admit that the remembrance of David Hume was the very thing that many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave a completely different direction to my researches in the field of speculative philosophy... If we begin from a well-grounded though undeveloped thought that another bequeaths us, then we can well hope, by continued reflection, to take it further than could the sagacious man whom one has to thank for the first spark of this light." (Kant 2004, p. 10). In Kant, the subject acquires the status of a fully active participant in the process of knowledge, as the synthesis of the manifold of intuition is carried out according to the pure concepts of our understanding.

Given Hume's conclusion that the concept of causation has no empirical reality and cannot be found in experience, the following question regarding the a priori source of the categories arises. It becomes a central problem of the so-called *Metaphysical Deduction*⁵⁾ of the categories of understanding:

"So I tried first whether Hume's objection might not be presented in a general manner, and I soon found that the concept of the connection of cause and effect is far from being the only concept through which the understanding thinks connections of things *a priori*; rather, metaphysics consists wholly of such concepts. I sought to ascertain their number, and as I had successfully attained this in the way I wished, namely from a single principle, I proceeded to the deduction of these concepts, from which I henceforth became assured that they were not, as *Hume* had feared, derived from experience, but had arisen from the pure understanding" (Kant 2004, p. 10).

According to this, in the *Metaphysical Deduction*, Kant presents the entire system of the a priori categories of understanding. This raises, as a result, the subsequent question "how *subjective conditions of thought can have objective validity*" (Kant 1929, p. 124), which becomes a central topic in the *Transcendental Deduction*. If the transcendental deduction succeeds in proving that no experience can be thought without the pure categories of understanding, then the deduction will be completed.

It could be said that the transcendental deduction shows the logic of *recognition* of the objects of experience, that is, how they are identified by the cognitive subject. Ricoeur notes that identification is equal to joining together or combination (see Ricoeur 2004, p. 37). Kant regards two types of combination (synthesis): these are the *synthesis of the manifold in intuition* and the *synthesis of representations in judgment*. However, the concept of

combination (or synthesis) itself contains the concept of *unity*: “But the concept of combination includes, besides the concept of the manifold and of its synthesis, also the concept of the unity of the manifold. Combination is representation of the *synthetic* unity of the manifold.” (Kant 1929, p. 152). Since the combination and unity of the manifold of intuition are not given at the empirical level, then they must be sought beyond experience. Indeed, they are provided by the pure concepts of understanding. Kant effectively proves the *necessity* of the categories by showing that without the presupposition of pure concepts of understanding, no experience can be thought. An object becomes an object *for us* through the synthesis of the manifold of intuition according to the pure categories of understanding. However, the condition of categories can be subjected under another *necessary* precondition of a higher order. Hence, no experience is possible at all without the precondition of the transcendental unity of self-consciousness.

To some extent it is not surprising that Kant uses the *Transcendental Deduction* to reveal that the concept of transcendental apperception is crucial for the argument of the metaphysical deduction as well. Kant introduces the topic in the *Clue to the Discovery of all Pure Concepts of the Transcendental Analytic*: “The same function that gives unity to the various representations *in a judgment* also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations *in an intuition*; and this unity, in its most general expression, we entitle the pure concept of the understanding” (Kant 1929, p. 112). However, only the *Transcendental Deduction* clarifies that the categories are bearers of unity, which they receive through the unity of self-consciousness. In this sense, the concept of transcendental apperception embodies the highest original and necessary condition of knowledge without which neither our experience nor our knowledge would be possible. Accordingly, the transcendental apperception provides the decisive argument for both the *Metaphysical* and *Transcendental* deductions of the pure concepts of understanding.

Conclusion

The Critique of Pure Reason presents a systematic exposition of the a priori conditions for the possibility of knowledge. Undoubtedly, each of Kant’s theoretical concepts has its own strict place and significance in the explanation of the process of knowledge. On the one hand, the comparative analysis of the concepts of inner sense, Cogito, and intellectual intuition demonstrated that the concept of transcendental apperception is an *original, formal* and *pure* precondition of knowledge. On the other hand, the analysis of the *Transcendental Deduction* showed that the transcendental apperception is a *necessary* condition for the possibility of knowledge. As such, it provides the argument for both the *Metaphysical* and *Transcendental Deductions* of the *Transcendental Analytic*.

NOTES

1. Regarding the difference between the *first* and *second* editions of the *Transcendental Deduction* in relation to the topic of the *subjective* and *objective* sides of deduction, see Kanawrow 2015, pp. 101 – 103 and Allison 2015, pp. 197 – 203.
2. Descartes's principle "Cogito, ergo sum" is widely criticised by different scholars for containing both a formal (Cogito) and an existential statement (ergo sum). Kant demonstrates the untenability of the conclusion in Descartes's statement in the *Paralogisms of Pure Reason* of the *Transcendental Dialectic*. On this topic, see Stefanov 1981, p. 46. Similar critique can be found in the context of the definition of the myth of the given in Sellars's *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, see Sellars 1997, see also King-Farlow 1961, pp. 50 – 52.
3. The translation from French into English is mine.
4. Regarding the relation between the concepts of *apperception* and *intellectual intuition* specifically in Leibniz, see Stoev 2003.
5. Since the primary task of the *Metaphysical Deduction* is reduced to the systematic derivation of the a priori categories, it could be said that the term *deduction* has the meaning of *derivation* in this context. However, it could also be said that it conveys the meaning of *justification*, as the *Metaphysical Deduction* not only derives but also justifies the a priori status of the categories of understanding.

REFERENCES

- ALLISON, H., 2014. *Kant's Transcendental Deduction: An Analytical-Historical Commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-872486-5.
- DESCARTES, R., 1647. *Les Principes de la philosophie, écrits en latin, par René Descartes*. Et traduits en françois par un de ses amis. Paris: Pierre Des-Hayes.
- DESCARTES, R., 1985. *The Philosophical Writings of Rene Descartes*, vol. 1. Transl. by Cottingham, J., Stoothoff, R., and Dugald Murdoch. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DESCARTES, R., 1995. *The Philosophical Writings of Rene Descartes*, vol. 2. Transl. by Cottingham, J., Stoothoff, R., and Dugald Murdoch. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- HUME, D., 1960. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- KANAWROW, V., 2015. *Roads of Transcendental Schematism*. Sofia: Iztok – Zapad [In Bulgarian]. ISBN 978-619-152-664-2.
- KANT, I., 2004. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-0-521-53535-9
- KANT, I., 1929. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Transl. by Kemp Smith, N. London: MacMillan.

- KING-FARLOW, J., 1961. Myths of the Given and the Cogito Proof. In: *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 49 – 53. ISSN 1573-0883.
- LOCKE, J., 1997. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Edited by Woolhouse, R. London: Penguin Books.
- RICOEUR, P., 2005. *The Course of Recognition*. Transl. by Pellauer, D. Harvard University Press. ISBN 0674019253.
- SELLARS, W., 1997. *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. Harvard University Press. ISBN 0-674-251155-5.
- STEFANOV, I., 1981. *Kant and the Problem of the Dialectics*. Sofia: Science and Art [In Bulgarian].
- STOEV, HR., 2003. The Concepts of Apperception and Intellectual Intuition (Leibniz, Kant, Fichte). *Proceedings in the Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Mining and Geology “St. Ivan Rilski*. Vol. 3, pp. 5-18 [In Bulgarian]. ISSN 954-9748-15-4.

✉ **Dr. Vera Lyubenova**

ORCID ID: 0009-0006-2297-8773

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Sofia, Bulgaria

Email: vera.lyubenova@ips.bas.bg