



Journal of Philosophical Investigations



University of Tabriz

Does Kantianism Imply Some Sort of Conceptual Creationism?

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Article Info

Article type:

Research Article

Article history:

Received 02 July 2024

Received in revised form
07 July 2024

Accepted 07 July 2024

Published online 07
August 2024

Keywords:

concept, intuition, Kant,
mind, understanding,
sensibility, world

ABSTRACT

I argue in the essay that the conceptualist understanding of the mind-world relation ultimately leads to the kind of view that Panayot Butchvarov calls conceptual or linguistic creationism. According to this view, “there is nothing we have not conceptualized”. In addition to being an antithesis of metaphysical realism, which maintains that there is a reality independent of us, the term refers to the kind of thinking that sees human cognitive experience (and reality itself) as thoroughly constituted according to our concepts. While it might be easy to attribute this kind of position to Kant as well, especially when read through a conceptualist lens, I argue that such a position is not in accord with Kant’s philosophical intentions. Using the Deduction and Schematism chapters of the Critique of Pure Reason as examples, I also argue that on the conceptualist understanding of the mind-world relation too much is read into Kant’s idea that sensibility and understanding must be cognitively compatible with one another.

Cite this article: Laiho H. (2024). Does Kantianism Imply Some Sort of Conceptual Creationism? *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(47), 49-62. <https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.18257>



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<https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.18257>

Publisher: University of Tabriz.

Introduction

There is already a plethora of philosophical literature proposing that Kant is a conceptualist, or that he is a nonconceptualist, or that he is something in between (see, e.g., Allais 2016; McLear 2020). I take the ultimate issue in the debate to be how the mind-world relation is constituted. Basically, the issue stands on the question of how the mind connects with the world, and what is the role of concepts and judgments in that connection, or whether we should regard *sensibility* or *understanding* as primary in establishing that connection.

In what follows, I mostly maintain a bird's eye viewpoint on the debate. My starting point is what Panayot Butchvarov calls *conceptual* or *linguistic creationism*, or “the heady view that there is nothing we have not conceptualized or verbalized” (Butchvarov, 2002, 300). In addition to being an antithesis of the metaphysically realist idea that there is a reality independent of us, conceptual/linguistic creationism refers to the kind of thinking that sees human cognitive experience—and with it, reality itself—as constituted according to our concepts and language.¹

First, I will go through some reasons why such a highly anti-realist view is not, strictly speaking, a Kantian position on the mind-world relation. Yet, as I will also argue, the Kantian conceptualist or intellectualist understanding of the mind-world relation leans towards such an unwanted view. Using the Deduction and Schematism chapters of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as my examples, I will then examine the idea of the co-operation of sensibility and understanding, and whether this idea favors Kantian conceptualism or not.

1. Conceptual Creationism versus Commonsense versus Kantianism

Let's start by slicing up Butchvarov's description of conceptual/linguistic creationism into two separate claims:

- (1) There is nothing we have not conceptualized.
- (2) There is nothing we have not verbalized.

¹ Butchvarov (2002, 300) himself promotes moderate antirealism that aims to avoid conceptual/linguistic creationism: “Our nonrealism acknowledges the virtual tautology that nothing unconceptualized can be the content of judgments or statements and thus serve as evidence or enter in other epistemic relations. But, unlike most current versions of nonrealism, it does not deny the need for something like Kant's distinction between things-in-themselves and things-for-us. It avoids what might be called conceptual or linguistic creationism, the heady view that there is nothing we have not conceptualized or verbalized. Nor does it deny, on the side of things-for-us, the difference between what Kant called sensibility and understanding. That there is such a difference is evident, however difficult it may be to state it. We might say that understanding is up to us, while sensibility is not, but this, though in the right direction, would be misleading or at least vague. It would be better to say that we have some idea of how we may choose to conceptualize differently the things we find, but not of how we may choose to find different things.”

By adding the notions of “creation” and “reality” into the picture, we may modify these two claims as follows: (1*) Reality is basically a product of conceptualization. (2*) Reality is basically a product of verbalization, limited to what can be expressed in a language.¹

All in all, conceptual/linguistic creationism says that reality is “up to us”—fully dependent on human concepts or language or both. If we assume that there can be no proper language use, or meaningful verbal expression, without concepts, then the claim (2*) entails the claim (1*). However, the opposite is not necessarily true: perhaps there can be concept use without the use of language.

The commonsensical reaction to any such creationism is that reality is *not* up to us: Whatever the role of concepts and language is in making sense of reality, most certainly the world we live in is not our own creation. We are *in* the world rather than its makers (cf. Goodman 1978). The world constantly pushes and pulls us, so to speak. Reality is as much (or more) like a constraining factor as it is an outcome of the cognitive processes of an individual. Most importantly, worldly objects exist independently of us, and this idea is not under threat due to claims such as the one that the perceptual system of an organism shapes the way the organism perceives objects. It is also phenomenologically evident that even if our descriptions of the world did depend on concepts and language, as they most certainly do, we also feel and perceive things in ways that go beyond the reach of our concepts and capacities of linguistic expression. In a word, much of reality is ineffable. Or at least some of it is, and in any case the world, and our experience of it, is “richer” or “denser” than our somewhat limited and coarse cognitive attempts at capturing it in everyday descriptions, scientific theories, religious belief, worldviews, and the like.

Kantianism appears to balance between the creationist view and commonsense realism. Creationistic looking Kantian items include space and time as “transcendentally ideal”, or as the necessary sensible features of possible experience that structurally precondition the actual perception and imagination of objects (see *CPR*, esp. Transcendental Aesthetic). The categories make another example: The Kantian concept of Substance, for example, does not pick out some sort of absolute or ultimate existents of the world as such, but, rather, indicates a cognitive rule employed in regarding spatiotemporally appearing objects as feature-bundles that exist over time (e.g., *CPR*, B6). In short, the mind-world relation is to be understood in Kantian terms “representationally”, and on one possible interpretation, this means that the worldly objects are objects only in so far as we represent them as being such objects. And in any case, one of Kant’s main points would be that our cognitive apparatus both affects and (at least partly) dictates the outputs of the mind-world relation.

¹ Of course, (1*) and (2*) do not directly follow from (1) and (2), since the latter could be regarded merely as characterizations of our epistemic limitations, as opposed to ontological claims about reality as such. It seems to me, however, that this distinction—or the lack of it—brings up the core problem with any such “creationistic” views: namely that they tend to run epistemological and ontological considerations together.

Still, the Kantian position does not appear to be utterly “creationist” or “irrealist” (cf. Goodman, 1978). For one thing, the things in themselves—things regarded independently of our representations—play an important, albeit negative role in the Kantian story. This is to say that the representations of things must be metaphysically grounded on something—it is just that we are not in the position to know much about this ground. Alternatively, one could take the main Kantian lesson to be that speaking of things utterly independently of our representations of them just does not make much sense in the end. Yet, we are in touch with reality all the time—surely representationalism does not need to mean that reality is purely a construct, or some sort of intramental collection of ideas, as the hardcore idealist would have it (see *Prol 4*: 374-5). Kant’s position would also be an antithesis of sheer subjectivism, or what might be called the pluralism of actual worlds (Goodman, 1978, 2)—after all, space-time and the categories are supposed to be the universal features constitutive of all human cognition and (at least humanly) possible experience (e.g., *CPR A42/B59*; *A96-7*; *B148*).

What’s more, the stark Kantian distinction between sensibility and understanding suggests that *conceptual* creationism would in any case be an unfitting term in the Kantian context. This would be so even if we admitted—whether for real or for argument’s sake—that Kantianism implies some sort of cognitive “creationism” or “constructionism”, because the contributions of sensibility—sensations, intuitions, perceptions, feelings, and the like—are not supposed to be conceptual (and even less verbal) items in the Kantian view. Quite the contrary, the whole point in introducing sensibility as a separate faculty from understanding or the intellect—also known as the faculty of concepts and judgments—revolves around the idea that there are elements in our experience that we have not (or need not have) conceptualized or verbalized.

Indeed, some such nonconceptual and nonverbal elements might simply be unreachable through conceptual thinking, and still be of utmost cognitive significance. Kant is quite explicit on this. Take, for example, the representations of space and time as non-discursive, the singularity of intuitions as opposed to the generality of concepts, or the distinguishing between incongruent counterparts, which cannot be based on a conceptual analysis of the objects in question, or the representation of apperception as nothing but a feeling of existence in the end:

Time is no discursive or, as one calls it, general concept, but a pure form of sensible intuition. Different times are only parts of one and the same time. That representation, however, which can only be given through a single object, is an intuition. (*CPR*, *A32-2/B47*)

What indeed can be more similar to, and in all parts more equal to, my hand or my ear than its image in the mirror? And yet I cannot put such a hand as is seen in the mirror in the place of its original; for if the one was a right hand, then the other in the mirror is a left, and the image of the right

ear is a left one, which can never take the place of the other. Now there are no inner differences here that any understanding could merely think and yet the differences are inner as far as the senses teach[.] (*Prol 4*, 286)

If the representation of apperception, the *I*, were a concept through which anything might be thought, it could then be used as a predicate for other things, or contain such predicates in itself. But it is nothing more than a feeling of an existence without the least concept, and is only a representation of that to which all thinking stands in relation (*relatione accidentis*). (*Prol 4*, 334n)

One could also stress that the worldly objects, understood in Kantian terms as *apparentia*, are at least partly strictly tied to the laws of sensibility (see, e.g., *Prol 4*, 346; *CPR*, B273; *CPR*, A441/B469). If nothing else, the objects obeying these laws are practically forced upon us: we do not make them appear, nor do we make them appear the way they do (at least not in any proper sense of the word ‘make’). The appearances simply define our *perceptual* or *sensory consciousness*, as one could put it. Take for example a ball flying suddenly through a window: there is no escape from the fact that something simply happens—a thing moves and breaks another thing—and makes us see and hear these things and react primitively in a certain way, and all this independently of how we may describe or interpret the situation, or how we may react to it in a more sophisticated manner after the initial shock. There is little we can do to contribute to reality through our concepts and language in that basic sense. I believe Kant would totally agree on this, and I also believe that his further idea that understanding prescribes the laws of nature (see, e.g., *CPR*, B164; *Prol 4*, 319-20) does not change any of that. After all, the same Kant would also maintain that:

The conditions under which alone the objects of human cognition are given precede those under which those objects are thought (*CPR*, A16/B30).

Or at least all of the above is true if the Kantian nonconceptualist or sensiblist or the “sensibility first” view (Hanna, 2015) of the mind-world relation is true. On the Kantian conceptualist or intellectualist understanding of the mind-world relation, however, the cognitive roles of sensibility and understanding are to be understood not only as strictly dependent and intertwined, but understanding is seen as primary. As it is sometimes put, the contributions of sensibility must be governed or guided by concepts, especially by the pure concepts of understanding also known as the categories (e.g., Williams, 2012). On one possible interpretation, like the one advocated by McDowell, there is no such thing as *nonconceptual sensory consciousness* or “bare getting of an extra-conceptual Given” (McDowell, 1996, 9) at all—not even when you primitively perceive the ball hit the window before you realize what just happened. This is because the conceptual capacities are supposed to be “already operative in the deliverances of sensibility themselves” (McDowell

1996, 39), which is also why the contents of perceptual experience must be conceptual contents according to the conceptualist. This opens the door for conceptual/linguistic creationism: if even sensations, intuitions, perceptions, feelings, and the like, are “concept-infused” from the start, then it looks like there is indeed nothing we have not conceptualized and/or verbalized.¹

2. Conceptualism Implies Judgmentalism Implies Verbalism Implies Creationism

A way to defend the conceptualist position—but which does not go very far if one wants to altogether avoid the view that there is nothing we have not conceptualized or verbalized—is to insist that in so far as we aim to make sense of reality, we need to express the contents of perceptual experience in judgments. And everybody agrees that making judgments means the employment of conceptual capacities. This much also seems true: if I want to understand what happened in the episode of the ball hitting the window, and communicate the details of the event to you, I surely do have to express myself using concepts that constitute my judgments—I have to think and say things like: “Did you see the ball break the window? Is that a baseball or tennis ball? Who’s the culprit?”

At the same time, the “judgmentalist”—or should I say the “verbalist”—kind of conceptualism basically shrinks perceptual experience to *sentences*.² If this much is true, and in addition, if the notion of nonconceptual sensory given is excluded from the equation, it is difficult to see how to avoid the slide towards the position according to which concepts and language dictate the mind-world relation. Stress the language-dependence enough and you are left without some of the core reasons to debunk conceptual/linguistic creationism: You cannot anymore say that reality cannot be fully captured by judgments or expressed through linguistic means. You cannot say that reality is to some extent ineffable. You cannot say that we are in the grip of something independent from us, directly evidenced by simple perceptual situations, for example. You cannot legitimately do such things because you are married to conceptual content, or more generally, to the kind of position that sees even a simplest perception propositionally, that is, in terms of *things being thus and so* (see McDowell, 1996, 9). As already said, such a theoretical move basically reduces the contents of perceptual experience to sentences, or to be more precise, to propositions necessarily *expressed* in sentences. And so, reality more or less becomes a product of verbalization, limited to what can be verbalized or otherwise linguistically expressed. As Wittgenstein famously put it:

¹ Alternatively, one might worry in this context about idealism (a worry explicitly brought up by Sellars, for example: see Williams, 2012, 63-4). In the Kantian context, in particular, pushing the conceptualist interpretation of Kant’s theory of intuition too far can be seen as leading to a similar outcome: “In my view, the dominant [conceptualist] reading of intuition [...] is likely to lead to understanding transcendental idealism as centrally a kind of conceptual idealism—a position which is about seeing empirical reality as carved up by or dependent on our concepts.” (Allais, 2015, 148)

² The Sellarsian claim-talk (e.g., McDowell, 1998, *passim*) does not change any of this: ultimately, the “claims” contained in perceptual experience are items expressed in sentences.

The limits of my language mean the limits of my world (Wittgenstein, 1922, 5.6.).

Surely there are conceptualists who do not want to “deplete” reality that much. Perhaps McDowell is one of them, though that is easier said than done from someone who also thinks that “receptivity does not make an even notionally separable contribution to the co-operation [between receptivity and spontaneity]” (McDowell, 1996, 9). Be that as it may, the kind of conceptualist who thinks that the “deliverances” of sensibility must be guided or “put under” concepts to play any cognitive role whatsoever, can still avoid the “verbalist” or “judgmentalist” version of conceptualism. All they need to do is show that concepts ought to be understood in some other manner than merely as the constituents of judgments that can only find real use by being expressed in the sentences of some language or another.

It seems to me, however, that nobody has ever *concretely* shown what such a concept-use would really mean, or how exactly it is supposed to take place, and particularly so in the Kantian context (see, e.g., Longuenesse, 2000, 45, 50 and *passim*; Allison, 2004, 79 and *passim*). Would it mean that when I saw the ball hit the window, I could only make sense of the situation by *implicitly subsuming*—just like that—the ball, the window, and their clash, under the concepts of Substance and Cause? Then again, what would this even mean if the “judgmentalist” or “verbalist” view is deemed unacceptable—as *too* intellectualistic, say? Would it mean that the implicit idea of an object that exists over time (and has got some sort of powers to affect other objects) is somehow implanted in our sense perceptions, already at the level of sensory intakes perhaps? But how could that be and on what grounds?

Be that as it may, instead of arguing for the de facto conceptuality of sensory inputs or the like, or the conceptuality of appearances as such, let alone the details of the cognitive processes involved, the main conceptualist argument would nevertheless be that for anything originated in sensibility to be judgeable for us, it must be *intrinsically compatible* with concepts—most notably with the categories in the Kantian context. And if that is so, it must then mean (says the conceptualist) that the ball hitting the window taken seemingly merely phenomenally must share the same cognitive structure as the ball hitting the window taken propositionally as an explication of *things being and behaving thus and so*. Therefore, they say, every perceptual experience must possess conceptual content, to which they are eager to add that otherwise the contents of perceptual experience could not enter in rational relations of justification or “the space of reasons” (see, e.g., McDowell, 1996, 4-5).

3. Can the Compatibility between Sensibility and Understanding Be Fully Explained?

Let’s look at the intrinsic compatibility view closer. It is based on a kind of transcendental argument that basically says that if the contents of perceptions were not isomorphic with the contents of judgments, then cognitive experience as we know it would not be possible. It is telling that such an

argument is not specifically an explanation of how cognitive experience takes place, and it effectively overlooks the abovementioned reasons to believe that perceptual contact with reality is much more direct and uniquely different from judgments. This makes the argument rather weak and uninformative and certainly not a definitive argument against nonconceptualism. As a matter of fact, the conceptualist compatibility argument reminds us of the refutation of *substance dualism* on the grounds that the mind-body causation would be very hard to understand anyway. While that is certainly true, that alone does not make substance dualism untrue in the slightest.

How about Kant? What kind of an argument he gives for the compatibility view? A good place to look for is the notorious Transcendental Deduction, especially the section 26 of the B-version, where Kant makes a notable move as he explicates his previous claim that “all synthesis, through which even perception itself becomes possible, stands under the categories” (*CPR*, B161). Kant gives two examples of this “standing under” relation. The first example concerns the perceptual grasping of the spatial form of a house in outer intuition and its abstracted counterpart, namely the category of Quality, which suggests the attribution of size to the house, and, moreover, the “agreement” of these two “synthetic unities” (*CPR*, B162). The second example concerns the perceptual recognition of water going from a fluid state to a solid state. This time the crucial element is the sequence between the two states, either considered in terms of their relation in time in inner intuition or as the abstraction of that relation in terms of effects and causes (*CPR*, B162-3). In a word, the category-application is a process of *abstraction* that presumably requires something *concrete* to be abstracted *from*. What else would this concrete thing be but an appearance given in intuition? In addition, take notice of the following: In the first example, the category-application concerns the quantification of the house, but *not* having the intuition or appearance of this particular object as such. Similarly, in the second example, the appearances of water turning from liquid to ice are already available for the perceiver, whereas the category-application concerns how to causally determine the event as a whole.

Kant’s view here looks to me exactly as the one *opposed* by the likes of McDowell, according to whom there cannot be anything like nonconceptual sensory consciousness, or “getting of an extra-conceptual Given”. But doesn’t the appearance—elsewhere explicated by Kant as the “undetermined object of an empirical intuition” (*CPR*, A20/B34)—play the role of the nonconceptually given? I would say it does. Some of Kant’s conditionals are quite revealing too—he says: “*if I abstract* from the constant form of my inner intuition” and “*if I apply* [the category of cause] to my sensibility” (*CPR*, B163; my italics). This does not at all suggest that the intuition or appearance itself would have to be “infused” by the category.

Of course, the abstraction process can only succeed if there *is* some kind of compatibility between understanding and sensibility. However, it seems that the Deduction remains rather silent on the question of how the abstraction process exactly takes place and what kind of compatibility

(that guarantees the success of that process) is precisely at issue here (see also Laiho, 2019, 45-6). In a letter to Herz, Kant himself suggests that this is something we cannot really explain:

we are absolutely unable to explain further how it is that a sensible intuition (such as space and time), the form of our sensibility, or such functions of the understanding as those out of which logic develops are possible; nor can we explain why it is that one form agrees with another in forming a possible cognition (*C* 11, 51).

Given this, the case for Kantian conceptualism remains weak: there is the idea of the necessary compatibility between sensibility and understanding, but no specific explication of their link. Besides, couldn't one suggest nonconceptualism *all the way up* on the same grounds (cf. Stalnaker, 2003, 105-6)? Say, by admitting that understanding and sensibility must operate together at some point of the cognitive process, while emphasizing that the main Kantian point would nevertheless be that their co-operation must be *grounded* in nonconceptual intuitions for that co-operation of theirs to have any significance at *any* point of the cognitive process? Such a strategy would in fact fully avoid the slide towards the conceptual creationist view that there is nothing we have not conceptualized, and the ill consequence that without a constant link to the nonconceptual ground it becomes unclear how always to distinguish the reality of concepts, that is, whether they "actually relate to objects or are mere beings of thought" (*Prol* 4, 295).

A little later in the Deduction, Kant makes another interesting move as he explicates the two examples further by referring to the laws of nature in general, as opposed to particular laws of nature that are always partly empirical (*CPR*, B163-5). These laws of possible experience, as Kant calls them in the *Prolegomena*, are "prescribed" by space and time "in combination with" the categories (*Prol* 4, 375). Yet, and this I find worthy of emphasis, these laws are *very general* in character. The category of Cause, for example, implies "the law, that if an event is perceived then it is always referred to something preceding from which it follows according to a universal rule" (*Prol* 4, 296). This in turn implies the more general view that nature as a whole must comply with such principles, since otherwise it would not be possible for us to know anything necessary and *a priori* about it. But what this more general view does not imply is that the appearances themselves must be governed or "infused" by the categories to count as appearing objects in the first place.

Of course, one might still argue that in order to count as fully-fledged objects, understood as epistemic items self-consciously available to the cognitive subject, the appearances need to be combined with the categories (see, e.g., Allais, 2009, 405). A textually based variation of this argument would go that mere representations need to be "related to an object", understood as "that in the concept of which the manifold of given intuition is united" (*CPR*, B137). This, in turn, points towards the categories, and "the unity of consciousness" (*CPR*, B136-7) constituted by them, which is supposed to secure how every intuition, and the manifold contained in it, is thinkable (see *CPR*,

B138). To my mind, however, the introduction of the one consciousness acts as just another compatibility argument, which leaves unanswered the question of how exactly the unity of the categories in one consciousness is related to the appearances in actual cognition. In support of this reading, I would like to pinpoint Kant's remark earlier in the Deduction (§21):

In the above proof, however, I still could not abstract from one point, namely, from the fact that the manifold for intuition must already be given prior to the synthesis of the understanding and independently from it; how, however, is here left undetermined (*CPR*, B145).

Put in general terms, while Kant clearly wants to keep intact the independency of intuition from the operations of understanding, he also leaves much unexplained in the Deduction. Nor do I see any further proof forthcoming in that piece of text. Moreover, it appears that it is the Schematism chapter that follows the Deduction—not the Deduction itself—that is supposed to give us insight into the question of *how* sensibility and understanding come together.

4. What Is Schematism Supposed to Explain?

We already touched upon the idea of the implicit subsumption of appearances under concepts, where the concepts are to be understood more like rules of synthesizing sense perceptions as constituents of actual judgments. Such a view would have more explanatory power regarding the co-operation between sensibility and understanding, in comparison to the explanatorily weak compatibility view. Such a view would also avoid the “verbalist” or “judgmentalist” version of conceptualism. At the same time, it is difficult to see what exactly would actual, albeit implicit, concept-use that already takes place at the level of appearances amount to, and how it would relate to explicit concept-use in actual judgments. What's more, the idea appears to stem from contemporary psychological studies, such as those that focus on the continuity of objects. The results of these studies suggest, among other things, that even very young children do not expect that a perceived object that has moved behind an obstacle has all of a sudden disappeared; instead, they expect the same object to soon reappear (see, e.g., Bertenthal & al. 2007). I think one could use the concept of substance in this or similar context to refer to a built-in cognitive mechanism thanks to which the test subjects anticipate perceived objects to exist over time even unseen.

But can we really find a similar idea in Kant? A good place to look for is another obscure piece of text: The Schematism chapter, which is supposed to explain how the heterogeneous elements of sensibility and understanding are brought together, that is, “how [...] the application of the category to appearances [is] possible” (*CPR*, A137/B176). More specifically, the Schematism chapter should clarify the *subsumption* of intuitions under the categories (*CPR*, A137/B176). That is to say, it should illuminate the process of regarding the intuited objects in accordance with one or the other of the categories, or as belonging under them, in which process the schemata are supposed to function as mediating representations (*CPR*, A138/B177). Unfortunately, Kant is sparse on details,

and gives better examples of geometrical and empirical concepts, and their respective schemata, though his ultimate point supposedly concerns the categories and their transcendental schemata. It almost seems as if he was in a rush when writing that section, or that providing a clear-cut answer to the question about the exact relationship between sensibility and understanding was never his primary concern (see esp. *CPR*, A142/B182). As we have seen, the same might be said about the Deduction.

What should be clear, though, is that the appearances and the categories never enter into a containment relation—he says:

No one would say that the category [...] is contained in the appearance”
(*CPR*, A137-8/B176-7).

What’s more, the categories appear in the Schematism chapter as some sort of rules of determination that are *laid onto* the intuited appearances with the help of the schemata, as opposed to something that are *put into* the intuitions themselves. Read this way, the strict distinction between sensibility and understanding can be kept intact, and one can also continue to stress that the appearances are given independently of the intellect. In addition, one can see why the schemata are needed in the first place: namely, because the intuited objects or appearances never become conceptual as such.

It is noteworthy that with the categories and their schemata, Kant emphasizes *time*. Here’s a rough sketch of what I think he means by this: The application of the categories depends on temporal conditions—in the case of Substance, on “the persistence of the real in time”, which is also its schema (*CPR*, A144/B183). Such a rule can be laid onto an appearance if there indeed is something that persists over time. The mere category cannot do the trick because it is supposed to be totally different in kind from the appearance given through sensibility. In addition, as Kant puts it,

if one leaves out the sensible determination of persistence, substance would signify nothing more than a something that can be thought as a subject (without being a predicate of something else)” (*CPR*, A147/B186).¹

In other words, the concept would be limited to a merely logical use. With the schema in place, on the other hand, the concept of Substance can be extended on the appearance. For this, imagination is required, since imagination apparently can do the trick because in its time-

¹ In the Schematism, Kant also reminds the reader that the goal of the Deduction was to establish that the categories “relate *a priori* solely to appearances” and “cannot pertain to things in themselves” (*CPR*, A139/B178). We see here again how Kant’s approach, here described in his own words, appears more general than the kind of approach that would aim to explain how the appearances become “infused” by the categories.

determinations it can employ both sources: time, understood as the intuition of inner sense, and the rules of synthesis expressed by the categories, which always have a temporal dimension to them, thus sharing the same *a priori* ground as their basis (*CPR*, A138-9/B177-8).

Kant's explication of the role of imagination leaves much to be desired. Basically, he appears to make just another indirect compatibility argument when he postulates a mediating faculty between sensibility and understanding—as he already did when he introduced the schemata as mediating representations. Yet he succeeds, I think, in showing how only under suitable temporal conditions something that appears can be *declared* to be a substance, for example.¹ If this so, maybe the Schematism should not be read as an analysis of implicit concept-use at the level of intuitions as such, but as a more general or higher level explication of how appearances can be regarded as instances for category-application, *when* a category is applied to sensibility (cf. *CPR*, B163). This, however, appears to be a matter of judgment. Not that this would be surprising given that the Schematism is a part of the section titled Transcendental Doctrine of the Power of Judgment.

Conclusion

I suggested in the last two sections that the Deduction is not exactly an explanation of how the co-operation of sensibility and understanding takes place, and that the Schematism too leaves much to be desired in this respect. What the Deduction shows at best is that sensibility and understanding, though separate and distinct, must be compatible in their operations. As such, however, the compatibility argument does not show preference for Kantian conceptualism over Kantian nonconceptualism. Earlier, I suggested that not only does Kantian nonconceptualism better appreciate the uniqueness of the two faculties and their different cognitive contributions, but helps us keep with Kant's partly realist tendencies that disfavor any such position that might be called conceptual or linguistic creationism. Taken together, these points support, even if only indirectly, the kind of Kantianism that emphasizes the primacy of sensibility. In fact, we could here follow the arch-conceptualist McDowell himself and insist that we do not even “[need] to give an account of how concepts and intuitions are brought into alignment” (McDowell, 2002, 457). Indeed, why not accept that we do not really need to—perhaps because we are unable to—fully understand the co-operation between sensibility and understanding? It is just that this argument works in favor of nonconceptualism too.²

¹ The term “declare” is borrowed from Kant himself: “If I declare [*erkläre*] a thing to be a substance in appearance, predicates of its intuition must be given to me previously” (*CPR*, A399).

² This essay is a slightly modified and extended version of my presentation at the *6th Annual Workshop of the Contemporary Kantian Philosophy Project*, “Kant and the Primacy of Sensibility”, held at the Washington University in St. Louis, May 19-20, 2023. I thank the participants for fruitful philosophical discussion and helpful comments.

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