

On Kant
Mind and the World
Jan. 29, 2007

I. Doctrine of Elements: Faculty of Cognition

- a. Transcendental Aesthetic: Intuition/Sensibility
 - i. Forms of intuition: *a priori* “functions” [B93]
 - 1. Space
 - 2. Time
 - ii. “receptivity of impressions”
- b. Transcendental Logic: Thinking/Understanding
 - i. Forms of the understanding: *a priori* “concepts”
 - 1. Quantity
 - 2. Quality
 - 3. Relation
 - 4. Modality

II. “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.”
[B75/A51, I.12]

or, as in the Kemp Smith translation:

“Concepts without precepts are empty, precepts without concepts are blind.”

III. Kant’s breakthrough on Concepts

- a. For both Descartes and Hume, “having ideas” and “thinking” were discussed in the same breath and not distinguished from one another.
 - i. Descartes, e.g., in the *Fourth Replies*, p. 74 of Cottingham (Cambridge)
 - ii. Hume, e.g. in §5, Part II of his *EHU*.
- b. Kant, however, sharply distinguishes “idea” from “thought,” i.e. what we *acquire through the receptivity of sensation* from what we *think through the use of concepts*.
 - i. At A69/B94 Kant writes, “All judgments are accordingly functions of unity among our representations, since[,] instead of an immediate representation[,] a higher one, which comprehends this and other representations under itself, is

used for the cognition of the object, and many possible cognitions are thereby drawn together into one.” Concepts are “principles of unity” that bring the “many” together as “one.”

- ii. This is not yet a new idea, but Kant goes further and notes, “Concepts, however, as predicates of possible judgments, are related to some representation of a still undetermined object.” Predicates are applied to subjects. Thus, concepts must be understood in relation to *propositional forms*.

Having an “idea” of “red,” the residue of an impression left by a red thing is an entirely different matter from thinking that *This object is red*.

- iii. This opens the door to Kant’s fundamental strategy in the Transcendental Analytic, “The functions of the understanding can therefore all be found together if one can exhaustively exhibit the functions of unity in judgments.” He will “...attend only to the mere form of the understanding in [judgment]...” [A70/B95]
- iv. This door will not be shut again. The way is clear for a transformation in the philosophy of mind. Judgment has now been distinguished fundamentally from what we are *given* in experience; “form” has been distinguished from “content.” The game is on to analyze the relationship between “form” and “content,” what constitutes the “form of understanding,” and what grounds it, and similarly what constitutes “content” and what grounds it.