

## Acquaintance and Cognition

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What does my dog see when he sees a bus? This might seem to be an odd question with which to begin an essay on Kant. In fact, it is a question that goes to the heart of a puzzle that I have always found to be quite deep. The puzzle can be made intuitively clear to almost anyone, regardless of philosophical training. But it is also a puzzle that touches the core of the Kantian enterprise, and that can be put quite clearly as a question concerning the details of Kant's views regarding the relationship between the possibility of self-consciousness and the possibility of representing objects as objects. The puzzle is this: Is there any sense in which animals who lack reflection in the human sense, and thus also lack a discursive understanding and the capacity to form judgments, nevertheless represent entities as objects distinct from their own representations? If the answer to this question is "yes," as I will argue that it must be, then we must confront a new and different question: What, exactly, are reflection and the capacity to judge necessary *for*?

### 1. THE STRUCTURE OF THE PROBLEM

#### a. The Intuitive Formulation

In its intuitive, secular form, here is the problem. There is surely a sense in which my dog (whose name is Mac) *sees* the large yellow school bus that, every weekday afternoon at 3:20, turns the corner on which our house sits. Not only is he equipped with the sensory apparatus typical of his species, but he responds differentially to the presence or absence of the bus. Further, Mac is an organism of a certain complexity and sophistication.

And this implies that Mac's reaction to the presence of the bus seems to vary as a function of his, invisible to us, internal state. (When Mac is tired, he reacts in one way; when not tired, he reacts in another way.) As it happens, one way in which Mac often reacts to seeing the bus is (while staying safely on our property) to run over in the direction of the place where the bus stops to let out children before turning the corner and then, as the bus is starting up again, to run around the back of the house (he is blocked by an invisible fence from going around the front of the house and keeping the bus in view) to wait for the bus to turn the corner, and to proceed to race it to the end of our property line, barking like mad the entire time. (That he acts in this way is characteristic of his breed, as Mac is a Shetland Sheepdog who herds by barking and running in just this way, and who apparently extends his herding behavior from sheep to large yellow buses.) So there is not much question that Mac *sees* the bus.

But there also seems to be another sense in which it is right to say, in another tone of voice, that my dog doesn't see the *bus*. Or perhaps we should say that he doesn't see the bus *as* a bus, or see *that* it is a bus. Mac, for all of his virtues, appears to lack the ability to recognize that what he is seeing is a bus; that is, that it satisfies that set of standards that qualifies something as a bus or that this entity possesses the marks of a school bus. It appears that he lacks a grasp on what it is to be a bus and, in the absence of such conceptual sophistication, that he cannot take what he sees as a bus. Mac is lacking in the capacity to judge. So, while it might be true to say (*de re*, as it were) that what he sees is a bus, it is not right to say that he sees (*de dicto*) a *bus*, or that he takes what he sees to be a bus.

For the same reasons, it also seems that it would be a mistake to say that Mac sees the bus as a vehicle or as a large, noisy, smelly thing. The reasons that it seems wrong to say that the dog sees the bus as a bus don't have to do with either the clarity of the concept of a bus or with the scope of its extension, so choosing a vaguer or a broader description of what Mac sees has no effect on whether he sees what he sees as this or that. The problem is that Mac does not have the ability to reflect on the character of his own acts or his own representations. Intuitively it appears that in order to see something as a bus, one must be able to recognize that one is seeing a bus, that is, one must be able to represent one's own representation as of the bus type. But this requires the ability to reflect on the character of one's own representational states. And, for Mac, this act of reflection is out of the question.

Such considerations have tempted many to the following roughly Kantian line of argument.<sup>1</sup> Attributions of beliefs, desires, and, in general, thoughts demand that the subject of those thoughts be able to distinguish among coreferring ways in which the same entity can be described. Oedipus wants to kill the old man on the road but does not want to kill his father, even though the old man and his father are the same individual. Oedipus believes that he is seeing the old man on the road, but not that he is seeing his father, although the two are identical. And this is possible only because Oedipus recognizes what he sees as an old man blocking his path but does not recognize, or cognize, what he sees as his father. Oedipus *recognizes* what he sees as an old man in his path, that is, he judges that he is such a man, but he does not recognize what he sees as his father, that is, he does not apply the concept 'my father' in this case. And it is only in virtue of this difference in the application of concepts that it is right to say of Oedipus that he thinks that the old man is in his way but does not believe that his father is in his way. So any subject, such as my dog Mac, who lacks this ability to cognize or recognize things *as* this or that, also lacks the ability to have thoughts.

It thus seems right to conclude that no subject who lacks the ability to think of some entity as of some type is capable of thought at all. And whatever other abilities are necessary for cognizing something as something must, then, also be necessary for having thoughts. Philosophers in the twentieth century frequently suggested that a capacity to use and understand language is necessary for thought; in the eighteenth century, Kant suggested that thought requires the use of concepts ("Cognition through concepts is called *thought* [*Denken*]"<sup>2</sup>) and that the use and acquisition of concepts require reflection, or self-consciousness ("The logical *actus* of the understanding, through which concepts are generated as to their form, are: 1. *comparison* of representations among one another in relation to the unity of consciousness; 2. *reflection* as to how various representations can be conceived in one consciousness; and finally 3. *abstraction* of everything else in which the representations differ").<sup>3</sup> And this seems right as well. To cognize something as something is to recognize that the thing belongs to a type, and this recognition just *is* the application of a concept. But it appears that the only way to acquire such a concept so as

<sup>1</sup> It seems to me that Wilfred Sellars and Donald Davidson are two who have given in to this temptation.

<sup>2</sup> Kant (1992), *Jäsche Logic*, Sec. 1, 589.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Sec. 6, 592.

to be able to apply it is to reflect on the relations among one's various representations, and the ability to do this in turn appears to depend upon the ability to represent various representations in a single mental act. So any agent who lacks this reflective ability also lacks the ability to apply concepts, and in lacking this ability lacks the ability to think of things as this or that, and with this disability, also lacks the capacity to think at all.

It is also natural to extend this line of argument one step further. Any agent who lacks the capacity to judge must also, it seems, lack the ability to cognize objects *as* objects at all. Take what my dog sees at the first appearance of the bus, before it turns the corner, as an example. Presumably he has some representation, or perhaps we should say some complex of representations, at that time. Using a Lockean paradigm, perhaps *we* might describe this complex (although Mac could not so describe it) in the following terms: loud, abrasive mechanical noise, smell of diesel fuel, yellow patch, spinning wheels, and so on. But nowhere in this sensed complex is there any element that displays an *object*, that is, something that perdures, or continues identical with itself through time and can have properties that change only if they are caused to change. It appears that to cognize an object a subject must represent a sense complex *as* an object, that is, recognize that the complex of sensations that are presented to one at present are an example of the types of representations that are characteristic, under current conditions, of some type of continuing, self-identical bearer of causally determined properties. And, to do this, it seems that an agent must be able to *think*, that is, to reflectively apply concepts in judgments. So the conclusion seems inevitable: Whatever my dog Mac sees when he reacts to (*de re*) the school bus, it is not an object.

We can now see the problem. From our armchairs, we have come to the conclusion that Mac has no perceptions of objects. But this can't be right. In our dealings with our dogs we count on their object recognition abilities all of the time. Mac's behavior around the bus suggests both that he responds to it as an object, as a continuously identical substance with causally determined properties, and that his ability to recognize that object depends upon a capacity to use the partial presence of the bus's sensory properties as *marks* for the presence of the object that is the bus. Given the configuration of our property, when the bus is stopped to let off children, Mac can neither see nor smell nor hear the bus. The sensory stimuli characteristic of the bus are simply absent. The house blocks his vision; sometimes the bus turns off and makes no noise; the distance is too great for him to smell and the wind often blows in the wrong direction. Nevertheless, it seems that Mac anticipates the presence of the bus around

the corner. He runs around the house and waits until the bus appears. On the rare occasions on which the bus, for one reason or another, does not turn the corner, Mac seems to get agitated and "look for" it, checking the last spot at which he saw it, and so on. In the dead of the Maine winter when the house is closed up tight, and Mac can only see the bus out of selected windows, he can hear the bus well before he can see it. Mac's solution: run to the window from which the bus is first visible, wait for it to stop and start up again, run like hell to the last spot from which it is visible, a hall door with a window at human eye level, and leap five feet straight up to look out of the window as the bus goes past, barking like mad the entire time. If you want to get Mac really agitated and act out of what seems to be terror, walk him past an unmoving, non-doggy-smelling statue of a dog. And on and on and . . .

Now, there are two things that must be said about all of this evidence. The first, of course, is that all of the evidence presented here is entirely anecdotal. Second, this sort of evidence of recognition of objects as objects in animals has classically been explained away by appeal to "mere" imaginative association. But neither of these remarks, it seems to me, really undercuts the behavioral evidence of Mac's object recognition abilities. Let me explain why.

First, regarding the anecdotal character of the evidence of animal object recognition. If Mac's behavior were that of a ten-month-old non-verbal human infant, we would immediately conclude that she was identifying the bus on the basis of partial representations, believing that the bus continues to exist, with the same properties, when it is not present perceptually, expecting the bus to have similar properties at different times and on different occasions, and being surprised at unexplained alterations or differences in the properties of objects. Indeed, we would (and do) consider such behavior to be *critical* of the presence of object recognition. The reason for this is obvious. The best way to explain these behaviors, as well as a host of abilities such as the capacity to distinguish and respond differentially to different perduring individuals of the same type, even when those individuals' sensory character alters markedly – think of dogs' legendary ability to recognize and respond in distinctive ways to their masters after a long absence – is to attribute representations of objects *as* objects to these animals. Evolutionary considerations point toward the same inference. The form of social and hunting life characteristic of dogs, for example, is possible only if the dog can reidentify a single continuing individual as to be responded to in similar ways in very different sensory situations, whether that individual is prey, or another

member of the pack, or a human being. And the most efficient, perhaps the only, way to ensure such recognition abilities is by representing those individuals as continuing, self-identical subjects with causally determined properties.

But perhaps there is another way to explain these abilities. Here is how the explanation is supposed to go. Mac doesn't represent the bus as an object; the fact that in the past he has repeatedly seen, heard, and smelled together the sensory stimuli characteristic of the bus at the first point of vision, repeatedly followed by the stimuli given at the second point of vision, causes Mac to reproduce the second type of sensory image when newly presented with the first, and this second image causes him to act as if he expected the bus to be around the corner. In essence, the suggestion is that the behavior of higher nonhuman animals can be explained by appeal to simple stimulus-response mechanisms defined over complexes of mere sensory stimulation. But to describe the suggestion in this way is also to see what is wrong with it. Perhaps it was plausible in the eighteenth century to think that such mere associative mechanisms were sufficient to account for the behavioral capacities of nonhuman mammals. But this account is not plausible now. The evidence that led to the collapse of behaviorism as a research program for explaining mammal behavior is just the evidence that shows that this eighteenth-century suggestion that the mere associative powers of imagination are sufficient to account for the full range of animal cognitive abilities is a nonstarter.

And the failure of this behaviorist-associativist explanation of Mac's behavior leaves us with the problem I mean to discuss. What is it that Mac sees when he sees (*de re*) the bus? Does he see what he sees as an *object*, a perduring subject of causally determined properties, a subject that remains identical with itself across changes in its properties, or not? If he doesn't see what he sees as an object, then how should we describe what he sees, given that it seems wrong to say that he just experiences mere sense contents and their imaginative reproductions? If he does see objects as objects, then how is this possible given that Mac lacks the capacity to form and apply concepts, and thus lacks the capacity to judge?

#### b. The Kantian Formulation

There is a very neat Kantian form of this problem. While it is possible to formulate the problem in Kantian terms without making any reference to Kant's views regarding animal sapience, if we do allow ourselves the

luxury of appealing to his scattered remarks concerning animals, we can specify the Kantian version of the problem by exhibiting what appears to be an inconsistent triad of propositions, all of which Kant appears to assert. Kant holds all of the following:

1. Intuitions involve a reference to an object. ("All cognitions [*Erkenntnisse*], that is, all representations related with consciousness to an object, are either *intuitions* or *concepts*."<sup>4</sup>)
2. Animals, although they lack the ability to apply concepts, have intuitions. ("Due to the lack of consciousness, even animals are not capable of any concept – intuitions they do have."<sup>5</sup>)
3. Cognition of objects requires a unitary consciousness of the act through which a manifold is combined and the ability to apply concepts. ("For this unitary consciousness is what combines the manifold, successively intuited, and thereupon also reproduced, into one representation. This consciousness may often be only faint, so that we do not connect it with the act itself, that is, not in any direct manner with the *generation* of the representation, but only with the outcome [that which is thereby represented]. But notwithstanding these variations, such consciousness, however indistinct, must always be present; without it, concepts, and therewith cognition [*Erkenntnis*] of objects are altogether impossible."<sup>6</sup>)

As this set of assertions should make clear, the Kantian form of the problem of animal sapience turns on the status of intuitions. Kant holds that in a very important sense, we see what we judge. The objects that we perceptually encounter have the same structural character as the objects about which we form judgments. "The same function which gives unity to the various representations in a judgment also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations in an intuition. . . ."<sup>7</sup> It is this isomorphism between the conceptual structures inherent in judgment and the intuitive structures inherent in perception that provides Kant with the clue he needs to produce both the Metaphysical Deduction of the pure concepts of the understanding and the Transcendental Deduction of the validity of those categories in empirical knowledge. Most of the

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Sec. 1, 589.

<sup>5</sup> Kant (1992), *Dohna-Wundlachen Logic*, Doctrine of Elements, 440.

<sup>6</sup> Kant (1965), A103–4, modified translation.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., A79/B104.

time Kant gives a complex explanation for this structural isomorphism. This account turns on rational beings having two abilities: The ability to combine or relate (synthesize) various representations, a capacity that he assigns to the faculty of imagination, and the ability to reflectively recognize the rule or principle that the imagination follows in synthesizing representations. This second, reflective, capacity Kant assigns to the faculty of understanding, and he claims that it is through this operation of the understanding that syntheses are "brought to concepts." "Synthesis in general, as we shall hereafter see, is the mere result of the power of imagination, a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we would have no cognition whatsoever, but of which we are scarcely ever conscious. To bring this synthesis to concepts is a function of the understanding, and it is through this function of the understanding that we first obtain cognition properly so called."<sup>8</sup>

So, for Kant, human intuitions of objects have the same implicit structure as the conceptual structure explicit in judgment because the same rules that structure conceptual connections in a judgment also structure the connections among the intuitive elements in a perceptual intuition. For this reason, human intuitions, as well as concepts, can be said to be genuine *cognitions* (*Erkenntnisse*), that is, representations with *objective* reference, and not mere sensations or mere modifications of an agent's subjective state.<sup>9</sup> This is the cash value of passage (1) cited earlier. But, as the passage that I just quoted from the *Metaphysical Deduction* makes abundantly clear, Kant also seems committed to a second part of this account. To say, as Kant frequently does, that cognition, or objective representation, depends not only on the synthetic activity of imagination, but also on the reflective capacity of the understanding to explicitly represent the unitary, rule-governed character of that activity (the position articulated

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., A78/B103, modified translation.

<sup>9</sup> Cf., for example, A320/B376. Although taken together, Kant's use of the term '*Erkenntnis*' for 'objective perception', his distinction between such cognitions and mere subjective modifications or sensations, and his insistence that intuitions form a class of cognitions, presents some interpreters, and indeed Kant himself, with a set of potentially embarrassing problems of the type presented in this essay, there can be little doubt that Kant is committed to just these views. His official characterizations of cognition, sensation, and intuition are remarkably consistent throughout the *Critique* and all of the various versions of *The Logic*, and in virtually all of these characterizations objective reference is associated with *Erkenntnis*. Beyond this, the suggestion that intuition prior to judgment is in some sense merely proto-referential cannot be made coherent, a conclusion I will argue toward later by showing why two different forms of this suggestion cannot work.

in (3)) is to assert that no agent who is incapable of such reflection, such as my dog, is capable of perceiving, or intuiting, objects at all.

Nevertheless, in (2) Kant explicitly asserts that, though lacking in the reflective self-consciousness essential to understanding, animals *do* have intuitions. And in (1) Kant asserts that intuitions are a species of representation related with consciousness *to an object*. But if Kant is committed to this view, the view that animals that lack the reflective capacities of the understanding still intuit objects, then how can he nevertheless maintain, as he does, that consciousness of the unitary act in which a manifold is synthesized is necessary for the use of concepts, and the use of concepts is necessary for the cognition of objects? This is the specifically Kantian form of problem that I mean to discuss.

## 2. THE TWO-OBJECT SOLUTION

Before offering my own solution to the problem (a solution that turns on rethinking, in a way suggested by Heidegger's reading of Kant, Kant's commitment to the primary importance of the understanding for the intentional character of cognition), I will briefly look at two other possible resolutions to the aporia I have already outlined. Both of these attempted solutions turn on treating preconceptual intuitions as in one sense or another 'proto-referential'. The first, suggested by Beatrice Longuenesse, turns on distinguishing two senses of 'object'. The second, which I will extract from Kant's discussion of animal sapience in scattered remarks in the *Logic*, turns on distinguishing two senses of 'intuition'. I will argue that both of these suggested resolutions of the aporia fail to resolve Kant's difficulties successfully.

There would seem to be an obvious solution to the Kantian form of the problem that I have laid out. Both we rational creatures and our nonrational animal cousins represent objects, we through our intuitions and our concepts and the animals through their intuitions. But what we and the animals thereby represent, the respective objects, are different in kind. We represent 'phenomena' (*Phaenomena*), both intuitively and conceptually, as well as intuitively representing appearances; animals represent only 'appearances' (*Erscheinungen*).

There is no question that Kant makes the distinction between the appearance, the object of mere intuition, and the phenomenon, or the object which is thought corresponding to this intuition. Indeed, in *The Critique of Pure Reason* he makes this distinction in, for him, a pretty consistent fashion. An appearance is "the undetermined object of an empirical

intuition. . . .”<sup>10</sup> To say that an object is “undetermined” is, for Kant, to say that it has not been categorized, or thought, through the application of concepts. So appearances are objects insofar as they are given in intuition but not represented as this or that through conceptual judgments. Kant characterizes phenomena in contrast with appearances. “Appearances, so far as they are thought according to the unity of the categories, are called *phaenomena*.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, insofar as one cognizes objects conceptually, what one intends is entitled a phenomenon. “Now there are two conditions under which alone cognition of an object is possible, first *intuition*, through which it is given, though only as appearance; secondly, *concept*, through which an object is thought corresponding to this intuition.”<sup>12</sup>

Armed with this distinction, it seems to be a simple matter to resolve the inconsistency in Kant’s thought that I pointed out earlier. The problem is that it seems that, on Kant’s view, animals must both intend and fail to intend objects. Insofar as they have intuitions, they intend objects. Insofar as they lack concepts, they fail to intend objects. On this “two-object” solution, the apparent contradiction arises out of a more or less innocuous ambiguity in the word object. Both humans and other animals intend ‘objects’. But animals only intend appearances, the undetermined objects of intuition, while we intend both appearances and phenomena, which are the objects of judgments. As intentions directed toward phenomena require the application of concepts, animals cannot cognize such objects. But being aware of appearances, the undetermined objects of intuition, requires only a sensibility capable of sensible intuition, and animals can possess that faculty. So there is no contradiction.

In her superb book *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, Beatrice Longuenesse essentially opts for this two-object solution to the puzzle. Supported by the very strong textual evidence in favor of the appearance–phenomenon distinction, Longuenesse suggests that the passage I just quoted from Section 14 distinguishing between the appearances given by mere intuition and the object that is thought as corresponding to this intuition should be read as distinguishing between two sorts of intentional objects, a ‘pre-objective’ object and an ‘objective’ object. The distinction “is intended to distinguish, within the realm of representation, between the object ‘only as’ appearance and the object ‘as’ object. In other words, it is intended to distinguish the object that might be called ‘pre-objective’

<sup>10</sup> Kant (1965), A20/B65.

<sup>11</sup> Kant (1965), A248.

<sup>12</sup> Kant (1965), A92–3/B125, modified translation.

(the indeterminate object of empirical intuition, prior to any distinction between the representation and the object of representation) from the ‘objective’ object, or the object ‘corresponding to’ intuition.”<sup>13</sup> And Longuenesse tries to flesh out this distinction between two types of intentional object with the following example. “[I]nformed by experience (the systematic comparison of our sensible intuitions), we recognize the shape seen from afar as an object (*phaenomenon*) that we think under the concept ‘tower’, and which we thereby distinguish from the *apparentia* immediately present to our intuition (a rectangular shape of various shades of brown standing out on the horizon . . .).”<sup>14</sup>

Whatever the virtues of this two-object view as a reading of the text, as a solution to the puzzle I outlined earlier it just doesn’t work philosophically. There are two problems with the proposed solution, both of which have to do with the character of the appearance, the hypothesized pre-objective indeterminate object of empirical intuition. First, as characterized by Longuenesse, for example, it is an *impossible* object. Second, for the appearance–phenomenon distinction to do the job Kant requires of it, phenomena, the objects of thought, and appearances, the objects of mere intuition, must be, and be intended by the rational subject to be, identical, rather than distinct types of objects. And if this is the case, then the proposed resolution of the inconsistency I detailed previously collapses. I will briefly outline each of these problems in turn.

First, either the appearance, as the object of empirical intuition, is represented by the intentional agent as distinct from the empirical representation in which it is given, or it is not. Longuenesse explicitly opts for the second disjunct; the pre-objective appearance is “prior to any distinction between the representation and the object of representation.” She reinforces that this is her view when she characterizes “the *apparentia* immediately present in our intuition” in entirely sense content terms, as, for example, a rectangular shape of various shades of brown. But if this is all that the appearance amounts to – if there is no distinction *within the realm of representation* between the sensory representation and the object represented by that representation – then in what sense, if any, are the sensory representations representations of an *object* at all? It is of course the case that we can recognize that what the dog sees when it intuits the bus is, *de re*, a bus. But that is not what is at issue. Rather, what is at issue is the intentional character, “within the realm of representation”

<sup>13</sup> Longuenesse (1998), 24.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

of the intuitive, nonconceptual representations. And if having an intuition is in no way distinct from having sensory representations that, by themselves, contain *no* reference to an object ("A perception which relates solely to the subject as the modification of its state is *sensation*, an objective perception is cognition [*Erkenntnis*]. This is either *intuition* or *concept*"<sup>15</sup>), then Kant himself must be in error on his own terms when he says that having an intuition is having a representation "related with consciousness to an object." That is, as Longuenesse characterizes it, the pre-objective object of mere intuition is no object at all. The concept of *object* has no content apart from its opposition to mere sensory representation. So on this view, 'appearance' is simply another word for 'complex of sensations'. Thus interpreting appearances, the undetermined objects of empirical intuition, in such terms offers no solution to the puzzle I have presented.

So we are thrown onto the other horn of the dilemma. To make any sense of the distinction between sensation and intuition, the appearance – the undetermined object of empirical intuition – must be *posterior* to the distinction between representation and the object of representation. Or perhaps it would be better to say that this distinction first occurs in and through the empirical intuition, as this is the first level of representation at which the distinction is manifest. If one accepts this position, however, then one must confront the problem of how to characterize the appearance as the *object* of empirical intuition.

Now Kant does not hesitate to characterize appearances, that is, the undetermined object of empirical intuition. For Kant, such objects just are identical with phenomena. As we saw, Kant frames the distinction between appearances and phenomena in such a way that it is the appearances themselves that are called phenomena under certain conditions: "Appearances, so far as they are thought as objects according to the categories, are called phenomena." That this should be the case is hardly surprising. The entire problematic of the critical philosophy arises out of the problem specified in Section 13: "namely, how *subjective conditions of thought* can have *objective validity*, that is, can furnish conditions of the possibility of all cognition [*Erkenntnis*] of objects."<sup>16</sup> And the context makes abundantly clear that Kant sees this problem of the objective validity of the categories in terms of the question of how those categories are related to the conditions on empirical intuition. Let us assume for a second that

the class of objects of intuition (let's call it  $O_1$ ) was disjoint from the class of the objects of judgment ( $O_2$ ). In this case, it is hard to see how any empirical intuitions we might have of appearances, the class of objects belonging to  $O_1$ , could ever be relevant to our judgments concerning the objects in  $O_2$ . It is only because the members of these classes are identical, and are intended as identical by the one who judges, that the empirical content of our intuitions could be, and be intended to be, evidence for our judgments about the objects of thought. Further, Kant's solution to the problem of Section 13 depends in part upon this identity of the objects of thought and of intuition. If the objects that we intuit were not identical with the objects about which we make judgments, then the fact, if it is a fact, that we could not cognize the objects of thought unless certain conditions were met would be entirely irrelevant to the possibility of our cognizing the objects of intuition.

It should now be obvious that the two-object solution to the problem of Kant's apparently inconsistent remarks concerning animal sapience is no solution at all. Not only is it impossible to characterize the object of intuition separately from the object of judgment, but even if one could do this, the very act of doing so would render empirical evidence irrelevant to judgment.

### 3. ACQUAINTANCE AND RECOGNITION: THE TWO TYPES OF INTUITION

For Kant the great division between kinds of representation is the distinction between representations that contain an intentional relation to an object and those that don't. Kant's name for the first, intentional, class of representations is, in German, *Erkenntnis*, in Latin, *cognitio*, and the mental activity of utilizing such representations is titled *erkennen* or *cognoscere*, 'recognition'. It is a perhaps necessary but still unfortunate fact that since *Erkenntnis* is sometimes translated into English as 'knowledge' and sometimes as 'cognition', Kant's consistent usage is somewhat obscured in translation. Kant is also consistent in specifying that the two great classes of cognitions are concepts and intuitions. Kant's name for the intentional object of intuition is 'appearance'. Such an object is 'undetermined' in the sense that the object that is merely given in intuition has not been determined, or characterized, by means of a reflection that specifies in a judgment the nature of the intuition that gives the object. Insofar as such a reflection has been carried out, this very same object that is given in intuition is determined regarding its type, and is called a phenomenon.

<sup>15</sup> Kant (1965), A320/B376.

<sup>16</sup> Kant (1965), A89/B122.

The two classes of cognitions are concepts and intuitions. As a kind of representation, cognitions are distinguished from other types of representation by the fact that all cognitions involve an intentional relation to an object. Unfortunately, however, Kant does not seem to have been entirely clear on the issue of how such an objective reference of cognitions is possible. Consider again the inconsistent set of assertions listed earlier:

1. "All cognitions [*Erkenntnisse*], that is, all representations related with consciousness to an object, are either *intuitions* or *concepts*."
2. "Due to the lack of consciousness, even animals are not capable of any concept – intuitions they do have."
3. "For this unitary consciousness is what combines the manifold, successively intuited, and thereupon also reproduced, into one representation. This consciousness may often be only faint, so that we do not connect it with the act itself, that is, not in any direct manner with the *generation* of the representation, but only with the outcome [that which is thereby represented]. But notwithstanding these variations, such consciousness, however indistinct, must always be present; without it, concepts, and therewith cognition [*Erkenntnis*] of objects, are altogether impossible."

The first quotation states that intuitions are cognitions and thus involve objective reference. The third quotation asserts that there can be no cognition without the ability to use concepts, and that the unitary consciousness of the act of combining various representations is necessary for the ability to apply concepts, and thus necessary for all cognition, that is, for all objective reference of representation, and thus also necessary for intuition. The second quotation asserts that animals lack the ability to apply concepts because they lack the ability to become conscious of their own mental activity. It also asserts unambiguously that animals have intuitions. And it is this last conjunct of (2), that animals have intuitions although they lack the right sort of consciousness, that is inconsistent with (1) and (3).

Now (1) and (3) are central to Kant's critical philosophy and entirely typical of much of Kant's thought. On the other hand, (2) is an obscure marginal comment from a set of lecture notes on logic. The obvious way to resolve the inconsistency would be to just throw (2) out as a perhaps unfortunate, but utterly inconsequential misstatement on Kant's part. There are at least two good reasons why this obvious resolution of the inconsistency won't do, however. First, as I tried to point out earlier,

there are very good reasons to think that Kant was right in thinking that animals do in fact intuit objects. And, left at that, this fact, combined with animals' incapacity to apply concepts and engage in reflection, would seem to undercut what Kant has to say about the relation between the possibility of reflective consciousness and the possibility of cognitions with objective reference. Second, in the *Logic*, Kant himself goes out of his way to attempt to provide a place for animal acquaintance with objects, even though he emphasizes in that work that animals don't possess the kind of reflective self-awareness that he maintains is necessary for cognition.

In a passage from the Introduction to the *Logic*, Kant seems to distinguish between two kinds of intuition: a kind of intuition of which animals as well as humans are capable, *kennen*, and a second type, that animals lack, that involves *erkennen*. The passage in which this distinction occurs is one in which Kant is attempting to distinguish the various types of acts of representing.<sup>17</sup> Here is the way in which Kant characterizes the third, fourth, and fifth grades of representing:

The *third*: to be acquainted (*kennen*) with something (*noscere*), or to represent something in comparison with other things, both as to *sameness* and as to *difference*.

The *fourth*: to be acquainted with something *with consciousness*, i.e., to cognize (*erkennen*) it (*cognoscere*). Animals are *acquainted* with objects too, but they do not *cognize* them.

The *fifth*: to *understand* (*verstehen*) something (*intelligere*), i.e., to cognize something *through the understanding by means of concepts*. . . .<sup>18</sup>

In this passage Kant replaces his familiar two-part distinction between intuition and concepts as two types of representations with a three-part division among kinds of representing: being acquainted with things, cognizing things, and cognizing things by way of concepts, or understanding them. He does not inform us in this passage regarding the representations associated with the third and fourth grades of representing, although he does specify that the fifth grade is attained by means of concepts. However, given the fact that Kant always identifies the two kinds of cognitions as intuitions and concepts, that he always asserts that cognitions in general are representations related with consciousness to an object, and that he specifies that the fourth grade, *erkennen*, is being acquainted with

<sup>17</sup> It is a bit disconcerting that in this catalog Kant uses *Erkenntnis* for the genus 'act of representation', rather than restricting it to acts involving cognitions in the narrower sense of those involving objective reference.

<sup>18</sup> Kant (1992), *Jäsche Logic*, Introduction, sec. VII, 569–70.



something with consciousness, there can be little doubt that he means to suggest that to cognize or (perhaps better in this context) recognize something without the use of concepts is to have an intuition of that thing. And this, at one fell swoop, solves the riddle concerning animal sapience (or so it seems), as Kant is quick to point out. Animals don't *intuit* objects, they don't relate to objects with *consciousness* in such a way as to recognize them; they merely are acquainted with objects, and this lower level of representation neither requires the ability to use concepts nor involves genuine cognition of objects. Animals have intuitions<sub>a</sub>, so to speak, not intuitions. On this view, animals can have a *kind* of relation to objects without its being the case that they can have intuitions; the ability to use concepts can be necessary for the ability to have intuitions, even though animals can't use concepts. And when Kant suggests in other contexts that animals have intuitions, he is merely, and innocuously, using the term loosely and ambiguously between intuitions and intuitions<sub>a</sub>.

There is a short, and not very informative, way to see why this explicitly Kantian solution to the riddle of animal sapience won't work, and there is a rather longer and more informative way to see why it won't work. Here is the short way. As laid out here, the notion of *kennen*, or acquaintance with things, straddles the canonical distinction in the *Critique* between subjective modifications of a subject's states, or sensation, and *Erkenntnis*, or *objective* perceptions. But Kant can't have it both ways. Either *kennen*, as opposed to *erkennen*, involves representing an object as distinct from the representation of the object, or it doesn't. If it doesn't, then in what respect is *kennen* an acquaintance with a *thing*? If it does, then how does the fact that animals are capable of *kennen*, and thus can represent objects, square with the claim that representation with consciousness and the ability to form judgments is necessary for intending objects? The problem is that intuition differs from mere sensation precisely insofar as it is the apprehension of an *object* and to be an object is to be distinct from the representation of the object. But cognition, as a type of representing, is the representing of an object. So one can't be acquainted with an *object* without having a cognition of an object.

The key to understanding Kant's attempted strategy for handling this new form of his dilemma is contained in his characterization of the abilities involved in *kennen*. And this leads to the long, and informative, way of seeing what is wrong with Kant's solution. To be acquainted with something is "to represent something in comparison with other things, both as to sameness and difference." We can see what Kant is driving at if we look at the famous passage from the *Logic* that I quoted earlier, in which he

specifies the acts of the understanding "through which concepts are generated as to their form." "The logical *actus* of the understanding, through which concepts are generated as to their form, are: 1. *comparison* of representations among one another in relation to the unity of consciousness; 2. *reflection* as to how various representations can be conceived in one consciousness; and finally 3. *abstraction* of everything else in which the given representations differ."<sup>19</sup>

When one compares this passage from the *Logic* with the earlier one, what is immediately striking is that Kant uses the same term, 'comparison' (*Vergleichung*), in both passages. The most basic act of the understanding that is necessary for generating concepts is the act of comparison. Similarly, the act that is characteristic of animal acquaintance with objects is also described as comparison. It is only later that one recognizes that in these two passages Kant is in fact *distinguishing* two types of comparison, and that this distinction is meant to dissolve the aporia I have cited. When we see why this attempted solution fails, we will also be able to see the only possible solution to Kant's, and our, dilemma.

Now, according to Kant in the *Logic*, animals are *acquainted* with objects. And this implies that they have the ability to represent something in comparison with other things, both as to similarity and difference. In the division of kinds of acts of representation in the *Logic*, Kant distinguishes *kennen* from *erkennen*, acquaintance from cognition or recognition, by treating the latter as a species of the former, a species whose differentia is *consciousness*: "to be acquainted with something *with consciousness*, i.e., to *cognize* it." It is this representational ability that distinguishes human cognition of objects from animal acquaintance with objects. But what is this distinction? In the second passage concerning the acts of the understanding through which concepts are generated as to their form, the first act, comparison, necessarily involves a relation to the unity of consciousness. What 'comparison' entails *in this context* is a comparison of representations among one another *in relation to the unity of consciousness*. So, implicitly, Kant is contrasting *two* kinds of comparison. One kind, the type practiced by mere animals, specifically does not occur *with consciousness*. The other, the act of the understanding that is necessary for generating the form of a concept (universality), is an act of representation 'in relation to the unity of consciousness'. And it is just this difference, the difference between acts of comparison with and without consciousness, or relation to the unity of consciousness, that is supposed

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., Sec. 6, 592.

to mark the difference between cognition and acquaintance, human and animal.

So it turns out that for Kant the two types of intuition broached earlier, intuition proper and intuition<sub>a</sub>, are supposed to be distinct in virtue of their relation to the unity of consciousness. But what does this difference in the character of intuitions amount to? We can answer this question if we focus on the context in *The Logic* in which Kant discusses “comparison . . . in relation to the unity of consciousness”. “The second passage I have been citing occurs in the course of a discussion of the acts of the understanding “through which concepts are generated as to their form”. Now, of course, the most salient difference between humans and animals such as my dog is that we are capable of generating and applying concepts, and animals are not. It is just this difference that is also marked in the distinction of *kennen*, the animal intuition that is acquainted with things in a way that compares them as to sameness and difference, and *erkennen*, the human intuition that is acquainted with things *with consciousness*. Intuition proper, human acquaintance with things with consciousness, allows for the generation of concepts; intuition<sub>a</sub>, animal intuition without consciousness, which is the mere comparison of things as to sameness and difference, does not. In the note to the second passage, Kant gives us what appears to be a perfect example of what is involved in making a comparison with consciousness, the kind of comparison that allows for the generation of concepts. “I see, e.g., a spruce, a willow, and a linden. By first comparing these objects with one another I note that they are different from one another in regard to the trunk, the branches, the leaves, etc . . .”<sup>20</sup> In the human, cognitive, case, to represent something in comparison with other things is to compare those things so as to “note that they are different from (same as) one another in regard to . . .”. Such a representing thus involves, in addition to the representations of the things represented, a ‘noting’, a ‘noticing’, of the sameness or difference of the representations and such a noting is a noting of sameness or difference *in some respect or other*. While animals have intuitions in which they compare things as to sameness and difference, humans have intuitions in which they compare things as to sameness and difference in some respect or other.

As we have seen, Kant characterizes the kind of acquaintance with objects that notices respects in which things differ as “acquaintance with consciousness” and as involving “comparison . . . in relation to the unity of

consciousness.” Noticing the respect in which willows and lindens resemble and differ from one another involves a relation to the unity of consciousness because such noticing acts require that the representations of the willow and the linden be combined or synthesized. It is a necessary feature of my comparison of the representations of the willow and the linden with respect to their trunks that I represent them together in a single intentional act. I represent them together in such a single act when I take neither of them as my intentional object, but rather when I “note”, or represent, their similarity in some respect. To do this is to represent together in a new act the two acts in which I have represented the willow and the linden; it is to perform an act of synthesis. But in the case in which I notice that the willow and the linden differ in respect to their trunks, this synthesis occurs *with recognition*, the recognition of the respect in which the trees differ. I synthesize the two representations *by* intending that they differ regarding their trunks: The recognition accomplishes the synthesis. In both the A and B Transcendental Deductions, Kant argues that such a recognizing consciousness is possible only insofar as it is possible for the subject to be conscious of the act in which the representations are synthesized.<sup>21</sup> And in both editions, this ability in turn is seen to depend upon the ability to reflectively relate one’s representations with the unity of consciousness. Thus human cognition (*Erkenntnis*), even in its intuitive form in which we intuit the differences among things in some regard or other, requires acts of recognition (*erkennen*), and acts of recognition always involve a relation to the unity of consciousness.

So for Kant, to carry out a “comparison of representations in relation to the unity of consciousness” is to represent two representations together so as to be able to note their similarities and differences in some respect or other. In the note to Section 6 of the *Jäsche Logic*, Kant tells us that “to make concepts out of representations one must be able to compare.” That is, in order to intend the concept ‘trunk’, for example, one must be able to compare representations of trees with trunks so as to come to note the respect in which they are both similar and different. Since this comparison is necessary for *generating* or ‘making’ the concept ‘trunk’, the representation in which the comparison is carried out cannot itself be fully conceptual. The suggested *origin* of the concept demands that I be able to compare the willow and the linden in respect of their trunks *even while I lack the concept ‘trunk’*. Thus, what is required in order to generate the empirical concept ‘trunk’ is the *intuitive* ability to compare,

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Cf., for example, A103 and B130.

in relation to the unity of consciousness, the intuitions of, say, a willow and a linden. Such an act of comparison involves a relation to the unity of consciousness insofar as, as a synthetic act, it essentially involves the possibility that the agent of the act can become conscious of the activity in which it generates the unity of the two intuitions in the comparison, and thus can become conscious of the rule, or concept, it follows in performing the act of comparison. Although humans need not be explicitly conscious of the concepts that are implicitly operative in their intuitive acts of comparison, the fact that those comparisons are carried out in relation to the unity of consciousness implies that they are always capable of forming the discursive judgments that are intuitively made present in acts that compare intuitions.

Animals, according to Kant, lack the ability to generate concepts or form discursive judgments. As such, they also lack the ability to be acquainted with something *with consciousness*. They lack the ability to note, or notice, the respects in which things differ. Kant thinks this because he believes that it is a corollary of his observation that animals lack the capacity to judge. For Kant, animals can intuitively grasp differences and similarities among things, but they can never intend the respects in which things are similar or different. Animals, for Kant, can note *that* two objects differ, but they can never note or notice *how* they differ, or the way in which those objects differ. That is, for Kant, animals can never become conscious of the unity of the act of comparison in and through which the synthetic representation (in which the representations of the willow and the linden are compared) is produced. And this is precisely the respect in which animal and human intuition differs for Kant. While animals do compare intuitions, they lack the type of intuition necessary to form concepts, and thus can never represent the respect in which they carry out this comparison.

Unfortunately, this is no solution to the problem of animal sapience. It only regenerates the same aporia we have been following right along. In addition to representations of the items involved in the comparison, *every* act of comparison, whether animal or human, as an act of comparison, *must* involve an intention directed toward the relation between the items intended, their similarity or difference. On Kant's account, animals do note similarities and differences between things. Mac does not only see the house and the bus differently. He also *sees* their difference, even if he can never intend any particular way in which they differ and can never become conscious of the specific differences between them. And such an animal act of comparison necessarily involves a synthesis of the

representations that are compared in the act. Now either such a synthetic act necessarily involves the possibility on the part of the agent of the act to engage in the type of reflection that Kant calls consciousness, and thus the ability to use concepts, or it does not. If it does, then animals can't be acquainted with objects, because they can't perform comparisons, and for Kant this is the minimal ability necessary for acquaintance with objects. That is, they can't have intuitions in any sense at all. If such synthetic acts don't require the ability on the part of the agent to reflect and form concepts, then such abilities are not necessary for intentions directed towards objects. So Kant's "two kinds of intuition" solution to his problem can't possibly work.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

What has gone wrong? The short answer to this question is that the problem of animal sapience points to a deep problem in the way in which Kant tends to report his own results. As I emphasized earlier, it is absolutely central to the Kantian project that we see what we judge, that the objects we perceptually encounter have, and must have, the same structural character as the objects about which we form judgments. It is only for this reason that Kant can conclude that we can have a priori knowledge of objects of possible experience, that is, a priori knowledge of the objects that we can *intuit*. We can know that the pure concepts of the understanding can validly be applied to the objects of intuition only because the forms of unity that make it possible to intuit an object are the very same forms of unity that allow us to judge that object: "The same function which gives unity to the various representations in a judgment also gives unity to the mere synthesis of representations in an intuition. . . ." Kant assigns to the faculty of imagination the ability to relate or synthesize sensible presentations so as to present us with the intuition of an object. As we are *presented* with intuitions of objects (and even more fundamentally with the pure intuitions of space and time in which the intuitions of objects are arranged), and we are not conscious of any activity on our part as necessary for such presentations, Kant says that imagination is a blind, unconscious faculty. The operation of this faculty thus does not require that we be conscious of its operation.

At this point, however, we can finally see what has gone wrong with Kant's attempts to solve the aporia. In the footnote to Section 6 of the *Logic*, Kant says that by comparing the willow and the linden with one another, I note that they are different from one another in regard

to . . . For such a noticing to be possible, it certainly must be possible for me to reflect on the way in which I represent the trees together in the comparison. And so for me to be able to generate and apply concepts in judgments, I must be capable of becoming conscious of the respect in which the comparison is carried out, that is, self-conscious of the unity of the act of synthesis through which the act of comparison is performed. Without the possibility of becoming conscious of the unity of the act in which I generate the comparison with respect to sameness and difference, the synthesis of recognition in a concept is "altogether impossible." But, strictly, this fact provides us with no reason to think that the ability to notice the respects in which I compare the representations of trees is necessary for me to be able to *compare the representations of trees*. On Kant's own account, my dog Mac can and does compare his sensible representations of trees in regard to their sameness and difference, but lacks the ability to ever intend how they are different. So the second, recognizing, ability cannot be necessary for the first ability, the ability to be acquainted with difference and similarity. On the other hand, it is quite implausible to believe that a subject could have the ability to represent or notice the respect in which trees are the same or different without also having the ability to intend that they are the same or differ. If I were not intuitively acquainted with the trees in such a way that I could in some manner represent their being similar or different, if I lacked the representational ability that Kant calls *kennen*, then I could not form concepts. But Kant has given us no reason to believe that such *kennen* requires the possibility of *erkennen*, the capacity to note the respect in which the comparison is carried out. Before we can be rational creatures who possess the discursive capacity to judge regarding the respects in which objects differ and are the same as one another, we must be animals who possess the intuitive ability to represent the similarity and difference of objects. That is, we must be able to *see* those similarities and differences.

In effect, the aporia arises out of Kant's failure to distinguish rigorously between two distinct capacities. The capacity to have a unitary representation of the outcome of an act of synthesis, by having a single representation of that which is represented through that act, is logically distinct from the capacity to represent the act itself, which generates such a unitary representation. Kant's willingness to admit that animals can compare things in respect to their similarity and difference, although they lack the ability to form and apply concepts, displays the fact that having the ability to intend the character of the act that generates a synthesis of representations – the ability that is necessary for the use of concepts – is in no

way necessary for the generation of such a synthesis. And for this reason, the reflective capacity to attach the 'I think' to our representations, while necessary for those representations to be anything for me, is not a necessary condition for our being able to represent objects as objects.

Kant argues that it is only in the representation that *is* the concept, the representation of the unity of the act of synthesis, that the act of synthesizing various representations is in fact carried out.<sup>22</sup> That is, the unitary representation of the comparative relation between the two trees *is* the conceptual, recognizing representation of the manner in which they are the same and different. This is the cash value of the crucial claim that without "such [reflective] consciousness . . . cognition of objects is altogether impossible." But insofar as it is the case that there can be intuitions that represent objects, and it is possible for non-concept-using animals to be acquainted with the similarities and differences of these intuitively presented objects, this just *can't* be right. And we are given no independent reason for thinking that the ability to recognize the manner in which things are similar and different is necessary for being acquainted with their being similar and different.

Having said this, it does not follow that we have a good grasp on what is involved in having a nonconceptual intuitive grasp of difference and similarity. The fact that my dog is acquainted with objects, although he lacks our facility with concepts, guarantees that such nonconceptual intuition of similarity and difference occurs. Fully understanding what is entailed by this fact regarding the nature of both conceptual and nonconceptual cognition, however, is another matter entirely.

So we have come to a perhaps surprising conclusion. We started with an inconsistent triad of Kantian views: 1. Intuitions involve a reference to an object. 2. Animals, although they lack the ability to apply concepts, have intuitions. 3. Cognition of objects requires a unitary consciousness of the act through which a manifold is combined and the ability to apply concepts. The surprising conclusion we have reached is that to resolve this inconsistency Kant should give up (3), the claim that cognition of objects requires the possibility of conceptual, judgmental cognition. Discursive understanding is only possible on the basis of the intuitive presentation of objects, the possibility of such an understanding is not necessary for the possibility of such an intuition, and it is only possible to articulate what is

<sup>22</sup> Kant, of course, explicitly adopts this position in the B edition Transcendental Deduction, most notably in Section 26, where he asserts that the figurative transcendental synthesis of the imagination is the effect of the understanding on the imagination.

involved in discursive understanding by first articulating what is involved in intuitively presenting objects. I take it that this is what Heidegger meant when he said that "intuition is the original building site of all knowledge, to which all thinking is directed as a means."<sup>23</sup>

What does Mac see when he sees a bus? He sees an object, of course. And the object that he sees is an object that he would describe as a big, smelly, moving, noisy one; that is, he would describe it in that way if he could *describe* it at all. Because he would be *right* to describe that object in that way, if he were able to describe it, he *sees* that this object is different from that other object that he would describe as a house if he could describe it. And because he sees this difference, he responds to them in quite different ways, even though he could never say, or judge, how these objects are different. Mac also sees the difference between me and the bus. But, this is quite a different difference from the difference between the bus and the house, and Mac is aware of this as well, thank goodness.

<sup>23</sup> Heidegger (1997), 58.