

Roger Williams University

DOCS@RWU

---

Architecture, Art, and Historic Preservation  
Faculty Publications

Architecture, Art, and Historic Preservation

---

2019

## Immanuel Kant: Philosophy of Perception

John Shannon Hendrix

*Roger Williams University*, [jhendrix@risd.edu](mailto:jhendrix@risd.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://docs.rwu.edu/saahp\\_fp](https://docs.rwu.edu/saahp_fp)



Part of the [Architectural History and Criticism Commons](#), and the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Hendrix, J. S. (2019). Immanuel Kant: Philosophy of Perception. Retrieved from [https://docs.rwu.edu/saahp\\_fp/41](https://docs.rwu.edu/saahp_fp/41)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Architecture, Art, and Historic Preservation at DOCS@RWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Architecture, Art, and Historic Preservation Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DOCS@RWU. For more information, please contact [mwu@rwu.edu](mailto:mwu@rwu.edu).

# Immanuel Kant: Philosophy of Perception

John Shannon Hendrix

In an early treatise, *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy* (*Versuch, den Begriff der negative Grössen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen*, 1763), Immanuel Kant developed a theory about thoughts that are fleeting, negated or cancelled, obscured or darkened. As certain thoughts become clearer, the other thoughts become less clear and more obscured (*Verdunkelt*). Kant's concept was influenced by the *petites perceptions* of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. He invoked Leibniz in establishing that only a small portion of the representations which occur in the soul, as the result of sense perception, are clear and enduring.<sup>1</sup>

Gottfried Leibniz conceived of minute perceptions of objects or ideas which have too little intensity to effect conscious thought. The minute perceptions contribute to ordinary perceptions, but they are so small and there are so many of them that they pass unnoticed in the consciousness connected to perception. There are far more minute, unnoticed perceptions than there are conscious perceptions. In the *New Essays on Human Understanding*, we are unaware of objects or ideas being perceived, of the activity of the perception. Until they are combined with other perceptions, most perceptions are too minute to be distinguished or distinctive. In *The Monadology* of Leibniz, conscious perceptions follow unconscious perceptions, because "one perception can in a natural way come only from another perception, as a motion can in a natural way come only from a motion."<sup>2</sup> By the time of Freud, the minute perceptions of Leibniz were referred to as unconscious mental states, representations or ideas (*Unbewusste Vorstellungen*).

The minute perceptions are "vivid in the aggregate but confused as to the parts,"<sup>3</sup> suggesting that perception is only clear when it has been organized into a totality, as Plotinus described, and which would be a basis of Kant's theory of perception. In Plotinus, perception is organized into a totality by the activity of the intellectual through imagination, the image-making power, and the *logos endiathetos*, the word which is thought but not spoken, the linguistic structure in thought. In Kant, perception is organized into a totality by the categories of a priori intuition acting through the schemata in the imagination, producing what Kant called the "manifold." For Leibniz, the relation of the parts to the aggregate in perception represents the relation of the

finite to the infinite, and the relation of the individual subject to the universe. An individual is defined by their perceptions which go unnoticed, the vestige of which form a palimpsest in the individual's consciousness (in discursive reason). Traces of previous perceptions, of sense objects or of ideas, contribute to a present state of consciousness. While there is no consciousness of the previous perceptions, "they could be known by a superior mind," that is, the *nous poietikos*, or the intellectual of Plotinus, the more complex form of thinking. The traces of the unconscious perceptions in memory play a role in the becoming conscious of the residues of images, or mnemic residues for Freud, in the processes of sense perception, imagination, and intellection, in the formation of the aggregate or manifold out of the individual perceptions.

Those unnoticed perceptions are also responsible for the "pre-established harmony between the soul and the body" for Leibniz, the relation between intellect and sense perception, and the perceptions determine equilibrium in behavior and activity. The perceptions cause a "disquiet," as in the pathos caused by sense perception for Plotinus, in *nous pathetikos*, and they also cause desire, in the searching on the part of discursive thought for that inaccessible element of its existence. All conscious perceptions contain those unnoticed perceptions; they would not exist without them. Leibniz cited Plotinus in asserting the necessity of the perceptions and ideas which are unclear and indistinct, partly resulting from the obscurity of sense knowledge, partly resulting from the inaccessibility of certain mechanisms of intellection to discursive reason. "Although the mind, as Plotinus rightly says, contains a kind of intelligible world within it," the intellectual or *nous poietikos*, "very few things in us can be known distinctly, and the remainder are hidden in confusion, in the chaos of our perceptions as it were,"<sup>4</sup> according to Leibniz.

In the tradition of classical philosophy, intellectual ideas "do not come from the senses," according to Leibniz in the *New Essays on Human Understanding* (p. 81). They are the product of the inner reflection of the mind, dependent upon intelligibles not connected to sense perception. Ideas that come from the senses are confused, as Plato established, in the same way that individual perceptions are confused before they are conceived as contributing to an aggregate, which is a product of intellect not connected to the act of conscious sense perception. Products of the *nous poietikos* are distinct and not contaminated by the lack of clarity of the sensible form, *species sensibilis*, in the *nous hylikos* or *pathetikos*, thought connected to sense perception. Ideas, products of *nous poietikos* or the intellectual, exist without our being aware of them (as in the *species apprehensibilis*), as Plotinus established. Leibniz

described them as “natural tendencies...dispositions and attitudes...” (p. 106). We also have traces of perceptions of which we are not aware (as in the residues of the *species sensibilis*), but it is possible at any time to become aware of either sensible or intelligible forms, the traces of which form the palimpsest of conscious experience. We are hindered in our awareness of them, in the inner reflection of the mind, by being distracted by the multiplicity and confusion of individual sense perceptions, according to Leibniz, exactly as Plotinus described.

We are also unaware of how individual sense perceptions are received and sometimes altered as they are processed in the mechanisms of intellect and imagination, according to Leibniz. In the simple act of perception, we are unaware of the mechanisms of intellect and imagination which determine the particular forms that are directly perceived. For example, in *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision* in 1709, George Berkeley asserted that the quality of distance cannot be immediately perceived of itself, but must be a judgment that is learned through an accumulation of sense perceptions in relation to discursive thought, as in the thought of Grosseteste. Judgment, according to Berkeley, or acquired understanding, the product of a higher intellect, is the product of experience rather than immediate sense perception; it therefore necessarily involves memory, the traces of perceptions of sense objects and ideas, the accumulation of which leads to the development of the imagination, the image-making power. In the Fourth Dialogue of the *Alciphron* of Berkeley, “we perceive distance not immediately but by mediation of a sign, which has no likeness to it or necessary connection with it, but only suggests it from repeated experience, as words do things” (§8).<sup>5</sup> The sign is an intelligible, a product of *nous poietikos*, intellection not connected to sense perception. The sign unconsciously determines the sense perception, especially of a quality like distance, which is a product of higher intellection.

The sign is constructed by the intellectual, and has no necessary relation to the sense perception of the object. As Berkeley explained in the *New Theory of Vision*, we are “exceedingly prone to imagine those things which are perceived only by the mediation of others to be themselves the immediate objects of sight” (§66). When we perceive an object, we are unaware that what we are perceiving is the sensible form of the object which has no immediate connection to the object itself, and that the sensible form is formed in relation to the intelligible form, the idea of the form of the object, by the inaccessible *nous* or intuition. It is the idea of the object as given by intellect that is immediately grasped, the intelligible form, rather than the image itself

of the object, the sensible form, which is imprinted on memory as a seal or sign. The objects themselves, according to Berkeley, “are not seen, but only suggested and apprehended by means of the proper objects of sight, which alone are seen” (*Alciphron*, §12). The proper object of sight is the seal or sign, the imprint or mnemonic residue, the intelligible form, which are constructed in intellect and language, memory and imagination, as for Plotinus. In the *Alciphron*, “it will not seem unaccountable that men should mistake the connection between the proper objects of sight and the things signified by them to be founded in necessary relation or likeness...” (§11). It is thus “easy to conceive why men who do not think should confound in this language of vision the signs with the things signified,” the intelligible form and the sensible form, in conscious thought. Conscious thought and perception are dependent on the mechanisms of the intellectual, *nous poietikos*, the classical concept of the higher intellect.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* of Kant (“A” version, 1781), it is impossible to know an object as a pure sensible object, its noumenal quality, outside its conception as an intelligible in intellect; perception in intellection transcends the experience of the sensible world in perception. The experience of the world is based on the inaccessibility of reason to the world. The constructed coherence and totality of the sensible world are necessary for perception, as perception is a basis for reason, but such totality is impossible in perception itself; it is only given by a priori intuition. The manifold of the sensible world is inaccessible to conscious reason: “The absolute whole of all appearances—we might thus say—is only an idea; since we can never represent it in image, it remains a problem to which there is no solution” (A328).<sup>6</sup> Reason as a whole is unrepresentable to itself, and requires the inaccessible *nous*, intuition or *nous poietikos*, in order for it to explain itself to itself. Imprints of sensible objects in perception are “mere representations,” as for Plotinus or Berkeley, “which as perceptions can mark out a real object only in so far as the perception connects with all others according to the rules of the unity of experience” (A495), in a manifold.

As for Berkeley, the relation between thought and a sense object that is perceived is never direct and is always mediated by the a priori understanding of the object in a totality, according to Kant. “Reason is never in immediate relation to an object, but only to the understanding” (A643), the intellection of the object. The transcendental idea, then, is not just a concept of an object, but a “thoroughgoing unity of such concepts...” (A645). The idea of an object is not possible outside the totality of the unity of objects,

just like a unit of time is not possible outside the totality of time, or a unit of space is not possible outside the totality of space. The sensible is not possible without the intelligible, and discursive reason is not possible without noetic reason. The object is singular while the idea of it is synthetic, composed of traces of previous sense perceptions and ideas, and judgments made, thus the idea of the object cannot possibly correspond to the object.

Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (*Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, 1798), although a late work, addressed subjects that went back to Kant's lectures at the Albertus University of Königsberg beginning in 1772.<sup>7</sup> In the *Anthropology*, Kant identified ideas of which we are not aware with the *petites perceptions* of Leibniz. "Sense perceptions and sensations of which we are not aware but whose existence we can undoubtedly infer, that is, obscure ideas..." Kant said, "constitute an immeasurable field."<sup>8</sup> Ideas of which we are not aware, like perceptions of which we are not aware, constitute most of our ideas, as Kant explained in Section 5 of the *Anthropology*, "On the Ideas We Have Without Being Aware of Them." Kant posited two levels of consciousness. The first is direct or unmediated (*unmittelbar*), full consciousness in perception. The second is indirect or mediated (*mittelbar*), partially unconscious perception involving indirect representations that are dark and obscure (*dunkel*), like the *petites perceptions* of Leibniz; "we can be indirectly conscious of having an idea, although we are not directly conscious of it" (p. 18). We draw conclusions about what we perceive without being conscious of perceiving every detail, because, as for Berkeley, what we perceive is determined by our understanding of it gained from experience. The majority of our perceptions are of the details which we do not consciously perceive, but which contribute to the conclusions and judgments we make in the act of perceiving.

We are often victimized by the obscure ideas and sense perceptions, which cloud our conscious perceptions, and our understanding of ourselves, as we become an object of obscure ideas, according to Kant. Cognition and perception are defined as a synthesis of the clear and obscure ideas and perceptions. Cognition consists of a union of an active capacity and a passive capacity, as in the active intellect (*nous poietikos*) and passive intellect (*nous hylikos*) of Aristotle, in the activity of combining and separating ideas. The ideas associated with the passive mind, by which the thinking subject is affected, belong to the "sensual cognitive faculty" (*Anthropology*, p. 25), *nous hylikos*, the lower of the two faculties. Sensual cognition is passive in relation to ideas and also to the "inner sense of awareness," the subjective facul-

ty that makes cognition possible through imagination.

Intellectual cognition, the higher faculty, on the other hand, has the “character of spontaneity of apperception,” as in *nous poietikos*, which is “the pure consciousness of the act which constitutes thought,” entailing pure logical deduction. Apperception is the apprehension of the manifold or totality of perception. All empirical or sensuous perception and cognition can only be of phenomena, of objects as they appear, as opposed to noumena, objects as they are in themselves. The receptivity of objects of sense as phenomena requires an a priori intuition independent of the empirical sense perception. As Plotinus and Grosseteste argued, the sensible form, is always already an intelligible form. That which is perceived by the senses is predetermined by the intellectual faculty in the intuition of inner experience. The formal character of the receptivity of sense objects in the inner intuition is time, according to Kant. Time is the category of a priori intuition that makes possible inner experience and sense perception in passive intellect, because it is an archetypal or intelligible category which is not subject to the divisions and multiplicity of discursive reason in passive intellect or the phenomenal objects of the sensual world.

But “through inner experience I always know myself only as I appear to myself” (*Anthropology* pp. 26–7). Appearance is the product of empirical intuition and understanding, that is, intellectual cognition, rather than judgment, or discursive cognition. My perception of my inner experience is in the form of the intelligible form, which I have constructed in my imagination, but the source of which I do not have access to. Imagination (*facultas imaginandi*) is the ability to form an image in the mind’s eye that is independent of a sensual object or image. Imagination, like cognition, is a synthesis of the passive and the active. The passive imagination is reproductive, “a faculty of the derived representation (*exhibitio derivativa*)” (p. 56), merely reproducing empirical perceptions as they are recalled to mind within the framework of the category of time in a priori intuition. The active imagination is productive, producing an original representation of an object (*exhibitio originaria*) that precedes experience, taking place in intuition rather than empirical cognition. Perception of intelligibles in the imagination (*phantasia*), and perception of the a priori categories of space and time, is a faculty of productive imagination. Passive imagination is connected to empirical cognition, or experience, and is presupposed by it. Active imagination is a function of intellectual cognition, while passive imagination is a function of discursive cognition, exactly as it was for Plotinus.

Kant outlined a theory of the imagination in his *Reflections on Anthropology* (*Reflexionen zur Anthropologie*) of 1776–8, and continued to develop it in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, 1787) and the *Critique of Judgment* (1790). The imagination in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is seen primarily as the higher, productive imagination, and the imagination in the *Critique of Judgment* is seen in relation to aesthetic judgment. As for Plotinus, the imagination mediates between sense perception and intellectual cognition. The primary role of imagination is to transform the categories of a priori intuition into the schemata that organize sense perception and discursive reason. The importance that Kant placed on the imagination is the equivalent of the importance that Plotinus placed on the imagination in classical philosophy. As in Plotinus, there is a higher imagination and a lower imagination, one instrumental in the reception and understanding of intelligibles, and one instrumental in the reception and understanding of sense perceptions. In the various *Reflexionen*, the notes prior to 1781, and in the *Reflexionen zur Anthropologie* in particular, Kant defined a variety of imaginative functions in relation to varying degrees of connection to the sensible world, and varying degrees of productive capabilities. These were summarized very clearly by Rudolf Makkreel in *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant*.

The formative faculty (*Bildungsvermögen*) is the power to organize and give form to intelligibles in intuition, which for Plotinus involved the *logos endiathetos*, the word in language, and the production of a visual representation or reflection in the mind's eye. The lower imagination, operating in relation to sense objects or phenomena, storing and preserving them as the *eidos* or *species sensibilis*, is called the *Bildungskraft* by Kant. The imagination is the storehouse (*Vorrath*) of representations. The *Bildungskraft* is seen to have the power to give form to an intuition or an intelligible, to create a sensible form from an intelligible form. The higher imagination, called imaginative formation or *Einbildung*, operates without any connection to phenomena, or sensible or intelligible form. It is able to produce rather than just reproduce, and create rather than just recreate. *Einbildung* is a function of *nous poietikos*, while *Bildungskraft* is a function of *nous hylikos*. *Einbildung* forms images through invention (as in the *fingendo* of Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten) and abstraction (as in the *abstrahendo* of Christian Wolff).<sup>9</sup>

Rudolf Makkreel summarized eight levels of image formation, six of them involving the mechanisms of imagination. *Bildung* is the general ability to organize and give form to intelligibles in intuition which is made use of



by the mechanisms of imagination. *Urbildung* is the form of intellectual intuition which is put to use by the higher forms of imagination in the higher intellect, *nous poietikos*. The lower imagination is composed of *Abbildung*, *Nachbildung*, and *Vorbildung*. *Abbildung* is direct image formation, the power to depict a sensuous object, or reproduce it as phenomenon. *Abbildung* makes the image of a sensible object visible so that it can be processed by the other levels of imagination within the temporal category of a priori intuition. The image of the *Abbildung* is limited only to the present moment. *Nachbildung* involves the reproduction of images that have already been formulated by the *Abbildung*, thus adding a temporal dimension. The *Vorbildung*, as a function of *Abbildung* and *Nachbildung*, reproduces images from the past and present in anticipation of future images, adding the temporal dimension of the future, and creating a storehouse of images which becomes the vocabulary for sense experience and discursive reason. The activities of *Abbildung*, *Nachbildung*, and *Vorbildung* are connected to discursive reason and sense perception, and they contribute to the substance of experience which is defined by the manifold in the process of apperception, the building of sense experiences of objects and ideas in an architectonic that provides the ground of experience and the self-consciousness of thought. The architectonic is subject to the temporal categories in intuition in the inner experience, and the spatial categories of intuition in sense perception. The activities of *Nachbildung* and *Vorbildung* generate images according to empirical laws of association and are connected to sense objects, but they nevertheless become functions of an active intellect rather than a passive intellect, in that they are governed by the categories of a priori intuition.

The higher imagination is composed of *Einbildung*, *Ausbildung*, and *Gegenbildung*, the three categories of imagination that are not connected to sense perception or empirical experience, and are thus solely the product of intellectual cognition or the *nous poietikos*. *Einbildung* is the power to invent images not connected to sense perceptions. It is an activity of the soul rather than material representation, although its invented image (*Erdichtung*) must be derived from the images of sense perception. *Ausbildung* is responsible for the completion of the invented images in intellection which leads to the final formation of the invented image in *Gegenbildung* as symbolic or analogical, an archetype or intelligible, formed by the schemata from the categories in a priori intuition.

In *Gegenbildung*, the invented, intelligible images become linguistic signifiers, in the same way that the intelligibles of Plotinus are reflected as im-

ages formed by the *logos endiathetos*, unspoken language, in discursive reason. The *Gegenbildung* completes the process of the intelligible, the source of which as an active intellect, becoming a material form in a representation or an image in perception, through the analogue (*symbolum*) or sign of the *logos*. The schemata for the three stages of higher imagination unfold from the temporal categories of a priori intuition. The pure form of archetypal formation in the *Gegenbildung* is the *Urbildung*, which has no connection whatsoever to the material world, but is solely a pure quality of the soul. The *Urbildung* precedes the mechanisms of imagination in cognition.

Kant's *Lectures on Metaphysics* (*Vorlesungen über Metaphysik*) consist of a set of lectures delivered between 1778 and 1780 and are preserved in student notes. In them the functions of the lower imagination are elaborated upon, leading to more developed discussions in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. *Abbildung* creates images which are representations in the present; *Nachbildung* recreates images which are representative of the past; and *Vorbildung* creates images which anticipate future image formation in cognition and sense perception. Each is tied to the mechanisms of sense perception and material images, but also depend on active intellect and intellectual cognition in their formative powers. The manifold, for example, is present even in *Abbildung*, as individual perceptions immediately participate in a totality, in a process of "running through" (*durchläuft*) the manifold. The mind is conscious in sense perception of forming and receiving images which are composites of many points of view, in the process of apperception. The variety of *petite perceptions* of an object are "gathered together" (*zusammen nimmt*), although sometimes they can be overwhelming, which Kant discussed later in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Judgment*.

*Abbildung* combines perceptions from the present, past and future. It thus involves the reproductive processes of *Nachbildung* and the anticipatory processes of *Vorbildung*. The mechanism of imagination connected to each is a form of empirical, discursive reason. Its function is to preserve objects of perception. The functions of the higher imagination, *Einbildung*, *Ausbildung*, and *Gegenbildung*, have the capacity of "producing images out of themselves (*aus sich selbst*) independently of the reality of objects."<sup>10</sup> They have the ability to absorb the particular perceptions connected to empirical or discursive reason into the manifold or totality of experience, and they have the ability to form images not connected to immediate sense experience, in a higher form of intellection, as in *nous poietikos*, that operates without the consciousness of sense perception. The linguistic signifiers of *Gegenbildung*,

or symbolic analogues, manufacture links between sense perception and intellection that are not given by perception or discursive reason alone. While even at the lowest level of imagination objects of sense perception are pre-formed rather than directly given, in *Gegenbildung*, images in imagination are formed without any connection to the objects of sense perception.

In the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, or the “A” version (1781), the “transcendental aesthetic” is the “science of all principles of *a priori* sensibility...” (A21). In the transcendental aesthetic, space is defined as an *a priori* concept that is applied to sense experience, rather than being a quality of sense experience or being derived from sense experience: “Space is a necessary *a priori* representation, which underlies all outer intuitions” (A24). An *a priori* representation, or intuition of sensibility, is taken as a concept. Space does not exist in empirical reality, it only exists as a concept in intellection. At the same time, space can only be a representation, to discursive reason, and not a directly knowable reality. Space is a necessary representation because it is impossible to conceive of the absence of space, thus all intuition is based on the presence of space in representation. In the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, or the “B” version (1787), space must therefore be “the condition of the possibility of appearances” (B39), and thus a condition of the possibility of all images formed in imagination. Space must necessarily be an unconscious intuition of sensibility: we are not conscious of the necessity of the *a priori* concept of space during the process of perception, because space appears to us to be an empirical perception in discursive, conscious reason. The grounds of perception and reason are inaccessible to us in conscious thought.

Space is a manifold, because it cannot be divided. As a consequence, geometry, or the geometrical representation of space, does not exist as an empirical reality, but rather only an *a priori* concept of intuition that is applied to empirical reality in perception and discursive reason. Therefore all products of geometry in intuitive imagination, in *Gegenbildung* and the higher forms of imagination not connected to sense perception, exist only as conceptual structures applied to empirical reality. In that space is the form of all appearances, it is the necessary condition for the *eidos*, and the intelligible form. The forms of appearances, as intelligibles, precede actual perceptions, as established by Plotinus or Robert Grosseteste. Forms of appearances are based on principles, the *principia conoscendi*, that are the categories of *a priori* intuition unfolded in the imagination to form the underlying basis of sense perception and discursive reason, in the same way that for Plotinus the

intelligibles are unfolded in imagination through the *logos endiathetos*, the linguistic signifier of Kant's *Gegenbildung*.

Time is also not an empirical concept derived from any experience, but rather a concept in a priori intuition that is defined by its apodictic necessity, as Kant explained in Section II of the Transcendental Aesthetic. Time is as well only a representation to discursive reason and sense experience, and is a necessary basis for the existence of the manifold, as a manifold cannot be conceived outside of a relation to the successions made possible by the concept of time, along with the concept of space. It is impossible to conceive of any sensible reality outside of time or space. Time, like space, underlies the possibility of all perception and discursive reason, without our being conscious of it as a purely a priori intuitive concept with no necessary connection to the perceptions and thoughts of which we are conscious.

As space determines the form of perception, it is the form of outer sense. Time has no relation to the shape or position of the objects of perception, so it is the form of the inner sense, or the relations of representations in cognition. Time has no existence in spatial representation, but we attempt to represent it to ourselves in the form of spatial analogies: the continuous, undivided line representing linear time, or the infinitely recurring circle representing cyclical time. In either case time is represented as a manifold which cannot be interrupted, although it can be divided, unlike space. The division of time is a function of discursive reason operating on the intuition of the inner sense. Regarding space, discursive reason cannot operate on outer sense, or the empirical reality to which it responds. The representation of both space and time to ourselves in perception and discursive reason is the product of an a priori intuition.

Because all sensual phenomena are representations and determinations of the mind, time precedes space in its apodictic necessity as an a priori condition of experience. The condition of the inner appearance, the intelligible form, determines the condition of the outer appearance, the sensible form. All representations, whether empirical or intuitive, are connected to the inner sense. Time in the inner sense is the condition of the possibility of the manifold, as all things, all sensible perceptions, are given a relationship in time. In apperception, in the combination of perceptions which conform to the a priori manifold, all sense objects are given a place in space and time. The placement of the sense object is determined by a priori relationships of intuition. A sense object that is perceived is understood in a particular spatial relation to other objects, while the perception of the object is understood in

relation to the perception and representation of other objects in time. In dreams, objects in the imagination may appear independent of the spatial relations that governed their perception as sense objects, and independent of the temporal relations that governed the perception of them, as analyzed by Freud. Dreams function independently of the manifold of space and time that organizes conscious reason. As Freud would say, dreams have no intention of communicating anything, so they are able to operate outside the framework of the linguistic mechanisms, the linguistic signifier or the *logos endiathetos*, that transform intelligibles into images, establishing the basis of the relation between reason and perception, between the human mind and the world as it is perceived and represented. Dreams must be a function of the higher forms of imagination, the *Einbildung*, *Ausbildung*, and *Gegenbildung* of Kant, which operate independently of the relations of empirical perception and discursive reason, the relations dictated by the manifold or a priori categories of space and time.

Time is necessary for a manifold to be understood or represented as a manifold to conscious thought. Time is the basis for the “synthesis of apprehension” (A99) that is connected to the representation of the manifold and the intuition that is the basis of the manifold. The synthesis of apprehension is a priori, prior to empirical experience and representation, and not connected to empirical experience. Thus it functions in the higher forms of imagination, as in intellection or *nous poietikos*. The representations of space and time that are given to discursive reason depend on the synthesis of apprehension, as a manifold itself. The manifold, composed of space and time as the categories of a priori intuition, depends on the synthesis of apprehension, which is a synthesis of the inner and outer sense, and of a priori intuition and perception. It is thus a synthesis of the subjective (ideal) and the objective (real), and represents an absolute in Hegelian terms. The absolute, as the manifold and the synthesis of apprehension, is necessary for all thought and experience. Without the categories of a priori intuition, empirical imagination would be unknowable to conscious reason, and would be unable to function in relation to sense perception.

Time, as the a priori category of inner sense or intuition, is the necessary ground of the “synthetic unity of appearances” (A101) in the manifold, and makes possible the reproduction of them in the imagination, and the representation of them to discursive reason. Appearances “are not things in themselves,” but rather “the mere play of our representations,” as phenomena rather than noumena, based on the determinations of inner sense, and the

categories of space and time. The play of the representations of appearances is possible in the higher forms of imagination and intellection, thinking and imagining not connected to the empirical experience. Freed from the relations of perception governed by the rules of synthetic apprehension and the categories of the manifold, appearances can be reproduced and reconstructed by imagination in such a way that different realities from empirical reality can be created. Different realities are bound to the categories of space and time in conscious thought, but in unconscious thought and imagination, in dreams for example, realities can be created from the representation of appearance, the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* of Freud, outside the unconscious manifold. The transcendental synthesis of imagination, which is a product of the synthesis of apprehension in the manifold, or the absolute, is the condition for the possibility of all experience, which is the condition for the possibility of the reproduction of appearances in imagination.

Thus the “synthesis of apprehension” in reason is “inseparably bound up with the synthesis of reproduction” (A102) in imagination. The synthesis of apprehension is the transcendental ground of the possibility of all knowledge, both empirical and a priori, while the synthesis of reproduction in imagination is the transcendental ground of all thought. The succession of representations in the reproduction of images in the imagination is made possible by the category of time; without the succession of images, conscious thought would not be possible. The unity of the manifold can only be given as a representation in conscious thought; as an a priori category, time is inaccessible to conscious thought. The unity of time only exists as it is unfolded in discursive reason through the mechanisms of imagination, in the translation of intelligibles to images through language. The products of the categories of space and time, geometry and mathematics, can only function as organizing principles in relation to perception in conscious reason, although as pure concepts they only exist in intuition, as intelligibles.

The relation of the unity of apprehension to the synthesis of imagination is defined as understanding. We understand something in perception when it corresponds to the a priori idea of it, as it has been apprehended in imagination. All possible perceptions must conform to the “necessary unity of the pure synthesis of imagination” (A119); otherwise they would not be knowable. The a priori modes of knowledge that contain such unity in the understanding are the categories, the “pure concepts of understanding.” Knowledge must include an understanding related to the objects of perception; such understanding is given by a priori intuition and imaginative syn-

thesis. All appearances and representations must conform to the understanding, as the sensible form must conform to the intelligible form. All experience of perception is made possible by noetic thinking of objects as phenomena or representations in the unity of the manifold of synthetic apperception in a priori intuition; objects cannot be known in themselves, nor can they be known as phenomena. Appearances have a “necessary relation to the understanding”: they would not be possible without it.

If an appearance were not an object of knowledge, it would have no objective reality and no existence, according to Kant, recalling the idealism of Berkeley. All appearances contain a manifold a priori, and can only be known in combination, derived from the transcendental synthesis of intuition and higher imagination, in combination with the empirical synthesis of lower imagination. The action of the productive synthesis of the imagination directed at perceptions is apprehension. Apprehension invests the form of the image or appearance in perception with the manifold of intuition, and in order to do so it must have previously processed the appearance in the imagination, recalling again the thought of Berkeley, as in the *Alciphron* “we perceive distance not immediately but by mediation of a sign, which has no likeness to it or necessary connection with it, but only suggests it from repeated experience, as words do things” (§8), and in the *New Theory of Vision*, we are “exceedingly prone to imagine those things which are perceived only by the mediation of others to be themselves the immediate objects of sight” (§66). None of this is possible without the “subjective ground” of the inner sense or category of a priori intuition that is time, which organizes perceptions in relation to past and subsequent perceptions in the empirical faculty of the imagination: *Abbildung*, creating representations in the present; *Nachbildung*, recreating images which represent the past; and *Vorbildung*, creating images which anticipate future images.

The subjective ground of time governs the rules of association between images in perception, imagination, and apprehension. While the subjective ground is the inner sense or intuition, the objective ground is consciousness in perception and apprehension. The objective ground of consciousness is necessary to unite all appearances in empirical imagination as part of the same and only consciousness. Even if the appearances were ordered in succession by the intuition of time, they would still not have the necessity of participating in the same unity. The single consciousness insures that all appearances conform to the categories, the universal principles that are the basis of knowledge. The unity is found in apperception, and all appearances

must conform to the unity of apperception in order to be apprehended. The unity of apperception is the “objective unity of all empirical consciousness in one consciousness” (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A123), which is “the necessary condition of all possible perception.” All appearances must have a certain affinity in a manifold, which is a consequence of the transcendental synthesis in imagination.

The necessary unity of apperception is provided by the transcendental synthesis of the productive imagination, the subjective inner sense, in combination with consciousness in perception and thought, the Cartesian “I think.” Transcendental apperception is distinguished from empirical apperception, just as transcendental imagination is distinguished from empirical imagination, because there must be an a priori representation for all perceptions, in order that perceptions might exist. As perceptions are dependent on a priori representations, a priori representations cannot be dependent on any empirical reality outside of apprehension and imagination. Transcendental apperception is the “transcendental unity of self-consciousness” (B132), as all representations are only unified in belonging to one and the same consciousness. The self-consciousness of empirical representations is made possible by the transcendental unity of apperception, which is made possible by the manifold in intuition. While the unity of apprehension depends on the self-consciousness of the perceiving individual, it also depends on the participation of individual self-consciousness in a universal or self-consciousness, ensuring the universality of the linguistic rules, derived from the principles of the categories, that govern the apprehension of a representation in imagination. Kant was in this way an early structuralist, arguing for the necessity of universal rules of thought and language.

The apperception of the manifold involves a synthesis of representations that is made possible through a consciousness of the synthesis in discursive reason, connected to empirical perception. Empirical consciousness has no necessary relation to the inner sense or the subjective experience without all individual representations being combined in a synthetic consciousness. Consciousness comes about in the relation between perception and language, specifically in the formation of the intelligible image in imagination, which connects the perceiving subject to what is being perceived, in the representation. I am only conscious of the world around me in my perception of it when I can represent it to myself in apperception and imagination. I am only conscious of the world around me as a representation to myself; my consciousness is my perception of my own representations, in relation to my use



of language, which provides the representations, as for Plotinus. The “analytic unity of apperception” (B133), in empirical thought or discursive reason, is given by the “synthetic unity of apperception” in the transcendental aesthetic, the principles of a priori sensibility, which paves the way for the transcendental unity of self-consciousness, and the possibility of knowledge and perception.

The synthesis of the manifold in pure concepts relates them to the unity of apperception, both transcendental and empirical, and is the basis for a priori knowledge, which depends on understanding, and the faculty of representation in imagination. Through the manifold of representations in imagination, in relation to the synthetic unity of apperception, understanding is able to identify the intuition in the inner sense as the basis of experience. The categories, the forms of the pure concepts, take objective form in the representations in the imagination, and are thus connected to the objects of sense perception, as they are themselves representations in the imagination. They are only appearances, “for it is solely of appearances that we can have a priori intuition” (B151).

The a priori synthesis of the sensible manifold of intuition, as it is represented to discursive reason, is called the “figurative synthesis” (*synthesis speciosa*), in contrast to the synthesis of the manifold in the categories of intuition in understanding, which is the “intellectual synthesis” (*synthesis intellectualis*). Both forms of synthesis are a priori and transcendental, and necessary for all other a priori knowledge. The figurative synthesis is the transcendental synthesis of the imagination, wherein the imagination represents an intelligible of a sense object in intuition. It is the higher, productive imagination, that is able to represent a sense object without the sense object being present. As for Plotinus, imagination operates midway between intuition (intellection) and sense perception. It connects sensible representations from empirical experience with the synthesis in the categories of a priori intuition, in its transcendental synthesis in the understanding. The intellectual synthesis is a product of understanding alone, without a connection to imagination, or to sense perception. Figurative synthesis is connected to the lower, reproductive imagination, and the empirical laws of sense perception. Intellectual synthesis is connected to the higher, productive imagination, which does not involve the empirical laws of sense perception, as in the *nous poietikos*, the intellectual or productive intellect. Figurative synthesis is a rhetorical synthesis, as opposed to a literal synthesis, that is, a synthesis represented in language.

In the thought of Plotinus, in a scheme that seems very similar to the Kantian one, and anticipated the concepts of Hegel and Freud, imagination facilitates the translation of sensible objects in perception to intellection. The intellectual act is not possible without an accompanying mental image. The ability to form the image (*eidos*), appearance or representation, in the mind's eye is always accompanied by the "verbal expression" (*Enneads* IV.3.30),<sup>11</sup> or more accurately, the *logos endiathetos*, the word in thought, as Plotinus seems to have intended it. The intelligible image, and thus the sensible image, is not possible without the linguistic expression of it, and linguistic expression is not possible without the intelligible image. Perception of sensible objects is only possible after the idea of the sensible object is articulated in language in intellection. While the "intellectual act is without parts," according to Plotinus, as in the a priori synthesis of the manifold in intuition, it has not been differentiated in discursive reason through the *logos endiathetos* in imagination, and thus in sense perception, and it "has not, so to speak, come out into the open, but remains unobserved within."

But "the verbal expression," or the *logos endiathetos*, "unfolds its content," from intellection or intuition, "and brings it out of the intellectual act into the image-making power," allowing imagination to form the intelligible image that corresponds to the sensible image in memory, as in the thought of Kant. In doing so, the linguistic articulation "shows the intellectual act as if in a mirror," for Plotinus, or a representation, as a mirror reflection might represent a sensible object, but the linguistic articulation in discursive reason does not contain the intellectual act; the intellectual act, like the intellectual synthesis, and the productive imagination, remains separated from sense perception and sensible reality, and discursive reason, wherein can be found the figurative synthesis, as the linguistic representation, *logos endiathetos*, of the intelligible, or the transcendental synthesis. The intellectual act of Plotinus is inaccessible, as the a priori transcendental synthesis of the manifold.

The *logos endiathetos*, as the unarticulated word, can be seen as Plotinus' "silent rational form" (*Enneads* III.8.6) and the "rational principle" which "must not be outside but must be united with the soul of the learner, until it finds that it is its own," like the categories of a priori intuition in the inner sense of Kant. Once the soul of Plotinus has "become akin to and disposed according to the rational principle," the *logos*, or the schemata of Kant unfolding the categories, it "utters and propounds it," forming the representation of the intelligible idea in relation to the representation of the object of sense perception. The spoken word in language, *logos prophorikos*, is an im-

itation of the *logos endiathetos* in the same way that the figurative synthesis is an imitation of the intellectual synthesis, and reproductive imagination is an imitation of productive imagination, but connected to perception. According to Plotinus, the *logoi* of discursive reason, “by means of sense-perception—which is a kind of intermediary when dealing with sensible things—do appear to work on the level of sense and think about sense objects” (*Enneads* I.4.10). Discursive reason depends on representations of thought in intellect, or the representations of the categories in imagination. Consciousness “exists and is produced when intellectual activity is reflexive and when that in the life of the soul which is active in thinking is in a way projected back,” as the representation formed by the *logos*, “as happens with a mirror-reflection when there is a smooth, bright, untroubled surface.”

The schemata of Kant, in the words of Rudolf Makkreel, in *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant*, are “a priori products of the imagination that mediate between concepts and empirical appearances,”<sup>12</sup> as the *logos endiathetos* might mediate between the intelligible and the sensible form in the thought of Plotinus. The schema has no empirical content, but must be both intellectual and sensible, as the imagination of Plotinus is both intellectual and sensible. The schemata apply the categories to imagination in order to form the groundwork of the subjective empirical experience of the objects of sense perception. Imagination mediates between the categories as universal concepts and sensible intuition as composed of empirical particulars. The framework for the mediation is time, within which the categories are unfolded as particulars, from the subjective intuition of inner sense to the objective cogitation of *nous pathetikos* or discursive reason. The framework of time allows for the temporal associations of representations to be combined in such a way as the manifold can be translated into perception. The most important function of the productive, transcendental imagination is to produce the temporal schemata, through representation in language, so that the sensible can be experienced as a manifold in intuition.

There are schemata of both sensible concepts in discursive thought and pure concepts of the understanding in intuition. As the framework for the function of imagination, which is both sensible and intelligible, reproductive and productive, schemata are both sensible and intelligible. The schemata of the pure concepts are independent of any sensible form and thus cannot be translated into an image, while the schemata of the sensible concepts are that through which images are possible in imagination. The schema is not a property of a sensible concept, but is a necessary basis for any sensible concept.

The schema is an archetype, the universal concept to which all particular forms must conform, but in relation to which all are imperfect or incomplete realizations. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the example is given of the triangle (A141), the schema of which cannot correspond to any image or representation, as it is a construct of geometry and mathematics, manifestations of the categories of space and time, intuitions that are applied to sensible reality a priori, thus preceding any possible formal representation.

In the Introduction to Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 1790), pleasure is connected with the "apprehension of the form of an object of intuition," and expresses the "conformity of the object to the cognitive faculties brought into play in the reflective judgement..." (VII, 189, 17–24),<sup>13</sup> recalling Ficino's definition of love. The image is the form in the imagination, the intelligible form that is a product of a priori intuition; pleasure is a function of the imagination, not sense perception. All sense perception is dependent on the synthesis of apprehension. Imagination is the active faculty for the synthesis of the manifold, as connected to the understanding. The apprehension that produces pleasure is an apprehension of particular relations of space and time as given by the categories in intuition. Sensations are synthesized in the imagination to create a form or appearance. If the synthesis of sensations corresponds with the pure a priori concepts, then pleasure results, as love and beauty for Ficino, and an object of sense, as the form or appearance in the imagination, is judged to be beautiful. If a sense object does not conform to the organization of reality in sense perception as given by a priori intuition, then it is judged to be ugly.

In order for a sense object to be perceived, judged to be beautiful, and give pleasure, it must conform to the intelligible appearance of it in the imagination, derived from the categories of a priori intuition. Kant sees elements of sense perception such as colors, tones, shadows, etc., to be products of the manifold of perception, or apperception, rather than individual perceptions. They participate in spatial and temporal sequences, and in a play of perceptions that forms the manifold. The spatial and temporal sequences are not present in a perception itself, nor is the play of perceptions that forms the manifold, but they make the perception possible. No sense object can be perceived outside a relation to other sense objects. Perceptions are brought together in the imagination, and sensible and intelligible forms in the imagination are a product of the manifold of perceptions in imagination, not individual sense objects outside their participation in the manifold. Pleasure and aesthetic judgment are the product of the manifold of perceptions, the

relations between objects of sense. Kant developed theories of language and perception in classical philosophy, in the neoplatonic, peripatetic, scholastic, and humanistic traditions, and laid the groundwork for theories of language and perception in the psychoanalytic theory of Freud and Lacan.

This essay was developed from sections of the chapter “Unconscious Thought in the Philosophy of Immanuel Kant” in *Unconscious Thought in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy 1755–1770*, trans. and ed. David Walford (*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 237. See Angus Nicholls and Martin Liebscher, “Introduction: thinking the unconscious,” in Angus Nicholls and Martin Liebscher, eds., *Thinking the Unconscious: Nineteenth-Century German Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *The Monadology*, trans. Robert Latta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1898), p. 231, Paragraph 23.

<sup>3</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, trans. and ed. P. Remnant and J. Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 55.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Philip Merlan, *Monopsychism Mysticism Metaconsciousness: Problems of the Soul in the Neoaristotelian and Neoplatonic Tradition* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), p. 61, and in Matthew Bell, *The German Tradition of Psychology in Literature and Thought, 1700–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> George Berkeley, *Works on Vision*, ed. C. M. Turbayne (New York: The Library of Liberal Arts, 1963).

<sup>6</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: MacMillan & Co, 1968).

<sup>7</sup> Joel Faflak, *Romantic Psychoanalysis: The Burden of the Mystery* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), p. 48.

<sup>8</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Victor Lyle Dowdell (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, XXVIII, 237, quoted in Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment*, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1966).

<sup>12</sup> Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment*, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952).