



## Appendix A

### Kant's Triple Synthesis

In official terminology, the three stages of Kant's triple synthesis as expounded in the first edition of the first *Critique* are called the *intuitive synopsis of apprehension*, the *imaginative synthesis of reproduction*, and the *conceptual unity of recognition*.<sup>1</sup> I will here discuss the intuitive synopsis, imaginative synthesis, and conceptual unity successively, emphasising how these three stages of the triple synthesis are interrelated and, in fact, interdependent: the synopsis of apprehension cannot well be achieved without the synthesis of reproduction, while the latter will be of little use without the unity of recognition. Moreover, recalling Kant's 'two-way traffic' of sense data coming 'in' from without that are at the same time conditioned from within, I will explain that each stage of the triple synthesis has a double aspect. Double, that is to say, in so far as Kant presupposes a 'pure' or 'model-synthesis', which is *independent* of sense perception, for every individual synopsis, synthesis, or unity made in the interaction with the world. Simply said, the former precedes and grounds the latter. In Kantian terms, the individual synthesis is called an *empirical synthesis*, which is to say that it involves the senses or contains sensory elements. The 'model-synthesis' is a *transcendental synthesis*, devoid of the empirical, and functions as a *condition of possibility* for any empirical synthesis. The former pre-casts the latter, and it is on this transcendental level that Kant's pure forms and *a priori* rules reign.

Thus, in the first, empirical synopsis of apprehension the senses pass through and gather together a sighted manifold (a *Mannigfaltiges*, which can be interpreted as many different, discrete sense-impressions) in a representation (Kant 1990: A99, 143a-144a). It should be noted that representation – as the regular but not altogether satisfactory translation of *Vorstellung* – is rather a tricky term here. For as Gilles Deleuze argues in

---

<sup>1</sup>In the Subjective Deduction of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* imagination has a much more important and fundamental role than in the strictly Objective Deduction of the second edition. In the latter, (transcendental) imagination appears mostly reduced to a function of understanding. In fact, in that same second edition Kant radicalises the role of understanding to such an extent, that the entire triple synthesis seems to have become an affair of understanding alone. However, like many others, I have chosen to describe the Transcendental Deduction of the first rather than the second edition of the *Critique*. This is due to the fact that only the Subjective Deduction presents a detailed discussion of the way in which intuition, imagination, and understanding *together* co-ordinate and organise the world of appearances into a world that can be thought and cognised objectively, and thus offers "the most elaborate account of the temporal nature of consciousness" (Makkreel [1990] 1994: 29). Moreover, and more to the point, it pays much more detailed attention to the function and power of the imagination, and sensibility as a whole, that is to play such a central – albeit also a failing – role in Kant's analytic of the sublime. To understand why imagination fails, however, it must first of all be understood how imagination works precisely – or: how it succeeds – in ordinary circumstances.

his extraordinarily lucid account of Kant's critical philosophy, representation alludes to the net-result of the triple synthesis as a whole. It is not necessary, he suggests, to "define [cognition]<sup>2</sup> as a synthesis of representations.<sup>3</sup> It is the representation itself which is defined as [cognition], that is to say as *the synthesis of that which is presented* [i.e. the manifold or empirical diversity]" (Deleuze [1963] 1995: 8). Thus, only understanding can represent.

Deleuze is, however, not entirely right in thus denying the senses the ability to yield representations. He may be right to the extent that representation implies an "activity and unity" that Kant only reserves for the faculty of understanding (ibid.: 8). The senses are for him passive, receptive, and incapable of forging the unity that the understanding can produce. Yet, in specific relation to this division of passive and active aspects of mind, Kant also distinguishes two sorts of representations or *Vorstellungen*. As he argues in the *Anthropology* (1789), representations to which "the mind relates itself passively, that is, through which the subject is *affected* [*affiziert*] belong to *sensibility*...; those, however, which contain a bare *doing* [*Tun*] (thought) belong to the *intellectual* faculty [i.e. understanding]" (Kant 1960: §7, 313). This means that 'representation' not just implies a mental activity, but also a sensual receptivity. In fact, it means that representations are either "sensations" [*Empfindungen*] (passive) or "cognitions" [*Erkenntnisse*] (active); that they are always either subjective (intuitive) or objective (conceptual) "perceptions" (Kant 1990: A320, B376, 354).

This shows that Kant conceives of representations in terms of *relations*: the way in which I relate to the world in being either passively and immediately affected by a manifold in its diversity, or in actively and mediately thinking this manifold as a unity. Such relations would be defined today as a 'seeing as' and a 'thinking as' respectively. Although unity is strictly only reserved for the latter, some sort of (minimal) unity in intuition is implied after all when, firstly, Kant remarks that intuitions *contain* (*enthalten*) a manifold. For to contain, which seems to be one of Kant's favourite metaphors, not merely connotes to hold but also to control or hold *together* (ibid.: A99, 144a). And indeed, secondly, although it is *but* a sighted manifold that the senses can offer in intuition (further unity must come from above), the sighting of 'a manifold' as such (*als ein solches*) is already to contain this manifold "in a representation" (ibid.: A99, 144a). This, moreover, is not all: the "absolute unity" of this representation is ensured by its being contained as *in one*

---

<sup>2</sup>In (the English translation of) Deleuze's account of Kant, the German *Erkenntnis* is translated as knowledge, but this glosses over an important distinction between *Erkenntnis* – familiarly translated as *cognition* – and *Wissen*, translated as knowledge, in Kant's text (who, incidentally, and also typically, himself not always upholds this distinction very strictly either).

<sup>3</sup>In the first *Critique* Kant calls the application of a concept to an intuition (i.e. 'mediate' cognition, or judgement) a "representation of a representation" (Kant 1990: A68, B93, 108).

*moment* (*Augenblick*, a blink of the eye) (ibid.: A99, 143a). Thus the synopsis of apprehension allows me to enfold or wrap a manifold in a minimal unit of a time sequence and *in this* way sight it as 'a manifold', in a representation.

What can in any case be inferred from this is that my being affected by the world in intuition must be an affectation (representation) *in time*. Now, for Kant time, and space no less, is not an independent fact 'out there' but a *subjective* form projected onto the world of experience. "Before Kant", as Schopenhauer puts it, "we were in time; now, time is in us" (Schopenhauer 1986: I, 573). He calls time an inner sense, and space an outer sense, and declares: representations – such as those yielded by intuition – are *representations of the form of the inner or pure* [i.e. independent of the empirical] *intuition of time*, or the 'outer' pure intuition of space (Kant 1990: A115, 169a). These two constitute the most basic framework of one's encounters with and representations of the sensory world, the basic forms in which one necessarily sees or senses things. Or, as Howard Caygill puts it, the forms of time and space "provide a field within which the manifold of [empirical] intuition may appear as a representation" (Caygill [1995] 1999: 249).

In this context, even a 'simple' sighting is already conditioned by the fact that the world extends before me in time and space, or rather that on a transcendental level I 'make' the world extend before me in time and space. Intuitions are not merely sensible, they are also spatio-temporally grounded. As such, all empirical synopses of apprehension yielded by intuition are grounded in, and logically 'preceded by', the pure intuitions of time and space: these constitute the nature of the representations in which one contains a sighted manifold as one manifold.

However, I can contain what I will in empirical intuition, one impression at the time, but what happens when I am no longer looking at a manifold, when all these discrete impressions are no longer vivid to my senses? I could never even see things in their empirical entirety, except perhaps when they are flat or transparent. On looking at a multi-sided object of sense I would instantly forget its backside while turning to see its front. Therefore, in comes the power of imagination to make its synthesis of reproduction:<sup>4</sup> a recalling of the manifold in mind when it is no longer in sight, no longer present (Kant 1990: A100, 145a).

---

<sup>4</sup>Indeed, for Kant, the synopsis of apprehension is therefore hardly possible without the synthesis of reproduction. Only by means of the latter can representations become complete, as my example in the above already shows. Kant actually observes in a note that if, as the empiricists hold, sense-perceptions "not just offer impressions but already put these impressions together, and yield images of sense-objects" they in fact presuppose not just an intuitive synopsis but also an imaginative synthesis (Kant 1990: A120, 176a). In other words, if one follows the empiricist claim about the nature and function of sense-perception, then imagination cannot but be "a necessary ingredient of perception [*Wahrnehmung*] itself" (ibid.: A120, 176a). After all, there is no reason to assume that my mere being affected by, or my being receptive to, a manifold already, and automatically, reproduces that manifold into a coherent image that can be

This reproduction is synthetic, i.e. connective or combinatory in so far as such a reproduction in the visual absence of a sighted manifold will enable one to connect it to other representations, which are also no longer 'actually' visible. Thus retaining a representation, and relating it to others, imagination ensures its continuity over time – it remains present to the mind even if it is no longer present to the eye. Quite literally, therefore, imagination may be said to bring the synopsis of apprehension “into coherent images, *Bilder*, which it has the power (Kraft) to institute into (*ein*) ourselves” (Bowie 1993: 18). As we have seen in the above, however, this power of imagination to not-forget and combine the representations yielded by intuition once they are out of sight, its power to re-call and relate them in mental images, will have an absolute limit in the Kantian analytic of the sublime: it keeps losing what it must retain and cohere as a whole.

If, then, in one's more usual encounters with the world, imagination is effectively reproductive Kant calls its transcendental ground – its condition of possibility – productive. On the one hand, this productive imagination is of crucial significance to sensibility as a whole (that is, both empirical intuition and reproductive imagination). For as Kant clearly states in the *Anthropology* the pure forms of time and space that ground intuition “belong to” this productive imagination – which, incidentally, he also calls a “poetic” or originating (*dichtend*) as opposed to “recollective” or derivative (*zurückrufend*), yet never “creative” (*schöpferisch*), capacity (Kant 1960: §28, 344, 345).<sup>5</sup> Knowing this, one could even suggest that in the final analysis – at least on the basis of the first edition of the first *Critique* and the *Anthropology* – transcendental or productive imagination grounds and conditions *both* the possibility of the empirical synthesis of reproduction (intuition without presence) *and* the empirical synopsis of apprehension (intuition in presence). For if the pure forms of space and time belong to the transcendental imagination, it is also the latter which ultimately allows for a manifold to be contained as in one moment; i.e. in a representation. On the other hand, productive imagination is especially significant to reproductive imagination as concerns its task to make *images* out of the contained manifold yielded by intuition. Kant is straightforward enough in this respect: if the empirical capacity of imagination yields images, the transcendental capacity of imagination provides the rules for the making of images (Kant 1990: A141; B181, 200). These rules are called *figurative schemata* and while not being images themselves, or derived

---

related, combined, or associated with others. To contain in a representation is not yet to retain it and relate it to others.

<sup>5</sup>Imagination, even productive imagination, Kant observes in the *Anthropology*, cannot ‘bring forward’ (*hervorbringen*) a “sense-representation” which has *never* been given in (empirical) intuition; i.e. which is utterly unknown to the senses (Kant 1960: §28, 345).

from them, they nevertheless condition the possibility of images in their being so called 'concepts' of graphic figures.<sup>6</sup>

Kant calls such a figure-producing schema a "*monogram* of the pure imagination": "a rule for generating configurations of lines" (ibid.: A142; B182, 200; Makkreel [1990] 1994: 31). This fully shows the verily pure and transcendental nature of the productive imagination: it is devoid of the empirical, it is not determined by the senses but rather determines them: it is not subject to empirical laws but generates laws for the empirically figurative (Kant 1990: B152, 167b). As such a schematic capacity to which the pure forms of time and space belong, the transcendental imagination pre-casts a regularity onto appearances (which are the mere play of representations) that triggers, as it were, empirical imagination *at all* to set about doing its proper job of reproduction and association.<sup>7</sup> That is to say, to retain or re-collect past representations in mental images and connect them with present representations passed on by the senses.

However, I can reproduce and associate what I will, so that representations obtain a continuity over time, but this amounts to nothing much if I cannot unify these successive representations and reproductions in a concept. If, that is to say, I cannot take these representations as one in the 'I recognize' or 'I identify' inherent to the third stage of the synthesis. As Deleuze puts it, cognition – and cognition is what the synthesis is all about – implies for Kant "a necessary relation to an object. That which constitutes [cognition] is not simply the act by which the represented manifold is synthesized [i.e. combined by imagination], but the act by which the represented manifold is related to an object (recognition: this is a table, this is an apple, this is such and such an object)" (Deleuze 1995: 15).<sup>8</sup> Or, more specifically, cognition requires recognition in a concept. This concept determines, in being (indirectly) applied to, the represented manifold and allows me to think this manifold as an object. Without such a conceptual recognition nothing could be made out as 'the same', all my representations would

---

<sup>6</sup>As such they also function as mediators between the sensual and *conceptual*. For as Kant maintains, the conceptual faculty of understanding is never directly involved with the senses; its concepts never immediately apply to things or even to images but to the schemata of images provided by the productive imagination (ibid.: A141; B180, 199). These schemata thus direct empirical imagination but they also serve understanding, which is to say that in its servile role imagination still "brings to bear some of its own formative power" (Makkreel [1990] 1994: 30).

<sup>7</sup>This I derive from Kant's observation that without an *a priori* rule imposing regularity onto the world of appearances "our empirical imagination would never get something to do [*etwas zu tun bekommen*] conforming to its capacity [more specifically: its power; *etwas ihrem Vermögen Gemäβes*], and thus remain hidden as a dead and, even to us, unknown capacity" (Kant 1990: A100, 145a). We would never know what reproductive, associative riches we possessed.

<sup>8</sup>Kant defines an object as "that in the concept of which the manifold of a given intuition is united" (ibid.: B137, 147a). Simply said: one needs concepts to produce objects (of cognition); one needs concepts to achieve a final unity, a final and definitive synthesis that makes cognition possible.

be ever new to me. I would be infinitely reproducing the same without identifying it as such, and without being aware of it. Imagination, reproducing representations from one moment to the next, would be offering an endless, successively ordered string of representations that would never be co-existing in or as a unified whole.

This conceptual unity of recognition is in turn grounded in the so-called transcendental *unity of apperception*; the unity of 'I think' which Kant considers to be "the highest principle [*Grundsatz*] in the whole sphere of human cognition" (Kant 1990: B135, 145a).<sup>9</sup> The significance of this unity of apperception appears to be that an 'I think' must attend all my representations. I must recognize them all as *my* representations, or else no coherence, no unity can ever be established among them (Kant 1990: B132, 141a). In fact, such a consciousness attending all my *various* representations at a time is not enough. As Kant states, I must be conscious of the *synthesis* of these representations for them to be united in one consciousness (ibid.: B133, 142a). If not, I have not an identity of consciousness but as many different 'consciousnesses' as I yield empirical representations. Not the mere 'I think', then, but the continued *unity* over time of 'I think' rules here.

If, therefore, the imaginative synthesis of reproduction is about re-collecting or not-forgetting, the last stage of the triple synthesis revolves around an even more essential not-forgetting. The former ensures the not-forgetting of representations, the unity of apperception ensures the not-forgetting of myself and my synthesizing my representations as *my* representations – as one whole. Understanding as a whole is according to Kant ultimately dependent on this synthetic unifying of different moments of consciousness (the unity of 'I think').

Finally, if the unity of the triple synthesis is a conceptual unity of recognition grounded in apperception, then the *form* of that synthetic unity is provided by the twelve pure, *a priori* concepts or categories of the understanding (van de Vall 1994: 280).<sup>10</sup> Given the complexity of these categories, I will here suffice to state that they constitute the rules or "grammar" of the actual use of concepts and though not dependent on "particular experience", they still "occur in all cognition of experience, where they as it were constitute the [elementary] form of

---

<sup>9</sup>In the *Critique* Kant specifically states that "the synthetic unity of apperception [is] the highest point, to which all use of the understanding...must be attached [or: affixed, *heften*], indeed, this power [i.e. the synthetic unity of apperception, the unity of 'I think'] is understanding itself" (Kant 1990: B134, 143a).

<sup>10</sup>As is well-known, Kant devised a so called table of categories corresponding to the basic acts, or functions of unity, of judgement. These are the categories, firstly, of *quantity* (unity, plurality, totality), secondly, of *quality* (reality, negation, limitation), thirdly, of *relation* (inherence and subsistence, causality and dependence, community), and, fourthly, of *modality* (possibility-impossibility, existence-non-existence, necessity-contingency). Schopenhauer, incidentally, proposed to "throw eleven of the categories out of the window" and just stick to the category of causality (Schopenhauer 1990: 605).

connexion" of representations (Kant [1783] 1994: 85).<sup>11</sup> This form can likewise be traced to the unity of different moments of consciousness in apperception.

For as van Eekert observes, the twelve pure concepts or categories supplying the form of the synthetic unity produced in recognition are "just as many modes of the thinking or experiencing of objects by [the] pure I" of 'I think' (van Eekert 1994: 43, my translation). Or, says Deleuze, the categories are "*representations of the unity of consciousness and, as such, predicates of the object in general*" to which I relate a represented manifold (Deleuze 1995: 16). Which means nothing more or less than that the synthetic unity of apperception which grounds and makes possible the conceptual unity of recognition is "disposed" or "distributed according to the categories" (Caygill 1999: 83). The categories, which formalise the unity of representations, thus operate only by the grace of the unity of 'I think': the unity they express in a concept is, in the end, expressive of this 'higher' unity.

It could, for that matter, be added to this that the operations of reason effectuate a fourth stage in the Kantian synthesis. For what reason (strictly speaking with a capital R) can do as a supersensible faculty is to carry the categorical unity informed by the unity of 'I think' "up to the completely unconditioned [*Schlechthinunbedingten*]" (Kant 1990: B383, 359). This unconditioned unity differs from the categorical or conceptual unity in that it can never be legitimately applied to sensibility: i.e. it transgresses the limitations of possible experience – experience being ultimately the net result of the triple synthesis – because there is no experience which is not conditioned by the pure forms of time and space and the unity of apperception. As such, we have seen, reason can think ideas (such as infinity) that cannot become objects of perception or cognition: these ideas are *just ideas*, and nothing more than that. They cannot be materialized as an object, they cannot be formed or visualized: they belong to the realm of the *noumenon*.

To recapitulate: the triple synthesis comprises an intuitive synopsis of apprehension grounded in the pure forms of time and space; an

---

<sup>11</sup>As pure, *a priori* concepts; concepts that are not derived from experience but are logically prior to it, these categories never directly apply to intuitions. They do so only by mediation of a specific class of schemata, or rather through a schematic correspondence between, on the one hand, one's temporally ordered sensations and representations in sensibility (receptivity) and, on the other hand, the purely logical function and significance of the categories (activity). Unlike the figure-producing schemata discussed above, these schemata do not bear on the sensible (mostly the spatial, the graphic) but on the *intellectual*. Corresponding as they do to the categories they can "be brought into no image whatsoever" (Kant 1990: A142; B181, 200). Yet they can be brought into agreement with the conditions of sensuous intuition – especially, for Kant, with its most 'universal' condition, which is the condition of time. For example, as Makkreel points out, the "category of causality...provides the rule for recognizing a temporal order as a necessary order. This can be schematised...as a progressive temporal sequence through which objects can be determinately related" (Makkreel 1994: 30).

imaginative synthesis of reproduction grounded in transcendental or productive imagination (which may also be said to ground the synopses and syntheses of sensibility as a whole); a conceptual unity of recognition grounded in the transcendental unity of apperception. As I have tried to show, the first cannot be successful without the second, while the second is utterly in vain without the third. Or, to put it in reverse, as the final stage of the triple synthesis the 'I recognize' is in a sense also its first, most fundamental aspect that determines the other two. Although of these three faculties of mind involved in the triple synthesis it is above all imagination, and sensibility as whole, that plays a major role in the Kantian sublime, I have included the workings of understanding as well for the following reasons.

First, Kant's triple synthesis, and especially the last, most decisive stage of that synthesis, reveals a coherent, unified subject which (as a logical function rather than a substantial being) comprises a self-conscious I that is "aware of itself as distinct from that which it is aware of" (Crowther 1989: 16). As I have shown, Kant's version of sublime experience reinforces the wholeness of this subject (rather than causing a subjective fragmentation), in what can be called a "radical self-orientation" – a reassertion of one's self-presence in, and even one's dominion over the world of nature – through an initial disorientation (Fenves 1994: 74).

Secondly, and in relation to this, as a 'Copernican revolution', Kant's critical philosophy also presents something of a claustrophobic revolution: in everything I see, hear, feel, touch, or do, I seem to be doing something I have already done before on a transcendental level. I apprehend, reproduce, and unify a world of appearances that I have already made to fit my apprehensions, reproductions, and conceptions. I am constantly dealing not with an outside world but with what I myself have conditioned to be possible as an outside world. This may, in fact, be why philosophy after Kant (and this emphatically includes our present-day post-structuralist philosophies after the 'linguistic turn'), is no longer concerned with an experiencing of and thinking about a world one encounters in everyday life, but only engaged in thinking conditions of possibilities (or the impossibility of any such conditions) for any such experiencing, thinking, or cognising. As such, this critical claustrophobia will also help to account for the fact that Kant's analytic of the sublime revolves around a subject that is not experiencing nature but itself – i.e. experiences in nature what it has (from within) itself already projected onto it – and experiencing itself as being separated from and contrasted to nature.

Thirdly, and lastly, the triple synthesis indicates how things 'normally' work in the Kantian world, that is, how sensibility and understanding are 'normally' supposed to operate and co-operate. Relations are strictly defined here: imagination completes intuition, but also serves understanding. It is only on this basis that the exceptionality of what I

would call the Kantian sublime situation – in which imagination is suddenly confronted with reason – can be fully appreciated.