

The Anticipations of Perception

The Anticipations of Perception treats the schematization of the category of quality and is the second of Kant's mathematical principles. As with the Axioms of Intuition, Kant alters the formulation of the principle of the Anticipations between the two editions of the *Critique* so we should begin with an account of the difference between the two statements of the principle. In the first edition Kant states the principle as follows: "In all appearances sensation, and the *real* which corresponds to it in the object (*realitas phaenomenon*), has an *intensive magnitude*, that is, a degree." (A166). Here Kant states a universal principle indicating that it meets one of the criteria for being *a priori*. The universal nature of appearances is said to involve reference to sensations. These sensations, when we reach the level of determinacy that enables us to say that we have an object, are what lead us to state that experience of any object is experience of something that has a degree of affect upon us. In the second edition the formulation is restated as follows: "In all appearances, the real that is an object of sensation has intensive magnitude, that is, a degree" (B207). The second edition formulation is again universal and again states a universal condition of appearances. Here the reference to the distinction between appearances and phenomena is left out with the statement following that the real that *is* an object of sensation has to have a degree.

At the opening of the second edition version of the proof of this principle Kant states that perception simply is empirical consciousness. Hence we are in his defence of this principle learning something directly

about the nature of experience. The pure forms of intuition are not what is given to empirical consciousness, rather what is given to such consciousness is the awareness of *matter* or in other words the sense that something is constantly occurring for it and being given to it. If we are empirically conscious, we are conscious *of* something and what this consciousness is necessarily directed to, is the sense of being affected by something that is beyond it. So if we are experiencing sensations we are experiencing something having a degree of influence upon us. However if we can state that whenever we have any sensation we have an awareness of being affected it follows from this that awareness of being affected is primary awareness, *even emerging for us before any sense that there are "objects"*.

Awareness of sensation is clearly not equivalent to objective awareness as sensations in the basic sense are what belong to us purely subjectively. Since what is given in sensation is not any type of direct awareness of space and time it would appear that the type of magnitude that emerges for us from sensation is not, as was the case when considering the Axioms of Intuition, extensive, it is rather *intensive*. What does this mean? Kant states that awareness of sensation is something given in an "instant" (A167/B209) and hence does not involve successive synthesis. Since the awareness of sensation is given in such instantaneous form there is no necessity to bring it under the heading of the continuous frame of time and space in order to grasp it in the first place. However even though sensations are given instantaneously they are all capable of arising and then gradually diminishing until they vanish. So any particular sensation has a variety of

modes of being given to our awareness, which is as much to say that some form of magnitude is given to us in our sense of it. But since this sense of magnitude does not require reference to successive synthesis it cannot be described as extensive (strung out in time and space) but must rather be termed intensive, a degree that is one of affection but not of any necessary representation in spatio-temporal form.

However we can now step back from the argument as given thus far and judge it as having an implication that was not at first obvious. We have said two things. Firstly, that if we are empirically aware then we are experiencing sensations. Secondly, that such sensations are always given to us as manifesting a degree of affection upon us. If we bring these two points together, we should note that the consequence is that there cannot be experience without awareness of some manner or form of sensation, so that if sensation were to cease being given entirely then experience would also cease as it would then have no content. What follows from this point is that there must be some mode of connection between distinct sensations as otherwise there would be a breakdown in experience's coherence. In other words, although the particular sensations have no necessary reference to time, the relationship between one sensation and another that gives the sense that there is experience occurring is one that involves necessary temporal connection between the sensations. Space and time are what enable the *continuity of quantity* that is required for sensation to be experienced at all to be ordered and made manifest. Whilst space and time hence are not

necessary ingredients of any particular perception they are necessary for the ordered connection between them that we term “experience”.

Ordered connection between perceptual inputs is what is required for sensations to point us beyond an awareness of purely subjective states to the sense that there is a world of “objects” that exists independently of us and is the source of our consciousness of being affected. So appearances have now been shown to have two mathematical conditions as they are on the one hand given as *extensive* when represented as intuitions and on the other are *intensive* to be merely perceived and both together require continuity in magnitude of description. One of the important things that emerges from this, is that empty space and empty time are not possible objects of experience. On this basis Kant directly and explicitly opposes the Newtonian view that we require reference to an absolute space and time in order to describe the difference in the quantity of matter that is possessed by bodies that have the same volume. In opposing the Newtonians on this manner Kant points both to the fact that metaphysical assumptions are often made in the course of presenting proofs in natural science (pointing for him to the existence of a specific discipline, “pure natural science”) but also to the need for the elements of the basic proofs of natural science to be demonstrated in terms of transcendental conditions.

As Kant points out we can give a different explanation for why bodies of apparently the same volume have different amounts of matter. We can state that in fact the two bodies possess different degrees of something (such as different degrees of weight or resistance) and that this is the ground

of their difference. Hence it is not necessary to invent the notion of empty space to account for differences between bodies.

Kant's general argument however is to the effect that there is an element of perception that we can anticipate *a priori*. This element is what enables us to describe the internal structure of sensations even though sensations are precisely in their nature not *a priori* but always given *a posteriori*. The particular quality of particular sensations is what is given *a posteriori* but we can state that for any sensation at all, whatever it is of and whatever its nature, has to possess a degree. This degree, a degree that has to be continuous between sensations, is what we can anticipate *a priori* and only this can be stated concerning sensation *a priori* but the fact that it can be asserted shows that not all Kant's transcendental principles concern only the *form* of how something is given as this one directly tells us something about the *matter* and hence this principle is one that describes to us *a priori* the nature of the material on which experience rests.

Anticipations of Perception Seminar

- A) Arguments about the relationship between the two statements of the principle: Heidegger prefers the second edition statement of it declaring that the first gives the false impression that sensations first have degrees and then the real does whilst the opposite is what Kant really means. Howard Caygill apparently agrees with the thrust of this stating that the principle concerns the "object" of sensation, not sensation itself. Kemp Smith also favours the second edition formula on the grounds that the first edition formula commits Kant to "phenomenalism".
- B) These arguments about the formula are really difficulties with the nature of what is being stated in the proof. Heidegger for example states that the "object" is not something different from the "sensations" and whilst it is true to say that the object is not thought of by Kant as something distinct from the sensations it produces, nonetheless the coldness of the ice cream can be separated from the ice cream "itself". Kant's argument concerns what has to be

presented in any “matter” of experience and the focus on sensation is meant to point out to us that there are no simples in experience. This is the ground of the distinction between “sensation” and its “object” but still the second edition formula is in fact superior as it removes the suggestion that the real is what “corresponds” to sensation.

- C) Robert Paul Wolff argues that since this part of the *Critique* is not based on successive synthesis it is out of keeping with the rest of the work. But Kant does refer here to a synthesis that is involved in generating the “magnitude of a sensation” (A166/B208). This synthesis is one of connection between the continuity of givenness of the sensation and consciousness. As Paton puts this the synthesis of imagination is not a combination of empty times and spaces but a filling of time and space, a filling that enables time and space to be given as having content.
- D) Paul Guyer suggests that the principle of continuity points only to a potential of sensation and in any case that it is merely empirical. Both points are wrong. Kant’s argument is that without sensation nothing at all *could* be given and hence it is not purely a potential element of experience as without it there would be no experience. Secondly, it is not purely empirical as it is not contingent but necessary.
- E) Phenomenalism objection: this lies behind the disquiet with this section of the *Critique*. Phenomenalism either means that objects can be reduced to sensations or that what is really meant by object-talk can be summarized in the meaning of sensation-talk. Kant is suggesting neither thesis. His point rather is that the elements of relation to objects can be summarized in terms of how they affect us. But affection is produced in us by means of sensation. Hence what he wishes to show is that the conditions of sensation are such that they cannot be purely subjective but must be such as to give rise to the notion of objects. Objects are not purely the sensational components, they involve more but Kant is not yet telling us what. That will be part of the next section of the *Critique*. Nor is the meaning of object-talk that of sensation-talk as again there are additional elements to the latter that we need to bring out in due course.