

Schematism: ‘indispensible though utterly dry’

In *Prolegomena* §34, Kant mentions the *Schematism* chapter (A137–47/B176–87). There, he discusses the problem of how pure forms of understanding, i.e. the categories, can be applied to intuitions. In a sense, this is the heart of Kant’s attempt to ‘intellectualise’ sensations and ‘sensualise’ cognition. That is: cognition is possible only if these faculties cooperate (cf. *Proleg.* §§20, 22):

- (a) the *senses*, the capacity to intuit, i.e. passively to receive *intuitions*. Thus, a concept is a general representation whose unity is ‘grasped’ in the many things to which it applies. *Pure* concepts of the understanding are the *categories*, enabling possible experience. Furthermore, concepts without *objects* are *ideas* (see *Proleg.* §§39–40, 4:326–8).
- (b) the *understanding*, the faculty of thinking, i.e. to ‘unite representations in a consciousness’, and to cognise through *concepts* [*Begriffe*] (*CPR* A69/B94); concepts rest on functions, i.e. ‘the unity of the act of ordering diverse representations under a common representation’ (*CPR* A68/B93), and
- (c) the power of *judgement*, whose job it is to ‘relate representations to *judgements* in general’.
- (d) There is also *reason*, which deals with *inferences* (cf. *Proleg.* §§42–3, 4:329–30; see also *CPR* A130/B169, Hatfield, p. 171).

In a nutshell, thinking depends on the *content* (matter) delivered by sensibility and *form* delivered by the understanding. Cognising an object is possible only if the manifold of intuitions is unified, and this synthesis depends on rules, and these rules are pure concepts (cf. *CPR* A50–1/B74–5; Hatfield, p. 161–2).

The pure concepts of the understanding are the *categories* (cf. *Proleg.* §39, 4:324). They determine the formal structure of the various types of judgments that we make about our experiences. As such, they are ‘logical functions’ (*Proleg.* §39, 4:324), and in a sense constitute the *grammar* of cognition and experience. Categories connect the elements of intuition such that the experience represents something as being the case.

For instance, when we see Fido running after a stick, we have a manifold of appearances that we conceptualise as ‘dog’, ‘stick’, and ‘running’—yet; we also see *that* something is the case, *viz.* that a particular dog is running after a stick: we see a fact or state of affairs, as it were. In effect, this is the unified, integrated, or fully synthesised *experience*. The categories thus *organise* the world as it appears to us as a representation of something’s being the case. Again, the categories are *a priori*, underived from experience, since without them, we could not at all experience the world in the way we do: the flow of appearances would be nothing for us (*CPR* A90/B123).

Kant aims to derive and justify (i.e. deduce) the categories from the logical form of judgments in the so-called ‘metaphysical deduction’ (*CPR* A70–83/B95–109), which is alluded in *Proleg.* §21. This is motivated by the thought that *pure logic* deals with the *form* of judgment, but not its (empirical) content. Similarly, the *categories* deal with the pure form of thought, i.e. thought without sensory elements (*CPR* A54/B78). The ‘transcendental deduction’ (A94–130/B129–69) aims to justify the

categories as the only necessary conditions for the possibility of experience. A brief allusion is at *Proleg.* §22 (4:305).

Here is the line of thought of the schematism chapter:

- (1) The imagination is the faculty which represents objects that are not actually present. These objects are presented in the intuition (*Anschauung*). Insofar as intuition is sensible (i.e. not cognitive), the imagination belongs to sensibility (but not the understanding).
- (2) If a faculty is passive or receptive, then it is *determined* (determinable), and if a faculty is active, or spontaneous, then it is *determining* (determinative). Insofar as the imagination belongs to sensitivity, it is passive (determined).
- (3) *But* the imagination is not only determined, but also *determining*: it can determine (make determinate) intuitions by determining the form (pure structure without empirical content) of intuitions: it dictates how these intuitions must 'look like', as it were. This is the *productive* imagination, since it generates (rather than re-creates) intuitions.
- (4) Hence the productive imagination is *a priori*, i.e. 'before', or independent of, experience.
- (5) This is why the productive imagination is also transcendental, i.e. a necessary condition on the very possibility of experience.
- (6) The productive imagination is limited only by the *categories*. So, the imagination produces intuitions (empirical content) according to the categories.
- (7) Hence, the imagination mediates between *sensitivity* and the *understanding*: it brings together intuitions with the pure forms of thinking (categories) and the pure forms of intuition.
- (8) This is achieved by means of *schemata*, which are entities that mediate between concepts and intuitions (like hinges). Hence, schemata either must be both intellectual and sensible, or neither intellectual nor sensible. They are a 'third thing' (*CPR* A138/B177).
- (9) Schemata are *generative rules* by which the imagination *determines* intuitions in congruence with concepts. Schemata are the pure general *forms* (moulds, templates) for having intuitions. As principles according to which synthesis occurs, they determine how intuitions (and ultimately conscious experiences) are formed and organised. Schemata work in two directions: they prepare intuitions for falling under concepts, and they adapt concepts for their application to intuitions.
- (10) In order to make synthesis possible, schemata have to be *a priori* (since they are used to make experience possible, they cannot derive from experience). These procedural rules (schemata) are therefore the transcendental product of the imagination: they are 'as it were a monogram of pure *a priori* imagination, through which, and in accordance with which, images themselves first become possible' (*CPR* A142/B181).

As hinted in *Proleg.* §34 (4:316), Kant introduces schemata to counter the idea that in some way the senses supply the categories, even though pure concepts refer to objects of possible experience and thus to 'beings of sense' (§32, 4:315).

