

CHAPTER - VIII'Imagination' in the Transcendental Deduction

The Transcendental Deduction is made peculiarly difficult by Kant's use of the term 'imagination'. In the present chapter I propose to say something about this.

Kant introduces 'imagination' into his doctrine about synthesis as follows :

Since every appearance contains a manifold, and since different perceptions therefore occur in the mind separately and singly, a combination of them, such as they cannot have in sense itself, is demanded. There must therefore exist in us an active faculty for the synthesis of this manifold. To this faculty I give the title, imagination.

This apparently contradicts my description of 'the synthesis of the manifold' as the concern not of imagination but of understanding. In fact, Kant cannot take understanding and imagination to be rivals for the role of synthesizing faculty, for he thinks that they are collaborators. He has a theory, that if a category is to be applied to something empirical then imagination is needed to produce 'some third thing, which is homogeneous on the one hand with the category, and on the other hand with the appearance, and which thus makes the application on the former to the latter possible'. Elsewhere imagination is said to 'mediate' between 'the two extremes, namely sensibility and understanding'.

Yet sometimes, rather than presenting imagination as the servant of understanding, Kant seems to identify the two outright; not just in calling imagination the 'faculty for the synthesis of the manifold'. For example, Kant says :

It is one and the same spontaneity, which in the one case, under the title of imagination, and in the other case, under the title of understanding, brings combination into the manifold of intuition.

If Kant really means two titles for 'one and the same' spontaneity then he is identifying imagination with understanding. That is probably not his intention, but it is true that he tends in the Transcendental Deduction to give to the activities of the understanding in which it collaborates with imagination labels which suggest activities of imagination alone.

Worse, instead of choosing one label and keeping to it, Kant shifts restlessly from one set of technical terms to another, making no attempt to relate them. This appears strikingly in a series of trichotomies of which the first is: There are three original sources ... of the possibility of all experience ... namely, sense, imagination, and apperception. Upon them are grounded (1) the synopzsis of the manifold a priori through sense; (2) the synthesis of this manifold through imagination; finally (3) the unity of this synthesis through original apperception.

It is presumably this same trio which is presented a few pages later :

This spontaneity is the ground of a threefold synthesis

which must necessarily be found in all knowledge; namely $\lceil 1 \rceil$ the apprehension of representations as modifications of the mind in intuition, $\lceil 2 \rceil$ their reproduction in imagination, and $\lceil 3 \rceil$ their recognition in a concept.

Kant explains these at some length : item (1) has to do with our having experience which stretches over a period of time, (2) with our recalling our past states and bringing them under concepts along with our present states, and (3) with our knowing that we are doing this correctly. Imagination, then, is closely connected - if not identical - with intellectually disciplined memory; and Kant is here expounding his view that the rational grasp of one's present experience requires the relating of it with remembered past experience.

There is a difficulty about the (2)/(3) borderline. It seems that (2) concerns something which we may do consciously and correctly; all that (3) adds is our consciousness of its correctness :

If we were not conscious that what we think is the same as what we thought a moment before, all reproduction in the series of representations would be useless... . The manifold of the representation would never ... form a whole, since it would lack that unity which only consciousness can impart to it.

The (2)/(3) distinction is clearly a delicate one, and in Kant's hands it crumbles. Concerning (2) he says :

When I seek to ... represent to myself some particular number ... the various manifold representations that are involved must be apprehended by me in thought one after the other.

But if I were always to drop out of thought the preceding representations (... the units in the order represented), and did not reproduce them while advancing to those that follow, a complete representation would never be obtained. And his illustration of (3) is this :

If, in counting, I forget that the units, which now hover before me, have been added to one another in succession, I should never know that a total is being produced through this successive addition of unit to unit, and so would remain ignorant of the number.

The two versions of the trio which I have quoted display certain differences. In the first version the term 'synthesis' dominates only item (2), while in the second version all three items are said to concern kinds of synthesis. This, I think, arises from sheer terminological indecision on Kant's part. Another difference is that item (3), which involves consciousness of unity in both versions, is said in the first to concern 'apperception' and in the second to concern recognition 'in a concept'. A tie-up is here presupposed between apperception and the official domain of concepts, viz. the understanding. When Kant speaks of 'apperception' he refers to that kind of selfconscious grasp of past and present states which requires and is required by an ability to use concepts; and this leads him sometimes to speak of 'apperception' where one might expect a stress rather on 'understanding'. Thus, immediately after the passage last quoted, he says : 'For the concept of the number is nothing but the consciousness of this unity of synthesis'.

He makes another remark which - though I do not pretend to understand it - seems also to reflect this sparing use of 'understanding'. This time he introduces it as an after thought to what is said in terms of 'imagination' on one hand and 'apperception' on the other : 'The unity of apperception in relation to the synthesis of imagination is the understanding.'

Here is Kant's next version of the trio :

[1] Sense represents appearances empirically in perception,
 [2] imagination in association (and reproduction),
 [3] apperception in the empirical consciousness of the identity of the reproduced representations with the appearances whereby they were given, that is, in recognition.

Here again, (3) seems to have to do with our knowing that we are doing correctly the 'reproduction' which is the concern of (2). Notice, incidentally, that 'association' seems now to be shouldering 'reproduction' aside in (2), though we are not told whether or how they differ.

A little further on we meet the trio again, only this time imagination has spread to engulf (1) as well as (2) : There must ... exist in us an active faculty for the synthesis of [the] manifold. To this faculty I give the title, imagination. [1] Its action, when immediately directed upon perceptions, I entitle apprehension. Since imagination has to bring the manifold of intuition into the form of an image, it must previously have taken the impressions up into its activity, that is, have apprehended them.

Kant goes on to say that we can have 'an image and a connection of the impressions' only because

[2a] There exists a subjective ground which leads the mind to reinstate a preceding perception alongside the subsequent perception to which it has passed, and so to form whole series of perceptions. This is the reproductive faculty of imagination But (2) is not yet complete, for Kant is now splitting up what he formerly called 'reproduction' into two parts : the calling up of one's past states, and the calling of them up in an orderly or principled fashion :

[2b] If, however, representations reproduced one another in any order, just as they happened to come together, this would not lead to any determinate connection of them, but only to accidental collocations; and so would not give rise to any knowledge. Their reproduction must, therefore conform to a rule, in accordance with which a representation connects in the imagination with some one representation in preference to another. This ... is called the association of representation.
