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RÉSUMÉ. – *Le présent essai tente de tirer au clair les différentes significations des termes « conscient » et « conscience » dans la philosophie critique de Kant et en particulier dans la* Critique de la raison pure. *On considère d'abord les divers types de représentations et ce que veut dire Kant lorsqu'il les dit « avec » ou « sans » conscience. On considère ensuite le concept de conscience tel qu'il apparaît dans la Déduction transcendantale des catégories, où il ne réfère pas à une qualité de représentations particulières, mais à une attitude active de l'esprit. Considérée dans son ensemble, la conception kantienne de la « conscience » mêle inséparablement un aspect que nous appelons, après T. Nagel, « conscience phénoménale », et un aspect proche de la « conscience d'accès » selon N. Block, dans lequel cependant la conscience de soi, exprimable par la proposition « Je pense », joue un rôle central. Cette combinaison fait de Kant un interlocuteur unique dans les débats contemporains sur la conscience et son rôle dans notre vie mentale, ainsi que sur l'IA et sa signification pour l'avenir de l'humanité.*

ABSTRACT. – *In this paper, I attempt to sort out the various meanings of the terms "conscious" and "consciousness" in Kant's critical philosophy and especially in the* Critique of Pure Reason. *I first consider the different types of representations and what Kant means when he says they are "with" or "without" consciousness. I then consider the concept of consciousness as it appears in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories, where it does not refer to a quality of particular representations, but rather to an active attitude of the mind. Properly understood, Kant's view of what he calls "consciousness" thus inseparably intertwines what we call, after Thomas Nagel, "phenomenal consciousness" and a version of what we call, after Ned Block, "access consciousness", but a version in which self-consciousness, expressed in the proposition "I think", plays a central role. I argue that the combination, in Kant's view of consciousness, of phenomenal consciousness, access consciousness, and self-consciousness, makes Kant's view a unique resource in contemporary debates about consciousness and its role in our mental life. More particularly, Kant's view is relevant in today's debates about AI and its meaning for the future of humanity.*

The terms "conscious", "consciousness", "unity of consciousness" and "self-consciousness" play a central role in Kant's critical philosophy. But what Kant means by those terms is far from obvious. Moreover, despite the omnipresence of "consciousness" in his view of the mind, Kant notoriously asserts that there are, on the maps of our minds, infinitely many representations of which we are *not* conscious. He also claims that our mental *activities*

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themselves are, more often than not, activities of which we are not conscious. What does he mean and what grounds does he offer for such assertions?

In recent years, there has been renewed interest in trying to figure out what Kant means by "consciousness" and to compare Kant's concept with contemporary concepts of consciousness. Unsurprisingly, this being Kant and this being philosophy, commentators differ in their interpretations. Some maintain that Kant's most basic notion of consciousness is an ancestor of the contemporary notion of phenomenal consciousness, first introduced by Thomas Nagel: an immediate, subjective awareness of qualitative features of mental states.[1] Others maintain that Kant's explanation of consciousness is an ancestor of the "Higher Order Thought" ("HOT") theory of consciousness.[2] Finally, some find in Kant's view of consciousness an ancestor of the notion of "access-consciousness" introduced by Ned Block, whether the latter coexists with a more basic notion of phenomenal consciousness or with the notion of "apperceptive consciousness". And if the latter, whether or not "apperceptive consciousness" is understood on the model of David Rosenthal's HOT theory of consciousness.[3]

My own view is that Kant's notion of consciousness, when qualifying representations (sensations, intuitions or concepts, to be explained below) combines two notions: one which corresponds to what we today call "phenomenal consciousness" and which Kant calls "inner sense"; and one which is closer to what we call, after Ned Block, "access-consciousness". I will justify both comparisons in what follows. But in addition, Kant's dominant notion of consciousness is what he calls "apperception", "consciousness" or "self-consciousness", by which he means an active attitude on the part of the subject of representational states, an attitude that shapes the features of the representations to which the subject directs that attitude. The plurality of notions of consciousness at work in Kant's view of representations and representational capacities explains why it is difficult to gain a reasonably consistent view, both of what he means by "consciousness" and of the ways in which his concept(s) of consciousness

1. See J. J. INDREGARD, "Consciousness as Inner Sensation: Crusius and Kant", *Ergo*, 2018, 5 (7), p. 173-202. On the contemporary concept of phenomenal consciousness, see T. NAGEL, "What Is it Like to Be a Bat?", *in* T. NAGEL, *Mortal Questions*, Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 165-80. N. BLOCK, "On a Confusion about a Function of Consciousness", *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 1995, 18, p. 227-87.

2. See G. BIRD, "Consciousness in the Critique of Pure Reason", *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus*, 2013, 11, p. 221-44. *Cf.* D. ROSENTHAL, *Consciousness and Mind*, Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

3. For a view that finds ancestors of both "phenomenal" and "access" consciousness in Kant, see again J. J. INDREGARD, "Consciousness as Inner Sensation: Crusius and Kant". For a view that defends the primacy of "apperceptive" consciousness in Kant as well as its connection with *and* differences from Rosenthal's HOT theory, see Y. LIANG, "Kant on Consciousness, Obscure Representations and Cognitive Availability", *Philosophical Forum*, 2017, p. 345-68. For Block's notion of "access-consciousness", see fn.1.

may relate to contemporary concepts of consciousness. Nevertheless, it is precisely such a reasonably consistent view I will try to offer in this paper.

In Section 1, I will clarify the meaning Kant assigns to the expressions "representation with consciousness" ["*Vorstellung mit Bewusstsein*"] and "representation of which we are conscious" ["*Vorstellung, dessen wir uns bewusst sind*"]. In Section 2, I will analyze the different ways in which different types of representations – sensations, intuitions or concepts – may respectively be "with" or "without" consciousness. In Section 3, I will analyze the concept of "consciousness" that plays a central role in Kant's critical philosophy. That concept does not characterize a feature of representations (representational states and their contents). Rather, it characterizes an active attitude on the part of the representing subject. The canonical text for the exposition of that concept is the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In both versions of the Transcendental Deduction, Kant argues that unless they were unified in "transcendental consciousness", our representations would not become cognitions, namely representations of which we are conscious and that are related to objects. But transcendental consciousness, he explains, can itself be "clear" or "obscure". Now, a "clear representation", as we will have seen in Section 2, is a representation "with consciousness". An "obscure representation" is a representation "without consciousness". How can transcendental *consciousness* itself be "with" or "without" *consciousness*? To clarify Kant's point, I will draw on the different meanings of "consciousness" identified in the first part of the paper.

I will conclude by some brief remarks concerning the importance of Kant's complex view of consciousness for contemporary debates about the differences between minds and machines and what those differences mean for our understanding of what it is to be human.

"REPRESENTATIONS WITH (OR WITHOUT) CONSCIOUSNESS," "REPRESENTATIONS OF WHICH WE ARE (OR ARE NOT) CONSCIOUS"

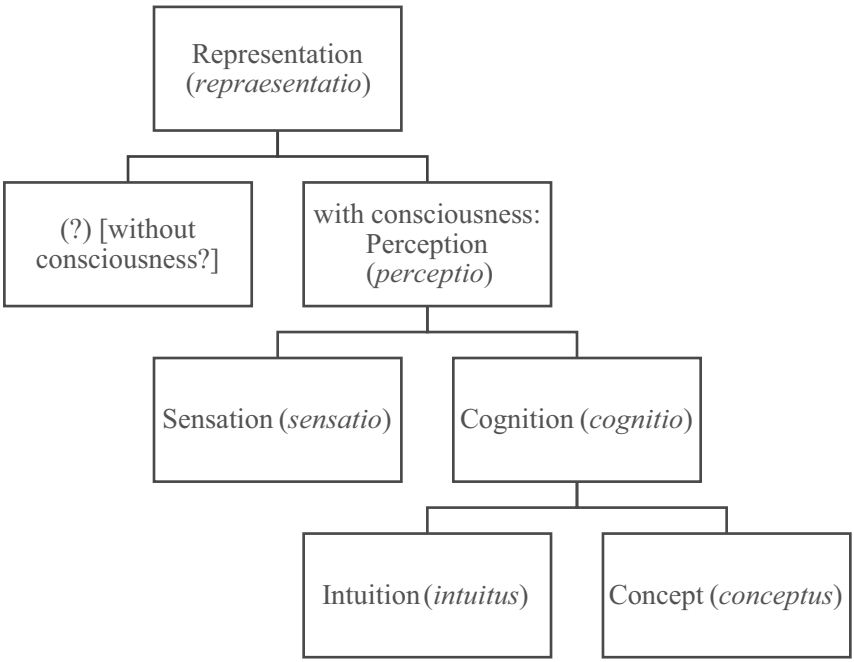
The Stufenleiter

Here's how Kant characterizes the division [*Stufenleiter*: literally "stepladder"] of representations in the Introduction to the Transcendental Dialectic, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

> The genus is *representation* in general (*repraesentatio*). Under it stands the representation with consciousness (*perceptio*). A *perception* [*Perception*] that refers to the subject as a modification of its state is a *sensation* (*sensatio*); an objective perception is a *cognition* [*Erkenntnis*] (*cognitio*). The latter is either an *intuition* or a *concept* (*intuitus vel conceptus*). The former is immediately related to the

object and is singular; the latter is mediate, by means of a mark, which can be common to several things.[4]

We can summarize the ladder in the following table:



As we can see, the first step down the ladder [*Stufenleiter*] takes us from "representation" [*Vorstellung*, Kant's German term for the early modern "idea": any mental state, whether or not it has intentional content] to "representation with consciousness" [in German *Perception* or, in Latin, "*perceptio*"].[5] Surprisingly enough, the contrast notion, representation

4. I. KANT, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A319-20/B376-77, Engl. transl. P. Guyer and A. Wood, Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Unless otherwise indicated, italics are Kant's emphasis. Latin terms in parenthesis are cited by Kant. German terms in square brackets are the German terms used by Kant, which it is useful to keep in mind (see fn.5). Texts from the *Critique of Pure Reason* will from now on be cited, as is usual, by reference to page numbers in the first edition (1781, indicated by "A") and the second edition (1787, indicated by "B"). These indications figure in the English translation as well as the French translation in Gallimard/Editions de la Pléiade. All other texts by Kant will be cited in the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, cited by volume and page number in the German edition of the Berlin Academy (AA), indicated in the margins of the English translations and of the French translations in Gallimard/La Pléiade.

5. In the stepladder, Kant uses the German term "*Perception*" rather than his more usual "*Wahrnehmung*" and indicates its origin in the Latin "*perception*." In doing this, he is clearly referencing Leibniz's term "perception" (in French in the *Nouveaux Essais sur l'entendement humain*). For Leibniz, *all* representations (i.e., what he calls "ideas") are such that the subject

without consciousness, is not mentioned. As I will argue in a moment, we should not conclude from this that the contrast notion is simply empty or not instantiated. I leave this point aside for now and consider representations "with consciousness."

The next steps down the ladder, unlike the first, do present explicit divisions of genera into their species. The genus "representation with consciousness" is divided into the species *sensation* [*Empfindung*], (*sensatio*), that is to say, a perception [*Perception*], (*perceptio*) "that relates only to the subject, as the modification of its state" [*sich lediglich auf das Subjekt, als die Modifikation seines Zustandes, bezieht*]; and *cognition* [*Erkenntnis*], (*cognitio*) or objective perception [in the German text: *objective Perception*]. Among cognitions, the division is between intuitions and concepts, about which more below. The next step (not cited above or in the summarizing table) specifies the genus "concept" into "empirical" and "pure" concepts, then the genus "pure" concept into the species "notion" (what Kant elsewhere calls "category", a concept having its origin in the understanding alone) and "Idea" (a concept having its origin in reason alone). I do not need to consider these divisions among concepts: the generic distinction between intuition and concept is sufficient for my purpose of clarifying Kant's notion of consciousness for each kind of representation.[6] I should add that the presentation in the form of a series of divisions of genera into their species is partly misleading. What we have here is not only a Porphyrian ladder or classificatory division of genera and species of representations. It is also a *progression*:[7] from representation in general to

of representational states has subjective awareness of them. But in many cases, that awareness is so weak that it is not sufficient for *apperceiving* the perception (in French: "*l'apercevoir*"), that is to say, distinguishing it from other states and their content, much less memorizing it. Leibniz calls "petites perceptions" such non-apperceived perceptions. See G. W. LEIBNIZ, *Nouveaux Essais sur l'entendement humain*. Chronologie, Bibliographie, Introduction et Notes par Jacques Brunschwig, Paris, Flammarion, 1990, p. 40-2. It is significant that Kant should borrows Leibniz's term "perception" to characterize representations "with consciousness". More on this point below.

6. This does not mean, of course, that "notions" or "Ideas" have the same origin, role or content as other types of concepts such as empirical or mathematical concepts. But as far as *consciousness* is concerned, they can be characterized in the same way (as we shall see below: see below, fn.24).

7. In the Cambridge edition referenced in fn.4, P. Guyer and A. Wood do translate Kant's term "*Stufenleiter*" as "progression". This is certainly faithful to an important aspect of what is going on in Kant's explanation of the divisions of "representation." But the term *Stufenleiter* literally means "ladder" and is clearly used to refer to the type of classificatory division called "Porphyrian ladder" or "Porphyrus tree", inspired by Aristotelian classifications and so named after the neo-platonist philosopher and logician Porphyrus. The French translation of the same text gives "échelle graduée" for *Stufenleiter*. For a reading of the *Stufenleiter* as a progression rather than a Porphyrian division, see C. TOLLEY, "The meaning of 'perception' in Kant and his historical context", *in* V. Waibel and M. Ruffing (ed.), *Natur und Freiheit. Akten des 12. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019, p. 244-51. As I explain in the main text, my own view is that the two ways of understanding what is at stake in the *Stufenleiter* are not mutually exclusive.

representation "with consciousness", from the latter's being *mere* sensation to its being cognition, from the cognition's being a *mere* intuition to its being a concept.[8] Our most basic, garden variety of representational states (perceptual states) have all of the components just listed: sensory content ("sensation") spread out and ordered in space and time ("intuition") and reflected under concepts ("concepts"). Still, those components of our perceptual states may come apart. Some (e.g., sensations) are more primitive than others (e.g., intuitions or concepts) and for each of them, being "with" or "without" consciousness has a specific meaning, as we shall see below.

Representations "without consciousness"

Let's now return to the missing left-hand side of the first division under "representation", which one might expect to be "representation without consciousness", the contrast notion to "representation with consciousness". The fact that this side, although not mentioned, is not empty, is attested by a well-known text from Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Standpoint*:

> The field of sensuous intuitions and sensations of which we are not conscious, even though we can undoubtedly conclude that we have them; that is, *obscure* representations in the human being (and thus also in animals) is immense. Clear representations, on the other hand, contain only infinitely few points on this field that lie open to consciousness.[9]

8. Here one may raise the question whether intuitions on their own or concepts on their own are different kinds of cognition (different kinds of representation related to an object, i.e., having intentional content) or whether, on the contrary, intuitions and concepts are two kinds of representations that *only together* contribute to cognition (have intentional content). If the latter, then only an intuition falling under a concept or a concept related to an intuition, would be a cognition, e.g., seeing (in empirical intuition) this object (this red patch) *as* F (*as* a strawberry, or perhaps as merely a red patch: <red patch> would still be a concept). One finds support for both views in different parts of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This has led some commentators to conclude that Kant uses the term "cognition" in two different senses: in the "narrow sense", cognition involves both intuition and concept; "in the broad sense" intuition and concept each are cognitions, albeit in a different way: intuition as an "immediate and singular" representation of object; concept as a "general and reflected" representation of object and so, a representation typically instantiated in a class of objects. On this point, see E. WATKINS and M. WILLASCHEK, "Kant's Account of Cognition", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 2017, 55 (1), p. 83-112. For the purpose of the analysis of the different ways in which intuitions, on the one hand, and concepts, on the other, can be "with" or "without" consciousness, I am taking each of them, taken separately, to instantiate cognition "in the broad sense". This seems to be the way they are considered in the *Stufenleiter*.

9. I. KANT, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Eng. transl. R. B. Louden, Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, AA7, p. 135. Note that "infinitely few points" is a bizarre expression. Kant probably means that there are, on the map of our minds, only *few* representations of which we are conscious and in contrast, *infinitely many* of which we are *not* conscious.

In this passage, the representations that may be "clear" or "obscure" are sensations or intuitions, namely representations belonging to our sensibility (our receptive capacity rather than our active capacity, the intellect). Even though Kant mentions "sensuous intuitions *or sensations*", his explanation of what makes those representations "obscure" seems to apply to intuitions rather than to mere sensations:[10] the reason he gives for the fact that some of our representations may be *obscure* is that the perceptual appearance of their intentional object is not sufficiently extended to be perceived (i.e., consciously represented or, in Kant's terminology, represented "with consciousness"). The perceptual appearance has too small an extension either in space – Kant gives the example of far-away objects, which we may not consciously perceive but of which we may *become* conscious when their perceptual image is magnified by a telescope –; or in time – Kant gives the example of the notes in a musical improvisation that follow each other too closely in time for the very author of the improvisation to have a clear consciousness of each individual note –.

However, in the conclusion to the same paragraph, Kant returns to the case of sensations themselves. He notes that

> the field of *obscure* representations is the largest in the human being. – But because this field can only be perceived in his passive side *as a play of sensations* (my emphasis, BL), the field of *obscure* representations belongs only to physiological anthropology, not to pragmatic anthropology, and so it is properly disregarded here.[11]

This raises the question: what does it mean for a *sensation*, as opposed to an intuition, to be *obscure* and nevertheless still a *representation*? I will return to this question below, when considering the different ways in which sensations and intuitions may respectively be obscure, that is to say, "without consciousness" or on the contrary clear, that is to say, "with consciousness". Suffice it for now to note that the distinction between *physiological* anthropology and *pragmatic* anthropology has been explained in the first pages of the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Physiological anthropology, says Kant, is concerned with what nature makes of human beings. Pragmatic anthropology, in contrast, is concerned with what human beings make of themselves.[12] *Obscure* intuitions or sensations, if their investigation belongs to physiological anthropology, are the objects of an investigation into their natural causes: they

10. As I will explain below, a sensation is a mere affection of our receptive mental capacity (sensibility) whereas an intuition is an immediate, particular ("singular", in Kant's vocabulary) representation *of an object*, which involves the object's having spatial extension and temporal duration.

11. AA7: 136. Unless indicated otherwise, italics are Kant's emphasis.

12. AA7: 119.

are the result of the affection of human beings' receptive representational capacity (sensibility). If sensations are too weak, then the subject's receptive capacity cannot make anything of them, namely present an intentional correlate for them, e.g., the redness of a roof, the greenness of a lawn, and so on. Even less can the subject include the perceived object and its qualities in the domain of objects relevant to the subject's activity of "comparison, reflection and abstraction" which leads to recognizing the objects under concepts. This activity is subject to norms of epistemic truth: I seem to recognize a house, indeed my brother's house. I'm right or I'm wrong about that. Understanding the norms of correctness applied in perceptual cognition is an investigation belonging to "pragmatic anthropology". In contrast, obscure intuitions and obscure sensations, not giving occasion for such active recognitional capacities, belong to the domain of merely "physiological" anthropology, not pragmatic anthropology. Even less are they relevant to the transcendental investigation into the conditions of possibility of *a priori* knowledge, the primary concern of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. I submit this may be why the left-hand side of the first division in the *Stufenleiter* remains empty. The *Critique*'s primary concern is with representations "with" rather than "without" consciousness.

And yet, what is "without" consciousness is omnipresent in Kant's critical investigation. Let me explain.

Representations "with" and "without" consciousness in the Critique of Pure Reason

Even more than the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, the *Critique* is concerned with what human beings make of themselves. It is concerned with how they make themselves *agents* of cognition rather than being merely receptive to sensory input ("affection"). In Kant's vocabulary, the *Critique* is concerned with what Kant calls "spontaneity" in cognition. So, it is concerned with *clear* representations, representations *with* consciousness, whether intuitions or concepts.

This does not mean, however, that the contrasting concept, "representations without consciousness", is irrelevant to the task of the *Critique*. Quite the contrary: I will argue that for each of the representations *with consciousness* laid out on the right-hand-side of the *Stufenleiter* schematized in 1.1, we can see implicitly delineated, on the self-hand-side, a contrasting way in which the relevant representation may be *without consciousness*. Indeed, if the contrasting notion of "representation without consciousness" were specified for each type of representation, it would present the limits to consciousness that the critical endeavor encounters at each step. We are familiar with Kant's insistence, throughout the *Critique of Pure Reason*, on the *boundaries* of reason. Now, I want to suggest that the *limits* of *consciousness* are

a no less insistent theme.[13] Indeed, for each of the representations *with consciousness* laid out on the right-hand-side of the *Stufenleiter* schematized above, we can see implicitly delineated, on the left-hand-side, a corresponding way in which the relevant representation may be *without consciousness.*[14] Let me now explain what this means in the respective cases of sensation, intuition, and concept (whether empirical or pure).

DIFFERENT TYPES OF REPRESENTATIONAL STATES, DIFFERENT WAYS OF BEING "WITH" OR "WITHOUT" CONSCIOUSNESS

Sensations

A sensation, Kant says in the *Stufenleiter*, "relates merely to the subject, as a modification of its state". In the Transcendental Aesthetic (Kant's theory of sensibility or receptivity), Kant defined sensation as "the effect of an object on our representational capacity, insofar as we are affected by it".[15] For instance, a tomato, in affecting our sight, may generate a sensation of red; in affecting our touch, a sensation of smoothness and softness; and so on. Sensations of red, of smoothness, softness, are "modifications" of the state of beings like us, i.e., beings endowed with an "outer sense", the capacity to receive sensory representations from outer objects. On their own, Kant thinks, sensations have no intentionality: they do not present an object to the relevant sense (say vision, or touch) unless that object is

13. The boundaries of reason [*Grenzen der Vernunft*] are the insuperable boundaries beyond which, according to Kant, reason cannot claim any theoretical knowledge. The notion of "limits" of consciousness [*Schranken des Bewußtseins*] which, I am suggesting, is essential to Kant's view of consciousness, is different. It means two things. First, the realm of conscious representations is a *limited part* of the "infinitely many" representations that occupy the map of our mind (see above, fn.8). But also: the *degree* to which any representation can be "with consciousness" is limited. In both respects, the *limitation* [*Beschränktheit*] of consciousness corresponds to the category of limitation in the table of the categories: the third title under the category of quality. See *Critique of Pure Reason*, A80/B106; and *cf.* B413-15.

14. As we will see in what follows, there are two different senses in which a representation may be "without consciousness". Being "without consciousness" may mean "having a vanishingly small degree of consciousness", like a Leibnizian "petite perception". This would explain why representation "without consciousness" does not figure on the left hand side of the Stufenleiter: "without consciousness" would just be a limit case of "with consciousness": a "petite perception". However, unlike Leibniz, Kant does admit zero degree of consciousness. See B413-15. How could a representation without consciousness at all nevertheless be a *representation*? Presumably because it would be a merely physiological state, without any corresponding subjective state. On this possibility, see again *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 413-15; see also Kant's "From Sömmering's *On the Organ of the Soul*".

15. A19-20/B34.

presented within spatial limits (the round shape of the tomato) and alongside other spatially delimited objects (the plate, the table, the chairs and so on). Then <red>, <smooth>, <soft> aren't just qualities characterizing the subjective state of the representational subject but qualities of the intentional object of an intuition, an appearance. As we saw, intuition is the first of the two types of "cognition" which, in the *Stufenleiter*, are contrasted with "sensation".[16]

Sensation is listed under "representation *with consciousness* [*perception*]". What makes it the case that a sensation is "with consciousness" i.e., a "perception"?

As a representation, sensation belongs not only to outer sense, but to inner sense: the mind's receptivity not only to outer objects, but to its own mental functioning. Just as space is the form of outer sense (in virtue of which subjective sensory states are intentionally related to qualities of external objects), so time is the form proper to inner sense (in virtue of which subjective states are, as such – as representational states – intuited as successive or simultaneous). But if inner sense is, just like outer sense, a *sense*, namely, a receptivity, what is it receptive *to*? Kant's answer: just as outer sense is receptive to affections received from outer objects, so inner sense is receptive to affections received from "inside": from the very entity which is active when the mind, in its "spontaneous" aspect, is active. It's precisely that activity that allows sensations to become perceptions, that is to say, allows them to be "with consciousness". In other words, sensation is not *per se* conscious, or "with consciousness". It becomes a sensation "with consciousness", or "of which the representational subject is conscious", only if it is seized upon, "apprehended" by the active capacity of the mind, which *affects* inner sense *with* the sensory content thus seized upon.[17]

16. Thus, what Kant calls "sensation" in the *Stufenleiter* is what the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* will call a *feeling*, meanwhile reserving the term "sensation" for "objective sensation", such as the sensation of green related to the green color of a meadow (see I. KANT, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, AA5, p. 206). In the context of the *Stufenleiter*, Kant seems to be distinguishing the sensation as a merely subjective state (what he calls "feeling" in the *Critique of Power of Judgment*), from the sensation as the qualitative aspect of an intuition *related to an object*. Even so considered as a merely subjective state, as I clarify above in the main text, the sensation is "with consciousness" only if it is not only the result of an affection by an external object, but also the result of the affection of the mind by its own activity of "apprehending" the sensory affection. On sensation and perception in Kant, see K. KRAUS, *Kant on Self-Knowledge and Self-Formation. The Nature of Inner Experience*, Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020, p. 17-82.

17. On this point, Kant's view may look like an ancestor of David Rosenthal's theory of consciousness as "higher order thought". For recent Kant scholarship comparing Rosenthal's view to Kant's, see above, fn.2 and 3. My own view is that even though the comparison is justified, Rosenthal's view differs from Kant's in two fundamental ways: [i] for Kant, consciousness as resulting from the affection of inner sense by spontaneity, is a sensing not a thinking, even though, as we shall see, that inner sensing (affection of the mind's receptivity by its spontaneity) is a necessary condition for thinking (forming concepts of objects); and

The notion of "consciousness" relevant to mere sensation is close to our contemporary notion of "phenomenal consciousness": a sensation's being "with consciousness" is for there to be something it's like for the subject to be in the relevant sensory state. What would it be, then, for a sensation to be without consciousness so understood? I submit it would be either for the outer affection to be so weak that it is not picked up by the active capacity of the mind as a material with which to affect inner sense (as when the sound of a plane high in the sky is so dim that it is not noticed); or for the mind's attention to be altogether distracted from the sensation (as when I am so absorbed in my conversation that I don't hear the bell ring). For either of these reasons, perception, namely empirical consciousness, in inner sense, of a sensation as an affection of outer or inner sense, can vary continuously from any degree to zero degree of intensity.

> Every sensation has a degree or magnitude, through which it can more or less fill the same time, i.e., the inner sense in *regard* to the same representation of an object, until it ceases in nothingness (= zero = negatio).[18]

Where sensation is concerned, then, the left-hand side of the *Stufenleiter* (representations without consciousness) could be occupied either with an infinitesimally small degree of (representational) affection, whether outer or inner; or with zero degree of (representational) affection.[19]

Intuitions

In most cases, however, sensations do not just "refer to the subject, as a modification of its state". As the sensory components of an intuition, they

[ii] consciousness is not a higher order representation, not even as a sensing (an inner sensation of an outer sensation). Rather, it is a new quality conferred on the outer sensation or outer intuition itself. The very same representational state (outer sensation and outer intuition) acquires a new quality: that of being "with consciousness" and thus acquiring temporal form.

18. A183/B182. On sensation with zero degree of consciousness, see above, fn.14.

19. J. J. Indregard (*Cf.* fn.1) has argued that in characterizing empirical consciousness as inner *sensation*, Kant is influenced by the philosopher and theologian Christian August Crusius (1715-1775). In contrast with the then dominant Leibnizian-Wolffian school, Crusius insisted on the importance of non-intellectual sources of human knowledge. In contrast, Indregard insists, Kantian scholarship has typically emphasized Kant's definition of consciousness in terms of the "clarity" and "distinctness" of representations, thus privileging the rationalist/Wolffian influence on Kant's view of consciousness. For a view which does emphasize the Wolffian influence on Kant, see T. STURM, and F. WUNDERLICH, "Kant and the Scientific Study of Consciousness", *History of the Human Sciences*, 2010, 23 (3), p. 48-71. My own view is that Indregard is right to insist on Crusius's influence and to note that there is, for Kant, nothing to be made clear or distinct unless there is an original state "accompanied with consciousness" *in inner sense*, namely, as an inner *sensation* and inner *intuition* (on intuition, see below in the main text). Once this material is available, *then* clarity and distinctness play their role in Kant's characterization of consciousness. In other words, unsurprisingly, Kant, in his view of consciousness, combines and transforms two influences while giving his own spin to each: Crusius's empiricist inspiration and Wolff's rationalist inspiration. For more about this twofold inspiration, see below in the main text.

refer to the matter of an empirical object: an appearance. Again, even though the *Stufenleiter* schematized above places intuitions on the right-hand side of the original division – on the side of representations "with consciousness" –, there is clearly a corresponding type of intuition on the left-hand side, intuition *without* consciousness – at least in the sense of infinitesimal degree of consciousness. § 5 of the *Anthropology* cited above has explained why: An intuition whose intentional object is not sufficiently extended in space or in time is neither distinguished *from* other intuitions (and so, it is not clear, but obscure); nor are its parts internally distinguished from each other (and so, it is not distinct, but indistinct).[20] As Kant explains in that same § 5, we can conclude, by inference, that we nevertheless *have* the intuition. But we are not conscious of it.

Is consciousness of an intuition a case of what I called earlier (admittedly with a measure of anachronism) phenomenal consciousness? I suggest consciousness (and lack thereof) should be understood, here, in two senses. When we are (i) phenomenally conscious of an intuition, then (ii) it is thereby available for judging and reasoning. In contrast, if we are *not* phenomenally conscious of the intuition, then it is *not* available for judging and reasoning. The case, then, is different from that of sensation *per se*. A sensation (and even more so, a feeling, in the sense delineated by the *Critique of Judgment*, see above, 2.1 and fn.16) may be "with consciousness" in a purely phenomenal sense (what it's like for the subject to be in that state) without being thereby available for judging and reasoning. It becomes so available only by becoming related to the matter of an appearance (including an *inner* appearance, our own subjective state). With intuition, we enter a realm in which phenomenal and what I will call, borrowing again the term from Ned Block, access consciousness (where a representation is "with consciousness" insofar as it is available for judging, reasoning and guiding action) are inseparable. If an intuition is a representation of which we are *phenomenally* conscious (there is something it's like for us to have that intuition), it is also a representation of which we have access consciousness (it is *available* for judging and reasoning).[21] That it is available does not mean, however, that it is *actually made use of* in judging and reasoning. For such use to obtain, our active, "spontaneous" cognitive capacity, the intellect, must be at work comparing those intuitions in order to form concepts ("general and reflected representations")[22] and to combine those concepts in judgments. This further step will come more fully into view in Section 3, when we consider the role of the unity of apperception or unity of consciousness or unity of self-consciousness in generating

20. See Kant's example of the Milky Way vs. the individual stars in the Milky Way in *Jäsche Logic*, AA9, p. 34.

21. "A perceptual state is access-conscious […] if its content […] can be used to control reasoning and behavior." See N. BLOCK, "On a Confusion", p. 229.

22. See *Critique of Pure Reason*, B377; *Jäsche Logic*, § 1, AA9: 91.

representations of objects thought under concepts. Let's now consider that third type of representation "with consciousness": concepts.

Concepts

In the *Jäsche Logic*, Kant writes:

> The difference in the form of the cognition [whether *intuition* or concept] rests on a condition that accompanies all cognition, on *consciousness*. If I am conscious of the representation, it is *clear*. If I am not conscious of it, *obscure*.[23]

However, being clear or obscure does not mean the same thing for a concept as for an intuition. As we saw, an intuition is *clear* if its intentional object can be distinguished, in space and in time, from other objects of intuition. It is *distinct* if the parts of its object are distinguished from one another in space and in time. A concept, on the other hand, is clear if it is apt to stand in relation to other concepts in judging and reasoning. It is *distinct* if its *marks* are clear, namely, if its marks are themselves concepts that are clear and susceptible to being combined in judging and reasoning.

We may have, indeed we in fact mostly have, only unclear marks of the concepts we make use of in judging and reasoning. We thus have only indistinct or, rather, incompletely distinct concepts. Just as there are, on the maps of our minds, infinitely many sensations and intuitions of which we are not conscious even though we can conclude that we have them, similarly there are, on the maps of our minds, infinitely many concepts we can conclude we have, even while we are not conscious of having or using them. What we are then lacking is not consciousness in the phenomenal sense; but in the access sense. Those marks of which we are not conscious may be marks of concepts that are, themselves, available for judging and reasoning and so, clear, while their marks are obscure, so that the concepts themselves remain indistinct.[24]

Of course, some concepts, even while they are concepts we are conscious of in the sense of access consciousness, are inseparable from representations of which we are conscious in the sense of phenomenal consciousness. Such

23. *Jäsche Logic*, in *Lectures on Logic*, Eng. transl. J. M. Young, Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992, AA9, p. 33.

24. In the *Jäsche Logic*, Kant gives two examples of concepts that are clear but, for most people, indistinct: the concept of beauty, and the concept of virtue. Strikingly, making those concepts distinct, namely making their marks clear, is appealing to the analysis of those concepts provided by the Analytic of Aesthetic judgment, in the *Critique of Judgment*; and by the Analytic of Pure Practical Reason, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. In both cases of course, the internal clarity, namely the distinctness, of concepts, is provided by what Kant calls the analytic of mental faculties, rather than by the means of classic analysis of concepts such as that provided by rationalist metaphysics. This confirms the point I was making in the first part of this essay: even though the "notions" of the *Stufenleiter* have different types of content or internal marks than those of empirical concepts, the sense in which they may be concepts of which we are or are not conscious is the same: they are, as concepts, clear or not clear (obscure); and they are, as concepts, distinct or indistinct (their marks are clear or obscure).

are the case of the concept of cause (an *a priori* concept of the understanding, according to Kant) and *a fortiori*, the case of concepts of empirical causal connections (say, the sun's causing the heating up of the stone). We are phenomenally conscious of the regular consecution of events (in the case of the concept of cause) and we are phenomenally conscious of particular empirical events (in the case of the concept of particular causal connections, such as the sequence of the sun's shining on the stone and the stone's getting warm)[25]. In the case of mathematical concepts, we are phenomenally conscious of the figures or symbols presented to spatiotemporal intuition. It remains that to be conscious of a concept *as such*, as a representation of the understanding, is to be access conscious of it: to have it available for judging and reasoning.

To recapitulate: I have distinguished sensations, which are "with consciousness" insofar as that consciousness is phenomenal consciousness; intuitions, which are "with consciousness" insofar as that consciousness is phenomenal *and* access-consciousness; and concepts, which are "with consciousness" insofar as that consciousness is primarily access-consciousness, even though in most cases, the use of concepts in judging and reasoning is *also* fundamentally anchored in *phenomenal* consciousness: sensation and sensible intuition.

For each of those types of representations, there is a corresponding sense in which they can be "without consciousness": subjective sensations or feelings susceptible to continuous variation to infinitesimal degrees of intensity, all the way down to zero; obscure or indistinct intuitions susceptible to continuous variation to zero degree of (intuitive) clarity or distinctness; obscure or indistinct concepts susceptible to continuous variation to zero degree of (conceptual) clarity or distinctness.

To understand how those different kinds of consciousness (and lack thereof) are related to one another, we now need to turn to the second task announced above: understanding the concepts of consciousness, unity of consciousness and self-consciousness in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories. This takes us to the second fundamental sense of "consciousness" I delineated at the beginning, where "consciousness" is not appended to representations but characterizes an active attitude of the subject of representational states and representational activity.

CONSCIOUSNESS, UNITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE TRANSCENDENTAL DEDUCTION OF THE CATEGORIES OF THE *CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON*

As we saw in the previous section, a sensation is "with consciousness" or is a sensation "of which we are conscious" only if the mind is affected not only, in outer sense, by external objects but also, in inner sense, by its own mental activity of apprehending the manifold by which it is affected

25. *Cf.* I. KANT, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, § 29, AA4, p. 312-3.

in outer sense. An intuition is not only clear ("with consciousness"), but also distinct (its parts are "with consciousness"), only if the mind apprehends its manifold components, thus distinguishing them from each other. Finally, a concept is clear if it is available for judging and reasoning (it is such that it enters in relations of subordination and coordination with other concepts in the contents of acts of judging); it is distinct if, not only the concept itself but also its "marks" (the concepts that constitute its intension) are related or relatable to other concepts in the propositional contents of mental acts of judging and reasoning. Whatever the representational state, then, being "with consciousness" or what we today would call "being conscious", is not a property the state has on its own, in isolation. Representational states and their contents are *made* conscious only insofar as an ongoing, unifying act of the mind is at work in generating consciousness of them in the two senses outlined in the previous section: in the phenomenal and in the access sense. That act is what Kant calls "transcendental apperception", "unity of consciousness", "numerical unity of apperception", "transcendental consciousness", "transcendental unity of apperception", among other denominations.[26] The unity is *transcendental*

26. See for instance A107, A117n, B132, B235, B140, B141. Note that in these texts, the transcendental unity of self-consciousness, or transcendental apperception, appears to be *both* a *capacity* to unify representations, in virtue of which it is possible for these representations to be related to objects (have intentional content), *and* the actualization of that capacity in acts of synthesizing those representations and their contents, whether in imagination or in acts of judging. Similarly, "I think" is *both* a generic expression, referring to a *type* of thought that "must be able to accompany all my representations" (see B131-32) *and* a proposition referring, in any instance of its use, to an occurrent instance of thinking (e.g., "I think this is a tree", "I think it will rain"). It may, in addition, refer to my very act of thinking as an object of inner sense: then the German "*Ich denke*" would be more properly translated by the English "I am thinking"). For a helpful overview of the different meanings and roles of transcendental apperception, empirical apperception and the proposition "I think" in Kant, see K. KRAUS, *Kant on Self-Knowledge and Self-Formation. The Nature of Inner Experience*, especially Chapters 2, 3 and 4. K Kraus offers a classification of the main interpretations of Kant's concepts of apperception and the unity thereof. She divides extant interpretations into two main categories which she calls "psychological" or "act-awareness" interpretations and "logical" or "self-ascription" interpretations. Included among the first are P. Kitcher, A. Brook and B. Longuenesse, among others. Included among the second are P. Strawson, G. Bird, Q. Cassam and T. Rosefeldt, among others. But she also acknowledges that the interpretations of both Brook and Longuenesse share features of the "logical" interpretation (emphasizing the logical features of the proposition "I think" as an expression of the transcendental unity of apperception). This is not surprising if, as I think is the case, *both* kinds of interpretation are important to understanding Kant's view, so that the dichotomy is somewhat artificial. See K. KRAUS, *Kant on Self-Knowledge*, especially p. 93-105. Fortunately, it is not part of my purpose in this paper to adjudicate those differences, nor is it to analyze the notion of identity or the metaphysical or non-metaphysical import of Kant's analysis of "I" in "I think", all topics that would be extremely important in a thorough analysis of Kant's notion of transcendental apperception. I am focusing exclusively on the question: what might it mean to say that apperception or the unity of consciousness or the unity of self-consciousness, is itself something *of which we may or may not be conscious*? For a detailed analysis of Kant's view of self-consciousness and "I think" in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, see my "Kant on 'the Self' and 'the I'", *Studi Kantiani*, 2022, 35, p. 99-119. See also B. LONGUENESSE, *I, Me, Mine. Back to Kant, and Back Again*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, especially Chapters 4 and 5.

because it is the necessary condition for any conscious representation of object (cognition) and ultimately, for the scientific knowledge of objects (knowledge of objects under natural laws). And it is a *unity* not in the passive sense of a given unity, but rather in the sense that it is achieved by an *act of unification*. As Kant writes in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories:

> All *my representations* […] stand under the unity of apperception, *but must also be brought to it* by a synthesis. (B135 – 36)

I understand this sentence in the following way. "My" representations are the representations *of which I am conscious*, or representations "with consciousness". No representation is "with consciousness" unless the "spontaneous" as opposed to the "receptive" capacity of the mind affects inner sense with it. The representation thus *stands under*, or is *under the purview of*, the unity of apperception. But it must be *brought to* it: the relevant act is an ongoing [i] apprehending of the manifold elements of intuitions, [ii] reproducing their parts and aspects in imagination and [iii] reflecting the common features of assembled particular intuited manifolds under concepts combined in propositiond and inferential patterns.

Now, the unity of apperception itself, considered under those three aspects, may or may not be "with consciousness". It may or may not be something "of which we are conscious". Kant maintains that the combination of sensory contents into sensory intuitions and cognitions is the work of a mental capacity he describes as "blind" and engaged in an activity "of which we are rarely even conscious".

> Synthesis in general is […] the mere *effect* of the imagination, a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we would have no cognition whatsoever, but of which we are rarely even conscious. (A78/B103)

What does it mean, to say that synthesis is a function "of which we are rarely even conscious"? I submit we can understand Kant's point in light of the two concepts of consciousness I applied above to mental states. On the one hand, the synthesis of imagination is something of which we are "rarely even conscious" insofar as there's "nothing it's like" for the subject of the activity of synthesizing in imagination, to be engaged in that activity: that activity is not something of which we are phenomenally conscious. It typically happens, as it were, behind our back. Even less is it, as such, conceptually represented and thereby, available for judging and reasoning: it is not something of which we are access conscious.

And yet, immediately after the passage cited above, Kant continues:

> However, bringing this synthesis to concepts is a function that belongs to the understanding and by which it provides us with cognition in the proper sense. (A78/B103)

Cognition "in the proper sense", I submit, is what Watkins and Willaschek call cognition "in the narrow sense".[27] An example of such "cognition" might be: recognizing the object I intuit in front of me as a bunch of flowers and moreover, recognizing it as the very same bunch of flowers I saw in bloom yesterday.[28] Such cognition involves not only intuitions but also concepts, e.g.: <flower>, <bloom>, <change from bloom to wilted>, and so on.

Now, even though the activity of imagination that led to the recognition is something "of which I am rarely even conscious", when an act of the understanding captures under concepts the representation that results from that activity (recognizing an object as the very same I saw yesterday, recognizing its changes, and so on), *that* act of understanding, and perhaps also therefore the act of imagination that is inseparable from it, may become, as the act it is, conscious ("with consciousness"), indeed self-conscious. How so?

It may become conscious in two of the senses I laid out in the previous section. First, the act may be phenomenally conscious. Thinking may be accompanied with an immediate, indeterminate awareness of thinking – immediate in the sense that I am aware of my currently being engaged in thinking even if I do not reflect on the fact that I am thinking (I do not make my thinking the object of my thinking). I just have "a feeling (of) thinking".[29]

Second, the act is access conscious. It is available for conceptual representation in the thought "I think". That thought, considered on its own, is completely indeterminate. To be determinate, it needs to be completed by the specification of *what* I think: what the *content* of my thinking is. Then the thought "I think", which expresses the mere consciousness *of thinking*, is available for being completed by determinate propositional contents, which may lead to inferences and thus to guiding action, as when I answer the question: "what do you think?" by saying: "I think it will rain!" and taking my umbrella.

However, both kinds of consciousness involved in self-consciousness as the consciousness of being engaged in thinking can, just like the consciousness that accompanies sensations and intuitions and just like the consciousness that accompanies concepts, vary continuously from any degree of clarity to 0 = *negation* = no consciousness at all.[30] Self-consciousness, as the consciousness of thinking, may be obscure if it is not expressed or available to be expressed in the proposition "I think": it is, then, access obscure. But it may also be obscure in that the phenomenal

27. See above, fn.8.

28. The German term *Erkenntnis* is sometimes translated as *cognition* and sometimes as *recognition*. I submit the latter corresponds to cognition "in the narrow sense" and the former to cognition "in the broad sense". See again fn.8.

29. See *Prolegomena*, AA4, 334n: "The representation of apperception, the I, is […] nothing but the feeling of an existence." For comment, see B. LONGUENESSE, *I, Me, Mine*, p. 84-9.

30. *Cf.* above, fn.13 and 14.

consciousness of being engaged in thinking may be trumped by the consciousness of *what it is I am thinking about*: what we would call intentional consciousness, consciousness of the intentional object of thinking, the "result" of the act of thinking.[31]

TAKING STOCK

The dominant notion of consciousness we see at work in Kant's system is resolutely non-phenomenal. Its highest manifestation is our capacity to form concepts to be combined in judgments and inferences. Insofar as that work is, itself, something of which we are conscious, that consciousness is primarily what I have called access consciousness, not phenomenal consciousness.

This gives an intriguingly contemporary flavor to Kant's view of consciousness. On the one hand, the higher functions of our minds are for the most part not phenomenally present to us, there is no "what it's like for the subject" to have or to implement those functions. They have such phenomenal character only in connection with sense (inner and outer) and feeling. On the other hand, however, the contents of our senses (inner and outer) and even our feelings are more than merely "in us" but rather, are "something to us"[32] only if they are taken up in that unifying function which Kant calls "transcendental unity of consciousness" or sometimes just "consciousness". Absent such a unity, sensory contents and feelings remain "less than a dream"[33] and concepts are never acquired.

The question this raises for us is the following. If consciousness, in the phenomenal sense (the "what it's like" character of our mental states and activities), plays an altogether minimal role in the highest forms of our mental life, whereas consciousness in the access sense plays the leading role, would a well-designed, well-oiled *automaton mentale*, whose functions would be carefully programmed and unified into its system, be a better option for a viable rational being than the feeling-loaded, affect-ridden creatures we are? The very rational functions of which we are so proud

31. See for instance Kant's striking statement in the Transcendental Deduction at A103-104: "This consciousness [here he is talking of transcendental consciousness, what I call the consciousness of being engaged in the act of thinking, which is not consciousness of an *object* of thinking] may often only be weak, so that we connect it with the generation of the representation only in the effect, but not in the act itself, i.e., immediately; but regardless of these differences one consciousness must be found, even if it lacks conspicuous clarity, and without that, concepts, and with them cognition of objects, would be entirely impossible." And its echo in the Paralogisms, at B414-15: "Consciousness always has a degree, which can always be diminished; consequently, so does the faculty of being conscious of oneself, and likewise with all other faculties."

32. For the distinction between representations' being "in us" and their being "something to us", see *Critique of Pure Reason*, B132 and B. LONGUENESSE, *I, Me, Mine*, p. 176-81.

33. *Critique of Pure Reason*, A112.

have, after all, very little to do, for Kant, with consciousness in the phenomenal sense. So, what should we hope for? Should we hope to be gradually replaced by *automata mentalia*, which perhaps would have been appropriately programmed to protect the world we hold dear and which we have proved so inept at preserving?

I submit Kant's answer to this question would be resolutely negative. For us human beings, phenomenal consciousness does get the first and the last word. In the theoretical domain, without the original terrain of *sensation* (phenomenal consciousness), no cognitive process gets off the ground. In the domain of practical reason, consciousness of the moral law is present to us first as a feeling, respect for duty, which opens the way to what may become, eventually, the *clear* representation of the moral law. In the domain of aesthetic judgment, the pleasure of reflection is a feeling without which no discursive aesthetic judgment is available at all.

It turns out, then, that the two types of consciousness – the most fine-tuned but conceptually radically obscure: phenomenal consciousness; and the most formal and abstract: access-consciousness, including unity of apperception and consciousness of the moral law – are indispensable to one another. The former (phenomenal consciousness) is not a mere subordinate to the latter (access consciousness). Certainly, the former is radically limited in what it can accomplish in the absence of the latter. But conversely, it is the soil on which the latter lives. It is what makes the very value for us of the latter palpable to us, accessible to us. Not only that: but the logical first–person aspect of the latter (the expression of spontaneity in "I think") is backed by what we might call the self-indexing of the former (the receptivity of inner sense and feeling). No first-person in the full sense of the spontaneity of thinking (expressed by the proposition "I think") without the self–indexing of sensation and feeling. This is a topic that calls for many more papers.

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