

Affinity and Experience

According to Kant the only way that we can have a unified consciousness is by means of combining conceptually all appearances (*Erscheinungen*) into a *single* nature. Experience is merely a composite of all the perceptions which fit together as a unity, a necessity by virtue of the object being looked for, i.e., nature.

A unity of consciousness based on empirical concepts would be no more certain than the face in the cloud. And so no identity of consciousness at all.

The conditions of experience are the condition of the objects of experience (and so what Hume found necessary for experience with an object is also necessary even for the recognition of the object of that experience). These conditions are the categories as the single means to a unified consciousness.

We know that the concept of cause is a priori, for Hume has shown that it is not based on any experience. So we come up with this notion of causation on our own; but then what is our confidence that the appearances themselves are subject to such a law ? It can't be empirical, as we have just admitted, and so it must be something we have come up with ourselves and on our own. Essentially we simply presuppose a nature (per the categorical makeup of the understanding) for the appearances that we are equipped to recognize, and proceed with associations to bring diverse representations into a unity. We have to do this in order to presume to grasp a manifold and examine it (as Hume did the representations of the mind), for this is done only in anticipation of a recognition (objective perception).

Accordingly: the transcendental affinity is the presupposition or prejudgement that the appearances, whatever they may be, represent a single nature, i.e., are connected in some way, immediately or remotely. This leads to our being on the lookout for hints of that nature (per rules and laws), e.g., coincidences and patterns, and this in turn, as experience has validated for us, we find in two distinct and related objects, the external world and the internal world, both of a single nature, the physical and the physiological. Essentially then, by this presupposition of the affinity, we assume and come to recognize that appearances are simply representation of things and not things themselves.

In a word: it is by means of the affinity of the appearances that we are confident of our experience, for without it there would be no certitude to our recognitions, and thus all recognitions of objects would fail and it would be as though the appearances were things on their own, which existed on their own just as they appear, e.g., going out of existence at each blink and getting physically smaller at a distance, etc.; and we would live in the land of the [Mad Hatter of Alice's Wonderland](#). It is only by means of the affinity that we would ever presume to associate empirical data in the first place, i.e., so conceive them that their appearance to us is actually necessary; and otherwise we would simply remember them as they appear, but never recognize them as they must be (necessitated objects). See [two metaphors](#) for this thinking.

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