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Kant on Nativism, Scepticism and Necessity

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Abstract

Kant criticizes the so-called 'preformation' hypothesis – a nativist account of the origin of the categories – at the end of the B-Deduction on the ground that it entails scepticism. I examine the historical context of Kant's criticism, and identify the targets as both Crusius and Leibniz. There are two claims argued for in this paper: first, that attending to the context of the opposition to certain forms of nativism affords a way of understanding Kant's commitment to the so-called 'discursivity thesis', by contrasting the possession conditions for the categories with those for innate ideas; secondly, it provides an insight with regard to Kant's understanding of the dialectic with scepticism. Kant's claim is that a certain explanatory lacuna that attaches to Humean empiricism can be seen to apply equally to any nativist theory. The lacuna concerns the explanation of the modal purport of *a priori* necessity, i.e. how it is that our consciousness can even distinguish contents that are represented *as* necessary features of objects.

Keywords: Crusius, Leibniz, nativism, preformation, scepticism

1. Introduction

The role of innate representations or mechanisms within Kant's Critical project is far from clear. On the one hand, Kant notoriously states in response to Eberhard that although the *Critique of Pure Reason* 'admits absolutely no implanted or innate *representations*' there nevertheless must be a 'ground' or source for our capacity to produce a priori representations 'and this ground at least is *innate*'.[1] On the other hand, Kant's appeal to innate cognitive mechanisms is thought antithetical to what is sometimes referred to as his 'normative turn'.[2] That is, his focus on a *quaestio juris* is thought to amount to the claim that the justification of our knowledge claims is independent of any appeal to descriptive facts concerning our psychological constitution.[3]

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Kant's opposition to a Lockean or Humean empirical psychology is thought to stem from just this normative commitment. An inquiry undertaken to investigate the empirical psychological conditions under which we have come to *possess* our metaphysical concepts could not, it is held, tell us whether or not we ought to think ourselves warranted to deploy those concepts in judgement. Lanier Anderson, for example, claims that, for Kant, 'empiricist psychology fails to account for the normativity of cognition, and the outstanding normative question of right is just the one Kant's transcendental deductions were meant to address'.[4]

Kant's opposition to nativism, expressed at the end of the second edition of the Transcendental Deduction, appears to serve as an example that for Kant the question of epistemic warrant can override any appeal to psychological facts.[5] There, in §27 at B167–8, Kant attempts to undermine an account of our knowledge of the world whereby a system of implanted innate ideas is set up to correspond harmoniously with a pre-established system of objects. This passage and others are thought to be evidence that, for Kant, an account of concept-*possession*, whether empiricist or nativist, simply fails to ask, let alone answer, the question of concept-*deployment* – the question of the warrant with which those concepts could be veridically deployed in judgement.[6]

In this paper I attempt to provide an alternative reading of this passage. In section 2, I outline the passage and put it in the context of Kant's overall strategy in the Deduction. While it is clear that there is some kind of anti-nativist claim being presented, it will be seen to be crucial to identify the exact brand of nativism that Kant has in mind. In section 3, I discuss the historical background to the development of Kant's views in the first *Critique*, beginning with his criticisms of Crusius. Section 4 presents a brief account of Kant's contact with Leibniz's *Nouveaux Essais*, where the question of the nature and role of innate ideas is at the fore. In sections 5 and 6, respectively, I look at Kant's theory of 'original' concept-acquisition and its relation to the categories and at the impact of Hume's account of causal necessity upon the development of Kant's approach. I conclude with an alternative reconstruction of Kant's reasoning. According to this reconstruction, Kant is arguing that only his new model of cognition, whereby both understanding and sensibility make essential contributions to the categories' 'sense and significance' (*Sinn und Bedeutung*), can account adequately for a basic representational achievement that both the empiricist and the nativist alike must accept, i.e. our ability even to *think* certain types of representational content with the purport of presenting how objects are

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necessarily. This reading thus does not question the centrality of the 'question of right' to the epistemic project of the first *Critique*, but rather argues that at B167–8 Kant's anti-sceptical considerations need not be considered as hinging exclusively on his identification of the demands of epistemic justification.

2. Kant's Anti-Nativism

It is crucial to consider the context of the passage in which Kant's anti-nativism is manifested. Kant has by this stage completed the second step of his proof of the transcendental deduction in §26. He now proceeds to draw the transcendental idealist conclusions that he thinks follow from that completed argument.[7] The same task was performed at the end of the A-Deduction where, having established that the categories actually apply to appearances, Kant argued that only an account whereby the categories are drawn from the nature of human thought, and moreover restricted *only* to appearances, can adequately explain that possession:

> If all the objects with which our cognition has to do were things in themselves, then we would not be able to have any *a priori* concepts of them at all. For whence should we obtain them? If we take them from the object … then our concepts would be merely empirical and not *a priori* concepts. If we take them from ourselves, then that which is merely in us cannot determine the constitution of an object distinct from our representations. … But if, on the contrary, we have to do everywhere only with appearances, then it is not only possible but also necessary that certain *a priori* concepts precede the empirical cognition of objects. (A128–9)

Given that the categories actually *do* apply, and can be schematized into principles expressing necessary truths about relations between empirical objects, it cannot be the case that those concepts were acquired subsequently to the experience of those objects, since concepts acquired in such a manner would, Kant claims, have only contingent empirical content. Imagining a scenario whereby all our concept-acquisition was performed in this way, we are to see that we would *only* possess concepts with contingent, empirically abstracted content.

It is important to note the type of failure of explanation of the categories Kant has in mind. To do this we must distinguish two senses in which the categories might be thought to apply 'necessarily'. The first, which I will call *transcendental necessity*, concerns the status of

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the categories as preconditions for the possibility of experience (cf. A11–12/B26). The second, which I will call *a priori necessity*, concerns the intentional content of the categories when deployed in judgement. By '*a priori* necessity' I mean the feature of categorial judgements insofar as they carry a particular modal inflection, that is, insofar as they *purport* to represent necessary truths *as* necessary. A judgement possesses *a priori* necessity if 'a proposition is thought along with its necessity' (B3). Similarly, in the Transcendental Aesthetic Kant characterises the *a priori* propositions of geometry as 'apodictic', which he glosses as 'combined with consciousness of their necessity' (B41). All synthetic *a priori* propositions thus possess *a priori* necessity in this latter sense. However, not all synthetic *a priori* propositions possess transcendental necessity. An individual mathematical judgement (e.g. that $7 + 5 = 12$) possesses *a priori* necessity – it is grasped as being necessarily true if it is grasped as true at all – however, that individual judgement does not represent a necessary condition of the possibility of experience.[8]

In the passage at A128–9, then, Kant is making a claim regarding *a priori* necessity. Specifically, he is making the counterfactual claim that, if the categories were acquired from our experience of things in themselves, this could only occur through our *a posteriori* epistemic contact with them. If this were the case, though, those concepts would only, when deployed in judgement, carry the purport of representing how things have been or how they currently are. However, by the end of the Deduction, Kant has already shown that the categories purport to represent how objects *must* be. The explanatory hypothesis of *a posteriori* epistemic contact with things in themselves fails as an account of how we might have come even to *possess* the basic representational ability to distinguish between things that seem to be a certain way contingently and those that seem to be so necessarily. Assuming an exhaustive and exclusive dichotomy between objects qua appearances and objects qua things in themselves, the implication is that the categories must apply only to objects qua appearances.

Whereas at the end of A-Deduction Kant's reflections involved a mix of two dichotomies – 'applying to things in themselves/applying only to appearances' and 'drawn from the object'/'drawn from ourselves' – at the end of the B-Deduction, Kant treats each dichotomy separately. At the end of §26, Kant first discusses how the 'lawfulness' of nature can be established only by restricting the concept of nature to appearances (B164–5). In §27, Kant repeats the same thought-experiment as in

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the A-Deduction, though now only with regard to the 'drawn from the object'/'drawn from ourselves' dichotomy, imagining scenarios that might be thought to be capable of accounting for our actual veridical deployment of the categories to a world of empirical objects. This time Kant considers *three* options: (i) that the categories are derived from experience of objects (i.e. acquired *a posteriori*); (ii) that they are 'self-thought' (a model he refers to as 'epigenesis', and which he endorses); (iii) a novel third option, the 'preformation system hypothesis'. Kant raises the very same objection to (i) as he did in the A-Deduction: the *a priori* status of the categories precludes an account whereby 'experience makes these concepts possible' (B166) and that '[c]onsequently only the second way remains (as it were a system of the *epigenesis* of pure reason): namely that the categories contain the grounds of the possibility of all experience in general from the side of the understanding' (B167).[9]

The objection to (i) is not that, in such a scenario, we could never *warrantedly assert* judgements employing the categories, rather that such candidate judgements *would never arise in the first place*. The theory claims an *a posteriori* origin for concepts with *a priori* content, which Kant states would be a *generatio aequivoca*, a generation of one thing from a *sui generis* distinct kind of thing (B167). The empiricist account is ruled out, then, just on the basis that we can at least *think* candidate categorial judgements.

Finally, Kant offers the passage where he considers and rejects the third option:

> If someone still wanted to propose a middle way between the only two, already named ways, namely, that the categories were neither *self-thought a priori* first principles of our cognition nor drawn from experience, but were rather subjective predispositions for thinking, implanted in us along with our existence by our author in such a way that their use would agree exactly with the laws of nature along which experience runs (a kind of *preformation-system* of pure reason), then … this would be decisive against the supposed middle way: that in such a case the categories would lack the *necessity* that is essential to their concept. For, e.g., the concept of cause, which asserts the necessity of a consequent under a presupposed condition, would be false if it rested only on a subjective necessity, arbitrarily implanted in us, of combining certain empirical representations according to such a rule of relation.

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> I would not be able to say that the effect is combined with the cause in the object (*Objecte*) (i.e. necessarily), but only that I am so constituted that I cannot think of this representation otherwise than as so connected; which is precisely what the skeptic wishes most, for then all of our insight through the supposed objective validity of our judgments is nothing but sheer illusion, and there would be no shortage of people who would not concede this subjective necessity (which must be felt) on their own; at least one would not be able to quarrel with anyone about that which merely depends on the way in which his subject is organized. (B167–8)

As mentioned, Kant's claims here are frequently taken as evidence of his conceiving of transcendental inquiry as crucially based upon the *quaestio juris*. Beiser, for example, claims that the passage is evidence of Kant's insistently anti-psychologistic approach:

> [Kant] recognized that all appeals to the subjective necessities of our own nature – whether based on innate ideas or habits of association – could never establish claims to objective validity, for the question remained whether the necessities corresponded to anything in nature itself. Hence psychologism begged the question against the Humean skeptic. (Beiser 2002: 168)

This takes Kant as raising the same *quaestio juris* against the nativist as he did against the empirical psychologist at the beginning of the Deduction (A86–7/B118–19). According to this reading, Kant's notion of the *a priori* 'self-thought' status of the categories is that the latter are an expression of the epistemic norms of veridical judgement about objects. It is only with appeal to such epistemic norms that the sceptic is genuinely engaged, and since the nativist neglects this question entirely, his position is inherently vulnerable to sceptical attack.

In contrast, Kemp Smith's analysis of the argument does not focus directly on the question of warrant but rather on the *kind of necessity* at stake:

> In the first place, this is a hypothesis capable of accounting for any kind of *a priori* whatsoever; the predetermined powers of judgment can be multiplied without limit. But a second objection is decisive, namely, that on such a theory the categories would lack the particular kind of necessity which is required. They would express only the necessities imposed upon our

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> thinking by the constitution of our minds, and would not justify any assertion of necessary connection *in the object*. (Kemp Smith 1999: 290)

This reads Kant as putting forward the counterfactual claim that, if the preformation model were true, then the categories would be lacking a certain kind of necessity. More specifically, it seems plausible to read Kemp Smith as intending a two-step argument that ultimately hinges on the question of the warrant of arguments premised on claims regarding subjective necessities.

The argument appears to run as follows: if the preformation theory were correct, then although our modal judgements might well be *true* judgements, they would not be *justified* true judgements. The only identification criterion articulatable on this model would be an agent's appeal to her own introspective phenomenology. However, appeal to introspective phenomenology is clearly inadequate as a source of warrant for modal judgements. It reveals only a subjective feeling of compulsion to judge, rather than recognition that such judgement is objectively appropriate. Thus, if the preformation theory were true, the sceptic could reasonably challenge our claims to have ever correctly identified a genuine necessary truth.

However, once we put Kant's reflections at B167–8 in their appropriate philosophical and historical context, a different reading of his strategy can be developed. To see this, one can first note that Kant's opposition to the preformation model in this passage does not concern what criteria must be self-consciously met in order for justified true judgement to be attained. More specifically, Kant's argument is not based on (i) a demand that we have introspective access to an adequate criterion that could serve as a norm for veridical judgement and (ii) a claim that on the preformation model we would lack such access. Rather, his claim is that no such criterion is required, since the model of cognition upon which such a requirement is postulated is false. If the preformation model were correct, it would not be that our causal judgements would be false – rather, as Kant says, it would be that the 'concept of cause' would be 'false'. What this means, I will argue, is that if the preformation model *were* correct, then our implanted concept of causation would not generate the *right kind* of representational content. Kant's argument against the nativist then is the same as that against the empiricist – if such a model were correct, then our judgements would fail to express the modal purport that our judgements can and do express.

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The moral of Kant's opposition to the preformation model is obscured by his complex anti-sceptical strategy. By claiming that the falsity of the preformation model can be seen from the fact that it would entail that we lack an adequate criterion for the self-conscious identification of veridical judgements, it might be thought that Kant's own epigenetic model aims to provide just such a criterion. However, to draw this conclusion would seriously misconstrue Kant's epistemological strategy. Kant is not engaged in the task of attempting to provide adequate criteria with which an agent might distinguish within her manifold mental contents those that genuinely obtain of objects. Rather, the new model of cognition put forward in the transcendental deduction is supposed to show that the coherence and possibility of inner subjective experience is dependent on the coherence and possibility of objective experience of outer objects.[10] Kant's goal is not to provide grounds that warrant inference from the inner to the outer, but instead to undermine the epistemological and cognitive picture that renders that task necessary in the first place.

3. Kant's Opposition to Crusius

Kant felt that the claims at B167–8 were important enough to be repeated in a footnote to §36 of the *Prolegomena*, and here the preformation theorist in the *Critique* is named as the well-known theologian and metaphysician Christian August Crusius:

> *Crusius* alone knew of a middle way: namely that a spirit who can neither err nor deceive originally implanted these natural laws in us. But, since false principles are often mixed in as well – of which this man's system itself provides not a few examples – then, with the lack of sure criteria for distinguishing an authentic origin from a spurious one, the use of such a principle looks very precarious, since one can never know for sure what the spirit of truth or the father of lies may have put into us. (*Prolegomena*, 4: 319, in Kant 2002: 112)

The scepticism that Kant seems to be referring to here looks like a variant on the Cartesian evil demon applied to the realm of innate ideas, whereby we lack a criterion to distinguish whether an innate disposition to believe that something is the case has its origin by virtue of a benevolent God or a 'father of lies'. This is a different challenge, however, from the one raised in the second edition of the first *Critique*, where it is assumed that genuine cognition of necessary features of objects *via* the categories has been established. Here the challenge is

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whether the preformation model's account can establish the application of the categories at all. On this account the problem looks straightforward: the preformation theorist requires knowledge of God's existence and beneficence, and to defeat a Cartesian evil demon-style challenge, before he can claim that the categories are secure.[11]

At this point, it is worth distinguishing two components within the position Kant appears to be opposing: first, there is the metaphysical claim that reality is already set up in such a way so as to conform to the broad features of our thinking about it; secondly, there is the epistemological claim that the necessary features of that reality can be read off the phenomena of what we subjectively determine to be the case. The metaphysical claim establishes some kind of connection between mind and world, whereas the epistemological claim offers a criterion for identifying that connection.[12] Whereas the metaphysical thesis is held by Leibniz, I would claim that only Crusius maintains the epistemological thesis.

Kant had in fact launched a criticism of Crusius very similar to that at B167–8 nearly quarter of a century earlier, in the 1764 work, *Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality*. In the *Inquiry*, Kant devoted a special section to criticizing Crusius's theological metaphysics, which Kant perceived as having gained an undeserved popularity.[13] Here Kant targets the supplanting by Crusius of the Leibnizian-Wolffian tradition's principles of identity and non-contradiction with a metaphysical 'supreme' principle that he takes to ground all others. This supreme principle is the rule that 'what I cannot think as other than true is true' and therefore the inferences that it legislates are generally ones from inconceivability to impossibility (e.g. 'what I cannot think as existing has therefore never existed'). It is just this inference-rule that Kant criticizes:

> The supreme rule is this: *what cannot be thought as other than true is true*, etc. However, it can easily be seen that this proposition can never be a ground of the truth of any cognition. For, if one concedes that there can be no other ground of truth which can be given, apart from the impossibility of thinking it other than true, then one is in effect saying that it is impossible to give any further ground of truth, and that this cognition is indemonstrable. Now, of course, there are many indemonstrable cognitions. But the feeling of conviction which we have

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> with respect to these cognitions is merely an avowal, not an argument establishing that they are true. (*Inquiry*, 2: 295, in Kant 1992b: 269)

For Kant, the objection is not against the notion of a subjective feeling of conviction, which he concedes might well arise towards a judgement whose falsity cannot be conceived, but is instead against the inference from it to the truth of that judgement. The objection hinges on the indistinguishability of *bona fide* from *faux* rules of judgement within Crusius's system.[14]

While there is good evidence then for identifying Crusius as the target of B167–8, it is notable that in the *Inquiry* there does not appear to be any explicit appeal to the claim that Kant considered 'decisive', namely that regarding the distinctness of 'objective necessity' (*a priori* necessity 'in the object') that characterizes the central objection in the *Critique*. It can also be seen that the objection that Kant pushes does not turn essentially on the notion of innate ideas. Instead, the objection turns on Crusius's appeal to an inadequate criterion for the *identification* of innate ideas that genuinely apply.

4. The Influence of the *Nouveaux Essais*

Since the basis of this objection to Crusius does not appear to hinge especially on the issue of 'inborn' status of ideas, the extent of Kant's anti-nativism might be more profitably approached through a consideration of his opposition to Leibniz's nativism. For this, one might begin by characterizing a 'dispositional' variety of the latter, positing capacities of thought that lie *in potentia* in the human mind, but which do not themselves constitute discursive representational content, and which require sensory experience for their actualization. However, in so doing no clear difference is yet drawn between the Leibnizian and Kantian positions, broadly construed. Both think that, in some sense, the capacity for cognition involves rational capacities that lie dormant in the mind; moreover, both think that sensory experience is a necessary condition for the activation of those capacities, at least as necessary enabling conditions.[15]

I take it that Kant read Leibniz's *Nouveaux Essais* sometime soon after it was published in 1765, probably around 1768–9.[16] The very first book of the *Essais* is directed towards defending the notion of innate ideas against the considerations raised in Locke's *Essay*. It is helpful first to look at Leibniz's reasoning. Leibniz refuses to accept the inference

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from the datum that a truth can be learned (which he does accept) to the conclusion that it is not innate:

> **Theo.** … And I cannot accept the proposition that *whatever is learned is not innate*. The truths about numbers are in us; but still we learn them, whether by drawing them from their source, in which case one learns them through demonstrative reasoning (which shows that they are innate), or by testing them with examples, as common arithmeticians do. The latter, not knowing the underlying principles, learn their rules merely through their being handed on; at best, before teaching them they confirm their rules, as far as they judge appropriate, by trying them out (*par l'experience*). (Leibniz 1981: 85)

For Leibniz, a truth may be innate without conscious awareness of it. There is no obstacle to construing 'learning' then as a process of discovery whereby one becomes aware of one's own antecedent (albeit 'unclear') possession of the relevant truths. The process may be embarked upon in the sure and principled manner of deductive reasoning, but also in the unsure and haphazard manner of experience. Thus Leibniz characterizes 'learning' as an activity that agents must engage in, deductively or empirically, in order to apprehend both the innateness and the truth of innate truths.

This comes out more clearly in Leibniz's defence of his account as opposed to a cruder form of nativism, which posits the actual presence in the mind of the constituents of true propositions as continuously open to conscious introspective view. Propositions such as those of mathematics are instead innate in the sense of being capable of discovery:

> **Theo.** The actual knowledge of them is not innate. What is innate is what might be called the potential knowledge of them, as the veins of the marble outline a shape which is in the marble before they are uncovered by the sculptor.[17]

Similarly, Leibniz claims that the non-appearance of innate truths in all agents is explained by the fact that '[i]nnate maxims make their appearance only through the attention one gives to them' and that this capacity to attend is variable from agent to agent (1981: 87). His conclusion is admitted as quasi-Platonist, though without the appeal to an implausible mechanism of *anamnesis* (1981: 106).

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It is plausible to claim that Kant had read the *Nouveaux Essais* before writing his *Inaugural Dissertation*, for there we find a concern with the formation and acquisition of concepts as central to the philosophical enterprise, and with particular reference to the innate status of concepts, that is less pronounced in Kant's previous writings.[18] In this pre-Critical phase, Kant has yet to formulate the 'discursivity thesis' (understood just as the claim (Allison 2004) that both discursive and sensible components are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for veridical cognition) and so he here aligns intellectual cognition with metaphysical knowledge and 'sensitive' cognition with empirical knowledge:

> Since, then, empirical principles are not found in metaphysics, the concepts met with in metaphysics are not to be sought in the senses but in the very nature of the pure understanding, and that not as *innate* concepts but as concepts abstracted from the laws inherent in the mind (by attending to its actions on the occasion of an experience), and therefore as *acquired* concepts. To this genus belong possibility, existence, necessity, substance, cause, etc, together with their opposites or correlates. Such concepts never enter into any sensory representations as parts, and thus they could not be abstracted from such a representation in any way at all. (*Inaugural Dissertation*, §8, 2: 395, in Kant 1992a: 387–8)

Kant's understanding of nativism is revealed more clearly here. Kant does not identify nativism as a thesis imputing dispositions of thought that essentially determine the possibility of cognition, but rather as the thesis that there are metaphysical concepts which are *non-acquired* and possessed by virtue of lying fully formed within the mind. For the Kant of the *Inaugural Dissertation* at least, metaphysical concept-possession is not accounted for in this latter way, but rather by giving a concept-acquisition story whereby an abstractionist process operates upon the 'laws of the mind'. Kant's focus seems to be squarely upon the task of providing the correct concept-acquisition account: the concepts in question are understood as metaphysical concepts like substance, cause, etc., and the task is to show how we are able to consciously articulate their content. His account responds to this task by positing 'inherent' laws of the mind upon which we abstract out conceptual contents.

That Kant's attitude towards nativism was informed by the *Nouveaux Essais* can be seen in regard to a discussion recorded in the so-called

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Metaphysik Vigilantius notes on Kant's metaphysics lectures from 1794–5. Here Kant discusses the development of metaphysics prior to the dawning of transcendental metaphysics. There are three groups identified on the basis of the general manner in which they determined their metaphysical principles. In the first group are Aristotle and Locke, the 'physiologists of reason' who supposedly derive their principles from empirical generalizations (29: 958–9, in Kant 2001: 429–30). In the second group are Plato and Leibniz, who are characterized as nativists of different varieties:

> Plato and later Leibniz appear to assume a system of pre-established harmony <*systema harmoniae praestabilitae*> with respect to cognitions of reason. That is, they took as a basis innate ideas, which were put in us before we were acquainted with objects themselves, and which agreed with the objects just because the author places them in us. Now Plato assumed as the source of the acquisition of all ideas of pure reason that they descended from the intuition of God; Leibniz modified this in that he supposed certain innate predispositions of reason as existing in us, which had only the use that we, in relying on them, would find the objects in agreement with these ideas.
>
> In order to state such a hypothesis, both were amazed by the conviction that truths often pressed upon them so evidently.[19]

For Leibniz, the implanted innate ideas are already set up *in potentia* as 'predispositions of reason' to conform to objects. The actual conforming occurs as a result of experience that is understood as an activity of discovery, of an uncovering of an agreement that was already there.[20] However, Crusius belongs in an entirely different group:

> … Wolff, and in this age his antagonist, Crusius. Crusius indeed contested such a unified effect of the soul on the body, which Leibniz assumed by virtue of the preestablished harmony <*harmonia praestabilita*>, but decreed on the contrary that the criterion of truth is to be sought for only in the ideas which the creator has placed in us, just because he could not trust it to our reason that it would find these ideas itself; he thus assumed an inner revelation with human beings, and with that the necessity of this for bringing one to conviction. (29: 959, in Kant 2001: 429–30)

On Kant's account, it seems that both Leibniz and Crusius are nativists of a sort, the difference between them consisting merely in *how* the

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divinely implanted innate ideas are veridically realized in relation to objects. The reason why Crusius is put in a separate group to Plato and Leibniz is not because of an adherence to innate ideas *per se* but rather because of the identification procedure for those veridical ideas. For Crusius, according to Kant, the criterion for identification is 'inner revelation' – not only are the ideas divinely implanted, but the method of their identification is also divinely guaranteed. Interestingly, Kant contrasts this identification procedure with one that 'trust[s] it to our reason that it would find these ideas itself'. It is not the case that Crusius does not look to reason in order to establish the truth of the innate ideas. It is rather that, although this procedure occurs *via* rational capacities (through consideration of that which is rationally conceivable), reason's reliability is itself divinely guaranteed. Therefore, for Kant, Crusius uses reason but without 'trusting' it to contain within itself and without external guarantee the resources to secure its own veridical application.

5. Nativism and Original Acquisition

Despite Leibniz's own characterization of innate ideas as 'dispositions', in Kant's view Leibniz holds a picture of innate ideas as ready-formed implanted representations. The 'dispositional' characterization serves only to express Leibniz's claim that those fully formed ideas require a disposition to discover them through experience or deductive reasoning. If anything, though, this might seem to bring Leibniz and Kant closer together in their opposition to an account such as Crusius's, since it might be thought that Leibniz's identification and application procedures are ones which 'trust' reason in the way that Crusius's do not. However, Kant has different reasons for rejecting Leibniz's brand of nativism. It is one thing to say, as Leibniz does, that there are contentful concepts which are only discoverable through their operation in experience; it is another to say, as I would claim Kant does, that those concepts are only first *generated* through the operation in experience of some non-contentful cognitive counterparts.

For Kant, there is a reflexivity between the articulation of the subject's cognitive functions and their application to a world of objects, a reflexivity that is lacking for the Leibnizian, who claims (along with Crusius) that the ideas are 'ready-made', i.e. articulated prior to their conscious apprehension, and thus possessed independently of any subsequent operation of applying those ideas to experience of objects. For Leibniz, the role of sensible experience is at most that of a possible enabling condition for the realization of contents determined by the

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predispositions of our rational capacities alone. Such a conception makes space for the possibility of an application of those rational capacities through alternative enabling conditions (such as the intuitional capacities of a different kind of being) – on such a conception, human sensibility is merely a sufficient but not necessary condition for the realization of the outputs of our rational capacities. Kant's discursivity thesis on the other hand entails that the contribution of sensibility is not a mere enabling condition for concept-application. Sensibility must instead be thought of as co-determining the possible 'sense and significance' (*Sinn und Bedeutung*) of our *a priori* concepts in combination with the contribution of the understanding. An *a priori* concept's application conditions, i.e. sensible intuition, provide strict limits for *any possible* application of the categories.

This is the import of Kant's talk of the 'genesis' of concepts in the *Inaugural Dissertation*, when further developed within the project of transcendental idealism. There is evidence that Kant retained this picture of the differentiation of transcendental from traditional nativist metaphysics in terms of the former's focus upon the acquisition of concepts from reflection upon the cognitive *acts* of our rational capacities in relation to sensible intuition.[21] In §43 of the *Prolegomena*, explicating how he arrived at the ideas of reason in the forms of syllogistic inference, Kant states:

> Since I had found the origin of the categories in the four logical functions of all judgments of the understanding, it was completely natural to look for the origin of the ideas in the three functions of syllogisms; for once such pure concepts of reason (transcendental Ideas) have been granted; then, if they are not to be taken for innate, they could indeed be found nowhere else except in this very act of reason … (4: 330, in Kant 2002: 121–2)

As I would claim, the 'origin' of the concepts in question refers to their acquisition-conditions, where the 'objects' from which they are acquired are in fact the 'acts' or consciously apprehended products of the processes of our cognitive-epistemic practices.

Such an interpretation is well positioned to make sense of what is arguably the most notable instance of Kant's dealing with the question of nativism, in the context of the so-called 'Eberhard controversy' and Kant's response to the contention of the unoriginality of the insights of the first *Critique* compared with those of Leibniz. Eberhard accused

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Kant of ambiguity regarding the status of space and time (though it clearly would extend to the categories also), as to whether they are 'implanted' or not. Kant's response seems to deny a nativism of one form and endorse another:

> The *Critique* admits absolutely no implanted or innate *representations*. One and all, whether they belong to intuition or to concepts of the understanding, it considers them as *acquired*. But there is also an original acquisition (as the teachers of natural right call it), and this of that which did not yet exist at all, and so did not belong to anything prior to this act. According to the *Critique*, these are, *in the first place*, the form of things in space and time, *second*, the synthetic unity of the manifold in concepts; for neither of these does our cognitive faculty get from objects as given therein in-themselves, rather it brings them about, *a priori*, out of itself. There must indeed be a ground for it in the subject, however, which makes it possible that these representations can arise in this and no other manner, and be related to objects which are not yet given, and this ground at least is *innate*.[22]

Kant hinges his claims regarding nativism here on a distinction between a fully formed (or even partially formed) representation and the 'ground' or basis for the formation of those representations. He denies that he is a nativist regarding the former but concedes that he is a nativist in the latter sense.

Of course, there might be a sense in which self-identifying as a nativist might be a relatively trivial commitment, akin to an empiricist's commitment to innate concept-formation capacities in order to account for an empiricist account of concept-formation. Whether or not Kant's nativism amounts to a trivial or non-trivial commitment will surely depend on what is meant when a concept is said to have been 'acquired originally'. This notion, as Kant indicates, has a juridical origin. In the *Metaphysics of Morals* we find the following characterization:

> I acquire something when I bring it about (*efficio*) that it becomes *mine*. – Something external is originally mine which is mine without any act that establishes a right to it. But that *acquisition* is original which is not derived from what is another's. (Doctrine of Right, Part I, §10, 6: 258, in Kant 1996: 411)

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The notion of original acquisition is understood negatively: something is originally acquired if it is not derivatively acquired. An original acquisition of a representation (considering just conceptual representations here) is one where the concept is first grasped *simultaneously* with the first manifestation of that which the concept expresses. Unlike *cat*, *table*, etc., where these concepts are acquired subsequently to the presentation of given cats and tables, a caused event, for example, is only (and can only be) first empirically manifested *at the same time* as the initial deployment of the concept *cause*, since *cause* must be operational in order for causes to be 'originally' manifested at all. It is this claim, that the categories are themselves originally manifested only through the conditions of sensible intuition that make experience of objects possible, that is supposed to motivate the thought that the deployment of those categories beyond those conditions would constitute not just an illegitimate or unwarranted use of them, but fundamentally one without sense and significance.

6. Hume and the Idea of Objective Necessity

Although the opposition to the preformation theory at B167–8 seems designed to oppose both Leibniz and Crusius, the grounds for this opposition follow from the theory in fact developed in opposition to the general target of the Deduction, which is the Humean empiricist model of cognition, whereby an agent's representations of a world of interacting objects is held to be made possible just through the contributions of her sensory and imaginational capacities, conditioned by custom.[23] Although the target at B167–8 is surely Crusius, it seems more likely that the sceptic threatening to expose the preformation theorist is Hume. In the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, lamenting the obscurity of the presentation of the B-Deduction, Kant suggests that the threat the nativist attracts is exactly that of it somehow collapsing into a Humean account of the origin of necessity:

> I shall take the next opportunity to make up for this deficiency … so that the perceptive reviewer may not be left with the necessity, certainly unwelcome even to himself, of taking refuge in a preestablished harmony to explain the surprising agreement of appearances with the laws of the understanding, despite their having entirely different sources from the former. This remedy would be much worse than the evil it is supposed to cure, and, on the contrary, actually cannot help at all. For the *objective necessity* that characterizes the pure concepts of the understanding (and the principles of their

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> application to appearances), in the concept of cause in connection with the effect, for example, is still not forthcoming. Rather, it all remains only *subjectively necessary*, but objectively merely contingent, placing together, precisely as Hume has it when he calls this mere illusion from custom. No system in the world can derive this necessity from anything else than the principles lying *a priori* at the basis of the possibility of *thinking itself*, through which alone the cognition of objects whose appearance is given to us, that is, experience, becomes possible. (Preface, footnote, 4: 476, in Kant 2002: 190)

Hume's diagnosis regarding the flawed inference from the subjective customary sense of necessity to the necessary features of objects is one that Kant wholeheartedly accepts, and is sharpest when directed towards the rationalist claims regarding pre-established harmony. However, here it is not so much the thesis itself that is objectionable (e.g. in terms of being an unwarranted appeal to a theological hypothesis), but rather that pre-established harmony cannot even explain our very possession of the *type* of discursive content that we require, namely, content that expresses *a priori* necessity when deployed in a judgement.

In the *Prolegomena*, Kant characterizes Hume's scepticism as one that points out the fallacy of inferring from a sense of necessity that might stem from psychological compulsion (or even pragmatic indispensability: 4: 258–9) to a conclusion that held of objects:

> He indisputably proved that it is wholly impossible for reason to think such a [causal] connection *a priori* and from concepts, because this connection contains necessity; and it is simply not to be seen how it could be, that because something is, something else necessarily must also be, and therefore how the concept of such a connection could be introduced *a priori*. From this he concluded that reason completely and fully deceives herself with this concept, falsely taking it for her own child, when it is really nothing but a bastard of the imagination, which, impregnated by experience, and having brought certain representations under the law of association, passes off the resulting subjective necessity (i.e. habit) for an objective necessity (from insight). (4: 257–8)

Here the aptness of the Humean attack on the preformation theorist is clearer. Crusius's 'supreme rule' had been described and criticized back

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in the *Inquiry* as the mere feeling of conviction; Hume's analysis had shown to Kant that this characterized feeling of subjective *conviction* was in fact the feeling of a subjective *necessity*. The mistaken inference from a subjective necessity to the entirely different concept of objective necessity is exactly the one Kant recognized himself as having identified before in his opposition to Crusius. Furthermore, at B167–8, Kant deploys the very same contrast between subjective necessity and objective necessity (and in both cases remarks that the latter is characterized by being grasped through 'insight'). The implication is that the preformation theorist commits exactly the same subterfuge as that of the Humean empiricist, that of 'passing off' one kind of necessity for an entirely different kind, and of having thereby made a *generatio aequivoca*.

We can look at some of the arguments of the first *Critique* as responding to the question of how we might have acquired the concept of a certain kind of necessity, which is that of connection consciously grasped as holding *between objects necessarily*, i.e. *a priori* necessity. There is a phenomenological difference between a judgement whereby one expresses the subjective compulsion to acknowledge a contingent truth (e.g. I am compelled to assent that I have two hands) and one whereby I acknowledge the necessity of a necessary truth (e.g. that $7 + 5 = 12$). The first is a statement about my own subjective state that makes no claim about the modal status of the proposition considered; the latter makes no reference to my subjective state but purports to express something necessarily true of the world.

Kant's question then is this: how can an agent with a purely sensory cognitive structure even have the capacity to generate representations with such objective and necessary *purport*? Accepting Hume's point that the essential concept whose *bona fide* acquisition must be explained is that of necessity, Kant's project is directed towards showing how a genuine concept of necessity can be acquired through reflection on the operations of our cognitive faculties. The argument concerns not the mere possession of metaphysical concepts (and the judgements formed with them) that express truths about objects, but more specifically possession of *categorial* metaphysical concepts, i.e. concepts that involve the possibility of necessary truths as manifested in relations between objects. As we have seen, in the scenario of the thought-experiment at B167–8, the preformation-theorist can plausibly account for the categories' *veridicality* (in that it is granted that the contents of the implanted ideas do in fact co-vary with features of the world) – rather, it is an explanatory account of the accompanying *modal purport* of the relevant judgements that Kant thinks is lacking.

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It is one thing to recognize, as Leibniz did, that an *a posteriori* truth fails to acquire *a priori* status irrespective of its invariable and repeated empirical confirmation; it is another entirely to note that it is a completely different representation of necessity from that of subjective necessity that we require, namely of a synthetic *a priori* necessity. Hume recognized the inadequacy of the concept of subjective necessity to account for the synthetic *a priori* role that we require. His conclusion is negative – there is no such necessity available to us and thus we are in practice confounding subjective necessity with that of synthetic *a priori* necessity. While Kant accepts the former claim he refuses to accept the negative conclusion, and instead develops an account of cognition in the transcendental deduction whereby the crucial concepts are acquired though reflection upon 'original' acts of the understanding in combination with sensibility in order to perform even the simple achievement of representing objects. For this very reason, though, the modal content of those concepts is already inherently connected with the cognitive achievement of object-representation.

The assumption attacked at B167–8, shared by Hume's empiricist and Crusius's nativist alike, is that a judgement involving a subjective necessity and one involving an objective necessity might have qualitatively identical purport for the conscious judging agent. The sceptical scenario that Kant seems to suggest is implied by the preformation theorist is one where we have a subjective feeling that something must be the case but lack the justificational grounds to infer from this subjective feeling that there is an objective necessity corresponding to it. Kant's account is thought to attempt to avoid this conclusion by showing that we have grounds on which to warrantedly assert that some of our subjective feelings of necessity (say in regard to supposed necessary causal connections between objects) in fact represent genuine objective necessities. On this assumption, the content of the judgement 'it necessarily seems to me that *p*' (where *p* makes some reference to an object or objects) is shared by both *faux* and genuine objective judgements.

The reading pursued here is that Kant is instead basing his argument on phenomenological claims regarding the difference in representational content between judgements with subjective or objective purport. The former merely aspire to represent the psychological conviction of the inner states of the judging agent ('it necessarily seems to me that *p*'). Such judgements are of the sort of which *both* Crusius and Hume avail themselves – with the result that they draw what Kant thinks are either overly optimistic or overly pessimistic conclusions respectively. Kant

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agrees with Hume's claim against Crusius that one cannot validly infer a claim regarding objects from a claim with merely subjective purport. Where he disagrees with Hume is with regard to the claim that judgements with subjective purport are the only type of necessary judgement available to us, since we are capable of at least forming judgements with both objective and necessary purport ('it seems to me that *necessarily p*') and this representational achievement demands explanation.[24]

One of the aims of the Deduction is that of showing the epistemic parity of judgements with objective purport in our experiential cognition with those with subjective purport. For my purposes here, though, one need only recognize that an objective judgement is one that is meant to be objective in its representational content in a way that the subjective judgement is not. The former is essentially object-involving in its purport. On this reading, the argument at B167–8 does not involve any specific recourse to the threat of scepticism. The claim is rather an example of Kant's 'wildly counterfactual thought experiments';[25] the thought-experiment here concerns the idea that if the preformation theory account were true, we would not be capable of *thoughts* containing *a priori* necessity with objective purport. However, we are in actual possession of representations that at least purport to represent how things must be with regard to objects. Therefore, the preformation theory is false.

The issue in question is prior to the sceptical question of whether judgements with that purport are *true* of the objects they purport to represent. When Kant states that, if the preformation theory were true, I 'would not be able to say that the effect is combined with the cause in the object (*Objecte*) (i.e. necessarily), but only that I am so constituted that I cannot think of this representation otherwise than as so connected', this is a claim meant to be taken literally – the very thoughts that are expressed in the former proposition would not be available to us, and we would only be capable of thinking thoughts that make up the inner reports upon our introspective phenomenology.

The attribution of the incoherent scenario is a result that stems from Kant's justifiable conflation of Crusius with Hume, on the grounds that both empiricist and nativist models of cognition account for only the subjective characterization of the representation of necessity. Kant's anti-nativism is of a piece with his acceptance of Hume's contention that within any such model sceptical reductions of our representations

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to merely subjective predispositions are inevitable. Yet Kant holds that neither model is even *prima facie* plausible, since they both lack the ability to account even for the basic phenomenological fact of our ability to distinguish between subject-directed and object-directed representations of necessity. In Kant's radically revised model of cognition, the categories are essential in a strategy that attempts to respond to scepticism indirectly, by revealing the flawed model of cognition that such sceptical conclusions presuppose.[26]

Notes

1 *On a Discovery*, 8: 221, in Kant 2002: 312. Defining 'nativism' is a substantial philosophical task in itself. For a single example, Samuels (2007) raises doubts about the very coherence of the concept 'innate'. Yet I will claim that a picture of Kant's understanding of nativism can be formulated with enough clarity to reveal an important contrast between innate ideas and the categories.

2 For a recent example, see Brandom 2009: 58.

3 A84–5/B116–17. Characterizing Kant's normative turn in a clear way is difficult, not least because of the ongoing difficulty in defining the sense of 'normativity' that might be at stake. It is sometimes thought that Kant's normative turn involves the substantial claim that adequate standards of epistemic responsibility involve questions of a *different order* from those that might be answered by identification of the division of labour of our judgement-forming capacities. Thus Hatfield claims that while Kant's terminology might be psychological, his claims are inherently *transcendental*, where that latter term is thought to imply a distinct form of inquiry from a psychological one (1997: 214). This 'juridical' reading has its origins in Henrich's classic account (1989, 1994). I argue that interpreting Kant's normative concerns in this way is mistaken in Callanan (2011). However, the interpretation of this paper does not turn on any of these latter considerations.

4 Anderson 2001: 278. Commentators hold then that Kant's apparent appeal to psychological facts, including those concerning innate mechanisms, cannot be central to his argumentative concerns. See also Beiser 2002: 170. Alternatively, Longuenesse concludes that, despite the apparent centrality of appeal to psychological mechanisms, 'Kant's lasting insights hinge on the addition of distinctively *normative* considerations that crucially accompany those appeals' (1998: 389).

5 This passage seems supportive then of the general supposition that Kant's talk of the 'origins', 'birth certificates' or 'sources' of our categorial concepts cannot be intended to connote any kind of nativism, e.g. at B80, A87/B119, A261/B317. All references to the *Critique* are to Kant 1998 and will be given in the text with the standard 'A' and 'B' referencing to the first and second editions respectively.

6 There are those who nevertheless attribute *some* kind of nativism to Kant's account of cognition – these include Hanna 2001, Kitcher 1990, Sloan 2002, Zöller 1989. The anti-nativist reading is surely the more widespread, however, following from the general influence of Bennett 1966, Strawson 1966, Walker 1978 and more recently Allison 2004. For general statements of the rationale for interpreting Kant as an anti-nativist, see De Pierris 1987 and Beiser 2002. For more difficult intermediary cases see Buroker 2002, Falkenstein 1990 and 2004, Longuenesse 1998, Waxman 1991. Of course, Kant's anti-nativism, if secured, would not thereby establish the non-psychological basis of transcendental inquiry; rather the concern is that an attribution

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of nativism would almost certainly entail a construal of transcendental inquiry as at least in part a psychological one. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me to be clearer on this account.

7 This is a regular activity that Kant engages in throughout the first *Critique* – there is discussion of the transcendental idealist implications of the arguments at the end of the Aesthetic, at the end of both editions of the Deductions, in the chapter on the Schematism, and elsewhere, e.g. A26/B42 ff., A128–30, A146–7/B186–7.

8 Of course, all mathematical propositions are related to the forms of intuition of space and time, which latter set transcendental conditions for experience. However, they are *not* themselves transcendentally necessary in the sense that there is (thankfully) no requirement for a transcendental deduction of each individual mathematical judgement. I distinguish the two types of necessity solely so as to highlight that different tokenings of '*a priori*' reflect Kant's intention to draw our attention to different claims: that a representation can serve as a transcendental condition, that it is known independently of experience, that it is known with certainty, that it can strike us as necessary, etc. It is my contention that Kant's intended meaning of '*a priori*' at B167–8 concerns the latter connotation. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me to clarify my reasoning here.

9 As will be seen, I take Kant's use of the biological metaphors of preformation versus epigensis to indicate only a contrast between accounts that do and do not postulate ready-formed representations lying in the mind. A full account of this distinction, which Kant returns to in the *Critique of Judgment* (see 5: 422–3 in Kant 2000: 291), is beyond the scope of the current paper.

10 Strawson (1966) offers a sensitive reconstruction of Kant's aims in this regard. Whether or not the Deduction was intended to fully realize this ambition is discussed in Guyer 2010b.

11 In the famous Feb. 1772 letter to Herz, which casts the investigation of the next decade as that of determining 'the ground of the relation of that in us which we call "representation" to the object' (10: 130, in Kant 1999: 133), Kant seems to object to Herz on the ground that the reasoning involved is circular: 'Crusius believed in certain implanted rules for the purposes of making judgments and ready-made concepts that God implanted in the human soul just as they had to be in order to harmonize with things … However the *deus ex machina* is the greatest absurdity one could hit upon in the determination of the origin and validity of our cognitions. It has – besides its vicious circularity in drawing conclusions concerning our cognitions – also this additional disadvantage: it encourages all sorts of wild notions and every pious and speculative brainstorm' (10: 131, in Kant 1999: 134). I will suggest that there is good reason to regard this circularity objection as entirely distinct from Kant's core argument against the preformation theorist in the first *Critique*. There are perhaps tactical reasons for Kant to present the objection like this in the *Prolegomena*, in that the inadequacy of the account is claimed as holding despite the piety of the motivation for the account.

12 Kant does keep these claims apart in the quoted passage in the previous footnote, distinguishing the 'ready-made concepts' that match up to the world and the 'implanted rules for the purposes of making judgements'.

13 The major work with which Kant was familiar was likely Crusius's 1745 *Entwurf der nothwendigen Vernunftwarheiten*, though as Martin Schönfeld points out, Kant is possibly responding to Crusius's 1752 piece, the *Epistola ad Hardenberg de Summis Rationis Principis* (Schönfeld 2000: 223).

14 See also *Jäsche Logic*, 16: 21, in Kant 1992b: 535. Kant is less sanguine in *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, where Crusius falls, with Wolff, into the category of '*those who build*

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castles in the sky in their various imaginary worlds' and advocates a condescending tolerance to those dream-world inhabitants: '[I]f we consider … the person who inhabits the world which was conjured out of nothing by *Crusius* employing the magical power of a few formulae concerning *what can* and *what cannot be thought* – if we consider these people, we shall be patient with their contradictory visions, until these gentlemen have finished dreaming their dreams' (*Dreams*, 2: 342 in Kant 1992a: 329). Kant concludes that the awakened Crusius would hopefully be in a position to formulate a form of philosophical inquiry 'which does not exclude agreement with the understanding of other human beings', implying the subjective status of the conclusions of his previous account.

15 Hogan (2010: 25) explicitly identifies Leibniz as the source of Kant's commitment to a model of cognition that implies 'the mind's bare dispositional structure'. In this paper, I resist the idea that Kant saw Leibniz as a dispositional nativist, and argue that he instead viewed him as a proponent of a nativism that characterizes innate ideas as at least partially formed representational contents. The matter is a complex one, however: first, how Kant might have understood the text of the *Nouveaux Essais* is far from obvious (e.g. at one point Leibniz explicitly characterizes innate ideas as 'dispositions'; yet in that very same passage, he characterizes them as 'preformations' (Leibniz 1981: 80)); secondly, how Kant understood Leibniz's position as compared and contrasted to the position of Leibnizians such as Eberhard, and how Kant's own position on this may have evolved throughout the Critical period, are questions requiring further defence than can be offered here.

16 E.g. see Cassirer 1981: 98. Zöller (1989) also stresses the centrality of the *Nouveaux Essais* to Kant's attitude towards nativism. Although in what follows I will present some textual evidence in support of this claim, I will not present an extended case here. Tonelli's careful consideration of Kant's contemporaries and their lack of appreciation of crucial distinctions within the *Nouveaux Essais* makes it clear that Kant's understanding of Leibnizian nativism could not have come about 'as an effect of a positive collective reaction' but 'may be explained by individual reasons', if at all (1974: 453). My reading is intended to be a (necessarily partial) defence of the claim that Kant's contact with the *Nouveaux Essais* was in fact first-hand.

17 Ibid. 86. Here and elsewhere in the opening book of the *Nouveaux Essais*, Leibniz motivates his nativism on the ground that necessary truths cannot be established *a posteriori*. Whereas this negative thesis is often assumed to have been impressed upon Kant at some point during the 'silent decade' of the 1770s, with his reading of Hume, Kant certainly had contact with the claims here, probably prior to his writing of the *Inaugural Dissertation*.

18 E.g. the very first section, 'On the concept of a world in general', states that attending to the conditions of the acquisition of the concept of a world 'can help us to secure a deeper insight into the method of metaphysics, it seems to me that it should not be underestimated' (§1, 2: 387, in Kant 1992a: 377).

19 Ibid. This is for me strong evidence of the influence of the *Nouveaux Essais*, for there we find this alignment, where Leibniz himself identifies his account with that of Plato, albeit with the rejection of *anamnesis* (e.g. Leibniz 1981: 77–8).

20 As Zöller notes (1989: 224), for Leibniz the ideas are '*trouvés*', not '*formés*'. But Zöller also remarks that the fact that Kant's metaphysical concepts might be *formés* does not entail that there is not also an innate basis that makes that formation possible.

21 For Kant's account of 'reflection' see A260/B316. I take it that the concepts are acquired by way of abstraction from the outputs of the mind's representational capacities, which are themselves the 'acts' to which Kant refers. Thus an explicitly articulated version of a categorial concept would be acquired by attending to the

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activity of our rule-governed patterns of synthesizing sensible intuitions. A fuller account of this process is required then I can give here, as well as its points of contact and divergence with accounts such as those of e.g. Krausser (1976), Longuenesse (1998) and Pendlebury (1995).

22 *On a Discovery*, 8: 221, in Kant 2002: 312. In what sense then is a concept '*a priori*'? Surprisingly perhaps, the term is not meant to be read with the connotation 'non-acquired'. Kant is clear not just on the claim that the *a priori* and the innate are not co-extensive, but also that there are no non-acquired concepts whatsoever. The notes from the *Metaphysik Vigilantius* are again instructive here as to Kant's mid-1770s conclusion that there are no innate concepts, but that there are representations, both intuitive and conceptual, that are acquired yet *a priori*: '1. with human beings all representations and concepts commence with objects of experience. But this means nothing more than: in order to obtain cognitions, even concepts of the understanding, our faculty of cognition must be awakened by objects of experience, the receptive faculty of the senses must be set into activity. 2. All concepts are acquired, and there cannot be any innate idea <*idea connata*> … 3. In spite of that there are *a priori* concepts, there are *a priori* intuitions <*intuitius*>, there are *a priori* propositions and judgments. Thus the concept of cause … is an *a priori* concept <*conceptus*>' (29: 951–2, in Kant 2001: 423–4). I would suggest then that this notion of '*a priori* concept' (considered as a concept acquired via reflection and abstraction upon the acts of our innate cognitive dispositions) was most likely developed as a result of Kant's reading of the *Nouveaux Essais*, put in place with the *Inaugural Dissertation*, and retained through the 'silent decade' and into the Critical period. The crucial later development, as we will see in the following section, concerned the range of concepts to which this notion applied.

23 For a defence of this interpretation, see Engstrom 1994. My approach is broadly in keeping with his claim that the strategy of the B-Deduction is not primarily aimed at refuting a particular sceptical challenge, but rather as an indirect response to scepticism following from the displacing of an incorrect model of cognition. My main point of difference with Engstrom's reading is that I read the strategy as primarily focused on the question of how the categories' *a priori* necessity is possible, whereas Engstrom takes it be focused on the question of how (what I have called) the transcendental necessity of the categories is itself possible.

24 Paul Guyer's analysis of the function of the passage at B167–8 has it that Kant's 'argument for transcendental idealism depends on a claim to knowledge of necessary truth' (Guyer 1998: 367). Furthermore, this necessity has to be characterizable as absolute, i.e. not conditional on our subjective cognitive constitutions. However, the best a preformation theorist can give us is necessity as essentially conditional on features of our cognitive constitution. The reading here then is in some ways similar to Guyer's in that I do not hold that what is doing the work for Kant here is the claim to *knowledge* of objective or 'absolute' necessity but rather the more modest claim to possession of the representational content relating objective necessity.

25 The phrase is Westphal's (2004: 3). A well-known example is Kant's claim that if experience lacked the structure contributed by the categories, it would then lack the unity that is in fact characteristic of it, such that our experience would in that case be 'less than a dream' (A112).

26 For comments on earlier versions of this paper I am grateful to the audiences at a Kant workshop in Cambridge and the International Kant Congress in Pisa. I am also grateful for the detailed comments from the referees for this journal. This article is a significantly developed version of the short paper concerning these topics, forthcoming in the Kant Congress conference proceedings.

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