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Unconscious Representations in Kant's Early Writings

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Abstract

There is an emerging consensus among interpreters that in his Critical writings Kant ascribes unconscious representations to the mind. The nature and extent of this ascription over the course of Kant's philosophical development is however not well understood. I argue that from his earliest published writings Kant consistently ascribes unconscious representations to the mind; that some of these representations are unconscious in the strong sense that they are not available to introspection; and that Kant extends his commitment to unconscious representations by ascribing to the mind unconscious acts of judging and reasoning.

Keywords: Baumgarten, Meier, Kant, unconscious, representation

1. Introduction

There is an emerging consensus among interpreters that in his Critical writings Kant ascribes unconscious representations to human minds.[1] The nature and extent of this commitment over the course of Kant's philosophical development is however not well understood.

The classification of a representation as unconscious can mean different things. A representation might be unconscious in a weak sense, such that it escapes notice in the course of conscious attention or simply has been forgotten. It might be unconscious in a strong sense, such that it is unavailable to introspection or cannot serve as a direct ingredient in conscious mental states. Each of these characterizations occurs in the writings of Kant's immediate predecessors and contemporaries. Assertions of his commitment to unconscious representations, however, rarely acknowledge these different characterizations. We can understand the nature of Kant's view only if we clarify the different ways he thinks one can possess a representation unconsciously.

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The extent of Kant's commitment to unconscious representations is, in part, a function of the role that commitment plays in his thought over the course of his entire philosophical development. Our understanding of this is however limited. Assertions of Kant's commitment to unconscious representations typically emphasize remarks in the late *Anthropologie* (1798) and, to a lesser extent, the first *Critique*. The study of Kant's commitment prior to those published writings has focused primarily on remarks in the student lecture notes on anthropology that date from 1772 onwards. Ascriptions of unconscious representations in his earliest writings, however, have received virtually no attention. We can understand the extent of Kant's commitment to unconscious representations only if we determine the prevalence of that commitment within the entirety of his published writings and *Nachlass*.[2]

Evidence of Kant's commitment to unconscious representations occurs in writings and marginalia that span four decades. These remarks raise important questions about Kant's views on a number of issues, including the role of unconscious representations in perception, moral motivation and the cognitive life of non-human animals. An exhaustive study of the nature, extent and significance of Kant's commitment to unconscious representations is beyond the scope of this article. What follows contributes to this study by documenting and explaining ascriptions of unconscious representations in his early writings.

Section 2 provides necessary context by discussing ascriptions of unconscious representations in post-Leibnizian philosophy.[3] I briefly describe the technical vocabulary post-Leibnizians used to classify mental content and then explain how some of these terms were used to denote unconscious and conscious representations, respectively. I focus on the writings of two of Kant's most important predecessors and contemporaries, Alexander Baumgarten (1714–62) and Georg Friedrich Meier (1718–77). Section 3 draws on this material to explain Kant's use of this technical idiom in early writings from 1747 to 1763. I argue that in his earliest published writings Kant consistently ascribes unconscious representations to human minds and that some of these representations are unconscious in the strong sense that they are neither available to introspection nor direct ingredients in conscious mental states. Section 4 explains how Kant's view of unconscious mental content expanded during the mid-1760s. I argue that starting in the mid-1760s Kant began to ascribe to the mind not only unconscious representations but also unconscious acts of judging and inferring. Finally, section 5 briefly considers Kant's principal justification for positing unconscious representations.

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Student lecture notes from the 1770s and 1780s ascribe to Kant a consistent rationale for positing representations that are unconscious in the strong sense that we can have no direct awareness of them. As a general methodological point, the paper illustrates the importance of understanding post-Leibnizian philosophy for the purpose of interpreting Kant's writings.[4]

2. Baumgarten and Meier on Unconscious Representations

Post-Leibnizian philosophers employed a set of technical terms and criteria for classifying representations and mental states. The initial statement of this technical vocabulary occurs in the opening paragraphs of Leibniz's 1684 essay *Meditationes de Cognitione, Veritate et Ideis* (G IV, 422–6).[5] There, Leibniz formulated a taxonomy and criteria for classifying 'notions', or concepts, in terms of the traditional Cartesian language of obscurity, clarity and distinctness. According to Leibniz's taxonomy, every concept is either obscure or clear, and every clear concept either confused or distinct.[6]

The immediate influence of Leibniz's essay appears to have been negligible. Thirty years following its publication Christian Wolff wrote that it had been ignored by those working on the very issues Leibniz had discussed.[7] What appears to have been decisive for the influence of Leibniz's taxonomy was its appropriation by Wolff. In the *Deutsche Logik* (1713) and subsequent writings, Wolff repeats both the taxonomy and the criteria Leibniz had employed for the classification of concepts. Wolff's use of Leibniz's taxonomy was itself then appropriated in numerous logic texts of the period, including Ludwig Philipp Thümmig, *Institutiones Philosophiae Wolfianae* (1725); Johann Christoph Gottsched, *Erste Gründe der gesammten Weltweisheit* (1733); Friedrich Christian Baumeister, *Philosophia Definitiva* (1738); Hermann Samuel Reimarus, *Vernunftlehre* (1756); and Johann Heinrich Lambert, *Neues Organon* (1764).[8]

There are important interpretative questions surrounding the origin and development of the technical idiom post-Leibnizians used for classifying mental content. These include questions concerning the scope of Leibniz's original taxonomy, the criteria he and Wolff employed for individuating obscure concepts, and a difficulty in their accounts of the conditions for possessing a clear concept.[9] A proper account of these issues is well beyond the scope of this paper. In what follows, I explain how two of Kant's most important predecessors and contemporaries used the

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post-Leibnizian idiom to express a distinction between unconscious and conscious representations. This, in turn, will allow us to better understand ascriptions of unconscious representations in Kant's early writings.

One of the most important developments in the reception of the post-Leibnizian idiom is its modification in the writings of Alexander Baumgarten (1714–62). In the *Deutsche Logik* (1713), Wolff had defined a 'thought' (*Gedancke*) as something like a conscious mental state, or that by means of which we are conscious. He then defined a 'concept' (*Begriff*) as both a constituent ingredient of a thought and a representation of something (§§2–4).[10] As a consequence, Wolff's appropriation of Leibniz's taxonomy in the *Deutsche Logik* restricted its application to consciously possessed representations. Baumgarten departs from this by using the idiom to classify both unconscious and conscious representations.

Leibniz had endorsed a monadic ontology that defines the essence of a monad in terms of the capacity for representation and posits 'bare monads' that represent in the absence of conscious awareness. Leibniz's philosophy of mind thus posits both unconscious and conscious representations. Baumgarten follows Leibniz in every one of these respects.[11] In the *Metaphysica* (1739), he endorses a monadic, representational ontology and posits 'slumbering monads' that represent independently of conscious awareness (§§230–4, 394–5; cf. §§400–2).[12] He defines the 'soul' (*anima*) as a capacity for both representation and conscious awareness, and ascribes to it both unconscious and conscious representations (§§504, 506, 511).

What is distinct in Baumgarten's account is that he uses the post-Leibnizian idiom to classify these representations. This is distinct for several reasons. First, Leibniz and Wolff formulated taxonomies for the classification of concepts in particular, rather than representations in general.[13] Second, while in later writings Wolff extends the application of the German cognates for 'obscure' and 'clear' to other forms of mental content, such as 'thoughts' (*Gedanken*), it is controversial whether he uses 'obscure' to denote unconscious mental content.[14]

In contrast to this, Baumgarten uses the idiom to classify both unconscious and conscious representations. Doing so, however, requires fundamental changes to the most basic terms in the taxonomy set forth in the *Deutsche Logik* and later logic texts. In particular, it requires changes to the connotations of the Latin and German cognates for 'obscure' and

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'clear' so as to incorporate into the taxonomy a distinction between unconscious and conscious representations. Baumgarten implements these changes in the *Metaphysica*. He uses 'obscure perception' (*perceptio obscura*) to denote an unconscious representation and 'clear perception' (*perceptio clara*) to denote one that is possessed consciously (§§401, 511–12). Corresponding to these changes in the connotations of *obscura* and *clara* is the introduction of a different criterion for distinguishing between 'obscure' and 'clear' representations. In particular, Baumgarten employs a criterion of phenomenal discrimination as a necessary and sufficient condition for the clarity of a representation: one's representation is clear if and only if one can distinguish that representation (or its referent) from other objects or properties in one's phenomenal field; otherwise, the representation is obscure (§§510, 520, 528).[15] This is different from the criterion Leibniz and Wolff formulated for clear concept possession. According to that criterion, one's concept is clear if and only if one can not only discriminate but also *recognize* the referent. The distinction between phenomenal discrimination and object recognition is important for explaining cases wherein one is unable to identify the object one discriminates in conscious perception.

Baumgarten's transformation of the post-Leibnizian idiom is reiterated and emphasized in the writings of his most prominent student and devotee, Georg Friedrich Meier (1718–77). Corresponding to this is a more explicit commitment to unconscious representations, one motivated by a broadly Leibnizian metaphysics.

Meier ascribes unconscious representations to human minds for two reasons. The first concerns the emergence of conscious mental states in a world of objects that lack conscious awareness. In his first published philosophical work, Meier appeals to a Leibnizian principle of continuity and argues that, since there are no leaps in nature, the conscious states of finite beings must emerge from mental states composed of unconscious representations and to which consciousness gradually accrues (Meier 1742: §45). It is for this reason that Meier asserts that unconscious representations are explanatorily prior to conscious representations: 'Our soul first receives obscure representations before these can be unwrapped and made clear' (*Unsere Seele bekomt erst dunckele Vorstellungen, ehe sie dieselben auswickeln und klar machen kan*) (§45).[16] He first posits mental states that are wholly unconscious and then explains the gradual emergence of consciousness by positing a continuum of mental states that include ever increasing numbers of conscious, constituent representations.

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A second reason for Meier's ascription of unconscious representations is his commitment to a monadic, representational ontology. This was arguably implicit in the first edition of *Beweis: daß keine Materie dencken können* (1742) and is explicit in the expanded, second edition published in 1751. Appealing explicitly to Leibniz, Meier writes that 'the bodies in this world are composed of monads, or simple substances' (Meier 1751: §§25, 53). He defines the essence of a monad in terms of its capacity for representation and classifies monads according to the different kinds of representations of which they are capable (§58). The simplest monads are unconscious and possess only 'obscure representations' (*dunckele Vorstellungen*). Other monads possess the capacity for representations in 'a higher degree' and are 'thinking monads' that represent consciously. A variety of monads that differ in their representational capacities is said to be necessary for the best of all possible worlds. In the absence of monads that have 'merely obscure representations' there would be a gap in the order of finite objects and a violation of the principle of continuity (§58).

In classifying the different kinds of representations of which monads are capable, Meier follows Baumgarten's appropriation of Leibniz's technical idiom. This is particularly true for his account of the representations of human minds. To understand Meier's account of mental representation, it is important to recognize that he often uses synonymously the terms 'representation' (*Vorstellung*) and 'cognition' (*Erkenntnis*). In his logic texts from 1752, Meier is explicit about this practice: 'There is no error to fear if we take the representation of a thing and the cognition of that thing to be one and the same' (Meier 1752b: §25).[17] Once this is recognized, it becomes clear that many of his remarks about the nature of human cognition generalize to the nature of mental representations. The following is one example.

> The absolutely first division [within human cognition] follows so readily from our investigations thus far that it must occur to every careful reader to divide cognition into that of which we are conscious and that of which we are not conscious. The first kind of cognition is called a clear cognition, and the other an obscure cognition. A clear cognition is always one of which we are conscious and is accordingly a thought (*Gedanke*) … We are not conscious of an obscure cognition, and so it is not a thought. (1752b: §155)[18]

On Meier's view, the most fundamental distinction among representations and cognitions is that between those that are unconscious and those

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that are conscious, respectively. These are the paradigmatic connotations of the terms 'obscure' and 'clear'. As with Baumgarten, Meier's further classification of clear representations as being either confused or distinct is broadly consistent with Leibniz's original taxonomy and need not concern us here.

Meier's claim that 'obscure' representations and cognitions are those of which we are 'not conscious' requires clarification, for there are several distinct connotations operative in his writings. Two of these concern his claim that the obscurity of cognitions admits of degrees. Meier sometimes uses the term 'cognition' to denote a complex aggregation of representations, or constituent marks (*Merkmale*) (Meier 1752b: §158).[19] A cognition that consists of a mixture of obscure and clear representations is said to be only 'partially obscure' (*einesteils dunkel*), whereas one that consists exclusively of wholly obscure representations is 'completely obscure' (*ganz dunkel*) (1752b: §156; 1752a: §125, AA 16: 318). There is thus a quantitative respect in which representations admit of varying degrees of 'obscurity'.[20]

In addition to this, degrees of obscurity can vary in a qualitative respect. Some representations are only 'relatively obscure' (*beziehungsweise dunkel*), where this means it is possible for one to become conscious of them (Meier 1742: §26; 1752a: §125, AA 16: 316). These representations are unconscious in the weak sense that they merely have been forgotten, are not objects of conscious attention, or simply evade one's current attempt at recollection. Some of these connotations are operative in Meier's use of the term 'obscure'. He writes, 'If we cannot recall a word, and yet it appears to be on the tip of the tongue (*vor dem Munde herumliefe*); then we have an obscure representation of it' (1752a: §124, AA 16: 316). Similarly, Meier appeals to forgetfulness to explain how clear, complex representations can become obscure: 'If we forget the marks (*Merkmale*) of a clear cognition, then a clearer cognition can become less clear, until, finally, it is transformed into a completely obscure cognition (*ganz dunkele Erkenntnis*)' (1752a: §136, AA 16: 338).

In addition to these 'relatively obscure' cognitions and representations, Meier writes of those that are unconscious in the strong sense that they have never been and cannot become ingredients in conscious mental states. An 'absolutely obscure' (*schlechterdings dunkel*) cognition is one example of this. A complex representation all of whose constituent marks are originally obscure is a representation that is 'so obscure that it is absolutely impossible to make it clear' (Meier 1752a: §125, AA 16: 316; 1752b: §156). The impossibility of making a cognition clear is equivalent

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to the impossibility of one becoming conscious of it: 'we confess that we cannot ourselves experience obscure cognition' (1752b: §159).[21]

Positing representations that are unconscious in the strong sense naturally invites questions about the reasons for positing representations of which we have no direct knowledge. It is a distinguishing feature of Meier's account that he recognizes the importance of justifying belief in the existence of unobservable representations: 'how can we be certain that we really possess obscure cognition?' It is a further distinguishing feature that the reasons he offers are independent of the monadic, representational ontology which motivates his positing such representations. In *Deutsche Metaphysik* (1720), Wolff suggests very briefly the possibility of inferring the existence of unconscious mental content (§193; cited in Madrid 2012: 196). In contrast to this, Meier offers several arguments to justify belief in the existence of absolutely unconscious representations.

Meier first criticizes the inference from the unobservable character of a phenomenon to its non-existence and then claims we are justified in positing unconscious representations on the basis of their observable effects:

> Yes, we concede that we cannot ourselves experience obscure cognition; we can only experience their effects. This confirms completely for us that [obscure cognitions], as their causes, must really be present in the soul. (*Ja wir geben zu, daß wir die dunkele Erkenntnis selbst nicht erfahren können, allein wir können ihre Würkungen erfahren, welche uns aufs vollkommenste versichern, daß sie selbst, als die Ursache derselben, würklich in der Seele vorhanden sein müsse*) (Meier 1752b: §159)

Meier offers two arguments for the claim that we can infer the existence of unconscious representations from their effects. The first proceeds on the moral psychological assumption that every affective state presupposes a representation of something one considers good or bad. Since we sometimes experience emotions of elation or depression without knowing why, Meier infers the representations underlying these emotions must be unconscious. The second reason presupposes the Leibnizian view that our concepts of sensible qualities are complex and composed of constituent representations. Since we always experience these qualities as being phenomenally simple, the representations constitutive of their underlying complexity must be unconscious (Meier 1752b: §159).

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Let me summarize briefly. Leibniz's 1684 essay and Wolff's *Deutsche Logik* (1713) were important for the formation of the technical vocabulary post-Leibnizians used to classify concepts. In the original version of this vocabulary, the term 'obscure' (*dunkel*, *obscura*) denoted a concept that is sufficient for conscious discrimination of the referent but not for its recognition. Corresponding to this, the term 'clear' (*klar*, *clara*) denoted a concept that is sufficient for both conscious discrimination and recognition of the referent.

Both these terms acquire new connotations in the writings of Baumgarten and Meier. In particular, 'obscure' is now used to denote representations that are unconscious to varying degrees, and 'clear' those that suffice for conscious discrimination of the referent. Meier, in particular, contributed to this usage by offering a more detailed account of unconscious representations and offering reasons for positing the existence of representations that are either inaccessible to introspection or incapable of serving as direct ingredients in conscious mental states.

The early Kant was well acquainted with the writings of Baumgarten and Meier. He used Meier's *Vernunftlehre* (1752b) as the official text for his lectures on logic during his first semester as a docent, and Meier's *Auszug aus der Vernunftlehre* (1752a) every semester thereafter. In his lectures on metaphysics and ethics, Kant regularly used Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* (1739), *Initia philosophiae practica* (1740) and *Ethica philosophica* (1751).[22] He lectured on the writings of Baumgarten and Meier nearly every semester of an academic career that spanned four decades. In early and later writings, Kant uses the Latin and German cognates for 'obscure' and 'clear' with the distinct connotations Baumgarten and Meier had assigned those terms. This includes Meier's distinctions between 'relatively obscure' (*beziehungsweise dunkel*) and 'absolutely obscure' (*schlechterdings dunkel*) representations, and between 'partially obscure' (*einesteils dunkel*) and 'completely obscure' (*ganz dunkel*) representations. This is one important reason for this article's focus on Baumgarten and Meier.

In what follows, I argue that in his earliest writings Kant uses this vocabulary to ascribe unconscious representations to the mind. It is important to recognize that the writings on which I focus were published between 1747 and 1763. This is significant because, while the publication of Leibniz's *Nouveaux Essais* was important for Kant's philosophical development, that work did not appear until 1765 in the edition published by Raspe.[23] As a consequence, the account of *petite perceptions* set forth in that

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work is less useful for interpreting Kant's earliest view of unconscious representations than might normally be expected. A further consequence is that the published writings of Baumgarten and Meier acquire greater interpretative significance because of this.

3. Unconscious Representations in Kant's Early Writings

Two related commitments define Kant's early philosophy of mind. Each of these was common among his post-Leibnizian predecessors and contemporaries. The first is a representationalist view of mental content. The second is the partitioning of the mind into higher and lower cognitive faculties. Kant characterizes each of these commitments in ways that imply a commitment to unconscious representations.

Representationalism about mental content is the view that the content of the mind consists paradigmatically, if not exclusively, of intentional representations. A representation is intentional if and only if it is a representation *of* something. An early expression of Kant's commitment to representationalism occurs in *Gedanken von der wahren Schätzung der lebendigen Kräfte* (1747): 'Now, the entire internal state of the soul is nothing other than the aggregation of all of its representations and concepts, and, insofar as this internal state is related to something external, it is called the *status repraesentativus universi*' (1: 21).[24] Kant is here endorsing a claim central to the post-Leibnizian literature. In the *Metaphysica* (1739), Baumgarten had defined the soul as a power for representing the universe (*vis repraesentativa universi*) and characterized its content in terms of the totality of its representations (*perceptio totalis*) (§§513–14). In the minds of rational human agents, this totality consists of a variety of obscure, confused and distinct representations. Such variety is implicit in Kant's reference to the 'representations and concepts' of the soul's internal state. In the post-Leibnizian literature, the Latin and German terms for 'representation' (*repraesentatio*, *Vorstellung*) were typically used to denote representations in general, and those for 'concept' (*notio*, *conceptus*, *Begriff*) to denote representations that are possessed consciously.[25] Interpreted with reference to this terminological distinction, Kant's claim is that the content of the mind consists exclusively of representations, some but not all of which are possessed consciously.

Kant's commitment to this form of post-Leibnizian representationalism is reiterated fifteen years later and in similar terms. In *Begriff der Negativen Grössen* (1763), he writes: 'There is something great and, I should think,

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very true in this thought of Herr Leibniz: The soul occupies itself with the entire universe by means of its power for representation, even though only an infinitely small number of these representations are clear' (2: 199).[26] The reference to 'clear' representations implies a distinction between 'clear' and 'obscure' representations, the latter of which are said to constitute the preponderance of the representations in the soul. Kant makes a similar claim in a *Reflexion* which Adickes dates to this period: 'The field of obscure perceptions is the most expansive' (*Obscurarum perceptionum campus est amplissimus*) (R176, 15: 64). The claim that the preponderance of the mind's representations are unconscious is one that was emphasized by Kant's predecessors. In the *Metaphysica* (1739), Baumgarten had written that the totality of obscure representations constitutes 'the foundation of the soul' (*fundus animae*) (§511). Meier is similarly committed to this view and asserts in his logic texts that obscure representations are explanatorily prior to those that are clear. Kant emphasizes this latter claim repeatedly in the margins of his copies of Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* and Meier's *Auszug*.[27]

In these early passages, Kant asserts the content of the mind consists exclusively of representations and implies that most of these are 'obscure' (*dunkel*). In the writings of Meier, we saw that the term *dunkel* is used to denote mental content that is unconscious to varying degrees, and that the term admits of several distinct but related connotations. Understanding the role of 'obscure' representations in Kant's early writings requires clarifying the intended connotation of that term. We can begin to do this by considering the second, aforementioned commitment definitive of Kant's early philosophy of mind.

Among Kant's predecessors and contemporaries, it was common practice to partition the mind into lower and higher cognitive faculties. The ascription of unconscious representations to the lower faculty was common within post-Leibnizian philosophy of mind. In the writings of Baumgarten and Meier, the lower faculty was the site of both 'obscure' and 'clear but confused' representations, and the higher faculty those that are 'distinct'. As a consequence, they ascribed both unconscious and conscious representations to the lower faculty.

Kant follows Baumgarten and Meier but also departs from them in a fundamental respect. Like his predecessors, he partitions the mind into lower and higher faculties, and ascribes unconscious representations to the lower faculty. He departs from his predecessors, however, in ascribing conscious representations *exclusively* to the higher faculty.

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In the *Nova dilucidatio* (1755), Kant discusses the role of unconscious representation in human agency:

> But the case can arise where the grounds that incline the will in one of two directions completely escape consciousness, but where, nonetheless, one alternative is chosen in preference to the other. In that case, the thing is reduced from a higher faculty of the mind to a lower one, and the mind is directed in one direction or another by the preponderance of an obscure representation (*repraesentationis obscurae*). (1: 401)

He repeats this claim several pages later: 'For all that is brought about by such irresolute uncertainty is that the thing [i.e. the determining ground] is reduced from the higher faculty to the lower one, from a representation that is conjoined with consciousness to representations that are obscure' (1: 406).

On Kant's view, every human action presupposes an antecedently determining ground (*ratio antecedenter determinans*). To say that a ground, or reason (*ratio*), is antecedently determining is to say it is the reason why a subject is determined with regard to one predicate rather than another (1: 391–2).[28] In some cases, an action is chosen on the basis of conscious deliberation, in which case the agent is conscious of the determining ground. In other cases, however, an agent chooses an action amid pronounced uncertainty and in complete ignorance of the grounds that incline her will in competing directions. In these latter cases, Kant writes, the determining ground that inclines the will in one direction rather than another is an 'obscure representation' in the lower faculty and one that 'completely escapes consciousness' (*conscientiam plane fugiant*).

In the passages above, the connotation of *repraesentatio obscura* is that of a representation that is unconscious in a strong sense, and that in two respects. In the first of these, the representation is unconscious in the sense that it is not available to introspection. This is evident from the nature of the phenomenon with which Kant is concerned, namely, one's inability to know the determining ground of one's action amid an experience of 'irresolute uncertainty' (*ancipiti tali dubitatione*). It is however conceivable that a representation might be possessed consciously and yet not be available as an object for introspection. Such a representation might perhaps figure in tacit awareness but elude one's capacity for conscious attention. For this reason, it is important to recognize the second, stronger respect in which the determining ground is said to be unconscious.

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This is implicit in the contrast between 'a representation that is conjoined with consciousness' and 'representations that are obscure'. If a representation is not 'conjoined with consciousness', then it is unconscious in the strong sense that it does not serve as a direct ingredient in conscious mental states, including those constitutive of tacit awareness. Since the representation in question is the determining ground, the representation plays that causally efficacious role *simultaneously* with its not being a direct ingredient of conscious awareness. This is a significantly stronger sense of what it means for a representation to be unconscious. This would explain why Kant thinks the representation is not available to introspection.[29]

In the passages quoted above, Kant identifies consciousness with the higher faculty and implies that representations in the lower faculty are exclusively unconscious. This is implicit in both passages but particularly evident in the second. The determining ground is 'reduced from a higher faculty to a lower one, from a representation conjoined with consciousness to representations that are obscure' (*a superiori facultate ad inferiorem, a repräsentatione cum conscientia coniuncta ad obscuras redeat*). Kant's explanation of what it means for a determining ground to be transferred from the higher to the lower faculty makes sense *only if* he ascribes all and only obscure representations to the lower faculty. If he ascribed 'clear but confused' representations to the lower faculty, then reduction of the determining ground to the lower faculty would not necessarily have the implication he describes. The implication is that, whereas a determining ground in the higher faculty is 'a representation conjoined with consciousness', a determining ground in the lower faculty is 'obscure'. Kant's remark implicitly excludes the possibility that a determining ground in the lower faculty might be a clear but confused representation. The reason why is that he identifies first-order consciousness exclusively with the higher faculty and ascribes all and only obscure representations to the lower faculty.[30]

Kant's identification of consciousness with the higher faculty is reiterated seven years later in *Die falsche Spitzfindigkeit der vier syllogistischen Figuren* (1762). In the philosophically substantial concluding remark, he advances three distinct claims. First, possessing a distinct concept is explanatorily dependent on an act of judgement. Second, the capacities for judging and inferring are one and the same. Third and finally, the higher cognitive faculty rests exclusively on the capacity for judgement (2: 58–9).[31]

In his explanation of the third claim, Kant is explicit that the capacity for judgement is a necessary and sufficient condition for possessing the

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higher faculty. What has not been recognized is that he identifies the capacity for judgement with the capacity for conscious awareness. This becomes apparent once we explicate his early concept of 'inner sense'.

In the course of elaborating on the nature of the capacity on which the higher faculty rests, Kant writes:

> If one is able to understand what kind of secret power it is through which judgement becomes possible, one will have untied the knots. It is my present view that this power or ability is nothing other than the capacity for inner sense, that is, the ability to make one's representations objects of one's thoughts … The entire higher cognitive faculty rests on this capacity. (2: 60)

The notion of 'inner sense' is one that Kant characterizes in different ways over the course of his philosophical development. In writings from 1770 onwards, his use of the term often implicates a capacity for self-consciousness, as it does for Locke (Longuenesse 1998: 233ff.; Kitcher 2011: ch. 2). The passage above however predates those remarks and uses 'inner sense' with a different connotation. Among Kant's predecessors outside the post-Leibnizian tradition, Christian Thomasius, Andreas Rüdiger and Christian August Crusius all defined 'inner sense' as a capacity for first-order conscious awareness (Thiel 2011: 345–9). Within the post-Leibnizian tradition, Baumgarten repeats this definition in the *Metaphysica*: 'Sense represents either a state of my soul – INNER SENSE – or a state of my body – OUTER SENSE. Thus, SENSATION is either INTERNAL through inner sense (consciousness in the strict sense), or EXTERNAL, which becomes actual through outer sense' (§535). The definition of inner sense in terms of consciousness is repeated in Kant's *marginalia*. Amid some *Reflexionen* which Adickes dates to the years 1752–6, Kant discusses the nature of consciousness and explicitly identifies it with inner sense: 'Das Bewust seyn ist *sensus internus*' (R1680, 16: 80).[32] There and in another *Reflexion* from the same period, Kant denies consciousness to animals that lack inner sense (R4230, 17: 469). In the student lecture notes contemporaneous with the 1762 essay on logic, Johann Gottfried Herder ascribes to Kant the identification of inner sense with consciousness: 'Consciousness – inner sense – is thus the distinguishing feature of a rational being' (*Das Bewusstsein – der innere Sinn – ist also der character distinctus der Vernunftwesen*) (*Metaphysik Herder*, 28: 117).

Kant's claim that inner sense is 'the ability to make one's representations objects of one's thoughts' is thus best understood as the claim that inner

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sense is simply the capacity for possessing representations consciously. Since he thinks this capacity is necessary and sufficient for the capacity for judgement, he can claim without inconsistency both that 'the entire higher cognitive faculty rests on this capacity [for inner sense]' and that 'the higher cognitive faculty rests absolutely on the capacity for judgement' (2: 59). These remarks, in turn, reiterate Kant's earlier identification of consciousness with the higher faculty in the *Nova dilucidatio*.[33]

If consciousness is identical with the higher faculty, then the representations in the lower faculty are exclusively unconscious. Earlier, we saw that in the *Nova dilucidatio* Kant uses *repraesentatio obscura* to denote representations that are unconscious in the strong sense that they are inaccessible to introspection and employed independently of their being 'conjoined with consciousness'. A remark written shortly after the 1762 essay on logic suggests that he continues to hold this view. Though it was not published until 1764, the *Preisschrift* (*Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral*) was completed in December of 1762 (Henrich 1967: 11). There, Kant writes, 'Obscure representations (*dunkele Vorstellungen*) are those of which one is not conscious' (2: 290). The intended connotation of the *definiens* is clarified to some extent by the context of the remark. Kant criticizes ambiguous uses of technical terms in philosophical analysis. He then illustrates the point by describing a fallacious argument some philosophers use to justify positing unconscious representations:

> Most philosophers give as examples of obscure concepts those that we have in deep sleep. Obscure representations are those of which one is not conscious. Now, some experiences show that we also possess representations in deep sleep, and since we are not conscious of these, it follows that they were obscure. Here, consciousness has two meanings. Either one is not conscious that one has a representation, or one is not conscious that one has had a representation. The first denotes the obscurity of the representation as it is in the soul; the second shows nothing other than that one does not remember it. Now, the example provided merely shows that there could be representations of which one is not conscious when one is awake; from this however it does not at all follow that the representations which occur during sleep were not clearly conscious. (2: 290)

Kant's discussion of the example is compressed and involves some confusion. Properly speaking, the ambiguity that is exploited by the

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philosophers in question concerns not 'two meanings' of 'consciousness' but rather two different connotations of what it means to *not* be conscious of something. What is important, however, is the implication of Kant's criticism. He defines 'obscure representation' as an unconscious representation and then criticizes those who justify this claim by appealing to an insufficiently strong notion of what it means for a representation to be unconscious. He claims the obscurity of a representation 'as it is in the soul' is unconscious in a sense stronger than that of a representation that one merely 'does not remember'.[34] Earlier, we saw that Meier had appealed to the latter as an example of a representation that is only 'relatively obscure' (*beziehungsweise dunkel*), and that he contrasted this with representations that are obscure in an 'absolute' sense (*schlechterdings dunkel*). The passage above suggests Kant thinks the paradigmatic connotation of 'obscure representation' is that of one that is unconscious in a sense stronger than that of being merely 'relatively obscure'.

The criticism advanced in the *Preisschrift* is repeated four years later in *Träume eines Geistersehers* (1766) (2: 338n.). There Kant continues to ascribe unconscious representations to the mind but denies the representations that occur in deep sleep are an example of these. What is noteworthy about this later text, however, is the more expansive account of unconscious mental content it implies.

4. Unconscious Acts of Judging and Inferring

In the 1762 essay on logic, Kant had explicitly identified the capacity for judgement and reasoning with the capacity for conscious awareness. Remarks in *Träume eines Geistersehers* (1766) imply both a significant change in view and a more expansive commitment to unconscious mental content. In the course of discussing dubious metaphysical concepts, Kant offers the following explanation of their origin:

> In the course of experience, many concepts originate in secret and obscure inferences and subsequently propagate themselves among other concepts without consciousness of either the experience or the inference on the basis of which the concept was constructed. One can call such concepts surreptitious. There are many of these, some of which are nothing but delusions of the imagination, whereas others are true, insofar as obscure inferences are not always erroneous. (2: 320n.)

Kant asserts the mind performs 'secret and obscure inferences' (*geheime und dunkele Schlüsse*) of which it is not aware. The claim that a

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surreptitious concept is acquired 'without consciousness of either the experience or the inference' on which that concept is based implies that the inferences in question are unconscious in a sense stronger than that of representations one merely does not remember. It is an open question whether an inference that is unconscious in this sense might later be accessible to conscious awareness through recollection. The point at present is that Kant ascribes to the mind not only unconscious representations but also unconscious acts of judging and inferring. This, in turn, entails a departure from his earlier identification of the capacity for judgement and reasoning with the capacity for consciousness.[35] What explains this change in Kant's view?

A comprehensive answer to this question is beyond the scope of this essay. I will however briefly suggest one possible explanation. Several scholars have noted that during the mid-to-late 1760s Kant began to classify judgements as being either 'analytic' or 'synthetic'. When explaining this distinction in the first *Critique* and later writings, he emphasizes that analytic judgements make explicit relations among concepts that are thought only implicitly. It is worth noting that Kant characterizes implicit and explicit judgements in phenomenal terms. In an analytic judgement, he writes, 'the predicate B belongs to subject A as something which is contained in the concept A *in a concealed manner* (*versteckter Weise*)' (A6/B10; emphasis added). In the judgement 'All bodies are extended', I arrive at the concept of extension by analysing the concept of body, where this means 'I only *become conscious* of the manifold which I always think [in the concept of body] to find the predicate therein' (A7/B11; emphasis added). In the late *Preisschrift* (on *Progress in Metaphysics*) from 1791, Kant offers the following definition: 'Judgements are analytic, namely, if their predicate represents *clearly* (explicitly) only that which is thought in the concept of the subject, albeit *obscurely* (implicitly), e.g. "Every body is extended"' (*Urtheile sind nämlich analytisch, wenn ihr Prädicat nur dasjenige klar (explicite) vorstellt, was in dem Begriffe des Subjects, obzwar dunkel (implicite), gedacht war; z.B. ein jeder Körper ist ausgedehnt)* (AA 20: 322). Kant here characterizes implicit and explicit judgements using terms he employs elsewhere to distinguish between unconscious and conscious representations. Further work is required to determine whether he is, in fact, using those terms with the technical connotations he appropriated from Baumgarten and Meier. If he is, however, this would explain why he stopped identifying the capacity for consciousness with the capacity for judgement during the mid-1760s. The suggestion is that reflecting on the explicative function of analytic judgements led Kant to reflect more

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extensively on the nature of implicit judgements, and that he developed an account of the latter within his existing commitment to unconscious representations.[36]

Kant's claim that 'there are many' surreptitious concepts suggests he thinks unconscious inferences occur with some frequency. The passage quoted above from the 1766 essay is indeterminate on this point. Remarks elsewhere however suggest that this is in fact Kant's view. In a lengthy *Reflexion* that Adickes dates to the late 1760s, Kant writes, 'Every act of the understanding and reason can occur in obscurity' (*Alle actus des Verstandes und Vernunft könen in der Dunkelheit geschehen*); and, more strikingly, 'Most of what the understanding undertakes occurs in obscurity' (*Das Meiste geschieht vom Verstande in der Dunkelheit*) (R177, 15: 65).

Importantly, Kant wrote these remarks in the margins of his copy of Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* and, more specifically, in the chapter devoted to empirical psychology. This chapter was the official text for his lectures on anthropology beginning in 1772. It is thus not surprising that some of the earliest student lecture notes attribute to Kant claims very similar to those in the *Reflexion* just cited:

> The obscure acts of our entire cognitive power constitute the greatest part of the state of the soul. The fewest cognitions are illuminated through consciousness. … The understanding is most efficacious among obscure representations, and all clear representations are for the most part the result of long and obscure acts of reflection. (*Reflexionen*) (*Anthropologie Collins* [1772–3], 25: 20)
>
> Preliminary judgements belong to the obscure representations. Before a person effects a determinate judgement, he has already effected in advance a preliminary judgement in obscurity. (*Anthropologie Friedländer* [1775–6], 25: 481)

As the first sentences of these remarks suggest, the judgements and inferences in question are 'obscure' in the sense that they occur independently of conscious awareness. There is reason to think this connotation is implicit in the final remark as well.

5. Kant's Justification for Positing Unconscious Representations

Anthropologie Friedländer is noteworthy in that it is the earliest set of student lecture notes that contains a distinct chapter devoted exclusively

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to the existence and nature of 'obscure' representations (25: 479–82). Over the course of three pages, the term 'obscure' is used in ways that imply several distinct connotations. These include a characterization of the contents of memory as being obscure, as well as the claim that some obscure representations can become clear (25: 480–1). The definition offered at the outset of the chapter, however, is that of a representation that is unconscious in the strong sense that it is inaccessible to introspection:

> Obscure representations contain the secret spring of that which occurs in the clear (*im Lichten*) and so must receive consideration. Obscure representations are those of which one is not conscious. How then can one observe them? Not immediately; however, I can infer that there are representations in me of which I am not conscious. (*Anthropologie Friedländer* [1775–6], 25: 479)

This remark is both corroborated by a *Reflexion* that Adickes dates to this period and repeated in subsequent sets of student lecture notes throughout the 1780s. A somewhat fragmentary remark in the *Collegenentwürfe* (1773–7?) characterizes 'obscure representations' as those that one has and of which 'one is in no way conscious' (*man sich seiner gar nicht bewust ist*) (15: 665). In subsequent student lecture notes, one finds variations of the paragraph quoted above from *Anthropologie Friedländer*.

> There have been disputes in philosophy as to whether there are obscure representations of which we are in no way conscious. Various philosophers say obscure representations are of a kind such that we do not know that we have them. But how can we claim that we know something of representations of which we are not conscious? Locke says this, but he is wrong; for we certainly do know these. As long as they are obscure, we are not conscious of them; they lie in immediate sensation, but through inferences we can certainly come to know (*hervorbringen*) that they are there. (*Menschenkunde* [1781–2?], 25: 867)

> I am not conscious of my obscure representations; how then do I know that I have them [?] I do not know them immediately; I can however infer that I have them on the basis of their effects. (*Anthropologie Mrongovius* [1784–5], 25: 1221)

> Obscure representations are those of which we are not immediately conscious; rather, through their effects … Many dispute the existence of obscure representations and say: How can one be

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> convinced of the existence of obscure representations if we are not conscious of them? To this one can respond: it is simply not necessary that one is conscious of it through sensation if one can come to consciousness of it through inferences. (*Es ist eben nicht nöthig daß man durch Empfindung sich bewußt ist, wenn man durch Schlüsse zum Bewußtseyn kommen kann.*) (*Anthropologie Busolt* [1788–9], 25: 1439–40)

These passages ascribe to Kant an enduring commitment to representations that are unconscious in the strong sense that they are inaccessible through introspection. The fact that they are inaccessible through introspection is why knowledge of their existence is problematic.

Of equal significance is the justification Kant offers for positing unconscious representations. Earlier, we saw that Meier recognized the need to justify ascriptions of unconscious representations of which we have no direct awareness. His principal justification is that we can infer the existence of unconscious representations from their conscious effects (1752b: §159). It is a striking feature of the passages quoted above that they consistently ascribe to Kant the same justification for positing unconscious representations.

Properly speaking, the student lecture notes are not part of Kant's published and unpublished writings, nor are they comparable to anything like verbatim reports from those who attended Kant's lectures. Their significance as textual evidence is best restricted to cases where they corroborate claims discernible in his writings. For this reason, it is important that Kant repeats many of the claims quoted above from the student lecture notes in the late *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (1798). In the opening paragraph of the chapter entitled 'On the representations that we have without being conscious of them', Kant writes:

> To have representations and yet to not be conscious of them – therein appears to lie a contradiction; for how can we know that we have them when we are not conscious of them? Locke already made this objection and for that reason denied the existence of representations of this kind. However, we can certainly be mediately conscious (*mittelbar bewußt*) that we have a representation even if we are simultaneously not immediately conscious of it. Such representations are called obscure; the remaining ones are clear and, when their clarity also extends to the

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> constituent representations of the whole and their relation to it, they are distinct representations, either of thinking or of intuition. (7: 135)

One knowledgeable of the post-Leibnizian idiom might readily notice the traditional taxonomic distinctions implicit in Kant's use of the terms 'obscure', 'clear' and 'distinct'. One familiar with the connotations that *dunkel* and *klar* possessed in the writings of Baumgarten, Meier and the early Kant would have good reason to interpret Kant's late use of those terms as denoting unconscious and conscious representations, respectively. One acquainted with the post-Leibnizian text Kant first used in his lectures on logic might notice he is here repeating Meier's principal justification for positing the existence of representations unconscious in the strong sense that they are not accessible through introspection. This is the implicit claim that we can be 'mediately conscious' of unconscious representations by inferring their existence from observable effects.[37]

6. Conclusion

Interpreted with reference to the writings of Baumgarten and Meier, Kant's published writings and *Nachlass* exhibit a sustained commitment to the existence of unconscious mental content. In his earliest published work, Kant ascribes to the mind representations that are unconscious in the strong sense that they are inaccessible to introspection. In writings and marginalia from the mid-1760s and later, he extends his commitment to unconscious mental content by positing unconscious acts of judging and reasoning. Paired with remarks in the student lecture notes and late *Anthropologie* (1798), this material suggests a substantial commitment to unconscious representations is an enduring feature of Kant's philosophy of mind for more than four decades.

Kant's extensive commitment to unconscious representations raises important questions about their place in his accounts of consciousness, empirical cognition and moral motivation. The same is true of his commitment to unconscious acts of judgement and inference, and their relation to his account of the explicative function of analytic judgements.

Readers sceptical of Kant's enduring commitment to unconscious representations sometimes appeal to either of two passages in the first *Critique*. The first is the famous claim in the B-Deduction that the 'I think' must be able to accompany all of one's representations (B131–2). Other interpreters have offered readings of that passage that are consistent with

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Kant's commitment to unconscious representations, and so I direct interested readers to that literature.[38] A second passage to which the sceptics sometimes appeal has received only limited commentary. In the second edition of the first *Critique*, Kant writes, 'consciousness at every moment has a degree that can always be diminished' (*das Bewußtsein hat jederzeit einen Grad, der immer noch vermindert werden kann*) (B414). He then elaborates on this claim in a lengthy footnote that includes the following remark: 'Clarity (*Klarheit*) is not, as the logicians say, consciousness of a representation; for a certain degree of consciousness, which however does not suffice for memory, must itself be found in some obscure representations (*dunkelen Vorstellungen*)' (B414n.).

Elsewhere, I offer a detailed reading of these passages. Here, I restrict myself to two remarks. First, Kant writes that 'a certain degree of consciousness … must itself be found in *some* obscure representations (*manchen dunkelen Vorstellungen*)' (emphasis added). The qualification is subtle but important. Kant does not claim a degree of consciousness is present in *every* 'obscure' representation; he only claims it is present in 'some'. This is wholly consistent with his positing representations that are unconscious in the strong sense that we have no direct awareness of them.

The second point concerns how exactly Kant conceives the restricted class of obscure representations that admit of 'a certain degree of consciousness'. Earlier, we saw Meier had claimed the obscurity of cognitions admits of degrees. He asserted a cognition is 'partially obscure' (*einesteils dunkel*) if it contains a mixture of obscure and clear representations, or constituent marks (*Merkmale*). He then posits a continuum of obscure cognitions that differ in terms of the number of clear marks each contains (1752b: §156; 1752a: §125, AA 16: 318).

Kant's remark is best interpreted with reference to Meier's account of 'partially obscure cognitions'. A complex, obscure representation admits of 'a certain degree of consciousness' if one or more of its constituent representations is clear. If Kant also holds there is a continuum of 'partially obscure representations' that differ in the number of clear marks each contains, this would explain why he thinks consciousness admits of degrees. It would also suggest Baumgarten and Meier were more influential for Kant's later thinking about the nature of consciousness than has been previously recognized. I pursue this topic elsewhere.

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Notes

1 The consensus is strong but not universal. Interpreters who ascribe to Kant a commitment to unconscious representations include: Paton (1936: 377); Schmucker (1961: 32); Satura (1971); Allison (1983: 137); Klemme (1996 : 187ff.); Carl (1998: 192); Oberhausen (2002); Longuenesse (1998: 64ff.); Wood (1999: 380–1); La Rocca (2006, 2008a, 2008b); Förster (2011: 164); Kitcher (2011: 102); Dyck (2014: 220); and Frierson (2014: 37). See also the recent collection edited by Giordanetti et al. (2012). Interpreters who have denied Kant posits unconscious representations include Guyer (1980: 209) and (1987: 143); and, in conversation, Gary Hatfield.

2 Assertions of Kant's commitment to unconscious representations typically appeal to the chapter in the *Anthropologie* (1798), titled 'On the representations we have without being conscious of them' (7: 135ff.). Some interpreters also appeal to the *Stufenleiter*, where Kant specifies conscious representations as a distinct class within the broader genus of representations (A320/B376–7). Satura (1971) focuses on the student notes from Kant's lectures on anthropology. Oberhausen (2002) devotes brief attention to Kant's early writings but focuses principally on material related to Kant's anthropology. The articles by La Rocca offer brief discussion of Kant's writings from the early *Preisschrift* onwards. See La Rocca (2006: 50, 2008a: 459, 2008b: 55ff.).

3 I use the term 'post-Leibnizian' to denote eighteenth-century philosophers who postdate Leibniz, appropriate substantive philosophical claims from him, and who also depart from Leibniz in important respects. Referring to these figures simply as 'Leibnizian' arguably would invite the misleading impression that they are orthodox proponents of Leibniz's philosophy.

4 The recent collection edited by Giordanetti et al. (2012) offers very little detailed discussion of the relation between Kant's commitment to unconscious representations and that of Baumgarten and Meier. There is brief discussion of Baumgarten's view (Giordanetti et al. 2012: 106–7) and one footnote providing some relevant quotations from Meier (196, n. 83). The articles by Oberhausen and La Rocca offer accounts to which I am sympathetic. The present paper departs from their accounts in six important respects. First, I explain the commitment to unconscious representations in Kant's writings from 1755 to 1762. Second, my account places greater emphasis on the influence of Meier, who I think is as at least as important as Baumgarten for understanding Kant's view. Third and related to my explication of Meier, I explain the different connotations of the Latin and German cognates for the term 'obscure' that occur in both Meier's and Kant's writings. Fourth, I explain the arguments Meier gives for positing unobservable representations, at least one of which was appropriated by Kant. Fifth, I discuss in greater detail Kant's positing of unconscious acts of judgement and inference. Finally, and as I explain in section 3, I do not recognize the student lecture notes as sufficient evidence for ascribing claims to Kant independently of his published writings and *Nachlass*.

5 I use the abbreviation 'G' for Leibniz 1875–90.

6 Leibniz's taxonomy includes a number of further distinctions. These however are not relevant for what follows, and so I omit discussion of them here.

7 Wolff (1713), preface. Hereafter cited as *Deutsche Logik*. All subsequent references to this work are by paragraph number and in reference to chapter 1. My interpretative claims about this work refer to the first edition, published in 1713.

8 See Thümmig (1725: §§4–7); Gottsched (1733: §§24–7); Baumeister (1738: §§50–1, 73–6); Reimarus (1756: §§48, 82–3); and Lambert (1764: I, §§1–9). For discussion, see Arndt (1965: 95–9); and Pozzo (2000: 97–8).

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9 It is unclear whether Leibniz intended his taxonomy as a classification of all ideas or only a subset thereof. This issue is related to a second, namely, the fact that Leibniz does not offer a positive definition of an 'obscure notion'. He defines the latter only negatively, as one which fails to satisfy the necessary and sufficient conditions for clear concept possession. The third issue, in turn, concerns an ambiguity in the conditions for possessing a clear concept. Interpreters frequently read Leibniz as claiming a concept is clear if and only if it allows one to identify reliably the referent of that concept. However, Leibniz's own formulation is less precise and arguably confuses an ability to recognize the referent of a concept with an ability to recognize the object on perceives. The second and third of these interpretative issues are operative in Wolff's *Deutsche Logik*.

10 Wunderlich (2005: 19, n. 52) writes that Wolff and later authors used 'thought' (*Gedancke*) as a *technicus terminus* for 'conscious representation'. Relatedly, Thiel claims that in the later *Psychologia empirica* (1732) Wolff 'defines thought in terms of consciousness' (Thiel 2011: 305).

11 On Baumgarten's appropriation of Leibniz, see Mirbach (2009).

12 The translations of Baumgarten are my own, though I have benefited from the German and English translations in Baumgarten 1757/2011 and 1757/2013.

13 Leibniz employs distinct vocabularies for describing ideas, on the one hand, and the perceptions constitutive of consciousness, on the other. When discussing the nature of *ideas*, Leibniz used the cognates for 'obscure', 'clear', 'confused' and 'distinct' to classify *concepts* (*notiones*) in terms of the criteria and taxonomic relations set forth in the 1684 essay. When discussing the nature of *perceptions*, however, Leibniz used the cognates for 'confused' and 'distinct' to denote unconscious and conscious perceptions, respectively. The importance of distinguishing between Leibniz's vocabulary for concepts and that for perceptions is emphasized by M. Wilson (1999: 339–40); Brandom (1981: 149–50); Simmons (2001: 53, nn. 41–2); and Jorgensen (2015: 56).

14 An anonymous referee suggests Wolff as an important source for Kant's early view of unconscious mental content. In response, I would first note that Wolff's account of 'obscure concepts' (*dunckele Begriffe*) in the first edition of the *Deutsche Logik* (1713) is consistent with there being consciously possessed concepts for objects and properties one can discriminate but not recognize. This is particularly evident in his account of the 'degrees of obscurity' (ch. 1, §9). One's concept is obscure if and only if it enables one to discriminate but not recognize the referent. If the referent one fails to recognize is phenomenally complex, then it has discriminable properties. Wolff claims that one's concept is 'somewhat' obscure if one recognizes some of these properties and 'very' obscure if one recognizes only a few of them. For these reasons, I think he uses *dunckel* to denote consciously possessed representations in the *Deutsche Logik* (1713).

Appealing to the *Deutsche Metaphysik* (1720) and later writings, Wunderlich (2005: 20ff.) ascribes to Wolff both a commitment to unconscious representations and the use of the term 'obscure' (*dunckel*) to denote these. It is worth noting that in the *Deutsche Metaphysik* and *Psychologia Empirica* (1732), Wolff sometimes identifies 'obscurity' (*Dunckelheit*) with lack of consciousness. At §731 in the *Deutsche Metaphysik*, for example, he writes that 'complete obscurity cancels consciousness' (*Also hebt die völlige Dunckelheit das Bewußtseyn auf*). There are two things one should bear in mind when assessing this claim. First, lack of consciousness does not entail unconscious mental content. Lack of consciousness is the absence of conscious mental content, and this is not the same as a positive concept of unconscious mental content. Inanimate objects lack consciousness but do not for that reason possess unconscious representations. Second, when Wolff writes in the *Deutsche Metaphysik* of obscure thoughts he characterizes them as consciously discriminable phenomena. In particular, he defines a thought (*Gedancke*)

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as a conscious mental state (§194) and an obscure thought as one which one can discriminate in perception but not recognize (§§198–9). He then claims that concepts admit of the same classifications as thoughts and explicitly endorses the account of concepts offered earlier in the *Deutsche Logik* (§273–5). All of this suggests that when Wolff is using the post-Leibnizian idiom to classify mental content he is using 'obscure' to denote an object of phenomenal consciousness which one can distinguish but not recognize.

15 Like many philosophers of this period, Baumgarten does not explicitly distinguish between a representation and its referent.

16 All translations of Meier's writings are original.

17 Meier's use of the term *Erkenntnis* is expansive. In addition to its use as synonymous with *Vorstellung*, he uses *Erkenntnis* to denote 'either the aggregation (*Inbegriff*) of multiple representations or the act through which the representation of a thing is brought about'. See also the corresponding passage in Meier 1752a: §11, AA 16: 76–7 (this work reprinted in vol. 16 of the *Akademie Ausgabe*, Kant 1900–).

18 As with other philosophers of this period, Meier does not distinguish between a conscious representation and consciousness *of* a representation. In the paragraph from which the quotation above is drawn, he writes, 'Whether I say: I am conscious of a cognition; or it is a thought; or it is a clear cognition; all of that says the same.'

19 There is a cryptic formulation of this point in Meier 1752a: §133, AA 16: 328.

20 That there are degrees of representational obscurity is a point made by Wolff and Baumgarten, though their accounts of this phenomenon differ significantly. I discuss this in detail elsewhere.

21 As this quote suggests, Meier frequently uses the term 'obscure' without specifying which connotation is intended, and so readers ought to bear these distinctions in mind when interpreting his remarks.

22 In some cases, Kant used later editions of these works. For discussion, see Arnoldt (1907: 386); Schneewind (1997: pp. xix–xxi); and Kuehn (2001: 108–9).

23 For discussion, see Tonelli (1974).

24 'Nun ist der ganze innerliche Zustand der Seele nichts anders, als die Zusammenfassung aller ihrer Vorstellungen und Begriffen, und in so weit dieser innerliche Zustand sich auf das Äußerliche beziehet, heißt er der status repraesentativus universi.' With the exception of the first *Critique*, references to Kant's writings refer to the *Akademie Ausgabe* and are cited by volume and page number. All translations of Kant's writings are original.

25 See e.g. Wolff (1713: §§2–4); Reimarus (1756: §§48–50); and Baumgarten (1761: §§15–16). Meier departs from this practice by classifying as a concept (*Begriff*) every representation possessed by an agent with the capacity for conscious awareness. As a consequence, he posits not only unconscious representations but also unconscious concepts (Meier 1752b: §§154, 282).

26 'Es steckt etwas Großes, und, wie mich dünkt, sehr richtiges in dem Gedanken des Herrn von Leibniz: Die Seele befasset das ganze Universum mit ihrer Vorstellungskraft, obgleich nur ein unendlich kleiner Teil dieser Vorstellungen klar ist.' This remark is prefigured by an earlier one in the *Nova dilucidatio* (1755). For discussion, see Förster (2000: 78–9).

27 Meier (1752b: §§156, 159, and 1752a: §128, AA 16: 322); and Kant (R177, 15: 65) and (R2338, 16: 322).

28 For discussion of Kant's notion of a determining ground, see Longuenesse (2005: 119–25).

29 Interest in the unconscious determining factors of human behaviour is similarly evident a few years later in a work from Johann Georg Sulzer, titled *Erklärung eines psychologisch paradoxen Satzes: Daß der Mensch zuweilen nicht nur ohne Antrieb*

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und ohne sichtbare Gründe sondern selbst gegen dringende Antriebe und überzeugende Gründe handelt und urtheilt (1759). See Brandt and Stark (1997: p. xxxi). A reference to Sulzer's account of 'obscure representations' occurs in the student lecture notes from the early 1770s. See *Logik Philippi*, 24: 409.

30 The interpretative claim that in the *Nova dilucidatio* Kant ascribes conscious representations exclusively to the higher faculty and only unconscious representations to the lower faculty is also endorsed by Schmucker (1961: 32).

31 I discuss these claims in greater detail in Leland (forthcoming).

32 See also R4459 and R4680, 17: 593–4, 667.

33 To avoid confusion: my claim is that in the 1762 essay on logic Kant identifies the capacities for 'inner sense' and consciousness. I think Kant's account of 'inner sense' changes significantly during the 1770s. Recognizing this distinction is important because the later account of 'inner sense' invites explication with reference to Kant's notion of apperception, whereas the earlier account does not.

34 This distinction has a history. Some seventeenth-century Cartesians claimed that mental phenomena which appear to be unconscious are really ones which are conscious but merely forgotten. See Simmons (2001: 35).

35 By itself, however, this would *not* entail an allowance for non-discursive consciousness. It would only entail that acts of judgement and reasoning can occur in both the lower and the higher faculty.

36 For discussion of Kant's engagement with the analytic–synthetic distinction during the mid-1760s, see Adickes (1895), Henrich (1967) and Anderson (2015).

37 Meier (1752b: §159): 'on what basis can we be certain that we really possess obscure cognition? … Yes, we concede that we cannot experience obscure cognition, however we can experience its effects, which assure us completely that [obscure cognition] itself, as their cause, must really be present in the soul.'

38 See e.g. Allison (1983: 137), Carl (1998: 192–4), Longuenesse (1998: 64ff.) and Heidemann (2012).

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