

Kant's Material Conception of Sense

Abstract: Hylomorphic language plays an important role in Kant's account of cognition. As interpreters have emphasized, Kant associates the form of cognitive states with the spontaneous activity of the understanding, while sensation (*Empfindung*) is characterized as the matter of cognition (R619 AA 15: 268). In this paper I provide a new understanding of Kant's characterization of sensation as material. Following Leibniz, I argue that Kant's use of matter should not be associated with constitution, but rather with passivity. I argue that appreciating Kant's Leibnizian heritage leads to the conclusion that Kantian *Empfindungen* are logically and conceptually posterior to enformed cognitive states. *Empfindung* is a passive *aspect* of a cognitive state, rather than an independent state. In turn, I argue this point has significant implications for the disagreement between conceptualist and non-conceptualist interpretations of Kant.

Recent readers of Kant¹ have sharply disagreed on the question whether Kant should be considered as holding a “non-conceptualist” or a “conceptualist” view of the nature of

¹ References to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* use standard A/B notation. I generally use the translation of Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (1997, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), with occasional references to Kemp Smith (1929, London: Palgrave MacMillan), and translations of my own.

References to other works in Kant's *oeuvre* are abbreviated as follows: **AA** = (1902-present) *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Königlich Preussischen (now Deutschen) Akademie der Wissenschaften. Berlin: G. Reimer (now Berlin: De Gruyter). **Anthr.** = (1974) ('Anthropology') *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Transl. Gregor, M. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff. **D** = (1973) ('Discovery') 'On a Discovery, According to which Any New Critique of Pure Reason Has Been Made Superfluous by an Earlier One.' In *The Kant- Eberhard Controversy*. Ed. Allison, H. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. **JL** = (1988) *Logic*. Transl. Hartman, R. and Schwarz, W. New York: Dover Publications. **LF** = (1746) ('Living Forces') 'Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces and Assessment of the Demonstrations that Leibniz and Other Scholars of Mechanics Have Made Use of in This Controversial Subject, together with Some Prefatory Considerations Pertaining to the Force of Bodies in General.' AA 1:3-181. **PM** = (1992) ('Physical Monadology') 'The Employment in Natural Philosophy of Metaphysics Combined with Geometry, of which Sample I Contains the Physical Monadology' In *Theoretical philosophy: 1755–1770*. Transl. Walford, D. & Meerbote, R. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. **MFNS** = (1970) *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*. AA 4. Transl. Ellington, J. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing. **NE** = (1992) ('New Eleucidations') *Nova Dilucidatio*. In *Theoretical philosophy: 1755– 1770*. Transl. Walford, D. and Meerbote, R. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. **R** = ('Reflexionen.') Kants handschriftlicher Nachlaß. AA 14-19. **R CV** = Reflexionen in Kant's copy of *Critique of Pure Reason*. AA 23. **VSGE** = *Vorarbeiten zur Schrift gegen Eberhard*. AA 20. **SGE** = (1973) *Schrift Gegen Eberhard*. AA 20. In *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy*. Allison, H. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. **UG** = (1992) ('Ultimate Grounds') 'Concerning the ultimate ground of the differentiation of directions in space.' In *Theoretical philosophy: 1755–1770*. Transl. Walford, D. and Meerbote, R. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

References to Leibniz are abbreviated as follows: **A** = (1923-) *Samtliche Schriften und Briefe*. Cited by series, volume and page. Berlin: Akademie Verlag. **AG** = (1989) *Philosophical Essays*. Eds. Garber, D. and Ariew, R. Indianapolis: Hackett Press. **Disc** = (1991) *Discourse on Metaphysics and Other Essays*. Eds. Garber, D., and Ariew, R. Indianapolis: Hackett Press. **G** = (1875-90) *Die Philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, 7 vols. (cited by volume, page.) Ed. Gerhardt, C.I. Berlin: Weidmann. **L** = (1969) *Philosophical Papers & Letters*. Ed. Loemker, L. Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co. **LD** = (1973) *Leibniz and Dynamics: the Texts of 1692*. Eds. Costabel, P., transl. Maddison, R.E.W. London: Methuen. **LOC** = (2001) *G.W. Leibniz, The Labyrinth of the Continuum: Writings on the*

perception.² The disagreement concerns the relationship between sensibility and understanding (A15/B29), the two faculties whose cooperation for Kant amounts to cognition (*Erkenntnis*). Do sensibility and understanding constitute independent partners in the joint venture of cognition, as non-conceptualists hold? Or are conceptualists correct that the relation is more complicated in that the understanding plays an indispensable role even in states associated with sensibility?

As interpreters have pointed out³, much in answering this question turns on Kant's characterization of the relation between understanding and sensibility as a relation between form and matter, and as the determination of a determinable. For Kant it seems to be the *spontaneity* of the understanding that accounts for its enforming role. Consider, for example, Kant's comments on the role of "synthesis" in cognition (B152):

inasmuch as [...] synthesis is an expression of spontaneity, which is determinative and not, like sense, determinable merely, and which is therefore able to determine sense *a priori* in respect of its form in accordance with the unity of apperception [...] This synthesis is an action of the understanding on the sensibility.

Note here the opposition Kant suggests between the determinative nature of spontaneity and the determinable character of sense, such that "therefore [spontaneity] is able to determine sense *a priori* in respect of its form."⁴ Conceptualist interpreters take it to follow that even cognitively "obscure" states such as intuitions (*Anschauungen*) (JL 9:33) must implicate the spontaneity of the understanding. In Ernst Cassirer's trenchant expression,

Continuum Problem, 1672-1686. Ed. Arthur, R.T.W. New Haven: Yale University Press. **M** = (1991) *Monadology*. Ed. Rescher, N. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

I also use the following abbreviation for a work by Christian Wolff: **AzDM** = (1983) ('Additional Comments to the *Deutsche Metaphysik*') *Der vernünftigen Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt, anderer Theil, bestehend in ausführlichen Anmerkungen* In Wolff, C. *Gesammelte Werke*, division 1, vol. iii. Hildesheim: Georg Olms.

² (For non-conceptualist readings, see Hanna 2005, 2008, 2011, Allais 2009, Tolley 2013, McLearn 2014, 2015, 2016a, 2016b, Onof and Schulting 2014. For conceptualist readings, see Ginsborg 2006, 2008, Wenzel 2005, Griffith 2010, Van Mazijk 2013, Gomes 2014, McDowell 2009, Engstrom 2006, Connolly 2013).

³ For important discussion to which I am indebted throughout, see Engstrom 2006.

⁴ Clearly this passage does not provide conclusive evidence for an association between spontaneity and form. It might be held, for example, that the relevant connection is between spontaneity and the unity of apperception, rather than form *per se*. My aim in this paper is not to defend the Monist thesis itself. But I believe my discussion below makes compelling the thought that it is form *per se* that is associated with spontaneity, rather than form only in connection with apperception.

The matter is [...] as follows: the being of intuition as definite (and what would an existence be like which was completely undetermined?) depends upon the function of the understanding.⁵

An entity's form determines its nature. Accordingly, for some interpreters Kant ultimately takes *any* significant cognitive state to bear the nature of the single spontaneous faculty of understanding, even if this faculty functions under conditions of sensibility.⁶

My concern in this paper will be with a compromise non-conceptualist position, which seeks on the one hand to give full countenance to the enforming and determinative role of the understanding, while nevertheless preserving a non-conceptualism that is unaffected by Kant's association between spontaneity and the notion of form. This position concerns Kant's conception of sensations (*Empfindungen*).⁷ In particular, the consideration is that while Kant associates form with spontaneity, Kant characterizes sensations as providing the *material* of cognition (R619 AA 15: 268):

The first building block [*Grundstück*] of our cognition is *Empfindung*. One designates [*Empfindungen*] the representations in which the mind is viewed as merely passive, to the extent it is effected [*gewirkt*] by the presence of a thing. [The *Empfindungen*] constitute at the same time the material of all our cognition.

This is a complicated passage, and my argument will turn on some of its details. But note Kant's characterization of sensation as "the first building block" and the "material" of cognition. The claim on which I will focus on in this paper is this: it is perfectly consistent with conceding that for Kant the understanding provides cognition with its *form* to also recognize an independent contribution from sensibility as providing cognition with its *matter* (however more precisely this is conceived).

⁵ Cassirer 1967, p. 141

⁶ There is an important distinction here between the understanding operating under conditions imposed by sensibility and conditions provided by sensibility. The former might imply that the understanding is itself unconstrained and limited merely by human sensibility, while the latter might imply that the understanding is itself a limited capacity, which requires sensibility for its functioning. In this paper it is the latter I have in mind (see my conclusion at §5 below)

⁷ I will use the English 'sensation' and the German '*Empfindung*' interchangeably.

Indeed this seems to be just what Kant is saying in passages like the above, and so many interpreters have understood him.⁸ In particular, this would make sense of sensibility providing genuinely independent deliverances, which nevertheless stand yet to be enformed as states of cognition. Indeed, this may seem what Kant has in mind when he allocates to the understanding the exclusive function of “combining” the sensible manifold (B130):

The combination (*conjunctio*) of a manifold in general can never come to us through the senses [...] For it is an act of spontaneity of the faculty of representation; and since this faculty, to distinguish it from sensibility, must be entitled understanding, all combination—be we conscious of it or not, be it a combination of the manifold of intuition, empirical or non-empirical, or of various concepts—is an act of the understanding. To this act the very general title ‘synthesis’ may be assigned

It seems natural enough to think that if there is “combining” then there must be something “combined.” As such, it seems the understanding is tasked with “combining” and thereby providing form to cognition, while sensibility is tasked with delivering that which is “combined”, the matter.

But in this paper I will argue that even the above-sketched compromise variety of non-conceptualism underestimates the pervasive unity of Kant’s conception of cognition, and the role of the hylomorphic language in which Kant articulates this conception. Specifically, I will argue that the position misses the specific notion of “matter” that Kant associates with *Empfindung*. I suggest Kant trades on a specific Leibnizian elaboration of the distinction between primary and secondary matter, i.e. the distinction between matter without form, and matter with form.⁹ On the Leibnizian elaboration of this view, primary matter is associated not with *constitution* but with *passivity*. Moreover, matter in this Leibnizian sense does not constitute independent metaphysical reality that might in some sense (logically or temporally) precede form. Rather, matter is merely an abstraction from enformed reality.¹⁰ Accordingly, I argue that Kant does not recognize the

⁸ E.g. Allison 1989, Aquila 1983, Falkenstein 1990; 1995, George 1981

⁹ For the suggestion of the significance of Leibniz’s metaphysics in understanding Kant’s hylomorphic language, see also Nussbaum (manuscript).

¹⁰ See Duarte 2015 for more on the association in Leibniz between passivity and lack of fundamental metaphysical reality.

reality of *Empfindungen* apart from their existence as enformed by the understanding, as is required by the compromise position.

If I am correct that this is the way in which Kant conceives of *Empfindung* as “material”, we should take seriously that *Empfindungen*, as Kant writes in the above passage, are states “in which the mind *is viewed* as merely passive (italics mine).” I will suggest that such expressions flag a carefully inserted qualificatory and aspectual tone to Kant’s discussion of *Empfindungen* which tone points to the important sense in which for Kant, (R177, AA 15:65) “*Empfindungen* are not representations, but are the material for them.” So the thesis I defend is:

Empfindungen

For Kant sensations are the primary matter of cognition. Sensations do not constitute independent mental states, but abstractions from mental states intended to capture a passive aspect of such states.

The paper will proceed as follows. The general outlines of the Kantian conceptualism debate have received very extensive treatment elsewhere. Accordingly, §1 briefly sketches a path through the debate in order to locate the sort of conceptualist position that will be pivotal to my argument. In §2 I turn to Leibniz’s conception of substances as forces. In §3 I discuss Kant’s notion of *Empfindungen*, and sketch two common disagreements about their nature: whether sensations are in some sense intentional, and whether they have spatial organization. §4 subsequently brings Leibniz and Kant together to provide a particular understanding of Kant’s notion of sensory material. I trace the consequences of my argument for the conceptualism debate. In §5 I return the rich (post-)Leibnizian background of Kant’s thought to address an important objection *Empfindungen* concerning my way of accommodating Kant’s famous critique of Leibniz as having (A270/B326) “intellectualized the appearances.”

1. Two Stems of Cognition

The recent conceptualism controversy about Kant’s view centers on the nature of a series of important distinctions Kant makes, and in particular, how to align these distinctions with

Kant's fundamental divide between sensibility and understanding. The controversy is: for those poles of Kant's various distinctions that are associated with Kant's account of intuitions—perceptual confrontations with objects—do they line up with sensibility alone (non-conceptualism), or must some be associated with the understanding (conceptualism)?¹¹

Initial impressions seem favorable for non-conceptualism. Kant introduces the sensibility/understanding distinction (A15/B29) as setting apart our capacities to perceive (or “get”) objects from our capacities to think about them. Further, Kant seems to line up the sensibility-understanding divide with the distinction between receptivity and spontaneity (A51/B75), suggesting that as the faculty for “getting” objects, sensibility is a “receptive” capacity, while the understanding is “spontaneous”, being the faculty for actively producing representations of objects. Finally, these two distinctions seem further complemented by Kant's distinction between intuition and concept, which Kant introduces as a distinction between representations that are immediate and singular and representations that are general and mediated, and which Kant subsequently seems to allocate to sensibility and understanding respectively (B75/A51). Thus sensibility and understanding, it seems, are divided according to their operations—“getting” objects versus thinking about them—according to the nature of the capacities they encapsulate—receptive versus spontaneous—and according to the kinds of representations they employ—intuitions versus concepts.

But it is the apparent role in intuitions of spontaneity (specifically, the spontaneous power of imagination) that appears to confound simple classification.¹² Kant distinguishes intuitions

¹¹ For helpful discussion, see Williams 2012.

¹² As Hannah Ginsborg (Ginsborg 2008, p. 66) writes,

[The] apparently clear-cut distinction [between sensibility and understanding] is quickly complicated by Kant's introduction of the notion of synthesis, an act of combining or unifying the sensory manifold which he ascribes to the power of imagination. For imagination seems to have affinities both with sensibility and with understanding, suggesting that their functions, of intuition and thought respectively, cannot after all be so neatly separated.

from mere sensations. Sensations do not have the object-presenting character of intuitions. So what sets intuition apart from sensation? It is the “unity” characterizing intuitions as opposed to the mere “manifold” of sensation. This is where Kant appears to envisage a role for the power of imagination. For the mind to obtain intuitions, the “manifold” of sensation has to be “synthesized” by the productive imagination. It is from this “synthesis” that conceptualist readers of Kant take their cue. Imaginative synthesis has a spontaneous character. But Kant seems to locate passivity with sensibility and spontaneity with the understanding (B152; B130). Accordingly, conceptualists have suggested that imagination must belong to the understanding, and consequently the understanding is implicated in intuition.¹³

For my purposes in this paper I want to sketch one way to understand the conceptualism versus non-conceptualism disagreement. Consider the following opposition:

Dualism

Kant’s account of cognition recognizes sensible and intellectual states that are independent in some important sense, the combination of which constitutes cognition full-blown.¹⁴

Monism

For Kant the spontaneity of the understanding must play a role in anything that counts as a state of cognition, including sensible states.

It would be wrong to suggest a one-to-one correspondence between this opposition and the conceptualism versus non-conceptualism disagreement.¹⁵ Nevertheless, commitment to Dualism

¹³ Non-conceptualists have mainly resisted the conceptualist line of argument in two ways. Either they suggest that the imagination belongs to the faculty of sensibility (Hanna 2005, 2008, 2011; Allais 2009). On this view, the thought is that a type of synthesis not involving the understanding is required for perceptual awareness, as opposed to the synthesis that is required for conceptual thought. As Lucy Allais has put the point, “synthesizing is not the same as conceptualizing.” (Allais 2009, p. 396; see also Hanna 2005, p. 249). It follows that sensibility cannot be entirely passive, but must be in part spontaneous. Or they suggest that spontaneity is not, after all, implicated in intuition. For Clinton Tolley, for example, intuitions have a unity that is “absolute” and that “belongs to [intuition] *per se*”, while the productive imagination does not play a role in intuition, but rather in synthesizing intuitions into what Kant calls “perception” (*Wahrnehmung*) or “experience” (*Erfahrung*) (Tolley 2013, p. 123). I discuss why I question these defenses elsewhere.

¹⁴ A naturally Kantian way of speaking here might be to suggest that both faculties independently contribute representations (*Vorstellungen*). But this would set the bar too high for the Dualist I consider in this paper, who might be content with sensible provisions that fall short of representations proper.

¹⁵ For example, there will be conceptualists who deny Monism, and grant the faculty of sensibility independent states that are below the right perceptual level.

will typically incline a reading towards non-conceptualism, while Monism is a way of understanding conceptualism. On this understanding, the *point* of being a conceptualist—the reason to attribute this view of perception to Kant—is because one thinks Monism is true: one thinks that in some important sense Kant meant to place cognition under a single faculty, viz. the spontaneous faculty of the understanding (albeit, of course, critically dependent in its operations on sensibility). In my treatment of *Empfindungen* below, this Monist understanding of conceptualism will be my interest. On this score it is worth noting that Monism is in some aspects weaker and in some aspects stronger than what some conceptualists have attributed to Kant. The Monist thought is weaker than conceptualism since it forbears any commitments about the role or nature of conceptual contents in Kant’s view of perceptual contact with the world.¹⁶ Indeed, this point extends in principle even to modest conceptualist positions that posit only categorial conceptual involvement in perception.¹⁷ For example, the Monist thesis is *prima facie* consistent with the recently popular idea that Kant should be seen as forerunner of contemporary *relationalism* about perception, on which perceptual states should be considered as mere confrontations with objects as opposed to bearing content at all.¹⁸ The Monist thought is also stronger than some forms of conceptualism, which may be satisfied to say that concepts are in some sense “drawn in” or “passive” during the perceptual process. By contrast, the Monist thought turns on the role spontaneity plays in perception.

2. Leibniz on Form and Matter

Just fifteen years young, G.W. Leibniz took a now legendary stroll through the Rosental meadows just outside of Leipzig, pondering the opposition between the Scholasticism of his

¹⁶ For views with stronger commitments in this regard, e.g. Ginsborg 2006, 2008, Abela 2002.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Griffith 2010, Connolly 2013.

¹⁸ See, e.g., Gomes 2014, Onof and Schulting 2014.

teachers and the new mechanistic philosophy. In later life Leibniz reflected on the episode as follows:

I recall walking in a grove on the outskirts of Leipzig called the Rosental, at the age of fifteen, and deliberating whether to preserve substantial forms or not. [While] mechanism finally prevailed [...] for the ultimate reasons for mechanism [...] I should have to return to metaphysics. This led me back to entelechies, and from the material to the formal, and at last brought me to understand [...] that monads or simple substances are the only true substances and that material things are only phenomena, though well founded and well-connected.¹⁹

As this passage reflects, Leibniz's favor ultimately fell on mechanism—but not without giving pride of place to the old Scholastic notion of form or “entelechy”, and a metaphysics of enformed simple substances. In turn, this substance metaphysics provides the basis for Leibniz's famous claim, central claim to his distinctive brand of idealism, that the material world we see and smell and hear is merely phenomenal (“though well founded and well connected”).

For the history of philosophy generally, Kant's development more specifically, Leibniz's renewed commitment to substance metaphysics was a milestone. Leibniz is the philosopher Kant cites most in the first *Critique*.²⁰ The philosophical environment²¹ that shaped the interests and views of the young Kant, the author of works such as LF, PM and NE, was dominated by Leibniz expositors like Christian Wolff and Alexander Baumgarten. Much discussion in this period centered on the basic tenets of Leibniz's metaphysics, including: (a) the need and nature of simple substances; (b) the representational capacities of such substances; and (c) the relation of such substances to space, time and causality. Kant's earliest works constitute direct engagements with these Leibnizian debates.²² But as Kant's contemporaries noted, Leibniz continues to loom large

¹⁹ G.W. Leibniz, letter to Nicolas Remond of January 10 1714. Insofar as Leibniz is accurate in listing his age as 15, this places the episode in 1661 or 1662 (Garber 1997, p. 327).

²⁰ Jauernig 2008

²¹ Of necessity my description of this environment be somewhat truncated, since my aims here are systematic rather than simply interpretative. For rich descriptions of the reception of Leibniz by Kant, see the work of Anja Jauernig (e.g. Jauernig 2008).

²² We need merely consider titles of Kant's works as *Living Forces* (1746) and *Physical Monadology* (1756) to see the centrality of Leibniz to Kant's early thinking. For exposition of Kant's early thinking see Watkins 2006; see also Svare 2006. To be sure, Kant is known to have deplored some of his early Leibnizian works (Svare 2006). But this may have more to do with the (perceived) failure of their engagement with Leibnizian thought, rather than a repudiation of their subject matter *per se*.

in the critical period as well. To be sure, we need not go as far as Kant's correspondent Eberhard, who notoriously proclaimed that "there is nothing true in the [first] *Critique* that is not already to be found in Leibniz."²³ But nevertheless there is some sense in which we should seriously Kant's own claim, in reply to Eberhard, of providing "the true apology for Leibniz" (D, AA 8 250).

Turning to the substance of Kant's engagement with Leibniz, we should mark two prominent interpretative strategies for engaging with Leibniz's corpus. While one interpretation takes *Monadology* as the proper mature reflection of a unified Leibnizian philosophy, a second tradition holds that carving Leibniz's corpus at the joints requires taking seriously not merely the views of the *Monadology*, but an early mechanist phase as well as at least two phases of neo-Aristotelian substance-metaphysics (divided e.g., by their stance on the reality of corporeal substance).²⁴ While my present aims do not require taking a stand on this contested issue, what *will* be important is to recognize a certain development in Leibniz's engagement with hylomorphic metaphysics.

Understanding the basic shape of Leibniz's engagement with Aristotelian substance metaphysics requires appreciating Leibniz's *hylomorphic taxonomy of intrinsic substantial forces*. The origins of Leibniz's hylomorphism lie in his rejection of Cartesian mechanism, both its metaphysics and its dynamics. In Eric Watkins' description of the Cartesian view:

According to Descartes, bodies do not consist of substantial forms and primary matter, as scholastic Aristotelians had thought; nor, as Leibniz understands him, are they the seats of active causal powers by means of which they could cause changes of motion in each other; rather, as purely geometrical figures, they are simply extended in space.⁸⁸

Leibniz's substance metaphysics is best understood as a wholesale repudiation of this broadly Cartesian view in favor of a rehabilitation of (neo-)Aristotelian metaphysics. For our purposes,

²³ Eberhard 1968, p. 289 For discussion, see Allison 2012, p. 189

²⁴ See Garber 1997, Garber and Rauzy 2004, Adams 1994, p. 308ff. A particular difficulty that the status of *Monadology* poses for current purposes is that during Kant's life many of Leibniz's works remained unpublished, and among the published works it is not clear which Kant read—accordingly it is not always clear which Leibnizian works Kant means to target, or even whether Kant always carefully distinguishes Leibniz's views from those of Wolff (for discussion, Garber 2008).

we can make do with a relatively simple-minded summary of the thrust of Leibniz's resistance to the Cartesian view. In particular, there are two points worth noting, one concerning Leibniz's rejection of Cartesian metaphysics and one concerning Leibniz's rejection of Cartesian dynamics.

Leibniz grounds his critique of the Cartesian metaphysics in an argument that a substance must have "a form of some kind" such as to provide it with "genuine unity," as opposed to being a "mere aggregate."⁸⁹ Leibniz finds such genuine unities in the 'soul,' the 'self,' or 'me' (A 2: 72; AG 89):

each extended mass can be considered as composed of two or a thousand others; there exists only an extension achieved through contiguity. Thus one will never find a body of which one can say that it is truly a substance. It will always be an aggregate of many. Or rather, it will not be a real entity, since the parts making it up are subject to the same difficulty, and since one never arrives at any real entity, because entities made up by aggregation have only as much reality as their constituent parts.

A substantial unity requires a thoroughly indivisible and naturally indestructible being [...] which can be found in a soul or substantial form, on the model of what is called 'me.'

As Leibniz makes clear in the first passage, extension does not meet his criteria for substance-hood because it fails to provide for metaphysical unity. Extended matter is indefinitely divisible, and lacks metaphysically basic constituents. Therefore, Leibniz concludes, extended material cannot qualify as metaphysically basic. As Leibniz famously formulates his criterion (G II 96-97/AG 85): "I consider as an axiom this identical proposition, which receives two meanings only through a change in accent; namely, that what is not truly a being is not truly a *being*."

In the second above passage, Leibniz posits the way his metaphysics meets this criterion, i.e., by the (re-)introduction of Aristotelian souls. That it is an Aristotelian notion of soul Leibniz has in mind is clear from the way Leibniz divides 'souls' in broadly Aristotelian fashion according to their capacities, distinguishing the lowest class of self-sustaining souls (M 48) from souls with perception and memory (M 19) and from rational and apperceptive souls

(M 82).

In turn, Leibniz’s rejection of Cartesian dynamics centers on the Cartesian abandonment of substances as seats of irreducible forces. Cartesian dynamics centers on a law of conservation of total *motion*, on which physical bodies, conceived as quantities of extended matter, are subject to a constant amount of total force operating extrinsically on them. Leibniz thinks this view is untenable, and instead proposes a law of conservation of total *energy*, which concerns not the momentum of bodies but their capacities for exerting force on other bodies. For Leibniz, the Cartesian account is committed to either of two unacceptable accounts of substance-to-substance interaction. One option is for the Cartesian to adopt *influx theory*, on which momentum is “transferred” from body to body. For Leibniz, influx theory fails to acknowledge the fact that dynamic properties like momentum are accidental to substances, and therefore do not have the sort of independent existence that would allow them to transfer from one substance to another.⁹⁰ The second option is for the Cartesian to revert to *occasionalism*, on which changes in momentum are directly occasioned by God (whether through intervention or systematic laws).⁹¹ For Leibniz the occasionalist undermines substances’ independence from the Divine, thereby collapsing the doctrine into incoherence (L 502).

The above two features of Leibniz’s thinking—the insistence on substantial form and the insistence on intrinsic substantial forces—come together in a forces-based development of Aristotelian metaphysics. For illustration, consider the following table:

Table 1: Leibniz's 'Hylomorphism of Forces'

	<u>Active Forces (Form)</u>	<u>Passive Forces (Matter)</u>
<u>Primitive Forces</u>	a substance’s capacity to <i>exert force</i> on other substances.	a substance’s capacity to <i>resist</i> the force of other substances.
<u>Derivative Forces</u>	the magnitude of a particular exercise of a substance.	the magnitude of a particular exercise of a substance.

	primitive active force.	primitive passive force
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As this table illustrates, Leibniz divides substantial forces along two axes, distinguishing passive from active forces and primitive from derivative forces. The difference between a substance's active and passive forces is between forces the substance exerts on other objects and forces that resist other objects. The difference between a substance's primitive and derivative forces is the difference between its capacity to produce force and the actual force it produces on a particular occasion. Putting these together, we have: primitive active forces; derivative active forces; primitive passive forces; and derivative passive forces.²⁵

The hylomorphic dimensions of Leibniz's substance metaphysics, then, are built out of substances' primitive forces. Consider the following passage (LOC 285-7):

substances have parts and species. The parts are matter and form. Matter is the principle of passion, or primitive force of resisting, which is commonly called bulk or antitypy, from which flows the impenetrability of body. Substantial form is the principle of action, or primitive force of acting.

As this passage makes clear, Leibniz aligns the form of an entity with its primitive active force, while the substance's matter is provided by its primitive force of passivity or 'resistance.' As such, Leibniz holds that (L 365):

if anything is real, it is solely the force of acting and suffering, and hence [...] the substance of a body consists in this.

I will now turn to argue that the above-lined themes in Leibniz's thinking are significant for understanding Kant's view of intuitions. To do so, I must begin by introducing Kant's thinking about sensations.

²⁵ One may wonder how this taxonomy of forces finds expression in Leibniz's monadic period. The answer is that the forces appear to get reduced to fundamental capacities for perception and appetite. As such, Leibniz writes (G VI 615/AG 219. Italics original): "we attribute *action* to a monad insofar as it has distinct perceptions, and *passion*, insofar as it has confused perceptions." In turn, appetitions can seem to constitute the later Leibniz's equivalent of derivative active forces (see Rutherford 2005, p. 165, Adams 1994, p. 380, Bodelschweig (manuscript), p. 30).

2. *The Nature of Sensation*

Sensations play an important, if frequently confusing, role in Kant's theory of cognition. Kant typically speaks of sensations as constituting a "manifold", which our faculties must "run through" and "order" to bring "unity" to what can otherwise seem like a blooming and buzzing sensory world. Much confusion accompanies the question how we must exactly conceive these ordering processes, and relatedly, the raw sensory material on which they operate. Complicating matters Kant will sometimes seem to speak of intuitions in the place of sensations, describing *those* as the manifold standing in need of ordering.

We can begin to make interpretive headway by considering an important passage in which Kant characterizes *Empfindungen* as (A19-20/B34): "the effect of an object on the capacity for representation, insofar as we are affected by it." This is an interesting passage since it combines two features that Kant repeatedly associates with sensation, but which may seem in some tension. On the one hand, sensations are "the effect of an object", i.e. their description makes reference to an external entity, namely as the object of affection. On the other hand, sensations seem intended to capture a distinctly subjective side of this process of affection. As Rolf George writes, "[t]he rider 'in so far as we are affected by it' is crucial. It is to convey that if merely a sensation is present in the mind, no object is represented."²⁶ In interpretations of Kant's view of sensations, these two aspects have tended to pull apart.

Some philosophers (George 1981, Kumar 2014) have considered the subjective character of sensations to be their critical feature, focusing on other passages where Kant seems to make this explicit (A320/B376; R683, AA 15; italics mine)

That perception (*Perzeption*) [i.e. representation with consciousness] which relates *solely to the subject*, as the modification of its state, [is sensation]²⁷

²⁶ George 1981, p. 239.

²⁷ Falkenstein argues that the *Stufenleiter* at (A320/B376) should not be taken at face value, since it comes in the context merely of Kant distancing his notion of "idea" from those of preceding empiricists (1990, p. 114). Kumar disputes Falkenstein's contention (Kumar 2014, fn. 54).

Appearance is a representation of the senses, to the extent it relates to an object;
sensation: if it relates *merely to the subject*

In particular, Rolf George (1981) has taken Kant's characterization of sensations as subjective as evidence of his adherence to the so-called "sensationist" doctrine, i.e. the view that the most basic states produced through sense-affection are non-intentional sensations. George finds the *locus classicus* for this view in Malebranche:

It seems that Malebranche was the first to hold that external impingements upon the senses must initially result in sensations, merely subjective modifications of the mind. The important insight here is not that all knowledge all external things begins with sensory awareness—many others held this view—and that some elaboration of the sensory input by central functions of the mind is needed before one can properly speak of knowledge or perception. It was, rather, that the mental states initially induced are non-intentional or non-referential.²⁸

George's attribution of sensationism to Kant is supposed to gain further plausibility from its apparent endorsement by Johannes Nicolaus Tetens, whose work Kant allegedly consulted when writing.²⁹ Consider, for example, the following passage from Tetens, which seems along Kant's above-noted lines in characterizing *Empfindungen* as alterations of a subject's state:

In sensation [*Empfindung*] comes [*entsteht*] an alteration [*Veränderung*] of our state, a new modification [*Modification*] in the soul. I direct my eyes to the sun. Something happens here, and I feel something, sense [*empfinde*] it. The impression [*Eindruck*] comes in this case from the outside; [...] the felt alteration is the *Empfindung*.³⁰

But understanding Kant's view of *Empfindungen* along sensationist lines is not uncontroversial. There are other passages in which Kant seems to emphasize the alternative aspect of sensations, i.e. their relation to objects of affection. As noted, Kant frequently speaks of sensations as the "material" of cognition of external objects. Kant at times identifies sensation as the material of intuition (A42/B60), and at other times Kant introduces sensation as "corresponding" to the matter of appearance, i.e. as corresponding to the *objects* of intuition (A723-B751; A581-B609). Grounded in these passages, Lorne Falkenstein provides a reading of

²⁸ George 1981, p. 229. For similar views, see Kitcher 1990, Aquila 1983, Kumar 2014.

²⁹ For the claim that Kant looked at Tetens while writing, Hamann's letter to Herder (May 17, 1779): "Kant is working busily on his moral (sic.) of pure reason, and Tetens is always before him." Quoted in Manfred Kuehn 1987, p. 143. For discussion see Kumar 2014, p. 283, Kitcher 1990, p. 68.

³⁰ Tetens 1913, pp. 161-162 In turn, the source for Tetens' sensationism seems to be Étienne Condillac (see Condillac 1971, 1930). For Tetens' discussion of Condillac, Tetens' 1911, p. 264

sensations that emphasizes not their subjectivity, but their role in external object-cognition.³¹ For Falkenstein, “the ‘matter’ of appearance, presumably, is [...] the stuff it is made of.”³² Accordingly, sensation cannot at pains of inconsistency be both the material of intuition and of appearance. Falkenstein resolves this conflict by taking seriously the idea that sensations *constitute* intuitions, but *correspond* to appearances. As such, “there is some sort of correlation between what exists as sensation and what is referred to as a component or property of the object.” In particular, sensations “designate a particular content in appearances.”³³ Indeed for Falkenstein sensations are taken as *inferential grounds* for the nature of affecting objects:

the objects referred to through perception are taken to be distinct entities to which we ascribe a degree of influence or force based on the intensity of our sensations. Rather than being a relation of identity, the ‘correspondence’ represented between sensation in our perception and force in the object is a relation of effect to an inferred cause.³⁴

Pace George, Falkenstein concludes that sensations are after all not wholly subjective, since their nature is explicitly tied to certain features of the objects of perception.

The disagreement between George and Falkenstein about the subjective character of sensations leads to a second dispute concerning sensations’ spatio-temporal properties. Again there seems tension in Kant’s text. On the one hand, Kant seems to explicitly deny that sensations have spatial character in lacking “extensive magnitude” (B209), since “In mere succession existence is always vanishing and recommencing, and never has the least magnitude” (A183/B226).³⁵ George concludes that “it is evident that Kant took the spatial and extended nature of objects to be the result of an interpretation placed upon sequences of sensations.”³⁶ On the other hand, Falkenstein suggests that sensations must themselves be spatio-temporally

³¹ E.g. Falkenstein 1990. See also Falkenstein 1995

³² Falkenstein 1990, p. 66

³³ Falkenstein 1990, pp. 67- 69

³⁴ Falkenstein 1990, p. 70. Indeed, Falkenstein’s view is not merely that sensations are effects with a certain intensity, but more specifically, that “sensations must be physical effects on the body of the subject.” (Falkenstein 1990, p. 83)

³⁵ George 1981, pp. 248-9. Longuenesse 1998 (pp. 299-300) agrees with the a-temporal characterization of sensation.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

determinate in order to facilitate the cognition of objects in time and space (I discuss Falkenstein's specific argument to this conclusion in §4 below.)³⁷

Whatever interpreters' views on the above debates about the nature of *Empfindungen*, in general a focus on sensation has fostered the above-noted Dualist readings of Kant's view of cognition. These Dualist views are sometimes described as "constructivist."³⁸ Constructivists take a "bottom-up" perspective on Kant's conception of cognition. They see Kant as aiming to explain full-blown representational intentionality given a relatively austere basis of sensory input. As Robert Aquila writes, representing the approach: "Like George, I connect Kant's need to introduce an element of intentionality with the fact that 'sensation' as such does not constitute mental 'reference'"³⁹ Further, constructivists see Kant's view of representational intentionality as the result of a multi-tiered cognitive system in which successive processes of "synthesis" produce states that are more sophisticated than their predecessors. Constructivist readings have differed as to the exact nature of the "bottom-up" synthesizing process, and in particular, the stage at which intentional reference is attained. The most common view is that intentionality arises with judgment. This view, for example, is presented by Allison,

What judgment 'produces' from itself is the representation of objects, that is to say, objectively valid judgments. The understanding is, therefore, spontaneous in the sense that it 'constitutes' objectivity or objective reference in and through the act of judgment, and it does this by synthesizing the manifold of sensible intuition⁴⁰

But this view is not universal, and other philosophers have suggested that Kant recognizes representational significance prior to judgment.⁴¹ In particular, such philosophers recognize what

³⁷ Falkenstein 1990, p. 64. Falkenstein recognizes that there are passages in which Kant appears to deny that sensations have spatial dimensions (A99; B208), but takes his argument to show that this cannot be Kant's considered view.

³⁸ Here I apply the term "constructivism" more broadly than sometimes done, when it is restricted to views that conceive of mental states as strictly constituted by more primitive ones. In my use of "constructivism", no such claim is implied.

³⁹ Aquila 1983, p. 186n. Compare also descriptions of Kant's project as concerning "how a mental state could be 'intentional'" (Kitcher's 1990, p. 66), and the way "The aggregation and coordination of sensory impressions produce objects, reference." (George 1981, pp. 240-241)

⁴⁰ Allison 1989, p. 94. For similar approaches, see also Paton 1936, Buroker 2006, Bird 2006, Bennet 1966. See Land 2006, fn. 10.

⁴¹ Longuenesse 1998 constitutes a prominent example.

Thomas Land has described as a “two-species view of the exercise of spontaneity”, on which Kant distinguishes between combination “of the manifold of intuition” and the combination of “several concepts in judgment” (A79/B104-5).⁴² On this form of constructivism, it remains true that Kant takes a “bottom-up” view of representational intentionality, but such intentionality is not attained in a single way or at a single stage, but rather in different ways in intuition and in judgment.

3. *Toward a Leibnizian Understanding of Empfindung*

I will now turn to unite the last two sections in exploiting Leibniz’s notion of “material” to provide a distinct understanding of Kant’s notion of sensation. Specifically, I will argue that, following Leibniz, the sense in which Kant describes sensation as “material” implies that *Empfindungen* cannot exist independent of the enforming influence of spontaneity. Therefore *Empfindung* cannot precede spontaneity either temporally or logically. But the general “bottom up” conception of Kant’s view of *Empfindung* depends on such sensory precedence; this approach therefore fail. I argue the upshot is a Monistic conception of Kant’s view of cognition.

Recall the claim I introduced in the introduction:

Empfindungen

For Kant sensations are the primary matter of cognition. Sensations do not constitute independent mental states, but abstractions from mental states intended to capture a passive aspect of such states.

I can now provide a different gloss on this claim: in my view, *Empfindungen* constitute the mind’s primitive passive force in Leibniz’s sense.⁴³ That is, just as for Leibniz items can be described as “material” in a sense that equates to a passive aspect of enformed reality rather than itself an independent level of existence, so, I suggest, Kant intends *Empfindung* to be understood

⁴² Land 2006, p. 196

⁴³ One may doubt this analogy. Surely *Empfindung* is not for Kant a “force.” But plausibly Kant follows Leibniz in thinking that affection requires the meeting of two forces, one exerting force, another meeting it—in some sense—with resistance. That is, affection may seem to depend on a type of passivity that includes a certain “impenetrability” to the effect exerted upon the affected substance. Thanks to Stephen Engstrom for bringing this difficulty to my attention.

as “material.” To see the initial plausibility of this claim, reconsider the passage cited in the introduction in which Kant describes sensation as “material” (R619 AA 15: 268)

The first building block [*Grundstück*] of our cognition is *Empfindung*. One designates [*Empfindung*] the representations in which the mind is viewed as merely passive, to the extent it is affected [*gewirkt*] by the presence of a thing. [The *Empfindungen*] constitute at the same time the material of all our cognition.

From our reflections on Leibniz, we can now note two points concerning Kant’s description of sensation as the “material” of cognition.

First, it is wrong to assume, as Falkenstein does, that “the ‘matter’ of appearance, presumably, is [...] the stuff it is made of.”⁴⁴ Kant need not be understood as suggesting that sensation “constitutes” cognition. This would prejudice a reading in favor of *secondary* matter opposed to *primary* matter. In fact, it seems plausible that Kant does intend *Empfindung* as material in a primary rather than secondary sense. This is in part because of the apparent association in Kant’s thinking between the passivity of *Empfindungen* and their material character, which plausibly follows Leibniz’s usage. In fact, Kant’s emphasis on sensation as the product of *affection* seems in line with Leibniz’s invocation of primitive passive power.

Second, reading Kant as having in mind a notion of primary material allows us to understand a characteristically qualified tone in Kant’s description of *Empfindungen* as mental states. Note Kant’s above characterization of *Empfindungen* in which “the mind is *viewed* as merely passive.” This expression is plausibly read as indicating that sensations are not in themselves mental states, but rather an element of the mind that we (or, perhaps, the mind itself) find when we *consider* the mind in its passive aspect. Recall some further places in which Kant sounds a similar note when describing *Empfindung*:

[*Empfindung* is] the effect of an object on the capacity for representation, insofar as we are affected by it. (A34)

That perception (*Perzeption*) [i.e. representation with consciousness] which relates solely to the subject, as the modification of its state, [is *Empfindung*] (A320/B376)

⁴⁴ Falkenstein 1990, p. 66

Appearance is a representation of the senses, to the extent it relates to an object;
sensation: if it relates merely to the subject (R683; AA 15)

In each of these passages, Kant speaks as if to suggest that by *Empfindungen* merely isolate an aspect of our cognition. Sensation is the effect of an object “insofar as we are affected by it.” An appearance is sensation “to the extent that” it relates merely to the subject. In these various cases, I submit that Kant does not posit independent states of cognition which precede the activity of the understanding, but rather merely highlights the primary material component of hylomorphic compounds that are states of genuine cognition (e.g. *Anschauungen*).

Now turn to Kant’s description of the spontaneous side of the equation, which underlies the above-discussed “constructivist” views (B130):

The combination (*conjunctio*) of a manifold in general can never come to us through the senses, and cannot, therefore, be already contained in the pure form of sensible intuition. For it is an act of spontaneity of the faculty of representation; and since this faculty, to distinguish it from sensibility, must be entitled understanding, all combination—be we conscious of it or not, be it a combination of the manifold of intuition, empirical or non-empirical, or of various concepts—is an act of the understanding. To this act the very general title ‘synthesis’ may be assigned...

Here my reading differs in two, I think plausible, respects from ordinary readings. First, by “manifold” I understand not an independently given quantity, but rather in Leibnizian vein a “mere” manifold—that which is infinitely divisible, and therefore does not possess the unity requisite for metaphysical existence.⁴⁵ If I am correct, this point applies to Kant’s *Empfindungen* and the “manifold” in which for Kant they are presented. Since the “deliverances” of sensation are not already enformed and therefore do not as such constitute “unities”, there really is not a “manifold” of them either. As Leibniz captures the spirit of the point (G II 118; G II 267):

There are not several beings where there is not even one which may be truly a being

For where there is not true unity, there is not true multiplicity.

⁴⁵ To be sure, this concerns existence at the relevant level. There are aggregates of enformed items, e.g. intuitions or concepts, but these will not have existence on some further level. Without further form a mere manifold of concepts will not, say, amount to a judgment, and in so far as no unity is present at all, such as in the case of *Empfindungen*, there is no genuine aggregate either.

Second, as such, *pace* the constructivist, my reading suggests that there is an important sense in which Kant speaks metaphorically when he invokes spontaneity as “combining” the sensory manifold. Prior to the activity of the understanding, there are not really multiple *Empfindungen*, and *Empfindungen* therefore cannot be “combined.” Rather, on my understanding Kant’s “combining” is like Leibniz’s enforming: giving first unity and existence to.

In further support of my reading, consider a few more passages in which Kant describes the role of *Empfindungen*. There are passages concerning the role of sensation in inner sense, e.g. (Anthr. AA 8: 153; italics original).

The senses can be divided into *outer* and *inner* sense. The first is that, where the human body is affected by corporal things; the second that where it is affected by the mind

There are various remarkable aspects to this passage, the most prominent perhaps its mention of “the human body.” This may seem to lend support to Falkenstein’s above-discussed view that sensation should be seen as a distinctly bodily phenomenon (fn. 33). But abstracting from Falkenstein’s specific commitment, the point I want to draw attention to is Kant’s methodology of introducing senses to accommodate types of affection. To be sure, this point may seem neutral since any account of *Empfindungen* will center on their role in affection. But I suggest my account lends particular salience to Kant’s individuation of senses according to the types of affection they accommodate. At any rate, Kant’s positing of “inner sense” may seem to lend particular urgency to conceiving *Empfindungen* in terms of *mere* affection, as on my account. Consider the following question: if sensations are themselves representations (or mental states of some independent sort), do they in turn affect the subject? If so, the result would seem a regress of *Empfindungen*. But if not, how do *Empfindungen* play a role in awareness? This difficulty is by no means obviously inescapable.⁴⁶ But it is nevertheless worth noting that on my account no such difficulty ensues, since *Empfindungen* are not mental states beyond their affective character.

⁴⁶ For example, Falkenstein’s view is unaffected by this worry, since for him *Empfindungen* are representational states of the body, thus stopping worries of a regress. But most readers of Kant do not hold the view that *Empfindungen* for Kant are bodily states.

A further benefit of my account is that it gives a compelling reading of Kant's repeated characterization of sensibility and its deliverances as apparently opposed to an unspecified "faculty of representations." Reconsider elements from two passages that have been central to this paper (A19-20/B34; B130. Italics mine):

[*Empfindung* is] the effect of an object on *the capacity for representation*, insofar as we are affected by it.

Combination] is an act of spontaneity of the *faculty of representation*; and since this faculty, to distinguish it from sensibility, must be entitled understanding, all combination [...] is an act of the understanding.

In both of these passages Kant places sense in relation to a "faculty of representation." By contrast, if sensibility were itself a cognitive faculty, we might have expected Kant's above comments to single out the understanding specifically. But on my account Kant's mention of sense as distinct from a single faculty of representations is unsurprising. Kant's view is just that. Sensation is nothing further than the passive aspect of a single faculty capable of representation.

A final advantage of my account, I think, is the way it treats the disputes between George and Falkenstein. Recall that the dispute concerning the spatio-temporal character of *Empfindung* turns on passages in which Kant denies sensations spatio-temporal "magnitude" such as (A183/B226) "In mere succession existence is always vanishing and recommencing, and never has the least magnitude." For Falkenstein, passages such as these must be explained away since only if sensations are spatio-temporally organized can they account for the sense in which sensations allow for cognition by "corresponding" to the objects of intuition.⁴⁷ But on my account

⁴⁷ Falkenstein hopes to avoid the consequences of this passage by suggesting that the items coming in "mere succession" are not *Empfindungen*, but rather changes in the nature of apprehension (Falkenstein 1990, p. 83):

Even though the apprehension of the array of appearance is always successive and the parts follow upon one another, as Kant puts it at A89-B23, it may be that these 'parts' of the array are not *minima sensibilia* but just successive alterations in the (spatially articulated?) apprehension.

As will be clear from the Leibnizian theme suggested in this paper, I am sympathetic to the idea that for Kant "parts" are not *minima sensibilia*. But as I have suggested, without involvement of the understanding, "sensible apprehension" generally is in no better standing.

both features of Kant's account can be combined coherently. On my reading, what Kant affirms by suggesting that in a succession of *Empfindungen* "existence is always vanishing and recommencing" is that, properly speaking, there is no existence at all in mere sense. It is because *Empfindungen* are not genuine mental entities that they cannot possess magnitudes. As Kant explicates, it is only in synthesis that we meet magnitude (B210) "Apprehension, merely by means of sensation, fills only an instant [...] As something in the appearance, the apprehension of which is not a successive synthesis, proceeding from the parts to the whole representation, it therefore has no extensive magnitude."⁴⁸

But *pace* Falkenstein, recognizing *Empfindungen*'s lack of magnitude is consistent with recognizing the role *Empfindungen* play in cognition by 'corresponding' to aspects of the object of intuition. Consider, for example, the following critical passages (B207-208; B209)

Appearances contain in addition to intuition the matter for some object in general [...] they contain, that is to say, the real of sensation as merely subjective representation, which gives us only the consciousness that the subject is affected, and which we relate to an object in general.

Corresponding to this intensity of sensation, an *intensive magnitude*, that is, a degree of influence on the sense [...] must be ascribed to all objects of perception, in so far as the perception contains sensation.

These passages contain some complicated elements, in particular (i) the notion that in addition to 'intuition' appearances also contain "the matter for some object in general", which Kant equates to (ii) "the real of sensation as merely subjective representation, which gives us only the consciousness that the subject is affected", which in turn (iii) we relate to an object in general. More specifically, Kant suggests there is (iv) a certain "intensity" to this sensation, which (v) "corresponds" to "an intensive magnitude, that is, a degree of influence on the sense" that (vi) "can be ascribed objects of perception."

I think these passages sketch out a path for my account to accommodate an appropriate role for *Empfindungen* in cognition. Consonant with my account, (i)-(iii) suggest that for Kant

⁴⁸ Transl. Buroker 2006, p. 160. Note here Kant's explicit association of magnitude with a move from "parts" to a "whole." This is resonant with the Leibnizian theme I have been advocating as structuring Kant's thinking.

there is nothing to sensation but “the matter of some object” in the explicit sense of the role objects play in affecting the subject. But as (iv)-(vi) make clear, this is sufficient for sensations to, in some sense, contribute to cognition of objects, since the “intensity” of sensory affection can be correlated to an intensive magnitude that can be “ascribed to” objects. In so far as I am correct in understanding Kant’s notion of sense along the lines of Leibniz’s “primitive passive power”, the upshot of the above passages is as follows. Even as *Empfindungen* are not themselves spatio-temporally determinate, nevertheless they constitute a form of “passivity” that cannot be understood without reference to external objects. To this extent I can side with Falkenstein against George in saying that *Empfindung* are not wholly without referential character, even as I deny that they are any kind of representation in their own right.

5. “*The Grundstück of our Cognition*”

But it may be objected that my argument in this paper cannot be right. Because Kant is a known critic of Leibniz precisely on the topic of sensation, famously accusing Leibniz of having “intellectualized the appearances” (A270/B326). I want to close my argument in this paper by responding to this objection.

Consider Kant’s objection in detail (A270/B326):

sensibility was only a confused kind of representation for [Leibniz], and not a special source of representations; for him appearance was the representation of the thing in itself, although distinguished from cognition through the understanding in its logical form, since with its customary lack of analysis the former draws a certain mixture of subsidiary representations into the concept of the thing, from which the understanding knows how to abstract. In a word, Leibniz intellectualized the appearances.

In a similar passage, Kant writes (R 695, AA 15: 308-9):

Leibniz takes all sensations (deriving from) certain objects for representations of them. But beings who are not the cause of the object through their cognitive states must in the first instance be affected in a certain way so that they can arrive at a representation of the object’s presence. Hence sensation must be the condition of outer cognitive states.

The common tenor of Kant’s critique of Leibniz in these two passages is that Leibniz fails to appropriately appreciate the conditioning role sensation plays on representation, as opposed to

itself being a form of representation generically conceived.⁴⁹ As Kant writes in R 695, Leibniz takes all contact with objects to consist in representations, rather than recognizing that “sensation must be the condition of outer cognitive states”, for “beings who are not the cause of the object through their cognitive states.” In turn, A270/B326 elaborates this critique. For Leibniz, “sensibility was only a confused kind of representation”: a representation of an imprecise, unrefined kind, but not fundamentally distinct from intellectual representation generally. Leibniz therefore “intellectualized the appearances” by treating them as of the nature of representations of the understanding. In particular, for Leibniz sensations are not a separable type of affection on which representation generally can be said to depend. This explains why Leibniz mistakes appearance for “the representation of the thing in itself.” By Kantian lights, Leibniz fails to see that objects appear to us not in themselves, but only to the extent that they affect us through sense.

Kant’s critique of Leibniz in these passages might be thought to contradict my argument in this paper. Does Kant’s critique of Leibniz not amount to a rejection of Monism in favor of a form of Dualism? I do not think it does. Indeed I suggest that it is my reading in this paper of *Empfindung* as mere affection that illuminates the upshot of the above passages. The key lies once more in Kant’s post-Leibnizian debates with Wolff and Baumgarten. One central topic of contention was Leibniz’s commitment to a doctrine of ‘pre-established harmony’, on which “substances are not only active but [...] are causally self-sufficient.”⁵⁰ As Leibniz writes (AG 206):

I do not admit any action of substance upon each other in the proper sense, since no reason can be found for one monad influencing another.

[Two substances] act equally in the collision, so that half the effect comes from the action of one, the other half from the action of the other. And since half the effect or passion is

⁴⁹ An interesting phrase in A270/B326 is Kant’s mention of sensibility as “a special source of representations.” The Dualist doubtless reads this as suggesting that sensibility provides independent representations. On the other hand, my reading emphasizes Kant’s mention of a *source* of representations. As I continue to suggest, it is a sensible *source* for representations that Leibniz’s account misses, as opposed to sensible representations *per se*.

⁵⁰ Jolley 2005, p. 73

also in one and half in the other, it suffices to derive the passion which is in one from the action which is in it, so that we need no influence of one on the other.

As these passages make clear, Leibniz attempts to account for the appearance of interaction between substances through forces proper to the substances themselves, thereby denying any genuine effect of one substance on another. This doctrine was widely rejected by Leibniz's followers, including the young Kant himself.⁵¹

As Helge Svare details, in early works like LF, PM and NE Kant remains committed to the broad outlines of Leibnizian metaphysics, including especially the fundamental notion of substantial forces, and the reduction of extended matter to such forces:

Leibniz is mentioned as a philosopher who understood more about the concept of force than others: Leibniz saw that a body possesses an essential force even prior to its extension. This he called its 'working force'. Unfortunately according to Kant Leibniz's followers misunderstood this concept and so his project may be understood as motivated by the intention to restore the theory of working force to its original state.⁵²

But consider Kant's following critique of the Leibnizian commitment to pre-established harmony

(NE AA 1: 410; AA 1: 412)

In a world that was free from all motion [...], nothing at all in the nature of succession would be found even in the inner states of substances

it follows immediately from what we have demonstrated that, if the human soul were free from real connection with external things, the internal state of the soul would be completely devoid of changes.

Kant's thought in these passages is that a commitment to pre-established harmony is in direct tension with the independence of substances that Leibniz's aims to preserve. A causally self-sufficient substance would simply cycle through its putatively representational states. But as Kant points out, it is not at all clear how such a substance could genuinely represent without standing in any relations to worldly states of affairs. Indeed, it is not difficult to see the problem Kant raises for the Leibnizian view. For example, what is a passive force if there is no genuine interaction between substances? And what is a derivative force?

⁵¹ E.g. Wolff 1983, §602, Baumgarten 2014, §396-9. Kant PM, AA 1: 476.

⁵² Svare 2006, p. 47.

I suggest it is this same thought that motivates Kant's critical objection that Leibniz "intellectualized the appearances." On this understanding of Kant's objection, Leibniz "intellectualized" appearances in thinking that the representational character of substances is autonomous and self-sufficient, and is not conditioned by genuine affection. If this is right, Kant's critique of Leibniz is consistent with my reading of *Empfindungen* in this paper. Indeed, Kant's objection sheds further light on my account. Recall a last time R619: "The first building block [*Grundstück*] of our cognition is *Empfindung*." I can now suggest that *Empfindung* is the *Grundstück* of cognition not in being the constitutive basis of cognition, but rather in the sense suggested by Kant's objection to Leibniz, in providing the affection on which representation depends.

Last, consider the way my account contrasts with the historical narrative of Kant's view typically offered by "constructivist" readers.⁵³ On this narrative, Kant departs from the Leibnizian/Wolffian tradition of assuming representational character as essential to the substances that possess it (expressed e.g. by Wolff's positing of a substantial *vis representiva*). By contrast, the constructivist understands Kant as siding with the broadly Humean tradition of providing a positive explanation of intentional character on a basis of sensory stimulus. In particular, Kant is understood as replacing Hume's associationism with an account grounded in *a priori* intellectual resources.⁵⁴ But on my account Kant comes down on the rationalist side of the opposition between Leibniz and Hume. Specifically, *Empfindung* is not foundational to a constructive view of representational character grounded in sensory input. On the contrary, *Empfindung* serves as a condition on the proper rendering of a Leibnizian view, such that spontaneous representational character is understood to depend on affection, even as in Leibnizian fashion it is assumed as the form of the sort of substances subjects are.

⁵³ E.g. Kitcher 1990, pp. 77-85.

⁵⁴ Kitcher 1993, pp. 79-82.

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