

A Post-Kantian Perspective on Recent Debates about Mystical Experience*

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I

Mystical knowledge claims are usually held to have more than a merely subjective validity; they are thought to pertain to the nature of reality in general. In so far as the mystic makes such claims he is purporting to have insight into the nature of something other than his own psychological states, and hence about an "object" that is in some sense distinct from his own subjectivity. Among philosophers the possibility that there exists a specifically mystical mode of knowing such objects has usually been held to depend on the idea that the structure of mystical experience is parallel to that of sense experience. It is commonly thought that in sense experience the subject has a direct non-propositional knowledge of particular phenomenological features of the object of consciousness the existence of which, at the time of their occurrence, it is impossible to doubt. Carefully formulated propositions expressing these features are also thought to possess a special epistemological status such that it does not make sense for the subject of the experience to doubt their truth (e.g., Russell's "Red patch now"). In addition, under normal circumstances, there is little reason for a third person to cast doubt upon them. Hence the question to ask with regard to mystical claims is whether certain among them might be plausibly thought to stand on a similar epistemological footing (e.g., "God now").

In examining the possibility of such indubitable elements of mystical experience the path that usually has been trod has been that of attempting to disentangle the elements of the experience that might be considered "directly intuited" or "given" from those that are the product of the mystic's own subjective understanding. This distinction, between intuition and understanding, is, of course, a Kantian distinction. It is one that has been uncritically presupposed by almost all thinkers working in this area of the philosophy of religion, taking the particular form of a division drawn between "experience" and its "interpretation." The two sides of this division are distinguishable in terms of

function. It is through intuition (here, experience) that appearances are 'given'; through understanding (interpretation) objects are 'thought'. As we shall see, thinkers as widely separated in their views as W.T. Stace and Steven Katz have unreservedly adopted this model in their assessments of mysticism.

A second and related Kantian distinction employed in the literature analyzing the nature of mystical experience is that of "phenomenon" and "noumenon." John Hick, for example, has spoken of a "divine noumenon" which is experienced as various "phenomena" by mystics of different religious traditions. The purpose of the present article then is to make explicit some of the implications and limitations of adopting a Kantian schema when assessing mystical experiences and the knowledge claims based upon them. If it should turn out that such an application is misleading or inappropriate, philosophers will have to rethink the conceptual framework in terms of which they evaluate mystical knowledge claims.

II

In addition to the distinction between experience and interpretation noted above, a further subdivision has been commonly made between two basic *kinds* of interpretation, *viz.*, interpretations that are applied at the time of the experience itself and interpretations that are applied post-experientially. I shall refer to the former as "concurrent." It is this kind of interpretation that pertains most directly to any discussion of the appropriateness of the application of Kantian terminology in the mystical context. For Kant held that conscious reference to an object presupposes that certain fundamental concepts of the human understanding be applied to the appearances of intuition. These are the categories. Without the application of the categories experience of an object is held to be impossible. The categories serve to unite the manifold appearances of intuition into coherent experiences of objects. Without their application experience would be nothing more than a "rhapsody of perceptions" to use Kant's colorful phrase (B 195). If Kant's definition of an object as "that in the concept of which the manifold of a given intuition is united" (B 137) is to be taken seriously, we can see why this should be so. It is the categories that give *form* to the intuitional *content* of experience.

How does this discussion bear on the philosophical analysis of mysticism? Most importantly, according to the Kantian model no experience of an object is possible without the application of concepts. If one is to experience an object at all, the categories of human thought must be applied to the spatio-temporal manifold of appearances given in intuition. Thus if one makes a contrast between experience and its conceptual interpretation as though experience ever

comes to us without being conceptualized, then strictly speaking one cannot be adhering to the Kantian system. The real contrast for Kant is that obtaining between the given raw data of intuition and the conceptualized experience of that data united under the categories. It is only when the categories are applied to the spatio-temporal appearances of intuition that objects are experienced. Such objects are termed "phenomena" by Kant; they stand in contradistinction to "things in themselves," the "noumena" which are ultimately unknowable postulates of reason. Kant held the view that phenomena are generated by the interaction of the noumenal world and the human mind (A 249-250). The process by which this comes about involves three logical steps. First the noumenon affects the human sense organs resulting in sensations. Further the sensations are patterned into spatio-temporal appearances. Finally, the latter are automatically conceptualized by the understanding resulting in conscious experience of phenomenal objects. Two points should be noted here. First of all, experiences of noumena are impossible. Secondly, all conscious experience is experience of phenomena and hence is necessarily conceptual in nature.

Given these facts one might well wonder how it is that contemporary thinkers relying on the Kantian model of experience have spoken of experience as though it stands in contrast to the conceptual interpretation which it is given. The answer lies in the fact that the conceptual interpretation of the intuitional data of experience may be legitimately divided into two kinds. There are, first of all, those concepts that Kant attempted to identify under the title of "categories." Such concepts are considered, as we have seen, necessary conditions of the possibility of the conscious experience of phenomenal objects. As such, they are part of the human cognitive hardware; they are unlearned, transcultural, common to all human minds.¹ Secondly, there are concepts that are culture-specific; these are learned and are by no means necessary conditions of the possibility of experience. When philosophers examining mysticism have spoken of experience as distinct from its interpretation they have, I believe, been thinking of interpretation in terms of the latter sort of concept.

Perhaps the best place to begin in attempting to gain an understanding of how this distinction between learned and unlearned concepts has been presupposed is with the classic account of the experience/interpretation distinction drawn by W. T. Stace in *Mysticism and Philosophy*. It is possible, says Stace, to make a legitimate distinction between two kinds of element present in any given report of a mystical experience. First, there are those elements that are truly descriptive of the phenomenal traits of the experience. It is clear that Stace would mean to include here those phenomena that are generated by the application of the basic Kantian categories to the appearances of intuition.

Secondly, there are those elements that constitute an interpretation of those phenomenological features. Stace here appears to be referring to those conceptual interpretations that are learned. Stace himself defines interpretation as "anything which the conceptual intellect adds to the experience for the purpose of understanding it, whether what is added is only classificatory concepts, or a logical inference, or an explanatory hypothesis" (37). The most important thing to note here is the contrast between the two schemas. On the Kantian model sensory experience can be logically analyzed into two basic kinds of component, namely, 1) the appearances that are given to human sensibility, and 2) the concepts by means of which this data is unconsciously organized and made intelligible to the mind as phenomena. On the Staceian model, however, the division lies at a different level -- between the basic phenomena (created by the categories in application to appearances) and a third component: the *learned* conceptualizations given to phenomena.² According to the Kantian model appearances are "given" while their conceptualization is the mind's unconscious activity in organizing them into coherent experience. That this division is merely a logical one, which is to say that experience of a phenomenal object must always contain the combination of these two elements, is, in Kant's philosophy, a matter of definition. But whether the same holds true with regard to the application of learned concepts is another issue. It does not appear to be a *logical* impossibility that an individual could have an experience of a phenomenal object without the concurrent application of learned concepts. This appears to be a question of *empirical* possibility. A great deal turns on this; for if it is empirically possible to experience phenomena without applying the learned concepts of one's tradition, then a non-contextual form of consciousness of phenomenal objects would appear to be possible. We shall return to this point later.

If a parallel between mystical and sensory experience is to be accepted, then perceptual appearances should have their corresponding raw data in the realm of mystical experience. I shall call this "mystical data." Just as appearances are experienced as concurrently conceptualized phenomena, so too mystical data would necessarily be experienced under the unlearned categories of the human mind. If the parallel is to hold, then this process would result in mystical phenomena much in the same way that conscious perceptual phenomena are generated by the combination of the categories and sensory appearances. And these basic mystical phenomena would be further interpretable under the learned concepts of the mystic's tradition.

It may be the case that in sensory experience phenomenal objects are always concurrently interpreted under some learned concept or another, but as noted there is no logical necessity in this. On this model the same should hold

true of mystical experiences of mystical phenomena. Just as the learned concepts of a tradition are concurrently applied to the basic phenomena of mystical experience, it is also undoubtedly the case that a great deal of post-experiential interpretation is added to such experience. Stace has noted that such post-experiential interpretations are made both by the subject of the experience as well as by third persons (e.g., philosophers) who merely have the subject's verbal testimony upon which to base their interpretation (37). Wishing to emphasize the universal character of mystical experiences he tends to underplay the importance of concurrent interpretation while playing up the fact of diverse post-experiential interpretation. In recent years this tendency has been thoroughly critiqued by Steven Katz.

III

It is Katz's contention that the phenomenology of mystical experiences varies across the different religious and cultural traditions in which they are found. Stace's attempt to find an underlying core experience common to all mysticism is viewed as misguided and untrue to the phenomenological facts. Katz's argument is based on the idea that the beliefs of mystics from different traditions vary to such an extent that it becomes implausible to suggest that they are of the same essential nature. For the concepts through which mystics actually experience the world, i.e., those which their conceptual intellects contribute to their experiences, are determined by their respective traditions. The phenomenological features of experience are partly constituted by these concepts under which raw data is organized and understood. For Katz, it is not the case that in searching for the raw phenomena of mystical experience we are attempting to find only those features that are parallel to sensational appearances. Such are never presented to consciousness in an uninterpreted manner; they are always organized under concepts. And for Katz, this means that mystical experience, like sensory experience, is always contextual, its phenomenology determined by the learned concepts of the mystic's tradition. It is not merely the case that the post-experiential interpretations given to mystical experiences vary across traditions; the experiences themselves, *at the time they are occurring*, are phenomenologically distinct because of this concurrent conceptualizing activity of the mind. "[T]he experience itself as well as the form in which it is reported is shaped by concepts which the mystic brings to, and which shape, his experience" (Katz 1978: 26). Katz's position is most forcefully illustrated when he contrasts the Jewish mystical experience with that of the Buddhist. "There is no intelligible way that anyone can legitimately argue that a 'no-self' experience of 'empty' calm is the same

experience of intense, loving, intimate relationship between two substantial selves, one of whom is conceived of as the personal God of western religion and all that this entails. The losing of self is not equivalent to the finding of another, especially when this other is conceived of as the God of Jewish tradition" (1978: 39-40).

Katz's argument hinges on the implausibility of suggesting that differences between the reports of different mystics are the product of post-experiential interpretations. On the contrary, he suggests, it is far more reasonable to think that the experiences of the mystic prior to his mystical experience determine the nature of his mystical experience. In speaking of the Jewish mystical experience he makes this point explicit: "[T]he entire life of the Jewish mystic is permeated from childhood up by images, concepts, symbols, ideological values, and ritual behavior which there is no reason to believe he leaves behind in his experience. Rather, these images, beliefs, symbols and rituals define, *in advance*, what the experience *he wants to have*, and which he then does have, will be like" (1978: 33 Katz's emphases).

Similar considerations obtain with regard to the mystical experiences of Buddhists, and indeed to mystical experiences of any tradition. The beliefs and expectations of the mystic determine the kind of experience which he will have. And it seems to follow from this notion that because the beliefs of the different traditions are not identical the experiences of their mystics will also be different.

Katz's empirically based argument is highly persuasive and certainly goes a long way towards undermining any attempt to find a central phenomenological core common to *all* experiences which have been labelled mystical. Yet when carefully examined in terms of the Kantian framework it presupposes his argument begins to look peculiar. It is Katz's position that it is because the conceptual frameworks of different mystics differ so dramatically that they cannot be deemed to have the same kind of experience. This position may be correct; but note that it can only be so if we accept the idea that a mystic's experience is *entirely* determined by the learned concepts of his tradition.³ If Katz wants to maintain the position that the phenomenology of different mystical experiences must be different if the expectations and beliefs of the mystics differ, he must hold either that a) there is no "given" mystical data as such, the entire content of the experience being conceptual or that b) whatever mystical data there exists is entirely determined by the beliefs and expectations of the mystic. Because he speaks of mystical experience as including such items as symbols and images, and because these objects seem to have at least a quasi-sensorially based content as well as a form, it would initially seem that

Katz did not intend the former of these two possibilities. But what is involved in the latter?

Because he wishes to deny the possibility that certain phenomenological features of mystical experiences could be present in the experiences of mystics of different traditions, i.e., as the mystical data of the experience, Katz is logically required to maintain that the data that mystics interpret is also a product of their contextual consciousness. Katz's point that their experiences would necessarily be different owing to their culturally dependent conceptualizations is well taken; but this does not rule out the possibility that that which they conceptualize could be the same; certain phenomenological features of mystical experiences might be common across cultural divides. Hence if Katz wishes to rule out this possibility he must maintain the position that the content as well as the cultural form of mystical experience is a product of the mystic's beliefs and expectations.

Hence for Katz's position to be consistently maintained it actually must be held that there is no "given" element in mystical experiences parallel to the sensory content of perceptual experiences. The phenomena experienced by the mystic must needs be entirely the product of his own mind; they cannot have objective reference to a reality beyond the individual's own subjectivity. There can be no mystical data *per se*, or, more accurately, any such "data" that does exist is not perceived but *projected* by the mystic's mind. It must be the case that not only are the learned classificatory concepts through which mystical data is understood the product of the mystic's tradition but also the very data itself! Thus for Katz the line drawn between raw data and its interpretation begins to blur. The logical distinction between these two elements partly rests upon their respective origins; if both originate in the mind of the mystic it becomes unclear as to which elements of a mystical experience are to be thought of as interpretation and which are not.

Katz himself does not seem to explicitly recognize these implications. In arguing that the object of the mystic's experience cannot, logically, be experienced unless the mystic is possessed of a pre-experiential belief in the reality of that object, Katz nevertheless *seems* to want to leave the door open to the possibility that the object of mystical consciousness may be partly composed by elements which do not find their origin in the belief structure of the mystic. This is suggested when, in speaking of an object "x" of a mystical experience, he states that "what 'x is' is itself, *at least partly*, determined by a contextual consciousness" (1978: 64 my emphasis). This qualification that the object is "at least partly" the product of the mystic's context of belief certainly does a disservice to the general thrust of Katz's argument. For if it is meant to indicate the logical possibility that mystical experiences may indeed refer to a

mental "object," the mystical data of which has its source outside the contextual consciousness of the mystic, then Katz would be compelled to admit the possibility that mystics from different traditions could experience the same phenomenal objects, albeit under their different cultural interpretations. This would imply the possibility that certain core phenomenological features could be variously present in all forms of mysticism. But as we have seen this is the very thesis Katz is arguing against!⁴

Katz's approach does have the virtue of giving the facts of religious plurality their due. On purely empirical grounds it may thus be considered preferable to the universalism of Stace. But it must be noted that this virtue carries with it the logical implication of subjectivism and, therefore, the philosophical irrelevance of mystical experience in general. To be entirely consistent Katz must maintain the position that the entire experience, both interpretation and raw data, is a product of the mystic's own subjective expectations and beliefs. Mystical claims of insight into the nature of objective reality must be rejected. The experiences they reflect will remain as anomalous states of mind best left to psychologists or scholars of religion to order and classify according to need.

Any argument to the contrary would necessarily open the door to the logical possibility that some mystical phenomena might remain the same for mystics of different traditions. The common elements of their diverse experiences could then be likened to a Rorschach blot variously interpreted.

IV

In assessing the nature and significance of mysticism there is another line of inquiry leading neither to the naive universalism of Stace nor necessarily to the subjectivism entailed by Katz's views. This approach makes no ontological claims. It grants that certain mystical phenomena are present in many, but not all, the cultural forms of mystical experience. It acknowledges family resemblances among the diversity of experiences called "mystical," while at the same time picking out for examination subsets of experiences having similar descriptions. For example, one can fruitfully draw comparisons among reported experiences of divine love - say those of a Christian, a Bhakti Vedantin, and a Sufi. Or one could draw together and compare diverse experiences of "tranquillity" - say of a Buddhist practitioner of *shamatha* meditation, a Taoist wayfarer, and a modern day enjoyer of float tank technology. The possibilities are many. As noted above, such an approach could bear much fruit in the field of religious studies - if not philosophy.

But in closing this article I would like to throw a monkey wrench into the discussion by picking out one such set of descriptions, which does raise a number of very interesting philosophical issues. The shared feature of this subset casts considerable doubt on Katz's key assumption that consciousness is necessarily contextual.⁸ The set is philosophically controversial, for it seems to require that the very subject-object dichotomy, and therefore the entire sense experience model, be rejected as unsuited to the task of characterizing mystical experience. While mystical knowledge claims framed in terms of subject and object might remain subject to objection, one might equally object to the subjection of all mystical experiences to the subject-object dichotomy. The kind of experience that does not seem to fit constitutes a subset of those described by Stace as "absolute undifferentiated unity."⁹ Even if it is not the case that an experience of undifferentiated unity is a core feature of *all* mystical experiences, there can be little question that it is central to the reports of *many*. And I would suggest here that the model of sense experience is not adequate to the task of fruitfully analyzing the nature and significance of this particular kind of mystical experience.¹⁰

The reason for this is that the sense experience model presupposes a division between subject and object which, if the reports of various mystics are to be believed, is entirely absent from the experience of undifferentiated unity. However one chooses to analyze an object of mystical experience, be it in terms of a noumenal interaction with the human mind or as entirely subjective, conceptually organized mystical data, the fact remains that a division between the experiencing subject and the object of the experience is required if the model is to work. Yet it is the presence of exactly this division within their experiences that these mystics deny.

As far as I can tell there has been very little in the way of explicit recognition of this fact by philosophers attempting to evaluate the claims of mystics. Recently some of the possible implications of this observation have been explored in detail by Robert Forman (31-54). But as far as I can trace it back, the point was first noted by Terence Penelhum (Penelhum: 80) There can be little doubt that as *one kind* of mystical experience, the experience of undifferentiated unity is one whose analysis logically cannot consist in evaluating which elements are interpretations and which are not. Why is this so?

The answer lies in the fact that the very notion of interpretation conceptually requires that there exists something to interpret. If the reports of mystics are to be believed, their experiences consist of a state of consciousness devoid of any object whatsoever. Hence this experience logically cannot be one involving the application of any concept, learned or unlearned. Whether this is in fact a real possibility or whether it is merely a confused post-

experiential interpretation of the experience is a thorny philosophical question. Its answer would seem to hinge on whether sense can be made of the idea of a consciousness existing without being intentionally related to some object. Can consciousness exist without being a "consciousness-of"?

Stace seems uncertain on this point (131). Katz is clear -- a non-contextual consciousness is not possible (1978: 56-58). Following Katz, it might indeed be tempting to attribute the reported unity of the experience to the *object* -- i.e., a completely homogeneous mental object to which the subject stands in some intentional relationship. For the moment we start describing the experience as one *of* undifferentiated unity, we thereby imply a subject-object dichotomy¹. But this, I believe, would be to mistake the intended meaning of at least some of the reports of such "experiences." Phrases like "undifferentiated unity" or "non-duality" clearly are sometimes intended as expressions of an experience of the complete absence of the subject-object dichotomy. Whatever words one uses to interpret this paradoxical occurrence, the essential point is to capture the fact that the mystic is alleged to be not *conscious of* any phenomenal object whatsoever. If this is so, then that this consciousness be non-contextual would not only be possible but necessary.² For it would appear that the only way in which the learned concepts of a tradition can shape conscious experience is by their application to an object of consciousness.³ If an object is not present, concepts cannot be applied. Consciousness would, therefore, be non-contextual. Such a state would have to be devoid not only of learned concepts but also of the basic categories of thought which Kant held to be essential components of all conscious experience.⁴

Notes

* Following the usual convention in Kant studies, in this article "A" shall refer to the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, "B" to the second edition. For both editions I have relied exclusively on the Norman Kemp Smith translation.

¹ Perhaps the most immediately intelligible category of those that Kant attempted to outline is that of causality; it is part of human nature to experience the world of objects in causal terms.

² This is my own reading of Stace; I think it is a fair assessment of his position in so far as he is silent on the issue of the application of the *basic* categories of human thought to the sensational component of experience and

also maintains that at least some conceptualization of sense data is always present in our experience. "[A]lthough we may never be able to find sense experience completely free of any interpretation, it can hardly be doubted that a sensation is one thing and its conceptual interpretation another" (31).

³ This point has also been noticed by Robert Forman (41). Forman's work constitutes a rare attempt to challenge the sense experience model's application to a certain subclass of mystical experiences which he terms Pure Consciousness Events (PCEs). As such, both his method and its results are consistent with my own. However, Forman argues for an understanding of Kant's thought which I cannot agree with, *viz.*, that it allows for the possibility of objectless consciousness (57-63).

⁴ Katz's apparent suggestion that some of the phenomenological features of mystical experience have their origins outside of the contextual consciousness of the mystic could imply one of two possibilities. First it might be thought to imply the existence of a common noumenal source of the experience which, through its interaction with the minds of mystics, results in the same kind of basic phenomenal object concurrently conceptualized in different manners by mystics of different cultural traditions. Or it might be taken to imply nothing more than the idea that the minds of different mystics all share in a basic cognitive structure which, when activated in certain ways, (e.g., through meditation, prayer, or mind-altering drugs) results in similar kinds of non-contextual psychological phenomena, the occurrence of which does not depend on the existence of any particular belief structure. Such basic psychological phenomena could be given alternative concurrent interpretations by the mystics of different cultural traditions.

⁵ While this passage refers to religious experience in general, Hick views its considerations as applicable to the subclass of mystical experience.

⁶ For recent summary statements of this debate see King:167-186 and Katz 2000: 3-6.

⁷ With regard to the first of these beliefs this point was first noted by John Heintz in his comments on Hick's paper (Heintz: 58).

⁸ There are, in fact, two closely related possible sets which might lead to Katz's position being undermined. The first can be described from within the model of the subject-object dichotomy which has been assumed throughout the

course of this paper. Here I will only touch on this possibility. It might be argued that an individual could train herself to experience phenomena *as such*. It seems to me that this is the point of certain meditative practices common in Zen and other traditions wherein, for example, one centers one's consciousness on a particular object such as a candle flame or the sensation of one's breath at the tip of one's nose. What is sought is a kind of "raw" experience of the object, without the application of the learned concepts through which it is normally understood. As has been noted, this question would appear to be *empirical* in nature. We have seen that it is a logical requirement of the Kantian conceptual schema that it be impossible to experience an object without the application of the basic categories of human thought; the same does not seem to be the case for those concepts that are inherited from one's culture.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to fully explore this possibility, the following description of a Hindu meditative practice provides some conception of what is meant: "In this meditation, thought is freed from the presence of the 'I,' for the cognitive act ('I know this object' or 'This object is mine') is no longer produced; it is thought that *is* (becomes) the given object. The object is no longer known through associations - that is to say, included in the series of previous representations, localized by extrinsic relations (name, dimension, use, class), and, so to speak, impoverished by the habitual process of abstraction characteristic of secular thought - it is grasped directly, in its existential nakedness, as a concrete and irreducible datum" (Eliade: 82).

⁹ It is this kind of experience that Stace argued is an essential feature of all genuine mystical experiences. In light of recent contextualist arguments it is now generally agreed that such a view is not justifiable. Katz's discussion of Jewish mysticism, for example, clearly shows that such a state of consciousness is not an element of every experience that is commonly accepted as "mystical." Many experiences popularly dubbed "mystical" are indeed differentiated, both with regard to the distinction between the mystic and the object of her consciousness, and with regard to the possibility of the object itself containing inner distinctions.

¹⁰ If this is so, then Katz's constructivist thesis will in fact have failed *on empirical grounds*.

¹¹ The same holds true if we describe such states in terms of "consciousness *of* consciousness" or "consciousness *of* the self." The genitive grammatical structure of these descriptions cannot be considered as accurately mirroring what the mystic himself goes through. Such descriptions can only be

interpretations, though perhaps defensible ones, of the actual nature of the state.

¹² This is not to suggest that such a notion is free from conceptual problems. The most obvious of these is that it is not clear that such events even qualify as being conscious! Forman notes that individuals who have undergone these events cannot recall anything about them and have no conception of the amount of time that has passed. Given their lack of an object, this only makes sense. But can such events plausibly be described as *conscious*? Wouldn't an expression like "non-dual event" be less interpretive than "Pure Consciousness Event"?

¹³ Or, it might be added, by their *effect upon the subject*. I leave a detailed response to this possible rejoinder for another day. In brief, one would have to argue that not only is it the case that the object is absent from such "experiences," but the subject too! No object, no subject. If one then wished to maintain that such experiences or "events" involved "consciousness," one would be compelled to speak in terms of a transpersonal consciousness, a notion that is in fact quite at home in many of the traditions wherein such mystical experiences are attested.

¹⁴ See A 252/B 307 for Kant's views on this. In A, Kant actually seems to hold open the logical possibility of a special mode of non-sensible intuition through which the noumenon might be given. In B, however, he forcefully rejects this very possibility. A 252: "But in order that a noumenon may signify a true object, distinguishable from all phenomena, it is not enough that I *free* my thought from all conditions of sensible intuition; I must likewise have ground for *assuming* another kind of intuition, different from the sensible, in which such an object may be given. For otherwise my thought, while indeed without contradictions, is none the less empty. We have not, indeed, been able to prove that sensible intuition is the only possible intuition, but only that it is so for us. But neither have we been able to prove that another kind of intuition is possible..." B 307: "If by 'noumenon' we mean a thing in so far as it is *not an object of our sensible intuition*, and so abstract from our mode of intuiting it, this is a noumenon in the *negative* sense of the term. But if we understand by it an *object of a non-sensible intuition*, we thereby presuppose a special mode of intuition, namely, the intellectual, which is not that which we possess, and of which we cannot comprehend even the possibility. This would be 'noumenon' in the *positive* sense of the term." I must here acknowledge my debt to James

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