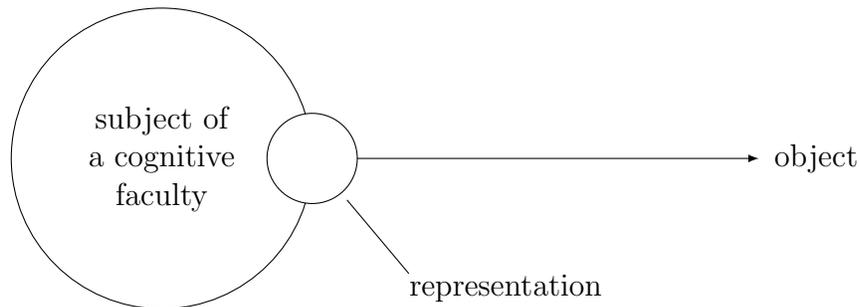


## Notes (more or less) on the Transcendental Aesthetic

- I. According to Kant, a being has a **cognitive faculty** (a power or capability of knowledge) if it is the subject of possible modes which (at least possibly) have objects.



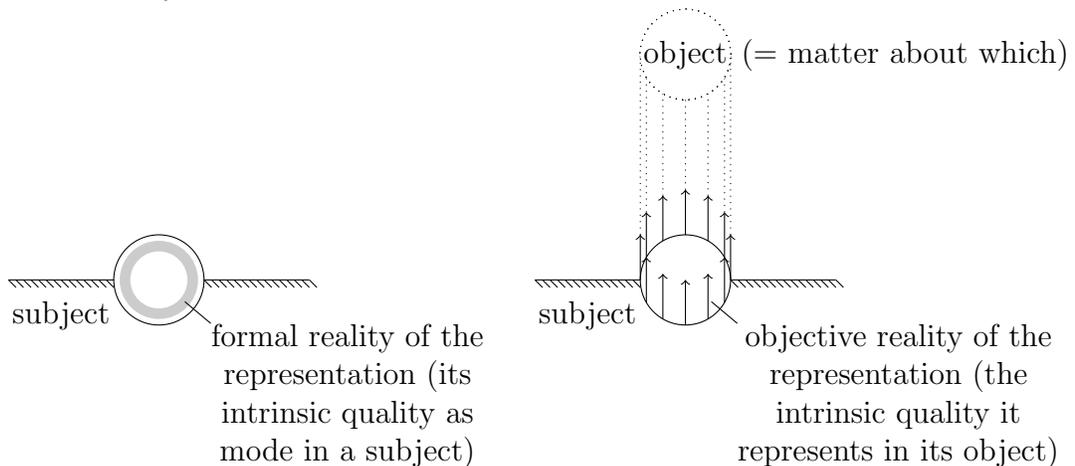
A mode of this kind (an *act* of a cognitive faculty) is called a **representation**.

Kant's rationalist predecessors mostly call such acts *ideas*; empiricists use the term *idea* somewhat differently. Kant objects to both of their ways of using the term *idea*, for reasons he will explain later on (see A312/B368–A314/B370).

The *formal reality* of a representation is its essential quality (*Beschaffenheit*) qua mode of the thinking subject.

The *objective reality* of a representation is the essential quality (if any) that it attributes to its object.

The contrast between formal reality and objective reality comes from Descartes, who uses the terms this way in his Third Meditation.



The object of a representation is also called its *matter*. So the form–matter contrast, for representations, is a contrast between subjective and objective aspects.

Kant's medieval and late-rationalist (Wolffian) predecessors refer to "matter" in this sense as *materia circa quam*, the "matter about which."

**II.** Cognitive faculties can be classified as either **intellectual** or **sensible**, depending on whether they contain *principles* from which the essential quality of their objects can be derived.

A cognitive faculty is *intellectual* if its acts (representations) contain a principle from which the essential quality of their respective objects can be derived. By definition of "active," this means that an intellectual faculty is *active* with respect to its object.

For something like this definition of "active," see Spinoza, *Ethics* III, Def. 2 and Leibniz, *Monadology*, §§49–50.

A cognitive faculty is *sensible* if its acts (representations) do not contain a principle from which the essential quality of their respective objects can be derived. By definition of "passive," this means that a sensible faculty is *passive* with respect to its object.

The subject with such a faculty cannot know, so to speak, in advance (a priori) what objects it will have; it must, so to speak, check to see how it is actually affected.

There must, therefore, be an *order* in which the subject can be affected by its objects (such that it is able to check where in that order it is affected by what).

The subject cannot derive that order from the objects, since it has no objects at all until it is affected by them in that order.

Hence the principle of that order must be in sensible representations insofar as they are modes of the subject — that is, it must belong to their *formal* reality. That principle of order, which is common to all acts of the sensible faculty in question, is the *pure form* of that sensible faculty.

**III.** Cognitive faculties can be classified as either **intuitive** or **discursive**, depending on whether their acts refer immediately or mediately to their objects.

[under construction]