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The Role and Scope of Intuition (Anschauung) in Kant Transcendental Philosophy

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ENG Abstract: Kant's notion of intuition is usually associated with the a priori forms of space and time. In my paper, firstly, I want to demonstrate that intuition is very complex and has different functions for transcendental consciousness and plays an important role in each function, secondly, to substantiate the thesis that this concept is key to understanding the principle of Kant's transcendental philosophy, and thirdly, to point out some aporias or problems associated with this concept. Here are some difficulties: the relationship between pure intuition and empirical intuition is problematic, and the function of intuition and representation is difficult to distinguish unambiguously. In my article, I will consider several key points in Kant's philosophy for which the concept of intuition plays its own special function.

Keywords: Kant, transcendental Aesthetics, pure Intuition, empirical Intuition.

Summary: 0. Introduction. 1. Judgment and Intuition. 2. Through Intuition the Object is given to Consciousness. 3. Pure Intuition and empirical Intuition. 4. Intellectual Intuition. 5. Intuition and Categories. 6. Intuition is the Condition of Experience. 7. Intuition and Representation. 8. Intuition, Thinking, Cognition. 9. Conclusion. 10. Bibliography.

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O. Introduction

Kant addresses the concept of Intuition in the *Critique of Pure Reason (CPR)* in the first Part, *Transcendental Aesthetics*. The definition of this important concept is, strangely enough, very small in scope (Felbinger 1980, p. 1). Nevertheless, the importance of this term cannot be overemphasised. In the overwhelming majority of cases, when it comes to the concept of intuition, one associates this concept with a priori forms of space and time. Nevertheless, and I want to emphasize this, this concept plays a vital role in virtually all aspects of Kant's philosophy, at least in his *CPR*.

Intuition (Anschauung) is pivotal in Kant's philosophy, as understanding concepts such as appearance, phenomenon, noumenon, experience, and cognition hinges on understanding its essence.

In the future, I will highlight several different types of intuition, including pure intuition (reine Anschauung), empirical or sensible Intuition (sinnliche Anschauung), and intellectual intuition (intellektuelle Anschauung). I would like to elucidate the relationship and functional significance of these concepts.

In my paper I will address a number of important questions: What is pure intuition? What is sensible intuition? How do they relate to each other? What is the function of intuition? How do intuition and thinking relate? Knowledge and intuition? Representation and intuition? Category and intuition? Examining these questions may illuminate the distinctive role, significance, and scope of intuition within transcendental philosophy.

The main intention of this article is to show that intuition is an integral part of understanding many important concepts of Kantian philosophy, phenomena, appearance, thing-in-everything, schematism, categories, etc., although it is precisely this concept that is given a place in *CPR*, mainly in transcendental aesthetics.

¹ The article is a result of the research stay at the Institute of Philosophy of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava in 2025. The research was supported by the National Scholarship Programme of the Slovak Republic (NSP).

1. Judgement and Intuition

Kant says in the preface to the second edition of *CPR* that regardless of who proved the equilateral triangle theorem, he made a significant breakthrough in thinking: he proceeded from his self-created notion of the figure a priori (B XIII). In fact, this is the mystery of the ancient genius: how theoretical geometry emerges from the completely applied science of a surveyor, in which the proof is built solely on the data of reason. In natural science, a similar discovery occurred much later when it was discovered that the mind sees in reality only what it creates by its design (B XIII-XIV). Both mathematics and natural science (and by natural science, Kant means above all physics) are sciences that build their knowledge on synthetic judgements a priori.

The first mention of intuition in the *CPR* appears in relation to mathematics, which can advance cognition far through *a priori* principles insofar as these principles can be represented in intuition (A1 / B1). From his point of view, all mathematical judgements are given a priori, and they are synthetic (Asmus 1973, p. 37). Kant demonstrates this through the example of 7+5=12, arguing that the concept of 12 cannot be derived merely from analysing the concepts of 7 and 5.

Usually, if one speaks of judgment, the realm of logic is implied. In transcendental aesthetics, we speak of analytical and synthetic judgments, but the difference between them is not so much logical for Kant. According to Kant's thought, analytical judgements are based on the law of contradiction. The law of contradiction states that two or contradictory or opposite judgements cannot be simultaneously true. In other words, an object either has a certain property, or it does not — this knowledge derives directly from the object itself, making it essentially tautological. This is the crucial difference between purely logical thinking and achieving something new. Actually, here we come to the new type of judgments, namely synthetic judgments, thanks to which a new understanding a priori is possible. Synthetic judgements need completely different principles, namely the principles of intuition. He writes in Prolegomena:

One must go beyond these concepts, in making use of the intuition that corresponds to one of the two, such as one's five fingers, or (like Segner in his arithmetic) five points, and in that manner adding the units of the five given in intuition step by step to the concept of seven. One therefore truly amplifies one's concept through this proposition 7 + 5 = 12 and adds to the first concept a new one that was not thought in it; that is, an arithmetical proposition is always synthetic, which can be seen all the more plainly in the case of somewhat larger numbers, for it is then clearly evident that, though we may turn and twist our concept as we like, we could never find the sum through the mere analysis of our concepts, without making use of intuition (Kant 2002, Prolegomena, 64, 4:269).

The example with the sum of 12 demonstrates this. All mathematical foundations, as synthetic, are based only on intuition: "[...] the mathematical principles [...] are drawn only from intuition, not from the pure concept of the understanding [...]" (A149 / B189). A synthetic judgement can be neither a relation of identity nor a relation of contradiction (B194). It is as if Kant divorces pure logic and the faculty of intuition. Analytical judgements are based on logical tautologies, while intuition becomes the basis for obtaining new knowledge.

However, Kant identifies another crucial function: in judgments, intuition serves to unite subject and predicate (B 17) (Grüne 2009, p. 30), thereby revealing intuition's supra-logical function, operating beyond mere logical analysis².

2. Through Intuition the Object is given to Consciousness

We perceive things that are outside of us. For as long as philosophy has existed, philosophers have tried to answer this paradox of how external things become cognizable from a theory of cognition. Let me formulate a tentative thesis: in Kant's theory of knowledge, intuition plays a connecting role between things and cognition.³

As is known in *CPR*, it is postulated that there are limits to our cognition. Firstly, we cognize a phenomenon, not the thing in itself, and secondly, the condition of this cognition is the a priori forms of space and time, which are the property of the subject. Usually, when one speaks of the distinction between the thing-in-itself and the appearance, it is said that the comprehension of the thing-in-itself is hindered by the a priori forms of space and time, which are the product of our mind, and do not exist in reality. Here, we are dealing with a

It is important to emphasize that the most popular example of 7 + 5 is used to explain the role of intuition. It is clear that the notions and transcendental schematism are important for the formation of new knowledge, which I will discuss later. However, it is significant to stress that intuition is fundamental for the formation of new mathematical and geometric knowledge. And this is their essential difference from logic, the laws of which are essentially tautological.

It should be noted that there is a temptation to interpret Kant's concept of intuition in phenomenological terms when it comes to the relation between subject and object. For example, Peter Baumanns interprets the concept of intuition in terms of intentionality. He writes that the term means in normal language, cognitive directing of oneself towards objects (Baumanns 1981, p. 70). I suppose that the intuition and the term intentionality still have quite different functional meanings. If for Brentano, and to a greater extent for Husserl, it is some act that has a centre, i.e. a certain initial effort, then intuition to Kantian transcendental philosophy is rather a foundational condition. When compared to Husserl's phenomenology, this it is akin to, rather, the pre-level (Ur-Schicht) of the consciousness, about which Husserl writes extensively in his manuscripts. Another possible interpretation of this concept could be related to the notion of looking, seeing, since etymologically Anschauung can be interpreted as anschauen (see, for example, Tilliette 2015, 7). However, this is fundamentally wrong, since Kant's transcendental contemplation is not gaze directed at an object, but grasping its physical essence. The blind also has intuitions (see Koriako 2004, p. 34; Adler, Gross 2016, p. 10). The treatment of intuition as looking is common in phenomenological analyses. For example, Heidegger interprets intuition as seeing (Heidegger 1979, p. 64). In Husserl's phenomenology we can find a large number of visual metaphors (see Mertens 2010).

certain duality: On the one hand, a priori forms a hindrance to the cognition of things, and on the other hand, they are a necessary condition.⁴

Kant writes: "In whatever way and by whatever means cognition may relate to objects, in any case, intuition is precisely how cognition directly relates to them and to which all thinking strives as a means" (A19 / B33). That is, we are dealing with a certain problem: on the one hand, a priori forms are a hindrance to "correct" cognition of things, while on the other hand, they are a necessary condition of cognition.

We perceive the appearance of an object. Here is his definition: "The undetermined object of an empirical intuition is called appearance (Erscheinung)" (A20 / B34). What is meant by an undetermined object of empirical intuition?

It is important to point out that Kant's notion of intuition itself is heterogeneous. In the previous chapter, we spoke about intuition having a supra-logical function. Here, we are talking about two types of intuition, pure intuition and empirical intuition. If the first is understood as a priori space and time, the second type of intuition is understood as having a relation to our various cognitive faculties.

An appearance is given in empirical intuition. That is, it is a matter of perception, which at a later stage will be categorised through transcendental deduction. Then, we will no longer be dealing with an appearance but with a formalised phenomenon⁵.

3. Pure Intuition and empirical Intuition

As we have already seen, when it comes to the role of intuition in transcendental aesthetics, one usually mentions the a priori forms of our intuition, space and time, through which synthetic judgements a priori become possible (A 39 / B56). They are pure intuition, existing before all actual perception, and it is they that allow experience to materialise (A42 / B60).

Meanwhile, Kant subdivides intuition not only into pure intuition but also into empirical intuition. Moreover, this relationship between these two types of intuition is a philosophical problem that Kant himself does not thematise. Its solution is no less significant and difficult than the relation between sensible intuition or empirical intuition and a priori categories.

The pure form of all intuition, which is in the soul a priori, is called pure intuition (B35). The forms of intuition are a kind of "receptacle" in which and based on which transcendent objects are represented. The "topography" of intuition must be understood symbolically as a thought experiment similar to Descartes' wax example in his Second Meditation. There, Descartes separates the accidental properties of wax from its essential nature—after the wax melts, only extension remains as its fundamental property. However, how the spatial outline is perceived by consciousness is not subject to Descartes' consideration. Kant, on the contrary, says that the extension of things can be perceived only thanks to the existence of a priori space and time. It is necessary to make an important note: the things Kant speaks about are the physical objects. Therefore, such qualities as taste, colour, and smell are not necessarily non-principled properties of a thing. If we strip away all the randomly conceivable properties from the body, what remains is the most important - extension and outline. Kant says quite clearly that such sensibilities as sight, hearing, touch, colour, sound, and heat cannot, like space, give cognition of an object a priori (A28 / B44). This is because colour and taste are subjective and dependent on the individual. As a result, we have the things that physicists deal with. And this means that the most objective and universal things are space and the shape of the object.

As previously noted, through sensation, we obtain representations of an undetermined object as appearance. Regarding the relationship between the two types of intuition, empirical intuition provides us with representations of an undetermined object's appearance, complete with its sensible properties such as colour and smell. However, the very principle possibility of such empirical intuition is funded by the presence of a priori forms of sensibility in the transcendental subject. At a higher level, we are dealing with the subjects of physicists, for whom extension and outlines are essential.

The function of pure intuition could be defined as a necessary condition of mathematical experience. In contrast, by means of sensible intuition, things are given to us as undetermined objects of experience, which then, by means of categories, become the subject of natural scientific experience. However, there are two difficulties: firstly, it is not entirely clear why Kant introduces the notion of sensible (empirical) intuition, whereas it would be sufficient to speak of sensible perception. Secondly, the relation between pure intuition and sensible intuition remains uncertain, since they are of quite different natures. Let us denote these problems as aporias of Kant's doctrine of intuition.

4. Intellectual Intuition

This paragraph is supposed to be the shortest since Kant aims to be quite clear about the limits of human cognition. While the topic of intuition in general, has been given little space in the short *Transcendental Aesthetics*, the topic of intellectual intuition is mentioned only a few times in the *CPR*. It is worth noting, however, that, strange as it may seem, this very notion received great resonance in the transcendental philosophy of Fichte, Schelling, and the German Romantics.

⁴ In this one can see a certain aporia in Kant's reasoning, since on the one hand, because intuition is the principle of a priori forms of space and time, it makes it difficult to comprehend the thing-in-itself. On the other hand, Kant will later speak (though quite briefly) about a special type of intellectual intuition that is accessible only to divine providence.

⁵ For more details on the problem of distinguishing between appearance and phenomenon, see Krioukov, 2020.

The first mention of intellectual intuition appears at the very end of transcendental aesthetics. There is no way for an ordinary human being to go beyond intuition, which is limited by space and time. A divine being could possess such an ability. But we cannot know anything about it (B72).

Kant returns to this theme for the second time when he speaks of the noumenon. The context of reflection concerns the relation between sensible perception (empirical intuition) and concepts. The thesis at issue here is that the pure concepts of reason can only have empirical meaning (A247 / B303). That is, there is some illusion as to whether concepts can be used without empirical application to be able to cognize a thing as it is in itself, a cognition that would be noumenal. Kant cautions that reason cannot bypass sense perception. Any attempt to apprehend the essence of things-in-themselves through reason alone can only lead to an understanding of the noumenon in its negative sense.

Briefly, if there is cognition of things as appearance, it is only because cognition is necessarily connected with sensuality. If we speak of the possibility of extra-sensible cognition, then it is impossible for man. Kant speaks of non-sensible intuition inaccessible to human beings (A256 / B312). That is, non-sensible intuition is equated with intellectual intuition.

For these reasons, understanding this mode of intuition is challenging. There is also the additional complexity of comprehending how a divine being can contemplate. As Kant notes, intellectual intuition is not accessible to humans but is exclusively available to the divine being (B72). But we can make two attempts at understanding. The first concerns the fact that the divine being has such a faculty that empirical sensible intuition is not necessary for it, and it already knows about all objects not as appearances but as things in themselves, bypassing the stage of sensible perception. The second is that the divine being, by contemplating things, thereby creates them⁶. The divine intellect does not represent but produces objects by its representations (B145). That is, here we are dealing with a modified realism of the Middle Ages, understood in the context of divine creation. It is worth noting that this very notion had great resonance in the transcendental philosophy of Fichte, Schelling, and the German Romantics.

5. Intuition and Categories

The relationship between these concepts in the *CPR* is most definite. In mathematics, we cannot find the sum of numbers from the categories of numbers alone. For this, we need intuition (B16), which we have already discussed above

The fact that categories and intuitions are different in nature is a well-known thing in Kant and is connected with the much-quoted statement about empty categories and blind intuitions, as well as with the claim that somewhere, perhaps, there is a common root of both cognitive faculties. That is, there is a connection between categories and intuitions, but it is inaccessible to our cognition. It is important to specify the following points: firstly, we are talking about sensible and not pure intuition, the relation between which, as we have just pointed out, is also problematic; secondly, the distinction between these two concepts is most definite. It cannot be said that categories are, in any sense, intuitions, but intuitions are akin to categories under certain conditions of certainty.

However, there is another important theme that links these two concepts. It is the problem of how transcendental categories are related to the sensible (empirical intuition). This is possible through transcendental deduction. The main principle is transcendental schematism. The mechanism of transcendental deduction is well known. Let me remind you that the condition of deduction is time as the basis of schematism. Kant writes: "Objects are therefore given to us by means of sensibility, and it alone affords us intuitions; but they are **thought** through the understanding, and from it arise concepts " (A19 / B33).

To recapitulate briefly: The synthesis of the variety of sense perceptions that can be summarised as categories is a function of the faculty of imagination. When different perceptions are synthesised in a single intuition, a category is obtained. Kant writes:

The same function that gives unity to the different representations **in a judgment** also gives unity to the mere synthesis of different representations **in an intuition**, which, expressed generally, is called the pure concept of understanding (A79 / B105).

Thus, a table of categories emerges: the first two categories (quality and quantity) refer to objects of intuition, while the second two (existence and modality) concern the existence of these objects (B110). The first pair is mathematical in nature, while the second is dynamic.

If transcendental schematism is a function, then the condition of synthesis is the I-thought (Ich denke) accompanying all my representations (B132). "So I am conscious of my identical self in relation to the manifold [present] in the representations that are given to me in intuition, because I call them all my representations, which constitute one representation" (B135).

I resume the relation between categories and intuition as follows. The multitude of sensible intuitions is united in the idea of one object as an appearance, still undetermined by means of categories. Categories are the condition for the emergence of general knowledge about the undetermined object of sensible intuition. The manifold sensible intuitions, by means of the productive imagination, form one object of experience, namely, appearance. By means of categories, i.e. general knowledge, specific knowledge about this currently

⁶ For example, Andrea Gentile says that Kant understands intellectual intuition as a creative, object-setting intuition. Intellectual intuition is, in other words, the divine intuition of traditional philosophy (Gentile 2018, p. 100).

⁷ Adler interprets this relation as the well-known historical-philosophical relation of spirit and matter (Adler 2016, p. 28).

perceived object is obtained (see Mohr, Willaschek 1998, p. 19, 20). Intuition and categories are homonyms. Both of these terms are necessary for experience, which is cognition and based on synthetic judgements, to take place⁸.

6. Intuition is the Condition of Experience9

One of the very first sentences of the CPR states:

There is no doubt whatever that all our cognition begins with experience [...] whether straightaway (directe) or through a detour (indirecte), must ultimately be related to intuitions, thus, in our case, to sensibility, since there is no other way in which objects can be given to us (B1).

Kant specifies that although all cognition is preceded by experience, not all cognition is entirely derived from experience (B2). He means the distinction between a priori knowledge and empirical knowledge. The former is not experience in the strict sense of the word.

The Kantian formula of experiential cognition states that experience arises from the connection between sensible intuition and categories. Without this essential connection, intuition remains blind, and concepts remain empty of content (A51 / B75). Related to this understanding of experience is also the famous division of the human faculties into two trunks: reason and the senses, which are so important for the realisation of cognition (A15 / B29). These repeatedly quoted statements of Kant indirectly confirm an important premise of his philosophy that the relationship between sensible intuition and categories is an indispensable condition of all experience.

7. Intuition and Representation

The distinction between these concepts, on the contrary, is one of the most interesting and difficult problems in Kant's philosophy. The distinction is difficult to make since Kant very often uses the two terms synonymously. When reading the *CPR*, the following questions inevitably arise: Is intuition a representation, or, on the contrary, is representation a special type of intuition? If so, how are they co-equal; if not, how do they relate, and what is the difference in their functions? The main question remains, nonetheless: How necessary was it to introduce the notion of intuition if there is already a similar notion of representation? It seems that the answer to this question could shed light on the role and scope of intuition in transcendental philosophy.

A few examples: "Things in space and time, however, are only given insofar as they are perceptions (representations accompanied with sensation), hence through empirical representation ". And below, he speaks of "empirical intuition" (B147). In another example, Kant writes: "Space is a necessary representation, a priori, that is the ground of all outer intuitions." (A24 / B39). That is, space is a representation. But immediately, Kant writes a few lines below that space is "pure intuition". Other confusing quotes: "That representation, however, which can only be given through a single object, is an intuition" (A32 / B 47). "We have therefore wanted to say that all our intuition is nothing but the representation of appearance [...]" (A 42 / B 59). In one case, representation is intuition; in another case, intuition is the same as representation.

The number of quotations in which these concepts are interchangeable in meaning could be multiplied. However, I believe that the concept of intuition is a more fundamental concept than the concept of representation¹⁰. It seems that we can find the answer, for example, in the following quotation: "What then must the representation of space be for such a cognition of it to be possible? It must originally be intuition [...] But this intuition must be encountered in us a *priori*, i.e., prior to all perception of an object, thus it must be pure, not empirical intuition" (A 25 / B 41). From this citation, it follows that representation is first of all intuition.

Here is what Kant writes with regard to time: "For then this form of inner intuition can be represented prior to the objects, thus a priori" (A 35 / B49). Here, the verb to represent (vorstellen) must be interpreted in the sense of understanding (verstehen). Further, let me quote the following: "The faculty of representation is the faculty of representing an object in intuition also without the presence of that object" (B151) - representation is possible only based on intuition (!).

I treat the relation of representation and intuition as follows: based on intuition as a pure form, various representations are possible. Despite the ambiguous relationship between these concepts, I believe that intuition is a more fundamental moment than representation, or rather, thanks to the presence of intuition, representation is possible, although Kant does not explain this directly in *CPR*.

8. Intuition, Thinking, Cognition

When one speaks about the theory of knowledge, one points to the existence, since the early modern period, of two strategies, empiricism and rationalism. The solution proposed by Kant lies, as it were, between these

For Kant, the attitude of thinking means the possibility to operate first of all with categories. In this respect, the question arises: is it possible to think using intuition? Although Kant's answer is negative, thinking about this topic has very far-reaching consequences (Briedbach, Vercellone 2011, p. 9).

⁹ The topic of experience in transcendental philosophy in general, and in Kant in particular, is extremely interesting and extensive. Since the format of this article presupposes the setting of the main accents in the understanding of the term intuition, in this paragraph, I point out only the principal points in connection with experience and intuition. More on the problem of experience see Baum 2015; Ginsborg 2006; Gutschmidt, Krioukov 2025.

¹⁰ See also Grüne 2009, p. 11.

two extreme positions (Mohr, Willaschek 1998, 19). One option for "reconciling" these extreme positions is the introduction and use of intuition as a middle term uniting sensuality and concepts.

Thinking and cognition, according to Kant, are not the same. He writes:

To **think** of an object and to cognize an object are thus not the same. For two components belong to cognition: first, the concept, through which an object is thought at all (the category), and second, the intuition, through which it is given; for if an intuition corresponding to the concept could not be given at all, then it would be a thought as far as its form is concerned, but without any object, and by its means no cognition of anything at all would be possible, since, as far as I would know, nothing would be given nor could be given to which my thought could be applied (B146).

Category or concept, through which the object is thought and intuition, through which the appearance becomes the object of thought - these are two components of cognition (A 92 / B125). According to Kant, cognition is a necessarily established connection between categories and sensible intuition (A 50 / B74) (Mohr, Willaschek 1998, 83). Reason can contemplate nothing, and the senses can think nothing. Only from their combination can cognition arise. At the same time, the principle of the emergence of categories is the spontaneity of thinking, while sensible intuition is based on receptivity to impressions (A 68 / B93). The function of reason is the ability to make judgements (A69 / B94).

The intuitions provide an as-yet unformed object, which is transformed into knowledge through the connection with categories. The guarantee that the disparate intuitions have something in common is the transcendental unity of the apperception "I think" (B131). The whole variety of sensible intuition is governed by this supreme principle of thought (B136).

The connection between categories and cognition is indisputable within the historical-philosophical context. Kant himself asserts that thinking is cognition through categories. We have just seen that intuition is a necessary component of cognition; without it, cognition cannot occur, nor can it happen without a category. However, how is intuition related to thinking? Here is a succinct quote: "Thinking is the action of relating a given intuition to an object" (A 247 / B304). In other words, if cognition is the interrelationship of categories and sensible intuition, then thinking is the ability to relate subject and intuition. At the same time, earlier in the *CPR*, he argued that intuition does not necessarily depend on the functions of thinking (A91 / B123). The situation may seem contradictory at first glance. Nevertheless, there is a certain internal logic to Kant's reasoning: thinking is possible only with the help of categories, but cognition is always intuitions plus categories. My interpretation is that intuition does not require thinking, but it is possible to think with intuition. Intuitions are more fundamental than categories (Grüne 2009, p. 14).

Let's summarise: cognition is a transcendental experience and equally sensible or empirical intuition plus categories. Thinking, according to Kant, consists of the ability to demonstrate the relationship between sense intuitions and concepts. I suggest that thinking can be understood not only as operating with transcendental categories but also with intuition.

9. Conclusions

In thesis form, I have tried to present that the concept of intuition is a fundamental concept for Kant's transcendental philosophy. The general understanding of how transcendental consciousness functions depends on understanding its function. There is no single homogeneous definition of intuition in the *CPR*. However, for all philosophers, this concept plays an important methodological role. Problems with the definition of this concept indicate that this concept lies on the edge of what is comprehensible by the human intellect. Despite its etymology, the word intuition (Anschauung) does not mean looking. The blinds also have intuition.

The relation between categories and intuitions is most definite since they complement each other so that knowledge and experience can emerge. The relation between representations and intuitions is less certain, and Kant often uses them as synonyms. At the same time, it can be argued that for Kant's transcendental philosophy, the concept of intuition is more fundamental when choosing between these two concepts.

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