

# ANSCHAUUNG

Authored by  
**mohammad looti**

November 11, 2025

## RECOMMENDED CITATION

mohammad looti (2025). *ANSCHAUUNG*. PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES. Retrieved from <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=69028>

## ANSCHAUUNG

**Primary Disciplinary Field(s):** Philosophy (Epistemology, Transcendental Idealism)

### 1. Core Definition: Immediate Representation

The term **Anschauung**, a fundamental concept in German philosophy, particularly central to the epistemological project of Immanuel Kant, translates generally to 'intuition,' 'contemplation,' or 'viewing.' However, within the specific context of Kant's transcendental philosophy, it acquires a highly technical and precise meaning that distinguishes it sharply from the everyday English understanding of intuition as a gut feeling or instinct. Kant defines **Anschauung** as the immediate relationship of the subject to an object, the mode through which objects are directly given to us. This immediacy is crucial; it stands in direct opposition to conceptual knowledge (known as **Begriffe**), which is mediated, discursive, and relies on the faculty of understanding (*Verstand*) to combine, judge, and structure representations. While concepts are general and abstract, intuitions are singular and concrete, offering the raw, unanalyzed content that is necessary for any cognitive experience of the world.

In the framework presented in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant posits that our knowledge arises from two primary sources: sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*), which provides the intuitions (**Anschauungen**), and understanding (*Verstand*), which furnishes the concepts. Neither source alone is sufficient to generate objective knowledge; "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind." Thus, **Anschauung** serves as the indispensable content--the initial data--that populates the structure of our experience. When a person perceives a chair, the immediate, singular apprehension of its shape, color, and location is the **Anschauung**. It is the raw 'appearance' of the object prior to the application of conceptual categories like substance or cause. This immediate apprehension is what grounds our empirical reality, providing the phenomenal material that the mind must then synthesize and judge to form complete knowledge.

The defining characteristic of **Anschauung** is its singular and direct nature. It is not arrived at through inference, logical deduction, or comparison with other objects; rather, it is presented instantaneously to the subject. This immediacy allows the subject to recognize an object directly, such as recognizing fire instantaneously upon seeing it, as suggested by the historical example. This immediate awareness contrasts deeply with discursive thought, where one must analyze characteristics, apply rules, and construct a judgment (e.g., "This red, hot, flickering phenomenon fits the concept of 'fire'"). For Kant, this immediate apprehension of sensible content is the necessary starting point for all human cognition, marking the boundary between the receptivity of the senses and the spontaneity of the understanding.

## 2. Etymology and Historical Development in German Philosophy

The word **Anschauung** is derived from the German verb *anschauen*, meaning 'to look at,' 'to gaze upon,' or 'to contemplate.' This etymological root emphasizes the visual and perceptual nature of the concept. Before Kant utilized it as a technical philosophical term, **Anschauung** was used in common language and earlier philosophical texts (e.g., by Leibniz's follower, Christian Wolff) to denote simple perception or immediate observation, often carrying connotations of deep contemplation or insight. However, it was Kant who formalized the term, anchoring it firmly in his transcendental epistemology and thus transforming it into a cornerstone of modern philosophical inquiry regarding the limits and sources of human knowledge.

The need for a technical term like **Anschauung** arose from Kant's project to solve the conflict between rationalism (knowledge derived purely from reason) and empiricism (knowledge derived purely from sensation). Rationalists, such as Descartes, had often relied on 'intellectual intuition'--a direct, non-sensible grasp of necessary truths. Empiricists, such as Locke and Hume, stressed sensory experience but struggled to account for universal and necessary truths (a priori knowledge). Kant's innovation was to define **Anschauung** specifically as a faculty of sensibility (receptivity), ensuring that for human beings, intuition is always tied to experience and sensation. By restricting human intuition to the sensible, Kant rejected the possibility of a human 'intellectual intuition' that could grasp things-in-themselves (noumena) directly, thereby setting definitive boundaries for metaphysical speculation.

Following Kant, the concept of **Anschauung** was further developed and sometimes contested by subsequent German Idealists. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, for instance, introduced the concept of intellectual intuition in a manner that Kant had explicitly reserved for a divine or perfect intellect. Fichte used it to describe the immediate self-apprehension of the 'I' or the ego, departing significantly from Kant's restrictive definition. Similarly, philosophers like Hegel integrated and modified the term, though its foundational role as the initial, non-conceptual content of experience remains inseparable from Kantian philosophy, defining much of the vocabulary used in subsequent discussions about perception and knowledge acquisition in continental thought.

## 3. The Kantian Framework: Sensation, Intuition, and Concept

To fully appreciate **Anschauung**, one must understand its place within the intricate architecture of the Critique of Pure Reason, specifically the Transcendental Aesthetic. Kant divides cognition into two main branches: sensibility (the capacity for receiving representations when affected by objects) and understanding (the capacity for thinking objects through concepts). Sensation (Sensation) is the raw effect produced upon the mind when an object affects our senses. Intuition (**Anschauung**) is the resulting representation of that object, placed within the framework of space and time. A concept (Begriff), conversely, is a general rule or predicate used by the understanding to

categorize and judge the intuitions provided by sensibility.

Sensibility is fundamentally passive or receptive; it waits to be affected. When light rays strike the eye, or sound waves strike the ear, the resulting mental state is sensation. **Anschauung** is the organization of these sensations into a coherent, singular image or datum. For example, when viewing a green tree, the sensation is the raw input of greenness and tree-like shape, but the **Anschauung** is the unified, singular representation of *that specific tree* existing in a particular location at a particular time. This process is immediate because it does not require the intervention of judgment or logical comparison; it is the mind's inherent way of ordering incoming data.

Crucially, **Anschauung** serves as the bridge between the external world (the unknowable thing-in-itself, or noumenon) and the internal structure of the mind. Everything we experience empirically--the phenomenal world--is fundamentally constructed from **Anschauungen** filtered through the inherent structures of the mind. Concepts then operate upon these intuitions. If **Anschauung** provides the image of the object, concepts provide the cognitive apparatus for saying *what* the object is. Without the immediate presence of the **Anschauung**, concepts remain empty intellectual placeholders; without concepts, the flood of sensory data would remain an unintelligible, non-objective manifold, unable to be recognized as 'fire' or 'table.'

#### 4. Forms of Intuition: Space and Time (A Priori Intuitions)

Kant further differentiates **Anschauung** into two types: empirical and pure (or a priori). Empirical intuitions are those that relate to specific sensory experiences and rely on the presence of an object in the world (e.g., the intuition of a specific red square). Pure intuitions, however, are the necessary, non-empirical conditions under which all empirical intuitions must occur. These pure forms of sensible intuition are **Space** and **Time**. Kant argues that space and time are not properties of objects-in-themselves, nor are they abstract concepts derived from experience; rather, they are subjective forms inherent in the human faculty of sensibility.

Space is identified as the pure form of outer sense, the necessary framework required for us to intuit objects as existing side-by-side or outside of us. Time is the pure form of inner sense, the necessary framework for us to intuit the sequence and coexistence of our own mental states. They are intuitions because they are singular (there is only one Space, and all spaces are parts of it; similarly for Time) and immediate, not general concepts. We cannot conceive of an object existing outside of space and time; thus, they are necessary, a priori conditions for the possibility of any experience. This claim is central to Transcendental Idealism, which asserts that the objects we experience are appearances constituted by our cognitive faculties, particularly the forms of **Anschauung**.

The significance of designating space and time as pure **Anschauungen** rather than concepts is profound. If they were concepts, they would be derived from experience and lack the necessity

required to ground mathematics and geometry. By establishing them as pure intuitions, Kant ensures that the necessary, universal truths of mathematics (synthetic a priori judgments) are possible because they describe the structure of the very framework (space and time) in which all our sensible experience must necessarily be situated. This guarantees the objective validity of Euclidean geometry and Newtonian physics within the phenomenal realm, simultaneously limiting their applicability to the world of appearances.

## 5. Empirical Intuition (*Anschauung Empirica*)

Empirical intuition, or *Anschauung empirica*, is the concrete sensory content derived from the affection of our sense organs by objects. This is the common meaning suggested by the example of instantly recognizing a common object like fire. It is the immediate sensory representation, which, while organized by the a priori forms of space and time, still depends entirely on the contingent presence of a sensible object. Empirical intuition provides the material component of knowledge, without which the forms of thought (the categories of the understanding) would have nothing to structure.

This form of **Anschauung** is inextricably linked to sensation. The moment the senses receive an impression, the sensibility immediately organizes that impression spatially and temporally, creating the singular, concrete representation of the object. For instance, when we see a ship sailing, the various raw sensations (colors, shapes, movement) are synthesized by the receptive faculty into one unified empirical intuition of *that* ship moving *now* in *that* part of the visual field. This initial, unified representation is what the understanding then takes up to apply concepts (e.g., substance, causality) and form objective judgments ("The ship is moving slowly across the water").

It is important to note that empirical intuition is inherently subjective in the Kantian sense: it is conditioned by the unique makeup of human sensibility. If human beings possessed a different set of receptive faculties--if we were sensitive to different ranges of light or sound, or if our experience structured reality using different underlying forms than space and time--our empirical **Anschauung** would be radically different, leading to a different phenomenal world. This emphasis underscores that human knowledge, while objective within the phenomenal world, remains fundamentally relative to the structure of the human mind.

## 6. Intellectual Intuition (Non-Kantian Context)

While the central use of **Anschauung** in Kant is strictly tied to human sensibility (sensible intuition), the concept of 'intellectual intuition' (*Anschauung intellectualis*) exists as a crucial philosophical counterpoint. Kant firmly denied that human beings possess intellectual intuition, reserving this faculty only for a non-sensible intelligence, specifically a divine intellect. An intellectual intuition would be a form of knowing that does not receive data passively (receptivity)

but actively creates or generates the object simply by knowing it. It would be an intuitive intellect whose representations are simultaneously the creation of reality itself, thereby grasping the thing-in-itself (Noumenon) directly, without the mediation of space and time.

Kant's rejection of intellectual intuition for humans is the core of his critical philosophy, establishing the limits of human reason. Because we only have sensible intuition, our knowledge is restricted to appearances (phenomena). We can never immediately grasp the ultimate reality of objects or metaphysical truths through mere thought, as rationalists had claimed. This limitation ensures that human knowledge is necessarily dependent on experience and the organizing structures of our own mind.

Despite Kant's explicit limitation, the concept of intellectual intuition was pivotal for the post-Kantian Idealists. Fichte used intellectual intuition to describe the immediate awareness of the self, arguing that the self-positing 'I' must be grasped intuitively, not conceptually, to account for self-consciousness and freedom. Schelling further developed this idea, linking intellectual intuition to artistic creation and the immediate grasp of the absolute identity of nature and spirit. These thinkers redefined the term, using it to describe a philosophical method aimed at transcending the sensible limitations Kant had imposed, often leading to charges of having abandoned the critical rigor of Kant's system.

## 7. Significance in Transcendental Idealism

The technical deployment of **Anschauung** is arguably the most significant move in Kant's establishment of his philosophical system. By defining intuition as immediate and sensible, Kant was able to successfully synthesize the opposing camps of rationalism and empiricism. He agreed with the empiricists that all content of knowledge must ultimately derive from experience (sensation, organized into **Anschauungen**), but he simultaneously agreed with the rationalists that knowledge requires necessary, a priori structures (the pure **Anschauungen** of space and time, and the categories of the understanding).

Furthermore, **Anschauung** provides the necessary grounding for synthetic a priori judgments, which are propositions that are both informative (synthetic) and universally true independent of experience (a priori). Without the pure intuitions of space and time, synthetic a priori knowledge, particularly in mathematics and geometry, would be impossible. The immediate, singular nature of these pure intuitions allows for construction in space and time, which is the methodology used by mathematical reasoning. This insight solved Hume's challenge regarding the nature of necessary causal connections by relocating necessity not in the objects themselves, but in the a priori structures (including **Anschauung**) that constitute our phenomenal experience of those objects.

In sum, **Anschauung** is the formal mechanism through which receptivity operates. It is the necessary condition for objects to be given to us. This placement ensures that knowledge is never

purely intellectual speculation (empty concepts) nor mere unorganized sensory input (blind intuitions). It locks human knowledge within the realm of possible experience, providing the essential concrete content that the abstract conceptual framework must operate upon to produce genuinely objective, though finitely limited, knowledge.

## Further Reading

Immanuel Kant

Critique of Pure Reason

Transcendental Idealism

Noumenon

Johann Gottlieb Fichte

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling

ARABPSYCHOLOGY.COM