Transcendental-Phenomenological Proof
&
Descriptive Metaphysics

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Mark Sacks (1953-2008).

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1 Transcendental Reflection

The suggestion that there are certain limitations to the kinds of things one can know is a familiar one; one not particularly philosophical or controversial. That there are different ways in which the notion of limitation can be used with reference to forms of knowledge is a fact that invites philosophical controversy in many quarters, extending not merely through the question’s home terrain of epistemology, but also, amongst other areas of inquiry, that great “queen of the sciences”, metaphysics. Beyond the commonsense curiosity regarding the possibility of particular empirical facts being or not being the case, questions of limitation tend to arise philosophically with respect to such things as knowledge of the external world, knowledge of other minds, and perhaps more disturbingly, the validity of rational inquiry and even knowledge itself. It is clear that philosophy’s turning of such things held dear into objects of scrutiny can be a sometimes-uncomfortable enterprise.

By engrossing oneself in these general questions the more specific idea arises that there might be either describable or perhaps even circumscribable conditions accountable for some of these purported limitations (in the latter case, to set out on the task of defining the limits of limits). This is a further specification\(^1\) that can be taken in a number of ways, both philosophical and non-philosophical. We might think of the latter grouping as involving, in the most respectable cases, a scientific account of limitation; in the terms relevant for us here, perhaps of physical laws describing conditions of perception for a perceiving subject, for example.\(^2\) That there is a tension between this way and the former case pertaining to a philosophical understanding of the question of limitation is significant, and the depth of this significance will become thematic in the course of thinking pursued herein. Before broaching this line however, a very general picture of the scope of the family of questions to be addressed here should be situated appropriately.

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\(^1\) To refer to the general specification immediately above; not to, at this point, associate description and circumscription with non-philosophical and philosophical senses of limitation respectively.

\(^2\) To hazard a preliminary equivocation of "scientific" with "descriptive".

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Our way of approaching the question of limitation here will be via the variety of philosophy and philosophical method entitled “transcendental”. This variety of philosophical thinking brings with it persistent controversy not only in terms of what questions it might settle, yet also in terms of its very nature; it being a matter of debate what the term “transcendental” does, should, or even could mean. Preliminarily, and as ought to be evident in an essay’s concerning itself with a defence of such a thing, it is a stamp of the arguments to be developed and defended here that the term “transcendental” not only has sense, and is a variety of philosophical thinking worthy of investigation, yet is also a sound, methodical approach to philosophical problems of some merit.

The common term for the topic of this essay is then “transcendental arguments”, yet an important terminological point will be made here via the programmatic suggestion that one ought to reconceive the central task of such philosophical method and evidence such reconception by instead using the title “transcendental proof”. The question of precisely what is involved in reconsidering the main prerogative of certain kinds of transcendental argumentation—those spoken of here as “transcendental proof”—will be given extended treatment in hope of delivering a positive and novel answer which satisfies not only the demands of philosophical rigour, yet also the demand of attention to historical developments which ought to have alerted us to alternate ways in which to regard transcendental philosophy.

The reconception alluded to above, with regard to transcendental proof, essentially involves a change of perspective as to not only the impetus for something such as a transcendental method, yet also the end-goal of

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1 Recognition of the importance of this terminological point is present in the work of such philosophers as Manfred Baum, Kenneth Westphal, and Mark Sacks to note a few.
2 The typical association of what have been called “transcendental arguments” with their origin in Kant will be given suggestive treatment—although unfortunately not entirely satisfactory treatment—in terms of extension—by ranging this association to include what we might call “transcendental insights” found in Hegel and Husserl (Hegel will be suggestively referred to in Section 3.4.2 and Chapter 4, while we will see some affinities between Husserl’s phenomenology and the account we give in Section 3.2 of situated thought). Additionally, our historical sensitivity will involve also mentioning precisely what it is that has led to un-Kantian varieties of transcendental arguments to dominate the literature.
employing such a philosophical tool. Summarily, we can say that in contemporary philosophy the term “transcendental argument” has been used to refer to certain kinds of arguments that seek to establish the conditions of the possibility of something, X. In the main, and as is the topical drift here, particular cases of such arguments substitute for X such things as “the unity and objectivity of experience”, “the existence of language”, “the employment of the concept X”, “the capacity to refer to oneself”, and so on; that is, such arguments intend to establish something regarding our experience, our usage of language, or the existence of thought. Perhaps there is no more interesting philosophical task than delivering plausible answers to these kinds of questions. But equally, at times, it would appear that few more demanding philosophical tasks can be set—perhaps mostly with reference to the first of the epithets enclosed in inverted commas (the unity and objectivity of experience)—since very little in way of conclusion or agreement seems to have come, or to be on the horizon.

However, the intended aim for employing transcendental proof is to show how more than the inference from one or more premises, in propositional form, stating some fact/s about experience, to a conclusion in propositional form making some claim about the nature of experience—how more than this is needed to secure a grasp on the scope of transcendental knowledge. The shape of transcendental proof involves locating arguments that make such claims about experience within the experiential framework about which they make such claims; transcendental proof aims to evidence the nature of empirical thought by encouraging reflection as to what is involved in having such thought. In this way, transcendental proof ought to be seen as directed at answering the “how possible” questions which, to put the thought in Kantian dress, amounts to enquiring as to the shape and limits of possible experience. For, as Kant said, “in transcendental knowledge...our guide is the

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1 We can here note the similarity between the idea of “what it is to have a thought”, or “what is involved in having a thought about an experiential framework”, and the idea of “what it takes to have a concept”. Unfortunately, we cannot address the questions this fascinating issue raises. For now, we can note that the idea of what is involved in having empirical thought will be given attention in Section 3.2 entitled “Situated Thought”.

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possibility of experience.”

Transcendental proof ought then to be seen as a philosophical method related to those familiar transcendental arguments which have occupied so many philosophers in the recent past, the crucial difference being that such proof occupies itself not merely with the logical relations between the premises of an argument directed at establishing some conclusion about experience, yet is the crucial core of certain transcendental arguments and thereby evidences their truth for the kind of epistemic subject for which they have relevance. The opacity of this phrasing of the problem will only dissipate (if only partially) with an extended and focussed treatment; something which will be the topic of a later chapter. What we can note here, however, is that committing to a positive account of transcendental proof will involve reviving some theses from the doctrine of transcendental idealism, the lack of enthusiasm toward that doctrine notwithstanding. For although much recent philosophy concerns itself with Kantian questions, not all of such work has hopes for more than extraction of singular insights conceived of as separable from Kant’s larger and purportedly treacherous metaphysical claims. That being said, this essay is not primarily concerned with Kant exegesis either, since its focus is on reconstruction, although a more positive tone than is usual will be found here with respect to Kant’s general philosophical project regarding the scope and limits of human knowledge, even if this positive tone is primarily expressed in the determined effort to show how Kant’s project can be extended, even if not completed (this aspect of the essay pertains also to historical sensitivity vis-à-vis those philosophers after Kant who made their own attempt on similar epistemological problems).

Following on from this thought, we can observe how in recent times there have been numerous attempts at showing how Kant’s doctrine of transcendental idealism can be viewed in ways diverging from the orthodoxy

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1 Immanuel Kant (1998) Critique of Pure Reason, trans. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge University Press: A783/B811. Unless otherwise noted, all further references to Kant will be to this volume. Additionally, references of this kind will simply include the standard A and B edition page numbers.

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of the recent past. Arguably the most salient and focussed of these attempts lies in the pages of Henry Allison’s classic interpretive text *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense.* The interpretation of transcendental idealism offered there is known generally as the “two-aspect” view. It is a view that places emphasis on the general thought expressed by Kant’s admonitions in the chapter of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (hereafter *Critique*) entitled “On the ground of the distinction of all objects in general into phenomena and noumena” which involve insistence on a purely negative conception of “noumena”; i.e., one that makes no positive claim about the existence of things in themselves yet instead employs the negative conception of noumena as a way of drawing a limit to knowledge. I will not indulge in an evaluation of this interpretation of Kant’s doctrine of transcendental idealism here, although I will at times make references to certain interpretive claims made by Allison insofar as I believe such claims bring out a distinctive and important aspect of the kind of transcendental proof which it is the task of this essay to elucidate. Involving such a revised interpretation of transcendental idealism in an account of transcendental proof will therefore serve as a complementary task whereby such an interpretation raises hopes for a positive account of such transcendental proof as it might be possible to construct.

To clarify the position of the reading of transcendental idealism referred to above with respect to the typical reading apparently accepted by the majority of the philosophers concerned with transcendental arguments in the recent past, we can make note of how the traditional, or typical, reading has been referred to as the “two-world” view (sometimes also called the “two-object” view). Although not referred to as such by him, this interpretation of transcendental idealism is that generally accepted by the philosopher who represents the modern source of interest in transcendental arguments; that

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2 It is noteworthy that these admonitions are most explicit in the B edition of the *Critique*.

3 The linkage to Tractarian remarks is of course here tempting, although will not be a focus.
philosopher being P.F. Strawson. This fact is significant if we reflect on how much a shaping influence Strawson has had on the literature of transcendental arguments, and how his general conception of such arguments, as highly influential, has smuggled in its carriage a particular—now contested—reading of the doctrine to which some claim transcendental arguments (and especially transcendental proofs) are tied.

Admittedly, the question of whether transcendental arguments are separable from transcendental idealism is a question for elsewhere, however, it will emerge that the particular conception of transcendental proof argued for here is tied to some core theses of transcendental idealism.¹ As said, I will not be committing to Kant exegesis here, so I will simply drop Kant’s name from further references to that philosophical doctrine concerning us, since it ought to be possible to consider a particular reading of the central arguments of such a doctrine without engaging in dispute over what the one who advanced them meant precisely by them.²

To risk a brief digression, we can observe two unique argumentative strategies applied in the case of re-interpretation of a philosophical doctrine. Firstly, there are those who may recognise a solid core of sound and valid claims contained in a doctrine, or entailed by it, yet may find an aspect of their expression (perhaps through purported ineptitude of the original thinker) unacceptable such as to void the overall doctrine as itself sound and valid. Secondly, there are those who may recognise the same solid core of arguments which they, in seeing them as sound and valid, opt to trumpet as the intended truth of the doctrine, however obscured that core of truth may be.

¹ We will offer a proposal for these “core theses” in Section 3.5.
² Additionally, I will desist from associating Kant’s name with the doctrine at every turn since I believe this makes thorough re-interpretation more difficult whereby it seems incumbent upon one to claim “Kant meant to say...” or “Kant should have said, more consistently...” By alluding to transcendental idealism plain and simple we are able to make claims about such a doctrine without being open to attack from those who engage in textual exegesis to launch the appeal that “Kant did not say X, nor did he mean to say X”. A basic claim to be made, however, is that the doctrine of transcendental idealism can be taken to mean something other than it has been taken to mean by many. More generally, we might think of this trend as the symptom of a problem with attitudes toward the term “idealism” insofar as such attitudes are largely fearful.
by possible infelicities in related expressions of the force of the doctrine. If we think of these two strategies as possible options for one bearing positive hopes for such a core of arguments in the doctrine of transcendental idealism, we might think of the former strategy as aiming to extract these arguments out of their original context and apply them in a new model—although however happy it might be for such excellent core arguments to find a new home away from their purportedly abrasive neighbours, one wonders as to whether the original expression of the arguments themselves can be maintained, their force intact, if they are subjected to such extraction and relocation. We might also wonder if the second strategy, by attempting to reconceive the neighbourhood of the central core of argument is not in fact misconstruing it, however commendable it might be to “take the good with the bad”, so to speak. Both these argumentative strategies thus bear virtuous and poisonous fruit alike, and it may come down to temperament which one sees as the most encouraging.

To use the above paragraph as an instructive stepping stone, we can refer to the former strategy (let us call it “Strategy A”\(^1\)) as that employed by the philosopher whose work on transcendental proof will be the focus of the main, middle chapter of this essay: Mark Sacks. Apart from what else will be said regarding Sacks’s work, mainly in praise, it can be noted here that the extent to which transcendental idealism can simply be discarded in the way Sacks seems to intend it to be\(^2\) is up for debate. However, again, we will involve ourselves in such a debate briefly and only to the extent to which such an evaluation impacts on giving the best possible account of transcendental proof. Thus, from the outset it appears that it is a commitment, yet not one to

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\(^1\) This strategy will be commented upon with relation the latter strategy, which we will call “Strategy B”, in a later discussion (in Section 3.5) of what I take to be the relevant core arguments of transcendental idealism.

\(^2\) This attitude is taken toward transcendental idealism in Mark Sacks (2000) *Objectivity and Insight*, Oxford University Press. I will single out his later paper, Sacks (2005) *The Nature of Transcendental Argumentation*, International Journal of Philosophical Studies, 13, pp. 439-460, as an exception since it is not manifestly clear in that work exactly what attitude Sacks is taking toward transcendental idealism—particularly in regard to the aspect relevant for us here: its relationship to transcendental proof.

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articulate beyond the terms explicated just now, of the account of transcendental proof to be argued for here that such an account implicates a transcendently ideal model of knowledge. However, exactly what the core of such a model of knowledge comes to is unclear, so a suggestive proposal differing from the typically accepted version will be given in these pages.

To link up with the classic origin of transcendental argumentation and proof as found in Kant it can be noted that Kant’s original intended reflections were concerned with self-consciousness and the unity and objectivity of experience, both being topics of some of the most fascinating yet troublesome of philosophical problems. Kant’s reflections were most exhaustively engaged in within the section of the *Critique* entitled “Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding”, although other sections such as the Refutation of Idealism deal with related matters. It has been a hallmark of 20th century readings of these classic arguments that they are read through the looking glass of the philosophy of language, which is a happy fact for the most part where such a lens allows for a reshaping that vastly increases the perspicuity of (what seem to be) the originally intended ideas and results in reconstructions which glisten with clarity and power where their ancestors suffered from myopia or blurred vision. As noted above, the dark side of this fact resides in precisely the neglect of the arguable dependence of such philosophical edifice on, at least a substantial part of, if not all of, the doctrine in which they originated.

From the outset then, we can embrace the program of reconstructing Kant’s philosophical project in his Transcendental Deduction, epitomised by Strawson’s attempt in *The Bounds of Sense*,1 while keeping on guard with an awareness of the peculiar hazards encountered by Strawson’s strategy employed there, such as will emerge shortly. Strawson’s reading of Kant2 will,

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2 It should be noted that in Strawson (1997) *Kant’s New Foundations of Metaphysics*, in “Entity and Identity and Other Essays”, Oxford University Press, an interpretation of Kant’s transcendental idealism similar to the two-aspect view is considered. Strawson accords a little sympathy before announcing his discomfort with the way such a reading does not do justice

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unfortunately, not be something we are able to address here in full, although it is worth noting that in some of his later work\(^1\) it appears he was uncomfortable with several of his original claims and made attempts to rethink relevant issues where they arose.

To reconnect with our opening reflections, by considering the philosophical notion of limitation mentioned above, we can see quite readily how this notion relates to the term “transcendental”; although precisely what this relationship amounts to will prove to be an abiding problem for us in the analyses entered into here. Thus, a sensible entry onto the landscape comes in the form of a consideration of Kant’s framing of the notion transcendental:

“I entitle *transcendental* all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects insofar as this mode of knowledge is to be possible *a priori*.\(^2\)

Thus, from the very beginning Kant establishes a link between a priori knowledge and transcendental knowledge. We need to pay heed to this comment as it should be taken as a directive for investigation into the hopes to what seems to be the full force of Kant’s intentions. Strawson says: “If, in accordance with a purely negative concept of the noumenon, the thought of things in themselves is to be understood simply and solely as the thought of the very things of which human knowledge is possible, but the thought of them in total abstraction from what have been shown (or argued) to be the conditions of the very possibility of any such knowledge, then it must surely be concluded that the thought is empty; for the doctrine that we can have no knowledge of things as they are in themselves then reduces to a tautology: the tautology that knowledge of the things of which we can have knowledge is impossible except under the conditions under which it is possible; or: we can know of things only what we can know of them. In that case, the ‘idealism’ in Kant’s ‘transcendental idealism’ would appear as little more than a token name; or as, at most, the acknowledgement that there may be more to the nature of the very things we can have knowledge of than we can possibly know of them.” (Op. cit.: p. 241)

Given this sentiment, Strawson would seem to be in agreement with critics of the two-aspect view, such as Guyer, who view it as an “anodyne” reading of transcendental idealism.


\(^2\) Kant (1933) *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith, 2\(^{nd}\) ed., Macmillan: A11/B25. The Kemp Smith translation is employed here due to the efficacy with which it brings out the intended point.
for transcendental argumentation and transcendental proof, regardless of whether these two characterisations of knowledge are to be viewed, in the last analysis, as separable or not. Of related importance, then, is a sound understanding of what a priori knowledge means in its essence for Kant. He says that

“we can know a priori of things only what we ourselves have put into them.”¹

So it is clear that Kant’s conception of a priori knowledge is a variety of what has been called “maker’s knowledge”² insofar as such knowledge essentially involves reference to one’s own contribution to one’s knowledge. Ignoring the subtleties of Kant’s position for a moment, let us content ourselves that at least for him there is an indispensable connection here. Despite this, much 20th century work on transcendental arguments has construed them such that it is thought “any inference from a successful conceptual practice (use of concepts a priori) to its presuppositions is a transcendental argument.”³ Therefore, and as alluded to already, it is a main contention here that the dominant readings of the scope and limits of transcendental arguments err. Precisely how these readings err will be explored in the next chapter, although at this point we can make the preliminary remark that such contemporary readings spring from the rejection of the philosophical context out of which transcendental strategies originated; specifically, Kant’s transcendental idealism. The adoption of a purportedly empiricist or naturalistic outlook, through the influence of Hume, has resulted in contemporary views of all things transcendental being skewed, insofar as the condition of acceptance of them has been reconception—and not radical reconception either. Instead, the modern versions of transcendental arguments are modest and highly domesticated, and devoid of the apparent metaphysical excesses the

² This phrasing is used in Jaako Hintikka (1972) Transcendental Arguments: Genuine and Spurious, Nous, 6, pp. 274-280.
³ Op. cit.: p. 277. Hintikka asserts that this conception of transcendental arguments has done much to damage the possibility of accounting for them adequately.
possession of which by their ancestors has been the main subject of criticism.

Given this last point, we should have an understanding as to how conflict might arise regarding the interpretation of a fundamental aspect of transcendental arguments, since arguably not every account of the way inferences are made from successful conceptual practices to their presuppositions is going to involve an appeal to the notion of this as transcendental knowledge—as “maker’s knowledge”—and additionally, since arguably the task of unearthing the basic structure, or fundamental framework, of our most basic conceptual practices upon which all other understanding is based does not entail any claims about the structure of experience more generally, the latter being a central concern of Kant’s transcendental investigations.

We are now at a point at which a crude picture of the structure of this essay can be drawn. The following three chapters each deal with fairly specific tasks, although aim collectively at arriving at some kind of positive conclusion vis-à-vis transcendental proof and transcendental philosophy generally. Chapter 2 concerns itself with general problems encountered, and solutions offered, with regard to transcendental argumentation in the literature and concludes with a more specific diagnosis of the way forward. Chapter 3 makes an attempt at reconstructing and buttressing some of the arguments provided in the work of Mark Sacks vis-à-vis transcendental proof and, for its own part, concludes with some further diagnoses as to what more needs to be done to adequately construct such transcendental proof. Finally, Chapter 4 makes some suggestions and advances some arguments for a revised conception of the structure and role of transcendental proof, its relationship to transcendental philosophy generally, and its links to what Strawson has called “descriptive metaphysics”.¹

¹ Exploration of the nuances of this thought is, of course, the self-assigned task of Strawson (1959) Individuals: An essay in Descriptive Metaphysics, Methuen & Co. Ltd. Page references are to the Routledge edition of 2006.
2 Evaluating Transcendental Argumentation

2.1 The Scope of the Problem

When reflecting on themes that radiate from the idea that there are limitations for thought, we tend to conjure up such questions as follows: “What might it mean, or be, to have thoughts about a world insofar as they are intelligible as such?” That is, we might ask, “What requirements do we have, what conditions is it possible to enumerate, that must ground any coherent account of the way self-conscious thought about an objective world might be possible?”\(^1\) Arguments directed at resolving difficulties inherent in questions of this form are those to which we have already alluded; those generally known as “transcendental” forms of argument. As we also noted, such arguments have a curious history and are notorious for carrying controversial commitments; the reason for the characterisation of those commitments as such it will at this point be efficacious to illuminate. An early diagnosis of this controversy and an awareness of the consequences of it will become important since, as we noted, the reading of transcendental proof given here is committed to a (perhaps inadequately demonstrated) version of transcendental idealism, which itself is a salient target for controversy.

To rehearse a well-known historical fact about the birth of what is generally called analytic philosophy we can observe that few more important shaping influences exist for such philosophy than Frege’s revolution in logic constituted in his series of seminal works written toward the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th.\(^2\) This Fregean innovation in logical

\(^1\) These epithets are italicised to draw attention to the precise specification that Kant’s notion of apperception and the possibility of having a subjective take on an objective world are tightly interrelated.

theory which involved, amongst other things, the development of some fundamentals of propositional logic, effectively made redundant in the eyes of the majority of philosophers the Aristotelian term logic dominant up until that time. An additional result of this innovation in logic was that the reason for Kant’s employment of the concept/intuition distinction dissolved. For the Aristotelian logic held to be, in Kant’s eyes, the final and complete word on such a domain of theory was unable to account for the logic of relations; something Kant enabled his theory of knowledge to account for, in its own way, through the faculty of pure intuition; space and time. Amongst other complex reasons for rejecting a transcendentally ideal model of knowledge, analytic philosophers, as generally holding to a conception of analysis as performed strictly under the rubric of the propositional logic initiated by Frege, can (seemingly) easily ignore the redundant Kantian distinction between the two forms of contribution to knowledge: concepts and intuitions.

This change in orientation has meant that few accounts of transcendental arguments exist that persist to associate them with Kant’s original concept/intuition distinction, since it would be inadvisable to attempt a reconstruction of a philosophical method such as transcendental argumentation whilst allowing that method to be tied to a philosophical doctrine now regarded as erroneous. However, not only may there be insights available through a reconsideration of the Kantian distinction, there may exist the possibility of the joint reconstruction of that distinction; one that would harmonise with a reconstruction of transcendental proof.¹ We will have to leave that potentially fascinating task to another place however, whilst saying that a quite general picture of what is at stake in this reconsideration will be offered in later sections when we undertake reflection as to the link between

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¹ John McDowell (1996) *Mind and World*, Harvard University Press, contains a classic case of the modernised version of Kant’s concept/intuition split, primarily in terms of attempting to conceptualise the Kantian notion of “intuition”. This issue bears quite directly on much that will be said here, although for reasons of focus will not be granted substantial attention.

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transcendental proof and what Strawson has called “descriptive
metaphysics”.

An additional development in analytic philosophy which is highly
relevant for considering the current status of transcendental argumentation
and proof is the innovative approach to thinking of synthetic a priori
judgment as advanced in the work of the logical positivists, most notably by
Rudolf Carnap.¹ Summarily, Carnap’s view of the scope of scientific
knowledge parallels Kant’s in some important respects, although diverging in
others. The parallel consists in Carnap’s agreement with Kant that, roughly,
there are pure (or, non-empirical) and empirical parts to scientific knowledge,
and that the former consist of synthetic a priori judgments whereas the latter
involve synthetic a posteriori judgments. Additionally, both philosophers
agree that the pure part of scientific knowledge, the synthetic a priori part, is
constitutive of the objects of experience; it makes possible the formulations of
particular empirical laws.² The divergence consists in what further ways the
notion of synthetic a priori judgment is interpreted.

As is well known, Kant thinks of synthetic a priori judgment as being
available via the validity of the a priori application of the Categories (the
intellectual contribution to knowledge) to pure intuition (the sensible
contribution to knowledge); scientific and thus also common empirical
reasoning proceeds synthetically—that is, not merely through conceptual
analysis³—yet in the a priori mode, in virtue of the a priori applicability of the
said Categories. Carnap, however, holds a view of the purported synthetic a
priori judgments made in particular scientific enterprises as being relative to,
and dependent upon, the wider assumptions of the paradigm in which that
science participates; i.e., in the case of the formulation of laws of motion, as in
Newton’s Laws, the prior assumption of a spatio-temporal framework is

¹ Excellent background treatment of this issue is given in Michael Friedman (1999) Geometry,
Convention, and the Relativized A Priori: Reichenbach, Schlick and Carnap, in “Reconsidering
Logical Positivism”, Cambridge University Press.
³ This would constitute unbridled metaphysical system building and represent precisely the
kind of procedure Kant attacks in his Transcendental Dialectic in the Critique.

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required.\textsuperscript{1} However, since the wider paradigm of scientific reasoning may alter, Carnap’s conception of the a priori admits of relativisation to the framework or requisite background theoretical assumptions; in the case of the spatio-temporal framework employed in physics, the theory of general relativity undercuts the Newtonian conception of an absolute space-time continuum.

To sharpen the point of difference from Kant further, we can note that Carnap’s formulation of his theory involves the usage of the terms L-rules and P-rules, where the former are logical rules, or analytic sentences, and the latter are physical rules, or synthetic sentences. While the latter P-rules refer to specific formulations of physical laws, Carnap allows for the former epithet, L-rules, to refer not only to rules of logic yet also to principles of physical geometry; an approach to thinking about Euclidean geometry, which Kant had taken to be the paradigm of a demonstrably a priori science, that meant it would be then regarded as not only merely empirical, yet also false in the context of the theory of general relativity.\textsuperscript{2}

For our purposes here, “the whole point” of making note of “the...conception of relativized and dynamical a priori principles” is to recognise the “profound conceptual revolutions that have repeatedly shaken our knowledge of nature to its very foundations.”\textsuperscript{3} However, as we progress, we will see that more than our knowledge of nature is to be determined by our conception of the a priori; it will be a major concern for us to investigate precisely what role transcendental proof (as claimed to contain synthetic a priori judgment) plays in self-knowledge and the right account of self-

\textsuperscript{1} “Indeed the logical positivists here agree with Kant in rather maintaining a sharp distinction between the underlying spatio-temporal framework of physical theory, on the one hand, and the empirical laws then formulated within this framework, on the other. Their view of geometry and scientific knowledge if therefore neither strictly Kantian nor strictly empiricist.” (Ibid.) Also, it is not required that the spatio-temporal framework be regarded as metaphysically real in the sense in which Newton apparently did; the spatio-temporality of the framework in question could just as well be merely \textit{empirically real} and \textit{transcendently ideal} in Kant’s sense.

\textsuperscript{2} Op. cit.: p. 69.

consciousness.

Overall, the revisability of the models of scientific reasoning (Newtonian and Euclidean), taken by Kant to be solidified in their truth, meant that a whole new conception of a priori knowledge was to filter through 20th century philosophy under the influence of logical positivism. And although the majority of contemporary philosophers would find much to disagree with in what they take to be the hallmarks of logical positivism, it cannot be denied that the notion of a relativised a priori is one conception inherited from that tradition which seems to have made a lasting impression. Thus, we find, even in the work of those who attempt a positive reconstruction of transcendental arguments, an employment of the notion of the relativised a priori—an approach that results in what are generally known as “modest” transcendental arguments. An argument will be developed towards the end of Chapter 3 which will attempt to show why the adoption of an attitude toward scientific reasoning mirroring Carnap’s need not amount to a total rejection of a strong conception of the synthetic a priori—and thus, of strong (we might call it “immodest”) transcendental proof. This argument will involve the assertion that claiming that conceptual frameworks may alter does not mean there is no limit on their alteration. We will have to wait to see the reasons for this assertion.

These foregoing remarks should make us aware of some of the key points of consideration involved in attempting a sensitive reconstruction of transcendental proof, since there is much ambiguity in not only the usage of particular terminology employed with reference to transcendental arguments, yet also many philosophical assumptions implicit in particular general attitudes toward them. The central issue which has been thematic thus far is the widely spread, generally negative attitude towards transcendental idealism and this general attitude has been seen to contain numerous specific philosophical opinions vis-à-vis such primary notions as synthetic a priori

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1 The direct influence of Carnap on Wilfred Sellars will be relevant for us in some peripheral considerations vis-à-vis the articulation of synthetic a priori judgment. See, for example, Wilfred Sellars (1953) Is There a Synthetic A Priori?, Philosophy of Science, 20, pp. 121-138.
judgment and the concept/intuition dichotomy.

An additional issue, which we can make note of now, yet one we will not broach until Section 2.2.5, is the complexity of the relationship between the notion of the “analytic method” and the “synthetic method” in Kant, and the form of regressive (as opposed to progressive) argumentation. Generally, this relationship is complicated by the alternate conceptions of judgment found in Kant’s Critical Philosophy as opposed to modern work on transcendental arguments in the analytic tradition, where the concept/intuition distinction employed in the former is in conflict with the purely conceptual construal of such arguments in the latter. This conflict raises issues also for the further distinctions of explicative/ampliative, and a priori/a posteriori, which we will explore below. To be sure, however, our employment of such distinctions here will be somewhat simplified by our adoption of a reconstructive approach which allows us to make claims with regard to these distinctions only with reference to the peculiarities of a particular core of arguments which it is claimed here one can find in transcendental idealism; that is, without concerning ourselves further with the complexities of the historical Kant. Sensitivity to the nuanced issues mentioned is necessary to allow for this reconstruction, however.

We will thus focus our further arguments in support of a transcendently ideal model of knowledge only as articulated through those core claims which relate directly to the project of supplying a plausible account of transcendental proof. Thus, we will find support here of a unique conception of such central theses claimed to be contained in transcendental idealism, which involve such Kantian ideas as the role of synthetic a priori knowledge in self-consciousness and the role of (something like)\(^1\) the concept/intuition distinction in spatio-temporal, world-directed (empirical) knowledge.

To return to our diagnosis of themes in the literature, we can advance some further claims about general tendencies there found which stem from

\(^1\) I say “something like” because the appeal is not sufficiently specified. It ought to be clear however that the main impetus for the appeal stems from role that something like Kant’s notion of “pure intuition” plays in the account of situated thought in Section 3.2.
the considerations already made. Firstly, the largely negative attitude toward
synthetic a priori judgment has meant that such judgment has been largely
absent from 20th century reconstructions of transcendental arguments, and
this has meant that such arguments have been construed in quite a different
way to Kant’s original transcendental expositions1 and proofs. Additionally,
the rejection the Kantian concept/intuition distinction and the focus of 20th
century philosophy of language on the notion of conceptual schemes has
meant that the intended force and power of transcendental proof has been
lost, since the purely conceptual construal of transcendental arguments has
taken place within a wider model of knowledge which is itself deliberately
quite open to the question of scepticism. In fact, as is generally claimed, the
dominant philosophical antecedent, or philosophical hero, for modern
analytic philosophy has probably been David Hume.2 And while it might be
said that Hume himself was a naturalist, not a sceptic,3 the questions raised in
his philosophising certainly make the sceptical challenge seem pressing; in
fact they are taken to be a major challenge of his philosophical orientation,
thus linking the modern philosophical stance of naturalism with a peculiar
group of sceptical worries from the outset.

Given these mitigating factors, we can see why modern transcendental
arguments have concerned themselves largely with scepticism. For not only
do many proponents of transcendental arguments nowadays seem to readily
commit to a form of naturalism, they also display a suspicion of both the
notion of the synthetic a priori and the conception of logic found in Kant

1 We will not labour over this additional terminological complication, although it is worth
depositing the word here since Kant’s transcendental exposition of the concept of space in the
Transcendental Aesthetic is taken as a paradigm case of transcendental method in Karl
273-287. This paper will be of central importance for assessing the appropriate role of
regressive argument in transcendental proof.

2 It is worth noting an additional characterisation of the evolution of analytic philosophy
which encourages the view that such philosophy is a strange bird indeed. In the introduction
to Sellars (1997) *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, with introduction by Richard Rorty and
study guide by Robert Brandom, Harvard University Press, Rorty characterises Brandom’s
work as “an attempt to usher analytic philosophy from its Kantian to its Hegelian stage” (pp.
8-9).


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which necessitated the conception/intuition distinction employed by him in his transcendently ideal model of knowledge. Because of these tensions most contemporary transcendental arguers have sought to build an alternate structure, or proceed by different means, with such argumentation. And since little in way of success has been enjoyed by these commonly employed, purely conceptual transcendental arguments in a defence against the sceptical challenge, it is easy to see why contemporary transcendental arguers have lowered their expectations about the scope and limits of their enterprise.^[1]

The failure of the purely conceptual construal of transcendental arguments to answer the sceptical challenge is therefore one reason for a re-assessment of the possibilities pregnant in a reconstruction of transcendental proof. A second reason is that no sustained attempt has yet been undertaken to reconstruct such transcendental proof, as there might be, in the context of a thoroughly re-interpreted version of transcendental idealism as exemplified by Henry Allison’s two-aspect view, which we mentioned above. Mark Sacks’s paper *The Nature of Transcendental Arguments* can be singled out in this regard as it constitutes the first focused attempt on the connection I have just mentioned, although, unfortunately, no fully worked-out theory of transcendental proof is given there. Additionally, the precise connection between transcendental proof and transcendental idealism is not explained in adequate detail. An attempt at thinking through the consequences of the account of transcendental proof given in that paper will be a major concern of this essay and will be the main topic of Chapter 3.

For now, we can note that the generally Strawsonian, conceptual versions of transcendental arguments embody certain misconceptions about what might ultimately be at stake in transcendental knowledge. For although

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^[1] Thus we find such luminaries as Strawson back-peddling, in later works, from the hopes expressed in his original, famous reconstructions of Kant and the analyses constituting his attempt at constructing a descriptive metaphysics, in *The Bounds of Sense* and *Individuals* respectively. Additionally, we find the host of recent accounts of transcendental arguments as all adopting a “modest” stance; nearly the entirety of such a recent and important collection as Robert Stern (ed.) (1999) *Transcendental Arguments: Problems and Prospects*, Oxford University Press, is in the “modest” mode.

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Strawson’s reconstructions of Kant represent vast improvements in terms of clarity, rigour, and consistency, they also represent attempts made within a wider epistemological model, itself open to scepticism in a unique way, which can be called into question. Thus, it is no surprise when we find Barry Stroud’s original objection to transcendental arguments\(^1\) targeting a vulnerable aspect of them which is absent in accounts of transcendental proof, such as that proposed here. Yet much subsequent philosophical work has gone into attempting to resolve what has seemed to be this insurmountable challenge against the possibility of transcendental argumentation which I will, following Sacks, refer to as “Stroud’s Challenge”,\(^2\) and quite generally, replies have come in two forms. Either those who might have endeavoured to argue transcendentally have now simply given up hope (a lack of reply); or, their reply has been muffled by modesty (a weakened reply).

Stroud has noted that arguments aimed at refuting the sceptic by insisting on the unity and objectivity of our experience, by way of articulation of conceptually necessary conditions of our conception of the world, turn on the necessity of the mere belief in such conditions of experience as holding, not their actually holding. We might think of this as a Humean line of argument stemming from the sceptical notion that the analysis of the foundations of our knowledge is not possible in the sense we assume, since it relies on the more fundamental problem of explaining the reliability of our beliefs—about the structure of our experience generally, for example—which, given Hume’s thoughts about the reliability of our perceptual contact with the world and the linkage between this perceptual contact and knowledge, is not a problem easily solved. Thus, so says Stroud, transcendental arguments cannot rid us of sceptical worries.\(^3\)

\(^3\) Stroud, *Transcendental Arguments*. In fact, it is interesting to note that this complaint against Strawson can be countered by suggesting that one should go further than he, in taking transcendental arguments to be not merely about the conception of our own experience that we must hold, but as Kant originally argued, regarding the conditions of the possibility of the representation of empirical objects. This stronger thesis, which Kant held and Strawson did not, is immune to Stroud’s attack, although it is of course vulnerable to objections of a familiar

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Although acceptance of the tenability of Stroud’s Challenge has been widespread, this is no indication of an impasse. There may be reasonable indication that there is a significant, if not insurmountable, objection to Strawson’s original project in *Individuals* and in the * Bounds of Sense*, although this by no means disqualifies the possibility of alternate attempts at providing a good account of what transcendental proof might be. Henceforth, it will be central to my concerns here to show just what theories about the structure of our thought about the world need to seem plausible, by way of elucidating a conception of a kind of transcendental argumentation—or proof

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—of perhaps a more faithfully Kantian variety than usual; albeit, a variety of proof that does not seek to be wholly a refutation of scepticism, but rather comes from a philosophical perspective in which the force of the sceptical challenge is diminished. It is important however to see that the strategy of attempting to diminish the felt force of the sceptical threat need not simply come to reconceiving objectivity in order to make ourselves feel comfortable with a weaker transcendental story.

As I have alluded already, this project will involve reconsidering the accuracy of some widely held beliefs about what the significance of some central arguments of transcendental idealism might be, although the evaluation of such a doctrine in all its multifarious aspects is a highly


1 The point of this distinction is not a mere definitional matter. There is a genuine philosophically interesting and important issue at stake here. To put matters briefly and crudely, a part of the reason for this modification of terminology comes from the notion that a successful variety of transcendental proof—as opposed to argumentation—cannot proceed merely by way of logically valid, deductive argument via articulation of relevant conceptual relations, but must include an appeal to the situatedness of the thinker having the thought or experience. Transcendental proofs are thus not merely forms of argumentation since they require more than appeal to logically valid forms of inference. The proposal here is that through retaining synthetic a priori moves in a philosophical account of objective knowledge, a kind of transcendental proof is produced which illustrates something of the revolutionary character that Kant intended. This matter will be given thorough treatment in Chapter 3 of this essay.

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ambitious project and is beyond my intentions here. Instead, the program of giving a good account of transcendental idealism will appear complementary to the debate of what the hopes for transcendental proof might be. The linkage I make in this way will show up as an important one that recommends, in harmony with recent two-aspect\(^1\) interpretations of transcendental idealism, a fuller appreciation of Kant’s Copernican Turn. This appreciation will also involve a resistance to the generally received impression of transcendental idealism as a “bad idealism”.\(^2\)

Additionally, it should be clear that since Strawson’s rehabilitation of some central arguments that he claims to find in Kant involves an acceptance of the widely received traditional interpretation of Kant’s wider doctrine (mentioned above as the two-world or two-object view), if one is to give an adequate critical appraisal of the validity, force, and general project of these rehabilitated candidates, one must re-think the cogency of this traditional interpretation. This is a relevant peripheral concern of the project here; one which builds toward an appreciation of what “transcendental” might mean—in terms of argument, proof, idealism, and so on.

To follow on from these considerations, we can observe a relevant claim made by Allison in this regard, namely, as to how we might take Kant’s transcendental project. He suggests that

“a rigorous critique of psychologism, i.e. of any attempt to explain, or explain away the validity of either our cognitive or moral principles by means of an analysis of their basis in human nature or their genesis in human experience, is one of the most characteristics traits of the Kantian philosophy. Yet this transcendental, logical investigation of the nature and limits of knowledge...leads Kant back to the human

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\(^1\) Of course, I do not thereby hold myself committed to every thesis entailed by the views of those who espouse this interpretation; however, I use this phrase as a short-hand for the general familiar position which has been put forth in recent times, most notably by Henry Allison. I agree with the general thrust of what Allison says regarding Kant, although I may not agree with all the details of his exposition. Some of these details, insofar as they are relevant, may show up in the course of this essay; others may not.

\(^2\) In fact, attempts at challenging the received impression of idealism as a philosophical bogeyman will be encouraged by the project here.
subject, in whose cognitive faculties he finds the a priori principles of human knowledge.”

This, Allison claims,

“gives rise to a paradoxical conception of man as on the one hand, together with the rest of creation, a part of nature, subject to its laws, and on the other hand, in his capacity as knower and actor, a rational being who not only transcends nature in the sense that he is not completely determined by its laws, but who is actually the author of these laws.”

This issue of the competing dual conceptions of human beings is, of course, one of the fundamental dilemmas of modern philosophy and it might be said that no-one has made a more strenuous attempt to solve it than Kant, not only in his analysis of human knowledge offered in the first *Critique*, but in the Critical Philosophy as a whole. Importantly, once it is clear that the problem is one of seeing how there might be necessary features of experience—and not merely *human* experience—which could resist reduction to matters of psychology, we should think of this general way of framing the issue; the central one for transcendental philosophy. Namely, we should ask: “What is at stake in the project of attempting to provide an account of universal features of experience, and how is this different from accounting for the conceptually necessary conditions of a particular conception of experience?” A verdict on this would also be a final answer to the overall cogency of the Strawsonian “austere” interpretation of transcendental philosophy.

It might serve to briefly clarify one particular issue which crops up as an important one in this context: that of certain conceptions of certain concepts in the philosophical vocabulary held dear. We run up against difficulties if we think that it is enough to simply rethink the state of affairs by giving new

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1 Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Humanism*: p. 182.
2 Ibid.
3 To paraphrase Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*: p. 15 (although with a different topical target).
definitions for old terms like “transcendental” and even those much-misunderstood and variously interpreted terms “subjectivity” and “objectivity”. However, it will be an ancillary claim of mine here that a rethinking of such concepts may be necessary, although the mere redefinition of the concepts will not suffice to justify the proposed interpretation; much argumentation is required to put on display the merits of particular philosophical options, and the reworking of the nuances of an important concept will only come about through a considerable philosophical apparatus and not merely by way of re-definition.¹

As we noted, the Strawsonian reconstruction of transcendental arguments smuggled into the literature a purely conceptual construal of such arguments which, jointly, advocated the two-world view of transcendental idealism (a main impetus for the former). That there has been limited complaint about this is interesting and possibly indicative of either, (1) philosophical persuasion regarding the doctrine of transcendental idealism itself; or, what is more likely: (2) decline in the hopes for a good account of transcendental arguments. There is, however, one shining case of complaint against Strawson’s strategy in the literature which has been put forth by Henry Allison where he says:

“What Strawson has done is to change Kant’s concern with the necessary conditions of the possibility of experience, and with the objective validity and a priori knowledge of the principles based upon these conditions to a concern with the structure of our conception of experience.”²

And as I noted above, this objection has been taken up more recently by Mark

¹ Indeed, it is the central task of Sacks’s Objectivity and Insight (esp. Chapters 8 and 9) to propose a new account of objectivity. In the last analysis, however, I find his account there to be unconvincing inasmuch as Sacks retains too little of the approach of transcendental idealism to hold up against sceptical worries. It seems to me that his general claim (made in Chapter 9 of that work) that we can merely “ascend” to a higher critical standpoint from which the sceptical worry fails to touch us is too weak. Additionally, it is unclear how Sacks’s arguments provided there differ, at least in principle, from the intended force of transcendental idealism itself, as construed under the two-aspect view.

² Allison, Transcendental Idealism and Descriptive Metaphysics: p. 227.
Sacks in *The Nature of Transcendental Arguments*, who attempts to make the connection between the notion of transcendental proof and the doctrine of transcendental idealism more direct, although somewhat ambiguously.¹

I am positive about the hopes of this particular attempt and as such, I aim to bring out some of the consequences of thinking about the problem in Sacks’s terms. A satisfying exploration of the proposal is not possible yet, though some brief remarks may help. Sacks has suggested that we can gain a deeper appreciation of what transcendental proof has to offer philosophically if we make a connection to transcendental idealism through Allison’s notion of “epistemic conditions”. The notion of “epistemic conditions” will be made more explicit by way of articulation of the philosophical device of “situated thought”, for “situated thought” can itself be regarded as embodying a philosophical conception of what is involved for a thinker to knowledgeably come into contact with the world in various ways. It thus serves as a way of making more explicit exactly what an “epistemic condition” might be and thus, provides an opening for articulation of some central insights of transcendental idealism. And crucially, the notions of “epistemic conditions” and “situated thought” involve a consideration of what transcendental claims stand to offer in terms of the Kantian idea of possible experience; a consideration that emphasises the connection between transcendental proof and synthetic a priori judgment.

The proposal for a reconstructed version of transcendental proof offered here then stands opposed to, on the one hand, those accounts of transcendental arguments that seek to separate them from transcendental idealism and instead, typically, construe them as mere “analytic”² arguments.

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¹ As has been noted, Sacks has his own unique interpretation of what transcendental idealism should come to; or, rather, what the central insight of that doctrine—thought of as separable—is. Sacks displays subtle differences in his regard for transcendental idealism across different works, so it is important to note that his reconstruction of transcendental proof in *The Nature of Transcendental Arguments* will be our main point of focus.

² In *The Bounds of Sense* Strawson employs the term “analytical” to denote the purely conceptual argument he takes to be expressive of the insight in transcendental idealism (the Transcendental Deduction in particular) which involves explaining the necessary conditions of the possibility of a unified, objective experience. It would seem that transcendental

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which seek to uncover the presuppositions of a particular conceptual practice, and on the other, those accounts which see them as attempting to provide something that it is thought by most they simply cannot provide—a story about how our experience is structured that is quite simply opposed to any “scientific” story about how our experience is structured, albeit one that not merely seeks to enumerate the conditions of the possibility of the representation of empirical objects, but the conditions of the possibility of empirical objects. This latter reading thus sees Kant’s project as attempting to account for the structure of experience in some kind of ontological sense and might be thought of as reading Kant as going too far; the former reading might be thought of as reading Kant as not going far enough and thus failing to achieve any substantial goal. If we read Sacks as providing a middle way between these two cliffs, we might see a more plausible, albeit a more faithfully Kantian variety of stratagem emerge.

For now, we need to appreciate the logical, philosophical and historical complexity of the terrain of transcendental argumentation and begin by taking stock of the host of main issues which are in need of attention once one has taken the course of developing this program. However, as the program I recommend pursuing involves mainly the first two in the trifecta (the logical and the philosophical aspects) my focus will be on those paradigm cases of the options which come into play when considering this compound of issues.

As a brief note, it pays to keep in mind that my references to transcendental argumentation pertain to those arguments that aim at making some comment upon the nature of experience; none of my efforts will directed toward other species of transcendental arguments, i.e., those making claims about the role of freedom in moral theory for example (although the possibility of these arguments will also be relevant to our analysis at several points, most especially when considering McDowell’s conception of the space arguments in the literature are called “analytic” for similar reasons—insofar as such arguments are generally in the Strawsonian spirit. We ought to not suppose that such arguments are then to be viewed as “regressive” since that would conflict with the reading we give of Strawson’s strategy interpreting the Deduction in Section 2.2.5.

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of reasons as *sui generis*). It will, however, be seen that strong (or “immodest”) transcendental proof, the kind I am interested in here, aims to assert the existence of certain conditions of experience and will *also* prescribe certain conditions for the application of certain concepts in experience, and indeed, the very existence of linguistic phenomena.¹

### 2.2 The Nature of Transcendental Argumentation

The task lying before us is one of philosophical geography. And since the terrain of transcendental argumentation is one dotted with many mountains of opinion, I will chart merely an outline by way of noting the salient features of the most verdant peaks; through charting these points, the appropriate orienteering ought to be made clear.

Before we engage in an analysis of the terrain it will be helpful to make a further note of the terminology that suggests itself in many of the articulations of transcendental argumentation in the literature. The first relevant terminological concern pertains to the labelling of certain kinds of transcendental argument as “analytic”.² The difficulty here resides in the temptation to think that those purportedly more Kantian varieties of transcendental proof, such as is to be constructed here, are thus to be labelled “synthetic”, however, this will not do. The reason for the inapplicability of the term “synthetic” to the kind of transcendental proof reconstructed here stems from the fact that the intended distinction between analytic and synthetic judgment is drawn against the background of the concerns of modern analytic philosophy, and in which philosophy this distinction effectively refers, roughly, to “statements true in virtue of the meanings of the terms involved” and “statements true in virtue of the meanings of the terms involved as well

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¹ The classic cases of transcendental proof explored in 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 will serve to bring out this point. The point will be elaborated upon further in Chapter 4.

² A particularly explicit example is Jonathan Bennett (1979) *Analytic Transcendental Arguments*, in “Transcendental Arguments and Science”, ed. by Peter Bieri, Rolf-P. Horstmann and Lorenz Kruger, D. Riedel Publishing Company.
as the relevant empirical content”, respectively. By contrast, the appropriate characterisation of the transcendental proof offered here will necessarily involve sensitivity to the Kantian conception of the structure of knowledge; that is, a conception of knowledge that is construed in terms of two different forms of representation: concepts and intuitions; not merely concepts, as the focus on talk about conceptual schemes with reference to transcendental arguments in the literature evidences itself to be concerned with.

An interesting point to note is that, despite the rejection in analytic philosophy of the distinction between conceptual and intuitive form in cognition, something like Kant’s notion of “empirical intuition” was preserved in Russell’s notion of a “sense-datum”. However, later in the 20th century, Wilfred Sellars’s attack on the “Myth of the Given” meant many analytic philosophers would come to see the notion of a “sense-datum” as itself problematic. The fact to recognise here is that Kant had an additional epistemic device operative in his notion of “pure intuition” which is not to be assimilated to the notion of a “sense-datum”. The notion of “pure intuition” is expressed in Kant’s assertion for the a priori status of space and time, which themselves are intended to function as necessary conditions of the possibility of empirical judgment. Unfortunately, the quite general wholesale rejection of Kantian epistemology has meant that the latter notion of “pure intuition” has found no place in most contemporary work. Part of the project here will attempt to work on rehabilitating the notion of “pure intuition”, at least covertly, through the focus on situated thought in Chapter 3.

The appropriate claim to be made with regard to such transcendental proof as referred to is that such proof involves synthetic a priori judgment; and it is this claim that can make the characterisation of transcendental proof as itself “synthetic” seem correct, when it is in fact not. To elucidate the depth of this point a little further we can look to Kant’s pre-Critical writings which predate the innovation of the concept/intuition distinction, for such writings contain a conception of both the analytic method and the synthetic method which is, on the one hand, in conflict with Kant’s later philosophical
commitments and, on the other, in closer harmony with the modern conception of analytic and synthetic.

In his *Announcement of the programme of his lectures for the winter semester 1765-1766* (1765)\(^1\) Kant states that the method peculiar to metaphysics has been misunderstood. He says:

> “Its method is not *synthetic*, as is that of mathematics, but *analytic*. As a result, that which is simple and the most universal in mathematics is also what is easiest, whereas in the queen of the sciences it is what is most difficult. In mathematics, what is simple and universal must in the nature of things come first, while in metaphysics it must come at the end. In mathematics one begins the doctrine with the definitions; in metaphysics one ends the doctrine with them; and so on in other respects.”\(^2\)

Kant can thus been seen here as still adhering to the Leibnizian-Wolffian conception of metaphysics which he was later to reject (as is well known, through his concerted effort to combine what he took to be truths inherent in both the former and also Newtonian mechanics). The Leibnizian conception involves the idea that in metaphysics one arrives at definitions (the kind Kant alludes to above) by way of an analytic procedure which leads one ultimately to the complete concept of something or other. This conception of the analytic method thus coincides, in one way, with what has been called regressive argument, since the appropriate analytic method involves ascension from the particular to the general—from a particular exemplification of a concept to the most general concept possible. This method of conceptual analysis is deemed illegitimate by Kant in the *Critique* where he speaks disparagingly of the “transcendental illusion” to which previous would-be metaphysicians had fallen prey and where he conjointly insists that no metaphysical truths can be arrived at simply by the unpacking of concepts; the metaphysics of experience Kant proposes in the Transcendental Analytic must instead proceed from a set

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of claims regarding the structure of our knowledge and which claims themselves serve to establish the conditions of knowing. So, Kant’s later conception of metaphysics is limited to the sphere of possible experience, which is itself shaped by a set of epistemic conditions.

The conflict with which we must deal here arises out of the temptation to conflate the terms “analysis” and “regression”, or, the procedures of analytic method and regressive argument. The key idea to embrace is that in Kant’s later epistemological edifice of transcendental idealism, which itself turns on the axis of the concept/intuition distinction, the previously paired notions of “analysis” and “regression” must now be kept apart. The central reason for this is that the operative distinction between concepts and intuitions allows for regressive arguments to be formulated which do not consist merely of conceptual explication of the kind demonstrated in Leibnizian attempts at metaphysical proof. The shape of regressive argument allowed by transcendental idealism is of a different kind. For example, Kant’s transcendental exposition of space in the Transcendental Aesthetic relies on a form of regressive argument, yet it certainly does not consist simply in the unpacking of concepts, but rather involves a proof of the necessary conditions of the possibility of perceiving the world as spatial. We must leave this preamble now and continue with its topic in a later section.

As can be seen from the considerations above, the attempt to divide forms of transcendental argument (or proof) into two broad groups by equating, without sufficiently detailed attention, on the one hand, the terms “analytic” and “regressive”, and, on the other, the terms “synthetic” and “progressive”, is misguided. Beyond the comments made with respect to the terms “analytic” and “synthetic” above, we will find in Section 2.2.5 a fairly thorough consideration of the role of regressive argument in the construction of transcendental proof. Additionally, the discussion there will attempt also to make more perspicuous the role of synthetic a priori judgment conjointly involved. This latter strategy will allow for the connection to ampliative

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1 This is claimed in Ameriks, Kant’s Transcendental Deduction as a Regressive Argument.
knowledge to be made, since the construal of synthetic a priori judgment will involve reference to how such judgment involves an actual increase in knowledge, not mere conceptual explication. In fact, it is worth noting in this context that Kant himself explicitly connects synthetic judgment with ampliative knowledge. In the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (hereafter *Prolegomena*) he says that

“whatever origin judgements may have, or whatever they may be like as to their logical form, there is in them a distinction according to content, by virtue of which they are either merely *explicative* and add nothing to the content of the cognition, or *ampliative* and enlarge the given cognition; the former can be called analytic judgements, the latter *synthetic* judgements.”

These preliminary reflections get us to a point where we can begin to see the usefulness of re-interpreting the current state-of-play of transcendental argumentation. The aim is to consider an account of the limiting features of *possible experience*, not merely the “limiting features of any experience that we could make intelligible to ourselves”, since the construal of the task of transcendental argumentation in the latter terms has been seen to lead to talk about the legitimacy of moves within particular conceptual schemes. And the conception of transcendental philosophy entailed by attempts to construct transcendental arguments in these latter terms is arguably so far from Kant’s original project as to be unrecognisable.

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1 The distinction between “explicative” and “ampliative” knowledge does not, as far as I can see, have any prejudicial connection to either a modern analytical or Kantian transcendentially ideal conception of knowledge (ignoring the opacity of the former notion). At least, if it does, such prejudice as there might be does not appear to touch the intended distinction being drawn here.


3 As is the focus of Strawson’s account in *The Bounds of Sense*.

4 I follow on from the argument to this effect by Baum (1979) *Transcendental Proofs in the Critique of Pure Reason*, in “Transcendental Arguments and Science”, ed. by Peter Bieri, Rolf-P. Horstmann and Lorenz Kruger, D. Riedel Publishing Company. It is important to note also that, due to the general rejection within analytic philosophy of the concept/intuition distinction, the notion of “conceptual schemes” includes both of what Kant conceived of as the conceptual and sensible contributions to knowledge, which Kant kept apart in his famous epistemological distinction.
I propose the idea that it is possible not merely to describe but circumscribe the conditions of a minimal framework of possible experience and, as I have alluded thus far, the claim that transcendental proof involves synthetic a priori judgment, and the notion that such proof is indeed possible, must stand or fall together.

To begin, we must consider some possible proposals regarding the nature of transcendental arguments. Here are a few:

(1) Transcendental arguments aim to refute the sceptic by establishing necessary conditions of the possibility of the unity and objectivity of our experience.
(2) Transcendental arguments (merely) articulate (necessary) conceptual relations.
(3) Transcendental arguments establish the uniqueness of a particular categorial scheme.
(4) Transcendental arguments establish the necessity of a certain minimal conception of experience.
(5) Transcendental arguments establish the necessity of a mere belief in a certain minimal conception of experience.
(6) Transcendental arguments rely on a (dubious) verificationist principle.
(7) Transcendental arguments are regressive arguments.
(8) Transcendental arguments establish necessary conditions of the possibility of particular kinds of knowledge; they articulate epistemic conditions.

We can immediately see some interconnections here; it being clear that some of these propositions suggest or even entail some of the others. It should then

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1 This distinction, which was made in Chapter 1, will continue to have an importance for us since it will be a related concern to recognise the opposition between transcendental and naturalistic investigation. This conception, which floats in the background of this essay, is alluded to in suggestive references to McDowell’s conception of the Sellarsian “space of reasons” as sui generis.
also be clear that some of these propositions preclude one another. A breakdown by way of remarks follows.

2.2.1 Remarks on Thesis 1

The first statement in our list, “Transcendental arguments aim to refute the sceptic by establishing necessary conditions of the possibility of the unity and objectivity of our experience”, constitutes a general way of viewing transcendental arguments, possibly the dominant way in current work; it would seem to be compatible with most statements in the list and could be thought of as being more important for the focus of investigation than for the exact pattern of arguments themselves—thus making it clear that this way of classifying transcendental arguments does not exhaustively characterise their nature yet merely suggests the target of such arguments: scepticism.

It is fairly clear that most 20th century work on transcendental arguments has been concerned with the purported threat of global scepticism, although what extent this was Kant’s exact concern with his own transcendental arguments is questionable.¹ So, pace Stroud’s Challenge² and the majority of the current literature,³ it is not clear that Kant’s Transcendental Deduction is

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¹ This is an important issue in the literature. For a paradigm case of the doubt that securing a good refutation of, or defence from, scepticism was Kant’s main concern in his transcendental philosophy, see Günther Patzig (1979) Comment on Bennett, in “Transcendental Arguments and Science”, ed. by Peter Bieri, Rolf-P. Horstmann and Lorenz Kruger, D. Riedel Publishing Company. This is a dividing question on the issue of what transcendental argumentation sets out to achieve (or, what it can or should set out to achieve).

² Taken to be advanced originally in Stroud, Transcendental Arguments.

directly aimed at refuting Cartesian scepticism.\textsuperscript{1} By extension, although transcendental arguments are “relevant to some forms of scepticism...their relevance has to be understood as an indirect consequence of another primary goal.”\textsuperscript{2} In fact, it is very important to recognise that if Kant \textit{was} concerned with any variety of scepticism in the Deduction, it was more the Humean variety of scepticism about \textit{reason}.\textsuperscript{3} We can see this fact if we reflect upon the orientation of Kant’s arguments contained therein as being directed toward thinking about the \textit{objective validity} of our empirical thought—seemingly an enterprise which one undertakes when confronted not with the threat that one’s empirical thought is misdirected but rather, that the fundamental conception of it is invalid or without adequate basis. This is highly significant, especially once we see that the focus of the debate is not centred primarily on doubts about the actual \textit{existence} of the world—which seems clearly not to have been Kant’s main concern—but centred rather on the question of how our world-directed thought can have objective validity.\textsuperscript{4} This shift in focus, it seems to me, brings out the deeper concern of Kant’s Critical Philosophy and more specifically, his Transcendental Deduction. In harmony with this line of thinking, it has been expressed that

\begin{quote}
“the establishment of an objective world against sceptical doubts is not high up on Kant’s philosophical priority list. The establishment of objective knowledge, yes. But the transcendental deduction of the categories does not...amount to an actual proof
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{1} It is, however, clear that the Refutation of Idealism was intended to secure Kant’s transcendental idealism from the seeming sceptical threat. That this chapter bears an intimate relation to the Deduction means that it is a complicated issue concerning exactly how the Deduction is not merely an argument against scepticism. Unfortunately, we cannot address this peculiarly demanding issue here.


\textsuperscript{4} This is arguably the central claim which the Transcendental Deduction attempts to advance (in terms of the \textit{quid juris}). I say “attempts” because it is not manifestly clear to many if Kant succeeds in this aim; it is, furthermore, not clear to others if this was even his main motive.
that there is, after all, an objective world out there. It rather concentrates on the idea that the system of categories based on the table of judgments is the only possible system which allows for the unification of our subjective intuitions into one consistent and coherent body of knowledge...I do not want to say that transcendental arguments are not also used to avoid sceptical conclusions. They are so used. But they are basically used to justify the application of concepts in the formation of our experience, which had been challenged.”

This comment should remind us of Kant’s intentions in his own theorising, although the extent to which we should take Kant’s approach as a clue for a rehabilitated version of transcendental argumentation is a controversial issue. Despite whatever else we might think about Kant’s own transcendental expositions and proofs, I want to place great emphasis on the sense in which they really needn’t be thought of solely as attempts at silencing the Cartesian sceptic. This point regarding scepticism is crucial and much hinges upon giving it full recognition. I have already noted above that the Humean variety of scepticism is seemingly a more significant opponent for Kantian transcendental argument than Cartesian scepticism and we can note further that this Humean concern crystallises in the recent concern with justificatory scepticism, as opposed to epistemic scepticism of the kind exemplified by Cartesian doubt about the external world. Justificatory forms of scepticism involve doubts about the validity of our claims to possess such things as reliable or indubitable rationality, and thus, undercut the certainty taken to be inherent in our most primitive intellectual procedures.

It is a condition of this project of rehabilitating of transcendental proof succeeding that the interpretation of transcendental idealism I place emphasis on be coupled with an appropriately plausible conception of objectivity. Since I suggest that transcendental proofs (and hence, by implication, the transcendental arguments encompassing them) function most coherently

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2 Such as is discussed by Stern, Transcendental Arguments and Scepticism: Chapter 1.
within a transcendently ideal model of knowledge, with the qualifier that we need to pair a sympathetic interpretation of this much misunderstood doctrine with the right conception of objective knowledge, we ought to further specify our conception of objective knowledge. The conception of objectivity within the transcendental idealist’s picture is necessarily going to be coupled with the idea that objective knowledge is limited or tied to possible experience. Despite the vagary of this characterisation, it manages to remind us of the requisite Kantian specification that objective knowledge only has sense for us in terms of possible experience—an idea which itself might seem commonsensical, yet on further inspection appears to entail some unacceptable theses—and, via this way of phrasing the problem, suggests that there might be limitations of a peculiar epistemic kind specifiable in philosophical terms.

To return to our main concern, we can observe that the variety of empiricism espoused by many 20th century analytic philosophers has been a contributing factor to the pervasive concern with scepticism, a point we noted in connection with Hume above. It would also be fair to say that the linguistic turn contributed to the 20th century propensity to interpret transcendental arguments in a way intrinsically tied to the notion of conceptual relations—in the form of arguments involving inferences from certain premises regarding facts about experience not doubtable by the sceptic to conclusions originally perceived as under threat from the sceptical challenge. The limitations of this approach have become apparent in the past fifty or so years of strenuous work on this set of problems, although my concern with a different approach does not stem from the fear of mere difficulty. There is a substantial philosophical issue at stake which relates directly to the way one understands the notion of a conceptual framework and its relation to the notion of a world. The fine points of this issue will unfold as we progress.
2.2.2 Remarks on Theses 2 and 3

The idea articulated by Thesis 2, “Transcendental arguments (merely) articulate (necessary) conceptual relations,”—the notion that transcendental arguments involve mere deductive inferences between propositional contents—is widespread. Given our recognition of Stroud’s Challenge above, it is immediately apparent that if transcendental arguments proceed this way all they stand to establish are necessary connections within a particular conceptual framework; in particular, in a particular conceptual framework for thinking about the world and our experience of it. Under this conception, the power of transcendental arguments is sapped; for since such a framework could be otherwise, transcendental arguments are seen to rely on something which is not “universal and necessary”, but is rather simply the object of strong belief, and this means that such arguments consist in expositions of what one must believe given certain other beliefs. From within this viewpoint, the enterprise entered into here of making transcendental claims would suffer a collapse. Additionally, given the Kantian conception of transcendental as a descriptive that characterises necessary conditions of the possibility of something being a certain way (the fact that it is for us does not weaken the notion), not it merely being believed to be a certain way, the aforementioned account constitutes a mis-construal.

Given the above considerations, we can observe the depth of the opposition between the commonplace accounts of transcendental arguments involving the assertion that transcendental arguments merely articulate

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1 Salient cases in the literature include the following: Strawson, The Bounds of Sense; Stephan Körner (1966) Transcendental Tendencies in Recent Philosophy, The Journal of Philosophy, 63, pp. 551-566; (1967) The Impossibility of Transcendental Deductions, The Monist, 51, pp. 317-331; Stroud, Transcendental Arguments; Rorty (1970) Strawson’s Objectivity Argument, The Review of Metaphysics, 24, pp. 207-244; Hamid Vahid, The Nature and Significance of Transcendental Arguments. Salient cases that go against this idea include: Allison, Transcendental Idealism and Descriptive Metaphysics; Charles Taylor (1978) The Validity of Transcendental Arguments, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 79, pp. 151-165; Ameriks, Kant’s Transcendental Deduction as a Regressive Argument; and Sacks, The Nature of Transcendental Arguments. As far as I know, The Nature of Transcendental Arguments represents the only focussed attempt to explicate what might be involved in a construal of transcendental arguments (reconceived as transcendental proof) that is not purely concerned with conceptual relations.

2 To refer to Kant’s characterisation of the a priori.
conceptual relations, and the positive account I am putting forth here. It is of course true that Kant’s Transcendental Deduction articulates conceptual relations in a limited sense, but this cluster of arguments does something much more—it advocates a much stronger thesis regarding the very idea of the linkage between conceptual relations and the idea of an empirical world (nature)—so it is inappropriate to interpret the final consequences of Kant’s transcendental project (and ours here) as a thesis about necessary conceptual connection. To be sure, however, the qualifier regarding the link between the idea of a conceptual scheme and Kant’s wider doctrine of transcendental idealism above is necessary as these two ideas do need to be thought of as connected in some way.

A further related way of thinking about transcendental arguments, expressed by Thesis 3, involves construing them as attempting to establish the uniqueness of a particular categorial scheme.1 Stephan Körner has argued for the impossibility of transcendental deductions (and thus presumably, by extrapolation, transcendental arguments in general) by showing that such things cannot be adequately constructed. He claims that

“A transcendental deduction can now be defined quite generally as a logically sound demonstration of the reasons why a particular categorial schema is not only in fact, but also necessarily employed in differentiating a region of experience. This definition is very wide indeed and will presently be shown to cover Kant’s conception of a transcendental deduction.”2

Körner goes on to argue that to show the necessity of a particular schema it is first required that a method of differentiating a region of experience definitive of that scheme be established. It is then to be demonstrated that no schema

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1 This phrasing of the issue is, for most intents and purposes, the same as that expressed by Thesis 4. That is, the uniqueness of a particular categorial scheme is supposed to amount to its necessity in differentiating a region of experience. Despite this, for expository purposes, Thesis 2 and 3 have been grouped together, as the following section deals with Stroud’s Challenge.

can be shown to be “unique” (a term presumably to be equated with “necessary”, although in a limited sense given Körner’s argument) since this would require that:

1. The schema in question be compared with undifferentiated experience and evaluated as to the adequacy of its application;
2. The schema in question be compared with other schemas and evaluated as to its relative validity or soundness;
3. The schema in question is examined internally to assess its validity.¹

We can see how these ways of attempting to show the uniqueness of a particular categorial schema must fail, although there is some quite general difficulty with the approach of the argument. The first two options are clearly not viable—the notion of undifferentiated experience being recognisable to us is unintelligible and, even if interpreted charitably, would amount to us simply seeing such undifferentiated experience through the lens of our current methods for differentiation and thus, would involve us continuing to work within our current ways of recognising items within experience and thus within our current conceptual scheme. Regarding the second option, comparing an alternate conceptual scheme to our existing one, we would have a similar result since we cannot make intelligible the notion of having the requisite independent method of assessment to evaluate an alternate conceptual scheme if we are working inside our current one. So the problem repeats itself. The third option is surprisingly spurious—what of value could come as a result of an internal examination of one’s conceptual scheme? It is not manifestly clear what this means and is difficult to see how this could achieve anything of relevance.

Consider now Davidson’s attack on “the very idea of a conceptual scheme”.¹ As Davidson’s argument should make abundantly clear, any sense

¹ This argument structure essentially condenses Körner’s claims in op. cit.: pp. 320-321.
in which we attempt to conjure up alternative conceptual schemes will result in a kind of mirroring of our existent scheme; and this is seemingly at least part of what Körner intends to show. As such, the very idea of a scheme becomes incoherent if we cannot make the notion of alternate schemes intelligible. Of course we need to appreciate the extent to which the notion of a conceptual scheme may not be isomorphic to that of a language; we might surmise that the possibility of translation hinges on the possession, by linguistic subjects attempting translation of different languages, of a common scheme which can make comparison by way of adequate translation possible. Thus a conceptual scheme could be thought of as something more general than a specific language—but then what could this mean if not an equation of the phrase “conceptual scheme” with the phrase “generally shared linguistic traits” and thus an appeal to something like the recognisable similarity between languages (or, a “general language” underlying sufficiently similar particular languages)? However, this seems like an obfuscation of what a language, after all, is. For the explanation of why translation between languages is in general possible comes down to the fact of the existence of certain shared practices which users of different languages have, and if we cannot tie the notion of a language directly to practices with which it is caught up, what can we tie it to? We certainly do not need the notion of a “conceptual scheme” to mediate between the notion of a language and the forms of life or practices through which a language shows itself to be valid, so why do we need it? It would appear that this superfluity may be part of what Davidson has demonstrated.

The point of this analysis is that the attack on transcendental arguments from the perspective in which they are thought of as making mere claims about conceptual relations relies on a dubious assumption about the nature of a conceptual scheme: that we can make intelligible the notion that there are conceptual schemes so radically different from our own that they shirk even

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the most basic features of a language embodying basic particulars, such as the ones Strawson claims for our conceptual scheme in *Individuals*. The point is not that radically alternate conceptual schemes are logically impossible, but rather that we can have no coherent conception of them.

In light of this, let us consider Körner’s definition of a transcendental deduction as

“a logically sound demonstration of the reason why a particular categorial schema is not only in fact, but also necessarily employed, in differentiating a region of experience.”

I think there is nothing *prima facie* worrying about this understanding of a transcendental deduction—although I think an important aspect of their nature is omitted, viz., the aspect to be emphasised in our rehabilitation of transcendental proof which construes the role of synthetic a priori judgment as depending not on mere relativity to a scientific paradigm (or other shape of inquiry) as in Carnap, but instead to non-revisable features of anything that might count as experience—so we might think of the above quote as articulating one requirement of the final reconstruction we will come to.

For our project here, a categorial schema would have to be shown to be necessarily employed in a particular region of experience by way of reference to Kant’s concern with searching for the conditions of a concept’s relation to an object. Kant’s concern with the notion of possible experience (and thus, possible experience of *empirical objects*) should suggest to us how a deeper connection between the notion of a categorial schema and the notion of an empirical object is to be established by a genuine transcendental deduction; in terms of our project here, by a coherent account of transcendental proof. The claim being that to (knowledgeably) perceive objects we must have particular and consistent ways of identifying and re-identifying them in a spatio-temporal framework; we must then be in possession of concepts which are

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necessarily employable in this form of experience. Moreover, the employment of concepts in experience must bear a priori relations to experiential objects—for the structure which the latter are experienced as having is dependent on the shaping influence of the former. Now it is important to again note that we can dodge commitment to the Categories whilst saying that there is an insight contained in the claim that certain logical functions determine the nature of anything that is to have a conceptual structure (such as the experience enjoyed by a rational subject).¹ We will have to return to this theme later and now consider one final objection to Körner’s attack on the notion of a transcendental deduction.

Körner’s argument against the transcendental deduction fails for the additional reason that he focuses solely on an argument which is analogous to what Strawson has called the “thesis of objectivity” contained in the Transcendental Deduction. Körner misses the relevance of the “thesis of the necessary unity of consciousness”, without which the “thesis of objectivity” on which he focuses loses its force anyway. Simply put, the idea of individuating the content of experience in terms of a particular scheme does not do the requisite epistemological work unless one can ascribe that content and those individuations to oneself as one’s own mental states. For what meaning could such individuation have without such self-reference? This idea effectively constitutes the definitive objection, formulated by Eva Schaper,³ to Körner’s attack on the notion of a transcendental deduction. Schaper reminds us of the ramifications of rejecting a theory aimed at articulating the possibility of a self-conscious subject having objectively valid thought about an empirical world, without addressing the question of what it takes to be

¹ The point is to come to an understanding of how Strawson’s central argumentative strategy in Individuals might work given certain supplementations. In the terms of our project here, this would occur through the re-establishment of a link between the possibility of a “descriptive metaphysics” and a transcendently ideal model of knowledge, as articulated. We will attempt to make this connection to Strawson’s “descriptive metaphysics” in Chapter 4, although only briefly.

² Both these broad theses are identified, I think rightly, by Strawson as the two central theses of Kant’s Transcendental Deduction. These theses are listed as (2) and (3) in Strawson, The Bounds of Sense: p. 24.


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such a subject—that is, to have one’s states of consciousness unified and, as such, *thinkable* as one’s states of consciousness.\(^1\) I take her reply to be quite decisive in this regard, since what Strawson refers to as the “thesis of objectivity” and the “thesis of the necessary unity of consciousness” are inextricably linked. Furthermore, given the orientation of the reconstruction of transcendental proof to be undertaken in the next chapter, recognition of the importance of the “thesis of the necessary unity of consciousness” will become crucial for such a reconstruction since the account of transcendental proof advocated here, unlike the majority of transcendental arguments in the literature, will necessarily involve reference to the thinker implicated in the construction of such transcendental proof to be argued for.

One more important note needs to be made before we leave these reflections. With regard to Körner’s attempt to demonstrate the superfluity of transcendental deductions we can note a further reason for this attempt appearing misguided. Jeff Malpas outlines a consideration which we raised earlier, although he employs this consideration differently with respect to Körner. He says that

> “the conclusion of this [his] paper is...a clearer recognition of how right Schaper was in her diagnosis of Körner’s position. The twist is that Schaper herself seems to fall foul of the same incoherence. Indeed, if Davidson is right, such incoherence begins precisely with the assumption of a dichotomy between knowing subject and object known. Only by relinquishing that distinction can knowledge be understood as possible.”\(^2\)

The relevant consideration is the issue of how the modern understanding, within analytic philosophy, of “conceptual schemes” relates to Kant’s own conception of the components of knowledge. As was noted earlier, Kant’s concept/intuition distinction does not fit neatly into the modern analytic

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notion of “conceptual schemes” since the latter effectively encompasses both side of Kant’s distinction, yet construes them in a different way. Of course, Kant’s construal of knowledge in terms of concepts and intuitions takes place within a transcendentally ideal model of knowledge quite unlike the typical modern epistemological conception widespread in analytic philosophy of a form of so-called “empiricism” or “naturalism”, so many complications are raised by Malpas’s claim that the “abandonment of the scheme-content distinction” makes Schaper’s objection to Körner superfluous. Effectively, I take it that we can learn from Schaper’s criticisms insofar as they point in the direction of the fundamental dependence between the two central theses of the Transcendental Deduction as identified: the “thesis of objectivity” and the “thesis of the necessary unity of consciousness”. This dependence, as noted, will become more apparent as we progress.

2.2.3 Remarks on Theses 4 and 5

These theses, which claim that “Transcendental arguments establish the necessity of a certain minimal conception of experience” and “Transcendental arguments establish the necessity of a mere belief in a certain minimal conception of experience”, represent the Strawsonian reconstruction of Kant’s Transcendental Deduction and Stroud’s refutation of it, respectively. Putting these theses in opposition thus makes clear the consequences of construing transcendental arguments in mere conceptual terms and also, of making the refutation of scepticism their focal point. The former Strawsonian idea that there necessarily is a “certain minimal conception of experience that we could make intelligible to ourselves” stems from the felt threat of scepticism that might render unintelligible how we can be so sure that our experience really is unified and objective. Strawson insists, by arguing “analytically”, that “for a

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1 Ibid.
2 This is how Strawson construes his strategy. He says that his intentions in The Bounds of Sense are to extract the “analytical” argument from Kant’s Transcendental Deduction, while leaving behind the transcendental psychology which he, Strawson, saw it as unfortunately
series of diverse experiences to belong to a single consciousness it is necessary that they should be so connected as to constitute a temporally extended experience of a unified objective world.”¹ That is, given the very notion of self-consciousness there are certain conditions that purportedly make it possible; these conditions being phenomena that a sceptic could have doubted had not they been shown to be necessary for the very fact of self-consciousness itself—something beyond doubt.²

The idea contained in Thesis 5, that we rely on the mere belief in the necessity of a “certain minimal conception of experience that we could make intelligible to ourselves”, expresses Stroud’s doubts that it is enough to merely claim that the “fact of experience” is only possible given certain conditions. We could still doubt, so says Stroud, whether we might be mistaken as to these conditions since one salient form of the sceptical challenge, as he formulates it, is that “our belief that objects continue to exist unperceived can never be justified.”³ This way of thinking assumes that justification might be the only available epistemic strategy here, which it need not be. Unfortunately, we are not able to go into this here.⁴

Stroud’s Challenge to transcendental arguments then appears to convert the method of philosophising inherent in such arguments to talk about the mere necessity of a belief in experience as being unified and objective (or, of a

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² That the additional extreme move involving rejection of this proposition is not available should be quite clear—and correlative—, it is not quite clear what could be meant by this move at all; what could one be denying through performing it? Of course one could give lip service to the idea that “what we have is not self-consciousness”, although this would just seem to betray an inadequate grasp of the concept itself (thus reducing matters to definitional scruples), or perhaps indicate irrationality—something which cannot be argued with. But does this then suggest an attitude to the sceptic of this same form—one of dismissal? Not if the sceptic referred to is taken to accept the “fact of self-consciousness”. But is there a problem here if we cannot make clear what is meant by denying the “fact of self-consciousness”? Only for the misguided sceptic under this impression of denial, we might think.
³ Stroud, *Transcendental Arguments*: p. 247. This phrasing of the problem is of course relevant for Strawson’s project in *Individuals* as well.
unified and objective world) and thus threatens to give way to varieties of conventionalism which assert the mere fact that we have particular ways of justifying certain beliefs and no form of justification for others; the point being that we could simply give up our current ways of speaking and thinking and adopt new ways not reliant on the same currently endorsed conditions of particular things making sense.\(^1\) But is this right? Can we do this? To what extent might certain features of our conception of the world not revisable?

What Stroud’s Challenge leads to is the admission that transcendental arguments, as they have been known in Kantian and Strawsonian forms, are not possible. But does this mean we cannot further revise them? Is it possible to rehabilitate the thesis that ampliative steps are to employed in transcendental argumentation—and thus, the thesis that synthetic a priori judgment (under a particular interpretation) is possible—such as to make such argumentation (and proof) a more powerful epistemic strategy than Strawson’s “analytical” argument, which itself reduces to claims about what a certain operative conceptual scheme requires? Showing this possibility is precisely our task here.

An additional, brief remark can be added here. With respect to our recognition of the target of Kant’s Transcendental Deduction as a form of Humean scepticism, we can observe also that Stroud’s own objection turns on similar principles. We might think of Kant’s rebuke of Hume as perhaps not adequately appreciate by those who argue as Stroud does; thus, we might say such arguers have missed Kant’s point in his Copernican turn in general and his conception of “transcendental” in particular.

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\(^1\) See Carnap (1956) *Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology*, in “Meaning and Necessity: A Study in Semantics and Modal Logic, enlarged edition”, University of Chicago Press, for example. Carnap’s understanding of “internal” and “external” questions can usefully be brought to bear upon our interpretation of the relation between his understanding of synthetic a priori judgment and Kant’s understanding of such.

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2.2.4 Remarks on Thesis 6

The notion, contained in Thesis 6, that “Transcendental arguments rely on a (dubious) verificationist principle” was a charge developed fairly early in the literature, and has done much to encourage recognition of shared traits between Wittgensteinian and Kantian patterns of argument.⁠¹ Rorty summarises the verificationist principle neatly:

“In order for ‘X’ to have meaning there have to be criteria for identifying X’s, and the sceptic cannot even talk about X’s unless he accepts that these criteria are sound. Since these criteria are obviously satisfied, he cannot deny that there are X’s.”²

And as we saw above in Section 2.2.3, Stroud concluded from this kind of principle that the most it can establish is that, given certain assumptions about the world—certain beliefs we have about it—certain other ones follow.

Stroud’s original attack on transcendental arguments to the effect that they rely on a dubious verificationist principle was initially formulated as an attack on Strawson’s account of “Particulars” in the first part of Individuals. Stroud sees Strawson as moving from a claim (as a premise in an argument) about the idea of the world as “containing objective particulars in a single spatio-temporal system” to the claim (as a conclusion of that argument) that “objects continue to exist unperceived”, via the additional premises to the effect that spatio-temporality is sufficient for identification and re-identification of particulars, and that satisfaction of our best criteria for identification and re-identification permits us knowledge of objects as existing unperceived. Stroud sees this chain of reasoning as relying on a verificationist principle of meaning insofar as it relies on the fact that our very ability to formulate the thought of “our best criteria for identification and re-identification” requires that we posit such criteria which we could, obviously, then not be wrong about (since

⁠¹ See, for example, Peter Hacker (1972) Are Transcendental Arguments a Version of Verificationism?, American Philosophical Quarterly, 9, pp. 78-85; Rorty (1971) Verificationism and Transcendental Arguments, Nous, 5, pp. 3-14; and Stroud, Transcendental Arguments.

⁡ Rorty, Verificationism and Transcendental Arguments: p. 4.

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it was us who determined them). And if knowledge of these criteria is all that is needed to license our claim to satisfactory fulfilment of their purpose, then transcendental arguments appear to turn on circular principles. The idea is that the sceptical challenge cannot be adequately formulated due to the fact that the proposition “objects do not exist unperceived” cannot be verified by way of experience. Henceforth, so says Strawson, the sceptic cannot make sense of this very doubt.¹

We can see how a charge like this threatens the notion of transcendental arguments as construed in Strawson’s terms, since if we think of such arguments as involving inferences from assumptions about the “fact of experience”, or in Strawson’s terms, from the assumption of the existence of self-consciousness, to conclusions about the necessary preconditions of such experience or self-consciousness, then it appears that no sceptical attack can be coherently formulated on such arguments due to a spurious principle; and surely this is a weakness of their form so construed.

Regardless of whether the verificationist charge is to be felt as a decisive damnation of transcendental arguments, it is important to see how the account of transcendental proof recommended here is immune to that same charge. The main reason for this is the point of difference we have been focussing on thus far: the fact that the construal recommended here is not wholly describable in terms of the notion of conceptual schemes, as Theses 3 and 4 are. It is clear that Strawson’s account in The Bounds of Sense is open to this charge and this is one reason among several which leads to my suggestion that we need a stronger and more thoroughly Kantian construal of transcendental argumentation as transcendental proof.

¹ Stroud, Transcendental Arguments: p. 247.
2.2.5 Remarks on Theses 7 and 8

As we noted in a preliminary way above in Section 2.2, the claim that transcendental arguments (or transcendental proofs) involve a regressive procedure, or are themselves wholly regressive arguments, is a complex one with numerous relevant points of consideration. The first question that arises (in terms of historical extrapolation) is whether Kant’s Transcendental Deduction itself can be regarded as a regressive argument (thus also re-engaging the persistent background concern of whether Kant’s procedure was the best or only available procedure for transcendental argumentation, or proof). This initial question is relevant for us insofar as we have been considering a more faithfully Kantian approach to the notion of “transcendental” than is generally exemplified in the literature. Congruently, a consideration of whether Kant’s Transcendental Deduction can be regarded as involving a regressive procedure will allow us to elaborate further the issues raised above with respect to the relationship between the analytic method, on the one hand, and regressive argumentation, on the other.

To begin treatment of this question we can look to the work of Karl Ameriks who, in his paper entitled *Kant’s Transcendental Deduction as a Regressive Argument*, gives persuasive reasons for answering in the affirmative with regard to the topical concern of this section. The central claim contained in that paper is the following:

“I will argue...that it is necessary and profitable to understand the deduction as moving from the assumption that there is empirical knowledge to a proof of the preconditions of that knowledge.”

Additionally, Ameriks regards this reading of the Transcendental Deduction as “unique” and at variance with the interpretations given by people such as Strawson, who regard the Deduction as “aiming to provide a proof of

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1 Ameriks, *Kant’s Transcendental Deduction as a Regressive Argument*: p. 273.
objectivity which will answer scepticism”.¹ This latter reading is characterised by Ameriks as construing the Deduction as a progressive argument, whereas Ameriks himself views the Deduction as a regressive argument. The complication comes in attempts to explain just what this apparent variance consists in.

As a preface to the above problem, we must first appropriately situate the reading of the Deduction with respect to Kant’s understanding of both the analytic and synthetic methods. As we noted earlier, Kant’s pre-Critical adherence to a Leibnizian conception of the metaphysical enterprise meant that the term “regressive” could be readily conflated with the term “analytic”, since the former involves moves up a syllogistic chain of inference toward more and more general concepts—precisely the kind of procedure involved in the analysis of concepts of which such Leibnizian metaphysics was essentially composed. Contrariwise, Kant’s later transcendentally ideal conception of knowledge forbids the previous faith held in this method for arriving at metaphysical truths since it is direct conflict with the notion that the only metaphysical truths available are ones limited to possible experience—something which the former method extends illegitimately beyond. In fact, due to Kant’s later faith in the role of synthetic a priori judgment, metaphysics can only show itself to be a valid and worthwhile enterprise if it can be shown to contain such synthetic a priori judgment.² Thus, metaphysical truths will be arrived at synthetically, not analytically as was previously conceived by Kant. Despite this, in Kant’s Critical Philosophy there is still a place for talk of regressive explanation. It is important to clarify just what role this talk plays for us here.

To note, and as is widely recognised, Kant’s definitions of both “analytic” and “synthetic” judgments turn on a dubious psychological criterion³ of what is thought in a concept. His classification of the judgment that “all bodies are

¹ Ibid.
² And it is of course the central task of the Critique to prove this possibility.

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extended” as “analytic” in virtue of the fact that the concept “extension” is contained in the concept “body” is now regarded as inappropriate; nowadays the term “analytic” is reserved, roughly, for those statements that are deemed true in virtue of the meanings of the terms involved (although this is still by no means entirely unproblematic or uncontested). Additionally, Kant’s classification of synthetic judgments, as of the type exemplified by “some bodies are heavy”,\(^1\) involves an appeal to a similarly dubious principle. This principle effectively defines itself negatively whereby the concept “heavy” cannot be said to be contained in the concept of body; thus, such a judgment cannot be analytic, so by extrapolation it must be synthetic. Much more could be said regarding these preliminary definitions although such a rudimentary account as has been given ought to suffice to further our discussion for now.

Given both the negative attitude displayed toward Kant’s criteria for analytic and synthetic judgments above and the generally reconstructive nature of the project here, it is not necessary to concur with Kant on such definitions. It will be enough for us to agree to the general definition of true analytic judgment as “true in virtue of the meanings of the terms involved” and that of true synthetic judgment as “true in virtue of the meanings of the terms involved in addition to the relevant empirical content” (such as was stated roughly above). This operative definition is general enough to concur also with Kant’s characterisation of analytic judgment as “explicative” and that of synthetic judgment as “ampliative”.\(^2\) This basic definition will become important for us as we attempt to explain in Chapter 3 how there might still be a legitimate conception of synthetic a priori judgment available, given the appropriate construal of transcendental proof. Let us return to our topic of focus and pick up again with these reflections shortly.

We noted above that there is a point of conflict between Ameriks’s reading of the Deduction and Strawson’s reading given in *The Bounds of Sense*. We can observe a remark by Ameriks to elucidate the source of this conflict:

\(^1\) This example, as well as the previous one regarding analytic judgment, is found in Kant, *Prolegomena*: p. 72.

\(^2\) Ibid.
“The major departure of this [Ameriks’s] interpretation is that it takes the Critique to accept empirical knowledge as a premise to be regressively explained rather than as a conclusion to be established.”¹

That is, Ameriks takes the Deduction to be a specific form of the argumentative structure typically thought of as exemplifying a transcendental argument:

i. There is experience.

ii. It is a necessary condition of the possibility of experience that p.

iii. Therefore, p.

Now, given Ameriks’s statement of his strategy as quoted above, the Transcendental Deduction will be read by him as constituting a regressive explanation of the proof of the preconditions of empirical knowledge. Ameriks’s more specific version of that argument can be transferred from his mode of presentation into a syllogistic form:

i. There is empirical knowledge.²

ii. Empirical knowledge ("experience") is possible only if the "original synthetic unity of apperception" applies to it.

iii. The "original synthetic unity of apperception" is possible only if pure concepts have validity.

iv. The validity of pure concepts requires that transcendental idealism be true.

v. Therefore, transcendental idealism is true.³

¹ Ameriks, Kant’s Transcendental Deduction as a Regressive Argument: p. 276.
² Kant indeed says that empirical knowledge is only possible given the transcendental unity of apperception (B137), but it would be improper to suggest that this is a valid criticism at this point in the argument since empirical knowledge is being regressively explained anyway.
³ This effectively contains Ameriks’s proposed version of the argument of the Deduction (ibid.).
Now the above argument might be taken to represent Ameriks’s reading of Kant’s Transcendental Deduction. This reading is thus in conflict with Strawson’s reading of that argument whereby Strawson begins his argument with the premise that we are self-conscious and argues to the conclusion that there is a unified, objective world. In his terms, Ameriks see Strawson as reading the Deduction “as showing that one can be self-conscious only if there is an objective world of which one is aware.”1 In opposition to this, Ameriks sees Kant “essentially to be arguing that for us there is objectivity, and hence empirical knowledge, only if the categories are universally valid.”2 An additional complication raised by Ameriks is the idea that “the deduction of the categories has a material dependence on transcendental idealism” and this is, we might think, a direct consequence of thinking of the Transcendental Deduction as having the precise structure as just outlined. Thus, with this additional remark Ameriks situates his reading even further from those, such as Strawson, who attempt to extract what they see as the core argument of the Deduction from the purportedly unacceptable epistemological edifice of transcendental idealism. The latter point regarding the material dependence of the Transcendental Deduction on the doctrine of transcendental idealism will become important for us as we elaborate our theory of transcendental proof, for as we will see in Chapter 3, such proof will involve “quasi-logical” moves similar to what has been called “material inference”.3

Further to the criticisms already attended to, we can observe Ameriks’s declaration that Strawson and others have read the Transcendental Deduction as “deducing empirical knowledge from consciousness and its conditions.”4 However, Ameriks contends, “Kant nowhere states that it [a transcendental deduction] is to give the sufficient conditions of empirical knowledge or is a

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2 Ibid.
3 For our purposes here the most relevant work on material inference is in Sellars and Brandom. This issue will be discussed in Section 3.2.

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proof that there is an objective world.”¹ Ameriks sees Kant as, instead, providing a proof of the objective validity of the categories, something that requires that the categories themselves be shown to apply \textit{a priori} in experience, since they are purported conditions of its possibility.² Interestingly, Ameriks construes this pattern of argument as “regressive” but \textit{not trivial}, as might be suggested by the possible conflation of the phrase “regressive argument” with the notion of “analysis”, which we noted above when discussing Kant’s pre-Critical and Critical Period conceptions of the “analytic method” and “synthetic method”. As such, this construal requires that an alternate conception of “regressive” be available that is not to be related to the term “analytic”. For although these terms may not be equivalent, it is easy to see how they may be taken by some to be sufficiently related to cause trouble for the transcendental arguer who makes the kind of proposal Ameriks suggests one finds in Kant. It is important then that the term “regressive” be understood here as applying to \textit{an argument that moves from some fact or thing to its explanation}. For example, Ameriks’s reading of Kant’s Transcendental Deduction construes it as moving from the existence of empirical knowledge to conditions which stand to explain its possibility. Strawson’s reading, on the other hand, as interpreted by Ameriks as “progressive”, moves from the assertion of the existence of apperception to a claim about what this means about experience more generally (that it is unified and objective), viz., experience of a unified, objective world is regarded as a sufficient explanation of apperception.

Now, we need to specify just what Ameriks means by characterising his reading of the Deduction as “regressive” and Strawson’s reading as “progressive”. In doing this, we need to observe a remark by Kant insofar as Ameriks distinguishes his conception of the two relevant terms in a slightly different way. Kant offers an interpretation of a terminological point regarding the relationship between the analytic and synthetic methods and

¹ Ibid.
the notions of regressive and progressive argumentation respectively that is worth subjecting to lengthy quotation:

“Analytic method, insofar as it is opposed to the synthetic method, is something quite different from a sum total of analytic propositions. It only means that one starts from what is being looked for as if it was given and ascends to the conditions under which alone it is possible. In this method one often uses nothing but synthetic propositions, as in the example of mathematical analysis, and it might be better to call it the regressive method, in distinction from the synthetic or progressive method.”

Now we are not given any help in the text of Kant’s Transcendental Deduction as a Regressive Argument as to exactly how Ameriks understands Kant’s position with respect to this distinction (except through Ameriks’s revision of the distinction itself) although an explanation seems to come easily enough. Ignoring Kant’s point regarding the precise relationship between the “analytic method” and the “regressive method” for one moment, we can say that these (similarly conceived) methods involve uncovering the “necessary conditions of the possibility” of the particular phenomenon to which they are applied. Kant’s statement that “one starts from what is being looked for as if it was given and ascends to the conditions under which alone it is possible” suggests this much. By contrast, we might suppose that the “progressive method” involves explaining sufficient conditions of some fact or thing, by moving from it to what might be possible (possibly sufficient) explanatory inferences or extrapolations from it (in the case of Strawson’s view of our conception of experience as necessarily of a “unified, objective world” as a sufficient explanation of apperception, or self-consciousness).

Ameriks, by contrast, offers a more specific and slightly altered version of Kant’s definition. He says that merely defining "regressive" and "progressive" as descriptives characterising argument that articulate necessary conditions

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1 As should be clear, this “ascension” is exactly the kind of procedure Ameriks reads the Transcendental Deduction as involving, insofar as it is viewed by him as “regressive”. Such ascension is not to be equated with the analytic method however.
2 Kant, Prolegomena: p. 82, footnote labelled *. 
and sufficient conditions respectively is unhelpful. He puts forward a more specific definition of this distinction in the following way:

“Once the epistemological concern of transcendental arguments is taken into account, I believe adequately distinguishing definitions of ‘progressive’ and ‘regressive’ are available: a regressive argument would show that y is a necessary condition of knowledge x; a progressive argument would show that z is a sufficient condition of knowledge x, where x is a type of representation not defined as epistemic.”

Thus, Ameriks provides the additional specification that a progressive argument not merely aims to provide sufficient conditions of a piece of knowledge—in Strawson’s case, apperception—but also that this piece of knowledge be a “non-epistemic representation”. Read this way, Strawson’s argument construes the Transcendental Deduction as moving from apperception, as a non-epistemic representation, to what would be a sufficient condition of it; namely, a unified, objective world of experience. We can see an additional point of conflict arising from this construal of Strawson’s argument as progressive, insofar as a truly Kantian argument of the kind intended would seek necessary conditions, not merely sufficient conditions.

The advantage of the way these terms are defined above is that it encompasses those demands that Strawson places on the structure of his own argument(s)—and thus on the idea of a progressive argument, insofar as such

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1 We might find ourselves disturbed by the characterisation of “x” in this definition as referring to both “knowledge” and “a type of representation not defined as epistemic”. I am unsure exactly how to take this apparent conflict of terms although I assume the general thrust of the point to be the following: for the progressive argument referred to (Strawson’s), “x” stands in for “apperception”, which, on the one hand might be characterised as “knowledge” (possible insofar as it involves a kind of self-knowledge; self-consciousness), yet, on the other hand, might be defined as “non-epistemic” since the notion of apperception does not strictly involve any knowledge claim of the typical kind involved in claims to know the world through empirical knowledge. This explanation is unsatisfactory however, since it could easily be reversed or even overturned altogether quite easily. We might say that “apperception” is a kind of “epistemic representation”, yet one that ought to not count as knowledge in the strict sense. However, this reversal seems to invite further criticism to the extent which results in a collapse of the point attempting to be made. Unfortunately, it is difficult to discern what the precise meaning of this specification is, so this attempt at explanation will have to do for our purposes here.

arguments might be interpreted in that fashion.¹ Importantly, it becomes clear through thinking about “regressive argument” in Ameriks’s way that such arguments need not look trivial (or, metaphysically blunderous if viewed under something like the pre-Critical lens of Kant where regressive arguments are easily conflated with the analytic method). The important difference between Ameriks’s understanding of “regressive” and what he sees as Kant’s understanding of the same is that Ameriks’s notion of “regressive” allows for synthetic a priori principles to operate as conclusions in regressive arguments whereas Kant purportedly saw synthetic a priori principles as fitting into the premises of such arguments² (thus readily inviting the metaphysical error of inferring to conclusions beyond possible experience).

In sum, we can note that the important difference between Ameriks’s reading and Strawson’s is that by contrast, Strawson begins with the notion of apperception as a posit and infers from that to the notion of a unified and objective world of experience. Problematically for Strawson though, by Kant’s lights, the very notion of unified and objective experience is written into the notion (or, meaning) of apperception. This ensures that Strawson’s reading looks trivial; a point which Ameriks makes in a helpful way:

“Kant makes it clear that the transcendental unity of apperception is a necessary condition of empirical knowledge; representations which cannot be unified as mine cannot be representations which amount to knowledge (B137). If it is also the case that the condition that representations agree with the transcendental and not merely the empirical unity of consciousness just means for Kant that they are objectively related, then ‘original apperception’ would be a sufficient condition of empirical knowledge as well, though by definition and not because of any progressive argument.”³

¹ As Ameriks reads him. I have yet to see Strawson use the term “progressive” although it is implied by his approach that this is his intended strategy of argument even if he did not understand it as such.
² As might be suggested by the quotation above from Kant, Prolegomena: p. 82, footnote labelled *.
So it appears that Strawson’s strategy, and that of others who takeapperception as a premise and the notion of an objective, unified world of experience as something to be explained, include the error of missing the basic interconnection between these fundamental ideas. Additionally, such strategies also misunderstand Kant’s general task in the Deduction insofar as they place weight on the task of ensuring objectivity in order to rebut scepticism instead of providing a proof of the necessary conditions of the possibility of a particular kind of empirical knowledge. Importantly, and as we have already mentioned, rebutting scepticism need not be thought of as Kant’s main task. As has been maintained here, the rebuttal of scepticism is not a main task as such for Kant at all, but rather a mere result given his main project which aims at something more profound—namely, a reshaping of the landscape in which those types of questions arise.

We might think of it as a conclusion of the above considerations that Kant’s Transcendental Deduction is a regressive argument and, by extension, that all transcendental arguments are regressive arguments. However, it is clear that the regressive procedure as proposed by Ameriks does not fit at all with the typical construal of transcendental arguments yet instead requires a commitment to a form of transcendental idealism in the sense we have made here, if the notion of regressive explanation is to be taken in terms of the phrasing of “conditions of the possibility” in the sense in which we have employed that phrase. This reading of Kant’s Deduction can now be extended to connect up with our account of transcendental proof by considering a point made by Ameriks which serves to bring out the peculiar nature of both.

Near the beginning of his paper Ameriks gives an example of Kant’s conception of a “transcendental exposition”, as exemplified by his account of space in the Transcendental Aesthetic, to make clear his reading of the Deduction. Ameriks says that

“surprisingly little attention has been paid to Kant’s explicit designation of the argument of the Transcendental Aesthetic as a transcendental deduction (B 119). In a
remarkably systematic paragraph added in the second edition Kant explains what he means by a “transcendental exposition” and how it is that his analysis of space is one. Briefly Kant declares a transcendental account of a particular representation (B) to be one which shows how B explains the possibility of a kind of synthetic a priori knowledge (A). Such an account has two parts:

(1) For this purpose it is required that such knowledge does really flow from the given concept, (2) that this knowledge is possible only on the assumption of a given mode of explaining the concept (B 40).”

Now, Kant’s transcendental exposition of space in the Aesthetic is instructive for us since it makes the connection between such an exposition (and by extension, what we refer to here as “transcendental proof”) and the doctrine of transcendental idealism. We can observe further that

“This means that the transcendental deduction in the Transcendental Aesthetic in particular must show (1) how the science of geometry “really flows” from the representation of space, and (2) how geometry is possible only if that representation has a particular (in Kant’s view, ideal) nature. This suggests that a transcendental deduction of a particular type of knowledge demonstrates its necessary and sufficient conditions.”

The opacity of the requirement of “really flowing” (which we might suppose means not simply logical entailment, but perhaps something more like material inference, yet in a rather peculiar form) notwithstanding, we can see how this construal is helpful. Namely, in Kant’s argument “geometry is possible as a science only if the representation of space is an a priori intuition, which is possible only if space is transcendentally ideal.” In applying this same reasoning to the Transcendental Deduction, we can say that empirical

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2 Ibid.
3 We will discuss the relationship of this notion to our account of transcendental proof in Section 3.2, entitled “Situated Thought”.
4 Ibid.

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knowledge is possible only if the Categories apply a priori in experience, and the a priori of the Categories entails transcendental idealism.

Thus, although we must conclude generally that the term “regressive” does not apply to transcendental arguments in the literature as a whole (something I take to be established by the diagnosis of Strawson’s strategy as at odds with the “regressive” reading), this is no problem, since the account on offer here has deliberately set itself apart from the typical treatments given in the literature. The way forward is to take Ameriks’s account of the Transcendental Deduction as a clue for explicating transcendental proof and that task will occupy us shortly. The most important thing to recognise about the reading of the Transcendental Deduction one finds in Strawson is the extent to which this reading makes the Deduction look superfluous. Strawson’s strategy of arguing from apperception to its consequences looks like—given the right conception of apperception and its entailments—not merely an “analytical” argument, but a straight out “analytic” argument (where “analytic” is taken to mean “true in virtue of the meaning of the terms involved”). This is because, properly thought out, Strawson’s reconstruction makes Kant’s Transcendental Deduction look like a tautology since a full-blooded conception of the transcendental unity of apperception itself already involves the notion of a unified, objective experience; we cannot have these two ideas at opposite ends of a syllogism and expect to get away with it. And as Ameriks says, this would obviously not represent “Kant’s best intentions.”

Now, although the focus of this section has been primarily on Thesis 7, we can briefly outline the link to Thesis 8, focus on which will be the task of Chapter 3. Thesis 8 states: “transcendental arguments establish necessary conditions of the possibility of particular kinds of knowledge; they articulate epistemic conditions.”

It seems that the appropriate link to make between Ameriks’s reading of the Transcendental Deduction and this conception of transcendental arguments (and proof) is as follows. The regressive procedure outlined with

respect to the Deduction is to be taken as central to the construal of transcendental proof (via the device of situated thought) to be given in Chapter 3. Since the regressive procedure, when read as applying to the Transcendental Deduction, involved articulation of the necessary conditions of empirical knowledge—taken by Ameriks’s Kant to include, roughly, the Categories and transcendental idealism—we can make the appeal that such necessary conditions are epistemic conditions of the kind appealed to by Allison in his two-aspect reading of transcendental idealism. We will elaborate upon this thought in the coming sections.

2.3 Overview

We have seen through the foregoing analysis of some general claims that have been made vis-à-vis transcendental argumentation that there is much regarding current orthodox views that may be questioned. The general list of theses listed in Section 2.2 can be reduced to a chain of claims which interrelate closely. We can observe the following:

(1) The general idea that “transcendental arguments aim to refute the sceptic by establishing necessary conditions of the possibility of the unity and objectivity of our experience” was seen to lead to a focus in the literature on justificatory scepticism which, from the outset, understood the traditional mind/world gap to be a problem to be explained. This focus included general commitment beyond the construal of this philosophical problem, as inherited from Hume. Namely, it included a commitment to a generally “naturalised epistemology” which rejected the Kantian “transcendental” approach to accounting for the mind/world problem. This general orientation then meant that the focus on conceptual construal of transcendental arguments dominated.
(2) The ideas that “transcendental arguments (merely) articulate (necessary) conceptual relations” and “transcendental arguments establish the uniqueness of a particular *categorial* scheme” stem from (1) where the only viable conception of “transcendental” is seen as one which involves mere conceptual necessity, and not commitment to any purportedly metaphysical theses.

(3) The influential nature of Strawson’s reading of the Transcendental Deduction allowed the idea that “transcendental arguments establish the necessity of a certain minimal conception of experience” to become the generally accepted version of transcendental argumentation. A central problem with Strawson’s reading raised by Stroud in his claim that “transcendental arguments establish the necessity of a mere *belief* in a certain minimal conception of experience” has led to the understanding of there being problems with transcendental arguments in general.

(4) The claim that “transcendental arguments rely on a (dubious) verificationist principle” can be seen as a charge arising from the same general view of transcendental arguments as phrased above, which we rejected.

(5) Finally, the idea that “transcendental arguments are regressive arguments”, which was discussed in relation to Ameriks’s paper, was seen to lead us a conception of such arguments which diverged from Strawson’s interpretation (and thus, the dominant view in the literature). The reading of Kant’s Transcendental Deduction as a regressive argument led us to a view of transcendental proof as having a similar form which will be explained with respect to the notion of “situated thought” in the next chapter.
Given these generally negative diagnoses of the approach to accounting for transcendental arguments in the literature we can now advance some preliminary, positive claims.

The crucial conception to appreciate is that of the linkage between transcendental proof and a certain conception of the synthetic a priori, a linkage which involves recruiting the notion of “situated thought”. This connection serves to strengthen the possibility of providing a suitable reconstruction of what has been called transcendental proof and, whilst not involving a passive acceptance of Kant’s doctrine of transcendental idealism, certainly advocates a thorough reconsideration of the merits of a way of thinking similar to this.

A related thought is that, whilst providing an excellent departure for, and material for the rehabilitation of, transcendental argumentation, the general Strawsonian “austere” interpretation of “transcendental” is certainly no longer acceptable in its original form; as we have seen from above subsections, the general philosophical community has long been possessed of this thought. Indeed much of the dispute regarding transcendental argumentation has its basis in the revision, in one way or another, of Strawsonian theses. By placing a line between those who, on the one hand, think that Strawson’s general strategy was correct yet in need of revision, and on the other hand, those who think that Strawson’s attempt at a conceptual construal of transcendental arguments was wrong-headed, we divide the scope of transcendental inquiry into weak and strong construals respectively. Clearly, this reconstruction falls in the latter camp.

This criticism notwithstanding, the Strawsonian interpretation provides an excellent and clear way of thinking about some of the central aspects of transcendental argumentation. And it has been one intention of mine in this chapter to take note of the idea that the notion of a “conceptual scheme”,¹ whilst not a central feature at work in transcendental proof, is a feature nevertheless, insofar as such proofs are contained within the conceptual

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¹ Despite the well-known criticisms of this notion in Davidson, On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme.
structure of transcendental arguments and distinguished by the synthetic a priori moves which constitute their primary epistemic virtue. Mark Sacks makes this point nicely when he says, giving a suggestion as to how such transcendental proof should be structured, that

“We should set out the formally valid deductive arguments as the shell, while recognizing that the central moves, which can be regarded only as premised in the run of the argument, need to be established independently by way of transcendental proof — working through the relevant propositional content in situated thought. If that is done, the status of propositions that are synthetic but a priori stands to be established (and their scope appropriately restricted).”

And this recommendation should point us toward a strengthened version of transcendental proof that makes a claim strong enough to be significant, and is palatable enough to be accepted as a genuine philosophical option when thinking critically about what it means to have, potentially, empirical, world-directed thought about an objective order independent of our subjective apprehension of it. Of course this recommendation is here opaque as it stands, so the notion of “situated thought” will be subject to a thorough analysis in the next chapter.

A final word on this chapter. I think a helpful way to gain a broad perspective of the landscape I have sketched thus far is by way of considering the consequences of the various forms of what have been called “transcendental arguments”. On one extreme, we have a fully collapsed picture of these kinds of arguments which see them as superfluous talk about what we can say either on the basis of the mere conceptual scheme we employ in talk about the world or, in an even weaker account, what we can say about the conditions of the possibility of our experience given our mere belief—perhaps erroneous—in the necessity of such conditions. And, as has been asserted repeatedly, this picture does not contain anything even roughly

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1 Sacks, *The Nature of Transcendental Arguments*; pp. 455-456. My emphasis; here intended to point out the sense of vagary which ought to be dispelled and replaced with serious philosophical analysis).
resembling an example of true transcendental proof, and more generally, does not seem to constitute an epistemologically interesting project worth pursuing.

At the other extreme we find an unnecessarily strong form, or more accurately, a distorted vision of what it means to talk about conditions of the possibility of experience, which comes in those accounts of “transcendental” which take it to mean something ontological about what the “conditions of the possibility of the existence of empirical objects” are. In fact, at the sentence level this account almost gets it right since the term “existence” needs merely to be replaced with “perception”; what Kant meant as an epistemological—or perhaps even semantic—claim is interpreted wrongly in this picture as an ontological claim.

3 The Proposed Reconstruction

3.1 The Proposal

Up to this point I have been suggesting that a full reappraisal of transcendental argumentation ought to be possible given (amongst other things) a consideration of the merits of the two-aspect reading of transcendental idealism. This requires some elaboration. We can articulate reasons for this suggestion which follow from one another and are themselves threefold: (1) the traditional two-world view of transcendental idealism necessarily engenders an untenable version of transcendental psychology

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1 Kant would have said “representation”, although we can avoid the danger of putting the point in those terms and instead, place emphasis on the role of perceptual experience by employing the term “perception”.
2 McDowell, for instance, has read Kant this way. I think it is important to see how closely this “semantic” reading of transcendental idealism comes to the classic two-aspect position. Whether this renders transcendental idealism trivial is a separate question to be answered elsewhere. Of course, for our purposes here the answer is in the negative.
3 That is, precisely the transcendental psychology that Strawson saw fit to reject. The kind of naturalised Kantianism one finds in the work of people like Patricia Kitcher gives a different take on the notion of transcendental psychology that seems to inadequately fulfil the meaning of this notion to the point of the term “transcendental” being unrecognisable. Therefore, the transcendental psychology I speak of here is the full-blooded Kantian one. Also, where I refer
that involves the thought that all we find to have the character of necessity in the empirical world—that of experience—is attributable to the constitution of our mind in the sense that implies an eternal, ahistorical, and necessary structuring element in thought about the world internal to ourselves, given certain elements of our constitution, and should be seen as in need of revision;¹ (2) a more faithfully Kantian account of transcendental argumentation as transcendental proof is able to resist what we have referred to as Stroud’s Challenge and is thus able to withstand the majority of the related attacks on what have been known as transcendental arguments; (3) the connection established between transcendental proof and the two-aspect reading of transcendental idealism is able to coherently explicate (through the philosophical device of situated thought) the fundamental meaning of the idea of epistemic conditions being operative in the thought and experience of a subject in possession of a discursive intellect—more specifically, it provides the tools for one to conjure a coherent account of the structure of subjectivity which explains the capacity for having viable, world-directed empirical thought.

We can observe that the assertion of the need for the revision mentioned in (1) issues as a reply to worries about two thoughts that arise given the above to a version of transcendental psychology this seems to implicitly allude to the possibility of alternate versions (apart of course from the naturalised version already mentioned) which might be tenable. This does not mean my advocacy of a theory of transcendental proof is committed to such a possible transcendental psychology—my advocacy intentionally avoids the phrasing of the matter in terms of “psychology” and instead emphasises the epistemic role of transcendental proof—thus the matter is left open as to what role a conception of transcendental psychology might play. Despite this, a brief and helpful remark ought to serve to close the matter here. Due to the ambiguous nature of Kant’s own theory of transcendental psychology, the reconstruction here avoids the usage of that terminology to characterise the subjective aspect of the project in the Deduction. The reconstruction here then takes what Kant might have phrased as “transcendental psychological conditions” and converts them to “epistemic conditions” (not to suggest, of course, that Kant’s own account is fundamentally at odds with the interpretation offered here).

¹ This is of course not to say that the two-aspect view excludes the possibility of thinking of the matter in these terms, especially in the innocuous sense in which this may be taken, although it does not encourage this view as the two-object view does. Additionally, it should be added that the two-aspect view of transcendental idealism (as argue for here) forestalls any attempts to reduce what might be called the “limiting factors” in our experience to psychology; empirical most obviously, but transcendental as well. This remark relates directly to the note above.

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conception outlined above, claimed to be contained in the two-world view.\(^1\)
The first thought is that there are genuine internal structures inherent in our minds (such as are referred to as “cognitive faculties” by Strawson) that function to create the world of appearances not merely in terms of its form, as Kant is read as claiming under the two-aspect view, but also in terms of its matter;\(^2\) this being the traditional ontological reading referred to. The second thought is that there are constraining elements in our experience that necessarily make it as it is except that these are merely empirical and resultant from our actual physical makeup being as it is; this second thought is that contained in recent attempts at naturalising Kant’s transcendental psychology (and as the combination of the two terms “naturalised” and “transcendental” should indicate, when brought to a logical conclusion, this latter thought leads to either an unacceptable watering down of the concept “transcendental”, or renders contradictions). It should be clear that the need for revision stems from the philosophically unsatisfying character of these two ways of thinking about the relationship between limiting factors in experience and the subject for whom there are such limiting factors; it is precisely this relationship that is up for revision.\(^3\) And as should be clear by now, the attempt at revision here consists in the elaboration and defence of a third alternative which combines the said two-aspect view of transcendental idealism with an account of transcendental proof which itself turns on situated thought.

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\(^1\) Notice that this conception is wide enough to include both the ontological reading of transcendental idealism as well as the naturalised reading of transcendental psychology.

\(^2\) This way of putting the point draws attention to Kant’s Aristotelian distinction between matter and form in cognition. The distinction in Kant is tied to the idea that the content or matter for cognition is received sensibly and shaped by the mind intellectually in terms of its form. The ontological reading is then seen as erroneously supposing that the mind creates the matter, or content, of its own cognition—a view that can lead to equating Kant’s approach to that of Berkeley’s, and thus to thinking of Kant as claiming something analogous to Berkeley’s notion that “esse est percipi”, or “to be is to be perceived”.

\(^3\) Notice that one can view a naturalised transcendental psychology with suspicion for many reasons, but most pertinently here because it is not clear that taking such a view of the mind combined with a metaphysical orientation of “robust realism” allows one to sidestep the sceptical worry anyhow, even though it is precisely the naturalisation of transcendental psychology that is meant to make this problem disappear. Sacks, Objectivity and Insight: Chapter 5, has an excellent exploration of this point.

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To give ourselves a wider berth in thinking about this issue we can observe that the notion of the “mind making nature” in the psychological sense implied by the phrase “cognitive faculties” employed by Strawson generates the two-world view, whereas the notion of the “mind making nature” in the epistemological sense combined with the shape of inquiry implied by the phrase “epistemic conditions” is inherent in the two-aspect view. This distinction was foreshadowed in my remarks in the introductory section Transcendental Reflection (Chapter 1), regarding the philosophical and non-philosophical notions of limitation. We can make the further cursory suggestion here that the philosophical notion of limitation intended coincides with the general thrust of McDowell’s assertion regarding the space of reasons as being sui generis. McDowell’s claim can be contextualised by relating it to the conception of the subject as a free actor in the space of reasons. To avoid getting off track here we can simply embrace McDowell’s notion as phrased above.

As the above considerations evidence, it is central to the project here that the correct relation between “epistemic conditions” and “cognitive faculties” is established. This is due to the fact that the former notion is relevant for an epistemic construal of transcendental idealism, whereas the latter notion is more easily accommodated into a view of transcendental idealism which advocates a form of transcendental psychology. And since the shape of the rehabilitated version of transcendental proof has been tied to a certain conception of the two-aspect view of transcendental idealism we need to focus here on what makes epistemic conditions salient—as having a sui generis character—in a way that defends them from absorption into the notion of cognitive faculties and thus a form of transcendental psychology. Articulating the uniqueness of epistemic conditions will thus be the central task for us in defending a form of the two-aspect view.1

1 As a side note, we can express surprise at how negative most reactions still are to the term “idealism” (now sometimes called “anti-realism”—a fact itself that evidences the very point itself). Unfortunately we cannot concern ourselves with this at the moment, although it is a point worth flagging. Namely, how the concept “idealism” should be understood is by no
To relate this point to our main aim we can assert that there is something sui generis about the character of the philosophical sense of limitation employed in the talk of “epistemic conditions” set over against the non-philosophical (albeit scientific) notion of limitation present in talk about “cognitive faculties”. This assertion of a sui generis character does not of course mean that translatability between these forms of considering the notion of experience and its limitations is impossible. Rather, it means that the notion of “epistemic conditions” is at least ineliminable and perhaps in some way—not able to be shown here—irreducible. Allison makes a helpful point regarding the question of objectivity—precisely what is at issue here—in his essay *On Naturalising Kant’s Transcendental Psychology*, which attempts to show why the appropriate construal of the Transcendental Deduction, as *quid juris*, follows epistemically relevant lines:

“what is required for objective representation is not simply the de facto presence of a rule-governed unity of representations in consciousness (something like Kitcher’s “contextual dependence”), but the thought or conceptual recognition of this unity. In other words, this unity must not only be in a single consciousness, it must be for that consciousness in the sense that the mind must be able to represent itself to itself, or equivalently, to recognize it as such. This reflexive dimension of cognition follows directly from the normative nature of the claim of objective connection. For unless the mind could think, that is, represent to itself or recognize the rule-governedness of

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means a matter of consensus—almost to the point of farce. The continual identification of Kant with Berkeley and thus the systematic mistreatment and misapprehension of what transcendental idealism means in its essence is evidence of this (at least in terms of one brand of what is called “idealism”). It is interesting that those who detect something important at the heart of transcendental idealism and yet feel repelled by the purported metaphysical excesses of Kant’s additional commitments decide that any essential insight at the heart of that doctrine must thereby be separable from it. Why not simply rethink the additional commitments of transcendental idealism, revise their expression or rethink their meaning instead of do away with that unwieldy philosophical badge? Perhaps it is a matter of taste whether one sees that label as necessary baggage for an independent reconstruction of a philosophical position. Strawson is not a target of this remark since his reconstruction is quite radical; Sacks is a target however, since his attitude toward transcendental idealism is somewhat complicated. Despite this, in *The Nature of Transcendental Arguments* Sacks’s attitude toward transcendental idealism is seemingly more sympathetic than in *Objectivity and Insight*. For this reason I take Sacks’s account of transcendental proof in the former work as a focal point. We will come to this issue shortly.

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the unification of its representations, it could not affirm the objective validity of this unification. It would remain a merely contingent, causally conditioned connection of mental states without any epistemic significance.”

So, given this remark, it ought to be clear what motivations there are for preserving an epistemic reading of the main claim of transcendental idealism, which itself is arguably present in precisely the aspect of the Transcendental Deduction as just referred to. For, as Allison says, “it is absolutely essential to keep firmly in mind the normative concern of the Deduction.” Although indeed, that “the concern of the Deduction is normative is itself hardly controversial, since Kant famously distinguishes the quid juris from the quid facti and contends that he is only concerned with the former (A84-85/B116-17).”

Now, despite these considerations, there might be a possible reply for those who view the two-aspect interpretation of transcendental idealism as “anodyne”. Namely, a two-world theorist might be tempted to say: “Well, ok, I grant you the notion of “epistemic conditions” you seem so keen on, but can this notion really do you any good? What if it is asserted that the notion you recommend is something that anybody would accept, since it is so minimal, and something which is incapable of supporting the kind of heavy argument seemingly required to sustain the picture of the “mind making nature” in any non-trivial sense?” The notion referred to of course being that transcendental idealism, at its core, claims that our cognition has specifiable limits, and these limits are bound up with the fact that our cognition is necessarily of a spatio-temporal form, and necessarily of a particular conceptual, discursive structure.

Despite this worry I think it is possible to see my foregoing proposal regarding a particular conception of the subject as having a sui generis character as holding up under this strain. This is because the main claim

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3 Ibid.

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contained in the conception of the epistemically located subject, which I have insisted is intrinsically tied to the notion of having epistemic conditions\(^1\) at work in one’s experience, is itself no weak assertion. In fact there might be many who would accept the two-world theorist’s attack on the supposedly “anodyne” two-aspect view of transcendental idealism, as phrased by our imaginary interlocutor above, who might not be willing to assent to the claim of this epistemic view of the subject as \textit{sui generis}. This is not to suggest that all two-world theorists are thoroughgoing naturalists (indeed, some who respond positively to such a reading of Kant might be immaterialists) who would eschew any talk of “epistemic limitations”, although it should be seen that this second claim of mine entails something stronger than the mere idea that we have epistemic conditions shaping our experience. It is the further qualification that these conditions are in some sense \textit{irreducible}. This is not a particularly anodyne claim. It might in fact be an irritant to many.

Moreover, once we see the need for revision of the two-world conception of transcendental idealism, we can see how conceding that all transcendental arguments stand to do is provide descriptions of the natural limitations of particular perceptual apparati—or, elucidations of the limits of our conceptual schemes to allow for the thought of such-and-such—is not necessary. The strength of the proposed account together with the coherence of the two-aspect reading of transcendental idealism means that fully-workable transcendental proofs stand to be provided.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) These epistemic conditions would be analogous to what I outlined crudely above—the condition of spatio-temporality and the condition of a particular conceptual structure. We might think of these as quasi-Strawsonian and thus, more general versions of Kant’s conception of sensible and intellectual conditions of cognition. Notice that it is much easier to argue for the necessity of spatio-temporality than it is to argue for something analogous to the Categories. The question of course arises then, if one accepts the necessity of spatio-temporality, if all concepts are necessarily of spatio-temporal kin. This is an appealing thought, though difficult to establish.

\(^2\) As a final clarification of this point, and since my purposes here are not exegetical, I will assume that the two-aspect version of transcendental idealism is a theory that can stand of its own accord without pledging of allegiance to Kant, or even further confirmation as to whether this is Kant’s “official” view. It is enough to show that it is a viable philosophical option.
Through showing how adherence to the traditional two-world conception of transcendental idealism typically leads to a negative dismissal of transcendental arguments (as they have been conceived hitherto) and, jointly, debunking the prejudices of this traditional conception, a way through the landscape appears to open up. We seem then to have a path to tread between the two cliffs of, on the one side, an overly ambitious ontological project of talk about what makes the existence of experiential objects possible, and on the other, a philosophically diluted conception of the link between experience and its “conceptual conditions” or “requirements of held beliefs” that seeks merely to talk about which beliefs or concepts make other beliefs or concepts possible—or, put another way, which frameworks are required for other frameworks to be put in place. This latter project appears to be accepted by many as all that is left of the transcendental landscape. However, it would seem that any attempts to theorise in this direction are superfluous and philosophically impotent, whereas the former project is committed to a seemingly indefensible, overly ambitious view.

It seems that the appropriate passage between these unpalatable options runs like this: the correct account construes the key moves of transcendental arguments as involving transcendental proof. Such transcendental proof is tied to a form of transcendental idealism which is structured primarily in terms of epistemic conditions. These epistemic conditions can be evidenced as operative in actual cases of thought and experience by examining the philosophical device of situated thought which itself brings into the picture the role of synthetic a priori judgment, transcendental content, and relevance of something like material inference in cases of empirical knowledge claims.

However, thus far, a major obstacle to accounting positively for transcendental argumentation in the terms just iterated has been lack of an adequate explication of the relationship between epistemic conditions and transcendental proof in the literature. The notion of “epistemic conditions” needs to be given a more thorough explication than has hitherto been the case;
their vagueness has been an obstacle to serious progress in explaining just what one means when one talks this way.¹

### 3.2 Situated Thought

The central insight contained in Mark Sacks’s rehabilitation of transcendental proof is the importation of the notion of “situated thought” into the debate and the linkage between it and the notion of “epistemic conditions” proposed by Henry Allison.² It will help to here give a systematic exposition of this paper in which Sacks’s proposal is contained since such a proposal will be central for us in understanding the structure of transcendental proof and such proof’s connection with the notions of both “situated thought” and “epistemic conditions”.

Firstly, we can look to Sacks’s own description of the task assigned to his paper *The Nature of Transcendental Arguments* to obtain a summary of its structure. The general aim there for Sacks is to “cast light on the kind of proof involved in central transcendental arguments”.³ Importantly, the structure of this proof offered by Sacks is at odds with much of the contemporary literature on such arguments. Sacks suggests that “some of the difficulty associated with such arguments may result from the tendency to construe them simply as articulating relations between concepts or propositional contents.”⁴ Sacks, by contrast, gives an account of the proof involved in such arguments in terms of “phenomenological description” which is “outlined...as

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¹ In *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism* Henry Allison gives a sympathetic account of the “sensible” and “intellectual” conditions of human cognition. My account of “epistemic conditions” will proceed differently by attempting to explain such conditions by way of the notion of “situated thought”; that is, by taking such conditions to derive from the structure of “situated thought”. I thus take the notion of “situated thought” to be more primitive. This strategy will be relevant for our explication of the “core set of theses” taken to be contained in, or extrapolated from, the two-aspect view of transcendental idealism. This will be attended to in Section 3.5.

² This rehabilitation occurs in Sacks, *The Nature of Transcendental Arguments*.


⁴ Ibid.

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a way of bringing out the force of these arguments.”1 Sacks then makes a connection to Kant by stating that “it can be fruitful to think in terms of this construal in understanding some of Kant’s transcendental proofs.”2 Additionally, Sacks makes a close connection, which I have insisted on establishing here, between transcendental arguments and a set of core theses found in transcendental idealism—a relationship which is given elucidation through the account of transcendental proof as referred to.3

The framing of Sacks’s task above impels us to examine closer what it might mean to give a construal of transcendental proof, which it is claimed is involved in central transcendental arguments, in terms of “phenomenological description”, instead of conceptual relations. To begin, we can present Sacks’s reason for this orientation by quoting him as saying:

“the significant drawback to concentration on conceptual schemes in approaching transcendental arguments is that it reinforces the view that transcendental arguments are concerned with conceptual structures, hived off from the objects of experience, rather than the experienced objects themselves (however conceptual that experience might be).”4

By way of this understanding, we can make a connection between the notion of an experiential object and the role of phenomenological description in transcendental proof. Such a connection, we might further suppose, establishes a link to transcendental idealism, although how this is done is not yet clear. A preliminary suggestion might be that transcendental proof is

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
3 To note, I say “set of core theses found in transcendental idealism” because Sacks does not commit himself to any further specified form of transcendental idealism, although he suggests that there links between parts of that doctrine and transcendental proof. This strategy concurs with “Strategy A” as mentioned in Chapter 1. My strategy, of course, fits with the alternative “Strategy B” which opts not to extract this purported “set of core theses” from transcendental idealism itself. Of course, it is still not sufficiently clear whether, and to what extent, the former and latter strategies might coincide in principle, however much they might differ in verbal matters where A opts for rejection of the traditional conception of transcendental idealism and B opts for reinterpretation of that same doctrine. Luckily, this is not our focus just now.
concerned with giving a regressive explanation of particular cases of empirical knowledge—itself necessarily of objects of experience—in terms of the conditions of the possibility of these experiential objects having the particular nature that they do (cf. Ameriks’s account of the Transcendental Deduction in 2.2.5 above). We can look to Kant’s way of putting the point to make this more explicit:

“the a priori conditions of a possible experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of objects of experience.”1

And Kant’s conception of the Categories, which is relevant insofar they constitute one portion of “a priori conditions”, is that they are:

“fundamental concepts by which we think objects in general for appearances...so far as the form of thought is concerned, through them alone does experience become possible.”2

So, given our alignment with Ameriks’s reading of the Deduction, we could say that this Kantian conception of objects of experience accords nicely with the task assigned to transcendental proof insofar as such proof proceeds from premises containing claims for the existence of empirical knowledge (of objects) to a regressive explanation in terms of conditions of possibility which implicates transcendental idealism. The one step we must insist on omitting, however, is the commitment to the particular conception of a priori concepts which Kant commits to. As we have noted already, endorsement of a form of transcendental idealism need not commit us to the precise articulation of that doctrine given by Kant. Transcendental idealism is employed here to make a claim for the existence of necessary conditions of the possibility of experience, although the exact form of such necessary conditions is left open here where we instead must be content with an account of what function such necessary

1 A111.
2 Ibid.

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conditions fulfil—and it is precisely the point of our focus here on situated thought to attempt to explain this.

Returning to our main point, we can see how phenomenological description would function within the appropriate regressive explanation by considering the following: in the case of regressedly explaining the conditions of the possibility of experiential objects having a particular nature, an appropriate phenomenological description of an experiential object would include an account (at least implicitly) of how such an experiential object comes to be perceived or apprehended. That is, such phenomenological description would articulate what is involved in such empirical knowledge.

To advance to the next step in our analysis, we can further the insistence on a form of transcendental proof which speaks not merely of conceptual relations by making a link between both Sacks’s understanding of the task of such proof and Kant’s understanding of the structure of synthetic judgment. Sacks says that the relations of “presupposition” or the place for “necessary condition[s]” purportedly established by most contemporary transcendental arguments are "understood in terms of logical entailment or deductive inference.”¹ Now of course “[S]uch construals cannot capture the genuine increase in knowledge claimed to be contained in transcendental arguments.”² That is, “[U]nless the sceptic is of no interest whatsoever, the conclusion of the transcendental argument is a substantial statement, one that says more than the premiss(es): the move from premisses to conclusion is, we might say, synthetic.”³ So “a deductive inference from premisses to conclusion could not in itself be responsible for the addition of substantive content along the way. Making implicit logical entailment explicit might, to put it in Kant’s terms, increase our explicative knowledge, but we are looking for expansive or ampliative knowledge. There must then be some point at which the process

² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
of simple deductive inference is disrupted, and a synthetic or ampliative move is made.”

Now it should be clear that this understanding of the basic function of transcendental proof is of a piece with Kant’s understanding in the *Critique* of how his there proposed metaphysics of experience is primarily composed, *viz.*, of synthetic a priori judgment. And as we have already noted, Kant explicitly links his account of synthetic judgment with ampliative knowledge, so it should be clear that, despite what else Sacks says with respect to Kant and to transcendental idealism, there is a crucial interconnection between the above understanding of transcendental proof and the latter (transcendental idealism).

We can now say a little more about Kant’s Critical Period conception of synthetic judgment which should suffice to establish some links which will become important for us, particularly in seeing how the account of transcendental proof offered here connects up with a host of debates in contemporary philosophy. An initial and interesting characterisation of synthesis, in its relation to analysis, can be found in a footnote in *Theoretical Philosophy 1755-1770* where Kant is paraphrased thus:

“Kant claims that rendering *objects* distinct is the function of synthesis, whereas rendering *concepts* distinct is the task of analysis. Likewise, *synthesis creates* a distinct concept, whereas analysis *renders* a concept distinct (cf. *Logic* [1800], Introduction VIII [AK 9:64]).”

And this paraphrase connects up quite neatly with Kant’s understanding of the *Critique* as following a “synthetic method” (to be paired with “synthesis” as referred to above) insofar as that work began merely with the idea of pure reason itself and proceeded to evidence what could be inferred from it, namely by “trying to determine in this source itself, according to principles,

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both the elements and laws of it pure employment.”

By contrast, Kant’s approach in the Prolegomena follows the “analytic method” (to be paired with “analysis” as referred to above) insofar as it begins with the idea that synthetic a priori judgment is indeed possible and from there “looks for support” by “ascending to the sources”, “which are not yet known, and which, when discovered, will not only explain what we knew already, but will also exhibit a large extent of cognitions which spring from all these same sources.”

The question of the Prolegomena is therefore “How are synthetic a priori propositions possible?” And this fits with the central guiding task of the Critique itself, which is effectively the “complete estimation of synthetic a priori cognition”—an answer to which is supposed to determine the possibility of legitimate metaphysics, for Kant.

To end our digression, and to provide a further idea to be explored, we can hazard one final reference to this division as neatly expressed by Allison. As he notes:

“in the Jasche Logic...Kant...presents the analytic-synthetic distinction as a contrast between a “formal” and a “material” extension of knowledge. Analytic judgments, he tells us, extend our knowledge in the former and synthetic judgments in the latter sense (JL 9: III; 606-7).”

Thusly we establish the basis for a connection between synthetic judgment and what has in recent times been referred to as “material inference”. We will explore this connection shortly.

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1 Kant, Prolegomena: p. 79.
2 Ibid.
3 Kant states the rubric for the Prolegomena on p. 81.
4 A14/B28.
5 Allison, Kant’s Transcendental Idealism: p. 91.
6 This notion was first given focussed treatment in Sellars (1953) Inference and Meaning, Mind, 62, pp. 313-338. More recently, Robert Brandom has made use of this notion in his project of inferentialist semantics. Historically, the idea in Sellars comes from Carnap, who seems to have gotten the notion from the early Frege (as noted in Brandom (1994) Making it Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment, Harvard University Press: Part One, 2.IV).
To pick up from where we left off with our discussion of Sacks, we can appreciate a now expanded conception of what is at stake in claiming that transcendental proof involves a synthetic a priori move.\textsuperscript{1} That is, such proof stands to provide a genuine, substantial increase in knowledge. This knowledge is not only ampliative but also involves a material extension, according to Kant. And we can here give support to that claim by way of alluding to a connection to be explored between synthetic a priori judgment and material inference.\textsuperscript{2} The significance of this connection will consist at least partly in the difference in philosophical orientation with respect to the project here and to those who appeal to material inference.

Now, to focus our discussion we can observe Sacks’s explicit reminder that, regarding synthetic a priori knowledge, “[I]t is clear that whatever else they do, transcendental arguments are supposed to deliver just such knowledge.”\textsuperscript{3} The difficult question comes in explaining just where and how synthetic a priori judgment fits into transcendental proof. We can begin reflection on this problem by considering the traditional conception of transcendental arguments as proceeding by deductive inference. Sacks enumerates four classic cases of such arguments:

1. If experience of succession is to be possible, there must be something that is invariant.
2. If experience of change is to be possible, the empirical world must abide by causality.
3. If experience of items as distinct from me and one another is to be possible, they must be located in a unified spatio-temporal world.

\textsuperscript{1} We are careful here not to say “synthetic a priori inference” for reasons that will become apparent below.
\textsuperscript{2} Unfortunately, we will not have space to address the concern of how much Sellars’s conception of material inference coincides with the synthetic a priori in the historical Kant, although that would be an interesting topic to consider.
\textsuperscript{3} Sacks, \textit{The Nature of Transcendental Arguments}: p. 441.

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4. If self-awareness is to arise, I must recognize others as themselves persons who recognize me.\(^1\)

Now it should be clear that these above cases have notorious cousins. Number (1) mirrors Kant’s First Analogy, (2) Kant’s Second Analogy, (3) Strawson’s “thesis of objectivity”, which he claims to find in Kant’s Transcendental Deduction, and (4) looks very much like Hegel’s dialectical result in Chapter 4 of the Phenomenology of Spirit\(^2\) which discusses “The Truth of Self-Certainty” with regard to “Self-Consciousness”.\(^3\)

The above conditionals are represented as turning merely on material implication; if they are accepted, the arguments containing them are to be valid. The drama begins in explaining how such arguments are to be demonstrated to be true, or established as true. The task would be to show “what kind of move could be involved here in each case, such as would render these crucial propositions \textit{synthetic} and yet such that their truth can be established a priori”.\(^4\) The idea is to go beyond the domain of formal logic (and its questions of validity), which pertains to the propositional contents of the argument, into the domain of transcendental logic (which has its own unique conception of validity such as entails the qualifier “objective”). The key move involved in engaging with situated thought is thus the shift of focus of the inquiry from the propositional contents of the transcendental proof to the “a priori grounds for its being true.” And “[S]ecuring the latter requires shifting from the conceptual level to something like the phenomenological level, the level of experience.”\(^5\) Thus this key move brings out precisely what is meant by Sacks’s insistence on the role of “phenomenological description” in transcendental proof. Such proof, as distinct from transcendental arguments which involve mere deductive inference, involves an explication of

\(^1\) This list is not numbered in the original. It is found in op. cit.: p. 442.
\(^3\) This will interest us in Section 3.4.2 and in most of what follows.
\(^4\) Sacks, \textit{The Nature of Transcendental Arguments}: p. 442.

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the a priori grounds of the truth of the argument contained within it. What exactly that might come to will be difficult to explain.

A common way to characterise the “a priori grounds of truth” is in terms of “conditions of possibility”, yet, as Sacks notes, this characterisation is “too vague”. For “conditions of possibility” could be interpreted in terms of “semantic conditions for the possibility of a given concept making sense”; something at odds with the account intended here. An alternative way of characterising such “a priori grounds of truth”, Sacks offers, is in terms of Allison’s notion of “epistemic conditions”—“a condition for the possibility of knowledge or experience.” However, as has been recognised, neither Kant nor Allison (nor any other source in the literature for that matter) gives a satisfactory definition of this notion, despite the fact that “this notion is central to Kant’s whole transcendental enterprise”. Sacks quotes Allison as stating that such a condition “is one ‘that is necessary for the representation of an object or an objective state of affairs.’” This condition is of course intended to be different from a psychological or ontological condition, as we have already noted.

In Allison’s terms, such epistemic conditions appear to consist in the kind of sensible and intellectual conditions of cognition proposed by Kant in the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Transcendental Analytic, respectively. By contrast, and as I have suggested already, my approach to the question of what epistemic conditions consist in will involve an explanation of such conditions in terms of situated thought whereby this latter philosophical device allows for an alternate conception of the former to become available. To explain the reason for this strategy we can quote Sacks as saying the following:

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1 Ibid.
3 Ibid. The material in single quotes is from the same source in Allison as quoted directly above.
“In saying of a thought that it is situated, I mean that it is construed as being the thought that one would have from a particular point within a framework, the content of which is informed by it being grasped as if from that perspective. It is not bare propositional content considered as if from nowhere, but is rather informed by being phenomenologically embedded and directed. In saying that what is so situated is a thought, I mean to distinguish it from mere phenomenological or perceptual experience.”

So we have here a conception of an epistemic device that is meant to give voice to exactly what is involved for a thinker to come into contact with the world; something that will allow for the articulation of reasons for experience as being of a certain nature. It is the fact that situated thought has this character that ought to allow for it to explain the nature of epistemic conditions. As Sacks says, situated thought “involves appropriating in thought” a “subject’s perspective onto the perceptual scene that corresponds to the bare propositional content”. That is, it involves “thinking ourselves into what is involved for the subject in his being positioned as he is in grasping the perceptual content.” Verily, a preliminary thought might be that via this conception, a connection is made between the kind of thing a thought is and how it is that it comes about; how it comes to be had by a thinker.

In the human case at least, we intuitively think of a natural story of ourselves being a certain kind of animal located spatio-temporally such as to have a spatio-temporally articulated experience (with the additional issue of the conceptual articulation of that experience). However, we need not take this only in the naturalised tone; the tone of the claim here is more general. The issue concerns something of the order of the logical requirement for having a thought, although we do not want this account to amount to an analysis of what is required for thought given a mere definition of thought. The aim is to elucidate the minimal conception of experience required such as

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1 Sacks, The Nature of Transcendental Arguments; p. 444.
3 Ibid.
would articulate the requirements for anything counting as experience. In line
with this, Sacks makes two qualifications vis-à-vis the notion of “situated
thought” to set it apart from the notion of mere phenomenological experience
itself, and we can make note of these as they further evidence what structure
is being claimed for any experience in which situated thought figures:

(1) “Any experience must be internally structure, or articulated, on pain of
it not qualifying as an experience at all: without that articulation,
sufficient to distinguish one type of experience from another, there
would be nothing that it is like for the experiencing subject to undergo
it. But saying that experience must be articulated is not the same as
saying that it must be linguistically articulated or indeed linguistically
articulable by the subject in question; it is not even to say that that
articulation is fully cognitive. Part of the point of talking of a situated
thought is precisely to focus on that articulation, and to make it
cognitively salient in a way that it might not be in a brute experience.”

Hence a claim is made for the unique epistemic status of situated thought
insofar as that notion functions to bring out what is involved in epistemic terms
for a subject enjoying a particular experience. Thus we can propose that it is
precisely this out of which the notion of epistemic conditions feeds. To put the
point briefly, and in Strawsonian terminology, we might consider that the
minimal conditions of experience include the possibility of identification and
re-identification of items in a framework which can be regarded in some way

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1 There is thus an implicit, unexplored issue here regarding the phenomenological quality—
the “what it is like”—of an experience. This issue is treated in, amongst many places, the
435-450. In Nagel (1986) The View From Nowhere, Oxford University Press, it is acknowledged
that the philosophical import of that idea was gleaned originally from T.L.S. Sprigge (1982)
The Importance of Subjectivity: An Inaugural Lecture, Inquiry, 25, pp. 143-163. Interestingly,
much of what Sprigge says in that paper bears directly on the kind of philosophical method
employed in talking of “situated thought”. Additionally, the issues raised in that paper make
clear the epistemic import of phenomenological method—that to which the notion of
“situated thought” is related in a suggestive, rudimentary fashion here.

as unified and objective (such as would constitute a unified, objective world). A further minimal condition might be the possibility of self-ascription of such cases of experience as might be composed this way. The former represents Strawson’s “thesis of objectivity” and the latter represents the “thesis of the necessary unity of consciousness”; we thus have a fairly neat connection, through this Strawsonian terminology, to Kant’s original notions of sensible and intellectual conditions.1 Furthermore, by giving an explanation this way, we are able to construct a story which takes situated thought as a primitive notion out of which the notion of epistemic conditions feeds. This reading has the additional benefit of mirroring the structure that Ameriks imputes to the Transcendental Deduction insofar as he reads the Deduction as beginning with the premise of empirical knowledge (or, experience) and regressively explaining this by way of positing the Categories and transcendental idealism as necessary conditions of its possibility. We might then propose the following: situated thought articulates the structure of the kind of empirical knowledge that is to serve as a premise in transcendental proof, so conceived. The very structure of such empirical knowledge, as construed in terms of situated thought, allows for a regressive explanation of the necessary conditions of its possibility which thusly implicates transcendental idealism.

As for the conception of “articulation”, or the “articulability” of something conceived of as experience, we can make some points which, although they may not be satisfactorily resolvable here, serve to draw attention to the relevance of this account of situated thought to recent debates in the literature on non-conceptual content. Firstly, we can note that for the conceptualist (one

1 We might become concerned at this point about adopting such a Strawsonian conception since, given some remarks we made earlier, it would appear that Strawson’s “austere” reading of transcendental idealism is in conflict with our reading here. Additionally, given the opposition we made note of between the notion of “epistemic conditions” and Strawson’s term “cognitive faculties”, it might seem misguided to give a Strawsonian reading of such epistemic conditions. Despite this, I believe there is no inherent conflict here. Simply phrasing epistemic conditions in terms of the “austere” conception of transcendental idealism does not forbid such epistemic conditions from being committed to more than what Strawson intended in his use of the phrase “minimal conditions”, as I have referred to. It is enough to suggest that the perspicuity of Strawson’s phrasing of the problem is motivation to adopt his terminology and advance it in our own way here by extending such terminology to account for more than the “austere” conception of transcendental idealism.

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who insists that anything deserving of the name “experience” is necessarily of a conceptual structure), Sacks’s references above to the role of “articulation” in situated thought ought to include only articulation of a conceptual variety. However, since Sacks says “saying that experience must be articulated is not the same as saying that it must be linguistically articulated or indeed linguistically articulable by the subject in question; it is not even to say that that articulation is fully cognitive”,¹ we are given pause to consider what other forms such articulation may take. The notion of non-conceptual content immediately suggests itself here since if such articulation as Sacks is referring to here is non-linguistic, and perhaps even non-cognitive (assuming these do not necessarily denote the same thing), then, given the assumption that “conceptual” and “linguistic” coincide entirely with one another, we have an allusion to the existence of non-conceptual content. Despite this, our assumption that “conceptual” and “linguistic” coincide entirely may be hasty and more difficult to establish than we assume, if we grant that the problem is more than definitional. If this is so, then it is possible that Sacks would find no place for the notion of non-conceptual content in his account of situated thought, and indeed, there is no prima facie need for it as far as the rest of his account is concerned. The suggestion might be however that, insofar as Sacks’s account of transcendental proof and situated thought is meant to be more faithfully Kantian than most other treatments of this area, it ought to rely on something like Kant’s notion of intuition as a form of non-conceptual representation.² An additional reason for this reliance might stem from the use Sacks makes of the synthetic a priori in his claims for the role of ampliative knowledge in transcendental proof. That is, given his conception of transcendental proofs as necessarily involving a “synthetic...ampliative

¹ Ibid.
² We will omit the qualification here that, given this point, Sacks’s account of situated thought would seem to depend on “pure intuition” since we are not able to adequately account for that claim here. It should be apparent however that even if one wants to resist appeals to something “Given” in experience, it seems that a structure analogous to Kant’s notion of “pure intuition”, not “empirical intuition”, is necessary to give full voice to the epistemic point intended by an account of situated thought.
move”, that is also a priori, it might seem odd if he did not endorse non-conceptual content, since in Kant’s terms at least, the validity of synthetic a priori judgment depends on an epistemological model that involves intuition as a form of non-conceptual representation.

We can now look to Sacks’s second characterisation of situated thought which sets it apart from the notion of mere phenomenological experience:

(2) “a situated thought differs from the corresponding experience in that the situated thought does not require that the subject actually be situated – only that he approximates in thought to what would be delivered up to him if he were so situated. We might put this by saying that the situated thought is phenomenologically informed without itself being a phenomenological experience. In this respect the situated thought can be considered to fall between, on the one hand, the bare propositional content and, on the other, an experience the content of which is expressed by that propositional articulation. It falls short of actually being an experience; it is rather a matter of representing in thought a situated construal of a propositional content: considering what it would be like to be so situated as to have an experience of that content.”

There are a couple of ideas here which it is important to explain carefully, as they will have consequences for how our final account of situated thought is to be structured. We can say the following: (1) in virtue of being structured this way, situated thought appears to be capable of functioning as a directive for the appropriate constitution of a framework of which experience might be possible, or in which experience might figure. We can think of cases as diverse as dreams (cases of which would need a coherent structure, but given the minimal notion of a framework employed here, it is likely few dreams would

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fall short), imaginative constructions, fictional universes, and virtual reality simulations. That is, the device of situated thought appears to articulate those conditions which must be fulfilled by anything that is to count as an experience which participates in the structural properties of a coherent, unified and potentially objective framework. The novel character of situated thought is that it places emphasis on a much tighter connection between such a framework and the subject for who there are experiences of it;¹ (2) since situated thought is construed as falling between the “bare propositional content” and the “experience the content of which is expressed by that propositional articulation”;² we can repeat again that it involves “thinking oneself into what is involved” for one to perceive such bare propositional content as obtaining. Given this, we might propose that situated thought embeds the appropriate structure for aperspectival content to be viewed perspectively, perhaps by a process similar to the attachment of indexical expressions to such content which function to represent precisely their conditions of realisation in an experiential context. This latter idea is presumably what is meant by Sacks’s remark that “a situated construal of a propositional content” involves “considering what it would be like to be so situated as to have an experience of that content”.³ I say that the process is only similar to the process of attachment of indexical expressions to such content since Sacks’s account of situated thought, with respect to the example “there is a tree in the garden”, does not explicitly insert such expressions. I take it that claiming that such a bare proposition can be regarded as having experiential import precisely in virtue of the notion of situated thought represents this equivalence.⁴

The above reflections ought to get us some way to understanding the structure and function of situated thought such that its role in transcendental

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¹ We will see some links to this conception drawn in our discussion of “permanence” in 3.4.1.
⁴ The opacity of this idea will become apparent below when we explore just what might be involved in making the apparently valid move from the statement “there is a tree in the garden” to the statement “there is a tree in front of me”.

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proof may be a little clearer. To recap, we can note that above we made mention of Ameriks’s reading of the Transcendental Deduction and suggested that if the notion of empirical knowledge taken to be contained in the initial premise of that argument was conceived of as having the structure of situated thought, then we could legitimately give a regressive explanation of the conditions of its possibility in terms of such things as the possibility of identification and re-identification of items in a framework, which could be regarded as unified and objective, in addition to the requirement of self-ascription of such thoughts in terms of a parallel to Kant’s notion of apperception. The further extension could then be made to a model of knowledge which allowed these synthetic moves to be made a priori (such as would invite a comparison to transcendental idealism and Kant’s actual Transcendental Deduction).

At this point we ought to consider a concrete case of situated thought lest we get caught too firmly in abstractions. To remind ourselves, the relevant account relates to the possibility of explicating certain minimal requirements for anything that could count as an experience in terms which also appreciate the character of the one having the experience, which then crucially requires investigation into what bearing a thinker’s being situated appropriately has to such a thinker’s thought being thusly situated.

A helpful way to explain the matter is by way of example. Imagine I am standing in a garden in front of an apple tree, at point A. It is arguably part of the structure of my thought that “there is an apple tree standing in the garden” that such a thought gets its content in virtue of me being situated appropriately; that is, by my being perceptually related to the tree such as to have the veridical perception, or thought, “there is an apple tree standing in the garden”. Now, it is in virtue of this structure of my perception that, in order to gain an alternate vantage point of the tree’s plumage, say, from point B, I know precisely what it is I ought to do to gain such an alternate view.

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1 This recalls both Sacks’s example (employed in op. cit.: p. 445 and ff.) as well as Husserl’s famous references to “the apple tree standing in the garden”.

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That is, one knows what is involved for one to position oneself such as to grasp the perceptual content from point B. I take it that this is the basic idea operative in the notion of situated thought; one we have been working our way towards from various angles thus far. And involved in any case of perceptual experience is the capacity to think and act in this way when granted the full use of one’s mental faculties. It is this character of our experience, as articulated through the notion of situated thought that allows us to make synthetic a priori judgments about it; that is, judgments which are not logically valid yet may be made without recourse to experiential evidence.

We need to make a brief note here however, to defend against an obvious misunderstanding of what is meant by this practical capacity to form future beliefs about what one’s actions might bring about. Talk of “knowing what it takes” to move from point A to point B vis-à-vis an apple tree also looks like what we might call a behavioural manifestation or exemplification of the holding of a particular belief, or set of beliefs—as spoken of by William James in *The Tigers in India*, for example—about the tree and one’s actions vis-à-vis it which has been informed by past experience of dealings with apple trees (and other kinds of trees and objects for that matter) in gardens (and other spatial regions as well). This would suggest that our ability to form expectations about what our experience will deliver up to us were we to do such-and-such is informed by mere a posteriori sources, not a priori sources as we have been claiming situated thought is structured in terms of. Despite this, the subtle point to be made is that although the particular content involved with the forming of expectations of this kind is undeniably an empirically informed matter, the capacity to have experience such that one can perceive spatial relations in this way is an a priori matter. The point is similar to Kant’s

1. Putting matters this way appears to open one up to objections which stem from the fear that this might be a chauvinistic account of what constitutes “full use of one’s mental faculties”. Despite this, it seems to me at least that in engaging in rational thought certain idealisations need to be made and are indeed made all the time (at least insofar as we might call an abstraction an idealisation).

characterisation of the a priori nature of space and time; viz., one cannot account for our perception necessarily being spatio-temporal by suggesting that we can infer from past experience (perhaps inductively) that the world really is spatio-temporal. The idea is that our experience is necessarily spatio-temporal, and it is a condition of the possibility of our perceiving anything recognisable as experiential that it is of this character. Although we cannot go into this point further here, we can note that the example above of our capacity to move through space on the basis of information gained through past experience with apple trees (and other phenomena) in gardens (and other places) depends also on the a priori character that spatial representation has for us. We must unfortunately leave this point here and return to our main discussion.

Sacks provides an example of the kind of move expressed above when he speaks of the “apple tree in the garden”. He says that, effectively, due to the nature of the situated thought corresponding to the proposition “there is an apple tree in the garden”, we can move from it to the statement “there is a tree in front of me”, or, the statement “there is a tree between me and the horizon.”

Now the precise character of this transition from one thought content to the other is difficult to account for. Surely we wish to say that such a transition is

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1 Sacks, The Nature of Transcendental Arguments: p. 445. It seems that there is an interesting point worth being noted here. In taking the assertion “there is an apple tree in the garden” at face value we can see it readily as an existential statement of the form $\exists x(x)$, where $x$ represents the tree in the garden. Phrased in English the epithet “there is” fulfils the function of the existential operator $\exists$. However, thinking in terms of perceptual judgments, “there” typically functions as a demonstrative. Although the usage of the term “there” can be distinguished as unique in both cases, there certainly seems to be a link, if not a dependency, between both usages. We might say tentatively that the existential usage is derivative from the perceptual usage. This suggestion is intended to link up with our generally intended point regarding the role of situated thought in perceptual judgment and transcendental proof, where the role of the “located” nature of perceptual judgment is intended to enforce the point that accounting for transcendental arguments (as involving transcendental proof) involves appealing to non-logically valid (synthetic) yet a priori judgment.
valid in some way, although for several reasons the nature of this transition is obscure. Let us see why.

Firstly, it is clear that the move from “there is an apple tree in the garden” to “there is a tree in front of me” is not a logically valid inference, for nothing in the logical form of the former statement permits a deductive move to the latter statement. Part of the reason for this is that the linkage between the two statements depends on a structure inherent in situated thought which is akin to the referential import of indexicals such as “I”, “Here”, and “Now”. It is clear that by making explicit the role of indexical expressions in what we might call the “meaning” of propositional contents, one can see how certain valid inferences might obtain between them, however, it is not clear that the move involved here is of that same kind. Despite this, it is clear that at least part of the structure of situated thought mirrors the relevant import of indexical expressions for demonstrating the valid relations between propositional contents.

Our next temptation might be to suggest that something about the content of “there is an apple tree in the garden” permits an inference to “there is a tree in front of me”, in a similar way that the validity of material inference is thought of as depending primarily on the content (yet obviously also the form—yet not the logical form) of the statements standing in such inferential relations. This latter suggestion would seem tempting and perhaps go some ways to explaining the relationship between the shape of situated thought and the role of spatial representation in the content of statements playing roles in an account of situated thought. However, if we examine more closely just what is involved in the transition referred to it becomes evident that what we are dealing with here is not actually an inference at all.

The problem is that, unlike material inference, the apparently valid move from “there is a tree in the garden” to “there is a tree in front of me” does not simply involve inferring from the meaning of one statement to the other as is the case in Robert Brandom’s examples of the inference from:

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1a. “Pittsburgh is to the West of Philadelphia”
to
1b. “Philadelphia is to the East of Pittsburgh”,

that from

2a. “Today is Wednesday”
to
2b. “Tomorrow will be Thursday”,

and that from

3a. “Lightning is seen now”
to
3b. “Thunder will be heard soon”.¹

In these cases, Brandom says that “[I]t is the contents of the concepts West
and East” that makes the first a “good inference”, whereas for the second it is
the “contents of the concepts Wednesday, Thursday, today, and tomorrow that
make the inference correct”. As goes the third inference, “the contents of the
concepts lightning and thunder, as well as the temporal concepts”² make it
correct. By contrast, in our example of the apple tree above, it is clear that in
the first statement no mention is made of the perceiver who is referred to in
the second statement. For “there is an apple tree in the garden” must be taken
as implicitly asserted by the thinker to whom reference is made in “there is a
tree in front of me”. Since no explicit reference is made in the first statement to
the thinker mentioned in the second we cannot really see this move as
inferential at all, since some additional apparatus embodying the notion of

¹ Brandom, Making it Explicit: p. 98. The numbering is not in the original.
² Ibid.
An obvious reply suggests itself here which mimics a rebuttal possibly entertained by one arguing against material inference. Namely, it might be thought that the apparently valid move between “there is a tree in the garden” and “there is a tree in front of me” rests of the suppressed premise “I am in the garden”—or, more generously, “I am in the garden standing in front of the tree”—although this reply will simply not do. This rebuttal assumes that the purported transition between the two propositions constitutes an enthymeme, yet it is apparent that with the appropriate conception of what is involved in the apprehension of both thoughts, no reliance on a suppressed premise is necessary. The idea is that it is possible to make a valid move between two propositions of this form without recourse to additional conceptual information. It is argued that the apparent “meaning” of both statements is enough to secure the move between them as valid. Unfortunately, for reasons of space, further explication of this idea will have to be left for somewhere else.

To be sure, I think it is to be understood that Sacks was aware of the peculiarity just noted, yet his attempt to account for such seems somewhat inadequate due to the fact that his account of situated thought is, unfortunately, “thin”. This characterisation of “thinness” is Sacks’s own and, to be fair, results from the limited space available to him in *The Nature of Transcendental Arguments* where the device is introduced and then quickly put to work. This is understandable. Sacks does say, on a more helpful note, that

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1 This is effectively Sellars’s diagnosis of his (occasional) interlocutor’s position which rejects material inference. Sellars, *Inference and Meaning*: p. 313.
2 We might suggest tentatively that part of the “meaning” of the two statements derives from (1) the act in which statement is asserted (involving something like what we referred to as “assertability conditions”) and (2) what would make the statements true, or the transition between them valid—their “quasi” inferential relations (since we have forbidden ourselves to say “inferential relations” plain and simple). Part of what would make the transition between the statements valid would of course be the spatial relationships between the perceiver referred to, the garden occupied, and the tree perceived.
“What validates the move is something other than a conceptual relation between propositions. It is not the content of the thought expressed..., but what the situated thinker brings to the thinking of it, that stands to carry that thinker from the truth of the one thought to the truth of the other.”

And this characterisation makes it clear that we were right to distinguish the move in question from an inference since such a move depends neither on logical form nor content. Additionally, Sacks comments in a footnote to this remark that

“I say ‘stands to carry’ in part because I have not gone into the kind of self-consciousness that would in fact carry the thinker from one to the other.”

And we can perhaps take the recognition of this requisite additional task as a directive for furthering the insights of Sacks’s work. Unfortunately, only a skeletal account of what might be done to answer to this requirement will be given here.

Now, at this point, it appears that we can make a connection which may help to illuminate the problem a little. We might liken Sacks’s example of the problematic move involved as somehow to be understood in relation to Moore’s Paradox, which is expressed in the form “P, and I don’t believe that P”. In Moore’s Paradox, like Sacks’s example of the situated thought, the issue turns on what relation the relevant thinker is construed as having to the statement given. Namely, in an exemplification of Moore’s Paradox such as “It is raining and I don’t believe it is raining”, it is implicit that the former part of the statement “It is raining” is taken to be asserted by the same individual who is referred to as “I” in the second part, “I don’t believe it is raining”. In a similar way, the first statement in Sacks’s example, “there is a tree in the

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3 By mentioning the possible linkage one might make here, further discussion of the relationship between the device of situated thought and the problems associated with Moore’s Paradox can be brought to light. The most relevant of these problems would pertain to the issue of self-reference, something which has been left as merely implicit in this essay.
“garden”, is taken to be a perceptual judgment made by the very same thinker who states that “there is a tree \textit{in front of me}”. The connection between these two statements is only implicit, although strong enough for the move from one to the other to be regarded as valid (although not logically valid in any obvious sense).

By making the point in this way, we are again reminded of the character of situated thought which it has been our focus to elucidate; namely, the precise way in which situated thought evidences \textit{what is involved} in one apprehending a particular thought. Of course, the focus for Sacks, and for us, has been on \textit{perceptual} judgments or thoughts, and the idea of \textit{what is involved} is construed in terms of the conditions of the possibility of coming into contact with the world in various ways such that we may occupy a position from which transcendental proof begins to look plausible.

The point is that, in relation to the Kantian turn of phrase, the move made between the kinds of statements referred to is, in a sense, synthetic a priori. It is clear that such a move is synthetic since it is not logically valid, yet such a move can be made a priori since it can be made without recourse to inspection of the spatial territory encompassing oneself, the tree, the garden, and the horizon (as discussed in our examples above). The requirement is that the propositional content be regarded as apprehended by the situated thinker from a particular point of view within a framework. For as it is phrased above, “there is an apple tree in the garden” constitutes an aperspectival content that parallels a “view from nowhere”. To locate the thought it is necessary to append indexical expressions such as “I”, “Here”, or “Now” to ascertain the personal, spatial, and temporal dimensions respectively, of the thought and its relationship to the thinker for whom it \textit{is} a thought (and, crucially, for whom \textit{there is} a thought).\footnote{This latter qualification gives voice to the relevant epistemic dimension of the suggestion; namely, that of a thinker enjoying viable contact with the world through empirical thought.}

It seems that for Sacks, giving recognition to the situated thought which corresponds to the bare proposition allows for a related procedure of locating such a proposition. What is crucial
for Sacks is that “the thought be grasped from my point of view and informed by it”\(^1\) since it is on this which the possibility of a legitimate synthetic a priori move, of the kind just mentioned, depends. For if we are under some illusion about how we relate to the content of the thought then there is most certainly a problem with the connection between the former and latter statements as referred to, such as would sever any connection we might make a claim for.\(^2\)

To bolster our example of the apple tree we can look to an additional example provided by Sacks in a footnote, since a further case ought to serve to make the point more explicit:

“consider the proposition |There is a table and there is a door|. The propositional content alone does not entail that there is something given and perceptually available between the table and the door. But the situated thought does allow me to infer a priori that if the proposition obtains, there will also be something (it principle – it might, of course, be occluded) between the two objects perceived.”\(^3\)

Firstly, we can note that the move alluded to here is inferential, as Sacks says explicitly. In fact, the kind of inference supposedly involved here brings out in perhaps more helpful and unproblematic terms just how we might envisage viable synthetic a priori judgment as playing a role in transcendental proof. Again, like the problematic case involving implicit reference to the subject of the perceptual judgment, the validity of the inference here depends on a particular conception of spatial relations, insofar as such relations structure the logical space\(^4\) in which such an inference can be made legitimately. Importantly, this example makes even more apparent just how we might relate the account of the synthetic a priori judgment provided here to the notion of “material inference” as already alluded to, for this case has a very

\(^2\) This problem of ascertaining the veracity of the connection as claimed for will crop up again in our discussion in 3.4.1 where we begin to see a possible opening for the sceptic.
\(^4\) For now, we will have to ignore the fact that this phrase contradictorily suggests that logically valid, deductive inferences are involved in synthetic a priori judgment. The phrase “logical space” is employed to communicate a different meaning here which will have to remain unexplained.

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similar structure to the kinds of material inferences Brandom has mentioned, which we noted above in distinguishing such inferences from the move involved in situated thought. And although we took care to distinguish the move involved for situated thought, it is helpful and instructive to observe Brandom’s conception of material inference to see what parallels might be drawn in addition to the disparities already noted. We can make note of the nature of Brandom’s position regarding material inference before we leave the matter to the side, by observing him as saying:

“Endorsing these inferences is part of grasping or mastering [the relevant] concepts, quite apart from any specific logical competence...Since neither the premises nor the conclusions of such inferences employ logical concepts, it seems appropriate to distinguish them from inferences whose correctness depends only on logical form.”¹

So, as we noted, it might be possible (given agreement with Brandom’s definition of material inference as well as his own understanding of conceptualism) to endorse both material inference as well as conceptualism. The idea here is that nothing in our account of situated thought is intended to commit one endorsing it to a variety of conceptualism. The point of alluding to Brandom’s commitment is to draw attention to the issue of how non-conceptual content might be regarded, and additionally, to maintain awareness of the relevance of that question for how the notion of situated thought might be further developed.

As said, comments I have made in this vein are intended merely to draw attention to how the issues raised by the account of situated thought relate to wider philosophical debates now in currency and are not to be taken as argumentative. It is enough to get a sense of what further hurdles one might have to overcome in giving an account of situated thought which retains a role for non-conceptual representation (insofar as such representation might

be regarded as indispensable for the synthetic a priori judgment claimed to be contained in transcendental proof).

As a general remark, we can link the construal of the synthetic a priori move involved in Sacks’s account of situated thought to Brandom’s conception of material inference by observing that in both cases the validity of the move depends on a particular conception of spatial relations (at least in the first example given by Brandom; the other two examples trade on temporal and causal concepts, although I take it in these two further cases the point is similar). As distinguished from Brandom’s account, however, the conception advanced here insists on a fairly explicit link between the possibility of our making such purported synthetic a priori judgments and the precise structure of our experience. The structure of experience is construed as necessarily having a particular spatio-temporal character which is a minimal requirement for such experience being intelligible. For as we noted already in Strawson’s terms, the identification and re-identification of items in a framework such as to suffice for that framework’s apparent unified, objective character, requires such a framework to be (at least quasi-) spatio-temporal. Unfortunately, we have no space here to address this fascinating issue, so we will leave it here.

Now, given the consideration of the issue of spatio-temporality, we can note that Sacks, to his credit, manages to propose an intuitively appealing construal of the synthetic a priori which avoids any talk of a priori concepts. In *The Nature of Transcendental Arguments* Sacks seems to assume, but not argue for (as he has elsewhere), the import of the notion of an “abiding substratum” that is analogous to a spatio-temporal continuum—and it is this idea (in addition to that of situated thought) that will sustain the possibility of forming legitimate synthetic a priori judgments. We might think of this strategy as parallel to Strawson’s interpretation of the First Analogy, except Sacks seems to go further with this idea and draw stronger conclusions from it. To discover what these might be, in our discussion of the idea of

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1 The opacity of this apparent qualification notwithstanding.

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“permanence” in 3.4.1 we will explore the above mentioned notion of an “abiding substratum” to give further voice to what might be involved in claiming that experience is necessarily of the kind of spatio-temporal character alluded to.

To switch to commentary of a more general nature, we can give a brief consideration to Sacks's view of transcendental idealism and the relationship between it and the account of transcendental proof and situated thought he provides. Interestingly, although Sacks thinks of the notion of situated thought as involving a central insight of transcendental idealism, he thinks of this notion as separable from such a doctrine. The reasons for this, I believe, are largely ones related to his unenthusiastic response to transcendental idealism under the two-world view, which I have suggested we can happily step over. He says that

“In a nutshell, the connection with transcendental idealism lies in this: in the domain of situated thought, or of experience, the necessity of making the move in question [the synthetic a priori or ampliative move] is established, and it holds true of any such context, regardless of whether it holds true of, or indeed makes sense to talk of there being, any domain that extends beyond it.”

And this analogy ought to remind us of the examples of experiential phenomena, or contexts, which we suggested could be explained in terms of situated thought (dreams, (cases of which would need a coherent structure), imaginative constructions, fictional universes, and virtual reality simulations). The problem, however, lies in the fact that this seems to invite the sceptical threat whereby the insistence on the limitation of the structure of situated thought leaves open the question of what “domain...extends beyond it”. Again, this fear parallels the fear felt by those who claim that Kant’s refusal to talk of “things-in-themselves” amounts to an admittance of ignorance of the real world; a happiness to instead know only the content of our own minds.

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By now we should be able to see that this threat simply ought not to worry us, although the residue of such demands linger in the background to an extent which makes us feel the account to be insufficient. This feeling of insufficiency may be deemed illegitimate although it seems that “telling the sceptic to get lost” is an unsatisfactory strategy. Our supplementations to Sacks’s account of situated thought will be proposed suggestively in Section 3.4.2, although we must firstly give ourselves over to some final considerations of synthetic a priori judgment.

### 3.3 Some Further Remarks on Synthetic A Priori Judgment

We need to extend our reflections on the notion of the synthetic a priori a touch further to clarify just what is involved in the crucial move outlined in transcendental proofs which trade on situated thought. To begin, we can consider a bolder conception of the synthetic a priori than the one proposed here, expressed by Körner. He reflects on the notions of “synthetic” and “a priori” thus:

“A method of differentiation belongs to a schema...if, and only if, it employs attributes which are constitutive of all objects in the domain and attributes which individuate all of them. The constitutive and individuating attributes are the schema. A statement is synthetic if, and only if, it is not logically valid with respect to the logic being considered. Thus we must, distinguish e.g. statements synthetic with respect to classical from those synthetic with respect to intuitionist logic. A statement is a priori with respect to a schema if, and only if, it is compatible with any statement in which an attribute is applied to one or more distinct objects by means of any method which belongs to the schema.”

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Thus, in these terms, a way of understanding the synthetic a priori would be that, with respect to a particular categorial schema, statements articulating the moves from thoughts like “there is a tree in the garden” to “there is a tree in front of me”, although not logically valid, would still be possible a priori since they would be “compatible with any statement in which an attribute is applied to one or more distinct objects by means of any method which belongs to the schema”. However, we might be puzzled by what kind of statement could articulate the “quasi-logical” move—the synthetic a priori move—here. For as we saw above in our discussion of situated thought, the reason why the transition between thought contents such as this could be made validly is entirely dependent upon the fact that such thought contents be regarded as expressive of situated thoughts. Taking the point in Körner’s terms forces us to express the move in purely propositional form and because the validity of the statement which might express the move involved (consider: “If statement A is expressive of a situated thought and B is expressive of a situated thought, then valid synthetic a priori relations obtain between them such as would allow for transitions from one to the other to be made on the basis of the epistemic import of the structure of such situated thought”) would make no sense in isolation from an understanding of the particular thought contents expressed, we can at the most hope for an unsatisfying abstraction.

Summarily, in the relevant cases, what allows the synthetic a priori move to be made is the situatedness of both thoughts and by extrapolation, the situatedness of the thinker making the statements as, knowingly, being in the garden. This corresponds to Sacks’s insistence that the thought be “grasped from my point of view and informed by it.”

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1 Ibid.
2 Both these conditions matter. It is important that the subject actually be in the garden and knows they are in the garden if the connection is to be of the right kind.
Körner regards synthetic, non-uniquely1 *a priori* judgments to be possible, which in effect amounts to an agreement with one part of Kant’s program (the Transcendental Analytic) with the proviso that such metaphysics of experience really can amount to no more than a descriptive enterprise of the judgments we are entitled to make, given our current conceptual scheme. In this sense Körner’s argument parallels Strawson’s since the latter’s task in *The Bounds of Sense* was to show how Kant’s transcendental arguments could retain validity only if their shape was restricted to the form of “analytical” arguments whose form was to be licensed by our conceptual practices—something in itself revisable and subject to change. As Körner says,

“contrary to Kant’s convictions, not only methods of differentiation but also the schemata to which they belong can and do change, the task cannot be completed once and for all, but must be undertaken again and again.”2

This construal of transcendental arguments as being bound up with particular conceptual practices is in conflict with the understanding attributed, I think rightly, to Kant that transcendental arguments occur in the “material mode, in terms of the conditions of the possibility of certain ways of thinking and experiencing.”3 Clearly, this latter understanding fits more comfortably with the project here.

Additionally, this latter characterisation displays a subtle difference which we need to appreciate: the notion of the conditions of the possibility of “thinking and experiencing” is a wider definition than that of the mere presuppositions of successful application and usage of a conceptual scheme since the former requirement bears an essential link to our capacity to have

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1 By “unique” it appears that Körner means something akin to Kant’s conditions of a priority (necessity and universality). It would thus seem odd and somewhat contradictory for Körner to use the term “a priori”, although it helps to bear in mind that Carnap (as we saw above) also regarded *a priori* judgments as relative to a paradigm which itself might be subject to change.


representations\(^1\) of empirical objects like leaves, tables, and pieces of cheese and arguably, the latter requirement, for the presuppositions of successful usage of a conceptual scheme, involves our mere ability to make judgments about, or talk about, such things. Here arises a problem: since cognition might be thought of as inherently judgmental—at least by Kant—how can we understand the idea, in this context, that having representations of empirical objects has a less stringent requirement on it than the making of judgments, presumably themselves of empirical objects? The important point to grasp is that talk of “certain ways of thinking and experiencing”, even if wholly conceptual or judgmental, need not equate to “certain ways of judging” since “certain ways of thinking and experiencing” ought to imply the wider sphere of activity encompassing judgment—not mere judgment itself. The wider sphere is not to be equated with “forms of life”, or “cultural practices”, but instead is to be thought of as the logical structure of thought and experience.

At this point we appear to have muddied the waters. What is intended by the phrase “logical structure of thought and experience”? In line with our investigations into the nature of situated thought in the previous section, we can say, firstly, that the logical structure of (at least empirical) thought and experience derives from the way our perception of the world is shaped by our implicit sense of what is involved in particular cases of such experience. To refer back to the example of moving from point A to point B with respect to the apple tree in the garden in order to gain an alternate take on its plumage, we can note that it is cases of precisely this kind which evidence such structure. It might seem to be problematic that our implicit ability to do this comes from a posteriori sources (that is, our past experience in dealings with trees, gardens, and our own situatedness with respect to such phenomena). However, no problem exists here if we give the Kantian point regarding the a priori character that spatio-temporal representation has for us its due. In fact, we can say that the empirical character, or element, here is itself dependent

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\(^1\) We will be here ignoring the possible problems which might arise given the usage of this term.

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upon what we have already noted as the synthetic a priori structures inherent in situated thought itself. Namely, such a role reserved for memory in imaginatively constructing our future action depends on an isomorphic structure in both the memory and the current perception and it is the situatedness of all thoughts of this kind that allows for inferences to be drawn in this way. We can say that although our empirical knowledge of spatial relations depends on certain kinds of experiential familiarity with how one moves through space (temporally of course; thus implicating time), our very capacity to perceived space stems from a priori sources, as Kant insisted. In the same way, despite the role of empirical thought in making inferences about the actions one ought to take to achieve placement in a particular spatial location, the ability to have and relate thoughts such as this stems from a priori sources. We might make this clearer with respect to Kant by saying that the former kind of imagination is akin to the “reproductive imagination”, whereas the latter kind is similar to what Kant refers to as the “productive imagination”. We will have to content ourselves with brevity with respect to this issue, despite its tendency to fascinate.

To continue our reflections, we need to further specify the synthetic a priori move involved in situated thought. Consider the statement “there is a tree in the garden” and the possibility of moving from this to the statement “there is a tree in front of me”. As we have pressed, these statements, taken merely as pieces of conceptual information, bear no special relation to one another. The uniqueness of the relation between them emerges only in connection with the idea of their being expressed by the same subject who is appropriately situated to make such statements truthfully.

When we make the transition from “there is a tree in the garden” to “there is a tree in front of me” we find ourselves in possession of new information which was not logically deducible from the mere propositional content of the former statement. Now, it is worth rehearsing the point again which we made
above in relation to material inference,\(^1\) for it might be ponderously imagined that we could indeed infer from the former to the latter statement in virtue of mere deductive logic yet this supposition, in one form, might rely on an assumption about our spatial position—assuming that the inference relies on an additional proposition of the form “I am standing in the garden”, or, more generously to our interlocutor, “I am standing in the garden in front of the tree”. However, even given this additional premise, the argument is still not logically valid since the insertion of the indexical “I” does nothing to improve validity since indexicals can play no relevant logical role here.\(^2\)

The central element we find missing in the account construed in purely conceptual terms is the sense in which the mere proposition expressive of spatial position is not sufficient to constitute bodily knowledge of one’s position in terms which allow for knowing what it would be to apprehend a particular thought content from a particular point of view.\(^3\) What informs the synthetic a priori move from “there is a tree in the garden” to “there is a tree in front of me” is precisely the situatedness of both thoughts; this involving an implicit awareness of *what it would take* for such a thought or observation to be true. And although what it would take for one to be in such a position as to apprehend a perceptual observation or thought is arguably acknowledgeable in terms of a purely propositional transcendental argument, what is critical and crucial about such a construal is not explicable in merely these terms, as we have noted by our insistence on a role for non-logically valid inferences which nevertheless yield veracious statement.

To advance Sacks’s understanding of situated thought further, we can say that the construal in terms of situated thought aims to bring out the

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\(^1\) This relates to the objection we mentioned Sellars’s interlocutor as making. See Sellars, *Inference and Meaning*: p. 313.

\(^2\) We might be tempted to insert additional (taken to be suppressed) premises which qualify the argument such that the notion of spatial position becomes logically viable, although the relevance of the indexical is simply not able to be adequately accounted for in this way. It relies on the kind of procedure articulated by Brandom above, in his examples of material inference.

\(^3\) This is the case despite what one might suggest is the “understood meaning” of statements about one’s spatial position.
dimension in which action and perception are intimately related, in the sense in which our example of the movement from point A to point B with respect to the apple tree in the garden was employed to indicate. As a related case in the literature, in *The Validity of Transcendental Arguments*¹ Taylor has argued that transcendental arguments should be seen as explicating fundamental a priori knowledge we have about our own bodily capacities—or, in his words, “an insight into our own activity”.² Taylor reads the general structure of Kant’s Transcendental Deduction in a way analogous to the account we saw given by Ameriks in Section 2.2.5, viz., he reads it as a “regressive argument”.³ Importantly, Taylor claims

“That our perception of the world is that of an embodied agent is not a contingent fact that we might discover empirically; rather our sense of ourselves as embodied agents is constitutive of our experience.”⁴

And further, that

“The connection is constitutive and not a mere correlation because we couldn’t have a subject with a [perceptual] field like ours who as a matter of contingent fact might not be an embodied agent.”⁵

This conception of our perception of the world synthesises the ideas pressed in our examination of the notion of situated thought and places focus on the point we have taken pains to make, viz., that the appropriate conception of perceptual judgment—or, empirical knowledge serving as a premise in a transcendental proof—is structured in terms of the relation between our perception of the world and our actions within it. Moreover, Taylor’s reference to “our sense of ourselves as embodied agents” as being

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⁵ Ibid.
“constitutive of our experience” ought to also remind us of our discussion (in connection with Carnap) of synthetic a priori judgments as being “constitutive of the objects of experience” and therefore, ought to suggest how the possibility of legitimate synthetic a priori judgment might depend on precisely the kind of “sense of ourselves as embodied agents” which we undeniably have.

The kind of transcendental proof argued for here stands to explain just how this link emerges between perception and action, through the analysis of the role of the situatedness of our perceptual thinking. And as we have noted Sacks as saying, “it is not the content of the thought expressed” by “there is a tree in front of me”, “but what the situated thinker brings to the thinking of it, that stands to carry that thinker from the truth of the one thought to the truth of the other.”¹ And as Sacks mentions in a footnote to this important remark, he says “stands to carry’ in part” because he has “not gone into the kind of self-consciousness that would in fact carry the thinker from one to the other.”²

To reiterate, we can see the attempts here to clarify and extend the treatment of the notion of situated thought as aiming to explain the relevant kind of self-consciousness referred to by Sacks; specifically, as making plain the relationship between the possibility of synthetic a priori inferences and the intimate connection between perception and action. We could perhaps here hedge a suggestive remark—and no more than this—that the possibility of allocating space for the perception-action link relates to the possibility of making connections between Kantian and Husserlian transcendental philosophy. Sacks suggests a link of this kind when he notes, at the close of his paper:

“Specifically, the form of identified, in asking after the preconditions of what I have been calling situated thought, approximates to what may deservedly be referred to as transcendental or pure phenomenology. If what has been said here is right, then we have an insight into how such a pure phenomenology is of epistemic – and not

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merely descriptive – import; and how it helps to capture both the nature of Kant’s transcendental proofs and the confinement of their validity to empirical reality, to the level of possible experience.”¹

And we can take this remark as a mere directive at this juncture, with respect to at least the superficial regard we might have for situated thought as accounted for here. At its core, the commitment to the above link takes the form of supporting an essential tie between the way our perceptual experience and empirical thought is structured by our capacity to act in the world of which such experience or thought is about, and the possibility of making synthetic a priori inferences within the domain of such experience and thought. Transcendental arguments have been characterised as constituting an “insight into our own activity”² and it might be said that the ineffability³ of this kind of insight makes adequate expression of their nature most difficult. As Sacks says,

“the content of a situated thought cannot by fully captured as propositional content: the content as delivered by the situatedness of the thinker essentially extends beyond anything that the mere propositional construal of the content can deliver.”⁴

And in a footnote to this remark he comments:

“We might put this by saying that there is something ineffable, but directly accessible, to the content of situated thoughts.”⁵

Yet although there is seemingly something “ineffable” about the content of situated thoughts, we can perhaps relate this content to Kant’s notion of “transcendental content” which is imparted by the structure of empirical thinking insofar as such thinking allows for synthetic a priori inference. Kant

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rarely mentions “transcendental content” explicitly, although a remark by him with respect to the imagination can be quoted to evidence what might be meant by it:

“the same function that gives unity to the different representations in a judgment also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations in an intuition...The same understanding, therefore, and indeed by means of the very same actions through which it brings the logical form of a judgment into concepts by means of the analytical unity, also brings a transcendental content into its representations by means of the synthetic unity of the manifold in intuition in general”\(^1\)

And in this remark we find a clue. That is, “transcendental content” appears to be imparted to representations by the “synthetic unity of the manifold in intuition in general”, which we might characterise as “apperception minus concepts”.\(^2\) That is, “transcendental content” could be thought of as the content necessarily included in our empirical thought if it is able to be apprehended by a subject as unified (we won’t yet say “objective” since such a term would appear to implicate concepts).\(^3\) Even though it might seem more appropriate to think of such a phenomenon as more accurately describable as “transcendental form”, we can see Kant’s reasons for phrasing the matter this way since “transcendental content” is meant to be imparted in tight connection with the faculty of pure intuition, the medium through which actual empirical content is realised in cognition.

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\(^1\) A79/B104-5.
\(^2\) This makes sense for the additional reason that Kant thinks of the “function” that allows for both a judgment and a representation to be unified in terms of “analytic unity” and “synthesis” respectively, as the same. Now judgment is only coherent in terms of apperception, since if something cannot be recognised as “thought in me” it cannot, as it were, be “thought at all”. By extrapolation, Kant seems to regard the “synthesis of various representations in an intuition” as reliant on a similar action of the understanding.
\(^3\) We can suggest that just as Strawson insists on the necessity of the spatio-temporality of our experience—if we are to be able to identify and re-identify items within it—for it to be regarded as unified and objective, the account of transcendental proof given here requires that experience be taken as necessarily spatio-temporal in something like the Kantian sense. That is, our experience must be regarded as structured in terms of something like the pure intuitions of space and time (themselves necessary conditions of the possibility of experience).
Given this consideration, we might suppose that the content of situated thought is similar to “transcendental content” since both are related to something like the faculty of pure intuition. The former notion of situated thought is claimed to license synthetic a priori inferences which purportedly gain intelligibility from the way we are able to think about space (and perhaps time also, although this has not been our focus), whereas the latter notion of “transcendental content” could be thought of as the content of synthetic a priori judgment itself, whereby the structure of such judgment depends on transcendental conditions. We will have to content ourselves with these tentative suggestions as we must now move on to consider some actual cases of transcendental proof.

3.4 Some Attempts at Constructing Transcendental Proof

Before we begin our discussion of Sacks’s transcendental argument for an “abiding substratum” it will be helpful to make a few general comments about the differing strategies in his work. The text I take as giving the right construal of transcendental proof is his paper entitled The Nature of Transcendental Arguments, to which we have so far devoted much attention. Sacks’s earlier book Objectivity and Insight as a whole seems to represent a different orientation (at least at the textual level) with respect to the issues dealt with here. Despite this, I will not hesitate to employ arguments similar to those presented by him in that book insofar as I take them to be independently convincing apart from his wider commitment to forms of transcendental argumentation shorn of transcendental idealism. Notably, it seems that Sacks was pushing toward a view of which he was perhaps unaware of as, virtually, isomorphic to a variety of the two-aspect view of transcendental idealism, although he was unwilling, however understandably, to pledge commitment to something of that order. By contrast, it has been a contention of mine thus far that retaining a transcendentally ideal framework explicitly allows one to enjoy the power of a
reconsidered version of the synthetic a priori which is seemingly unavailable to alternate positions.¹

### 3.4.1 The Argument for Permanence²

Importantly, Sacks’s proposal in Chapter 7 of *Objectivity and Insight* for an approach to transcendental argumentation mirrors Ameriks’s interpretation of the Transcendental Deduction as discussed in Section 2.2.5. Sacks takes a minimal conception of experience (what he calls a “heterogeneous presentation”) as his starting point (or, premise) and argues regressively from that to the existence of an abiding quasi-spatio-temporal substratum (as a conclusion). In doing this, Sacks sidesteps the appeal to a priori concepts and instead appeals implicitly to the arguments of the Analogies (in particular the First Analogy) to sustain the idea that a minimal conception of experience that we can recognise as an experience must at least take a spatio-temporal form that itself suggests the existence of an abiding substratum sufficient to sustain such an experience. To begin, we can observe Sacks’s reference to the First Analogy in *The Nature of Transcendental Arguments*:

“If experience of succession is to be possible, there must be something that is invariant.”³

We can break this argument down into a modus ponens form⁴ as follows:

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¹ One needs to be careful here since there might be cases where the existence of synthetic a priori judgment might be taken to be congenial to philosophical orientations other than transcendental idealism. It is true that this matter may reduce to a terminological quibble. I take it, however, that these claims for the existence of synthetic a priori judgment would be committed to different conceptions of such judgment; to conceive of such judgment in a manner similar to Kant involves accepting Kant’s doctrine of transcendental idealism at least under some interpretation of it—whether that be an epistemologically oriented two-aspect view or an ontologically oriented two-world view.
² I will here say “permanence” instead of “substance” since the former is more general and seemingly less ontologically committed than the latter.
⁴ Interestingly, and perhaps detrimentally, by doing so we make the validity of the argument seem to rest on merely formal principles. If we leave the conditional as it stands, the sense in which it might depend on material principles of inference can be made readily apparent.
i. We have experience of succession.

ii. It is a necessary condition of the experience of succession that something in experience be invariant.

iii. Something in experience is invariant.

This appears to be a version of the argument from the First Analogy in the Critique and we can begin our analysis by considering the initial premise. It is clear that in one sense the first premise is a contingent, empirical truth, or, something taken to be true. In another sense, we might say that insofar as there is to be experience at all it is necessarily true, but that is controversial and not what is meant here. We could of course reframe the premise as “there is experience of succession” or “there is succession”, although this would blur the picture since these two ways of reframing this statement undermine precisely the view that is to be constructed here insofar as the former encourages elimination of the notion of a self or subject and the latter eliminates the notion of experience in terms of which “succession” gains coherence.¹ We can note in a preliminary way that by this it is meant that both of these re-framings suppose that the notion of “succession”—not the notion of “a sequence of events”, which is seemingly less sensitive to what we might call the “subjective dimension” than the former notion, insofar as “succession” seems to be an experiential notion whereas “a sequence of events” seems to refer to something entirely independent—can be analysed on its own in isolation from the notion of experience and still retain coherence. This seems prima facie to be wrong.

We can make additional remarks once the second premise is in place. As the second premise claims, experience of succession depends on something in experience being invariant. We might conjecture that this item of invariance is

¹ The extreme sceptic may suppose that these details raise further problems to be solved, although it can easily be countered that such scepticism that makes the usage of certain concepts completely unintelligible—in a sense above and beyond the charge of unintelligibility normally levelled at the sceptic—and is not a threat to be taken seriously.

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us, but this would seem to be a little quick off the mark and would be open to Hume’s objection that there is no self present across our states of consciousness; we need to look for this principle of unity elsewhere. We might instead venture that there is a background, independently existing world which contains objects, to which the series of our perceivings belong, or to which they are related. However, this suggestion already traffics in the notion of a spatio-temporal framework that is tied to the notion of an independently existing world that the argument is attempting to explain. But what if we suggest this: we need not claim that there is any one thing that is present across all our states of consciousness, since it is evident that there simply cannot be; the content of our experience is constantly in flux and it is only in virtue of our capacities for identification and re-identification that we are able to knowingly perceive the same empirical objects again and again, through periods of their presence and absence from the actual content of our experience. Instead, it is enough that we can have perceptions which themselves exhibit a structure such as to be locatable in terms of the structural properties of a framework that, generally, allows for exhibition of features or properties (or is inhabited by objects) such as to allow linkages between adjacent perceptions. The idea being that where there are linkages between such perceptions (thinkable as “regions” of that framework) they are commensurable. This merits explanation.

If we consider the problem of securing a notion of invariance, all we really require is sufficient similarity between adjacent cases of perception. I am not here speaking of the possible thought experiment where one might be walking through a room with a strobe on, hence where one’s capacity to find one’s way is reliant on re-identifying, across periods of darkness, similar items which one encountered in adjacent periods of lightness. The claim is more general and much wider. Consider the sceptical problem of thinking that, for any currently unperceived (though presumably previously perceived) empirical object, we can doubt that it exists unperceived. The familiar Strawsonian reply will be that this kind of doubt reduces to the
tautology that “you do not continuously observe what you do not continuously observe”, thus “the standard for being sure” about the re-identification of such objects, “while meaning what we do mean” when we say that we perceive them, is “set self-contradictorily high”.¹ What this amounts to is the fairly straightforward idea that if we are not logically in a position to confirm or disconfirm something’s existence, it does not make sense to raise the question. Obviously, it simply won’t do to redirect the problem by claiming that hypotheses exist to predict the existence of currently unperceived objects, since the possibility of testing these require at least indirect perception of the objects in question and in which cases the problem disappears anyway.

The additional Strawsonian reply is that to ask the sceptical question whether the stretch of experience one is currently enjoying is indeed of the same objects one experienced earlier and which have since endured stretches of non-continuous observation is simultaneously to *doubt* and to *presuppose* the framework in which such individuation occurs and only in which it makes sense. That is, the notion of a spatio-temporal framework relies on accepting, in at least some cases, particular-identity where non-continuous observation occurs. If we did not hold ourselves to this conception of particular-identity then the notion of a spatio-temporal framework would collapse; we would have no choice but to conceive of every case of observation as observation participating in the structural properties of an independent framework entirely unrelated to every other. Thus, the question of whether an item in one framework was related to one in another framework could not arise, since these systems would be, as said, independent or, unrelated, which comes to the same thing. There would thus be no common criteria for individuation of properties or objects in those frameworks and hence no grounds for the question being raised. The idea is that it is a condition of having intelligible criteria for the individuation or the identification and re-identification of empirical objects that there is a kind of

¹ Strawson, *Individuals*: p. 34.
continuity across cases of observation. It is not necessary that we have a single
point of reference across all experiences; it is enough that at least one element
ties things together across experiences although the role of such a tie between
experiences might be fulfilled by something different from one case to the
next. Ultimately, this is to make it intelligible that such disjointed cases of
observation fulfil the requirements for evidencing that they participate in (or,
share the structural properties of) the same framework.1

It might then seem that the possibility of invariance in experience is
sustained by the existence of rogue elements which persist, as it were, from
one case of observation to the next. But this cannot quite be so. Consider the
commonsense thought experiment mentioned above regarding the strobe-lit
room. Surely in cases such as this there is no common element in some
perceptions if one happens to step through a doorway, for example, during a
period of darkness, into the next room which is completely different from the
previous one. To take this objection to be relevant is to have missed the point,
and to have missed the Strawsonian counter-argument above. The point, to
reiterate, is more general. The idea is that the spatio-temporal framework in
which such cases of observation occur is continuous; all cases of observation
occur within the same framework, or at least sub-regions of it. I will not rely
on the more tendentious argument that we cannot make intelligible other
forms of individuation since our current conceptual scheme limits us from
conceiving of alternate kinds of framework other than the spatio-temporal,
viz. that our concepts are necessarily spatio-temporal. For one, the
Strawsonian argument for the role of a “conceptual scheme” has been
challenged by Davidson, for the other, it is not quite to the point. Rather, what
we are after is something more substantial.

1 Of course, again, it is not to be thought that going to sleep and waking up in a different
place than where one closed one’s eyes raises a problem here. Obviously in these cases the
region of the framework may be different yet the capacity for individuation of the region of
experience is analogous. The idea is that one could not wake up, be considered conscious and
be faced with a world that one could not, in principle, observe. This would simply be for
one’s unity of consciousness to have dissolved.

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Here we can make a transition to Sacks’s account in *Objectivity and Insight* of how we build up the notion of a necessary quasi-spatio-temporal framework inherent in any experience. Sacks’s first step is to describe, in the Strawsonian tone, a “minimal conception of experience”. He proceeds by taking what he sees as a step back from Kant’s notion of apperception in the Transcendental Deduction, to a more primitive notion, that of the minimal structure of any experience that could be subject to unification in such a case of apperception.¹

Sacks’s first claim is that for any experience to count as an experience it must involve a distinction between two elements: a “subjective component” (that for which there is something that it is like) and a “content component” (the something that it is like).² The connection between this and a well-known Strawsonian thesis is worth bringing out, since Strawson says:

“There can be no experience at all which does not involve the recognition of particular items as being of such and such a general kind. It seems that it must be possible, even in the most fleeting and purely subjective of impressions, to distinguish a component of recognition, or judgement, which is not simply identical with the item recognized, which forms the topic of judgement.”³

The relevant point is that, given the thought expressed above, there needs to be a distinction between the recognition of the content of an experience and that content itself. Strawson goes on to state:

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¹ It is interesting to note that, given this orientation, Sacks seems to hold the view that Strawson’s reading of the Deduction is correct; namely, that apperception is indeed the starting point of Kant’s argument. Sacks’s tactic of taking the argument one step further back to the notion of a minimally conceived experience then seems to mirror Ameriks’s reading of the Deduction as actually beginning from the supposition of the existence of empirical knowledge. That is, in Ameriks’s case we start with empirical knowledge, in Sacks’s case we start with a minimally conceived experience; although the extent to which these are equivalent is up for debate. Given my arguments thus far, Sacks’s approach then seems to be in accord with the actual approach of the Deduction.


³ Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*: p. 100. Sacks, to his credit, flags the issue that one needn’t construe recognition of such items as necessarily judgmental; that is, as having the same logical structure as judgment.
“Recognition implies the potential acknowledgement of the experience into which recognition necessarily enters as being one’s own, as sharing with others this relation to the identical self. It is the fact that this potentiality is implicit in recognition which saves the recognitional component from absorption into the item recognized (and hence saves the character of the experience as an experience) even when that item cannot be conceived of as having an existence independent of the particular experience of it.”

It is worth making note of two varieties of recognition at work here, in addition to a third which will form the topic of our discussion of self-awareness in 3.4.2. The first two are mentioned by Sacks:

(1) Recognition internal to an experience of the content of that experience.
(2) Recognition of the kind fundamental to self-consciousness: the recognition of an experience or item as being one of mine.

The first is “necessary to avoid the collapse of an experience into a mere event (albeit possibly a cognitive one)”; the second is seen as a way of saving those experiences which fail on the first count, viz., sensations which cannot be prised apart from the very experience or awareness of them, yet are still thinkable as items of our consciousness if they allow for unification in such consciousness. And we have our third sense:

(3) Recognition of another subject as a subject who recognises oneself as a subject.

We will come to this third point later on, although it is worth mentioning now as the connection with the two other kinds will become important. The details of this discussion of recognition serve as the groundwork for Sack’s minimal conception of experience—and also serve as the basis for my criticisms of how

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this conception is extended, given the sense of importance I place on (3). For now we need to see how Sacks’s argument plays out.

The next step is to consider what more can be said about the necessary structure of such minimally conceived experience “considered strictly on its own, prior to adding it to a unified series of other such experiences”.\(^1\) To avoid commitment to a position on the debate about the extent to which experience is wholly conceptual or not, Sacks introduces some terminology to characterise what such a minimal conception of experience as we have been characterising must be like. He thinks of the “individual experience as a whole” as a “domain of presentation” and the ‘content component’ within it as the “presented domain”.\(^2\) Sacks then makes the further distinction between homogeneous and heterogeneous domains of presentation. The former is conceived of as having potential to support the recognition of (no more than) one property, whereas the latter are thought of as having sufficient structure to allow for recognition of different (multiple) properties. Initially, his discussion of these domains of presentation is restricted to “momentary experience”, which is meant to be the “briefest temporal span that can be psychologically significant,\(^3\) although this will be seen to render them incoherent and thus lead on to the thesis of necessary spatio-temporality.

Sacks is rightly quick to conclude that for a domain of presentation to have the potential for recognition of no more than one property is for it to fall short of being epistemically significant. The first point of failure is that such a domain of presentation has no room for a foreground-background structure that is necessary to place a property or to identify an object to which such a property might belong, since this would require recognition of more than one element. The second failure is on the fall-back option of a simple homogeneous field; such a domain of presentation could not even take the

\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) It appears that Sacks should have said “epistemically significant” since presumably his account here is intended to be more than psychological. The problem with this however is that it suggests that homogeneous domains of presentation might count as epistemic representations, whereas the conclusion is to be that they do not.
form of a homogeneous field—say, a red (quasi-spatial) expanse—since the recognition of (quasi-spatial) properties would require identifying more than one property, or rather, more than one instance of the same property of redness, which would then require individuation of spatial location within such a domain — itself a type of property.

The claim that such a field might be possible in terms of a mere quasi-spatio-temporal structure, as examined in Strawson’s example of the sound world in Chapter 2 of *Individuals*, is familiar and not worth going into here since that structure fails on the count of “independent access to various locations”,¹ that is, the master sound in Strawson’s argument, on its own, would not bear the capacity of being (quasi-spatially) located in a variety of places since there would be no external measure to it which could fit the bill—there would be no analogue in the sound world of an “abiding substratum” which, it is argued here, is a viable and necessary conception in the structure of our ordinary experience—there would thus be no viable conception of quasi-spatiality. This is all we can say about this here.

An additional complication that is worth noting, but into which we shall not go too deeply here, is that experience looks, in this picture, necessarily conceptual. This is because once homogeneous domains of presentation have been dispensed with the heterogeneous domains of presentation left over are nothing less than fully conceptual episodes, insofar as their structure necessarily admits of being individuated thusly. Insofar as recognition and individuation are arguably conceptual matters and insofar as a heterogeneous domain of presentation, as having the structure to support recognition of multiple properties, is thusly individuated, such domains of presentation seem to be conceptually articulated. This leaves us with an apparent commitment to a conceptualist thesis—where such a thesis is taken to involve an assertion for the necessary (but not necessarily sufficient) role of concepts in experience—if we are to accept the rest of what has been said. One alternative is to follow Strawson in saying that experiences that fall short of

being conceptual are able to be recognised by a component external to them, in terms of being ascribable by us as our own states of consciousness. Something like this alternative is ascribed to Kant by Sacks, which we will see in a moment.

Once it is established that anything counting as experience must be minimally, in Sacks’s terms, heterogeneous, that is, contain two or more elements or properties, it is noted that a mere momentary case of such an experience simply cannot be classed as epistemically stable. Such a domain of presentation can only be recognised as having more than one property if such co-existing properties as there might be can be experienced successively; that is, over a passage of time.¹

Here it is worth bringing out a point that Sacks makes about this strategy. There are two potential ways to enrich the conception of a heterogeneous domain of presentation such as to make it more epistemically viable. The first strategy, which is ascribed to Kant by Sacks, would be to fit such a domain of presentation into a wider framework of a single consciousness for which there were other domains of presentation, both homogeneous and heterogeneous. The unifying principle in this case would be the transcendental unity of apperception and this would lead us to Kant’s premise in the Deduction (as Sacks sees it, and as I have shown Strawson above in Section 2.2.5 as arguing in his reconstruction) which then seeks to explain the “conditions for such discrete experiences to being ordered under a single consciousness of them all.”² Sacks’s alternate strategy is to enrich the conception of a heterogeneous domain of presentation not externally, in the way just noted, but internally by spelling out how such a domain of presentation also requires, minimally, a temporal element within it. According to Sacks this strategy amounts to starting a transcendental argument a “step earlier than Kant does”, and thus

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¹ At this juncture it is worth flagging, but not worthwhile going into, the subtle issues at stake in calling such an element a “passage of time. This expression will have to do for now.
beginning with “an even more rudimentary and hence less debatable premiss.”¹

We can see the intuitive appeal of this strategy by simply reflecting on the fact which I noted above that, for such recognition of multiple properties within the kind of domain spoken of here, it is necessary that a temporal element be present since even to recognise co-existing properties requires, one might say, as many “moments” as there are properties. As Sacks says,

“for the contrast between two properties to be drawn, it must be possible to attend discreetly to each point. And that can only mean that it must be possible to attend first to the one then to the other. And this already presupposes the availability of temporal relations.”²

Of course this does not mean that the properties themselves necessarily occur in a temporal sequence, since they may be co-existing, but merely that the recognition of them must. Sacks goes on to say that “there must, internal to the experience, be the resources to attend to the properties in temporal sequence.”³ And, more strongly, it is claimed that this fact just iterated “explains the transcendental status of time”, namely, that it “is essentially presuppositional to any differentiation of properties.”⁴

The next stage in the argument is as follows. It is claimed that the recognition of multiple properties within a heterogeneous domain of presentation requires that such recognition be accompanied by a single consciousness such that the recognition of those properties can be coherently envisioned as related in some way, i.e., such that there can be “experienced contrast”⁵ between them. This raises the question of what the conditions are under which we can preserve the unity of consciousness within the heterogeneous domain of presentation. Sacks’s response is this:

¹ Ibid.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
“The unity of the subjective component presupposes unity of the objective element of the presentational domain. For the different experiences to belong to a single consciousness there must be some way of relating them to one another. For that to be possible there must be a background matrix, or grid, onto which those experiences can all be plotted.”

Of course, we are then open to the worry of the grid changing from one experience to the next. The idea is that when this occurs the disjointed grids are re-aligned or made commensurable by way of reference to a more general background grid, in relation to which they may be plotted. When there is radical shift in cases of perception, recourse to a more primitive grid must occur, and this, it must be said, is simply an argument for permanence; the argument for the necessity of an abiding substratum which sustains the capacity to make spatio-temporal individuations.

The worry that this abiding substratum might change can be shown to be a non-starter. Either the change “falls outside the experiential capacity of the unity of consciousness in question”, in which case the problem is a chimera or, the change between one grid and another is sustained by the mechanics I described above. Of course, the further possibility that in some instances there might be no further recourse to a more primitive matrix simply leads to the unity of consciousness to a collapse. The basic point is that it is not possible

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1 Ibid.
2 This is a self-conscious allusion to Kuhn. The suggestion is not that we can readily assimilate the idea of change in the structure of our experience wholly to change in our conceptual scheme (or however one wants to refer to linguistic practice), yet by making this link interesting questions are raised.
3 As the title of this section suggests.
4 Ibid.
5 That this suggestion does not constitute a problem ought to be clear. We are clearly aware of when our unity of consciousness has collapsed, or, more accurately, in those cases in which this happens we do not have sufficient awareness to be deceived about whether or not our unity of consciousness has collapsed. To say that our previous unity of consciousness has collapsed into a hallucination or wide-ranging perceptual error is not to threaten this idea. Rather, such hallucination can simply be accounted for in the usual way in retrospect by way of comparison with both earlier and later experience. In the possible case of a permanent and radical shift in the thread of one’s perception of the world—in the case of an individual who has undergone a permanent and radical psychological trauma which has trapped them in a
to experience a change in the fundamental grid or matrix which supports the capacity for recognition of properties in heterogeneous domains of presentation.\(^1\) And as Sacks states:

“The unity of consciousness requires a single unified and unchanging matrix onto which all change can be plotted. And that is just the unity of the objective world.”\(^2\)

We can say two things about this: (1) according to Kant at least, unity of consciousness and a recognisably unified, objective world are interdependent, so nothing is discovered by reasoning this way; (2) this conclusion might seem to be a little unguarded (and thus vulnerable). Let us see why.

The above account seems to have left a hole. The possibility that the background matrix or grid could undergo unperceived change seems to suggest an opening for a further sceptical dilemma. What if, indeed, the background matrix (supposing the sceptic is willing to grant us that posit) does undergo unperceived change? Does this mean that our experience is then an illusion since we miss whatever alteration it is that might have occurred? This appears to be Stroud’s Challenge showing itself, since the basic worry is again “what if our belief in the necessity of our conception of experience is false?” We have dealt with that worry already, although it seems we have not given a satisfactory reply. What we are working on is an account of how certain relevant transcendental arguments (insofar as they encompass transcendental proofs) can do more than articulate necessary conceptual connections within what is perceived to be a necessary conception of experience. This account, as we have seen, requires that transcendental proofs include a synthetic a priori, ampliative step in them which will tie them to the

\(^1\) We can relate this idea to a famous remark made by Kant where he says: “A coming to be or ceasing to be that is not simply a determination of the permanent but is absolute, \textit{can never be a possible perception}.” This quote is from Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith: A188/B231 (my italics). Kemp Smith’s translation is used here because this particular passage reads more elegantly and shows itself as more relevant to our purpose under that translation.

\(^2\) Sacks, \textit{Objectivity and Insight}: p. 240.
notion of possible experience and a version of the two-aspect reading of transcendental idealism which focuses on epistemic conditions. The quick answer to Stroud’s Challenge is that what we have argued for thus far is to be supplemented by an additional argument that mirrors what has been interpreted as Hegel’s completion of Kant’s Copernican Revolution.¹ But for now, we need to continue filling in some details of the argument for the objective framework which we are currently discussing. As a preliminary hint at the additional argument against the sceptic, precisely why it won’t make sense to question the existence of a kind of background matrix or grid stems from the remark I made about the kind of recognition expressed in (3) above.

To return to our main theme, we can observe that I set out a brief summary of the argument for time above. A parallel argument can be set out for space, equally briefly. The quite straightforward idea expounded above with reference to time was that it was presuppositional to making any kind of individuation whatsoever, since to identify one or more properties requires knowing what it is for something to be what it is and not something else, which requires precisely that one be able to differentiate between what something is and what it is not—which requires, even in the most elementary cases, a temporal element for such individuation to thus occur. The parallel argument for space is as follows.

Individuation of properties is dependent not only on a temporal element but also a fundamentally spatial element² since such individuation is reliant on the capacity for recognising particular properties as being thus-and-so, that is, as they are, and not as something other than what they are. This recognition requires that such properties be somehow placed in a context or frame of reference against which (or within which) they might show

¹ Although we cannot adequately address Hegel here it is worth noting some references which typify this reading. Such works include Robert Pippin (1989) Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness, Cambridge University Press and Paul Redding (1996) Hegel’s Hermeneutics, Cornell University Press.

² For simplicity I will here drop the qualifier “qua si” since it should be clear by now that this argument is wholly more general than one tied to any realisation of a particular spatio-temporal structure.

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themselves. Additionally, being able to tell the difference between two co-existing properties requires that such properties may be placed in a particular relation to one another; there must be a “specifiable difference of locus”\(^1\) between them. Without this possibility recognition of such properties could not occur, since to be recognised by a single consciousness requires room for comparison between them such as to allow for their identity to be made manifest. And to link up with our discussion above of a “background matrix” or “grid”, we might say that without the potential for being placed relative to one another such properties as there might be could not be conceived of as participating in the same grid. That is, no recognition of a relation could arise.

The additional important qualification here is that despite the parallel structure between the argument for the necessity of both space and time, there is still an asymmetry. The argument for space above still requires the capacity for individuating a spatial network in terms of a range of places where properties might be realised. The fundamental mechanism here is still temporal; individuation of a spatial framework still requires, more fundamentally, temporality.

It might help at this point to review the account of a unified, objective framework proposed by reconsidering the shape of Sacks’s transcendental argument. An argument similar to that presented at the opening of this section can be found in Chapter 7 of *Objectivity and Insight*:

i. We have (at least some) heterogeneous experiences.

ii. It is a condition of the possibility of having heterogeneous experiences that there is a permanent spatio-temporal order.

iii. There is an abiding spatio-temporal structure.\(^2\)

Now, as we noted briefly above, it still appears that this argument, insofar as it is representative of the account given thus far, is open to Stroud’s

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2 This argument is similar to that presented in op. cit.: p. 271.
Challenge. There is however a route we can take to an argument for the “condition of self-awareness” which was alluded to in the third kind of recognition as mentioned briefly above, via the considerations of Sacks’s version of the argument for substance of the First Analogy.¹ This later version of Sacks’s reconstruction employs the notion of situated thought and is thus a stronger argument with additional ramifications for the broader account proposed here. The reconstruction begins with the consideration of a proposition similar to the “central move” of Kant’s First Analogy:

“All change is merely the alteration of an underlying substance.”²

It is claimed that this proposition appears to be a piece of “metaphysical dogma”, that is, until the purported a priori truth of the statement is taken to be “expressive of a situated thought”.³ Here we have recourse to the general approach Sacks takes toward transcendental proof. Sacks’s curious employment of the example similar to Husserl’s “apple tree standing in the garden” can be embellished to supply us with an explanation of the tie between thought about “substance” and the situatedness of a thinker thinking about “substance”. The example involves considering the circumstance of a tree in front of us which has just gone up in smoke; an event the recognition of which requires some comprehension of a perceptual backdrop sufficient to sustain the thought of a continuous surrounds for the event, the kind that would be necessary to place the event spatio-temporally in relation to other objects, events, and properties.

Sacks’s emphasis is here on the fact that merely entertaining the propositional content articulable of such an event, namely “there was a tree in the garden, and now there is not a tree in the garden” will not allow for full recognition of what is involved in such a happening in our perceptual life; a recognition of what is required to sustain the occurrence of such a happening.

¹ As quoted from Sacks, The Nature of Transcendental Arguments: p. 442.
³ Ibid.
or event. Instead, to emphasise the role of situated thought, we must again come to see what would be involved in apprehending such a perceptual occurrence or event; in Sacks’s terms, we need to think ourselves into what it would take to be beholden to such a perception. In this case, we need to understand what sustains the perception of the disappearance of the tree, followed by the plume of smoke, and further, followed by a perception of the tree’s absence in the spatial region where the tree stood moments prior; that is, precisely the kind of abiding substratum which we have been for. The key move is to insist on the perceiver’s situatedness in that framework (or substratum). We can look to Sacks remarks on this to elucidate:

“For the situated thought to make sense, it would have to be thought that there is, throughout, something in front of me, a perceptual backdrop, such that the demise of the tree is an event, an alteration, of that underlying substrate.”

This is because

“For the change between there being a tree in the garden at t1 and there being no tree in the garden at t2 to be given within the confines of one situated thought, there must be presupposed, within the domain that the thought encompasses, an abiding spatio-temporal world.”

Given this, and in alignment with the Kantian thought quoted above (“All change is merely the alteration of an underlying substance”), taken to be expressive of the central move of the First Analogy, we ought to feel the force of the argument even if the exact letter of Kant’s version is unacceptable. As we noticed above in our analysis of the notion of an abiding substratum, such a notion might function as a suitable alternative to Kant’s notion of an “underlying substance” and thus free us from any seeming commitment to an untenable metaphysical doctrine.

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
The device of situated thought makes it seem promising that the notion of an abiding substratum is fully coherent and is necessary for perceptions of the kind we have been discussing due to the way in which an a priori move can be made from the statement “things change” to “there must be some object that is invariant underlying such a change”. The way in which the move from the first statement to the second can be made a priori can be evidenced by considering the situatedness of both thoughts; thinking oneself into what it would take to apprehend the first thought brings out the extent to which the second thought is accessible by an a priori move. Consider the example of the tree. The statement “things change”, which represents a thought one would have in the case of the disappearing tree, provides access to the claim for a form of invariance—either as substance or as an abiding framework—since such a thought about change can only arise if the (at least implicit) notion of a perceptual backdrop is in place. Simply put, the notion of change can only be rendered coherent if there is some kind of continuity, something unchanged in relation to the object about which change is predicated. Additionally, the notions of variance and invariance depend on the relations between events evidencing such phenomena and the subject in relation to which those events are situated in terms of the same framework.

To return to our criticism of Sacks above, we can raise doubts once more as to whether situated thought is entirely effective in strengthening the kernel of the First Analogy. We might find ourselves troubled by the prospect that it is simply the appearance of a thought’s reliance on a perceptual backdrop to render it coherent that is needed. But what could this mean? To say that it is enough to have the impression of a thought’s being about a world which is necessarily structured spatio-temporally (in four dimensions) is to have quite missed the point pressed thus far. Suppose the extended form of the objection involves postulating a world consisting of random, unconnected happenings entirely devoid of collective participation in an abiding substratum or, in the Kantian register, “substance”. It is not simply that this world would fall short of the basic requirements for a possible perception, let alone a string of related
possible perceptions; it is not simply that we could not conceive of an experience that would be had of a world like this, although this is indeed true; it is rather that the structure of such a world falls short of the requirements for a world that could sustain the existence of rational, active subjects. We might say with Strawson that the problem’s existence is dependent on its solution (as is so with “all transcendental arguments”\(^1\); the imaginative case conjured by the sceptic can be seen as arising out of a far more comfortable commerce with the actual world.

Despite its appeal, this is a familiar and unsatisfying reply to the basic concern arising from attempts on the transcendental project\(^2\) and it has been thematic thus far that replies to sceptic of this form which skirt the issue or attempt to dissolve it in weakened versions of transcendental argumentation are not to be relied upon. We can come now to the stronger reply which depends upon an argument, more Hegelian than Kantian in orientation, to explain the further depth we can give to the background of the argument for an abiding substratum as sustaining spatio-temporal thought about a unified, objective world. This argument will link up with Strawson’s project in *Individuals* in Chapter 4 insofar as it makes a case for the primitive nature of the category “persons”, albeit in a somewhat different manner.

### 3.4.2 The Condition of Self-Awareness

We can begin by considering the fourth example of a transcendental argument as quoted from Sacks above in Section 3.2:

“If self-awareness is to arise, I must recognize others as themselves persons who (can) recognize me.”\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Strawson, *Individuals*: p. 40.

\(^2\) I say “arising from” because, as I have stated at numerous points, external world scepticism was arguably not Kant’s main motivation for constructing his transcendental philosophy.

We might feel tempted to accommodate this conditional within a modus ponens argument thusly:

i. We are self-aware.

ii. It is a necessary condition of self-awareness that I recognize others as themselves persons who (can) recognize me.

iii. Therefore, I recognize others as themselves persons who (can) recognize me.

As a preliminary way of bringing out the general intended force of this point, consider the account above given in 3.4.1 regarding the notion of a necessary abiding substratum, or background matrix or grid onto which all domains of presentation—the minimal conception of experience—must be plotted to be anything for us. We saw there that a fairly thorough analysis can be given which seemed to suggest the necessity of such a framework if we are to have experience. However, as we also saw, Stroud’s Challenge seemed to rear its head once more due to the fact that this reconstruction—as generally quite Strawsonian in spirit—appeared to rest on the assumption that it was enough to have a framework that we were merely required to suppose. That is, the account above still seemed like it would be open to the challenge that this was merely a conception of experience we believed was necessary—not one that was actually shown to be necessary.

It seems fair enough at this point that one might feel this dilemma to be irresolvable. For what exactly can be intended by making the distinction between, on the one hand, a mere conception of the minimal structure of experience we believe is necessary and, on the other, an actual minimal structure of experience? How would we find out about the latter and in what way could this be different to our finding out about to the former? It seems that finding out about the latter would require crossing the

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1 I say “we” simply because saying “I am self-aware” would be in conflict with the central point to be pressed in this section.

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appearance/reality gap and this is precisely the gap to be explained—or, perhaps, reconceived. Additionally, saying something about “reality” in the sense in which we are tempted to take that term here just seems to run afoul not merely of Kant’s principle of significance, but of the whole distinction pressed upon thus far between the philosophical and non-philosophical senses of limitation; between epistemic conditions and cognitive faculties. The turning point in the argument is that the difference here is between a posteriori and a priori forms of knowledge; finding out about the necessary minimal structure of experience requires a priori investigation whereas talk about physical limitations is merely a posteriori. This kind of claim has been made before and has indeed been ill-received by most. It is now incumbent upon us to attempt a radical revision of Kant’s point by way of a Hegelian move.

The best way to bolster the argument above in 3.4.1 is by showing how the condition of self-awareness underwrites the recognition of a spatio-temporal framework as argued for above. It must be noted that in doing this we do not unravel the line of thought pushed thus far which indicates that any transcendental argument which moved from the premise of apperception to the conclusion of the necessity of a unified, objective world was ill-conceived. Indeed, under the Kantian conception this line of thought looks tautological since apperception cannot be made intelligible without the notion of a unified, objective world; thus, having the two at opposite ends of a syllogism must be disallowed. What we have here is an altogether different reading of what self-consciousness is and how it comes about. The argument runs thus:

(1) Confrontation with a world of mere objects cannot, on its own, produce self-conscious thought.¹

¹ This relates to what we noted earlier about the significance of the difference between the forms of recognition mentioned in Section 3.4.1.
(2) Communion with like-minded entities is required for the existence of a language.

(3) Language usage (in the full-blown rational sense of conceptual, systematic thought) is not possible without self-consciousness (in the full-blown rational capacity to reflect on one’s own experience—possibly to think of it as a subjective route through an objective world)—it is in fact inherently bound up with it.

(4) Recognising another subject (who is also an object in the world) as such a subject who thus recognises oneself as a subject (and an object in the world) is a necessary condition for self-consciousness.

(5) Self-consciousness requires that one is aware of oneself as a locus of abilities to act and, also, as an empirical object in the world that can be acted upon.

(6) Conscious thought—for a self-conscious being—which thus requires the capacity to individuate a spatio-temporal framework, is derivative of being able to think of oneself as such a being.

(7) The capacity to identify and re-identify (conceived of as static) objects and properties in a framework requires that the one so identifying and re-identifying is in dynamic relations with other like-minded beings.\footnote{Here “static” is not meant to denote spatio-temporally fixed, but rather lack of a mind or similar capacity for principled action. Correlatively, we might suppose that the term “dynamic” suggests mindedness.}

(8) The original perceptual objects—the geneses of conceptual thought—are subjects of mutual recognition.

Now, the end-point of this argument seems to leave us with perhaps an unacceptable identification of consciousness with self-consciousness. As should be plainly obvious, the major dilemmas arising from dissolving the distinction that is possible here are ethical ones which pertain to thinking of non-human animals and insufficiently mature human animals as without consciousness—and by implication, without the awareness of important phenomena in one’s mental life such as pain. It is an ever-important reminder
that this is a mere generalisation, a drawing of a sharp line where there is rather a blurry boundary, between conceptual and non-conceptual thinking. To claim that those without fully-rational thought have no experience, or no consciousness, is a crude simplification. There is not only the whole issue of the period of transition between different forms of both non-conceptual and conceptual thinking, but also of deciding what precisely constitutes such forms of thinking.\textsuperscript{1} Unfortunately, this is no place to deal with those fascinating questions so we will have to content ourselves with the general idea expressed above; that there is, at the extreme ends of the scale of linguistic capability, an incommensurability between the related forms of thinking—conceptual and non-conceptual thinking. We can say no more about this matter here.

At this point we appear to have moved from one point on the transcendental landscape to another. The problem of the external world seems to have been circumvented and the problem of other minds seems to have—at this juncture—potential for taking its place. For the question would now appear to be “How do we know which objects in the world are other subjects?” and “How do we really know that they have minds?” Thus it appears that external world scepticism might slip back into place; if we cannot be sure that the empirical objects we take to be like-minded subjects are such, then the global sceptic seems to take over once more.\textsuperscript{2} However, it helps to here set out more explicitly a few strong theses as regards the argument for recognition:

(1) Self-conscious thought and language—in the fully rational sense—presuppose mutual recognition.

(2) Empirical thought presupposes the capacity for reflective thought, since being able to think of one’s experience as a subjective route

\textsuperscript{1} Indeed, much of this issue can be rightly allocated to developmental psychology and evolutionary biology.

\textsuperscript{2} As a general historical remark this might look like the problem seemingly faced by Husserl—that problem which Hegel managed to avoid. I say “seemingly” because this is a debated issue.

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through an objective world requires one to be able to think of objects of empirical thought (perhaps imaginatively\textsuperscript{1}) in a multitude of perhaps un-experienced contexts.

(3) The richness of one’s conception, or empirical thought, about properties or objects, is determined by the richness of the discourse potentially to be had about them; as understood by oneself as potentially to be had. Thus, the issue is not whether a non-rational animal experiences a different block of wood—merely a “less rich” block of wood.\textsuperscript{2}

\textbf{3.4.3 Difficulties and Resolutions}

We can begin to see some problems arise with the notion of situated thought. A prima facie worry is the seemingly obvious objection: “The notion of situated thought was introduced to divert the concern of transcendental arguments turning into pieces of reasoning that turned on the mere conception we must have of our experience (Stroud’s Challenge). However, the notion of situated thought could be likewise attacked insofar as it can be countered that this notion too could be thought of as the necessary conception we must have of empirical thought and of ourselves as thinkers in order to make coherent transcendental proof.” I recognise the gravity of this counter-argument, yet insist that the notion of situated thought is left untouched by it. Let us see why.

In 3.4.1 I explored a classic case of what has been called “transcendental proof” and which we saw, in the stronger case represented by Sacks’s account in \textit{The Nature of Transcendental Arguments}, to rely on the notion of situated thought.

\textsuperscript{1} This can be taken in two broad senses. The common-sense notion of imagination seems to include creativity in the sense of exploration of aesthetic possibility; the more technical sense here is the slightly more Kantian notion of imagination as that which allows for one to reproduce in reflective thought a potentially realisable empirical state of affairs vis-à-vis the object in question. Both senses are of interest and relevance here although the Kantian sense is more important since it might be seen to underlie the former conception.

\textsuperscript{2} Unfortunately, we cannot address all the questions which this way of putting the point raises.

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thought. I admit the force of the above objection on account of 3.4.1, yet I do not feel such a threat with regard to 3.4.2. In fact, I believe that it is precisely the fact that 3.4.2 explores an argument that is not Kantian in orientation that we may take it as immune from the sceptical worry. The first subsection (3.4.1) dealt with a more or less definitive case of transcendental proof inasmuch as it explored the necessary conditions of the possibility of unified objective experience. The second sub-section (3.4.2) does indeed explore something like a necessary condition of unified, objective experience although I suggest that it does more than this. The master-thought at the heart of 3.4.2 is that self-consciousness is tied to intersubjectivity. This master-thought is Hegelian and admitting the power of it entirely transforms the landscape of the transcendental project.

Before we explore the consequences of this change in orientation, it is helpful to be reminded of a few points. Accepting the power of 3.4.2 and taking it to be the centrepiece of a theory about the necessary conditions of self-consciousness and also the necessary conditions of experience of a unified, objective world, does not negate the truthfulness of other classic cases of transcendental proof which might be explored; it merely bolsters them with an entirely different mode of anti-sceptical force. This anti-sceptical force derives from the truism that we only know ourselves in our dealings with others; we only possess language because we are in commerce with other similar beings; we are only able to recognise ourselves as subjects—who are also physical objects—because we are recognised as such by similar subjects who we recognise as recognising us—and, quite profoundly, recognise ourselves in such subjects’ recognition of us. This is no place for exploring the complexities of Hegelian dialectic although these brief points are enough to establish the general idea that 3.4.2 provides us with a case of transcendental proof, indeed reliant on situated thought, that resists the objection I noted above.

To qualify further, one could not coherently raise the following objection: “Well, perhaps all experience requires is for one to have the conception of
oneself as being recognised by another subject—who is also an object in the world—thereby having the mere conception (or belief, perhaps erroneous) of recognising another subject and the mere conception that one recognises oneself in such a subject’s recognition of oneself?” since it should be plain that the very notion of intersubjectivity cannot be seen to, as it were, arise from nowhere. It is not as if we could construct the materials in our own consciousness to sustain the idea of another subject—somehow in terms of extrapolating from the multiplicity of items or mental states to the idea of multiplicity of beings like ourselves. This cannot be made intelligible since the conception of the former, as articulated here, is not possible without the latter. Apart from many other objections which might be raised against this counterargument, the idea is that, without external criteria, one does not have the materials to even recognise such a starting point in one’s consciousness—in terms of there being mental states—which would presumably constitute the kind of phenomena from which one would make the extrapolation (in this case, supposedly fanciful) to the existence of other subjects.

It is important to here pre-empt a familiar kind of objection. It has been said that making self-consciousness inherently intersubjective opens one up to the historicising of consciousness—a process which purportedly rids such consciousness of any kernel the kind of which is seemingly required for transcendental philosophy (as a form of foundationalism) to make sense. That is, if the structure of self-consciousness (and thus consciousness for self-conscious beings) is shaped by the kind of intersubjective relations one enters into—the linguistic case perhaps being most salient, but not necessarily, although this of course depends on our understanding of “linguistic” which may or may not stop at the ordinary notion of “conceptual”—then it appears as if such a structure can have no a priori conditions of its possibility. Indeed, it costs little to give up on Kant’s argument in the Metaphysical Deduction, yet to relinquish the account given there of priori concepts is not therefore to relinquish the possibility of synthetic a priori judgment. As it was a task of our concern with the notion of situated thought to show, synthetic a priori
judgment can be brought into the picture through a certain conception of what it takes for a thinker to be such as to have a thought; we saw that this structure revealed a peculiar relationship between being so situated as to have a thought and the notion of the content of such a thought had by a subject thusly situated. The qualifier here in the form of intersubjective recognition is even more primitive – although in a bizarre way might seem to invite suggestion that it also relies on a more primitive conception of the former idea. That is, if one only becomes self-consciously aware through recognition of another subject’s recognition of oneself and hence recognition of oneself in such another subject’s recognition, then is the idea of recognition of a spatio-temporal object—the other subject—primary and prior? It takes care to see why this simply isn’t so.

The act of apprehending a spatio-temporal object in the sense suggested here is not the kind of apprehension of a spatio-temporal object one might think of a being not in possession of conceptual and rational capacities as having; the idea is that for self-consciousness to arise there must be a transition from mere sentience to full-blown sapience, and the idea is that this must occur all at once and be, in a sense, irreversible, insofar as advancing to the conceptual level means we give up on the primitive notion of one-to-one relations between word and world only sustained by a stimulus-response form of training for non-rational beings. The idea is that we are not stuck with having to explain how we go from self-consciously perceiving things that look like subjects to thinking to ourselves “Am I to recognise this as a subject recognising me, and am I therefore opened up to the domain of rational enquiry and thus inculcated into conceptual thinking?” This is to put the cart before the horse. Of course we may raise the question of whether some physical object is, say, either a tree or a person, yet for this form of thinking to exist we must already have been inculcated into a linguistic tradition which as I have said, presupposes intersubjective recognition. It is as

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1 I am deeply concerned with the complexities involved in the idea of a ‘transition’ although there is hardly space to treat this compelling issue here.

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if there is some—for now—inexplicable point at which the transition is made, and when it is made, it is made all at once in a form analogous to the transition from sentience to sapience.\footnote{This way of looking at the issue raises the curious question for developmental psychology as to what some actual physical factors might be in this “transition”.}

That is all the digression we can afford at this juncture; a return to the main theme must occur.

### 3.5 Transcendental Proof and Transcendental Idealism

Through the foregoing reconstruction we have seen how much in the realm of transcendentalism is still viable given a sufficiently sensitive treatment. Our main goal now is to focus on the connection between the account of transcendental proof given, via the notion of “situated thought”, and the “core set of theses” taken to be contained within transcendental idealism (as interpreted in terms of the general spirit of the two-aspect view), to which we have referred at numerous points. As we noted earlier, the notion of “situated thought” is taken here to be a more primitive notion than that of “epistemic conditions”. Our general reason for this, as hinted at thus far, is that the notion of “situated thought” stands to explain certain general intuitions about the structure of our experience which, upon closer inspection, reveal it as having quite a novel character and, in some deep sense, guided by practical demands (in the case of being able to not only move through space—across time of course—but also able to have a priori knowledge of how we fit, as an embodied subject, into the spatio-temporal framework of our experience). The structure of our experience evidenced by the notion of “situated thought” was in this way shown to be constrained by epistemic conditions—such conditions as were contained in the fact of our experience having the structure which examining the notion of “situated thought” showed it to have. Given this thought, it becomes immediately apparent how the “core set of theses” taken to be an expression (or extension) of the two-aspect reading of transcendental idealism stands to be established by taken
the notion of “situated thought” as our clue. Let us examine this thought by way of enumerating the basic structure claimed for our experience and knowledge by the notion of “situated thought”.

(1) The basic claim of transcendental idealism, under the two-aspect view, is that our knowledge claims must be limited possible experience. This phrase is taken to mean that our claims about experiential objects, for example, must be taken in terms of the “conditions of the possibility” of these objects appearing to us as they do. That is, any claims or judgments about these objects may be taken as implicitly accompanied by the phrase “under the aspect in which we experience them”. Kant’s principle of epistemological modesty is thus read as a claim about the epistemic conditions inherent in our experience and knowledge claims or judgments about it. This claim is to be contrasted with the two-world (or, two-object) view which takes our experiential claims as about different objects than the ones which we typically think of as making up the real world. These opposing claims are familiar enough by now for a summary to be sufficient.

The point revealed to us by the examination of the notion of “situated thought” is that we can move from the fairly obscure epistemic register of the original Kantian claim (under the two-aspect view) that our experience is constrained by epistemic conditions, to the somewhat clearer claim that our experience and our knowledge of the empirical world, is structured in terms of certain a priori knowledge we have of that world and, which knowledge is shaped by the inherent link between our perception of the world and our actions within it.

We attempted to demonstrate this point, perhaps insufficiently, by our examination of what appeared to be certain a priori knowledge we had of spatial relations. We saw that this a priori knowledge was in some way to be related to the Sellarsian/Brandomian conception of material inference—although such a relation was quite suggestive and pointed
more to what additional work needs to be done to clarify the mechanics here, than to a definitive solution to our troubles.

(2) The claim that all knowledge must be indexed to *possible experience* carried with it the additional idea, as alluded to by the reference to *spatial relations* above, that such a conception of experience had a particular character, the structure of which was taken to be demonstrated by the account of situated thought. This structure was likened to the structure Kant imputed to possible experience in one way, and contrasted with it in another. Let us examine these in turn.

The point of contact with Kant came in the assertion for the necessity of experience necessarily having a spatio-temporal form. We phrased the point in Strawsonian terminology by talking of a “unified, objective world” which allowed for the identification and re-identification of items in a framework which would admit of such (this corresponds to Strawson’s notion of the “thesis of objectivity” as articulated in *The Bounds of Sense*). This insistence on experience necessarily being shaped by the structural properties of a framework of this kind, such as would meet the appropriate identification/re-identification demands, was shown mainly in the discussion of Sacks’s transcendental argument for an “abiding substratum” in Section 3.4.1. We also linked that conception, however, to the account we gave of situated thought in Section 3.2 where we saw the idea of perceptual experience, as articulated there, as relying on the possibility of such identification/re-identification as referred to.

The divergence from Kant consists in how the notion of a priori concepts has been viewed. We have noted at various points the unattractive nature of Kant’s arguments (if we may be permitted to call them so) in the Metaphysical Deduction and have taken care to insist that it is possible to read the Transcendental Deduction as moving from a premise containing an assertion for “empirical knowledge” to a

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transcendental ideal model of knowledge, without committing to a particular account of a priori concepts along the way. For our purposes here, due mainly to reasons of space and focus, we can deal with this particular issue by according it appropriate recognition and leaving the matter somehow open. As we discussed in our allusions to Hegel’s arguments in Chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, we can perhaps take the view that there is something like an a priori structure for concepts—not particular concepts themselves, yet perhaps something analogous to the functions which determine their shape, not the particular shape of the concepts themselves (ignoring the opacity of this claim for present purposes)—which can be seen to generate from the necessary conditions of the possibility (transcendental conditions) of rational thought and experience; something in the Hegelian model that is taken to be dependent upon intersubjectivity.

(3) A third “core thesis” of transcendental idealism which can be mentioned here is the other main thesis taken by Strawson to be essential to the Transcendental Deduction: the “thesis of the necessary unity of consciousness”, which effectively relates to Kant’s notion of apperception. The idea is that I must be able to self-consciously unite or unify all my thought contents—such as to maintain a logical order among all my beliefs—so that such thought contents or beliefs might coherently count as my own.

We saw this notion of self-consciousness extended from the apparently formal conception in Kant to what we thought of as a, perhaps, *material* conception of self-consciousness which required reference to *actual* other subjects—such as the existence of which was taken to be a necessary condition of the possibility (a transcendental condition, perhaps the *ultimate* transcendental condition) of rational thought and self-conscious, reflective experience.

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Now, it is in this last “core thesis” taken to be expressive of an insight in transcendental idealism which we find trouble; for certainly this thesis is not Kantian, and henceforth our references to it as a “core thesis” of transcendental idealism are dubious. However, one main task of the reconstruction of transcendental proof here has been to extend the conception of the transcendental from Kant, to what we might think of its fullest expression. In this way, our reading of the transcendental as extendable from Kant to Hegel mirrors those recent readings of Hegel as “completing” Kant, or bringing Kant’s Copernican Revolution to its logical conclusion.¹

This last suggestion is ambitious and we are not able to defend it here. It has merely been our aim to show how tension shows itself when attempting to account for the Kantian notion of “transcendental”, as in attempts of many other kinds which aim to bring into clearer focus what the consequences of Kantian ways of thinking are.

What picture do we then have of the transcendental landscape from this point? Let us run through the main themes of the argument thus far. We began with the question of how we might reconstruct transcendental argumentation, by involving transcendental proof. By examining strategies in the literature we came to see the need for an approach that reinvigorated the strength inherent in the original Kantian project without commitment to the totality of Kant’s views. This thought took us through a reconstructive attempt at formulating a sound basis for transcendental proof by way of considering the notion of “situated thought”. We found there to be numerous Strawsonian strategies worth appropriating with an added element of faith in a re-interpreted version of transcendental idealism, under the two-aspect view. This account, however, appeared under threat from a persistent sceptical doubt labelled here as “Stroud’s Challenge”. We then made a

¹ As we referred to above, works in this vein include Pippin, Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness and Redding, Hegel’s Hermeneutics.

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transition to a Hegelian mode of thinking which involved a consideration of how the notion of “situated thought” itself could become philosophically viable. This involved an investigation into the genesis of the link between perception and action; an investigation into the mutual starting point for intentional action and conscious thought; the same place at which we found the impetus for linguistic development and thus the formulation of conceptual thinking.

It is now at this point that we need to consider a further elaboration of this idea. This will involve engagement with Strawson’s project in *Individuals*; self-described as “descriptive metaphysics”. We might tentatively conceive of the strengthened reconstruction of Strawson’s version of transcendental argumentation so far proposed as leading toward a rewritten basis for descriptive metaphysics. This hope for reformulation should carry us forward into the next chapter.

4 Rewriting the Basis for a Descriptive Metaphysics

In the first part of his book *Individuals*, Strawson argues that there are certain particulars such as persons and material bodies that are necessary and fundamental features of our conceptual scheme. These particulars are thought of as playing a role in our thought such that we could not make all the identifying references we do make without reference to them, and, additionally, reference to which is claimed to not rely on reference to other particulars of any kind. Through the arguments I have advanced thus far regarding the necessary minimal structure of experience, a picture has emerged in which it appears that—in a philosophically interesting and important, and not in a merely platitudinous or truistic sense—a structure similar to that which Strawson argues for in *Individuals* is not a mere contingent curiosity of our conceptual scheme, but instead is a necessary feature of anything that could intelligibly be called experience; not merely in

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the sense of what fits our definition of experience such that different kinds of experience might be conceived of or regarded as possible, but rather in the sense that no other shape for thought aiming at knowledge or representation of the world or discourse about it is possible.

We might think of my account here as departing from a delineation of merely “formal conditions of the possibility of experience” and setting out to also indicate “material conditions of the possibility of experience”. “Formal conditions of the possibility of experience” could be thought of as paralleling the generally “austere” account given by Strawson in The Bounds of Sense which, for its own part, concurs with at least one side of Kant’s transcendental enterprise. For despite the unique form of its expression, Strawson’s reconstruction of Kant no doubt retains some central Kantian theses, some of which Kant himself might have endorsed as long as such theses were qualified and bolstered by additional claims. Also, and at least superficially, the notion of “formal conditions” would seem to agree with both the Kantian idea that the “form” (not the “matter”) of cognition is designed entirely by sensibility and the understanding, as well as the Kantian idea that the “I of apperception” attaches itself apparently only formally to self-ascribed cognition (in terms of the “I think”) and does not figure obviously in any more substantial sense vis-à-vis our thought.

Conversely, the phrase “material conditions of the possibility of experience” seems to denote a metaphysical qualification with respect to the shape of our thinking. Indeed, it might be supposed that Kant would have endorsed certain “material conditions” vis-à-vis our thought, and in fact such an interpretation of the significance of the Third Analogy, in particular, has been given by Jeffrey Edwards in his book Substance, Force, and the Possibility of Knowledge. However, we are unable to delve into the detail of such an account here so we must say merely that there is perhaps some—unobvious—way that Kant might be read as attempting to provide such “material

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conditions”. Despite this, the main claim here is that with reference to the Transcendental Deduction, it is not manifestly clear this was Kant’s aim—something which is made at least prima facie evident in Kant’s talk of the bare fact of attaching the “I think” to all my representations, where failure to satisfy this condition results in failure to be self-conscious in particular cases as referred to.

The superficial force of this point is levelled at Kant’s reluctance to commit to a more substantial account of what is required for self-conscious thought about a unified, objective world to obtain. The briefly-stated attempted corrective voiced in Section 3.4.2 intended to show how a Hegelian transcendental proof could be employed to demonstrate the necessity of actual intersubjective relations for self-conscious thought about a unified, objective world and thus, attempted to show how self-conscious thought was materially dependent on the existence of and commerce with other subjects and not merely formally dependent on the self-ascription of states of consciousness. In fact, the idea is that Kant’s formal requirement is essential, yet is to be supplemented by, and recognised as dependent upon, the Hegelian corrective.

In this chapter, we need to explore some of the detail of a few arguments presented in the first part of Individuals and attempt to draw a parallel to the suggestive references to Hegel already made, and to show what further conclusions might be drawn. The general strategy is to spell out in a little more detail the distinction between the account here of the proposed “material conditions” of a unified, objective experience—understood as a fully rational, self-conscious experience of a world, entailing capacities for reflection—and the “formal” account proposed by Strawson in both The Bounds of Sense and Individuals. Hence, the proposal in the previous chapter for a kind of transcendental proof which holds a place for synthetic a priori judgment, in virtue of the former’s reliance on situated thought, may be extended and strengthened by stating what implications this proposal has for understanding the relationship between perception and action; between the

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epistemic and what we might call the “agency-relative” aspects of a subject or person. We observed some general and briefly stated reasons for endorsing a claim like this in 3.4.2 and we need to say a little more by here linking our reference to the necessary role of other subjects in our thought to Strawson’s insistence on the logical primitiveness of the concept of a person as stated in Chapter 3 of *Individuals*.

The parallel to be drawn with Strawson’s account of “Particulars” in the first half of *Individuals* has two parts: (1) the proposal for the concept of a person being logically primitive is paralleled here by derivatives of the assertion that a picture of a unified, objective world only falls into place once the conditions of intersubjectivity are fulfilled; the term “person” is thus seen as the generative concept of any conception of a unified, objective world of experience in a material and not merely formal sense.\(^1\) In Strawson’s case, the argument for the necessary primitiveness of that concept stems from the rejection of the idea of a solipsistic consciousness, and indeed, the corollary of that motivating idea here is precisely the suggestion for the dependence of the individual consciousness on its relations to other individual consciousnesses; (2) the argument for the necessity of a certain structure inherent in our conceptual scheme can be extended by arguing for the necessity of a certain structure necessarily inherent in any form of thought. This can be done by firstly changing the terms of the transcendental argument from those only aimed at establishing the necessity of a certain structure inherent in our conceptual scheme to those aimed at establishing the linkage between thought and intersubjectivity and by claiming the reliance of the former (under a demanding conception entailing appropriate conceptual or linguistic sophistication regarded as rational) on the latter.

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\(^1\) We need to take care in evaluating this assertion since it can quite easily be taken to mean more than it does mean. The idea is that having a unified, objective world-view depends on having adequate linguistic capacities for identification of items in such a world in addition to reflective capacities which themselves both depend on intersubjective relations with other subjects with whom one shares such a language that is in turn employed for such “identificatory” and reflective purposes.

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The relevant conjecture is that a case can be made for the existence of a primitive structure inherent in any form of thought which generates from the same point as thought itself—at the crucial transition from sentience to sapience. This primitive structure will show itself to relate to what we might call the “dialectical” or “dialogical” form of all thought, yet will insist on its status as being firmly ahistorical. The appropriate structure will indeed retain transcendental form even though it is generated through commerce with other subjects; the significance of this being the possibility of articulation of a logical form for thought which is both non-egological and ahistorical. That is, a form of thought that is not “egological”, where this term indicates the existence of an internal logical structure contained in the mind of individual subjects independent of the intersubjective relations they bear to other subjects (a paradigm case of which is Kant’s account in the so-called Metaphysical Deduction), yet also not “historical”, where this latter term seems to relativise all claims to truth and meaning to particular languages to the point of obscuring or threatening the idea that we can coherently talk about the basis for a shared world view which is “goes beyond” the individual culture of language in which we are caught up.

1 Thus the common fear felt regarding Hegel’s “historicising” of consciousness need not apply to the kernel of the claim that the logical structure of thought depends on intersubjectivity. It is possible to claim that consciousness is in an important sense dependent on historical factors (i.e., the history of our concepts, practices, etc.) yet still maintain that a kernel of logical truth exists in the statement that thought (as we conceive of that term) does not arise for subjectively isolated beings. In Chapter 4 of *Objectivity and Insight* Sacks raises this concern regarding the “historicising” of consciousness, as well as the validity of certain claims vis-à-vis rationality. He does not seem to have considered the option I explore here by interpreting the kernel of Hegel’s theory of subjectivity (and thus intersubjectivity and objectivity) as immune, in a peculiar way, from this apparent threat.

2 Here we can suggest a re-evaluation of what “transcendental” ought to mean. If the shape of this argument is still in terms of the “conditions of the possibility” of thought, language, and consciousness and so on, why assume that the rejection of an egological model of the mind (see footnote directly below) should mean the usage of “transcendental” is void?

3 I borrow the term “egological” from Sacks, *Objectivity and Insight*, where it is used throughout, although primarily in Chapter 4.

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The explication of this idea will involve suggestive references to Hegel’s arguments in the first four chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which themselves, I think, can be taken to demonstrate some of the ways such a structure may be generated and in what sense that structure serves to shape both perception of, and action in the world of which one’s thought is about. This is to claim that there is a universal and necessary form to all possible languages and forms of thought due to the joint necessary conditions of their genesis, despite discrepancies in all other detail; the relevant shared basis being what we referred to as a “dialectical” or “dialogical” structure. A perhaps widely-held and well-received version of this assertion is that something’s being a language means it’s necessarily involving interaction between at least two subjects, viz., it’s being necessarily socially mediated.

We might be tempted to explain the phenomenon of a shared language naturalistically, in biological terms or otherwise, by arguing for the necessity of a shared biological basis in order for linguistic sophistication or self-conscious thought to arise, although the point is thoroughly transcendental: it is a condition of the possibility of thought and language that intersubjective relations exist between any subjects which are to have such thought or language. By extrapolation, it should be clear that the existence of thought or language is necessary for any conception of a unified, objective world to be in

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1 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The first four chapters (excluding the introduction) are entitled thusly: “Sense-Certainty”, “Perception”, “Force and the Understanding”, and “The Truth of Self-Certainty”.

2 It should be taken as implicit here that action does not equate to mere bodily movement.

3 My reading of Hegel’s arguments in the opening chapters of the *Phenomenology* thus concur with the reading given by Charles Taylor (1976) *The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology*, in “Hegel: a Collection of Critical Essays”, ed. by Alastair MacIntyre, University of Notre Dame Press. My suggestions here go beyond Taylor’s reading of Hegel however, since Taylor focuses on the first three chapters of the *Phenomenology* and does not broach the issue of the role of mutual recognition between subjects as a condition of the possibility of rational thought. Despite this, I take it that Taylor would not disagree with the spirit of my suggestions here.

4 We can here draw attention to the relevance of this point for thinking of Wittgenstein’s “Private Language Argument” as, in some way, a transcendental argument.

5 For one, it should be obvious that inter-species communication is possible, and the question of whether one wants to call primitive stimulus-response interaction a kind of communication, or a kind of language, should not trouble this issue.
play. Let us leave these reflections for now and embark upon a brief account of Strawson’s argument in Part One of *Individuals*.

As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, the basic argument of the first part of *Individuals*, entitled “Particulars”, gives persuasive reasons for thinking that both material bodies and persons are logically primitive features of our thought, or conceptual scheme. “Particulars” is divided into four main chapters: “Bodies”, “Sounds”, “Persons”, and “Monads”. The train of thought is linear and proceeds from establishing the place of material bodies as the basic subject matter of our thought, to exploring the possibility of this occurring in a (quasi-) non-spatial paradigm, to establishing persons as a logically primitive concept, to exploring a possible variation of this conception. Due to the nature of my arguments thus far, it seems prudent to focus on Chapter 3 which discusses persons.

A way of building on the suggestive arguments advanced in Section 3.4.2 is by exploring the, I think, even more profound implications one can ascertain regarding the role of the concept of a person in our thought—or at least the conception of mutually recognising rational subjects—than already drawn by Strawson. By spelling out in a little more detail how the account we gave of situated thought in Section 3.2 is dependent upon intersubjective relations that sustain the requisite link between perception and action—between the epistemic and other “agency-relative” aspects of a subject—we can move also to suggest how, in a quite distinctive way, the very structure of thought itself, thus any conceptual scheme, unfolds from its recognitive genesis in interaction with other subjects.

### 4.1 The Argument for Persons

A useful way to open up the logical space for assessing the possibility of re-writing the basis for a descriptive metaphysics will be to engage with the structure of Strawson’s actual arguments in Chapter 3 of *Individuals* and to reflect, at the relevant crucial points, what the arguments stand to gain once

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adapted to the model of transcendental subjectivity that I have proposed thus far.

Strawson begins his reflections on this problem by thinking about some of the ways in which we “talk of ourselves” and some of the things we “ascribe to ourselves.” After reflecting on our disposition to ascribe both physical and mental predicates to ourselves, Strawson asks two questions. Firstly:

“Why are one’s states of consciousness ascribed to anything at all?”

And, secondly:

“Why are they ascribed to the very same thing as corporeal characteristics, a certain physical situation, &c.?”

The initial treatment of this issue is dealt with by exploring the “unique role” that one’s body plays in one’s experience; something that leads Strawson to some interesting conclusions about the role of particular physical apparati in our experience’s constitution. However, Strawson’s conclusion from these explorations is that the claim for a “unique role” for one’s body in one’s experience does not settle the questions as phrased above. As Strawson notes, the peculiar role of my body in my experience does not “explain why I should have the concept of myself at all, why I should ascribe my thoughts and experiences to anything.” That is, the facts regarding, for example, the role of one’s eyes, one’s head position, and one’s bodily orientation in one’s (at least visual) experience of the world being a certain way does not “explain the use that we make of the word ‘I’, or how any word has the use that word has.” Such facts “do not explain the concept we have of a person.”

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1 Strawson, *Individuals*: p. 89.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
7 Ibid.

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Part of the difficulty Strawson sees in making the extrapolation from the obvious role our body appears to play in our experience to the claim that, somehow, this body that plays such a “unique role” in our experience and is in harmony and intrinsically connected with the “consciousness” for whom there seems to be experience, stems from familiar historical dilemmas which involved driving a wedge between the “mental” and “physical” aspects of persons; viz., the typical view attributed to Descartes. Given this, Strawson’s strategy continues by exploring two alternate conceptions of the relationship between the purported mental and physical aspect of the subject. The first view is called the “Cartesian view”, linked of course to Descartes, whereas the second view, entitled the “No-ownership view”, is attributed to Wittgenstein and Schlick. The point of exploring these two alternate conceptions is to develop dialectically a view which evidences the logical primitiveness of the concept of a person out of which the notion of a separate “material body” and a “pure consciousness” are abstracted. The details of these two views are less important than the conclusion they lead Strawson to, so we can move straight to Strawson’s considerations about how the logical primitiveness of the concept of a person emerges.

Possibly the most powerful drive toward the notion of the logical primitiveness of the concept of a person comes from the fact that ascription of states of consciousness to oneself involves the possibility of applying criteria which one would apply in third person cases. The necessary role of external criteria in ascribing states of consciousness to oneself evidences the connection between one’s capacity to refer the possession of states of consciousness to oneself and one’s capacity to refer such possession of states of consciousness to other subjects. We can note following David Pears that Strawson’s argument for the concept of a person is thus an “indirect argument” since the primitiveness of the concept of a person is to be

1 Strawson notes that the “evidence that Wittgenstein at one time held such a view is to be found in Moore’s articles in Mind on ‘Wittgenstein’s Lectures in 1930-33’ (Mind, Vol. LXIV, pp. 13-14)” Op. cit.: p. 95.

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established “indirectly” by way of arguing for the conditions of the self-
ascription of states of consciousness. In Pears’s words, for the indirect
argument,

“the genesis of my concept of my ownership and the genesis of my concept of
another’s ownership of states of consciousness must occur at the same point in the
logical order of my understanding.”

Namely, one must recognise the existence of persons as logical primitives for
one can apparently only self-ascribe states of consciousness to oneself if one
can ascribe them to others, which of course depends on one having a
conception of other subjects for whom there are states of consciousness.

This “indirect” argument differs from the “direct” argument of Chapter
One of Individuals,2 entitled “Bodies”, which insists that the doubt that
material bodies cannot reliably be thought to exist unperceived demands
more than the best possible criteria we could have for such identification; the
Berkeleian sceptic about material bodies is thought to be either claiming that
when we speak of material bodies existing unperceived we either do not
mean what we think we mean, or we go beyond the best available criteria.
The argument for persons thus has a unique structure. We can evidence this
uniqueness further by quoting Strawson’s answer to his dilemma as phrased
above, regarding the possibility of attributing both mental and physical
predicates to particular entities:

“a necessary condition of states of consciousness being ascribed at all is that they
should be ascribed to the very same things as certain corporeal characteristics, a
certain physical situation &c. That is to say, states of consciousness could not be

1 Op. cit.: p. 180. We might think of this idea as approximate to the notion of mutual
recognition. Self-consciousness cannot occur for a subject on its own; it is only possible for
mutually recognising subjects.

2 As referred to throughout Pears, Critical Study.
ascribed at all, unless they were ascribed to persons, in the sense I have claimed for this word.”

And in Strawson’s defence of this idea, which includes insistence on the incoherence of conceiving of the concept of a person as a “compound-idea” composed of the both the idea of a “pure consciousness” and that of a “material body”, he is led to refer to the historical cases of Hume and Kant who both, in their own ways, seem to have inadequately accounted for the phenomenon of which Strawson is speaking. Strawson sees Hume’s search for “the entity corresponding to” the “illusory primary concept of the pure consciousness, the ego-substance” as in vain, for it was in this fictitious entity that Hume sought a “principle of unity” for consciousness. Yet, as Strawson notes correctly, “there is no principle of unity where there is no principle of differentiation”. The idea for Strawson presumably being that for one to conceive of a conscious as being unified (and possibly objective, to allude to his reading of the Deduction in *The Bounds of Sense*) requires that one be able to distinguish different states of consciousness and be able to self-ascribe them, something dependent on external criteria (and thus other-ascription of states of consciousness) as we have noted.

Kant, as seen by Strawson, made a related blunder when he

“accorded a purely formal (‘analytic’) unity: the unity of the ‘I think’ that accompanies all my perceptions and therefore might just as well accompany none.”

And this criticism of Kant corresponds to the objections I already noted in relation to a merely formal account of self-consciousness in Section 3.4.2 where I suggested that it might be possible to delineate material conditions of self-consciousness. These material conditions of the possibility of self-

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1 Strawson, *Individuals*: p. 102.
2 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
consciousness were discussed there in relation to some Hegelian theses and it is at this point that we can begin to illuminate the connection to Strawson.

Following on from his assertion that states of consciousness can only be ascribed to the same things to which “certain corporeal characteristics” and a “certain physical situation” can be ascribed, Strawson says:

“There would be no question of ascribing one’s own states of consciousness, or experiences, to anything, unless one also ascribed, or were ready to ascribe, states of consciousness, or experiences, to other individual entities of the same logical type as that thing to which one ascribes one’s own states of consciousness.”

This conception, articulated by Pears above as the idea that self-ascription and other-ascription of states of consciousness “must occur at the same point in the logical order of my understanding” depends on the idea, which we have already noted, that we require (at least) external criteria which can be employed for the ascription of both kinds. We can further explain this idea by noting that for Strawson

“There is no sense in the idea of ascribing states of consciousness to oneself, or at all, unless the ascriber already knows how to ascribe at least some states of consciousness to others. So he cannot argue in general ‘from his own case’ to conclusions about how to do this; for unless he already knows how to do this, he has no conception of his own case, or any case, i.e. any subject of experiences. Instead he just has evidence that pain &c. may be expected when a certain body is affected in certain ways and not when others are.”

To illuminate this idea, Strawson employs the terminology of M-predicates and P-predicates. M-predicates stand for the ordinary predicates we apply to material bodies such as “weights 10 stone” and “is in the drawing room”.

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4 Strawson, Individuals: p. 106.
whereas P-predicates stand for all other relevant kinds of predicates typically applied to persons such as “is smiling”, “is going for a walk”, in addition to predicates like “is in pain”, “is thinking hard”, “believes in God” etc.\footnote{Ibid.} Strawson then claims that being able to appropriately apply P-predicates, the kind distinctively applied to persons, requires recognition of the double-aspect of their criterial requirements. This double-aspect is as follows.

Firstly, as ought to be evident by now, reliable self-ascription of P-predicates of the kind “is a bad driver” require external criteria which is publicly mediated in the sense that appeal to ascriptions of this kind refer to publicly assessable standards about the kind of behaviour driving is, and what variations of this kind of behaviour suggest it be deemed “bad”. However, P-predicates of the form “has a pain in one’s leg” do not rely simply on the kind of external criteria which it is obvious “is a bad driver” does. For although there is a swathe of pain-behaviour which may reliably (and sometimes unreliably) lead to ascriptions of the kind “has a pain in one’s leg”, it is obvious that, at least in some cases, truthful self-ascription of leg pain may rely on a different set of criteria.

The existence of cases such as this appears to cause a problem if it suggests that different criteria exist for self-ascription as opposed to other-ascription of particular P-predicates—for it was this disparity which was to be dispensed with. Specifically, if it appears that one can rely on merely “internal” criteria for the self-ascription of leg pain, then one’s other-ascription of leg pain begins to look dubious (as does others’ ascription of leg pain to oneself). However, it ought to be clear that such “internal” criteria as there might be for self-ascription of leg pain are not therefore necessary criteria for such ascription, but merely sufficient, in the appropriate cases.\footnote{Wittgenstein’s argument against the idea of a “private language” for our sensations does not, on its own, threaten the idea that we actually have sensations at all, so the idea that I can be in a unique position to confirm the existence of a pain in my leg should not be controversial claim. It is the re-identification of particular kinds of sensations that is problematic, not the identification of sensations in general (or the awareness that we have them). For surely it is part of the structure of our language involving the concept “sensation”}

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cases of other-ascription of leg pain it seems that there are, equally, a range of sufficient criteria, none of which should be seen as necessary. This range of sufficient criteria may range from the more or less dubious (hobbling) to the more or less reliable sets of criteria (reporting pain, sitting down whilst desperately clutching one’s knee, howling, signs of blood from leg).

The whole point of noting this range of criteria is to show how no straightforward answer can be given which insists on one set of external criteria for identifying such a thing as leg pain. And noting this complication brings us closer to appreciating the virtue of viewing the concept of a person as “logically primitive” since the temptation to rely on merely external criteria, in cases of P-predication in which it is apparent other criterial requirements might be served, leads to a perversion which places priority on what we might call the “visible” (or external) aspect of personhood.¹ This perversion attempts to drive a logical wedge between self-ascription and other-ascription of P-predicates of the logical form “has a pain in one’s leg” whereby it is assumed that these two kinds of ascription are independent. Yet, as Strawson says,

“it is essential to the character of these predicates that they have both first- and third-person ascriptive uses, that they are both self-ascriptable otherwise than on the basis of observation of the behaviour of the subject of them, and other-ascriptable on the basis of behaviour criteria. To learn their use is to learn both aspects of their use. In order to have this type of concept, one must be both a self-ascripter and an other-ascripter of such predicates, and must see every other as a self-ascripter.”²

At this point we can see a link emerge to the conception of the role of intersubjectivity in the formation of self-consciousness, although at this stage the link exists only at the surface level of ordinary discourse, not the deep

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¹ We will not call the converse aspect of purportedly “internal” criteria “invisible” since this might appear to commit us to more than be intended here.

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logical structure of our thought. The link comes via talk of how the concept of P-predicates requiring a double-aspect relies on the concept of a person being thought of as logically primitive. For Strawson, the concept of a person functions as a logically primitive notion insofar as it is presupposed by our satisfactory grasp of the employment conditions of such P-predicates as “has a pain in one’s leg” where complete grasp of the logical structure of such predicates requires that one be able to both self-ascribe and other-ascribe these predicates. Strawson says further:

“In order to understand this type of concept, one must acknowledge that there is a kind of predicate which is unambiguously and adequately ascribable both on the basis of observation of the subject of the predicate and not on this basis, i.e. independently of observation of the subject: the second case is where the ascriber is also the subject.”

The point being that, for concepts like “pain” and “depression”, we must appreciate both the external, behavioural criteria we have for their identification, as well as the “internal” criteria. Failure to appreciate this idea is “to refuse to accept the structure of the language in which we talk” about phenomena like this.

Since Strawson says, regarding the logical structure of concepts like “pain” and “depression”, that this logical structure pertains merely to “the language in which we talk” he allows himself the qualification that “[O]ne might give up talking or devise, perhaps, a different structure in terms of which to soliloquize.” However, it seems that the logical structure of the language involved here actually demonstrates an additional fact about the conditions of a shared language. For although one might speak differently, a manner of speaking that avoided the logical structure inherent in our ordinary ways of speaking about concepts such as “pain” and “depression” would not

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1 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 We will here ignore the tautologous nature of this phrase.
constitute a language which recognised the existence of other subjects—or the dependence of the meaning of one’s own states of consciousness on interaction with such other subjects—since it would exclude a conception of not simply other subjects’ states of consciousness, but also the possibility of third-person cases of ascription of states of consciousness to oneself. In such a case, the logical structure of one’s language would—in a self-deluded fashion—appear to lead to an (at least implicit) endorsement of solipsism. It is difficult to see how such a language could in principle come to be employed—unless as a joke, or as a temporary experiment which thus depended on our regular ways of talking and applying P-predicates dependent upon both first-person and third-person ascription.

After considering the indispensable role the concept of a person plays in the actual structure of our language, Strawson rephrases the guiding question regarding the possibility of ascribing states of consciousness. He does so in the following way:

“Now our perplexities may take a different form, the form of the question: ‘But how can one ascribe to oneself, not on the basis of observation, the very same thing that others may have, on the basis of observation, reasons of a logically adequate kind for ascribing to one?’ This question may be absorbed into a wider one, which might be phrased: ‘How are P-predicates possible?’ or: ‘How is the concept of a person possible?’”

Strawson does “not pretend to be able to satisfy this demand at all fully” yet he mentions “two very different things which might count as beginnings or fragments of an answer.” A discussion of these continues below.

Strawson’s first suggestion consists in “moving a certain class of P-predicates to a central position in the picture”. These P-predicates are those pertaining to familiar kinds of actions such as “going for a walk”, “coiling a
rope”, “playing ball”, “writing a letter”. Now although these P-predicates involve observation in cases of other-ascription of them, no observation is required in cases of self-ascription of them. This is common enough. The distinctive character of them however, is that this fact does not appear to cause a problem in understanding them, or in understanding what exactly this fact means in such cases. Strawson describes this relative comfort as dependent upon “the marked dominance of a fairly definite pattern of bodily movement in what they ascribe, and the marked absence of any distinctive experience.” For the idea is that such predicates involving actions of these kinds “release us from the idea that the only things we can know without observation or inference, or both, are private experiences; we can know, without telling by either of these means, about the present and future movements of a body.” However, “bodily movements are certainly also things we can know by observation and inference.” For, “[A]mong the things we observe, as opposed to the things we know about without observation, are the movements of bodies similar to that about which we have knowledge not based on observation.”

Strawson’s general point seems to be that our tendency to be happy with thinking about such bodily movements as the same phenomenon in both self-ascribed and other-ascribed cases, despite the disparity inherent in the fact that the former cases do not rely on observation whereas the latter cases do, shows the unique role bodily movement (discussed in terms of these P-predicates) can have for explaining the conceptual scheme we have. Strawson says that:

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1 Ibid.
2 As in contrast to the case of the concepts “pain” and “depression” which we examined above, for example.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.

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“What I am suggesting is that it is easier to understand how we can see eachother, and ourselves, as persons, if we think first of the fact that we act, and act on each other, and act in accordance with a common human nature.”

Now, before we move on to consider Strawson’s second suggestion with respect to how we come to have the concept of a person, we can relate the quotation immediately above to a thought expressed by Taylor where he gives voice to an idea alluded to in our account of situated thought. Taylor says that:

“Perception of objects is available only to a subject who is an embodied agent interacting with the world he experiences.”

And although Taylor’s remark is related to his reading of Chapter 2 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, we can see how it is relevant for our understanding of Strawson’s investigations into the concept of a person as pointing to a truistic conception of persons as embodied, active, rational agents in the world. Additionally, drawing the link this way makes the appropriate connection between our actions *within* the world as embodied agents and our perceptions *of* the world, the structure of which is tied to the same.

As for Strawson’s second suggestion vis-à-vis the derivation of the concept we have of a person, by way of it we can make reference to some explicitly Hegelian theses. Let us examine his suggestion.

By way of reference to the idea of a “group mind” Strawson entertains the possibility of “whether we might not construct the idea of a special kind of social world in which the concept of the individual person is replaced by that of a group.” This possibility is explored by conjuring the imagery of groups of individuals engaged in such group pursuits as battle and wherein such individuals refer not to themselves, but rather to the group of which they are

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2 *Taylor, The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology*: p. 182.
3 *Strawson, Individuals*: p. 113.
a part by employing the terms “we” and “they”. However, as Strawson notes, these apparent “plural forms” do not have their usual meaning for there is no corresponding singular usage.\(^1\) Strawson’s examples of this kind of usage are: “We have taken the citadel” and “We have lost the game”.\(^2\) Indeed, the usage of “we” in these contexts, as employed by a member of a group, refers not to something, the logical order of which can be adequately contrasted with “I”. Since although it is essential that an individual who might make such a claim be thought of as a part of that to which “we” refers, that status as a “part” of “we” cannot be captured by claiming that “I have (in part) taken the citadel” for the point of a claim like “We have taken the citadel” is to establish that a particular entity, say “the army of Goths” has “taken the citadel”. The personal pronoun “I” cannot be adequately accommodated in this claim in the same way that “I” can be said to be a member of a group, for the action of “taking the citadel” is only intelligible as a group action, not a series of atomistically conceived actions by individual soldiers, for example (although we can of course describe the course of events at that level). Moreover, the role conceived for individuals within the group, as in a cricket team for example, is to be in terms of the group as a whole; viz., Strawson’s examples of “stroke” and “square leg” represent these kinds of roles.\(^3\) The general conclusion from this second consideration is as follows:

“When we think of such cases, we see that we ourselves, over a part of our social lives—not, happily, a very large part—do work with a set of ideas from which that of the individual person is excluded, in which its place is taken by that of the group. But might we not think of communities or groups such that this part of the lives of their members was the dominant part—or was not merely a part, but the whole? It happens sometimes, with groups of human beings, that, as we say, their members think, feel and act ‘as one’. I suggest it is a condition for the existence of the concept of an individual person, that this happen only sometimes.”\(^4\)

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
Undoubtedly, and as Strawson’s characterisation of the two foregoing points as “beginnings or fragments of an answer” to the question of how we come to have a logically primitive role reserved in our discourse for the concept of a person suggests, much more would need to be said to make explicit the precise consequences of this remark.

It appears that the first suggestion can be loosely related to the account we gave of situated thought wherein we suggested that a link between perception of and action in a world was necessarily to be established in order to construct adequate transcendental proof. We saw this suggestion take shape in our talk of the case of moving from point A to point B vis-à-vis the apple tree in the garden, guided by both empirically informed expectation and synthetic a priori knowledge about spatial relations.

The second suggestion, regarding the role of our sense of, occasionally, not merely belonging to group, but temporarily having our usual sense of identity absorbed by such a group, can be related to a “linguistic case” which has been mostly implicit thus far. The “linguistic case” can phrased simply in terms of the familiar idea that the meanings of words derive from and rely upon their role in linguistic structures which are embedded within particular ways of speaking and acting in the world. The idea is that just as we occasionally lose our sense of our separate identity from other subjects by absorption in a group, what we might call the “meaning” of our actions and utterances, and our more fundamental sense of ourselves as self-conscious beings (beings for whom there are meanings), is permanently caught up in a similar fashion. It is to this “linguistic case” that we can relate Hegel’s famous dialectical result in Chapter 4 of The Phenomenology of Spirit where he discusses “The Truth of Self-Certainty”:

“A self-consciousness exists for a self-consciousness. Only so is it in fact a self-consciousness; for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness become

explicit for it...A self-consciousness, in being an object, is just as much ‘I’ as ‘object’. With this we already have before us the Notion of Spirit...this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: ‘I’ that is ‘We’ and ‘We’ that is ‘I’. It is in self-consciousness, in the Notion of Spirit, that consciousness first finds its turning point, where it leaves behind it the colourful show of the sensuous here-and-now and the nightlike void of the supersensible beyond, and steps out into the spiritual daylight of the present.”

Ignoring the bewildering mode of expression and grandiose tenor of statement, we can certainly appreciate that Hegel’s words here are relevant to the suggestions we made in both Section 3.4.2 and the foregoing discussion of Strawson’s argument for the logical primitiveness of the concept a person. The general idea is that self-consciousness cannot be adequately construed in terms of the merely formal conditions proposed by Kant, in particular, by being able to append “I think” to all the contents of my consciousness, but rather can only generate out of intersubjective relations.

In the proposal for a form of transcendental proof which depended on the notion of “situated thought” we saw that Kant’s Transcendental Deduction could be extended beyond the mere formal condition of being able to think of all one’s states of consciousness as one’s own, by claiming that being able to ascribe states of consciousness to oneself was dependent upon linguistic capacities which themselves required that the conditions of intersubjectivity be satisfied. The conception of intersubjectivity alluded to can also be related to the insistence in Strawson’s reading of Kant’s Transcendental Deduction on the necessity of a “unified, objective world of experience”; undoubtedly, the conception of a unified, objective world independent of our subjective apprehension of it arises from the conception we get, through intersubjectivity, of other subjects’ points of view on the same world of which both their and our experience is of.

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1 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*: section 177.

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Moreover, in our account of Strawson’s argument for the logical primitiveness of the concept of a person we have seen some similar ideas be developed, although it appears that to complete the train of thought suggested by such arguments we need to recognise the full flavour of Hegel’s position as phrased above. And although it may be controversial to call Hegel’s general philosophical position “transcendental”,¹ the point just made with reference to Hegel’s conception of the condition of the possibility of self-consciousness certainly looks like it could be interpreted as “transcendental” in the sense we have given that term in this essay.

### 4.2 Consequences of this reading of Transcendental Philosophy

It should help to briefly consider a numbered list of general outcomes that result, given the version of transcendental philosophy I have proposed. These general outcomes are a condensed version of the foregoing claims. Let us examine them.

1. Transcendental philosophy retains the province of synthetic a priori judgment, yet with the qualifier that such judgment is not generated out of internal “egological” metaphysical laws contained in the individual subject which impart a necessary structure to anything which can be considered as thinking or experience (as, roughly, in Kant). The deepest transcendental condition—of experience and thought—is seen to be socially mediated, recognitive relations with like-minded subjects.

2. Typical interpretations notwithstanding, the structure of experience and thought’s reliance on intersubjective relations does not lead

ultimately to a weakening of the transcendental position to one which collapses under the threat of all-embracing relativism. Although the social and linguistic dimension of selfhood is easily seen as having a socially mediated structure, the primitive logical structure of self-consciousness and language is regarded as having an ahistorical structure; one which is generated by that which the existence of language, thought, and experience (admitting of rational, reflective capacities) necessitates.

(3) The possibility is entertained that transcendental philosophy might provide not merely formal, but material conditions of the possibility of language, thought, and experience. These material conditions are seen to include the actual inter-relations between epistemic agents and say nothing in the naturalistic tone whatsoever about physical constitution or empirical existence, but instead dictate the logical requirements standing in need of fulfilment such that intersubjectivity (and thus, subjectivity and objectivity) may exist, appropriately conceived. As we have noted, the consequence of this is that language, thought, and experience is seen as having, at bottom, a dialectical structure.

(4) Under this interpretation, an alternative to Kant’s Metaphysical Deduction appears to suggest itself. Although no explicit commitment to a form of Metaphysical Deduction has been made, it now seems as if a valid appeal to a related idea can be made, given acceptance of what has been argued for thus far. Such a new Metaphysical Deduction (if one wishes to call it that) will dictate merely what dialectical form must structure concept employment. Such a Deduction would logically precede anything having an analogous role to Kant’s actual Metaphysical Deduction since it would dictate the possibility of such a Deduction; it would not prescribe a Table of Categories yet would instead dictate the conditions of the possibility of having something like such a Table of Categories (and the Table of Judgments for that matter, since the former are taken by Kant to derive from the latter)—where

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this is simply taken to mean the basic structure of any given language, not the metaphysical basis of empirical thought. Such a structure is itself mutable whereas the latter metaphysical idea is not; again, we are moving the commitment to something immutable a step further back than Kant. Thus, in harmony with what I have said so far, no claim will be made here for a list of concepts which themselves serve to structure our thought, rather the claim will be limited to circumscribing the conditions of the possibility—the transcendental conditions—of having any such form of thought about the world. Under such a rubric we are not committed to the untenable claim that there is a universal form for all thought or language; instead, we are committed to the more primitive and less ambitious claim that all thought and language is generated by a universal, dialectical structure; in the commonsense image, of two or more persons engaged in articulate, mediated, logical interaction.

As an additional disclaimer, the advocation of transcendental conditions of this form not only eschews the particular form of Kant’s Metaphysical Deduction yet also eschews commitment to the particular expression of transcendental idealism which links Kant’s Metaphysical Deduction with such theses as the concept/intuition divide and the notion of unschematised categories. However, due to limitations of space and focus we must leave these complex issues untreated.

4.3 Objections to the Proposed Account

The first objection that comes to mind when entertaining the thought of an interpretation of Kant’s Transcendental Deduction that holds a place for

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1 We can skirt the question of whether defining our commonsense version of the notion here as involving logic amounts to damaging circularity, since we have not bothered to go into too much detail what “logical” means here beyond the everyday conception by referring to “recognitive logical structure”. The idea is that revisions at the base level need not be thought of as percolating up such as to disturb our argument.

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material and not merely formal identity is that such an interpretation gets Kant wrong. This seems to be a fair objection and the task here, as reconstructive, has been to fulfil the seeming requirements of the project Kant initiated rather than concur with him on all fronts. Hence, with our general operative notion that Hegel’s understanding of the demands of self-consciousness are in principle correct, we have insisted on a richer understanding of self-consciousness and the related idea of a unified objective world. Given the strategy inherent in this attempt on extending the project taken to be contained in Kant’s Transcendental Deduction, it is clear that the reading of transcendental idealism advocated thus far can be distinguished in an important way from Kant’s. For if the basic outcome of the project of the Deduction is seen as extending beyond Kantian theses into Hegelian territory, the basic philosophical doctrine which guides Kant’s thought cannot be seen as adhered to. Thus, under the reading of transcendental proof given here, the term transcendental is given a modified meaning. This modified meaning however, adheres to the basic notion of “necessary conditions of the possibility of experience or thought”, yet extends this basic notion beyond Kant’s by co-opting the Hegelian insight that self-consciousness is dependent upon intersubjectivity.

Now it is true that Kant, perhaps correctly, conceived of self-consciousness as “the supreme principle to which...all forms of rationality (‘employment of the understanding’) can be traced back”,¹ yet it is perhaps not true that this “supreme principle” could quite be derived in the way Kant suggested, or that as a mere principle it could support the actual generation of self-consciousness, conceived of in the richer sense discussed here.

To illustrate the parallel between Kant’s argument and the one here, we can consider how, for Kant, “in relation to the possibility of self-consciousness the categories can be regarded as conditions of the possibility of experience.”²

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Namely, for Kant at least, there is an indispensable connection between the Categories and the possibility of self-conscious experience of a unified, objective world. We can draw a parallel with this thought by conceiving that, indeed, an indispensable connection exists between the conditions of self-consciousness, experience of a unified, objective world, and a certain logical structure, yet this “certain logical structure” might be more indeterminate than Kant assumed. Consider Strawson’s later willingness to entertain the idea that we can explain how it is that “we have just the functions of judgement (the logical forms) and just the spatio-temporal forms of intuition that we do have”.¹ His attempt at explanation involves three assumptions, two of which, he says, were made by Kant himself. For our purposes here, we need mention only the first of them:

(1) The necessity of a certain form for general logic; one which pervades our capacity to think about the world. This general form includes the “fundamental logical operations”, which are: “predication (subject and predicate); generalization (particular and universal forms); sentence composition (including negation, disjunction and conditionality, etc.)”.² This idea of the existence of certain fundamental logical operations is expressed also by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* where he says:

“One could say that the sole logical constant was what all propositions, by their very nature, had in common with one another. But that is the general propositional form.”³

We might think of this remark of Wittgenstein’s as an expression of the same thought; that of the ineradicable logical form inherent in thinking, insofar as thinking is taken to be propositional. However, as

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² Ibid.
Strawson notes, it is a relevant yet unresolved problem as to why Kant supposed that the truths of logic and principles of formal inference were analytic, yet did not suppose that “the forms of logic, the fundamental logical operations” were “themselves analytically implicit in the very notion of judgement”.\(^1\) As Strawson says, correctly, this further conclusion would have left Kant unsurprised by the fact of our possession of particular, unique functions of judgement.

Now the reason for recognising this point made by Strawson is to make it clear that we are here leaving open the issue of how a priori concepts might be conceived of. We have avoided commitment to Kant’s actual account of a priori concepts in the Metaphysical Deduction, although this does not disqualify us from considering how else one might account for such a purportedly possible notion. We will have to be contented with these brief reflections as it is beyond our concerns here to give a satisfactory answer.

5 Conclusion

The landscape we have traversed is a peculiar one which admits of chaos in attempts to fix a compass point. We must revisit our reflections in Chapter 1 since they gave shape to what followed; this ought to help us in obtaining a synoptical view.

We began by reflecting on the notion of limitation and on both the philosophical and non-philosophical senses which this notion lent itself to. We made thematic the idea that a certain philosophical sense of limitation was to be regarded as salient for us in a unique way, which meant that focus on a non-philosophical sense of limitation—as exemplified by a scientific or naturalistic account of the “limiting factors” in perceptual experience—was to be regarded as inadequate for certain epistemic purposes.

\(^1\) Strawson, *Kant’s New Foundations of Metaphysics*: p. 239.
Following from this distinction, we characterised the philosophical sense of limitation under focus in terms of the word “transcendental”; thus making clear that the general project here belonged to the topic of transcendental arguments. We then employed a further way of characterising the distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical senses of limitation by placing in opposition the two phrases “epistemic conditions” and “cognitive faculties”. The former phrase, we declared, was to be the focus of our defence of transcendental argumentation, proof and, generally, transcendental philosophy. The reason for this was that the notion of “epistemic conditions” formed the cornerstone of the interpretation of transcendental idealism which we set out to defend (although only in a partial, peripheral—and thus inadequate—manner). We noted that this interpretation found its fullest expression in the work of Henry Allison and was known generally as the “two-aspect” view (such a position was distinguished from the traditional ontological reading of transcendental idealism now known generally as the “two-world” (or “two-object”) view. This latter reading of transcendental idealism we saw to be connected up with Strawson’s influential reconstruction of transcendental arguments and thereby, to have played a role in the generally negative dismissal of transcendental argumentation. We observed that the connection between the negative attitude toward transcendental idealism and the dismissal of transcendental arguments was due to the fact that reading transcendental idealism as, primarily, an ontological thesis, meant that it was seen as untenable. Due to this apparent untenability, attempts at reconstructing transcendental argumentation avoided implicating transcendental idealism and instead proceeded by way of explicating the necessary conceptual connections which were required for a coherent, unified, objective world of experience to exist.

By advocating an alternate reading of transcendental idealism and reconnecting transcendental argumentation with that doctrine (and reconceiving the core of such arguments as involving transcendental proof), we saw that a stronger construal of such a philosophical method was made.
available. This stronger construal was taken to involve the explication of the kind of epistemic conditions taken to shape our knowledge, under the two-aspect view of transcendental idealism. Our innovative strategy here was to further develop the notion of “epistemic conditions” which allowed for such conditions to be made manifest in cases of actual experience. We employed the notion of “situated thought” to this end; a notion we found in the work of Mark Sacks. In our investigations of the notion of “situated thought” we made appeals to an intuitive conception of what is involved in having certain kinds of experiences and the making of certain perceptual judgments. In doing this we connected up with a host of issues in contemporary philosophy (such as the issue of non-conceptual content, the notion of material inference, the possibility of a role for phenomenal quality as the “what it is like” of an experience, etc.) which showed their relevance in considering the philosophical import of the notion of “situated thought”. In doing this, we noted how much more work was needed to adequately account for this philosophical device, yet exhibited a generally positive disposition toward it; a disposition which reflect our generally positive attitude toward the philosophical method of transcendental argumentation and transcendental proof.

Through the consideration of a variety of problems in giving an account of transcendental proof we came to the conclusion that an approach toward doing transcendental philosophy that stopped at Kant was inadequate. We made the cursory suggestion that alternate philosophical insights could be legitimately borrowed from Hegel which, as it were, extended the transcendental project. We saw the impetus for this extension of Kant as stemming from a feeling of inadequacy toward the notion of a merely formal account of subjectivity and self-consciousness. We noted with respect to Hegel that the a fully coherent reading of subjectivity and self-consciousness required a connection to, what we took to be, the ultimate conditions of the possibility of a unified, objective view of the world. We saw this construal of the “ultimate” conditions of the possibility—the “ultimate” transcendental

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conditions”—as involving an appeal to Hegel’s dialectical result in Chapter 4 of the Phenomenology of Spirit which essentially claims that self-consciousness of dependent upon relations with like-minded subjects. This appeal was more suggestive than explanatory although justified our general sympathy with a Hegelian extension of Kant with respect to the project taken to be contained in Kant’s original Transcendental Deduction.

The advocation of this possible “extension” of the Kantian project was not meant to negate the totality of Kantian theses but meant instead to supplement them. Thus we found in our appeal to something like the two-aspect version of transcendental idealism an extension of that conception. We phrased this extension mainly in terms of what we took to be the precursor to the Strawsonian reading of the Transcendental Deduction as giving an account of the relationship between self-consciousness and a unified, objective experience. What we took to be the precursor to both these notions was precisely the intersubjectivity which Hegel, apparently rightly, claimed was necessary for the existence of self-consciousness.

Chapters 2 and 3 could then be taken to represent, respectively, the reasons for advocating this reconstructed version of transcendental argumentation (as involving transcendental proof) and the necessary extensions of the transcendental project required to make it consistent.

At the end of Chapter 3 we made the additional appeal that the more full-blooded version of transcendental argumentation offered, via the notion of “situated thought”, could be extended from a criticism of Strawson’s project in The Bounds of Sense to the beginning of an attempt to rewrite the basis for his “descriptive metaphysics” as accounted for in Individuals. We gave a brief outline of how we might reconceive Strawson’s project in Individuals by way of the heavy emphasis we placed on the Hegelian conception of self-consciousness as playing a role in our account of transcendental proof. This suggestion for reconceiving Strawson’s project of a “descriptive metaphysics” was also phrased in terms of shifting the emphasis from merely formal conditions (necessary conceptual connection) to material conditions of the

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possibility of concept employment, thought, language, and experience. Again, we took the relevant point to be the material dependence of self-consciousness on intersubjectivity—insofar as the actual existence of other subjects was taken to be the ultimate transcendental condition of language, thought, and a self-conscious, unified and objective experience.

Now, there are numerous possible objections to the account given here and it will be helpful to consider them momentarily to give us a sense of how further to argue in this vein.

The exact form of transcendental idealism argued for here is defined in terms of a “core set of theses” which we have argued can be read off the structure of the notion of “situated thought”. Admittedly this reading of transcendental idealism given in terms of this “core set of theses” is highly controversial and extremely limited. The idea is that the proposal given for a reconstruction of transcendental proof via the notion of “situated thought” stands to explain how one might read transcendental idealism differently. No doubt the defence of that idea would require deep, lengthy reflections in another place.

The general idea, however, is that such a transcendental idealism as one might argue for need not be identical to the historical position found in Kant. The support of the two-aspect view of such a doctrine as recommended here by reference to the work of Henry Allison serves to fulfil our commitment to some form of that interpretation, yet again, no commitment is made to any further illuminating particulars since restrictions of space and focus are indeed pertinent. The support does its work of giving us a sense of how transcendental idealism might be thought of, given the arguments put forth to reconstruct an account of transcendental arguments and proof.

It is inappropriate to rehearse all points of attack on, and defence of, the two-aspect reading. However, there are a number of points worth being made out for purposes of clarification. As should be fairly clear, the worry with attempting a rehabilitation of transcendental proof that retains transcendental idealism as a philosophical partner (which indeed, given that it is
Transcendental proof, should be seen as virtually necessary) is that the reading required of such a doctrine to make it palatable can be seen as an inelegant attempt at letting go of that doctrine. The threat then might seem that “Strategy B”, as I have characterised my reading, is an illegitimate strategy. “Strategy A”, as I have characterised Sacks’s reading of transcendental idealism in, especially, Objectivity and Insight, might seem to be a more sober, sensible strategy insofar as it apparently appreciates (what is taken to be) the full force of transcendental idealism and deems such a philosophical doctrine indefensible in general, although in possession of particular, extractable virtues.

I have defended “Strategy B”, however, on the grounds that the “core set of theses” claimed to be contained in transcendental idealism are most powerful and coherent when left as partnered with what seem to be their metaphysically flamboyant neighbours. Claiming that “Strategy B” gives a more coherent reading of transcendental idealism in these terms is risky however, since it has been noted explicitly that the reading given here of the “core set of theses” claimed to be contained in transcendental idealism goes beyond Kant into Hegelian territory. Again, the defence against this interpretive strategy is that certain tensions exist in Kant’s philosophy that appear irresolvable in the terms in which Kant states them. The general idea advanced here is that talk of self-consciousness in the Transcendental Deduction must be supplemented by the Hegelian corrective as referred to.

Given this appeal to Hegelian theses we might wonder why the label “transcendental idealism” is appealed to, instead of the Hegelian doctrine of “absolute idealism”. We can say merely that the point of retaining the Kantian label has two aspects: (1) most of what we say here is in a generally Kantian spirit and we have endeavoured to show—in a primarily suggestive manner—that the revised conception of “transcendental” is not a usurpation of Kant, but a supplementation; (2) since our concern here has been with transcendental philosophy, insofar as such philosophy is concerned with articulating “conditions of possibility”, we prefer to retain the phrasing of the

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The doctrine appealed to here as “transcendental idealism” instead of “absolute idealism” (as is Hegel’s label for his own philosophical orientation).

Now, to show why such revision of transcendental idealism is not an inelegant attempt at letting it go, we need make note of a few points. It becomes evident that it is a peculiar philosophical quibble that emerges: the matter comes down to either re-interpreting what transcendental idealism means—including a more charitable reading of its tendentious aspects—or, extracting the appealing parts and discarding the rest. This distinction corresponds to what I earlier referred to as “Strategy B” and “Strategy A” respectively. Obvious arguments against the former strategy might claim that it obscures or downplays certain essential features of the position; arguments for this strategy might claim that it is a more accurate and sensible (albeit charitable) way to think of such a doctrine, and since the tendency to misconstrue it is a more general symptom of the reception of revolutionary philosophical ideas, we ought not simply extract the parts which are easy to accommodate since this undermines the revolutionary character of the original thought.

A brief comment on the references to phenomenology and phenomenological method—and nothing more than this—is needed. Although Husserl is scarcely mentioned in this essay, he looms as a spectre in the background and should even be visibly present to the keen observer in the discussion of the work of Mark Sacks. In the account given of the notion of “situated thought” we ought to have discerned such a philosophical notion to represent an affinity with Husserl’s phenomenology, and such affinities as there might be should then suggest to us what further explorations of the transcendental terrain might be possible given this connection. Further comparisons between the transcendental in Kant and Husserl suggests themselves as well as a more complete account of how the conception of the “transcendental” in Husserl might be extended and argued for more clearly, given Sacks’s articulation of the idea of situated thought, which itself is arguably quite Husserlian. Clearly, the suggestion from Sacks is that the

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notion of “situated thought” ought to be the touchstone for further work on transcendental proof and that any attempt at reconstructing transcendental arguments ought ultimately to refer to such proof insofar as this serves to make the connection to “lived experience”\(^1\) (discounting for now the *prima facie* vagueness of this appellation). Support of this estimation of phenomenological method can be found in J.N. Mohanty’s words, such that a remark made by him in his review of Rorty’s *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* is worth quoting in full:

> “although in some of the writings of Husserl, especially in the early *Idea of Phenomenology* of 1907, there is a concern with epistemology, namely, with *how* knowledge is possible, this epistemological concern is not the predominant theme of phenomenology, even of the Husserlian sort. The concern is rather about what is *involved* in knowledge (as well as other sorts of experience, moral, aesthetic) than in justifying any cognitive (or other non-cognitive) claims. The motive of “blocking scepticism” – that typical Anglo-Saxon concern – is conspicuous by its absence.”\(^2\)

The close of this remark need not be our focus since by now it ought to be clear that the general theme of this essay also dodges commitment to justification of knowledge claims against the sceptic, at least in that sense in which much contemporary epistemology, especially that concerning the topic of transcendental arguments, has committed itself. Rather, the general comment about phenomenology as being concerned with “what is *involved* in knowledge” is precisely our concern. This was the central point which the focus on situated thought intended to show by attempting to make as transparent as possible what transcendental proof ought to be concerned with in making claims about the possibility of synthetic a priori judgment and its relationship to “what is *involved* in knowledge”. So it is an attempt at elucidating this “involvedness” that has occupied us, and perhaps such an

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1. Not the exact term used by Sacks, although one which ought not to seem at odds with his understanding of what is at issue here.
orientation might point specifically to what Mohanty seems to regard as an anti-epistemological\(^1\) orientation of phenomenological method, and might show also how we might overcome this drive to a certain species of epistemology (one concerned with rebutting scepticism).

Putting matters in these terms seems to put us in a familiar position, one which we can, however, easily resist; viz., making a choice between those varieties of philosophy which profess to have simply stepped over the sceptic. Such luminaries as Rorty, Davidson, and McDowell come immediately to mind. And the pertinent disposition can be displayed by repeating the expression of Rorty’s attitude as evidenced in his quip of “telling the sceptic to ‘get lost’”.\(^2\) Perhaps McDowell’s strategy, especially in *Mind and World*, can be described as somewhat more elaborate than a “stepping over”, although his general quietist approach to philosophy means that the exact way we ought to take his extensive theorising, in the face of claims for such theorising as unnecessary, is unclear. As a general comment, it can be said that the account of transcendental proof given here differs in philosophical orientation to the three luminaries mentioned above in at least its attempt to provide a substantial, positive philosophical account of “what is involved in knowledge”.

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1. We can relate Mohanty’s comment to a quote from Sacks which we employed on p. 110. The quote runs: “Specifically, the form of identified, in asking after the preconditions of what I have been calling situated thought, approximates to what may deservedly be referred to as transcendental or pure phenomenology. If what has been said here is right, then we have an insight into how such a pure phenomenology is of epistemic – and not merely descriptive – import; and how it helps to capture both the nature of Kant’s transcendental proofs and the confinement of their validity to empirical reality, to the level of possible experience.” (Sacks, *The Nature of Transcendental Arguments*: p. 455). Of course it would appear that Sacks’s construal of a “pure phenomenology” as of “epistemic – and not merely descriptive – import” (ibid.) is in direct conflict with Mohanty’s claim that a concern with epistemology “is not the predominant theme of phenomenology, even of the Husserlian sort. The concern is rather about what is involved in knowledge” (Mohanty, *Rorty, Phenomenology and Transcendental Philosophy*: p. 61). However, it would appear that the conflict is only superficial. For by claiming that phenomenology is not primarily concerned with epistemology it would appear that Mohanty is referring to *justificatory* epistemology of the kind concerned with rebutting scepticism. The “epistemic” concern to which Sacks refers would seem to be precisely the variety of philosophical thinking referred to by Mohanty in his idea of “what is involved in knowledge”.

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