Scepticism, Time and Kantian Necessity

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Introduction

In this thesis I will examine different types of transcendental arguments, and consider how successful they are against the sceptic's challenge. My main focus will be on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason,* which I will compare with a modern transcendental argument — that of Donald Davidson — and also with various modern approaches to our modal thinking.

I will begin by elucidating Kant's description of time, as a pure intuition and the form of all our experience, as Kant argues for this in the 'Transcendental Aesthetic' and 'Analytic'. Here, we find Kant's most famous arguments for the *a priori* status of time, but much of these seem to be weak at best, particularly in the Aesthetic, where the transcendental component is clearly intended to bolster the metaphysical discussion, but this transcendental element itself depends largely upon the supposition that mathematical and geometric proofs are truths which are synthetic *a priori*. Kant himself took this pretty much as given; today, we have non-Euclidian geometry, and quantum theory, and this would seem to at least introduce doubts, which would not be the case were the status of such proofs as certain as Kant believed it to be. This might lead us to question Kant's view of time (and space) overall; however, there are other arguments in the *Critique* which strengthen his position. And the over-arching thought in each is, indeed, the existence of time as a pure *a priori* element in our intuition, which must exist for us, as Kant has described at the outset, as both unique and unified, if we are to have any experience at all.

In each, Kant wants to show that we do, indeed must, possess parts of our thinking *a priori*, this *a priori* knowledge being necessary for any experience at all to be possible. So, in addition to his arguments at the beginning of the *Critique*, which really are intended to complement his view that certain truths of mathematics and science are synthetic *a priori,* I will look at two further aspects of the *Critique* where the status of mathematical and scientific truths is not leant upon so heavily. The first of these is Kant's general attack on relativism — which would state that there are different equally-able to be held true beliefs on one world — through his view that, for any concept of subjectivity to be possible, we must be aware of a world that exists independently of ourselves the experiencers. For Kant, this involves there being a necessity present in how the objects of the world appear to us, that its objects are revealed as causally inter-connected in one space and time, in order for us to understand that this world constitutes something apart from ourselves — this necessity is not something which we choose. This entails that there is an objective, single truth about the way the world is. I will compare this stance with a similar, modern argument, found in Donald Davidson, which depends on our rationality to 'fix' the form of the world.

The second strand is more elusive and found, essentially, in Kant's Metaphysical Deduction. Just as much as the receiving of intuitions in the Transcendental Aesthetic, the application of the necessary elements of our understanding — the categories — depends upon the necessary unity of space and time. The temporal order puts constraints on our experience that enables us to form synthetic judgements about the world around us. This view puts Kant in

direct opposition to the more modern approaches of Lewis and Fine. While Kant may not so clearly disagree with the metaphysics of Fine's approach, as it stands Fine gives us no account of the relevant epistemology; and Lewis is simply wrong, as a consequence of Kant's transcendental argument is that there simply is only one space and time, and that this is necessary for us to have any knowledge at all. Further, given that not only can we form modal judgements, but that this modality is fundamental to our everyday thought and speech, Kant's approach, reliant on *a priori* elements in our thinking, gains further credence. In this respect, it is a clear advance on Fine's account, which tells us nothing of any epistemology whatsoever; and as against Lewis's, it seems highly implausible that something so basic, so central, might be dependent on anything so counter-intuitive as infinite numbers of physically existing possible worlds.

Pulling all these strands together, we generate a strong position for the Kantian view that synthetic *a priori* knowledge exists, and, contrary to the sceptic, that we can be certain that the world exists, because the necessary rules that bind it (the world) are necessary for our having any experience at all. Thus, I will argue, not only is this necessity required for our concept of objectivity, it also constrains our judgements and enables us to apply modality in our thought and speech, something central to our use of language. Finally, through an examination of Kant's thought in these areas, I hope to provide a more substantial view of the contention with which Kant has started his *Critique* — 'that there are two pure forms of sensible intuition, serving as principles of *a priori* knowledge, namely, space and time.' (A22/B36)

Despite philosophers' best efforts, the classic sceptical challenge — how can we ever be certain of anything? — has never really gone away. The transcendental argument attempts to force him to concede that we have (at least some) knowledge of which we *can* be certain. The general strategy is to start with a premise with which even the sceptic must agree, for example, that we have an awareness of ourselves as subjects. From this, the argument moves to a conclusion previously disputed by the sceptic, based on that initial, agreed, premise. Often, the hope is to re-establish our knowledge on a new, firmer, footing, one that the sceptic cannot undermine.

Famously, Kant sought to re-establish the grounds of our knowledge, following the assault on its supposed conditions by Hume, who claimed that all knowledge was ultimately empirical (excepting that of standard analytic truths, which Hume termed relations of ideas), and hence, in effect, essentially uncertain, insofar as there was no *a priori,* necessary knowledge of any kind. This can be seen in Kant's determination to defend the status of mathematical and scientific knowledge as synthetic *a priori*, and also, his espousal of the importance of the law of causality in his Second Analogy. The thrust of Kant's claim can be seen as twofold: firstly, a modal claim, that as 'experience teaches us that it is so; not that it must be so,' (A31/B47) some grounds for the necessity surely inherent in our mathematical and scientific theorems must be present, *a priori*; and secondly, that Hume is right to say that there is no empirically-perceived principle of causality, but that an *a posteriori* principle would not serve our purpose in any case — such

concepts are present *a priori*, being as they are conditions of our experience in the first place. Hume correctly argues that there is no causal law observable through our senses, but wrong to then conclude that the perceived necessity is merely a consequence of our being accustomed to seeing one event follow another. Rather, claims Kant, it is there prior to our experience, and necessary for any perceiving of the world to be possible for us at all.

However, Kant's project in the Critique is not merely a defence of the existence of *a priori* knowledge, and hence of our right to claim that we can make valid judgements regarding an external world; he also has a positive objective, in his seeking to draw the boundary between 'good' and 'bad' metaphysics. Of course, the two go hand-in-hand, as the delineating of the areas where knowledge can be claimed, from where only 'metaphysical juggling' and irrelevant reasoning can occur, is achieved through the establishing of the *a priori* and hence necessary conditions for our knowledge. I would argue, however, that in an important sense, Kant's real concern is not merely with the Humean sceptic, but also with relativism. Kant can be seen as bypassing the traditional sceptic's problems, by changing the question from 'What is there?' to 'How do we know?' He then examines this by uncovering the *a priori* elements in our sensibility and understanding, which for Kant form the 'bridge' between our minds and the external world. The price of this move is Kant's controversial claim that the objects of our judgements can only ever be things as they appear to us, subject to these conditions, and *never* as things 'in themselves'.

This division raises the threat of a new, arguably more serious form of scepticism, that of relativism. Kant wants to show that, contra-Hume, our thoughts do not consist of mere appearances, but rather that the world is indeed an object for our judgements, with us able to relate *to the world* instead of being locked inside our own heads, as it were. We can be sure, then, that there is a world there around us. If, however, there is a significant distinction between the objects of our knowledge, and what there is in the world, as Kant's claim regarding things in themselves seems to suggest, then all Kant's efforts are ultimately in vain — we might be assured that there is an external world, but we are no further forward in defending our knowledge of it, because we remain aware of nothing more than appearances, as Hume claimed. Kant has no intention though of such a sharp and dangerous distinction, as I will argue later; if he were, we might consider the possibility that there is, after all, no such thing as objective truth — at least that can be known by us — and any judgement that we make on the world might, therefore, go awry, depending as it does on our conditions of knowledge. Kant seeks to get around this difficulty by claiming that the conditions are transcendental, that they do relate to our external world, and of course that the conditions themselves are not contingent but necessary. A set of conditions for experience that might not be transcendental, that might therefore vary from one person to another, suggests relativism, and hence a permanent lack of certainty; but Kant insists that these conditions are *necessary* for finite, sensory creatures such as ourselves. There is no room for relativism here therefore — this just is how we see the world, and indeed to suggest that our knowledge might somehow be *more* certain than this — as Hume implies — is really, in Kant's

eyes, to stray into the realm of the metaphysical juggler. Our knowledge could not *be* more certain, and so the traditional sceptical questions make no sense.

The danger of relativism then comes through its challenge that all knowledge depends on us to such an extent, that we might have different beliefs on the same world. Thus, one way of viewing the sceptical challenge would be in terms of its attack on there being any, or of our ever being able to attain knowledge of, objective truth. There is a clear link detectable between doctrines of relativism, and the sceptical line of thought; for instance, if we are to take the view that there is no truth of the matter as to how the world is, that different people might have different beliefs with no way, no evidence in the world, which might enable us to decide between them, then we seem to lose our way of ever saying what might be right or wrong. All our knowledge begins to slide into uncertainty, then, because there is no way of our establishing a criterion for what could be considered to be a valid judgement about the world. Even if we feel we are justified in holding certain beliefs, we have no defence against the relativist who argues that there is no 'fact of the matter' at all. On the other hand, if we were to show that there were truths to which we had access, then this would strike against the kind of global scepticism that we are considering. Truth would exist as the subject of our beliefs, and we would have a way of assessing our beliefs as constituting knowledge or not. Our ability to acquire genuine knowledge would be assured.

In invoking the idea that there are conditions which are necessary for all our knowledge, that if we did not have them we would not possess any knowledge whatsoever and be completely unable to interpret the impressions coming into our senses of the world around us, and so be quite unable to experience anything at all, Kant seeks to establish that there is no relativism for us as human beings. That the conditions of our experience are present *a priori* and hence in his view necessarily, means that for creatures such as ourselves, the world can only be interpreted in accordance with these conditions. There is no room for a significant divergence of thought (and nor, indeed, could there be such a divergence). There are certain conditions for our knowledge, and these conditions must hold if we are to be able to have such knowledge. They cannot then have arisen from experience itself. It is his further contention that, for these conditions to have any import, the world must indeed be true to this shape or form of our experience; it is through these various conditions — most famously, space, time, causality and substance — that the world is able to become an object of thought, able to be experienced by us.

Much of Kant's belief in the strength of his position arises from the view that the theorems of maths and science are indeed synthetic *a priori*, and that this is not something to be doubted by anyone (even a sceptic). We might not share his confidence in this today, and even if we were broadly to agree with his view the very fact that it is so controversial implies that we need further justification for Kant's view, over and above the existence of these fields. As stated previously, however, Kant has a second transcendental argument, expounded in the Transcendental Deduction. Here he

argues that, undeniably, we have a sense of ourselves as subjects — there is, he points out, always the 'I think,' (B131-2) which must be able to accompany all our representations, for us to be able to be said to have knowledge at all. However, for this understanding to be possible, we must have an objective, independent reality, to serve as contrast to what is subjective and contingent or within our control; and we must have knowledge of this external reality, not, as I will argue, of mere appearances (in the empirical sense) in our minds.

A similar thought is found in Donald Davidson's recent work. In papers such as 'The Second Person' (Davidson, 1992), he illustrates his thought by way of an analogy, where he describes the structure he believes to be central to our acquiring the concept of objectivity as a triangle. His triangle consists of ourselves, the second person and the world forming the three points, with communication as the baseline. If only we on our own were relating to the world, then no sense of objectivity and hence subjectivity could ever be established; a second person is required, and not only that, but a second person who will be in broad agreement with us as to the judgements they make on the world (and be able to communicate this to us) before we can reach the necessary understanding that the world is an objectively-existing reality, about which judgements can be true or false. Such an idea of objective truth is only possible if we have knowledge of a world which others also see and have beliefs about. For Davidson therefore the faculty of language, and our ability to communicate with and interpret one another, is of as much importance as our relating to an external world.

Davidson's approach differs from Kant's in that interpretation features where Kant has his categories and pure intuitions. However, Davidson attempts to tie this ability to interpret one another to the way the world has to be through his appeal to our rationality, which he argues is *necessary* if we are to be able to interpret at all. His most striking attack against the relativist viewpoint comes in his paper, 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme' (in Davidson, 1984) where he convincingly argues that we simply cannot make sense of the idea that there are any different conceptual schemes, and, further, that if we cannot say there is more than one, we cannot intelligibly assert there is one either. Thus he argues against the existence of 'a dualism of total scheme and uninterpreted content,' (Davidson, 1984, p.187) something that he sees as central to empiricism (indeed, as its 'third dogma') depicting as it does some kind of organising structure giving understanding of uninterpreted, typically sensory, data. It is clear that, for Davidson, any such scheme, if upheld, would introduce the possibility of relativism, as schemes might vary, generating different, but equally reasonable, interpretations of the same data. Thus in arguing against the possibility of such schemes, Davidson also refutes the possibility of such relativism. Meanwhile, in Kant, we find the depiction of our knowledge as dependent on the faculties of sensibility and understanding, where the sensibility supplies the uninterpreted content, namely intuition, and the understanding, with its organising concepts, is the 'scheme' that structures this. Thus Kant can be seen as espousing just such a dualist scheme as Davidson seeks to dismiss. I will argue that, while it could be claimed that Davidson therefore opposes Kant, the two positions are not so different as might first appear, and can

indeed be assimilated to produce a stronger anti-sceptical argument.

A further way to strengthen Kant's position of claiming that we do indeed possess *a priori* knowledge, is found through examining modern accounts of our use of modal terms. I will bring this out by contrasting various modern approaches, beginning with the possible worlds view of David Lewis. His claim is that, when we refer to any possible object, that object must exist for this statement to have meaning, and its existence is as real and physical as our own world. The worlds that contain these objects are removed from our own, located in a different time and space; nonetheless, argues Lewis, we can know that they are there, or else how could our modal judgements have any content?

This position seems incredible to many, but alternatives, such as that advanced by Fine, seem deficient in various respects. Fine's view is that the possible worlds account cannot capture what he regards as the more fundamental notion of essence, and that our understanding of an object's essence comes instead through our somehow seeing or grasping it. Actually, Fine doesn't quite say this, but it seems to be what we are left with — he focuses on the metaphysics of his theory and says little or nothing of the epistemology involved in his approach.

I will then turn to the work of George Bealer, who offers an opposing, more Kantian account of how such knowledge might arise, based on elements which are present within our understanding *a priori*. I will move from Bealer's account to an

examination of ideas expressed within the *Critique* itself, that, for our having any knowledge to be possible at all, it simply cannot be that we have experience of other times and spaces. Nor, indeed, could there be other times and spaces. So what Kant would say to Lewis's account is clear. In accounting for judgements where the possible *is* evoked, I will discuss his employment of the two tables, the Table of Judgements and the Table of Categories, and show that this provides a way out for us in our modal dilemma, providing a means to account for judgements where the possible is referred to, without our having to believe in its actual, physical existence, in any way (or place).

I will conclude, therefore, that Kant's 18th century account of our knowledge and experience is perhaps our best hope of both elucidating our modal thought, and countering the sceptic's attacks.

Chapter 1

Kant and the Synthetic *A priori*

Kant begins in *The Critique of Pure Reason* by describing the fate of what once was the 'Queen of all the sciences,' (Aviii) metaphysics. He describes it as having become a 'battleground,' (Bxv) with no consensus being reached between the sceptics, who wish to show that metaphysical knowledge is quite impossible, and the dogmatists, who would have us unquestioningly accepting all such knowledge. Kant regards neither of these alternatives as acceptable. Firstly, if the sceptic is to repudiate our metaphysical beliefs, then, Kant argues, he must also doubt our reasonings about our experience of the world around us. For the same tools of human reasoning as are employed beyond the limits of human experience, in metaphysics, are also involved in our acquiring knowledge of the external world. He writes that metaphysics 'begins with principles which it has no option save to employ in the course of experience, and which this experience at the same time abundantly justifies it in using.' (Avii)

Meanwhile, dogmatism is equally erroneous, leading, as it does, to its practitioners being encouraged to 'indulge in easy speculation about things of which they understand nothing, and into which neither they nor anyone else will ever have any insight.' (Bxxxi) The employment of dogmatism — 'the presumption that it is possible to make progress with pure knowledge, according to principles, from concepts alone,' (Bxxxv) leads to the kind of contradictions and futile debates which have characterised metaphysics and rendered it a 'battleground.' Reason ends up

refuting itself because here, in areas such as the immortality of the soul, proofs of God through the claim that he is the prime mover, and so on, metaphysics ends in contradictions with no hope of their being resolved. The failure of metaphysics to produce a consensus and justify its claims has left the entire field of human reasoning open to sceptical attack.

Kant sees the rectification of this situation as paramount, not least because he believes that such enquiry is a part of our nature, rendering the abandonment of metaphysics inconceivable. His hope is then to effect a similar revolution in this sphere as he believes has already been effected in the fields of mathematics and science, where once untrustworthy enterprises have been set on a sure and non-contradictory path, representing genuine knowledge.

Kant's solution to the problem of metaphysics is to turn the metaphysical debate (what exists) into an epistemological one (how can we know). He seeks to eliminate the difficulties caused by the employment of philosophical concepts alone, and the justification of our other knowledge, through an examination of the conditions for knowledge itself. This move, to the focus being on *ourselves* as observers and experiencers of the world, as opposed to what exists in the world itself, is regarded by Kant as comparable to the revolution achieved by Copernicus in science, where he succeeded in giving an explanation for the movement of objects in space through imagining not the spectator having these objects move around him, but rather the objects being still and the spectator moving. He writes:

> Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them *a priori*, by means of concepts, have, on this assumption, ended in failure. We must therefore make trial whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge. This would agree better with what is desired, namely, that it should possible to have knowledge of objects *a priori*, determining something in regard to them prior to their being given. (Bxvi)

In so doing Kant will, if successful, show how it is that the world and all its contents are able to be an object for us — something that we, as finite thinking creatures, can interact with and have knowledge of. His aim, in establishing the conditions for our knowledge, is to fix the boundaries for the legitimate employment of our reason. Within these boundaries and subject to these conditions, our knowledge will be established as a valid part of our experience; outwith them, we can be sure that there is no possibility of genuine knowledge whatsoever, and hence that we must restrict our reasonings to areas where the conditions of our knowledge do apply.

Kant, then, sees no profit in the type of speculation which might be seen as the best (and perhaps only) way to completely refute the sceptic, where we seek for some kind of 'outside' view of our knowledge, in order to show that it really does correspond with what is in the world. Such a view is quite impossible, and to seek to

attain it is to stray into the realm of the type of bad metaphysics that Kant so despises. It is impossible because we can never step outside of ourselves and know things apart from who we are, and therefore we are always bound to have experience only within the realms of the conditions of our knowledge. Kant's move is to attend to these conditions, rather than seek to attain some kind of outside view that we could never possibly validate, or even acquire, being quite outside the realm of our experience.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, then, Kant sets out to establish the conditions for our knowledge. Being conditions for experience itself, they could not, as Hume claimed they could, be products of that experience at all, and must then be there *prior* to experience — that is, be present *a priori*. For Kant, this entails their necessity, as he believed only *a priori* knowledge could be necessary: 'Experience tells us, indeed, what is, but not that it must necessarily be so, and not otherwise.' (A31/B47)

At the heart of the *Critique* lies Kant's thesis of transcendental idealism. Under transcendental idealism, these conditions of our knowledge must hold true of the objects as they appear to us, else they would be of no consequence, and we couldn't have any experience. This forms the 'transcendental' aspect of the thesis. The 'idealism' arises as a consequence of the view that our mind can only condition the way objects are, insofar as they must *appear* to us, not, obviously, that our own faculties could ever actually dictate things as they are apart from us, or 'in themselves'. So, while, though reflection on our faculties, on the conditions for our knowledge, can give rise to synthetic *a priori* knowledge of the way

things are such that they appear to us, knowledge of things as they are in themselves is quite beyond us. Anything lying outside the conditions of our knowledge simply cannot be known by us. We cannot assume to know anything of objects as they are in themselves, when we experience the world — such a thesis of 'transcendental realism' Kant emphatically rejects. But this does not mean we are bound to accept a Humean or Cartesian view, that all we have knowledge of are mere fleeting mental entities, the sense-data impressions Hume speaks of and which Kant also refers to as, confusingly, appearances, which may or may not reflect reality. Such empirical idealism, Kant also rejects. The alternative remaining to us is transcendental idealism.

The Pure Intuition of Time

Kant was famously woken from his slumbers by Hume, and his sceptical attack on such concepts as causality. Kant saw that the price of this scepticism was too high — the abandonment of such principles as that of causality led to the elimination of conditions which Kant argued were necessary for our forming any idea of ourselves as subjects, and the world as existing independently of us. Furthermore, Kant argued that Hume was simply wrong to suggest that all our knowledge stemmed from a flow of impressions coming through our senses. In and of itself, this could not possibly be regarded as sufficient for knowledge, for thought, for what Kant terms as experience. To properly experience something, we must connect these impressions somehow into some meaningful, manageable form — a synthesis — a coherent whole through which judgements might arise. For us to be able to form these judgements, and have experience, there must be a second faculty

to that suggested by Hume; Kant terms this the understanding. The *a priori* conditions contained therein, which synthesise our impressions and give rise to our judgements are what he calls the categories. The faculty, equally important and quite distinct, which receives the information from our senses is the sensibility, and it is governed by space and time. We have no knowledge of anything that might be considered to lie outwith these conditions.

The *a priori* intuition of time is necessary for all our experience, as, while our outer experience is of objects in space, all our inner experiences including therefore the judgements that we make using these impressions, occurs in time. In a sense, then, time might be seen as the more significant of the two, and examination of Kant's philosophy of it therefore the more rewarding. Indeed, as well as forming half of the discussion in the Transcendental Aesthetic, it also forms much of the most interesting discussions in the Transcendental Analytic; although it is a spatio-temporal framework which Kant describes here, it is true to say that it is time particularly which is used to power the argument in, for example, the Second Analogy. Similarly, in transforming the synthesis of our sensory fragments into useful, informative judgements, as described in the Schematism, time is the element that is added to produce our experience, to make it genuine knowledge.

The Transcendental Aesthetic

In the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant takes as his first objective the elucidation of what forms the appearances belonging to our sensibility. He writes:

> That in which alone the sensations can be posited and ordered in a certain form cannot itself be sensation; and therefore, while matter of all appearance is given to us *a posteriori* only, its form must lie ready for the sensations *a priori* in the mind, and so we must allow of being considered apart from all sensation. (A20/B34)

In order to uncover this form, he states he will:

> … first *isolate* sensibility, by taking away from it everything which the understanding thinks through its concepts, so that nothing may be left save empirical intuition. Secondly, we shall also separate off from it everything which belongs to sensation, so that nothing may remain save pure intuition and the mere form of appearances, which is all that sensibility can supply *a priori*. (A22/B36)

Thus will be revealed 'two pure forms of sensible intuition, serving as principles of *a priori* knowledge, namely, space and time.' (A22/B36)

One of Kant's stated aims in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is to demonstrate how synthetic *a priori* knowledge is possible, which he describes as 'the proper problem of pure reason.' (B19) The solving of this problem will, he believes, set metaphysics on the correct footing, whereas the type of programme pursued by Hume results in the jeopardising of all our mathematical and scientific knowledge. This is because Kant believes all such knowledge to be both synthetic and *a priori*, and the destruction by the Humean

programme of the possibility of our possessing any *a priori* conditions for knowledge left it with no means to attain this status.

Kant thus takes it as given that maths and the laws of science possess this status of synthetic *a priori* knowledge; and argues that this is a status which both rationalism and empiricism fail to account for. This belief — that mathematical and scientific truths constitute synthetic *a priori* knowledge — is upheld by Kant and used to form much of his discussion that space and time are indeed the necessary forms of our intuition. If we allow ourselves to be somewhat more sceptical than Kant is regarding the status of the proofs in these fields, then we will hope to find further evidence elsewhere, in his *metaphysical* exposition of the two.

Many of these arguments seem to be quite insufficient, particularly as Kant is going to found the greater part of the *Critique* on the notions of space and time, and their alleged status as pure forms of intuition. Much of the discussion appears to employ out-dated ideas regarding the nature of each; we now know that neither are 'fixed' in the way postulated by Kant, and which did seem so much more plausible in the seventeenth century than today. If this were not so, it would be considerably easier to accept the idea of their nature being *a priori* and given to us; however, given that this *is* the case, the scientific descriptions of each seem radically at odds with any kind of space and time which might reasonably be described as 'intuitive'.

To put Kant's arguments of the Transcendental Aesthetic in context, then, much of the discussion is perhaps best interpreted as giving

an alternative view to those of Leibniz on the one hand, and Newton on the other. Kant disputes Leibniz's conclusion that space and time are mere relations (or possible relations) between perceived objects; and Newton's view that they are objective existents, and so knowable *a posteriori*. Kant contends that: 'We cannot, in respect of appearances in general, remove time itself, though we can quite well think time as void of appearances.' (A31/B46) Here, Kant is making the point that, while we can form an idea of time as empty of any objects, we cannot think of an object without thinking of it as being somehow in time. Thus, time is epistemologically prior to our intuiting any objects. Further, we do not perceive time through seeing objects and noticing the relations between them, rather, the *a priori* intuition of time is required for us to pick out the objects in the first place. Together with space, it creates the framework for all our impressions of the outer world, and its necessity entails its being present *a priori*.

Much of this could be read as a direct challenge to Leibniz's (and Newton's) viewpoints; however, Kant seems correct in asserting that there is an importa distinction to be made in the relative necessity of time as compared to our other
intuitions. Time does indeed seem to be prior to our thinking of objects, and receiving impressions. We perceive of objects as being within a spatio-tempora framework; we are aware of time passing as we intuit them, and place our ow existence within this same, spatio-temporal framework. Regardless of what modern
science may have taught us of the vagaries of time (and space), this remains as
true for us today as it was for someone in the 18th century. There does, indeed

seem to be an important sense in which time is *a priori*, much as Kant described.

But is our intuition, that time is necessary for any thinking, any experience, to be done at all, correct? Walker (Walker, 1978) sets up a counter-example in an attempt to show that experience *is* possible without time.

We are asked to imagine a world where there is, in effect, no time, an 'altogether static and changeless world' (Walker 1978, p. 34), where a being cannot move and so alter his perceptions, and where, therefore, important elements which seem to contribute to our forming a conception of an objective world are quite lacking — for example, such a being could not form an idea of objects persisting while it was not there to observe them. Walker argues that, if such a being was in a position to see various shapes of different colours, but where here and there the pattern was interrupted as another shape began, then it would perceive that one shape was actually placed on top of another, as opposed to imagining that it was viewing several highly irregular shapes. While the former conclusion is the more economical, to reach it, the static being would require a concept of depth, of things existing in three (as opposed to two) dimensions. How could such an idea occur to a being that never moved position, and only saw things from a fixed perspective? Further, the holding of such an idea would surely be superfluous if one existed in a world where nothing ever moved. Unless Walker could justify a static being's holding such an idea, then he has not shown that experience could be possible without time. He also talks of this being as 'making judgements', which surely entails *passing*

from one thought to another; again, temporal context seems unavoidable.

It could further be objected that for self-consciousness itself to be possible, there must be an awareness of a distinction between the objective world and ourselves; and that a static universe would not be sufficient to provide such an awareness. In his Analogies, Kant will go on to argue that it is our ability to judge, for example, that non-perceived objects persist which enables us to form and maintain the idea of an objective self. Without the possibility of similar patterns being perceived in the static world, Walsh's argument will fail.

The second feature of time (and space) discussed in the Transcendental Aesthetic is that of its existing as an *intuition*. It is not something that is a feature of 'things in themselves', and nor is it a concept; rather, it is 'but a pure form of sensible intuition.' (A31/B47) Kant's central argument here concerns what he refers to as the 'uniqueness' of time, a feature which he expounds ~~upon~~ by stating that we can only ever represent to ourselves one time, and that when we talk about different lengths of time, we are simply referring to parts of that whole. Also, that we conceive of time as being infinite means, he argues, that 'every determinate magnitude of time is possible only through limitations of one single time that underlies it.' (A32/B48) Time is *unified*, and this is something that Kant claims could only be possible if time were given to us as an intuition. If it were a concept, then we could represent to ourselves different parts of time as being of different times, and quite separate; but, again, that is not an accurate picture of how we (seem to) think. Again, if time were something which existed as an object or as a property of objects in the world,

then we would not have the idea we do of the uniqueness and totality of time; rather, we would perceive it as existing in different 'bits' in different objects, with no way of relating them to an underlying unity.

Walker points out that even if we granted the uniqueness of time, Leibniz could still argue that it existed for us as a system of relations — it would just be the only such system. It does not seem to follow from time's uniqueness that it is an intuition. Similarly, its infinitude could be explained in Leibnizian terms by arguing that it exists as a series of infinite possible relations. So Kant does not appear to have established that time must exist as an intuition. However, if we focus on the unity (as opposed to the uniqueness) of time, we can perhaps come closer to understanding Kant's position. As a transcendental idealist, Kant regards time as given, not thought, and so it is an intuition, not a concept: time is a *whole* thing which is given to us, within which we can intuit objects. Kant even goes so far as to say that, if there were no objects or appearances, then time (and space) would no longer exist at all. Thus Kant's contention of the intuitive nature of time can be understood within the context of his transcendental idealism.

But, given the advances made in 20th century physics, can we continue to hold a view of time as essentially whole and unified? Our intuition may be, as Kant describes, that time is like a one-dimensional progression along a straight line, but particle physics has discovered the existence of 'parallel universes', at least on a molecular level, which indicates what Kant took to be certainly false: that there are different times, unrelated to one another. However, such scientific observations may not be fatal to a Kantian view of time. No such similar phenomenon has been found to exist for larger entities, such as

ourselves, and the idea of such a phenomenon is so counter-intuitive that it does not really threaten the strength of Kant's observations. We can draw a (perhaps not very scientific) distinction between the fate of a particle fired at two slits, and a human confronted with any kind of choice. If we are unable to formulate a theory to say exactly where and how a line should, as it were, be drawn between the two, then that is no reason for us to dismantle our inherent ideas of time; rather, it is something for science to pursue and fill in the gaps within its theory. Another way of putting this could be to say, as Schlick does (discussed in Friedman 1990), that it is the concern of the philosopher to expound the *form* of our ways of thinking about the world, and that of the scientist to explore, and find laws to describe, the *content* of that world. Thus, the existence of parallel universes does not threaten the Kantian view of time as a transcendental whole, because the two are examples of different kinds of knowledge. One might want to appeal to Kant's own claim that the understanding of certain phenomena is (at least temporarily) withheld from us, due to the 'grossness of our senses'. One might feel that this is expecting the empirical facts to fit around our preferred theory, but the point is that the strange results are interpreted and experienced within our single form of space and time. More difficult is the idea that matter has been somehow created through such processes. While, strictly speaking, a particle of light is not matter in the substantial, Kantian sense, it nonetheless has a spatial location. However, does a particle of light, produced, not spontaneously, but as the result of firing one particle at two slits, demonstrate such a creation that would serve to count against Kant? I suspect not. It is surely the role of the scientist to attempt to account for this change, which we experience in our time frame, and find some way of assimilating it, just as physicists try to find a

coherent account which can unify the strange results of quantum physics with the more intuitive ideas in general relativity theory.

The Transcendental Analytic

It is Kant's transcendental idealism that supports and informs his discussions regarding time. In the Analogies of Experience, as in the Transcendental Aesthetic, arguments that might otherwise seem elusive, or at worst, weak, are, when given this context, much more readily understood. Kant's transcendental idealism provides a strengthening framework for his whole enterprise; it then becomes a question, not of the conclusiveness or otherwise of his individual arguments, but of whether transcendental idealism is in fact a viable position or not. Kant's view is that, quite simply, there *is* no alternative: the consequences of Humean scepticism, and the abundant errors he saw present in metaphysical discussions based purely on reason, led him to pursue this third way.

In the Analogies of Experience, Kant applies his methods to the realm of the understanding, wherein appearances received via our sensibility have certain concepts applied to them, namely, the categories. Unlike the sensibility, the understanding is an *active* faculty, within which objects are 'thought'; that is, that concepts are applied and objects arranged within an overall framework, a 'synthesis', such that they can inform us, and provide us with knowledge. In the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant sought to establish what could be found *a priori* within the faculty of sensibility; in the Transcendental Analytic, he explores what must be *a priori* in our understanding, such that we can have knowledge and self-awareness.

That we are self-aware is of critical importance in the analogies. Kant saw that a strictly sceptical viewpoint would largely preclude such a possibility; instead, given that we are self-conscious beings, he asked what *must* be present in our understanding to make this possible.

He believed that within our understanding there must be a framework already in place, an *a priori* set of rules and relations between the concepts, enabling us to structure our intuitions and ultimately to form a distinction between our inner selves and the objective world. Kant's view is that all appearances are subject *a priori* to rules determining their relation to one another in time. There are three kinds of rules, one for each mode of time — duration, succession, and coexistence. That we require these rules to apply to the *a priori* intuition of time is necessitated by our not being able to perceive time in the objects themselves; objects do not come with dates stamped on them. Thus, in order for us to have an idea of a fixed temporal framework, a system within which we can order and, as it were, date our impressions, we require *a priori* laws to enable us to place and interconnect the objects in time. Without these laws, Kant believes, we could not interpret and make any sense of our impressions; with them, we can create a synthesis, a way of understanding the objective world, and hence our place within it. We are able to impose order on our impressions, and make judgements concerning them; without this fixed temporal framework, everything collapses, and we are left with a mish-mash of sense-impressions, and no hope of organising them into something coherent.

The first analogy concerns the mode of duration. Kant states the

principle of this analogy to be:

> In all change of appearance substance is permanent; its quantum In nature is neither increased nor diminished. (B224)

What might be read as Kant's main argument here comes towards the end of the analogy, where he argues that if we were to perceive something as suddenly coming into being we could only perceive of this as an alteration in the substratum. Were this not so, then 'appearances would relate to two different times, and existence would flow in two parallel streams, which is absurd.' (A188/B231-2) Thus, objects cannot ultimately start to, or cease to, exist, as this would entail our perceiving two different time series. Any alteration in the world of appearances can only be understood by us as an alteration in the underlying permanent substance — as *change*, rather than creation. Without this, the unity of the series of time is lost, and with it one of the primary conditions for the manifold of our experience. And, Kant contends, it is necessary that this substratum does not itself increase or diminish, or change its form. For us to perceive change, there must be something which persists through that change, and that something is substance, the fixed medium through which we see all change. Kant adds that we cannot know the first thing about what this 'substance' might consist in, but that, nonetheless, because we *can* see change, we can be sure that it must exist in the determinate way he describes.

An obvious question to raise here is why Kant concludes from our requiring that *something* will persist through a change, that there must be such a thing as a 'substratum', whose 'quantum in nature is neither increased nor diminished.' (B224) Even granted that we do conceive of time as a

single series, this unity could arguably be provided in a continuation of overlapping substances. This would preclude the need for one permanent, unchanging substance, such as Kant describes. A substance that persisted through one change could itself be the object of another, with a different underlying substance providing the medium. As long as there is always something which persists through the alteration, our idea of change is maintained, without the unity of time being sacrificed. What 'persists' here is simply that there is never a 'gap', and so never a break, in time. Time remains unified.

Why wouldn't this do for Kant? Why the need for something absolutely permanent, when it seems that relatively permanent substances would suffice for the understanding of change?

Strawson (Strawson, 1966) argues that this is largely a result of Kant's tendency, as he sees it, to identify whatever he established about our experience of an objective world, with what he held to be scientific truths. In this respect, it is profitable to compare the two principles at the beginning of the analogy. In 'A':

> All appearances contain the permanent (substance) as the object itself, and the transitory as its mere determination that is, as the way in which the object exists. (A182)

This contrasts with the version given in 'B', where Kant, as we have seen, talks of a substance whose 'quantum in nature is neither increased nor diminished.' Here, the emphasis is clearly on a scientific principle concerning some mysterious kind of measurable matter, which Kant believes he will argue for in the following pages. As Strawson points out,

this does not appear to be relevant to a description of our empirical experience at all. A category is something which everyone, at least implicitly, applies to his experience; but the principle outlined in 'B' does not seem to belong to this system. As Strawson puts it, 'The pre-scientifically-minded person is quite able to see or think of something's going up in smoke... without in any way supposing that anything quantitatively identical persists throughout the transaction.' (p. 131-2) Kant would seem to be pre-supposing the existence of an item which his own argument does not need in order to fulfil its premises.

However, in his paper 'Kant on the Perception of Time' (Walsh, 1967) Walsh argues that anything less than constancy of substance would catastrophically undermine our whole temporal framework, that 'If there were nothing stable in our experience... we could not even appreciate its instability.' (p. 381) He argues that, while empirically we seem to date things and monitor time with the aid of large, relatively permanent objects such as the sun, it is necessarily the case that, given time is an *a priori* intuition, even such objects as these are insufficient. Our temporal framework is there *a priori*, and as such only an absolutely permanent substance as Kant describes will maintain this structure. We need to fix our time, found our perceptions, on something, and if this thing were itself mutable, it would be something else other than that substratum which Kant discusses. Thus, to see something relatively permanent is to intuit something further, something absolutely permanent, underneath; at bottom there must be such a substance, which is the principle of the succession of time.

This idealistic argument offers another way to see Kant's conclusion; however, it presupposes that only a fixed substance will allow us to

perceive time. The significant thing in this argument though is the vital importance, for Kant, of the unity and uniqueness of time, demonstrated and revealed in the idea that change must never involve either creation or annihilation. This then leads him to assert that it must rather be observed as an alteration in the substratum, whose volume neither increases or diminishes. This fixed framework of time, within which all our experience must occur, is paramount.

The second mode discussed by Kant is that of succession, and here the relevant principle is causality:

> All alterations take place in conformity with the law of the connection of cause and effect. (B232)

The Second Analogy can be read largely as a response to Hume's scepticism regarding causality. Hume had argued that, despite how it may seem to us as we perceive events, there is no causal necessity. Instead, when we think, 'A has happened, so B will follow,' what we are 'reading' in the situation is merely an inductive phenomenon. We have seen B come after A time after time, and cannot but conceive of the same event occurring again.

Kant believed that such scepticism, about something so central to our experience of the world, threatened the very possibility of our having knowledge of the kind we do. Without a causal law connecting our appearances in time, the facility of our relating impressions to an underlying framework would, he felt, be lost; and with it the ability to form any self-consciousness. As in the preceding analogy, central to this argument is Kant's contention that we cannot perceive time directly

in the objects; thus, we require principles, such as that of causality, to make our 'dating', and hence the understanding of our impressions, possible. Causality forms a part of the mapping-system that is required if we are to avoid having nothing more than an unconnected array of impressions, within which it would be impossible for us to distinguish those from the external world with those occurring to us from within.

Kant attempts to show the different *kind* of order involved in our impressions. He compares the order of perceptions I receive as I watch a boat moving downstream, to the order I have when I look over the various rooms of a house. In both cases, impressions come to me successively — the ship first upstream, then downstream, and the different parts of the house. However, we as a subject are conscious of a clear difference between the two: in the first, we know that impressions could not have occurred in any other order. There seems to be a necessity involved here, as the order is determined not just by how I happened to perceive them, but by how I *had* to perceive them in order to perceive that event. By contrast, as we look over the house, despite our impressions once more being successive, there is no necessity apparent to us. These perceptions are what might be termed 'order-indifferent'. We could look over the house in any order we chose, and still understand that we were seeing coexistent parts of one larger object, rather than objects which exist in succession. Kant then asks what it is that enables us to make this distinction.

It could be objected that in one sense, the order of my perceptions of the house is also fixed. I cannot go back in time, as it were, and look over the house afresh; there is only one possible order here, too. However,

this does not matter to Kant's argument, and if anything actually strengthens it, as it helps bring out the force of how the synthesis is formed by the understanding alone. Kant's whole point is that as there is nothing in the impressions themselves to make us understand them in the way we do, and think of them as being either successive or co-existent, it must be a pure category of the understanding which enables us to make that distinction.

Strawson makes the objection that Kant commits 'a *non sequitor* of numbing grossness' (Strawson, 1966, p. 137) in moving from the conditional necessity we find in perceptive sequences, derived from the events occurring in a certain order, to a necessity connecting the objects themselves. Thus, while there is a necessary order connecting our impressions of a boat moving downstream, it does not follow that there is a corresponding necessity linking the events in the world. (Strawson then goes on to reconstruct Kant's argument, and forms a transcendental argument for a concept of a kind of causality from the premise that we require such a concept if we are to have self-awareness.)

Might Kant indeed be guilty of 'numbing grossness' in his argument? If he were, we might be forced back on to a sceptical conclusion. However, if we reflect on Kant's transcendental idealism, we find an answer to this apparent difficulty.

As a transcendental idealist, Kant's concern is avowedly not to show us anything regarding objects 'in themselves'; rather, he wants to establish the necessary epistemological conditions for our knowledge and

experience of the world. Thus, central to Kant's argument here is the transcendental idealist view that our experience of objects is as they appear to us, and *not* that what we experience are sense impressions of externally-existing objects, objects which we have no other access to. Understood in this way, we can see how Strawson's conclusion is avoided, as it depends upon the existence of such an empirical-idealist framework. The appearance and the object (insofar as it appears to us) are not, according to Kant, as portrayed by the empiricist; so it is not that Kant is saying, we have these conditionally-necessary appearances, from which he thence derives the idea of the underlying events being necessary. Rather, in our experiencing that which is outside us, we have already constructed our impressions according to a rule, or we would experience nothing at all; in a sense, for Kant, the object as it appears to us, and our experience of it, are as one, and they cannot be so separated as to leave him open to the charge of committing such a non-sequitør as Strawson alleges, where we move from the necessity in one to the ascription of it in another. And, in accordance with transcendental idealism, this experience of events is dependent on the categories of the understanding, and these are, of course, *a priori*; they are there before we perceive any sequence, as opposed to being derived from it.

A further objection to Kant's second analogy is that he is guilty of confusing 'Every event has a cause' with the much stronger claim, 'A necessarily follows B.' Kant seems to wants to establish the latter (this will utterly refute Hume's kind of scepticism) but appears, in his discussion, to really have been discussing the former. Further, it is not the case that from the lack of order-indifference, we can deduce necessity; order-dependent impressions are clearly not always necessarily connected. For example, someone may step out into a

road, and be hit by a car. Here, the perceptions are not order-indifferent, but the person's stepping out into the road did not cause the car to pass. It is a mere coincidence, and the two events of the stepping out and car passing are to be determined causally by two distinct sets of causes, which are of no relevance in understanding the perceived event's order-dependence. However, Kant's discussion of order-indifference can be viewed as a highly effective means of elucidating the distinction which we successfully and repeatedly draw, time after time, in our experience. It may not, as it stands, directly argue for our having an *a priori* category of causality in the stronger form, but it does provide a means of demonstrating our possession of the category which enables us to see that one event is *always* caused by another, and that we draw this distinction on a basis that is based not upon experience — that could not generate necessity — but is present *a priori*.

For, clearly, Kant is right to assert that there is something which we notice when we compare events, and that this 'something' forms a critical part of our understanding of the world, and our place within it. We have an awareness of where we could have received the perceptions in a different order and still seen the same object, and where the order is necessary in order that we undergo a particular experience.

Given that order-difference does not only occur where there is a necessary connection between impressions — as in the case of the car — we feel encouraged to look elsewhere for a second argument which might strengthen Kant's position here, and also indicate why he considers this necessity to be of such importance in the first place, why it is that the alternative, that this knowledge might simply be present *a posteriori,*

must be wrong. In this respect, we find that Kant employs a similar argument to that concerning empty time in the first analogy, and asserts that there can never be such an occurrence as an uncaused event. He states that, 'only by reference to what precedes does the appearance acquire its time-relation.' (A198/B243) Thus, if we are to date and understand perceptions as coming in the order in which they do, we require a necessary causal principle to connect these perceptions — this is the framework within which we operate. An uncaused event would entail a 'break' in time, and would also mean that we would have no means of dating the event. Our temporal framework would disintegrate.

However, we might disagree with this, especially in the light of modern physics, where there do indeed seem to be such things as 'uncaused events'. But these occurrences do not seem to upset or destroy our concept of causality; such events are rare, and perhaps it is this that enables us to absorb their existence without any catastrophic consequences. As will be discussed in the following chapters, to allow any uncaused events will, for Kant, threaten all our knowledge, and with it our understanding of our subjectivity, because he believes that the unity of time underpins the very possibility of our experience. Causality, as one of the principles governing our perception of time, must, then, admit of no exceptions, or the coherence of the whole will be lost. Walsh argues that, if we admit of one or two exceptions to 'every event has a cause', it will become impossible for us to draw the line, as it were, and know what to admit as a possible exception, and what to dismiss; our entire temporal framework will be rendered unstable and therefore useless as a means of interpreting the world of our perceptions. Perhaps, however, the reason that we can cope with such uncaused events as those described in particle physics is that they

do occur within such a restricted realm as particle physics. We consider them strange, and mysterious, but they do not trouble us as regards our conception of the world. As has been suggested previously, it is for the physicists to formulate rules describing such behaviour. Alternatively, if something were to suddenly occur in 'our world', as it were, we would indeed question it, and be baffled, calling it magic or miraculous, if not a hallucination; our ideas of the world would indeed be greatly threatened. So here, too, it is questionable whether the apparent counter-example to Kant's thesis is effective.

However, this answer might be considered to be less than satisfactory, not least by Kant himself, who sought to establish a complete physical system, whose laws governed and connected everything from the smallest elements of matter up to the planets themselves. Thus it is extremely unlikely that Kant would have remained untroubled by these aspects of quantum theory, as something irrelevant to his own philosophy. It is an intriguing question as to what exactly Kant would have done in response to this problem; perhaps he would have thrown up his hands in despair, and abandoned transcendental idealism altogether. However, it seems that there might still be a case to be made in favour of transcendental idealism, given the force of arguments such as that of the Second Analogy, and our as yet incomplete understanding of the physical world.

Kant's view is, then, that for us not just to have experience, but to have any concept of ourselves as subjects, we must have a necessary (and therefore *a priori*) spatio-temporal framework, within which to form our objective experience. Anything less than necessity would not be sufficient; in defying the sceptic, all prospect of relativism is eliminated.

Chapter 2

Kant, Davidson and the Conceptual Scheme

Kant's transcendental argument to show that our knowledge of the world is valid, that the world must be subject to certain conditions of our knowledge, is built on a conceptual scheme of scheme — the understanding — and content — the sensibility, or rather, that which is provided by the sensibility. That our knowledge of the world is valid is what, he argues, enables us to make the difference between what is subjective, and what is objective, and hence generates our own concept of subjectivity. A more modern transcendental-type argument, that of Donald Davidson, attempts to establish that the world must be as it appears to us to be through claiming, as Kant does, that there is no possibility of relativism, and, also like Kant, that the possibility of our having the concept of subjectivity depends on it. However, Davidson does this by arguing that there is no such thing as different conceptual schemes, and therefore no *single* conceptual scheme either. In this way, he might be seen as being in direct opposition to Kant, in claiming that the advocating of any conceptual scheme is erroneous and detrimental to the establishing of knowledge. While it seems that Davidson's arguments against relativism are strong, we might want to try to retain the Kantian anti-relativist position that our knowledge is, necessarily, subject to certain *a priori* conditions. The question then arises — how can the two positions be made compatible, with the hope that they will even compliment each other, given that both are so close in spirit?

In her paper, 'The Metaphysics of Interpretation' (Rovane, 1986), Carol Rovane draws direct comparison between Kant's approach to metaphysics, and Davidson's. Both share the idea that the conditions upon our making judgements, or forming beliefs, are where we must turn if we are to formulate any metaphysical conclusions about an external world. As Rovane puts it, 'the concept of belief (or judgement) must be our point of departure in metaphysics.' (p. 419)

Davidson's Argument

In drawing out her comparison between the two, she distinguishes what she regards as two quite separate theses of Davidson's. One is more focussed upon by Davidson — at least, it was up to the time of Rovane's writing the paper — and that is that, unless we can interpret someone as a speaker of a language, we cannot ascribe any beliefs to him. This is because, given a holistic view of belief, we cannot ascribe any single one in isolation — it is just what beliefs are that they cannot be taken in isolation, but always involve other beliefs, with which they are interconnected in various complex ways. And the only behaviour, Davidson believes, which is rich and fine-grained enough to justify the ascription of such a web of beliefs is language.

The other thesis is, argues Rovane, made less of by Davidson but she believes it to be more interesting in that it is deeper and more radical than the former. This is because, she argues, it does not assume a third-person perspective as the other does; rather, it 'concerns the conditions on self-consciousness, or first-personal ascriptions of subjecthood.' (p. 423) According to this thesis, we are

dependent upon identifying other points of view on a shared objective world in order to appreciate that our own beliefs are subjective. This is Davidson's 'triangle' analogy; in 'Rational Animals' (which Rovane quotes from), and more recently in 'The Second Person' and 'Epistemology Externalized', Davidson describes a triangle being set up between oneself, a second person with whom one can communicate and interpret, and the objective world. Only in this way are we able to understand that our beliefs are distinct from the external world, capable of being true or false. In 'Epistemology Externalized' (Davidson, 1991), Davidson writes: 'Without one creature to observe another, the triangulation that locates the relevant objects in a public space could not take place.' (p. 201) But this process is itself dependent upon communication, 'for to have the concept of objectivity, the concept of objects and events that occupy a shared world, of objects and events whose properties and existence is independent of our thought, requires that we are aware of the fact that we share thoughts and a world with others.' (p. 201) In 'The Second Person', he discusses the necessity of there being an interaction between (at least) two creatures in order that we establish the common cause of their responses; to fix something as an independently-existing, temporally-enduring object in the world, and so grasp the concepts of objectivity and subjectivity, we require the triangle, the base of which is communication.

The idea captured by the triangle analogy is, then, that without communication between ourselves and at least one other person about a shared world, we cannot have any concept of our having true or false beliefs about that world, and hence of our own

subjectivity. We know our place in the world, and hence also that we are a subject, through knowing our place in the triangle, and this from observing the other two points; the base-line being, as Davidson says, communication.

In 'The Method of Truth in Metaphysics' (in Davidson, 1984), Davidson moves from this to the argument that a theory of meaning for language must therefore reveal features which are metaphysically significant. If we look at the constraints on communication — which for Davidson amounts to the constraints upon a theory of meaning, modelled on a Tarskian definition of truth — we should notice certain features of language that in turn will represent certain 'large features of reality' (1984, p. 199) as Davidson calls them, allowing us to draw metaphysical conclusions, about what the world *must* be like, if we are able to communicate with and interpret one another. While in later papers where the triangle is discussed, less emphasis is placed upon the explicit use of Tarskian theory of meaning, the idea of our communicating with others as being necessary for our own notion of subjectivity, and of there being an objectively existing world, which is the only thing which could generate a shared experience, is retained and further developed.

For Davidson, then, *language* — or, rather the fact that we use language, and can communicate with and interpret one another — is central to who we are. It also provides him with a kind of transcendental argument for the existence of an external world. Here, the parallel with Kant is clear — where Kant took the concept of judgement, and the constraints upon it, as revealing

metaphysical consequences (and conclusions about features we must have) such that we can form judgements or have experience at all, Davidson looks to language and the ability to communicate — and, relatedly, to form beliefs — as central.

In both cases, the formation of beliefs or judgements is regarded as a crucial indicator of the existence of, and nature of, the external world. That this is a reasonable standpoint is assured by the close relationship between the concepts of *belief* and *truth*. A belief is something which can be true or false, and so in order to partake in this concept we must be able to distinguish between the belief itself, and the object of that belief. We must therefore presuppose the existence of an external world, before we can begin to regard ourselves as capable of such a thing as belief; further, we cannot formulate the idea of sceptical doubt — of our beliefs as being possibly false — without first understanding that there is an objectively existing world. So, at bottom, the features of the world presupposed by our concept of belief must hold — Rovane says, 'we cannot be skeptical about those conditions.' (p. 419)

For Kant, these conditions are those which are conditions upon our possible experience. They are the categories, and the forms of our intuition, space and time. Davidson's connection with the world though might be regarded as more immediate, as it dispenses with the classic empiricist dichotomy of scheme and content, famously exemplified by Kant in his epistemological division of the understanding, which is governed by the categories, and sensibility, the forms of which are space and time. For Davidson, the conditions on our forming beliefs about the world are those upon

our being able to communicate successfully with a second individual; and, as we have no way of knowing if we do speak the same language as they do, we are, he claims, dependent upon our being able to radically interpret their speech behaviour. The conditions for our knowledge then become those upon our being able to radically interpret — the existence of a shared environment, our being essentially rational, and the principle of charity.

Rovane considers Kant's enterprise to be fatally weakened by his inability to break away from traditional empiricism; in his use of scheme and content, she argues, we are still inviting the sceptic in, for the result is that we are not bringing our understanding to bear upon 'real', objectively-existing entities, but rather on our sensory appearances of them. She regards Kant as a 'somewhat rarefied phenomenalist' (p. 421), who also permits relativism, as, while he suggests we cannot conceive of there being other forms of experience in the sense of knowing what such experience would be *like,* at the same time we also have our concept of what objectively exists tied to our experience, so that there is a possibility of someone with a different type of experience concluding that different things exist. Rovane admits that here, she is overstating Kant's position, but she wishes to draw out the distinction between the possible consequences, particularly the sceptical ones, of Kant's position, and that of Davidson's. And it seems that there is a clear difference, because, whereas Kant, while not advocating relativism directly is nonetheless, claims Rovane, 'clearly agnostic' as to the possibility of other types of experience, Davidson dismisses the very possibility of relativism.

Here we come to Davidson's famous paper, 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme'. There, he examines what might be involved in the notion of a 'conceptual scheme', and argues that, subjected to such a close examination, it 'cannot be made intelligible and defensible.' (Davidson, 1984, p. 189) The dualism of scheme and content should, he claims, be rejected as the third dogma of empiricism, 'the third, and perhaps the last, for if we give it up it is not clear that there is anything distinctive left to call empiricism.' (p. 189) In dismissing the traditional dualism of scheme and content, then, Davidson brings us into a more immediate relationship with the external world; we are no longer dealing with appearances or some other such epistemic intermediary, but with *actually existing objects*. This position is further brought out, and linked explicitly with the triangle, in The Second Person. There, Davidson reaches the same conclusion through emphasising the way we communicate, and what must be the case such that that is possible.

While he draws on the implications of radical interpretation in the earlier paper ('On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme'), the emphasis is on the close examination of the idea of a conceptual scheme. Davidson notes that, as a philosophical concept, it is an exciting one, which, if reasonable, would generate much interesting debate in many areas; however, he believes that, 'as so often in philosophy, it is hard to improve intelligibility while retaining the excitement.' (p. 183)

What looked appealing becomes, on closer examination, unintelligible and, what is more, implausible. Davidson shows up

the implausibility to great effect by focussing on what might be regarded as the core of his philosophical outlook — our rationality, and our ability to communicate with one another. Here, the thesis of radical interpretation does come into play, as Davidson argues for his conclusion that such creatures would never come to have differing conceptual schemes. Like Kant, he regards us, as humans, as being much more the same than different from one another, and so regards certain characteristics as essential, and therefore of immense philosophical significance.

Firstly, however, the unintelligibility. Davidson begins by discussing various different ideas which philosophers have taken 'conceptual scheme' to mean. He readily grants the appeal of an idea that suggests that views of different cultures, or of society at different times, are equally valid. It implies a move towards tolerance and respect for those whose views might seem at odds with our own.

Perhaps the most obvious place to locate a conceptual scheme is in language. Davidson gives the example of Whorf's study of the Hopi language, and quotes him as writing that:

> ...language produces an organization of experience. [It] first of all is a classification and arrangement of the stream of sensory experience which results in word-order...[It] does in a cruder ... way the same thing that science does... We are thus introduced to a new principle of relativity, which holds that all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated.

(Whorf, 'The Punctual and Segmantive Aspects of Verbs in Hopi,' quoted on p. 190)

Here, then, we find expressed an idea that is, as Davidson points out, very different to that referred to by Strawson when he writes, 'It is possible to imagine kinds of worlds very different from the world as we know it.' (Strawson 1966, p. 15) Here, Strawson is talking not about different conceptual schemes, which are incommensurable, but about our imaging worlds different to our own, which don't physically exist but can be thought about through our 'redistributing truth values over sentences in various systematic ways.' (Davidson 1984, p. 187) What Davidson is attacking is the idea that the same world, because of different creatures within it having different conceptual schemes, might be viewed in radically different ways; so different, indeed, that one cannot be comprehended by the other.

This is a view located by Whorf in different language communities, specifically, between Hopi and English. Our metaphysics is shaped by our language, and so, he argues, the possibility exists that a language very different to our own will generate a metaphysical viewpoint which we cannot participate in. Similarly, philosophers such as Kuhn have argued that different scientific traditions produce conceptual schemes that are at variance with one another- Davidson quotes him as claiming that scientists 'work in different worlds.' (Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, quoted on p. 187)

Davidson examines at length just what we might take the notion of a conceptual scheme to be. He begins his close scrutiny by giving the various ways that the term has been understood. Generally, conceptual schemes are thought of as either organising something that is given — perhaps reality, or experience — or they might fit it, as when Quine writes 'he warps his scientific heritage to fit his... sensory promptings.' (Quine, 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', quoted p. 191)

Neither of these views can be made intelligible, he argues. To imagine 'organising' something, we must conceive of something as consisting of parts, which might be organised — otherwise, what is there to be organised? We have to imagine being able to rearrange some parts of the whole, for as Davidson puts it, 'the notion of organization applies only to pluralities.' (p. 192) We are looking for a criterion that will demonstrate that there is or might be a language that cannot be translated into our own; however, such a criterion is not suggested here. Davidson gives the example of organising a wardrobe, saying that if we are asked to organise it, we can understand it as meaning that we are to rearrange the objects within it, whereas if told we are not to organise the contents, but the cupboard itself, 'we would be bewildered.' (p. 192) In a similar way, then, we must understand the idea of organising the world or nature, or indeed experience, as entailing we organise various items within it. Will this provide us with a criterion for a language that while being a language is nonetheless not translatable into our own? Davidson thinks not — here, we cannot make sense of organising the world itself except as us bringing some kind of organisation to bear on the various items

within it, which isn't what we wanted at all in order to suggest that we might really conceive of there being two radically different *worlds*. Further, while we can make sense of minor differences between the languages, this itself is because 'a background of generally successful translation provides what is needed to make the failures intelligible.' (p. 192) But how to make sense of the idea of *complete* non-intertranslatability? This becomes especially problematic when we consider that any language which so deals with the objects in the world — our world — 'must be a language very like our own.' (p. 192) And much the same problems occur if we apply the notion of organising to experience — again, it must be regarded as a plurality of some kind, say different items of sensation like tickles, but these are just the same entities as an advocate of this approach would imagine himself dealing with. The two languages are thus organising the same sorts of thing, whatever we take that to be, and such a language must of course be one 'very like our own', which hardly amounts to a criterion for a different conceptual scheme.

If we take instead the idea of *fitting*, we move onto the thought that sentences, or groups of sentences that constitute a theory, fit the information from our senses (or whatever other evidence we take the concept as applying to). This provides us with the idea of sentences being confronted with, or compared to, something further, something external — 'for a theory to fit or face up to the totality of possible sensory evidence is for that theory to be true.' (p. 193) But, argues Davidson, this notion of fitting the totality of experience 'adds nothing intelligible to the concept of being true.' (p. 193-4) It may say something about what we take the source of

the evidence to be but 'it does not add a new entity to the universe against which to test conceptual schemes.' (p. 194) Such theories presuppose that we can find something, something beyond the evidence which our schemes 'fit', in order that we can compare schemes and so find them to be different. But Davidson's point is that there is no third thing, no 'facts', nothing beyond the evidence that we might use that would make our theories true. If this is so, then just as before we are in no position to make intelligible the idea that there are different conceptual schemes.

The only way out left to the proponent of such a theory is to claim that we are looking for two schemes that are both largely true, but not translatable. This gets around the difficulty of there being no 'facts' which might make our beliefs true and provide a comparison of schemes, but new difficulties arise. Here, Davidson's theories of truth come into play, as he makes the point that, to make sense of this criterion, we must be able to make sense of the idea that truth and translatability can be understood quite independently of each other. And, of course, for Davidson, the two are inextricably bound together. The totality of true sentences for our language can be given by the formula, ' "S" is T if and only if S,' where 'S' stands for each well-constructed sentence in English. This recursive definition of truth, while not the kind of definition we might want in order to explain our concept of truth, nonetheless, Davidson believes, represents our best understanding of what truth is — a basic concept, he argues, which cannot be reduced. But note that this definition operates through translation, and this strongly suggests that the two notions, truth and translation, cannot be sharply separated from one another. If this is so, the case of the proponent

of the conceptual scheme seems very weak indeed. It looks unlikely that they will be able to demonstrate that there are cases of schemes which both are true, and yet not intertranslatable. Indeed, it is hard even to imagine what such a scheme would look like, which fitted the evidence just as well as another scheme, was equally true, and yet proved not translatable. How could it then be 'different'? Surely the two would end up looking exactly the same?

So, Davidson concludes that, in both cases, we have failed to find something that might be seen as common to two incommensurable conceptual schemes, such that we might compare them; and that, therefore, we should altogether 'abandon the attempt to make sense of the metaphor of a single space within which each scheme has a position and provides a point of view.' (p. 195)

An attempt to justify the ascription of different conceptual schemes on the grounds of partial, rather than total, failure of translatability fares no better. Here, Davidson draws on his ideas of radical interpretation, and the necessity therefore of the principle of charity, to show the unintelligibility of this approach, which might at first seem the more promising one, given that in its shared, inter-translatable part, we have provided a common ground of comparison between the supposed two schemes.

Davidson holds that belief and meaning are closely interconnected. In knowing the meaning of someone's sentences, we attribute beliefs to him; and we know the meaning of his sentences through our believing that he will tend to hold mostly true beliefs, as we do, and therefore that our beliefs will tend to coincide. Thus,

communication, and relating to others, is possible. To account for this, we need a theory 'that simultaneously accounts for attitudes and interprets speech, and which assumes neither' (p. 195), and this theory is radical interpretation.

Radical interpretation states that we begin to interpret someone, with no presupposition of what their sentences might mean, or, therefore, what the beliefs being expressed are, simply from the idea that they will accept certain sentences as true. Truth is thus the crucial notion, the starting point. However, to even get started on interpreting the sentences, and ascribing beliefs, to someone whose language might be different to our own, we must assume a large part of his beliefs to be in agreement with our own. In other words, we must assume that they will be as rational as ourselves, holding mostly true beliefs, and tending to reject those sentences that represent untruths. Then, and only then, can we begin to assign meanings to his sentences, and so interpret him.

This foundation of shared beliefs does not, and nor does Davidson intend it to, eliminate all disagreement, but this foundation of agreement is what, he contends, makes it possible for us to have meaningful disagreement. In interpretation, then, 'charity is not an option... Until we have successfully established a systematic correlation of sentences held true with sentences held true, there are no mistakes to make. Charity is forced on us... if we want to understand others, we must count them right in most matters.' (p. 197) Where we find a sentence which they will reject, but we, translated into our language, assent to, we might want to call this a difference in conceptual schemes — but surely it's just a case of our

having different *beliefs*, not different concepts; after all, we can, it seems, translate that sentence expressing the belief into our own language. There is no reason for us to conclude that what we have is a difference in concepts, no evidence available at all.

He then goes on to claim that, if we have found no way to make intelligible the notion that there are different conceptual schemes, we are in no position to draw the conclusion that we all share the *same* conceptual scheme, either. Rather, Davidson states that 'if we cannot say that schemes are different, neither can we intelligibly say that they are one.' (p. 198)

In concluding that we do not operate under *any* conceptual scheme, Davidson believes that we put ourselves in unmediated contact with 'the familiar objects whose antics make our sentences true or false.' (p. 198) A single objective truth is established — there is no 'truth relative to a scheme.' (p. 198) Thus, in his rejection of the 'third dogma' and abandonment of empiricism, Davidson has found an anti-sceptical argument that puts us in direct contact with the world. He has achieved this outcome by replacing the idea of a conceptual scheme with that of language and our ability to communicate with one another, and the necessary conditions that are entailed by this process.

The demonstration of the unintelligibility of the concept of there being incommensurable conceptual schemes, which provide different groups with different metaphysics, coupled with the implausibility of the notion as noted by Davidson at the outset, makes for an extremely strong case, at least that there are no

different conceptual schemes. The implausibility is brought out well. There seems little to be said against Davidson's observation that, for example, Whorf has used *English* sentences to note the allegedly different metaphysics of the Hopi, supposedly generated by their so-different language. And yet, if this conceptual scheme is claimed to be incommensurable with our own, how could we describe it within our own language? Surely that would be quite impossible? Put in this way, the position sounds absurd. We are saying that, for us to acknowledge a different conceptual scheme, we wouldn't be able to identify it as being different because our two languages would not be intertranslatable. If we could see something as being different, we would not be seeing something different, but something which we could understand insofar as being able to compare it with our own. But then, they wouldn't be incommensurable at all. If all we have is language, and the available evidence of the world through our senses, then, as Davidson says, there is no third thing to give an 'outside' view, and enable us to see the two schemes, compare them, and judge their commensurability. All there is the 'available evidence' of the world, which must be broadly agreed upon by us if we are able to communicate. If we assume that we have a conceptual scheme, then we can only operate from within that scheme, and so are not free to explore and judge another as being radically different to our own. Further, if we accept Davidson's view, that meaning and truth are inextricably linked, it is difficult to see how any creature, who shares our world and is capable of speech behaviour, could possess a conceptual scheme either radically or partially different from our own.

Is there no Conceptual Scheme?

Is it, however, reasonable to conclude from this, as Davidson does, that we have no conceptual scheme at all, and that therefore we are in an immediate relationship with the objects of the world after all? What he is accrediting to us sounds like the intellectual intuition, which Kant discusses God as possessing (if he exists) in the *Critique*. There, Kant draws a comparison between this intellectual intuition with our sensory one, where we attain knowledge of the world through our senses and so necessarily require a means of drawing in the sensory information from the world, and a means of organising these pieces into a whole, such that we might have experience. If God does exist — and Kant insists that we can only exercise faith here, that we cannot know, in the ordinary sense, that he exists — then, being infinite, he will immediately grasp objects not as they appear, but as they are in themselves. He has no need of a scheme to understand them, as we, finite beings, do. We do not need to have a strong belief in God's existence to get Kant's point here, and see the distinction. We can understand that, to be infinite as God is, would entail our having no need of the forms of space and time, to place objects in the world and orientate ourselves within it. Similarly, the categories would be superfluous, as we would apprehend each object as it was in itself, without requiring the synthesis of intuitions governed by the categories. And then, we would not be seeing objects as they appear to us, represented as being within space, but just as they are in themselves.

While Kant understands the possession of scheme and content as being just how we can and must acquire experience as humans,

Davidson has a quite different view. He suggests a picture of us as being like Kant describes God as being, with no need whatsoever of a scheme to handle content, which implies our being in a direct relationship with them as things in themselves, for without a scheme, there simply is no other way of knowing them. However, even if we make appeals to such ideas as 'of course there is always a possibility of error, because we never have the perfect conditions for knowledge', there seems to be an intuitive resistance to the idea that it is *even possible* that we could be in the same kind of relationship with the world as a perfect being would be. We are, as humans, broadly rational, as Davidson suggests; and this is very much of the essence of who we are, so it cannot be too unreasonable to base much of your philosophical views and arguments around that very notion. But are we *perfectly* rational? And if not, can we conclude, as he does, that we can and do enjoy an immediate relationship with the objects as they are in themselves, just as Kant depicts God as doing? It seems unlikely.

This point can be further brought out when we consider the criticism that charity — a principle which takes into account our not being perfectly rational — is not sufficient on its own to guarantee that the world *be* any particular way. In her paper, Rovane shares this view. While in broad agreement with Davidson's Kantian strategy, that is, of looking at conditions on belief as having metaphysical consequences, she argues that Davidson is mistaken in his next move, where, in 'The Method of Truth in Metaphysics', he goes on from this to argue that we look for these metaphysical results in the constraints on a theory of meaning which operates in our communicating with one another. She argues that the central

concept of the principle of charity is of no help in our search for metaphysical truths, because it does not entail the world being any one particular way: 'Charity tells us we are all in agreement and what we agree on is in fact the truth (more or less). But it does not tell us *what it is* that we are all in agreement about... By itself the constraint of charity doesn't seem to require agreement about anything in particular.' (p. 426) If this is right, then Davidson's move, to seeing the constraints on meaning as the stopping-off point for metaphysical analysis, seems unjustified.

Rovane asks us to imagine interpreting someone as having mostly true beliefs about her sensory states, who, being mostly right about these and knowing more beliefs than we do about objective circumstances, will be being interpreted in a way that satisfies the condition of charity. But, says Rovane, we have interpreted her to be an idealist, and if charity can allow someone to be so interpreted, then charity does not look like a contender for the role Davidson intended it to have. We would have to look elsewhere, for additional arguments to rule out this possibility, and this would go against Davidson's argument that the constraints found in meaning theory are sufficient for his purpose. So we can see here that there are clear difficulties with Davidson's account, if we wish to establish metaphysical conclusions about how the world must be, which suggests an opening for a more Kantian approach.[1]

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[1] Davidson's own attempt to strengthen his position involves the description of an omniscient being, who believes all and only true beliefs. Such a being must be able to interpret us, and we him, and this, of course, will only be possible if our beliefs tend to coincide. As a result, we must believe largely true statements about the

The main areas where we would see Davidson as being in dispute with Kant are, then, also the areas where we would consider his account to be weaker and in need of modification in any case. Thus, despite Davidson's eagerness to dismiss the 'third dogma' of a conceptual scheme, and introduce a radically different way to conceive of ourselves as relating to the world, it seems that, if we take the main arguments of his paper, which criticise so devastatingly the notion that there might be different conceptual schemes, the similarities between what they point towards, and the view espoused by Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* are more striking than these differences. And we would surely want this to be so, as both positions are so compelling. While Kant, famously, *does* believe that we attain knowledge through a scheme and content system, that 'Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind' (A51/B75), it is equally central to his approach that that as humans our 'scheme' *cannot* be otherwise. If we are humans, then, for us to have any experience, form any

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world, or else his interpreting us would be impossible. This is an interesting, perhaps un-Davidson-like move, but more to the point, if it *does* succeed in establishing that we are largely correct about the world, it only does so by a method which invokes a god-like being and tells us nothing whatsoever about ourselves, about what makes *us* largely right about the world. Kant's move, on the other hand, does this by outlining something true about the creatures we are. He both fixes the world, and gives us insight into ourselves. Further, it's interesting to note that here, Davidson seems to concede Kant's point, that the idea of such a being does have a role to play.

judgements, we *must* have the described scheme as a necessary condition. It simply could not be otherwise. His insistence on this point, and on the necessity of or our intuition and understanding being as he describes them to be, puts him in spirit, at least, very close to Davidson's position in 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme.' Davidson argues that, as rational creatures, we relate to and experience the world in much the same way, with only small variations, disagreements, between us; and that it could not be otherwise. To have language and communicate is to partake in this shared environment. For Kant, it is equally necessary that our having knowledge at all is dependent on our possession of the categories, through the intake of sensory intuitions in the form of space and time, and our ability to synthesise these into experience. There are no alternatives for either Kant or Davidson — neither has any space for relativism, of any kind. Where Davidson contends that we must, in order to radically interpret, assume that others hold mostly true beliefs as we do ourselves, Kant argues for the unity of time, and, as will be seen in Chapter 4, for the conclusion that everything possible in the world, and necessary in the world, is actual; that there is one world, which we *all* inhabit and share, where objects are causally interconnected in a single spatio-temporal framework, and nothing else can possibly exist for us.

For Davidson, then, to assume someone had radically different beliefs would be to hamper our ability to interpret and communicate with him, and, if there was only the two of us in the world, and we were so prevented from interpreting one another, we would be left quite unable to attain any knowledge, for on such communication our being able to place ourselves in the world, and gain a concept

of objectivity, depends. And for Kant, to imagine a world where time is not one, where things can be spontaneously created or annihilated, is to imagine a world where knowledge would be quite impossible.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, we can see how Davidson's triangle analogy plays a similar role in his anti-sceptical argument to Kant's in the Second Analogy. In the passage, quoted by Rovane, from 'Rational Animals' (Davidson, 1982), Davidson describes how not being bolted down to the earth, 'I am free to triangulate,' (p. 327, quoted p. 423) and so to place objects correctly within my environment. We know, as Davidson says, where they are. Similarly, we get an idea of our objectivity through the triangle which is set up between ourselves, a fellow communicator, and the world which we share and which enables us to communicate with and interpret one another. An understanding of an external world enables us to experience ourselves as subjects, as we can gain a third-person perspective on the world through our communicating.

Similarly, Kant employs the notion of a causally-connected world, perceived by and experienced by us, to explain our acquisition of the concept of the subjective and objective. Here, we see that there is a necessary order to certain of our impressions, and not to others. While all our thinking is done in time, in sequence, we know that some of these 'apprehensions' are of objectively-ordered events, whereas others simply constitute an arbitrary arrangement.

Kant's famous contrast is between looking over the rooms of a house, and watching a boat travel downstream. In the former case,

I am well aware that I am not perceiving any event — although there is an order to my impressions of the house, this is not a necessary order, and I know that in fact I would be free to look over that house in any order I chose. However, in the case of the boat moving down river, while there is, again, an order to my apprehensions, I do not see these as being merely chosen by me — rather, I know that there is a necessity at work, and that it could not have been otherwise. I do not need to travel back in time, and try the procedure again, to check if there is a possibility of my having perhaps perceived the order of the appearances of the boat or the house differently — I know already. And just as well, because without this, Kant believes, we would have no possibility of having any experience of the outside world, and therefore no way of perceiving it as objectively existing, of our impressions as being anything other than mere mental appearances with no connection to anything outside us. And hence, we would not have any sense of ourselves as subjects, who can hold beliefs and make judgements about this external world. So, Kant concludes, there must be a rule of causality, which enables us to so order our experience. For there is, he claims, 'nothing in the appearance which so determines it that a certain sequence is rendered objectively necessary' (A194/B240); and if there is nothing in the appearances themselves, but we do have the capacity to experience the world and make judgements concerning it, then such a rule must exist, and we can know this *a priori*:

> I render my subjective synthesis of apprehension objective only by reference to a rule in accordance with which the appearances in their succession, that is, as they happen, are

> determined by the preceding state. The experience of an event [i.e. of anything as *happening*] is itself possible only on this assumption. (A195/B240)

Is Kant a Relativist?

However, there remains Rovane's criticism of Kant's whole program — that, as she claims, we are only ever aware not of objects in the world, but of mental items, the appearances, in our minds; and that this idealism leaves us in the hands of the sceptic. This is a commonly-held view of Kant; he is often regarded as claiming, particularly in his claim that we can never know objects as they are in themselves, and that our understanding is brought to bear on appearances, that we can only have certain knowledge of mental entities — or that because all we have direct knowledge of is these appearances, we cannot be sure that there are any external objects. If this is correct, then it is wrong to claim that there are essential similarities between Kant's anti-sceptical argument and Davidson's. Kant is no further forward than the empiricists he sought to refute, and we are left with the idea that only the rejection of the claim that we have any conceptual scheme at all will restore us into a direct relationship with the external world.

The Second Analogy, however, is interesting not just for its similarity to Davidson's triangle in its function, but also for its giving a clear demonstration of the falsity of such interpretation's of Kant's epistemology. Rovane writes that he 'never escapes the empiricist framework', and that his position entails that 'the notion of objectivity provided by the understanding must be restricted to the

realm of appearance.' (p. 421) Let's put this view together with that which motivates the Second Analogy. Are the two even similar? I don't think so.

Kant's move, brought out best, perhaps, by the Second Analogy, but recurrent throughout the Critique, is to contrast repeatedly the subjective with the objective. While it is true to say that he argues our knowledge of the world is achieved through the understanding being brought to bear on the material given via the faculty of sensibility, it is surely equally apparent that he does not mean this to imply that we have no certain knowledge of objects in the world, and therefore that he holds the Cartesian, idealist view, that what we have immediate knowledge of is mental content. Kant talks of 'appearances' of objects, but in no way does he imagine that these are objects existing only within our minds. He is at great pains, indeed, to distance himself form such idealistic views, most obviously in the Refutation of Idealism but also throughout the Critique, where he continually contrasts the merely subjective with the objective.

In the Second Analogy, then, his argument is based upon our being able to have knowledge of something that is *not* just 'in our minds'; the boat is an externally existing object, moving on the water and generating our impressions of it. While we do receive these intuitions of the boat through our senses, as it *appears* to us, at no time does Kant claim that what we are really aware of is not an external object, but a mere mental appearance, with no way of our knowing if it relates to anything 'outside' at all. His intention in the Second Analogy is to uncover, given that we *are* able to distinguish

what is subjective from what is objective, just how it is that we do so. For we clearly do know that what we are experiencing through our senses is an objectively-existing world, where things are connected and inter-related in a particular way — this is how we come to conceive of ourselves as making judgements, and forming beliefs. Unlike the empiricists, who supposed that, as there was nothing we could experience through our senses in the objects themselves to justify our apparent knowledge of them, then we could not be sure that they existed at all, Kant never doubts that they are there, and that we know they are. If this were not so, we could have no concept of ourselves as subjects. So he asks — if there is nothing in the objects themselves to reveal certain knowledge of them to us, how is it that we can have this knowledge, that they can become objects for us? And he finds his answer in the forms of space and time, and in the categories. He does not limit his enquiry to what can come though our senses, and indeed it would not make sense to look there, because to have experience at all will *depend* on these conditions. He thus avoids the empiricist's result of falling either into what he calls problematic idealism, exemplified by Descartes, who claimed that all we could be certain of was the mental appearances; or the dogmatic idealism of Berkeley, who believed that all our knowledge was really just knowledge of appearances, and that nothing else could exist. (B274-5)

Another source of the criticism of Kant as being, at heart, an idealist, is the erroneous idea that he considers our sensory knowledge as being somehow inferior to God's intellectual intuition. But nowhere does Kant say this. For one thing, we cannot know

that God does exist, but even if we could, this would not lead Kant to draw such a conclusion. The intellectual intuition can grasp objects without need of intuitions, and concepts to synthesise and organise those intuitions, but to call knowledge so arising somehow superior or more truthful is quite unwarranted. As there is no way for us to have knowledge, other than through the kind of intuition that we *do* have, the question of which might be 'superior' sounds misplaced. Better to say, in the context of the Critique, that the forms of intuition are different, rather than that one is superior to the other. To say otherwise is to presuppose the sceptical, and perhaps Cartesian-influenced view, that all knowledge which comes though the senses is suspect and not to be trusted; that there is somewhere an alternative, more reliable source of knowledge for us; and that we can only be assured of knowledge of our mental contents. Kant's view is that we *can* have knowledge of an independently-existing world, in the form which is available to us, which is through our senses.

But what about Rovane's claim that, in invoking the idea of an intellectual intuition at all, Kant is opening up the field to relativism? Here, after all, are two conceptual schemes, are there not? We even have provided the appropriate claim, that two schemes are incommensurable, where Kant stresses that, although we can conceive of God's intuition as being different from our own, we can in no way imagine what it would be like to have that kind of knowledge. In with this is linked Kant's famous claim that we can only know objects as they appear to us, and never as God does (if he exists) as they are in themselves. While this might seem to suggest that our knowledge is *only* of appearances, and therefore

inferior, there seems no reason to dispute the more common-sense — and appropriate-to-the-*Critique* view — that, when he claims we can only know objects as they appear, he is making the point that without our sensibility, we cannot know them at all. This is a view that seems relatively uncontroversial, as all Kant is saying here is that we have knowledge of objects, but that, in knowing them, they will appear to us in a certain way; and, because we are sensory creatures, there are certain conditions under which they *will* appear. Our knowledge is constrained by these conditions — we cannot go beyond them and have experience in any other way. It is a conceptual scheme, then, but a necessary one — there are no alternatives for us.

Does this then open up the possibility of different conceptual schemes, and therefore of relativism? Kant is most insistent on the necessity of the scheme, but it was a central point of Davidson's paper that the very idea of our establishing that, for us to make sense of there being any conceptual scheme at all, we would need to have a second type of scheme to serve as a comparison. Otherwise, how do we know that there is anything there at all? It looks like mere dogma to claim that there is. The entire enterprise then begins to look implausible, as, as Davidson points out, immediately we are in a position to recognise a scheme as being 'different' to our own, we have undermined that finding because we have shown that we can interpret the other's language (or whatever it is we take it to be that their conceptual scheme is manifested in). To find a contrasting scheme, we must interpret, but to interpret, we must be in a broadly similarly-experienced world. And from this,

Davidson concludes, we have no grounds for ascribing to ourselves *any* conceptual scheme at all.

Kant's position, however, is quite different. He does take note of a possible, different conceptual scheme, but unlike Whorf, and Kuhn, makes no attempt to imagine — let alone describe — its metaphysics, because he believes that to be quite impossible. As humans, with our own conceptual scheme, we cannot conceive of what knowledge attained through another conceptual scheme would be like. While we can make sense of the idea of ourselves possessing a scheme, because we know we are sensory creatures with fixed ways of acquiring knowledge, and, further, imagine that a being not dependent on senses will receive a different form of knowledge, to have any idea of the knowledge so attained is quite beyond our reach. And this is no more than what we would expect, considering that we talking here of two different, incommensurable, conceptual schemes.

If we resist approaching Kant from a Cartesian-influenced perspective, and allow that his position is that of, as he says, an empirical realist *not* 'empirical idealist', then we put ourselves in an anti-sceptical position of immediately grasping objects in the world in the way they appear to us. This now sounds much more like a Davidsonian position. Kant then of course goes on to look at the conditions upon our so grasping and interpreting our environment. This introduces the prospect of Davidson's argument not just not being in conflict with the Kantian view, but actually being strengthened by it, with Kant demonstrating how finite beings, who are not therefore perfectly rational, can come to have knowledge of

an external world. While Davidson focuses upon language, and our ability to interpret and the associated ascription of belief, nonetheless part of his picture consists of a shared world. Given that we are finite beings, the Kantian argument of how knowledge of this world is possible for us might seem preferable, as we cannot, as will be discussed in the next section, depend on our limited rationality to generate the required necessity in our experience of the world.

Davidson's stated view is that we don't have any conceptual scheme at all. Any different conceptual schemes would simply block — or at least hinder — our success at communication; and given that we have no way to make sense of the claim that there are different schemes, he concludes that we have no way of knowing that there is any such thing at all. But Kant shows us that we can make sense of the claim that there *might* be a different conceptual scheme — even if we (necessarily) cannot know how things would appear to us under such a scheme — at just the level required for suggesting that we *do* have a conceptual scheme. That is, we have a comparison, which is all that was required, without the absurdity of our being to interpret the other scheme through our own, and this suggests that we might be correct in thinking of ourselves as possessing a conceptual scheme, insofar as we are sensory beings. Further, there is the inherent plausibility of Kant's claim, that we are a part of this world and to have conscious thought must somehow be able to interpret it and make sense of it from the jumble which comes through our senses. How to even *begin* to triangulate otherwise? And there is no danger of radical interpretation failing, and of the world, as it were, fragmenting,

because our conceptual scheme is *shared* -not surprisingly, given the transcendental nature of Kant's claims — just as Davidson insists the world must be shared and that we are all (potentially) able to interpret one another. The idea of unity, of a shared environment with no deviations form it, is thus retained. We have a conceptual scheme, but still communicate — our concept of objectivity is thus assured.

While many of Kant's individual arguments for the existence of space and time as the pure forms of our intuition, and the categories, are regarded as seriously flawed by many commentators, put in context the overall picture is much stronger. Like Davidson, the ultimate force of his position is contained in the idea of us all, as humans, being much the same, taking centre-stage; we share a way of approaching our environment, and that environment is itself a shared one, and we are also all essentially rational. Kant's approach to the problem of how we come to have knowledge does not, therefore, either contradict ~~with~~ Davidson's attack on there being different conceptual schemes, or introduce the possibility of relativism. Further, we might see Davidson's attack on the idea of there being different conceptual schemes as an alternative way of arguing for Kant's view that the *a priori* conditions on our knowledge are the only possible ones for creatures such as ourselves.

Chapter 3

Essence and Modality

The idea of there only being one space and time for us, within which all our knowledge can and must occur, is of the utmost importance for Kant's theory of knowledge. Without it, he argues, we could know nothing at all — no experience of any kind would be possible. In particular, we could not have any knowledge of ourselves as subjects experiencing an objectively-existing world, as the world would then be as fluctuating and unpredictable as our own disjointed and fragmented impressions, which we experience in our own minds, and which have no necessary order to bind them together. We need the contrast, brought out most forcefully in the Second Analogy, between what is necessary, and thus outwith our control and objective, and what is merely subjective, impressions would might have come in another order entirely, the choice being down to us. This contrast can only come through the observance of the necessity inherent in the external world; therefore, Kant reasons, given that we do indeed undergo experience, and are able to form judgements — the concept of the 'I' — that is, subjectivity — being central to this process — then it must be that the world is bound by necessary connections, cause and effect; and that there is therefore a unified space and time, for there simply are no choices, no other outcomes, of which we could have knowledge and which would constitute a different world. The idea of necessity implies a single spatio-temporal framework; in an important sense, for Kant there are *no* 'possible worlds'.

In this light, then, it is profitable to compare this strong viewpoint with today's debate on our modal thought.

In discussions of modality, it has been traditional to draw a distinction between modality *de re* and modality *de dicto*. This is a distinction which can be traced back to Medieval philosophy, and, very roughly, it can be outlined as follows: modality *de re* ascribes a certain property to an object, whereas modality *de dicto* ascribes a certain property to a statement or proposition.

The trend in recent decades has been very much towards the former. This is not surprising, as the resurgence of interest in modality can be seen as a direct result of the work done in the field of modal logic, where we find the employment of the modal operators *necessity* and *possibility*. That these modal terms operate on objects, as opposed to propositions, leads us into the realm of modality *de re*. This has consequences for our conception of essence, as the concepts of modality and essence are closely related. For if we speak of a property as being essential to something, what we are saying is that it is necessary that it has that property, if it is to be the thing that it is. Whereas, if we regard a property as non-essential to something which has it — an 'accident' — what we are saying is that we can conceive of them as existing, minus that property.

Lewis's Approach

We are accustomed to assessing modal claims in terms of what is the case in all possible worlds; if something is a necessary truth, then we understand it as being something which is true in all possible worlds, while for something to be possible is for it to be true only in some possible worlds. This conception allows our modal

logic to become a powerful tool in examining and exploring various concepts and arguments. In David Lewis's words, it opens up a 'philosopher's Paradise', (Lewis, 1986, p. 1) in a similar way to how the use of set theory created a paradise for the mathematicians. But, as ever, this comes at a price, for when we scratch the surface — perhaps even before we scratch the surface — a welter of difficulties, in particular regarding counter-intuitive consequences of the method, emerge.

The metaphysical complications of the theory become immediately apparent when we ask the *de re* proponent the following question: how does he resolve the apparent contradiction in his requiring the existence of things that do not exist? For this is what it is to be a possible world — merely possible, not actually existing. But the theory operates by attributing properties to these non-existent entities, in its account of the notions of possibility and necessity. So, how are we to interpret these claims?

There are two main approaches to this problem, the actualist and the possibilist. The actualist argues that the difficulty disappears when we recognise that there are two senses of the term 'possible world' being employed here. Firstly, it is being understood as stating that there are various ways the world might be, states of affairs which might have existed, and in this sense there very clearly *are* 'possible worlds'; to say so does not seem problematic at all. The other meaning is that it might refer to a world which literally does exist, in concrete form, but in the actualist view this existence applies only to our own world.

The alternative, possibilist position is exemplified by Lewis. Here, the division is made in the area of the modal term's application, where we can take it to range over what is actual — namely, our own world — but also over all of reality, which includes the possible worlds. On this view, the possible worlds really do exist, but are removed from us in time and space, so in the actual realm, they can be correctly described as not existing.

There are clear difficulties with the metaphysics of both possible solutions. The first solution seems somehow 'messy', with no real answer being given as to the problem of what a possible world *is*; possible worlds seem to have disappeared into talk of what is and isn't possible, whereas surely our original aim was to explore what lay behind the modal concepts of necessity and possibility, and demonstrate what made them true or false of certain objects or states of affairs. It seems to be saying that possible worlds are possible, and nothing more.

Lewis's response would seem to be arguing that we can talk meaningfully of entities, which clearly would have to be, if he is right, infinite in number, of which we can have no experience, as they are separated from us in space and time. How, then, can we know that they exist? And, of course, it is not just that we know that they exist, but we know in infinite detail their contents, all of their objects with all of their properties, such that they inform all of our statements of possibility and necessity. In this respect, we have ended up with a much more complicated and difficult notion than that which we sought to understand to begin with, which might

suggest to us that there is something wrong here. For Lewis, however, this is the right path to go down; he claims that:

> If we want the theoretical benefits that talk of *possibillia* brings, the most straightforward way to gain honest title to them is to accept such talk as the literal truth. It is my view that the price is right... The benefits are worth their ontological cost. Modal realism is fruitful; that gives us good reason to believe that it is true. (p. 4)

He describes the logical space generated by these possible worlds as a 'philosopher's paradise'. His ascription of literal existence to these worlds certainly avoids the obvious circularity of the former (actualist) approach, while yet retaining the advantages of illuminating the logic that underlies our talk of modality. Lewis believes that the benefit of being able to economically account for our notions of necessity, possibility, essence, and consistency, for example, far outweighs the ontological cost of these worlds' existing. Furthermore, this in itself is a good reason for him to believe that this theory is true.

The most immediate difficulty, I would argue, lies in the epistemology of this theory. How, exactly, are we supposed to be able to acquire knowledge of these worlds with which, by definition, we can have no actual acquaintance? Lewis's response is to draw a parallel with the field of mathematics (p. 108). Just as, in mathematics, we draw on our knowledge of a whole host of abstract objects to inform our statements, so with modal statements. He reminds us of Benacerraf's dilemma: we would like

an account of mathematical knowledge that parallels that of our semantics for a natural language. However, this seems unlikely, as there are countless mathematical objects, such as the sets of set theory, which are not open to inspection, and therefore 'beyond the reach of the better understood means of human cognition (e.g. sense perception and the like).' (Benacerraf; quoted p. 109 Lewis.) So to attribute truth conditions according to these objects opens up the mystery of how we can know them when we aren't, it seems, acquainted with them, while to attempt a different account leaves it a mystery as to where the truth values of mathematical statements comes from at all.

For Lewis, 'it is very plain which horn of Benacerraf's dilemma to prefer.' (p. 109) It's the epistemologist's problem if he can't understand it; for after all, isn't mathematical knowledge much more useful to us than the epistemology which here seeks to undermine it? It would be 'hubris' (p. 109), he contends, to take their being baffled as a reason to reform maths, in order to demonstrate our knowledge of its truths. For Lewis, that something is beneficial is reason enough to regard it as true; therefore, it really doesn't matter what epistemological difficulties there might be, or how strange the relevant ontology seems, because we know, independently of any strategy which they might introduce, that our mathematical knowledge is true and correct.

And this is what Lewis wants to say about *possibillia*. The 'ontological cost' (p. 4) and accompanying epistemological problems are irrelevant to its truth; and if we're really so worried about 'how we know', then look at maths — aren't we willing, there, to accept

that we have knowledge of objects with which we have no direct acquaintance? Perhaps we are; intuitively, we operate on the basis that we are dealing with 'real' objects when we assign truth conditions to our mathematical statements, even though, as abstract objects, we can have no direct sensory acquaintance of them. But surely we would hesitate to do the same regarding items such as (to take Lewis's favourite example) talking donkeys. (p. 108)

There is an obvious difference in that natural numbers, sets, and so on, are accepted as being abstract objects; maybe we don't know quite how we come to have knowledge of them, but it doesn't surprise us too much that they can't be known in the same way that we know of physical, concrete entities. But the whole point of Lewis's argument is that his possible worlds exist as fully as our own. These are concrete, physical objects, of which he asserts we have full but mysteriously-acquired knowledge. So on the one hand, we have physical objects, which we know through, for example, sensory perception, and on the other, we have the possible objects in the other worlds, which exist as fully, are essentially 'the same', and yet are known in a completely other way! What fixes this asymmetry? In maths, it is clear: we can justify it by our appeal to the abstract nature of the mathematical objects. What is Lewis going to appeal to?

His response is to divide our knowledge into necessary and contingent knowledge. Taking the example of a talking donkey, which, he claims, we know to possibly exist, he argues that we clearly possess such 'abundant modal knowledge'. (p. 108) He

moves from this assertion to the claim that what we need, then, is a comprehensive theory that includes this knowledge which, although we might not know how, we clearly do have. Our necessary knowledge then comprises all our knowledge of mathematical objects, and the possible worlds with their various members. We have this knowledge *a priori*, without the need of any observation — obviously, because we can't observe it. Our contingent knowledge is that which depends on our experience, and it is the knowledge of our own world, with which we interact and observe. This is where Lewis finds his division between the donkeys in our world and the donkeys in the possible ones; and we discover which world is actual, which is the one inhabited by us, through observation.

Again, however, the distinction between the abstract nature of mathematical entities and the concrete existence Lewis is ascribing to his *possibillia* remains troubling. We might happily accept that mathematical objects are known by us *a priori*; but to extend this to concrete objects in other worlds, seems both counter-intuitive and unnecessary. We generally imagine that our knowledge of the immediate objects around us is prior to any knowledge of what form these things might possibly take, while still remaining recognisably the object that they are; we go from the actual to the possible. According to Lewis, however, this is not so; he seems to suggest that everything starts off as necessary knowledge, of what is possible, and then upon this is built the merely contingent knowledge of what is actual. We might think that it is our idea of what a donkey is that leads us to the conclusion that there might be a talking donkey, and that this is gleaned, at least in part, from our

a posteriori knowledge of donkeys. But Lewis has it that we survey all the donkeys in all the possible worlds, to establish what properties they might have, and which are necessary and which contingent; and that through observation of donkeys around us we establish which of these are actual. Do we really possess such knowledge? And even if we do, is this how our knowledge works, that knowledge of possible donkeys is in a sense prior to the apparently more straightforward knowledge of the donkeys around us?

Further, not only does Lewis seem to be wrong about the source of our modal knowledge, his *possibillia* do not seem to be necessary for our understanding of modal concepts. The traditional, Aristotelian model explicates *de re* modality without recourse to the existence of numerous possible worlds, through designating contingent properties as accidents and necessary properties as essential. Admittedly, this is circular, but it seems much closer to how our understanding of and use of modal concepts operates in practice than Lewis's model.

Lewis's theory tells us that we need this immensely complex knowledge to lie behind our modal concepts. But we seem to manage just fine without any such knowledge of possible donkeys in other worlds. Modal concepts such as possibility, necessity, contingency and so on have always been with us and form an intrinsic part of our language and reasoning, but at no point do we seem to call upon such a reserve of knowledge to attribute truth conditions to our statements; rather, we combine our knowledge of actual properties with actual knowledge of possible bearers. Lewis

seems so eager to delve into the logic that he has neglected the objects which the logic — which is, after all, only a tool — was designed to handle in the first place. His *possibillia* are a neat way of accounting for the inferences we make in modal thinking, but it does not bear closer examination, and really serves only as a tool for exploring certain modal concepts in a limited way. Does this aspect constitute a 'philosopher's paradise'? Surely philosophy should seek to operate in a much wider field than that served by the postulation of possible worlds; we *do* want to know and want philosophy to tell us, perhaps above all, how we know things, and why. A philosopher's paradise would be somewhere that addressed all these concerns and even united them; putting semantical concerns first as Lewis does seems to be a mistake, beyond its value as a tool for our understanding of how modal logic operates. It can't tell us anything much about *this* world, and how we structure our knowledge of this world, such that we have the knowledge that we do; it doesn't tell us anything that we might want to know about *us*, at all. (Unless, I suppose, you already agree with Lewis that we have knowledge of infinite possible worlds, all existing as concretely as this one, and that our knowing this constitutes an essential part of what it is to be human.)

It doesn't even seem to have divested us of the problem of circularity; the notion of 'possibility' is required in Lewis's account of the other worlds. This operator is still there and hasn't been reduced or explained fully; even if he were right about the possible worlds existing, pointing to other objects in this way would not serve as a definition for how we understand the modal concepts such as possibility and necessity; he has not given us an account of

these ideas, he has just told us which objects they are true of, and we knew that already. This can be seen when we consider that the question of his justification of necessary knowledge remains. Even if he is right about the *possibillia*, does something being true in all possible worlds constitute its being necessary? We talk like this in shorthand in philosophy, we say that something is necessary if it is true in all possible worlds, but does this fact about different worlds justify the modal step to an assertion of absolute necessity? To assert that something is true is one thing; to say that it is necessarily true, quite another. If it does not justify the modal step, then Lewis still has questions to answer — he hasn't explained necessity, and has introduced infinite objects in his attempt — the ontological price now looks far too high.

Further, what fixes the boundaries of the possible worlds? Clearly, it can't be observation, so how do we know what pertains in each world? Where does one world stop and another begin, and might it be possible that, somewhere, scientifically contradictory properties pertain? For example: might it be possible that there could exist water with 3 hydrogen molecules? There is a real uncertainty here, which surely would not be the case if we drew upon existing *possibillia*. This example serves to remind us, too, that there are grounds for thinking that Lewis is mistaken in his belief — crucial to his argument here — that all necessary knowledge is *a priori*; Kripke's argument that such scientific necessities as water's being H2O can only be known *a posteriori* raises serious doubts that Lewis is right in seeing the division in our types of knowledge, and accordingly in how we might come to know them, where he does. Another difficulty is pointed up by Bob Hale. (1997) He points out

that on Lewis's account of what a possible world is, there must exist possible individuals in various of these worlds. But then they would have knowledge of the *possibillia* around them just as we have, not of the same objects, but of the objects in our immediate surroundings. And this then, in Hale's words, generates a 'yawning chasm' (p. 503) between what makes our ordinary modal statements true, on Lewis's view, and our knowledge — 'nothing in the character of our knowledge could in any discernible way reflect the nature of the states of affairs which confer truth upon the propositions known.'

Fine's Approach

Kit Fine, in his paper 'Essence and Modality', (Fine, 1994) argues that it must always be a mistake to attempt to reduce the concept of essence to that of necessity, and therefore that we should revise our metaphysical concepts accordingly. He begins by arguing for a *de dicto* form of modality, which he contends will place things the right way round. And this is something which feels 'wrong' about Lewis's account — the idea that we start from the abstract, and then go to the particular, actual, object; or from the possible, to the necessary, where necessity ceases to be something of utmost importance and interest, and is reduced rather to a particular kind of possiblity.

His central point is that:

> The notion of essence which is of central importance to the metaphysics of identity is not to be understood in modal

> terms or even to be regarded as extensionally equivalent to a modal notion. ... one notion is... a highly refined version of the other; it is like a sieve which performs a similar function but with a much finer mesh. (p. 3)

If he is right, then it is not only the epistemology of Lewis's account which is troubling; he has paid the ontological cost, and not even secured a comprehensive modal theory.

Fine begins by demonstrating the intuitive appeal of his position, against, as he sees it, the suspicious character of the *de re* account. He notes that we have an everyday, accepted way of talking of essence: 'We say "the object must have that property if it is to be the object that it is".' (p. 4) Now, the various *de re* options seem not to explain the significance which we feel is inherent in the claim, 'if it is to be the object that it is.' What Fine refers to as the categorical account — which states that an object has a property essentially just in case it is necessary that the object has that property — makes the phrase redundant and empty, in which case, why is it given? The two conditional accounts — the first, which makes the necessary possession of the property dependent on existence, and the second, which makes it conditional upon identity (the object has the property essentially just in case it is necessary that the object has the property if it is identical to that very object) — seem to fare little better. On the existence view, the phrase is regarded as expressing that existence, which seems to make it more promising. But then, asks Fine, 'why is the existence of the object expressed so perversely in terms of identity?' (p. 4) And

because our significant phrase is one concerning identity, the identity-conditional account renders it redundant.

All of this, while not amounting to an actual argument against the reduction of essence to some form of modality *de re*, does indeed suggest that there is something wrong with that way of thinking, and thus motivates our searching for an alternative account.

Fine goes on to argue that the criterion given in the standard accounts is necessary, but not sufficient. While it is the case that if an object has a property essentially, then it has it necessarily, it is not true to say that for an object to have a property necessarily it has it essentially. (Here we can find the notion captured by the additional phrase, 'if it is to be the object that it is.') Focussing on the conditional-existence account, he considers the example of Socrates' necessarily belonging to the singleton Socrates. While it is certainly the case that this is a necessary proposition, would we want to call it an essential property of Socrates? The criterion under consideration claims that it is, for, if Socrates exists, then any property necessary to him must be essential — to put it in another way, there is no possible world in which it could be otherwise. But, says Fine, 'intuitively, this is not so. It is no part of the essence of Socrates to belong to the singleton.' (p. 4-5)

The force of Fine's point here can be brought out more fully by contrasting the claim that Socrates essentially belongs to the singleton Socrates, with the claim that the singleton Socrates essentially has Socrates as its member. The latter seems to hold, uncontroversially — returning to our earlier, informal notion of

essence, it *is* what it is to be the singleton Socrates, to have Socrates as a member. There is then an asymmetrical relation between the two propositions. However, *de re* modality, referring as it does to the objects, and not propositions, can draw no such distinction between the two cases; if Socrates exists and has the necessary property of belonging to the singleton Socrates, then on its account of essence it must conclude that he has this property essentially.

Similarly, if we take any necessary truth at all, such as '2+2=4', or even the conjunction of *all* necessary truths, then clearly it is the case that, if Socrates exists, then it is necessary that 2+2=4, or that all necessary truths are true. But, argues Fine, 'it is no part of Socrates' essence that there may be infinitely many prime numbers... or what have you' (p. 5). Further, it follows that, because any statement of essence is a statement of necessity, it becomes true that the essence of any object (Socrates, say) is formed in part by the essence of every other. Bizarrely, this means that the essence of the Eiffel Tower — being a necessary truth — constitutes part of Socrates' essence. So it is a part of his essence that the Eiffel Tower is essentially spatio-temporally continuous. 'O happy metaphysician! For in discovering the nature of one thing, he thereby discovers the nature of all things.' (p. 6)

Thus, the account given of the standard phrase by the categorical form is too weak, and our alternative, the conditional account, while giving a more substantive interpretation ends up making it too strong. For we can't distinguish between the non-essential properties; once we allow existence to be non-essential, many

others — such as, to take Fine's example, the existence of Socrates' parents — will follow, too. Such properties as this are necessary if Socrates exists, but not essential to him; the conditional account seems to make all such attributes essential. Anything we could say is necessarily true about Socrates, becomes a part of his essence.

One way round this, for the upholder of *de re* modality, would be to introduce a condition of relevance for any property to constitute a subject's essence. But all that this does is to raise the question: how do we know what is relevant? We can only know this by presupposing the very concept that we are attempting to reduce — that of essence itself. As Fine puts it: 'We want to say that it is essential to the singleton to have Socrates as a member, but that it is not essential to Socrates to be a member of the singleton. But there is nothing in the "logic" of the situation to justify an asymmetric judgement of relevance; the difference lies entirely in the nature of the objects in question.' (p. 7) In other words, it lies in their essence. On the *de re* account, then, there seems to be no way of avoiding the conclusion that we must assume the concept of essence in order to group together the properties which we regard as properly belonging to that object.

Fine argues from this to his claim that, rather than, as the *de re* proponent would have it, essence being a special case of metaphysical necessity, metaphysical necessity is a special case of essence, namely, those properties which are true 'in virtue of the nature of all objects whatever.' (p. 9) We need the *source-sensitive* notion of essence to draw the distinctions which the logic of *de re* modality fails to do, for example, as in the case of the singleton

Socrates having Socrates' existence as part of *its* essence, while Socrates does not have the existence of the singleton as a part of *his*.

Fine attempts to give an account of his alternative, source-sensitive *de dicto* modality, by way of a comparison between the concepts of necessity and analyticity, and those of essence and meaning. The suggestion of such a parallel — 'as essence is to necessity, so is meaning to analyticity' (p. 10) — is implied in the very notion of *de dicto* modality, concerning as it does attributions made not to objects, but to propositions or definitions. Fine goes on to give his account of essence in terms of its alleged relation to the concept of definition.

Thus, we can take a familiar example of an analytic statement, 'All bachelors are unmarried men,' and assert that this is necessarily true; it is so in virtue of the meanings of 'bachelor' and 'unmarried man'. Fine then goes further. He argues that we can draw a distinction between this basic notion of what it is for something to be analytic, and a deeper, object-sensitive, more finely-grained notion. He refers to this process as 'relativizing analyticity'. (p. 10) Thus, we can say that the above statement is analytic in the sense of 'bachelor', for, when we analyse that term, and extract its definition, we find the concept of 'unmarried man'; whereas, if we take the words 'unmarried' and 'man', we find that the sentence is not analytic relative to them — when we analyse them, nowhere do we find therein the concept of bachelorhood. In other words, it does not constitute part of their definitions. One is contained within the other, but not the other way around. And here is our parallel — a

necessary truth may be true in virtue of the identity of certain objects as opposed to others, just as an analytic truth can be true in virtue of the meaning of certain words and not others in the statement.

He regards the objection that the above sentence is in fact equally true in virtue of 'man' and 'unmarried', where 'man' is taken to contain 'bachelor or married' within its definition, and so on — as implausible. He writes, 'It seems quite clear to me, for example, that the concept of marital status is not at all involved in the concept of being a man.' (p. 10-1) And, even if we do disagree with him here, 'the important issue concerns intelligibility rather than truth' (p. 11), and his notion of relativized analyticity has been made to sound intelligible — certainly in comparison with the idea of 'man' defined as being 'unmarried or married.' This reminds us of the earlier discussion as to the distinction between necessary truth and essence; it is the case that a man must be unmarried or married, but this truth does not constitute, for us, a part of a man's essence; and it does not constitute a part of the definition of 'man' either.

Further, we can agree on the analytic facts, while yet disagreeing on facts about meaning, just as, Fine argues, we might agree on the modal facts and disagree on the essentialist ones: 'These considerations... suggest that even when all questions of analyticity have been resolved, real issues as to their source will remain. The study of semantics is no more exhausted by the claims of analyticity than is the metaphysics of identity exhausted by claims of necessity.' (p. 12)

To say that meaning is holistic, and that an analytic truth derives its status from its parts being synonyms of each other, is to give no more real understanding of what is generating the analyticity of the sentence than our account of essence in terms of necessity gave us, in demonstrating how we ascribe essential properties. Fine argues that we must dig deeper, and so it isn't enough to claim that 'the logical derivation of an analytic statement from the definitions of its terms constitutes an analysis of that statement' (p. 12) — there is something more going on here than mere *logical* truth, and we are reminded of his earlier attack on the reduction of essence to *de re* modality when he adds: 'as far as this conception goes, one might as well extract any predicate P from the given analytic statement and use the artificial 'definition' above to provide it with a trivial pseudo-analysis.'

A real account of analytic truth will be provided if we allow the definitional truths which figure in our traditional conception of analyticity — where analytic truths are understood in terms of definitional truth — to derive their truth status from the meanings of the statement's defined terms. This way, 'real content is given to the idea of analysis. The given analytic statement is derived from definitions which in a significant sense provide one with the meanings of the individual items.' (p. 13)

Fine's view is not simply that there is a similarity between defining a term and giving the essence of an object, but rather that the two 'are, at bottom, the same' (p. 13). Synonyms are no good, for the reasons given above; so in looking to define a term, we should be

attempting to do so in a way which tells us what the meaning essentially is — thus, in giving a definition, we are giving an essence, which, Fine will go on to argue, is not just the essence of the meaning of the word, but of the object itself.

His argument is that there is no real reason to see ourselves as defining a concept or meaning, and not an object, other than having 'some prejudice against real definition' (p. 14). This prejudice, then, causes us to veer away from the conclusion which Fine is pushing us towards, and feel strongly that we shouldn't presume that we are able to give definitions of actual objects themselves.

This accusation of 'prejudice' in itself, however, is not sufficiently persuasive if Fine is to get us to accept the rest of his conclusion. After all, his arguments up till now have derived much of their power from our *intuitions* about essence ('...that it is the object that it is'), which Fine has made full use of, and to then, at the last, call another such intuition a 'prejudice' is at least surprising. His idea throughout is that we come to an awareness of what the essence of an object is not by following rules of logic but rather by, presumably, somehow intuiting or perceiving that property of the object which is its essence. Thus, we have some kind of direct relationship with that object's essence; and this seems to sit ill with his earlier contention that an indication of the deeper status of essence, as opposed to necessity, was our ability to disagree on some essentialist facts but not others. This does seem to point up that essentialist questions cannot be entirely answered by the necessary facts; but it also suggests that we are dealing with the

concepts that we each hold of objects, rather than the objects themselves.

This can further be seen when we consider the example Fine has chosen to illustrate his point, namely, the natural numbers. Rather than defining each natural number in terms of various others, for example, '1' as 'the successor of 0', is it not more reasonable, he asks, to define each number independently of others? (p. 14) And this does indeed seem plausible. However, these numbers are, of course, abstract objects if they are objects at all, and thus knowable only 'directly', that is, without our senses. There is here, then, a clear case for our not requiring the mediating notion of concepts to enable us to talk about those objects; it would be superfluous, and there is an economy in defining the numbers individually, as distinct objects. They clearly are, unless you disagree that they are objects in the first place, not concepts but objects; '1' is just that, '1', there is nothing more which needs to be or can be said in giving its essence. But now consider: what of a table? Or a person? It is far from clear, when we turn our attention to concrete objects, that we do have the kind of immediate access to their essence which Fine is suggesting. And this would certainly account for our disagreeing on the essentialist facts as to what constitutes, say, a mind or a person. We can talk about objects meaningfully, and communicate successfully, but of course all that is needed for this is a shared conceptual understanding (which itself needn't even be identical) of what it is that we are referring to; no agreement of essence, indeed no direct reference to the essence of the object itself, is required.

And here, of course, is where the possible worlds position is strongest. This is not surprising; it is motivated by accounting for the truth-conditions that attach to our modal statements, and so provides exactly what seems to be required here, and no more. We can communicate adequately without agreeing on the essentialist facts, and the possible worlds account provides a tool that can provide just these truth-conditions for our modal statements. But Fine has shown that, metaphysically as well as epistemologically, we must look further than this theory; while it is not perhaps necessary that we always agree upon the essentialist facts, but only operate within a shared conceptual realm, the concept of essence still underpins and informs all our other modal judgements. It therefore remains significant, and demands a theory that explains it further.

What is beyond doubt is that the notions of essence, possibility, necessity and contingency and so on are used by everyone everyday, and it has always been so. You might argue that there seems nothing simpler, more natural, to us. You might then feel that any account, such as Lewis's, that made things more complicated and outlandish than what it is it is trying to explain, has to be wrong somewhere. We have all got along fine without presupposing Platonic objects, or *possibillia*; we don't need these things to talk to and understand one another. Further, the underpinning of our language by these modal concepts, and their interrelations with one another, suggests a more *fluid* approach than any which could ever be afforded by the reduction of our notions to certain abstract or concrete objects. Something will always be lost in that process — there will be something, as Fine so

convincingly demonstrates, which slips out, or which can't be accounted for on pain of circularity. Our most fundamental modal concepts simply don't submit to being pinned down and fixed in that way.

If this is correct, we could argue that essence is such a powerful concept, it is always a mistake to try to reduce it, and the correct place then to locate it is as an epistemological concept within us. There, it is, as it were, readily-available and can be utilised at will in our thinking and reasoning.

A Kantian Approach

If we take the notion of essence to be *a priori*, inherent in all of our thinking and communicating, we are brought to a Kantian view of our modal thinking. The various modal operators then become dependent upon categories by means of which we understand and 'sort' the world.

Such an approach is advocated by George Bealer. In his paper, 'The Philosophical Limits of Scientific Essentialism' (Bealer, 1987), he argues that a form of 'circumscribed rationalism' is required if we are to make sense of, and justify, our knowledge regarding various modal concepts such as necessity and essence. These different 'categories' enable us to make the distinctions that Lewis argues require our having knowledge of *possibillia*; it answers the metaphysical difficulties of that theory while enabling us to account for much of our intuitive notions, which so destabilised the Fine account.

Bealer's argument takes as its focus the modal step — perhaps more of a leap — which occurs when, in scientific theorising, we move from empirical observations of what is true in certain observed cases, to conclusions regarding the necessary status of these truths, based upon *a posteriori* knowledge. Contrary to much modern philosophical thinking, his view is that the *a posteriori* nature of such necessary knowledge does not lead to the conclusion that this knowledge means that scientific knowledge is independent of philosophy, or even (what Bealer terms 'global scientific essentialism') that all questions of philosophy will ultimately be reduced to science, in a similar way to Lewis's reduction of the modal notions to talk of possible worlds. Rather, he argues that we are dependent on various *a priori* categories or concepts in making our scientific judgements; without these, the crucial modal step to necessary truth remains unwarranted.

He begins by reminding us of Kant's assertion that 'Experience teaches us that a thing is so and so, but not that it cannot be otherwise.' (Kant, 1990; quoted p.290) There is, then, a tradition in philosophy that this type of modal knowledge requires a source other than experience, and the accompanying thesis that science is ultimately dependent on philosophy. However, this has been challenged of late by scientific essentialism, which has pointed out that certain, scientific necessary truths — for example, that water is always H2O — are based on knowledge which is, contrary to Kant's contention, *a posteriori*.

Does this mean that science doesn't need philosophy? No, argues Bealer, for the status of philosophy is such that, not only does it not

reduce to science, but *science actually depends upon philosophy*. He thus proceeds to construct a transcendental argument, to show that this is so, on the grounds that the scientist still needs to justify his modal step from truth to necessary truth. His point is that this can only be achieved through a kind of rationalism that he calls 'natural rationalism' (p. 339). This is a rationalism that, unlike more traditional versions, allows it to coexist alongside the doctrine of scientific essentialism. Thus, he holds that both rationalism and the *a posteriori* knowledge espoused by scientists is required for the establishment of scientific necessary truths.

He discusses, at length, the claim often made by the essentialists that intuitions are what justify our claims of necessity. They generally concede that philosophy must provide a general proposition, somewhere, if their program is to get off the ground; in this way, the modal step is facilitated. The ground of this philosophical proposition is, they assert, merely an intuition. Bealer quotes Kripke in this regard: 'I think it [intuition] is very heavy evidence in favour of anything, myself. I really don't know, in a way, what more conclusive evidence one can have about anything.' (Kripke, quoted p. 300) And Bealer defines 'intuitions' thus: 'non-inferential beliefs regarding the applicability of a concept to a hypothetical case. Or if intuitions are not strictly identical to such beliefs, they are mental states having a strong modal tie with them.' These intuitions form a crucial part of the scientific process, for example, in telling us that, on Putnam's twin-earth, the substance XYZ, while being macroscopically identical to water, is in fact not water but 'twater'. Such intuitions lead us to conclude that water is necessarily always H2O. Bealer asks — what is it that gives

these intuitions their evidential weight? (p. 301) And it is no good, he argues, to turn to the rules of logic, or of our language and logic combined, to perform this function; these rules are themselves frequently controversial, requiring further argument, using more intuitions, in their justification. Further, their simply being classed as intuitions isn't sufficient either, for there are many intuitions which we wouldn't want to accord evidential status to — gambler's hunches, and the like.

Bealer's solution is to distinguish between three types of concept: naturalistic concepts, category concepts, and content concepts. Naturalistic concepts are those which require *a posteriori* knowledge; they include the concepts of water, heat, tomato, gold, and the like. Category and content concepts are those which philosophy is primarily concerned with; examples of the former include substance, person, compositional stuff, action, reason, and so on; content concepts are 'familiar phenomenal qualities' and 'basic mental relations' (p. 295). (The demarcation of various categories reminds us, again, of Kant's approach.) In order to retain the status of necessary scientific truths (while also ensuring the independent status of philosophy from science) he argues that we must impose a two-tier theory, which separates the content and category concepts from the naturalistic concepts, thus enabling us to treat them differently, allowing that the former group be known only *a priori*, and the latter, *a posteriori*. There is then no conflict, and the evidential status of our intuitions, governed as they are by the rational concepts known to us *a priori*, is assured. Scientific, necessary truths can then be seen to draw their modal status from the realm of the category and content concepts.

We can see how this works in the 'twater' example. Here, we know that XYZ is not water, because we have a rationalist intuition about what Bealer terms the category concept of compositional stuff, which tells us that: 'If paradigm examples of a compositional stuff have a certain complex composition, then items lacking that composition would not qualify as samples of the compositional stuff.' (p. 304) This rational intuition, then gives its weight to the naturalistic intuition which motivates the conclusion in this example.

A second problem discussed by Bealer is that of the origin of ideas. Scientific essentialists need to provide an account that does not contradict with their thesis, while yet retaining the status of ideas within our epistemological framework. Again, there are certain, naturalistic ideas that they don't want to say are *a priori*, but rather come to us through experience. So, what is it to possess a naturalistic concept?

The accepted answer is that we must stand in some sort of casual relation to the items in the world, which belong to those concepts. This seems reasonable; however, in another transcendental-type argument, Bealer sets out to demonstrate that for such a causal account to work, we must already possess the content and category concepts. Anything less than this will fail to provide an adequate foundation for local scientific essentialism; thus, scientific essentialism presupposes natural rationalism.

The critical difficulty for the scientific essentialist here is that his thesis requires that the concepts he employs be *determinate* — ambiguity will not do; we want to say that we have a concept from being able to define a particular something, whether that be gold, heat, lemon, or whatever. (The alternative, logical-positivist view reduces us to merely stipulating what something might mean; there is no room for genuine empirical discovery allowed here.) However, argues Bealer, concepts which are established through a causal chain alone do not give us the necessary determinacy. He writes:

> ...the act will always be underdetermined (ambiguous) if exclusively causal or "externalist" resources are involved. The thought or reference is determinate only if the person employs background category and content concepts. So just as in the case of the problem of the evidential status of our intuitions, so in the case of the problem of the determinateness of our concepts, scientific essentialists will be forced to adopt a two-tier theory that separates naturalistic concepts from background category and content concepts. (p. 308-9)

And, in order to avoid a regress, the only option available for an account of how it is we possess these concepts, is natural rationalism.

This conclusion 'meshes exactly' (p. 309) with that of the previous, intuitions-argument, which for Bealer lends further strong support to his position. His answer as to how we possess determinate concepts is 'broadly Kantian' (p. 321) — to have a concept is to

have a mental capacity, like perfect pitch, which is a cognitive capacity 'for necessarily making mostly true judgements regarding the applicability of the concept to elementary hypothetical cases that the person might consider.' In a similarly Kantian vein, he regards the mind as a whole, saying that 'a disconnected piece of mind is no more possible than a disconnected piece of space; like space, a mind comes as an integrated, synthesised whole.'

At first glance, Bealer's division of concepts and two-tier system might look somewhat implausible, or at least, messy. Why three? Kant had lots, after all — a proliferation of categories. However, it becomes clear, particularly as we are taken at length through the various alternative positions — traditional rationalism, empiricism, Platonism, coherentism — that his position has much appeal. In particular, it appears to give an adequate account of how much of our naturalistic reasoning operates. For we do want to justify the modal step to necessary truth, and we do want to say that science is operating with determinate concepts and making genuine empirical discoveries when it does redefine these.

Empirical knowledge cannot be enough for this. We need more if we are to establish necessary truth, and also, relatedly, if we are to have determinate concepts. Empirical observation cannot fix our concepts, and it cannot establish necessary truths; if we are to avoid Quinean scepticism, we must look for the answer elsewhere.

Bealer's natural rationalism can give the required weight to our natural intuitions, and it can also account for our employment of particular examples in our reasoning. For what constitutes a

genuine hypothetical case? When we reason to the establishment of a truth, we frequently employ various hypothetical examples in order to test our theories, and we know which examples are good and valuable, and which are no help at all — which are the ones that are metaphysically impossible. But how do we know this? To give all examples equal weight will permit the bad examples — for example, that a substance XYZ might be water — as well as the good ones; it would contradict the scientific essentialist's thesis. The 'good' examples, the ones which we have intuitions regarding, do not contradict scientific essentialism; but, asks Bealer, 'why is the cut just here?' Why is it that, when we come to the cases which do not contradict essentialism, we have these intuitions that they *are* metaphysically possible, whereas in the other cases, we do not have these intuitions? A purely causal account cannot answer this question, and so, Bealer suggests, we must turn to natural rationalism.

It is these *a priori* concepts, with their strong modal tie to the truth, which provide the basis for scientific essentialism. Through them, we are able, through causal connections, to form our natural concepts. They also guide us in our formation of hypothetical cases, enabling us to judge which are valid and possible, and which are not. Without them, we would be floundering — we would have no means, short of stipulation or luck, of establishing any scientific necessary facts, and no means of accounting for our according certain of our intuitions the status of evidence, and not others.

We can see a parallel here between the global scientific essentialist, and the type of modal account typified by Lewis, although it is true

that Lewis is claiming that our modal knowledge is fundamentally *a priori*, unlike the scientific essentialist. The parallel exists because, while Lewis's modal knowledge is *a priori*, it depends on the existence of something more, something *external* to us, whereas Bealer's account does not. Rather, it comes from the supposed existence of the possible worlds, and this is like scientific essentialism. For what can justify the modal leap from something being true, to our being able to claim that it is *necessarily* true? Lewis can give us no adequate answer here, and nor can global scientific essentialism. Given that this is so, and given that we do operate with certain modal concepts, it seems reasonable to conclude that these must somehow come from within us, and that our notions of essence and so on are established through the use of certain rational concepts, as Bealer suggests.

Fine has argued, contrary to Lewis, that we should take the concept of essence to be our most basic modal notion. If it is to do the work he argues that it must, then we have two possibilities, the first being that essence is a property of objects, their 'definition' as he puts it, which we somehow intuit in knowing that object. However, this again is an *a posteriori* claim. For how do we identify the essence of the object? Remember — Fine took the example of natural numbers, avoiding the quite different nature of the concrete objects, which we might arguably be most interested in. What gives us the essence of a person, or a book? What gives these experiences their special quality, such that, contrary to our other property ascriptions to that object, we categorise this one as 'essential' and of a different modal status from the others? And we can't just say 'experience', that won't provide us with necessary

knowledge. We look and see that it has a different colour, or that it is a certain shape; we also look and see (somehow — Fine says that we do know the object) its essence. And yet the latter has the power to generate justified necessary truths.

How do we know the definitions of objects? To know the definition is, on Fine's account, to know their essence — because essence is, on his account, constituted by those properties such that the object is the object that it is. But what gives us access to these definitions, and enables us to 'relativize' them as Fine suggests? For we are able to carve off some properties as being non-essential, while yet identifying and retaining what is essential, and this cannot be though observation or experience, because this *a posteriori* knowledge cannot justify our ascriptions of necessity.

In asserting that we are able to find what is essential in an object, such that this is necessarily true, Fine seems to be doing what he criticises the *de re* modalists for — presupposing what it is he is seeking to give an account of. He needs us to have some kind of prior concept of essence to account for our carving off properties in the way that he implies; we have to 'see' the essence — which is, after all, just a bundle of properties such that the thing is the thing it is — before knowing which properties constitute our definition.

All of which implies the second alternative answer to our difficulty: that this 'essence' is dependent on a faculty which is located within us. This account also has the virtue of explaining the central role of the modal concepts, in particular the crucial one of essence, in our everyday thought, reasoning and language; its fluidity; its

applicability to any realm to which we care to bring it. It also answers our previous epistemological difficulties, as to how we know, and how we are justified in making the modal leap that we do.

Bealer's account seems to suggest a good model for an account of our modal concepts. While we may not have the direct and intimate access to the 'object in itself' which Fine thinks that we do (if we did, we might follow the Kantian line that we would then have no need of such a classifying concept as 'essence' at all — we would know the object as it was — 'in itself' — without it), we can form an understanding of its essential properties, and of what might be predicated as being possible or not for it, through our use of various concepts as Bealer suggests. Our natural concepts, of what it is that objects are, do require our experiencing that object, but they ultimately derive their determinate status through our employment of the *a priori*
category and content concepts. It is through these that we know which properties to designate as essential, and which not, when we formulate our modal ideas about any object. Disagreements about the essentialist facts can be attributed to our not having the immediate relation to the object required to know it fully; reliant upon a combination of our observations of its properties, and our various concepts, we might come up with different conclusions. This might be because, in certain cases, there are gaps in our knowledge — for example, Fine's example of the mind — which allows us to attribute various accounts of its essence. More knowledge, and we will have more content for our concepts, and more agreement —

here we see Bealer's natural rationalism in action, a combination of the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* establishing a necessary truth.

This theory is economical, presupposing no *possibillia*. We know what is possible not because of existing worlds, but rather because of the intuitions generated by our concepts and our ability to reason; and the strong modal ties of these intuitions to the truth accounts for our making the attributions which we do.

Here we find a modern argument, along Kantian lines, suggesting a more intuitively plausible approach to our modal thinking. Bealer's rationalism is close in spirit to Kant's account of scientific knowledge as both synthetic and necessary, with the necessity meaning that there is something *a priori* in each case to generate that modal status. However, Kant has deeper reasons for his belief that necessity is not tied to any knowledge of possible worlds, and hence that certain concepts are found within our thinking *a priori*; and that is his belief that our experience *depends* on there being only one world.

If we wish to examine Kant's view on how it is that we make judgements, and how these judgements are constrained by the *a priori* intuition of time, then we must turn to Kant's account of the categories, in the Metaphysical Deduction.

Chapter 4

The Metaphysical Deduction

In the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant concluded that the form of our intuition was governed by the pure intuitions of space and time. While, as discussed in the first chapter, his arguments in the Aesthetic have varying merit, it is nonetheless the case that we find space and time *do* apply themselves quite naturally to our perceptions; Kant's attribution of them as necessary for our knowledge thus has a certain intuitive plausibility. The Transcendental Analytic is supposed to mirror the process for the understanding; however, it is clear from the outset that the task that Kant has set himself in this section is much less straightforward. There is nothing which immediately presents itself to us as a likely contender for the equivalent role of space and time, so Kant must not only unearth what he believes to be the necessary elements of our understanding, he must also, somehow, persuade us that these constitute a comprehensive list and that they also truly *do* apply to our experience. Furthermore, he must explain just how these elements go through and organise the material presented to the understanding by sensible intuition, such that a 'thought' can be successfully constructed — this was a task that did not arise in the Aesthetic.

To Kant's advantage, however, the idea that there must be something *a priori* present in the understanding which performs this function of arranging and giving structure to our thoughts, has immediate appeal, particularly when contrasted with the deficiencies in the empirical position that only our senses give

knowledge. Kant seems to be right in denying that this is so — in order to see an apple, it is not enough that we receive various sensory inputs; we also need to know, somehow, how to organise these inputs so that we can think that we are having the experience of *seeing* something, and that the red sensations and the roundness and so on go together to give the thought of an apple. And, as Kant argues in the Transcendental Deduction, our ability to do this cannot possibly arise from experience as Hume suggests, for experience itself depends upon the elements already present in our understanding. So they must be 'pure' elements, present prior to any experience.

The Categories

These pure elements of the understanding Kant entitles the categories. The argument where he derives the twelve categories, which he considers to be essential for knowledge, is found in the part of the *Critique* known as the Metaphysical Deduction. It centres on the claim that the 'clue' to the categories, at least one of which must be present in each and every judgement which we make, can be found in the different forms of logical judgement. Kant lists twelve of each, arranged in four groups of three, and each one in the first, Judgements table, is supposed to correspond with the similarly-situated category in his second table. Thus, the twelve forms of judgement are: Quantity — universal, particular, singular; Quality — affirmative, negative, infinite; Relation — categorical, hypothetical, disjunctive; and Modality — problematic, assertoric, apodeictic. The twelve categories are as follows: Of Quantity — unity, plurality, totality; of Quality — reality, negation, limitation; Of Relation — inherence and subsistence, causality and

dependence, community; and Of Modality — possibility-impossibility, existence—non-existence, necessity—contingency.

Kant's belief that the table of categories is complete and exhaustive resides in his claim that the science of what he calls general (as opposed to transcendental) logic has been completed, and that as the categories have been derived from the judgement-forms, *their* list must be complete and exhaustive, too. Despite the emphasis he places upon the completeness of his table, Kant makes no argument for the certainty of the elements of the table of judgements — instead, he simply states that the completion of general logic is so.

What Kant calls general logic is what we would term formal logic; Kant describes it as follows:

> Pure general logic has to do, therefore, only with principles *a priori*, and is a *canon of understanding* and of reason, but only in respect of what is formal in their employment, be the content what it may, empirical or transcendental. (A53/B77.)

It is, then, 'the mere form of thought,' (A54/B78), and it is these forms which we find in the table of judgements. Purely formal as it is, general logic 'abstracts from all content of knowledge,' considering only 'the logical form in the relation of any knowledge to other knowledge.' (A55/B79.) The only restrictive principle here is that of *non-contradiction* — providing the two items in the judgement do not contradict one another, then we make any

judgement we choose. Truth, as in, what is or is not so in the world, is not relevant because these purely logical or formal judgements take no regard of what is actually the case, or not.

In the Table of Categories, however, we find represented the body which Kant calls transcendental logic. Unlike general logic, it does not abstract from all content of knowledge, and therefore places constraints upon the judgements that we can make. If something is not in agreement with the categories, this is equivalent to stating that it is false; Kant points out, however, that no positive criterion of truth is possible, as it would have to be both general and apply to any number of varied cases of knowledge.

Debate upon the Metaphysical Deduction has frequently focussed upon the precise relationship between the two kinds of logic, particularly and most interestingly upon whether one might be dependent upon (and even reducible to) the other, and if so, which one we should regard as being fundamental. While there are very obvious objections one might make to the programme of the Metaphysical Deduction — for example, that developments in modern formal logic indicate that it is hardly complete as Kant considers it to be, and nor, if we follow Quine, need it be so certain — to focus on these is really to lose sight of much of what is of worth within the presentation. A closer, more balanced examination of Kant's thought here, particularly if we link it with other relevant parts of the *Critique*, shows the Metaphysical Deduction — and especially this division of logic — has much of interest to offer us in modern debates upon the nature of logic and modality.

In the previous chapter on modality, the difficulty of accounting for our referring to possible (but non-existing) objects was discussed, and various approaches to this problem were examined. Kant's approach here is interesting because it involves two types of necessity, one given in the Table of Judgements, and the other in the Table of Categories. This might give us some hope of accounting for the dilemma of how we can account for the possible existing, and yet not being actual and therefore *not* existing in any ordinary sense, without recourse to the claim that there are infinite, physically-real possible worlds. However, in order for us to be able to make this distinction, Kant will again lay claim to various *a priori* elements in our thinking. These constraints will replace the need for physically-existing objects, as in Lewis's account. Most obviously, in this section of the *Critique*, this means the categories; but at a deeper level, he is arguing that *we are dependent upon the unity of space and time to be able to apply the categories at all.*

Kant's claim is that, while the Table of Judgements relates only to analytic knowledge and depends solely upon the principle of non-contradiction for its application, the categories relate to our formation of synthetic knowledge, and therefore to judgements involving *more* than bare logic, judgements which will then have further constraints imposed on them. This being the case, for knowledge to be attained we require the framework of space, and particularly time, and such a framework implies that there be *one* space and *one* time, that things might find their place in the succession and so generate knowledge. Without this *a priori* framework, we would lack the necessary, further constraint on our synthetic judgements, which, unlike those that arise from the Table

of Judgements, are sometimes order-dependent. As Kant has said, nothing can be experienced outwith this space and time, and this fixed framework guides the application of the categories, just as the principle of non-contradiction guides that of the bare judgements.

This asymmetry, or order-dependence, found in certain of the categories' applications is crucial to this claim. It reminds us, too, of Fine's attack on the possible-worlds approach to our modal thinking — his whole point there was to argue that the asymmetry occurring in much of our modal thinking could not possibly be accounted for by the order-indifferent 'bare logic' underlying the possible-worlds view. The question then arose — how might these constraints be generated? Fine's answer was that we have some kind of relationship with what we are judging which enables us to just see which of its properties are essential (as opposed to the purely formal status of being necessary). Kant's response is that the necessary unity and uniqueness of our spatio-temporal framework is what constrains the application of our categories, and that this framework is present in our thinking *a priori.*

In his paper, 'Concepts, Judgements and Unity in Kant's Metaphysical Deduction of the Relational Categories' (Nussbaum, 1990), Charles Nussbaum picks out this asymmetry as a means to give an account of what is special about the Table of Categories compared with the Table of Judgements. His paper is largely a response to the debate which much of the discussion of the Metaphysical Deduction has centred around — if the 'clue' for the categories is to be found in each of the corresponding judgements, and if, as Kant says, the same *function* is found in each case, then

how are they distinct from those judgements such that they might be said to hold a significant place in our thinking? And, if we allow them to stand apart from the judgements, so that they can represent something vital in our thinking, can they then be said to be deducible *a priori* from our understanding?

Charles Nussbaum, taking his lead from an earlier work by Klaus Reich, *Die Vollstandigkeit der Kantischen Urteilstafel*, attempts to steer a middle course between these two equally unpalatable alternatives. He begins by quoting the passage from the Metaphysical Deduction which he believes to be the most significant:

> The same function which gives unity to the various representations in a judgement also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various representations in an intuition; and this unity... we entitle the pure concept of the understanding.' (A79/B105.)

He asks, if the two functions — the one which relates to the analytical unity and that which works by means of the synthetic unity of the manifold of intuition in general, that is, all that is given by intuition and synthesised in the understanding — are the same, then how can we begin to distinguish between analytic and synthetic judgements?

Some commentators, such as Allison (Allison, 1983), have argued that Kant intends us to take it that the same kind of judgement — the analytical — is involved in both tables' application; this will,

they believe, strengthen the position of Kant in deriving one necessarily from the other. However, Nussbaum believes that Allison has been helped into this position through his misinterpretation of a key sentence of Reich's: 'Necessity of 'synthesis' as a special act of thought... and knowledge by means of general concepts are thus interchangeable concepts.' (Reich, quoted p. 92) Allison, he argues, seems to have taken from this the idea that synthesis and knowledge by means of general — that is, those listed in the table of judgements — concepts is interchangeable. But Reich is not saying that at all — he is saying the *necessity* of synthesis is what is interchangeable with knowledge by means of general concepts. And this means something quite different.

The point here is that, as Nussbaum puts it, the two are 'indispensable sides of any discursive understanding, and neither would be applicable to an understanding that was intuitive.' (p. 92-3) Reich is then simply stressing that both are equally important for us to have knowledge, and that, if we have one, then we must have the other as well. Without the ability to form a synthetic unity, we would not be able to have any experience. Without an analytical unity, our experience could not be brought before concepts and so interpreted, and understood.

The whole point of the Critique is that there are certain things necessary for us — humans — to have knowledge, and Kant makes the comparison between the limited beings which we are, and the intellectual intuition possessed by a perfect being (God). This distinction is highly illuminating for Kant's underlying thought in the

Critique; when it is borne in mind, much of what might otherwise be obscure or baffling in his argument is more easily understood — for example, the doctrine of phenomena and noumena. It could be seen, indeed, as the essence of his position of transcendental idealism. Because we are reliant on our senses for knowledge, we cannot immediately grasp objects, but can only know them as they appear to us. Only God can know things as they are in themselves, and as such has no need whatsoever of concepts to organise his impressions, which are gained immediately by his intellect. But we must depend upon a synthetic unity, generated by the categories, and the forms of judgement which give the analytical unity vital for judgements — only then, can we be said to have knowledge. Both these steps are vital, both are required for sensible beings such as ourselves. And it follows too, then, that these two are not the same thing at all, and we can see Kant's establishing of two tables as carrying through this theme, of *both* being necessary for humans to have the knowledge which we do.

Further, it is surely most unlikely that Kant wants us to see him as saying that it is the same act of thought involved in bringing things together via the categories, as it is in constructing judgements according to the general logic forms. For the two operations quite clearly *are* different, and it requires little reflection to see that this is so. Walsh (Walsh, 1975) brings the point out well, asking us to compare the thought processes involved in making the judgement, 'All hymn books are black,' with that present in thinking, 'There's a fast car coming.' He writes:

> The 'analytical unity' (A79/B105) which belongs to such representations [in the former example] is not at all like the 'synthetic unity' which is involved when we identify an object on the strength of its various appearances [as in the latter example, where] I connect them not as identical instances of the same concept, but as different manifestations of the same continuing thing. The two operations are totally distinct, and to speak of the 'same function' (A79/B104) as being involved in both is quite mistaken.' (p. 62)

Walsh then sees Kant as going astray here; however, we might argue that Kant meant something quite different as being 'the same function', and also that quite clearly he *did* see a vital distinction between the two kinds of thought, which is precisely why he has two different tables in the first place.

In unlocking just what Kant did mean, then, in claiming that the same function was operating, Nussbaum urges us to make a careful distinction between analytic *concepts* and analytic *judgements.* (This is what he believes Allison fails to do.) The sameness of function lies in our finding the same basic forms underlying our thinking when we abstract from synthetic and analytical judgements:

> ...we have, in the case of the judgements and the categories of relation, three basic syntactic forms, in the sense that these forms outline the minimal conditions for what we might call well-formed judgmental expressions, whether these expressions rest on analytical or synthetic functions.

> On this view, the general function of unifying concepts in a judgement is the 'same function' referred to by Kant, and the 'form of thinking', in the most general sense, is judgmental, and *only secondarily conceptual.* It is most certainly not the form of analytical unity. (p. 95, italics added.)

Thus, while Kant calls the categories 'pure concepts', they are, argues Nussbaum, better classed as rules of judgement, employed when making synthetic judgements. Aside from these formal similarities, however, the two processes are quite different, as Walsh has shown. There is analytic thinking going on in the judgement, 'All hymn books are black', but for us to be able to make that judgement we are dependent upon a synthetic unity, which has connected all the various impressions of black hymn book-objects into a knowledge, an experience, of them, which then can be brought to bear on the general concepts and allow us to make the judgement. Both are required, but the synthetic unity is quite distinct from the analytic, and in fact is presupposed by it. But that should not surprise us; for Kant, all such knowledge starts with experience.

Asymmetry in Synthetic Judgements

However, a problem remains, for there seems to be a significant formal difference between the crucial relational categories, and their equivalents in the table of judgement. The difficulty is that, for the categories of causality and substance, order matters, whereas in the general categories, this is not always so. Logically, any concept can be combined in any way with another so long as the

result is not self-contradictory, but the category of substance, for example, demands that the subject of the judgement must always function as substratum, and never as an attribute.

Kant makes this distinction himself:

> Thus the function of the categorical judgement is that of the relation of subject to predicate; for example, 'All bodies are divisible'. But as regards the merely logical employment of the understanding, it remains undetermined to which of the two concepts the function of the subject, and to which the function of predicate, is to be assigned. For we can also say, 'Something divisible is a body'. But when the concept of body is brought under the category of substance, it is thereby determined that its empirical intuition in experience must always be considered as subject and never as mere predicate. Similarly with all the other categories. (B129.)

So, Kant is saying that, whenever we assign to something the category of substance, and regard it as such, then its place as subject is *fixed*. And Kant is claiming more here than that it is so within *that* particular judgement, made at that moment; again, this would be to trivialise the role of all the categories. Rather, he is making a fundamental point about the nature of the categories, and how they are essentially different from the general concepts, adding more to our knowledge, because they are concerned not just with form (like the general concepts are) but also with *content*. This empirical element is irrelevant to the logical form of a judgement, but in synthetic judgements, it is of the essence, and means the

arrangement of concepts within a judgement is relevant. This is precisely why we need the categories, which take notice of more than bare logic, enabling us to make valid synthetic judgements about the objective world.

Nussbaum brings out this difference by describing the relation between substance and attribute as *asymmetrical,* while that between subject and predicate is symmetrical or order-indifferent. (p. 97) With the former, we might also say that there is a direction, as in the statement, 'A is north of B.' In contrast, there is no direction involved in a symmetrical relation — 'A is equal to B' is equivalent to 'B is equal to A.' In making this distinction, we give ourselves a way to shed some light upon what Nussbaum terms Kant's 'dark saying' (p. 97) that the understanding 'introduces a transcendental content into its representations, by means of the synthetic unity of the manifold in intuition in general.' (A79/B105.)

It is this 'transcendental content' which provides the extra-logical means for our understanding's employment of the categories. Without it, we would have nothing more than the general logic, and the kind of asymmetric relation apparent in the category of substance would be unachievable. Kant's answer as to how the understanding can so order its elements, so that they are constrained by more than general logic, is that it depends upon the pure intuition of time (this is made clear in the Schematicism). Nussbaum repeatedly stresses that he (Kant) falls back upon time for this role because, in Kant's day, there was no conception of a logic of relations which might account for these differences in a logical manner. Hence, Kant's assumption that, if it was not

(general) logic that supplied the extra constraint, then it must arise from a pure intuition — which for us is time.

The pure intuition of time, however, seems to occupy too central a place within the *Critique* as a whole for its purpose to be met by modern logic. To assert this is to take one's eyes from what is Kant's purpose throughout, which is to establish the ultimate conditions for our knowledge. Logic — modern or otherwise — seems to be limited in what it can explain in this respect. To take Nussbaum's own example: he reminds us of Kant's discussion, in the Prolegomena, of the problem of the incongruous counterparts. The logic of Kant's day provided him with no way to account for the distinction which we can make between one hand and the other — the right and left are both identical in that respect. Therefore, Kant concludes that it must be a pure intuition which provides us with the necessary means to this distinction; if he were writing today, says Nussbaum, he would simply turn to the logic of relations, and assert that we know that one is the opposite of the other. And so with the use of time in the Analytic; ample resources exist within modern logic to enable Kant to account for the transcendental content in our judgements, and the pure intuition of time is only turned to out of a lack of a better alternative. This would further be to Kant's advantage, he believes, because he has already made a huge advance in his philosophy by turning away from ontology, which was traditionally regarded as the source to the answer of the problem regarding what fixes something as a substance and never a property, instead seeking to find it within the sphere of logic: 'The proud name of an Ontology that presumptuously claims to supply, in systematic doctrinal form synthetic *a priori* knowledge of things

in general... must therefore give way to the more modest title of a mere Analytic of pure understanding.' (A247/B303.) Such a move would then allow Kant to turn fully, as Nussbaum sees it, from 'a dogmatic assertion of how things must be, to a defensible assertion of how we must *think* things to be' (p. 99), formalising the categorical rules which he instead turns to the field of transcendental logic, together with the intuition of time, to accomplish. But for Kant, the reason that we cannot look to ontology is that we can only ever know things as they appear to us, not as they really are; and it is this that leads him to explore the conditions of our thought. Kant does not see logic as superior to ontology, in the way that Nussbaum's argument seems to imply; rather, his abandonment of an ontological approach stems from his conviction that we can only know things as they appear to us. This emphasis on epistemology leads Kant to explore things at a much deeper level — hence his transcendental logic.

The whole point of the pure categories, as Nussbaum himself is at pains to point out, is that they concern the synthetic unity in our understanding. And this unity, for Kant, is essentially temporal; we can think of nothing but in time, all of our perceptions and thoughts require the form of time for us to have them at all. This does not seem to have much to do with the logic of relations. Kant is not just turning to the notion of time for want of a better alternative in the field of formal logic; rather, for him, it is what underlies all of our representations, and what makes the synthetic unity of consciousness possible.

Kant's priority is surely not finding as many formal (logical) rules for our experience as possible. Rather, he is interested in how it is we must think things to be, if we are to have knowledge; what it is necessary that we have in order, as humans, to have any experience at all. As well as the importance of the pure intuition of time throughout his argument, its occurrence in various parts of the *Critique*, we might even argue that, for Kant, transcendental logic is playing a role which formal logic alone could not. We can see this when we look at the sole condition applying to the formation of valid judgements in his general logic, non-contradiction. This principle is symmetrical and is as simple — indeed the same as — the conditions upon basic mathematical equations. It has nothing to do with sensory experience. The conditions attaching to relational logic, however, are quite different. The fundamental notion of non-contradiction cannot guide us in the formation of the asymmetric judgements, such as we find in those constructed by the relational categories of substance and causality; and those which we find in relational logic, such as subordination, seem to presuppose something further if we are to employ them in our judgements.

We must remember that Kant is starting from scratch, as it were — he wants to look at how we can even *construct* judgements as to what is opposite to what. His response is that we must have something within our understanding, something that is both pure and extra-logical, in order for us to have any synthesis of our understanding. This is the 'transcendental content' to which he refers, and the whole point of his transcendental logic. We must have some 'transcendental content' if we are to know how to subordinate one concept to another — remember, the argument

given by Nussbaum centred around his observation that the relationship here was, in two of the relational categories, fixed — and our understanding of the relational logic necessary itself requires something already existent in our thinking, such that we can apply this division in the first place. Logic might help us to express what is going on in such statements, but it does not give the slightest clue as to how we perceived that relationship, understood the asymmetry, and judged accordingly. Kant's original question is — how are synthetic *a priori* judgements possible? Which here leads to — what is it that so constrains the order of our judgements, establishing these asymmetric relations?

It is our pure intuition of time that accomplishes this. Here, we see all of Kant's ideas as to the nature of time come together, particularly when we look beyond the relational categories to those of modality. The difference between the fields of general and transcendental logic here is at least as striking as that which we found in the relational judgement forms and categories, although it is, perhaps, less obvious at a purely formal level. Kant makes a clear distinction between two kinds of necessity — that found within general logic is analytic necessity, but the *category* of necessity cannot be thought about any substance or being itself, but only of their attributes, and that in accordance with already-existing objects and the principle of causality. Given the role of the temporal in our understanding of causality, as is made clear in the Second Analogy, we can here see the importance of time as the uniting force in our synthetic unity.

The Modal Categories

Kant argues that the categories of modality are quite different to the other three, in that, 'in determining an object, they do not in the least enlarge the concept to which they are attached as predicates.' Instead, they 'only express the relation of the concept to the faculty of knowledge.' (A219/B266.) If an object is possible, then, 'it is in connection only with the formal conditions of experience, and so merely in the understanding... If it stands in connection with perception, that is, with sensation as material supplied by the senses, and through perception is determined by means of the understanding, the object is actual. If it is determined through the connection of perceptions according to concepts, the object is entitled necessary.' (A234/B286-7.) This compares with the account of their equivalents in the table of judgements thus — the problematic is that which expresses 'only logical (not objective) possibility'; while the assertoric 'deals with logical reality or truth.' The apodeictic, meanwhile, 'thinks the assertoric as determined by these laws of the understanding, and therefore as affirming *a priori*; and in this manner it expresses logical necessity.' (A75-6/B101.) With these, purely formal, judgements, Kant describes the mind as passing from one to the other in a sequence; we start by formulating a possible judgement, which we have a 'free choice' of admitting and taking into the understanding, making it assertoric or valid. This then might come to be regarded as having analytic necessity, if this validity is determined by the laws of the understanding, and so could not be otherwise.

Kant wants to make a very clear distinction between these forms of judgement — where anything is possible providing it is not immediately self-contradictory — and the modal categories. This is,

at least in part, because of the attack he wishes to make on metaphysicians, whose excesses he so abhors; he then places severe constraints on what can be counted as possible, actual, or necessary in our synthetic thinking, and does this through his introduction of the temporal, and the associated idea of a permanent substance. Thus, the transcendental content, given in time, which Kant regarded as shaping our judgements formed by the relational categories, is relied upon even more heavily — and certainly more explicitly — in the employment of the categories of modality. Here, also, there is a clearer case for the argument that no amount of modern logic could capture the notion that Kant is after here, as shaping and guiding our judgements of the objects of our knowledge. Perhaps because the modal categories are different, not adding to our knowledge but rather commenting on it, logic cannot serve to account for this ability at all, and we must, if we agree with Kant that there are certain necessary conditions of our knowledge, which it is the job of the philosopher to uncover, turn to something 'pure' and present within our own understanding, to accomplish this task.

In his discussion of the modal categories, Kant claims that, while *anything* non-contradictory is 'possible', the application of the modal categories generates something quite different, and, as with the relational categories, more restrictive. In the Postulates of Empirical Thought, Kant writes:

> ...the principles of modality are nothing but explanations of the concepts of possibility, actuality, and necessity, in their empirical employment; at the same time they restrict all

> categories to their merely empirical employment, and do not approve or allow their transcendental employment. For if they are not to have a purely logical significance, analytically expressing the form of *thought*, but are to refer to the possibility, actuality, or necessity of *things*, they must concern possible experience and its synthetic unity, in which alone objects of knowledge can be given.' (A219/B266-7.)

So we are not here assessing the logical form of judgements, but 'things', and this means that our modal judgements are shaped and restricted by the synthetic unity of the understanding. This forbids the kind of wild theorising which the metaphysicians might be tempted to employ, because we can only judge what is given to us in our experience.

This point is what lies behind Kant's apparently odd claim that there is the same amount of possible, actual, and logical things. He agrees that formally, we can go from the proposition, 'everything actual is possible,' through conversion, to the particular proposition, 'some possible is actual.' But this does not mean that we can allow the number of possible things to exceed that of the actual, for, he argues 'this alleged process of adding to the possible [to make it actual] I cannot allow. For that which would have to be added to the possible, over and above the possible, would be impossible.' (A231/B284.) It is 'impossible' because all that we can add to the possible is a 'relation to the understanding', that is, that it is something which we can perceive; and such a thing is precisely what it is to be actual. So the idea of some thing which exists as merely possible, without the connection to our senses which would

make it actual, makes no sense. As Kant goes on to say, 'without material nothing whatever can be thought. What is possible only under conditions which themselves are merely possible is not in all respects possible.' (A232/B284.) We can reason to ourselves that something is logically possible, but we can draw no inferences from this to the conclusion that such things are in any way real or existent.

Kant's position on this is clarified when we remember his contention that all of our intuitions have the form of time, and that there is only one time — there are no breaks in it, and no separate, disconnected, 'bits'. This means that we can only interpret the world, that it only has any meaning for us, if we are able to perceive it as occupying one temporal series, with past, present and future all being part of this one unified time sequence. Kant's view is that knowledge ceases, and descends into chaos, where time is allowed to fragment. It is a necessary condition for our knowledge that the pure form of our intuition — time — is one continuous series. It is from this that Kant argues for the existence of the substratum — the permanent substance, which can never be thought as an attribute — which represents the continual unbroken series of time, binding together the synthetic unity while allowing us to notice changes within nature. All this means that, for us, there can be no possibility of inferring any possible objects, as that would entail knowledge of a different temporal unity, which it is quite impossible for us to do. There is simply no possibility for something's being different to what it is at any one moment in time, because of the 'laws of nature' — that 'nothing happens through blind chance', and that 'no necessity in nature is blind, but

always a conditioned and therefore intelligible necessity.' (A228/B280.) We perceive the world as unified through the *a priori* principle of causality, held within one temporal framework. Everything is bound up together and interconnected with something else — nothing stands on its own, just as no piece of time stands on its own. It is because of this unity that we are able to have knowledge at all, and it is in this way that Kant can say that there are no more necessary objects in the world than actual.

This unity in one time, where we understand the world as one of inter-relating objects, is what gives us knowledge, but is also what restricts it. Kant's two purposes were to attack the ontological excesses of the metaphysicians, and to establish the conditions for genuine knowledge; here we see the boundary established through both these objectives, beyond which we cannot be said to know anything at all. Hence, the restriction of the categories, to that which we can experience only, and there being the same number of actual and possible things. We can see here also that Kant is not merely falling back on time for want of a better logic — rather, it is time that shapes the synthetic unity from which all knowledge begins. It is time that orders things, such as in our asymmetrical judgements, and restricts them, giving us our transcendental logic. Without it, Kant argues, there would simply be no knowledge possible, for us as human beings.

This point is argued for by Walsh in his paper, 'Kant on the Perception of Time' (Walsh, 1967), where, as discussed in Chapter 1, he examines the view of time as advanced in the three Analogies of Experience. He takes issue with the view, advanced by some

commentators, that, even if it were possible for a substance to be utterly annihilated, so that it no longer existed — or, in terms of the Second rather than First Analogy, that an event occurred which produced no effect; or if some substance suddenly sprang into existence from nowhere — an event without a cause, in other words — this would not matter too much. We would still, they argue, manage to keep track of our perceptions, and organise them, and so be able to distinguish the outer, objective world from our own impressions. This is because there is enough stability in the world to enable us to order it sufficiently, even if a few isolated events like this did occur. This view runs completely counter to the transcendental argument that Kant produces, which states that, without the unity of one time, experience is impossible; and that such annihilation of, or miraculous creation of, substances would utterly destroy this unity of time, for 'the appearances would then relate to two different times, and existence would flow in two parallel streams — which is absurd. There is only one time in which all different times must be located, not as coexistent but as in necessary succession to one another.' (A188-9/B231-2.)

Walsh agrees with Kant that this *a priori* form of a unified, single time is necessary for us to have experience at all. He argues that, if we were to start to allow for the odd miraculous occurrence, then we would have no way of knowing where we should draw the line — how many incidents would count as one too many — and how we should draw it. He asks, 'how far must this process go before we have to confess ourselves totally baffled?' (p. 392) We would, he argues, be faced with two alternatives, if we were to safeguard the objective status of (at least some of) our knowledge — to either say

that anything empirically experienced must be real, no matter how 'odd' it seemed; or to claim that these oddities were entirely unreal — but on what grounds would we make this distinction and justify it? Either way seems a muddle. We end up losing the clear line between is actual and 'real' and what is, in Kant's phrase 'merely possible', or unreal. And, if we follow Kant's line of thought, this has the result not only that our ability to interpret the external world is lost, but also our ability to distinguish between inner and outer impressions, for it is the necessity we see in the objective world — the way in which we cannot 'choose' what to perceive, but must just see what is there for us to see — that enables us to tell apart our inner impressions from our intuitions of an existing world. There is a real need, then, for a unified framework according to what Kant has called the necessary 'laws of nature.' (A216/B263) Any exceptions, and we will have a 'parallel stream' of existence, with, as Walsh points out, 'no reason for preferring one over the other' (p. 393), just as we have no reason for calling one event 'real' and another, odd one, not. And, of course, because all our experiences must be placed within the framework of one single time, it is in fact quite impossible for us to experience such miraculous events in any case. Experience, for us as humans, just is as part of one single temporal framework, where everything we experience is bound by laws of necessity. If any creation or annihilation was permitted, then we would forfeit the necessity involved in the world as it appears to us — anything might happen.

It is the force of this thought that underlies Kant's view of the modal categories. The number of actual and possible is of course the same, because there is only one 'stream', one time, within

which we can and in fact do experience everything. And all these things are also necessary, in that we could not have seen them otherwise, because there is only one time, where everything is linked causally. To claim otherwise is to stray into the area of the metaphysicians which Kant attacks throughout the Critique; or to go too far down the Humean, empirical road, where all our knowledge is forfeited, including our ability to distinguish between the objective and subjective.

Kant brings out this distinction with his two tables — there are many things possible logically, but only so many which are *real*. Only things which can be experienced empirically are real (allowing for the restrictions imposed by what Kant calls 'the grossness of my senses' (A226/B273), such as our not being to perceive what makes iron fillings jump, although we can deduce that magnetic forces exist). Anything that does not fall into the single time (and space) which gives form to our intuition cannot be experienced; we can claim no knowledge of it.

As Kant says, the modal categories, while adding nothing to our concept of something, 'restrict all categories to their merely empirical employment, and do not approve or allow their transcendental employment.' (A219/B266-7.) We can profess no knowledge of that which we cannot experience, even if the *idea* of the object is logically possible, in accordance with Kant's general logic, for this purely formal logic has no power to tell us anything of the content of our propositions; we must look to experience, to our synthetic unity, for that.

A Kantian View of Modality

Kant's concern is always to avoid metaphysical excesses, establishing our knowledge on true foundations. It is interesting to bear this in mind when we consider alternative, modern accounts of modality. In Kant's view, these would certainly constitute a step backwards, towards the realm of the metaphysicians that he argued so vehemently against two hundred years ago.

The obvious example here is Lewis's possible-worlds account, whereby he argues that everything that we consider metaphysically possible actually exists in some other world, of which we can have no direct experience whatsoever. Clearly, he owes us an account of how we can come to possess any knowledge of objects that by their very nature we cannot experience, and, as discussed previously, his answer is that our knowledge of these objects is no more problematic than our knowledge of mathematical objects. We readily attach truth-conditions to mathematical statements, he argues, without direct acquaintance with the objects concerned, and without fully understanding how we come by this mathematical knowledge as a result; but we accept this puzzle, of imaging that objects exist which we cannot experience, as a price worth paying for the valuable tool of mathematics. So with his *possibillia*. In assuming that everything deemed 'possible' really exists in some other world, just like our own, we can justify our attaching of truth-conditions to all such reasoning. We can move freely from 'logical' talk of necessary and possible, to our more ordinary way of thinking, as 'all' and 'some'. For Lewis, this is a 'philosopher's paradise', which makes the ontological cost, of a proliferation of possible worlds with their objects, a price worth paying.

However, clearly this is not the only cost involved. If we follow Kant in holding that knowledge is only possible for us as humans if our intuition has the form of one unified time (and space), where objects interact according to certain necessary, *a priori* laws, then the price of Lewis's paradise is much higher than he thinks.

In giving any account of modality, there is the problem of deeming the existence of objects, which we at the same time say *don't* exist, because they are merely possible. How can we say that something is possible without requiring its existence in some way? For Kant, the answer is really quite straightforward, and not in the least counter-intuitive — he distinguishes between two kinds of possibility via his two forms of logic. In the former — general logic — we can talk of anything as possible that does not involve a contradiction. But, of course, it would be very silly of us, he seems to say, to think even for a minute that these things, logically possible though they are, actually *exist*. Formal logic pays no regard to content, after all — how could these statements tell us anything whatsoever about what there actually is outside us? General logic is no 'logic of truth.' For what really exists, we must look to our experience for guidance, and this is the realm dealt with by the transcendental logic that *does* take notice of content.

In the Table of Judgements, we find under the heading of Modality 'Problematic', 'Assertoric', and 'Apodeictic', and Kant informs us that this function adds nothing to the content of a judgement, and 'concerns only the value of the copula in relation to thought in general.' (A74/B100) Here, the understanding is attending merely

to the logical status of the judgements concerned — for example, 'problematic' 'expresses only logical (which is not objective) possibility,' and is one which 'may for a moment be assumed.' He goes on, 'like the indication of a false road among the number of all those roads that can be taken, it aids in the discovery of the true proposition.' (A75/B101) Kant is here describing a common-sense approach to understanding our process of reasoning — we do indeed consider logically possible, but not actually asserted, judgements 'for a moment' in our working our way to asserting a logically true claim.

The assertoric judgements are those to which we attach 'real' affirmation or negation, and those classed as 'apodeictic' are those where the affirmation or negation is deemed necessary. Kant describes our process of thought as passing through these three 'moments' — we first consider a statement as logically possible, that is, as problematic, then accept it as true or assertoric, before finally, in seeing the assertoric as determined by the laws of the understanding, and therefore as *a priori*, as necessary or apodeictic.

This account, with its description of the formation of judgements where synthetic content plays no part, distinguishing these from judgements where synthetic content does come into play, suggests a different way of accounting for the meaning in our modal judgements. According to Kant, judgements that only take notice of 'bare logic' do not depend on what actually exists for their meaning. To take Lewis's example of the possibility of a talking donkey existing, the judgement is formed on the grounds that there is no

logical contradiction in the concept of a donkey that can talk. We can construct the idea from our experience of actually-existing donkeys, and of speaking things, but content of the judgement itself does not depend on any such thing physically *existing* — this judgement concerns an analytical unity, not a synthetic one, and, as Kant says, the only constraint here is the logical one of the principle of non-contradiction. The employment by Kant of two tables regarding our judgements spells out the idea that, while such constructions of our thought are indeed *logically possible*, they form no part of our *possible experience*. The two things are quite distinct.

This bare logic, with no consideration of content, is transformed in the Table of Categories to the modality Kant believes we find in our synthetic judgements: possibility — impossibility, existence — non-existence, and necessity — contingency. This transcendental logic, being a 'logic of truth', does indeed pay attention to content, and, as we might expect, this has consequences for the category of modality.

While Kant is, of course, at pains to emphasise the close relationship between the two tables, particularly as he wants to claim his categories are exhaustive, and that we can know this from their being developed from the first table, it is perhaps misleading to describe the second as embodying a kind of 'logic' at all. Because we are looking to content here, and applying the categories to our spatio-temporal manifold, what our applications of the modal categories concern isn't so much logic as a question of what we know to exist, or not exist. This leads Kant to the perhaps

surprising claim which he makes in the Postulates of Empirical Thought, that we can have no more possibly existing objects in the world than we have actually existing objects, and that, further, there will also be the same number of necessarily existing objects.

This might seem highly counter-intuitive, surely there are always a greater number of actual things than necessary things, and still more of those which are necessary? However, Kant does not mean to go against this at all. To take the account of the possible and actual, in his Table of Judgements, Kant acknowledges the place of the possible in our assessing judgements in a purely logical way; here, however, in the field of *transcendental* logic, content comes into play, and this is what we must bear in mind as we interpret Kant's remarks. If we can *only* apply the categories to what is presented to the understanding from the manifold in space and time, then such logically possible things as (to use Kant's own example) a shape enclosed by two straight lines is immediately recognised as impossible. Thus what exists logically does not exist objectively. In the same way, anything whatsoever which we could not experience, which, in Kantian terms, exists nowhere in space and time, is not merely something which does not actually exist, it is something which is also impossible. He writes:

> Other forms of intuition than space and time, other forms of understanding than the discursive forms of thought, or of knowledge through concepts, even if they should be possible, we cannot render in any way conceivable and comprehensible to ourselves; and even assuming that we could do so, they still would not belong to experience — the

> only kind of knowledge in which objects are given to us. Whether other perceptions than those belonging to our whole possible experience, and therefore a quite different field of matter, may exist, the understanding is not in a position to decide. It can deal only with the synthesis of that which is given. (A230-1/B283.)

Therefore, while the modal categories do tell us of a thing 'the cognitive faculty from which it springs and in which it has its seat' (A234/B287), they do not permit us to multiply the number of entities open to our possible experience. Possibility is 'merely a positing of the thing in relation to the understanding (in its empirical employment), actuality is at the same time a connection of it with perception.' (A234/B287, footnote) But this is not to claim that there are any more entities to which we claim experience, or attribute any kind of existence. To add to the number of possible something which would render some actual Kant, as discussed previously, won't allow, for such an addition is 'impossible' — 'What can be added is only a relation to my understanding, namely, that in addition to agreement with the formal conditions of experience there should be connection with some perception. But whatever is connected with perception *in accordance with empirical laws* is actual, even although it is not immediately perceived.' (A231/B284, italics added)

The crucial thing here is the claim, 'in accordance with empirical laws.' Anything outside of this cannot be judged as either possible or actual, as it simply cannot be experienced at all. Our possible experience consists of that which exists within space and time,

connected according to the rule of causality. And here we find the reason for the second part of Kant's claim, that everything possible is actual and also *necessary*. The claim as to the necessity of every actually existing object is simply a consequence of Kant's contention that everything that exists does so because it is an event with a preceding cause. For Kant, of course, this perceived necessity is central to our being able to experience the world at all, and he reminds us of this in the Postulates:

> The principle of continuity forbids any leap in the series of appearances, that is, of alterations…; it also forbids, in respect of the sum of all empirical intuitions in space, any gaps or cleft between two appearances…; for so we may express the proposition, that nothing which proves a vacuum, or which even admits it as a part of empirical synthesis, can enter into experience. (A228-9/B281)

Not only can such unconnected things, uncaused events, not be experienced; their being able to be so at all may 'do violence or detriment' (A229/B282) to the understanding itself. For Kant, it is of the utmost importance that everything be contained within one time and one space. Any violation in this continuum, and we would, as it were, lose track of where things might be placed, as necessity would no longer be such. All our experience would then begin to fragment, to unravel, leaving us with nothing, no sense of what objectively existed, and hence of our own selves as intuiting subjects. Therefore, everything actual, is insofar as it is necessarily caused, also necessary; were it not so, it could not form a part of our experience.

Here we can see, then, that for Kant, everything that can and does exist is bound through causal laws within one space and time. Things that are not at a particular moment experienced by us constitute our possible experience — possible because, being present in space and connected with other objects in the world, they can come under our empirical experience. The only difference is, as Kant says, how the objects in the world are connected with our understanding — 'the cognitive faculty from which it springs and from which it has its seat.'

This approach is in dramatic contrast to Lewis's, not just because it doesn't postulate a multitude of entities, but in its whole emphasis. Lewis wants to generate a 'philosopher's paradise', at almost any cost; Kant puts first our epistemology, otherwise, he believes, our reasoning is useless and meaningless.

Lewis's view is that everything formally possible, which we might choose to talk about, really does exist. His answer to the difficulty of our apparently assuming the existence of things that do not exist, but are only possible, is to distinguish between two possible ranges for the existential quantifier. This results in our saying that everything possible does exist, while also being able to consistently deny their existence because in the other range — that relating to our world — they do not.

Kant, on the other hand, would not find this very persuasive. For a start, it is putting the cart before the horse, as it were, in allowing logic, rather than experience, to dictate what exists. Throughout

the *Critique*, Kant is as opposed to the metaphysical, rationalist-based approach to knowledge as he is to the radical empiricism espoused by Hume. All knowledge, he believes, must be tied to our experience. If we employ reason alone, such as the metaphysicians do, we end up being able to apply logic to argue just about anything we choose — how is this 'knowledge'? We must supplement our reasoning with the contents of experience, to arrive at truth, in just the same way as the purely logical Table of Judgements tells us nothing about the content of our experience, and needs to be supplemented by the Table of Categories if we are to attain any knowledge at all of the way things really are. Only synthetic judgements give us actual knowledge, reason alone cannot. There are certain areas, Kant believes, which lie outside our possible experience, and therefore where we cannot claim to — or know — anything. We can apply reason there, and produce the illusion of knowledge, but it is only that — an illusion. We must always restrict our judgement to the areas of possible experience, to what lies within our spatio-temporal framework, if we are to attain knowledge.

We can apply this outlook to Lewis's possible worlds and see exactly what Kant would have to say about such an approach. Clearly, here, there are things that are claimed to be able to be known by us as objectively existing, and yet, on Kant's account, we could *never* claim to know this. In his view, our knowledge is dependent on our intuitions of space and time, and these intuitions are of one space and one time, that they must exist as unified wholes, if we are to experience anything within them at all. Our having any knowledge of something's existing outside of this framework is not

only impossible epistemologically, it threatens the whole coherence of that framework itself, upon which our knowledge depends. Kant's whole point about why it is that everything (really) possible is actual is that we can't have any knowledge of anything outside this sphere, and yet, clearly that is exactly what Lewis is claiming we must be doing if we employ modal judgements. It looks like, if we go down Lewis's road, everything is starting to fragment.

Lewis thinks that there isn't a problem between making the critical distinction between what is knowledge of the actual world, and of the infinite number of possible worlds, because we have an empirical acquaintance with the objects of this world (directly or indirectly), and not of the others. This enables us to understand which it is that is knowledge of *this* world because this *a posteriori*, empirically-based knowledge is contingent; whereas our *a priori* knowledge of the other worlds is necessary. Kant wouldn't accept this, as he would deny that we have any such necessary knowledge of possible objects. We can know what is and isn't logically possible, through the application of the forms of judgement to various concepts we might possess, but this is hardly the same thing as knowing the contents of an infinite number of possible worlds *a priori*. Kant's doctrine of the essential unity of space and of time precludes the claiming of any such knowledge; as he says, the categories are restricted to their proper empirical employment only. This is because they are applied, by the understanding, to the material given through our faculty of intuition, what Kant terms 'the introduction of transcendental content' (A79/B105), to give us knowledge. There is no 'content' brought to bear on the categories from outside our own single space and time, simply because

anything existing outside this *cannot possibly* be known by us to exist. Content, for Kant, just is that which is experienced by us, and therefore from within this space and time alone.

Unsurprisingly, then, while we might criticise Lewis by questioning whether we ever can reduce necessity in the way suggested, it is surely the epistemological difficulties of Lewis's account which are most striking, particularly when compared with Kant's approach. His description of infinite possible worlds, all of which exist as concretely as our own (just in another, separate time and place) sounds like 'an art very commonly practised by metaphysical jugglers' (A63/B88). It doesn't seem to tell us anything of what *really* lies behind our ordinary, everyday use of modal concepts, while also laying claim to vast areas of knowledge where it seems we actually can't claim to know anything at all; and all this is before we even get to Kant's argument that straying into other times and spaces would ultimately mean that we had no knowledge whatsoever. Further, if Kant is right that only one space and time can and does exist, then Lewis is just wrong to claim otherwise. And he makes his strange claim without evidence, whereas Kant has much to say for his view. This is because Kant seems to win out over Lewis not just in maintaining the integrity of our system of knowledge, but also in sticking close to our own intuitions of what lies behind our modal thinking. It seems most unlikely that something as bizarre and counter-intuitive as an infinite number of, and our knowledge of, possible worlds is what underlies our use of modal terms. This appears particularly so when we consider the central, and everyday, role they play in so much of our thought processes and our use of language in communicating with others.

In his depiction of modal terms as applying either in a purely logical way, where there is no commitment to anything's actual existence, or in a metaphysical way, where we are dealing with the contents of experience, be it possible experience or actual, Kant seems to give an account which is entirely in keeping with concepts which are used 'everyday', and by everyone. There is nothing strange or mystical going on here, as Lewis's account seems to suggest there has to be, whenever we use a modal term.

Kit Fine's approach to modality, meanwhile, might seem much closer in spirit to Kant's. As discussed previously, he argues that the account offered by the likes of Lewis, where statements of necessity, possibility and actuality is reduced to talk of possible worlds, fails to account for what he regards as the crucial notion of essence. The standard approach takes the essence of something to be that which is true of it in all possible worlds — in other words, it is the same thing as saying, what properties are necessary to it. Fine compares this with the statement that gives an informal, but nonetheless representative, depiction of our ordinary, everyday idea of essence — 'we say "the object must have that property if it is to be the object that it is".' (p. 4.) His point is that the concept of necessity is not equivalent to this at all, as it does not allow us to distinguish between other properties which are necessarily true, and therefore 'true in all possible worlds', and those which we would accept as being essential because they are relevant to the object's being the object that it is.

To draw out this point, he compares the necessary property of the singleton Socrates, of having Socrates belong to it if he exists, with

that of Socrates's property of his belonging to the singleton Socrates if he exists. Both properties are necessary — true in every possible world. But, while the property of having Socrates as a member is clearly essential to the singleton, we would not want to say that the property of belonging to the singleton is in any way *essential* to Socrates's being what he is. We thus want to make a distinction between saying that something is true of something in every possible world, with saying that it is *essential* to that thing. To suggest saying that a property is essential if it is both necessary and also somehow relevant to that thing is no help, for that is to presuppose precisely what we were seeking to explain — essence — in the first place. He writes, 'there is nothing in the "logic" of the situation to justify an asymmetric judgement of relevance; the difference lies entirely in the nature of the objects in question.' (p. 7.)

There is an obvious comparison to be made here between the capabilities Kant saw in his general logic, and those which he saw in his transcendental logic. Whereas one is strictly formal, paying no attention to content, the other does look to the nature of the object within the judgement. Fine compares the asymmetry in what is essential to Socrates, and the singleton Socrates, with the symmetry in the modal account, of what properties are necessary to them — 'no corresponding modal asymmetry can be made out.' (p. 5.) In the same way, Kant's transcendental logic looks to empirical content — to the objects which we are judging — and this sensitivity to the objects themselves, as opposed to purely formal, logical relations, allows us to acknowledge and represent to ourselves both symmetrical and asymmetrical relations between

these objects (as Nussbaum argued). This is a clear difference between both forms of logic, and one that cannot be accounted for if we depend upon general logic alone. As Kant says, in transcendental logic, a transcendental content is introduced, and it is this to which the transcendental logic is applied. This transcendental content is given through the synthetic unity; it is the world that we experience, as we experience it. Transcendental logic takes notice of *objects*, what exists in the world, whereas general logic merely tells us of the purely formal relations between concepts.

Compare Fine:

> Thus different essentially induced truths may have their source in the identities of different objects... an induced truth which concerns various objects may have its source in the nature of some of these objects but not of others. This is how it is with our standard example of Socrates being a member of singleton Socrates; for this is true in virtue of the identity of singleton Socrates, but not of the identity of Socrates. The concept of metaphysical necessity, on the other hand, is insensitive to source: all objects are treated equally as possible grounds of necessary truth. (p. 9.)

So, our standard logic alone cannot distinguish between which properties are essential and which logically necessary, so 'fixing' the relation of components of our judgements, and it is our understanding of the objects as they are themselves which does

this. For an answer to the puzzle of asymmetric relations, we must look to the objects themselves.

For Kant, the question immediately arises: how is it that we know? What is it, for us, that enables us to interpret the world around us in this way, such that we have an understanding of it and can make true judgements? For we can only experience these objects empirically; there must therefore be some way of sorting out all these varied impressions into a coherent vision of the world. Without establishing the answer to this, we cannot know the correct range for our knowledge; it is the most central question. Fine, on the other hand, has nothing to say here. The essence of an object by which we know the object that it is, is something we just grasp or see. He offers us no clue as to how, exactly, we know which properties of an object we carve off, as it were, and which we recognise as being the essence of the object.

Central to Kant's epistemology is that we can only know things as they appear to us, and never as they are in themselves. This division is highly controversial and has attracted much criticism; commentators like Strawson have tried to reformulate what they see as being the 'good' parts of his argument in the *Critique*, without it. In fact, however, it is an indispensable feature of his thesis. As has been discussed previously, Kant's point is that if we are to have knowledge at all, then that knowledge must be shaped by who we are, by how we must therefore perceive the world around us; and these conditions will both help to justify the knowledge that we can lay legitimate claim to, and delineate those areas where we cannot claim to know anything at all — *these* will

be those areas where the conditions for our knowledge *cannot* apply. As humans, we are reliant on our senses for knowledge — this intuition is all we can know of the objects around us. So, when Kant claims that we can only know objects not as they are in themselves but as they *appear* to us, he is not merely saying that for each appearance there must be an object which it is an appearance of; he is making an important claim about the nature of our knowledge, which underpins the whole *Critique*. That we actively think, and construct our sensory intuitions into thoughts of, knowledge of, objects, indicates that there *must* be things which are necessary about us, which can be known *a priori* — and it is these necessary conditions which Kant believes he has uncovered in his *Critique*. Because we are dependent upon these conditions for our knowledge, we can only ever know things as they appear to us; it would take an intellectual, rather than sensory, intuition — like God's, if he exists — to be able to dispense with such epistemological equipment as concepts and a spatio-temporal framework. God can grasp things with his intellect — he need not shape or construct various sense-impressions into something that might count as knowledge. He is in direct contact, therefore, with the object as it is *in itself*, with no need to categorise it or apply any concepts to it, in order to understand what he is perceiving.

Fine seems to imagine that our knowledge is like this; indeed, at the end of the paper, he suggests that many might believe our understanding of essence relates to concepts of objects, whereas he believes that in fact our ideas of essence are of the objects as they are in themselves — 'I believe that what is properly regarded as a definition of an object is sometimes treated as a definition of a

concept or of a word,' (p. 14.) Essences, in his view, don't merely give us the definition of the concept of an object, but of the object itself — a direct intuition of the object in itself, like God would have. On his account, therefore, we really do know the objects as they are in themselves. However, he doesn't say how this is done, and so ends up, from a Kantian perspective, sounding just like Lewis; he too is straying into areas where he cannot claim to know anything at all, areas where the conditions necessary for our knowing anything at all — experience, within a spatio-temporal framework which enables us to relate all the objects experienced on to another — cannot apply. Where is this mystical faculty, which enables us to dispense with all forms of conceptual reasoning, freeing us to see each object on its own terms, unique, as a thing in itself? This just doesn't seem to be how we think at all. We do use concepts to help us to relate to the world, which implies there isn't the immediate apprehension which Fine suggests. Further, the fact remains that we just are sensory beings — this is how we acquire our knowledge of the world. There is no way in the world that Fine's description of an immediate grasping of something's essence could be the type of thing that comes through our senses — our knowledge is, as Kant suggests, a construction built from a constant comparison and adding together of various elements, with the aid of the understanding.

Given that Kant claims we can only know objects as they appear to us, how might he account for our concept of essence? It seems that he would say our idea of what properties constitute the essence of something arises, not from some mysterious 'grasping' of each object's essence, but rather from a constant comparison made of

various objects which we experience, and apply our categories and learned empirical concepts to. Thus, 'which make an object the object that it is' then becomes 'which make an object how it must appear to us to be.' We anticipate our perceptions is certain respects, according to the conditions necessary to us; and these objects, if we are to have knowledge of them, must conform to these conditions, to our categories which we apply to them. 'Essence' is really another concept that helps us classify our knowledge, showing us, in this case, what it is about an object that enables us to identify it. If we had immediate intuition of the objects in themselves, then this would be yet another concept that we could dispense with, for then each object would be known to us as it existed, with all its properties contributing to that immediate knowledge. We could have no greater understanding of it than that. That we have the concept of essence at all, then, suggests that the Kantian view is correct, that we have knowledge of the objects only as they appear to us, and are required to classify the impressions of them and sort through them.

One criticism which might be made against Kant's account of modality is that it seems to preclude useful scientific reasoning. Kant's insistence that there is only one time, and therefore that everything possible is in fact actual, seems to run counter to the process whereby scientists formulate hypotheses and then test them, to establish what is the case. It seems that here, there is more possible than actual; and isn't this what makes new discoveries possible in the first place? To this, Kant might reply that any new discoveries are in fact made within our existing spatio-temporal unity, and understood in terms of it — of what is around it

and went before and after it. To the charge that any such reasoning is precluded, a possible solution is suggested by Kant's example of how general logic alone isn't enough for mathematical or geometric judgements either. He writes that there is nothing self-contradictory about the idea of a shape formed by two straight lines; it is only when we bring this idea before the intuition of space that we realise what was logically possible is not really possible at all. In a similar way, we could say that scientists formulate hypotheses in accordance with ideas already held and within which there is no contradiction; they then look to experience to see what is really the case. Again, there is only one real possibility here — that which we find to be the case.

However, it might be objected that this account takes no notice of the essentialism found in statements regarding natural kinds. Kant had no concept of any such thing as 'the analytic *a posteriori*', which many find in such statements as, 'All cats are mammals.' He always linked necessity with the *a priori*, and so might not have accepted this. However, George Bealer offers an account that marries both the *a priori* and empirical experience in justifying the necessity we find in such statements. As we have seen, in his paper, 'The Philosophical Limits of Scientific Essentialism,' he sets out to establish what might be used to justify the 'modal leap' from what we notice, through observation, to be the case, to asserting that this is necessarily the case, as happens in the establishing of scientific laws. He quotes Kant at the outset: 'Experience tells us, indeed, what is, but not that it must necessarily be so, and not otherwise.' (B3)

Interestingly, like Nussbaum, Fine, and of course Kant, Bealer appeals to an asymmetry, in his argument for an alternative approach. He notes that there are some hypothetical cases that we would be prepared to base our scientific formulations on, and others that we would reject immediately as being somehow 'bad intuitions'. To these bad intuitions we assign the status of something like the gambler's fallacy — we would be quite wrong to base anything on them at all. However, asks Bealer — 'Why is the cut just here?' (p. 345) How can we tell the genuine hypothetical cases from the 'bad' ones? Clearly, it cannot be any difference in our experience; but we need something through which we can account for this difference, for such intuitions are essential to the 'modal leap' whereby we establish our scientific principles. Like Kant, Bealer concludes that some element found not in experience but in us must provide the answer. And this will have the potential to justify that step to necessity, as it does not come through our senses alone.

Bealer's argument is convincing. In his long paper, he examines different alternative ways in which the genuine intuitions might be accounted for, concluding that only one is reasonable — his naturalizied rationalism, which states that knowledge is always dependent upon rationalism but not always solely dependent upon it, as in the case of science where experience is equally vital. (Note that the idea of mixing the two elements like this, with each equally important, is itself Kantian in spirit.)

When we supplement this account of the source of the necessity employed in scientific statements, with that given of our ordinary

modal thinking in the *Critique*, a strong position is generated. Kant has given us a picture of our modal language that, unlike that of Lewis and Fine, gives us little or no problems in terms of epistemology, and, in dramatic contrast to Lewis, is similarly straightforward metaphysically. Perhaps best of all, it maintains a common-sense perspective, vital in an area so central to our everyday thought and communication as modality.

However, it is important to recognise that this has been achieved through the advocation of a single, unified space and time, without which no such 'modal leap' would have been possible, and nor would the distinction we want to draw between our reasonings of what is possible, and our experience of what is actual. It is this framework which constrains our judgements *a priori*, providing for the correct application of the categories and so generating genuine knowledge.

Conclusion

The classic sceptical problem is how we can ever be certain of, or justify, our (apparent) knowledge of the external world, and this question often has its root in the idea of ourselves as having to bridge a gap between our inner selves, our minds which perceive and think, and the external world, which seems quite separate from us. If we do not create it or influence it in any way, if it is indeed quite separate from us, then how can we ever be certain if our knowledge of it is correct? Indeed, is any knowledge of it possible at all?

Kant's response has been to argue that there must be certain elements in our thinking which are present *a priori*. Without these, we could not have any thoughts or experience at all; further, these necessary conditions on our experience serve to delineate the area beyond which we cannot reasonably claim to know anything whatsoever. In a sense, Kant would probably see the sceptic as straying into this area, assuming things really might be other than they are, and yet we would still be able to have experience in order to form judgements (such as, that Kant might be wrong). We cannot formulate these questions without imagining ourselves as perhaps beyond the area where, Kant claims, our judgement can be legitimately applied. However, clearly this is question-begging, and Kant also has his positive reasons for claiming the sceptic is mistaken.

I have singled out the claim that time (and also space) must be thought as both unique and unified, if we are to have any experience at all. It is the pure intuition, which is the form of all our intuitions. It orders our experience, allowing the world to become an object for us, and hence enabling us to form judgements regarding it; and for this to be possible, the world must correspond to our intuition, or else it would have no application.

What, then, are the alternative views, views which would deny that we had any such *a priori* conditions? One such alternative would be simply to deny that there are any *a priori* conditions on our knowledge, for there simply is no such thing as *a priori* knowledge; and, of course, Kant's most famous target, Hume, held just such a view. He believed that all our knowledge was ultimately sensory, and hence that there was no *a priori* knowledge of any kind. Such apparent examples to the contrary as the principle of causality were dismissed by Hume as nothing more than the result of seeing one event repeatedly following another. Of course, Hume had to say this, as there is nothing to 'see' that might be termed the law of causality, and he can't allow that there is any alternative source of such knowledge. But Kant turns this on its head, arguing that without causality, no knowledge would be possible as there would be no way of our experiencing the world. Such a conclusion implies that this knowledge must be present prior to our experience, not only because it is clear that, as Hume pointed out, it cannot be discerned through our senses, but also because the very possibility of experience itself depends upon it. Without causality to bind the objects of our experience together, we cannot perceive events, and all our potential for knowledge is lost. Further, if the world cannot

be understood as existing objectively, then our own idea of ourselves is lost, too. And we do have such a concept of subjectivity. So Kant's view, then, seems more plausible than Hume's.

There are other difficulties with the strictly empirical view of Hume. Mathematics ends up as being either true by convention, or simply a branch of analytic knowledge, and hence, arguably, dull and uninformative. And we are left with no answer to the question of how we can sort the multitude of sensory fragments constantly pouring in through our senses, into coherent thoughts of objects and events. Moreover, if Bealer is right, then we lose our means of accounting for and justifying the modal 'leap' inherent in uncovering necessary scientific laws.

A further outcome of a Kantian account of our thinking is that a convincing account is generated of our application of modal terms in forming judgements. Alternatives which do not depend upon the constraint of *a priori* elements in our understanding, and the necessary ordering imposed by the pure intuition of time, leave us without a plausible account of this vital element in so much of our thought and speech. This in itself seems to be a strong reason for adopting his position.

In general, our nature as finite, sensory beings means that, if we are to have experience, communicate, and think of ourselves as subjects, then there must be a means whereby the world can become an object for us, and if these conditions are the conditions for our experience itself, then they must be present *a priori*. And

synthetic *a priori* knowledge can therefore be attained, regarding these conditions. Further, and perhaps equally importantly, the uncovering of these constraints also reveals the limits to our human knowledge, beyond which, we cannot claim to know anything at all. The laying down of these conditions can be seen as an alternative to the sceptical position on our knowledge — while it is true that we cannot claim to know anything beyond here, within these boundaries experience is possible, and our knowledge legitimate.

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