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Kant's Transcendental Methodology

Abstract

I offer a novel account of the methodology of Kantian transcendental arguments by intervening in two debates. The first concerns Kant's transcendental deduction. It is between P.F. Strawson, who aims to appropriate Kant's insights by reconstructing his transcendental argument and rejecting his doctrines on our transcendental subjectivity, and Patricia Kitcher and Henry Allison, who aim to recuperate his subjectivist doctrines of transcendental psychology and transcendental idealism. The second debate is between Strawson and Barry Stroud, and concerns Kantian transcendental arguments in general. Strawson reconstructs Kant's transcendental argument without reference to our cognitive faculty in order to prove the anti-skeptical conclusion that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure. Stroud argues that a Kantian transcendental argument can establish only the more modest result that experience necessarily involves our use of the categories, but can still mitigate skepticism. My key contribution is to draw an original distinction between, on one hand, Kant's unacceptable doctrines of transcendental psychology and transcendental idealism, and on the other, his philosophically respectable transcendental method – which is to analyze our cognitive faculty – and methodological idealism, which posits a mutual interdependence of empirical objectivity and our finite cognitive subjectivity. My position in the first debate is that while Kant's transcendental psychology and transcendental idealism must be rejected, his insights in his deduction's transcendental argument are inseparably connected with his transcendental method and methodological idealism. My position in the second debate is that while a modest result would not mitigate skepticism, a Kantian transcendental argument could prove that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure, but only by following Kant's transcendental methodology.

Kant's aim in his *Critique of Pure Reason* is to establish a scientific metaphysics by our cognitive faculty's critique of itself.¹ The Kantian idea that objective metaphysical knowledge can be attained through the subject's self-knowledge has been influential in the Continental tradition in philosophy. Hegel appropriates it in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where he aims to establish a system of science by Spirit's successively more adequate attempts to conceptualize its own essence, and so does Heidegger in his *Being and Time*, where his aim is to answer the question of the meaning of Being through the existential analytic of Dasein.² Kant has been equally influential in the Analytic tradition, yet his influence has been in spite of his idea that the self-knowledge of the subject can be a method for achieving metaphysical knowledge of objects. P.F. Strawson has persuaded Analytic philosophers to this day that while there is much to learn from Kant, it is only insofar as his insights in his transcendental arguments can be saved from his doctrines on our transcendental subjectivity.³ I will argue in this paper, however, that although Kant's subjectivist doctrines of transcendental psychology and transcendental idealism must be rejected, Analytic philosophers still have much to learn from the Kantian idea that the transcendental investigation of our finite cognitive subjectivity can be a method for discovering the metaphysical structure of empirical objectivity.

I will present my argument by intervening in two debates. The first is between P.F. Strawson, on one side, and Patricia Kitcher and Henry Allison, on the other. It concerns Kant's transcendental deduction. Strawson reconstructs transcendental argument as a proof that a certain necessary feature of experience logically presupposes that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure, and rejects his doctrines on our transcendental subjectivity. Kitcher and Allison aim to recuperate Kant's subjectivist doctrines by showing that they are integral to his deduction's argument. Kitcher defends Kant's transcendental psychology, which states that we necessarily use the categories in experience because of our cognitive faculty's *a*

¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans., Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). References to Kant's *Critique* are in standard A/B pagination.

² G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans., A.V. Miller, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans., John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (New York: Harper Collins, 1962)

³ P.F. Strawson, *Bounds of Sense*, (London: Methuen, 1966). Jonathan Bennett adopts a similar approach in *Kant's Analytic*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

priori constitution.⁴ Kant's transcendental idealism, which Allison defends, states that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure likewise because of our cognitive faculty's *a priori* constitution.⁵

The second debate is between Strawson and Barry Stroud, and concerns Kantian transcendental arguments in general. Strawson reconstructs Kant's argument without reference to our cognitive faculty in order to refute a skeptic who denies that our use of the categories in experience is justified. Stroud argues, however, that because Strawson's reconstruction premises only a necessary feature of experience, it cannot prove that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure, but only the more modest result that experience necessarily involves our use of the categories. Yet, Stroud maintains that this modest result still mitigates skepticism.⁶

My key contribution is to draw an original distinction between, on one hand, Kant's unacceptable subjectivist doctrines of transcendental psychology and transcendental idealism, and on the other, his philosophically respectable transcendental method – which is to analyze our cognitive faculty – and his methodological idealism, which posits a mutual interdependence of empirical objectivity and our finite cognitive subjectivity. My position in the first debate is that while Kant's transcendental psychology and transcendental idealism must be rejected, his insights in his deduction's transcendental argument are inseparably connected with his transcendental method and methodological idealism. My position in the second debate is that while a modest result would not mitigate skepticism, a Kantian transcendental argument could prove the ambitious metaphysical conclusion that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure, but only by following Kant's transcendental methodology.

1. I will begin by introducing the Kantian idea that has come to seem paradoxical in Analytic philosophy. I will do so by identifying, on one hand, Kant's project in his transcendental deduction, and on the other, his transcendental method.

Kant's project is to justify our use of the categories in experience. For him, a deduction answers the question "*quid juris.*" It proves the "lawfulness" of, or our "entitlement" to, the

⁴ Patricia Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁵ Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 2nd ed., (2004).

⁶ Barry Stroud, "Transcendental Arguments," "Kantian Argument, Conceptual Capacities, and Invulnerability," and "The Goal of Transcendental Arguments," in *Understanding Human Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Robert Stern also defends modesty in *Transcendental Arguments and Skepticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

“claims” that we make in using certain concepts in experience. (A84-5/B116-7) An empirical deduction does so by appealing to particular experiences, while a transcendental deduction does so non-empirically. Kant grants that empirical concepts can be deduced empirically, since in using these concepts in experience we claim to know contingent truths about the world, and such knowledge can be justified by particular experiences. He maintains, however, that an empirical deduction of the categories “would be entirely futile work,” and that their deduction “must always be transcendental.” (A85-6/B118) In using the categories in experience we claim to know necessary truths about the world, and such knowledge cannot be justified by particular experiences. So, what grounds our use of the categories in experience? Kant explains that a transcendental deduction of the categories must prove that “it is possible through them alone to *cognize something as an object*,” or that the categories are “conditions of the possibility of experiences.” (A92/B125 and A94/B126) Since Kant defines “experience” as “empirical cognition,” and “cognition” as “objective,” “experience,” for him, must be the cognition of empirical objects. (B218 and A320/B376-377) What he has to prove is that experience can be the cognition of empirical objects only if it involves our use of the categories.

Now, Kant’s definition of “experience” would beg the question against a Cartesian skeptic who denies that our experience is of empirical objects. Kant’s skeptical target in his deduction is not a Cartesian, however, but an empiricist. The empiricist grants that we have empirical knowledge of contingent truths about the world, but denies that we have categorial knowledge of necessary truths about the world. Indeed, Kant targets two empiricist skeptics. Both attempt to explain our use of the categories in experience as a “subjective necessity.” (A95/B127 and B168). The first is a Humean who maintains that the categories are dispositions for thinking “arisen from frequent association in our experience.” (B127) The second maintains that the categories are “implanted” “predispositions for thinking.” (B167) I will call this second skeptic a transcendental Humean. For, while the Humean’s reductive account appeals to the contingent constitution of our empirical subjectivity, this second skeptic, the transcendental Humean, appeals to the necessary constitution of our *a priori* subjectivity. Against these skeptics, Kant must prove that our use of the categories in experience is objectively necessary. He writes, “Concepts that supply the objective ground of the possibility of experience are necessary just for that reason.” (A94/B126) Thus, Kant’s project is to justify our use of the

categories in experience on the grounds that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure.

Yet, Kant's transcendental method is to analyze our cognitive faculty. He writes,

I understand by an analytic of concepts not their analysis, or the usual procedure of philosophical investigations, that of analyzing the content of concepts that present themselves and bringing them to distinctness, but rather the much less frequently attempted *analysis of the faculty of understanding itself* [...] for this is the proper business of a transcendental philosophy. (A65-66/B90-91)

Here, Kant distinguishes his transcendental method of analyzing our cognitive faculty from the method of analyzing our concepts, either by the principle of non-contradiction or sufficient reason. He explains that his method is not to analyze our concepts, but our conceptual faculty itself. The paradox is: how can Kant's analysis of our cognitive subject prove that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure?

2. There are two dominant approaches to this paradox in the literature. According to Strawson, the paradox cannot be resolved. He reconstructs Kant's transcendental argument as a proof that a certain necessary feature of experience logically presupposes that the empirical world has a necessary categorial structure, and rejects his references to our transcendental subjectivity. Kitcher and Allison, by contrast, aim to resolve the paradox by recuperating Kant's subjectivist doctrines of transcendental psychology and transcendental idealism.

According to Strawson, Kant's *Critique* is Janus-faced. One face is Kant's transcendental argument, which looks forward to Analytic philosophy. The backwards-looking face is his transcendental subjectivism. Strawson proposes his reconstruction by considering a dilemma. He distinguishes weighty and thinner senses of objectivity. Objects in the weighty sense are "independently existing objects forming a unified spatiotemporal system." (Strawson 1966, 26) On the first horn of Strawson's dilemma, if Kant were to premise this weighty sense of objectivity, he would beg the question. But on the second horn, Strawson contends that any thinner sense would "offer us rather little to work on." (Strawson 1966, 73) He concludes that Kant cannot premise any sense of objectivity at all, but only a feature of any intelligible experience. This feature, according to Strawson, is "the necessary unity of consciousness," according to which "there must be such unity among the members of some temporally extended series of experiences as is required for the possibility of self-consciousness, or self-ascription of experiences." (Strawson 1966, 74 and 24) Kant's argument, according to Strawson, shows that

experience can be self-ascribable only by allowing for “the distinction between how things are and how they are experienced as being,” or by “saving the recognitional component in an experience from absorption into its sensible accusative.” (Strawson 1966, 110-111 and 110) Kant’s conclusion, according to Strawson, is that we can draw the distinction in experience between seeming and being, only because empirical objects are objects in the weighty sense.

Strawson rejects Kant’s “imaginary subject of transcendental psychology” and his “disastrous model” of transcendental idealism. (Strawson 1966, 32 and 21) Kant’s transcendental psychology states that we necessarily use the categories in experience because the categories are our *a priori* concepts. His transcendental idealism is the thesis that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure also because the categories are our *a priori* concepts. From this thesis, it follows that empirical objects are only appearances, not things in themselves. Strawson rejects these doctrines as “incoherent” and “unintelligible.” (Strawson 1966, 16 and 38) According to him, Kant’s transcendental psychology “is exposed to the *ad hominem* objection that we can gain no empirical knowledge of its truth,” and his transcendental idealism “is closer to Berkeley than he acknowledges.” (Strawson 1966, 32 and 22)

3. Kitcher and Allison strive to recuperate Kant’s doctrines of transcendental psychology and transcendental idealism. They aim to resolve the paradox by explaining how Kant’s doctrines on our transcendental subjectivity are integral to his deduction. According to Kitcher, Kant justifies our use of the categories in experience by grounding this use on our cognitive faculty’s *a priori* constitution. According to Allison, Kant’s conclusion is that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure because they essentially conform to our cognitive faculty’s *a priori* constitution and the categories are our *a priori* concepts. I will now argue, however, that although Kant’s transcendental psychology and transcendental idealism are not generally incoherent or unintelligible, they are unacceptable for the specific reason that they undermine his deduction.

Kitcher defends Kant’s transcendental psychology. She explains that it is a “functional analysis” (Kitcher 1990, 21) of the cognitive tasks performed by our “particular empirical capacities.” (Kitcher 1990, 22) According to her, Kant’s transcendental psychology is integral to his deduction, since it provides the non-empirical grounds for our use of the categories in experience. She writes,

[T]ranscendental psychology analyzes cognitive tasks to determine the general specifications for a mind capable of performing those tasks. That is how Kant is going to show that certain aspects of our knowledge are grounded in our faculties. (Kitcher 1990, 13-14)

Thus, according to Kitcher, Kant's deduction analyzes the task of "represent[ing] objects on the basis of a varied and fluctuating stream of cognitive states." (Kitcher 1990, 71) According to her, Kant justifies our use of the categories in experience on the grounds that cognitive subjects with an *a priori* cognitive constitution such as ours must use the categories in order to unify experience into the representation of objects. She explains,

[Kant's] response to the *quid juris* on behalf of the *a priori* concepts involved in such claims is, "We can do no other." Unless the *a priori* elements in these concepts were supplied by our cognitive faculties themselves, we could not perform even simple cognitive tasks. (Kitcher 1990, 18)

According to Kitcher, Kant's deduction justifies our use of the categories in experience by proving that we must use the categories to unify our experience, and that the reason why we must do so is because the categories are our *a priori* concepts.

Kitcher shows that Kant's transcendental psychology is not an incoherent doctrine; however, it is still a subjectivist doctrine, and far from it justifying our use of the categories in experience, it simply grants transcendental Humean skepticism. I argued above that Kant's project is to justify our use of the categories in experience on the objective grounds that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure. He must disprove the Humean skeptic who proposes to account for our use of the categories in experience on the subjective grounds that the categories are our habituated concepts, as well as the transcendental Humean skeptic who proposes to account for this use on the subjective grounds that the categories are our *a priori* concepts. Kant characterizes this latter, transcendental Humean skeptic by writing that if the categories were "subjective predispositions for thinking," then "the categories would lack the *necessity* that is essential to their concept," (B167) since "I would not be able to say that the effect is combined with the cause in the object (i.e., necessarily), but only that I am so constituted that I cannot think of this representation otherwise than as so connected; which is precisely what the skeptic wishes most." (B168) Now, Kant's transcendental psychology is the thesis that we necessarily use the categories in experience because of our cognitive faculty's *a priori* constitution. But if this were true, then, for example, in using the category of cause in experience I would not be saying that "the effect is necessarily combined with the cause in the object," but only that "I am so constituted that I cannot think of this representation otherwise

than as so connected.” This, Kant explains, is “precisely what the skeptic wishes most.” Kant’s transcendental psychology would not justify our use of the categories on objective grounds, but simply cede the transcendental Humean skeptic’s merely subjective grounds. Kant’s transcendental psychology must therefore be rejected not for being incoherent or unintelligible, but for undermining Kant’s own deduction.

Allison defends Kant’s transcendental idealism, but I will argue that it too undermines his deduction. Allison distinguishes ontological “two-world” interpretations from epistemological “two-aspect” interpretations. Kant’s transcendental idealism is the doctrine that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure because they must conform to our cognitive faculty’s *a priori* constitution and the categories are our *a priori* concepts. It entails that empirical objects are appearances, not things in themselves. Now, ontological interpretations harbor the transcendental realist assumption that objects are essentially independent of our cognitive faculty. As a result, they interpret Kant’s transcendental idealism as the thesis that there is a phenomenal world of appearances of which we can have knowledge, and an unknowable material world of things in themselves. Allison bases his epistemological interpretation on the contrary assumption that empirical objects are essentially dependent upon our cognitive faculty. He defines an epistemic condition as “a necessary condition for the representation of objects,” and he explains, “the concept of an epistemic condition [...] involves the relativization of the *concept* of an object to human cognition and the conditions of its representation of objects” (Allison 2004, 11-12). On Allison’s interpretation, Kant’s transcendental idealism is the thesis that one and the same things can be considered either in conformity with epistemic conditions, under which aspect they are empirical objects of which we can have knowledge, or independently of such conditions, under which aspect they are unknowable things in themselves. According to Allison, Kant’s transcendental idealism is integral to his deduction, since the reason why empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure is because they essentially conform to epistemic conditions and the categories are epistemic conditions.

Allison shows that Kant’s transcendental idealism is not a phenomenalism, but it is still a subjectivism, and it undermines his deduction. While transcendental realism conceives of objectivity and subjectivity as essentially independent, Kant’s transcendental idealism reconceives objectivity as essentially dependent upon subjectivity, yet it retains the conception of

subjectivity as essentially independent of objectivity. Allison explains, “[Kant’s transcendental idealism] relativize[s] the concept of an object to the conditions (whatever they may be) of the representation of objects.” (Allison 2005, 12) Thus, as Allison explains, Kant’s transcendental idealism states, on one hand, that empirical objects essentially conform to epistemic conditions, but on the other, that these conditions are “whatever they may be” independently of empirical objects. This asymmetry causes Kant’s deduction to collapse into transcendental Humean skepticism. Consider the following. If Kant’s transcendental idealism were true, then even if his deduction were to prove that we must use the categories in experience because empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure, his transcendental idealism would state, on one hand, that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure because they essentially conform to epistemic conditions, but on the other, that the categories are epistemic conditions independently of empirical objects, just because they are our *a priori* concepts. So, it would follow that we must use the categories in experience, ultimately, just because of our cognitive faculty’s independent *a priori* constitution. This, again, is “precisely what the skeptic wishes most.” Kant’s transcendental idealism must be rejected not because it is a phenomenalism, but because it undermines his deduction by causing its objective grounds to collapse into the transcendental Humean skeptic’s merely subjective grounds.

4. We can now see the rationale for Strawson’s strategy. It is to appropriate an insight of Kant’s. While pre- and post-Kantian philosophers, and even interpreters of Kant, have attempted to justify our categorial knowledge of the world by something other than what that knowledge is about – either by logic alone, or the constitution of God’s subjectivity, or the habituated or *a priori*, or even the biological, social, or cultural, constitution of our own subjectivity – Kant’s insight is that the justification our use of the categories in experience can derive only from the necessary categorial structure of empirical objects themselves. Strawson aims to appropriate this insight by reconstructing Kant’s transcendental argument without any reference to our cognitive faculty. Barry Stroud has objected, however, that since Strawson’s reconstruction premises only a necessary feature of experience, it cannot prove that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure, but only the more modest result that experience necessarily involves our use of the categories. Nevertheless, according to Stroud, this modest result still mitigates skepticism.

In Stroud's early work, he assumed that Kant's deduction targeted a Cartesian skeptic. He wrote, "The transcendental deduction [...] is supposed [...] to give a complete answer to the skeptic about the existence of things outside us" (Stroud 2000, 9-10). Stroud's objection was then that a Kantian transcendental argument could not show that the necessary unity of consciousness logically presupposes that there is an external world, but only that "we must *believe* that there are material objects" (Stroud 2000, 25). Since Kant's target is not a Cartesian, however, this objection is unfounded. But Stroud's later formulations are decisive. He now sees that Kant's deduction targets an empiricist skeptic. His objection is now that a Kantian transcendental argument cannot "proceed deductively [...] from facts about how we think and experience things to conclusions which appear to say how things are independently of all human thought and experience." (Stroud 2000, 158-159) According to Stroud, because a Kantian transcendental argument premises only the necessary unity of consciousness, it can prove only the modest result that we must *believe* that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure.⁷

Stroud maintains, however, that the modest result that our experience must involve our use of the categories can still secure "a reassuring invulnerability against philosophical skepticism," (Stroud 2000, 172 and 218). He writes,

Suppose [...] that it had been proved [...] that to think of a world independent of us at all we must think of it as containing enduring particular objects in a single space and time [...] If even that were true, it would put the belief that there are enduring particulars in a special position in our thought. [...] It would mean that any conception we could have of a world independent of us must be a conception of a world in which there are enduring particulars. [...] That is a connection solely within our thought: if we think in certain ways, we must think in certain other ways. (Stroud 2000, 214-215)

So, according to Stroud, the modest result that since we must be able to self-ascribe our experiences, we must use the categories in experience mitigates the empiricist skeptic's worry.

To the contrary, however, it just pushes this skeptical worry back. The empiricist skeptic grants that we necessarily use the categories in experience, but as a merely subjective necessity. This skeptic contends that the reason why we must use the categories in experience is just because of our cognitive faculty's habituated or *a priori* constitution. Now, Stroud's modest result is that we must use the categories in experience because we must be able to self-ascribe our experiences. But why must we be able to self-ascribe our experiences? A satisfying

⁷ P.F. Strawson has since granted Stroud's objection and repudiated anti-skeptical transcendental arguments, *Skepticism and Naturalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)

response to the skeptic would have to prove that it is not as a merely subjective necessity. Without such a proof, the skeptic can grant the modest result that we must use the categories in experience because we must be able to self-ascribe our experience, while contending that we must be able to self-ascribe our experience merely because of our cognitive faculty's habituated or *a priori* constitution. The skeptic would then still have "precisely what he wishes most."

5. This is where we stand with the paradox. The question is: How can Kant's analysis of our cognitive subject prove that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure?" Kitcher and Allison aim to resolve this paradox by defending Kant's transcendental psychology and transcendental idealism. But these subjectivist doctrines ultimately grant the transcendental Humean's subjective grounds. Strawson's approach is to abandon the paradox in order to appropriate Kant's insight that our use of the categories in experience must be justified on objective grounds. But since his reconstruction premises only a necessary feature of experience, he fails to secure these objective grounds. I now aim to show that we can appropriate Kant's insight into the nature of justification, but only if we appropriate another Kantian insight as well – an insight into the nature of objectivity and subjectivity.

The key to my interpretation is to distinguish Kant's unacceptable subjectivist doctrines of transcendental psychology and transcendental idealism from his philosophically respectable transcendental methodology. Kant's transcendental method is to analyze our cognitive faculty, and his methodological idealism states that what it is to be an empirical object and what it is to be a finite cognitive subject are mutually interdependent for their very intelligibility as such. Now, these are doctrines on our transcendental subjectivity, but they are not subjectivist doctrines. For, they do not ground either our use of the categories in experience, or the necessary categorial structure of empirical objects, on our cognitive faculty's *a priori* constitution. Rather, they stand empirical objectivity and our finite cognitive subjectivity on the same grounds.

For Strawson and Stroud, Kantian transcendental arguments premise not any conception of objectivity, but only a necessary feature of experience, and proceed without reference to our cognitive faculty, but by identifying logical presuppositions. Yet, if all conceptions of objectivity are forfeited, no ground can be recovered from the skeptic. So, in my view, Kant must premise some conception of objectivity. According to Strawson's dilemma, however, a weighty conception begs the question, while any thinner conception offers too little to work on.

But I suggest that we try. My suggestion is that Kant premises a conception of empirical objects as objects of possible experience. This is not the phenomenalist thesis that to be is to be perceived. It is rather that to be an object is to be in principle able to be cognized. This would beg the question against a Cartesian skeptic, but not the empiricist skeptic. Moreover, it would not render Kant's argument circular. For, assuming that empirical objects must be cognizable, it remains to be proved that empirical objects can be in principle cognizable only if they themselves have a categorial structure. Now, this conception of objectivity is indeed thin, and it does not logically presuppose that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure. Kant's transcendental method, however, is not to identify logical presuppositions. It is to analyze our cognitive faculty.

But how does Kant's transcendental methodology differ from his transcendental subjectivism? Kant's transcendental psychology, as Kitcher defends it, specifies how cognitive subjects with an *a priori* constitution such as ours must think. His transcendental idealism, according to Allison's defense, reconceives empirical objectivity in terms of our cognitive subjectivity. In my view, while Kant's transcendental psychology specifies how we must think, his transcendental method is to identify what a faculty for thinking even is. And, while his transcendental idealism posits an asymmetrical, unidirectional dependence of empirical objects on our cognitive faculty, his methodological idealism posits a symmetrical, bidirectional interdependence between them. It does so by reconceiving both objectivity and subjectivity, each in terms of the other. What this means is that, on Kant's methodological idealism, the answer to the question, "What is it to be a finite cognitive subject as such?" must refer to what it is to be an empirical object, and in just the same way as the answer to the question, "What is it to be an empirical object as such?" must refer to what it is to be a finite cognitive subject.

I have said that Kant's premise is the thin conception of objectivity, according to which empirical objects are essentially able to be cognized. Now, with Kant's methodological idealism, this conception of objectivity goes hand in hand with a conception of subjectivity. According to Kant's conception of our subjectivity, finite cognitive subjects are essentially capable of the cognition of empirical objects. In fact, Kant has more precise conceptions. For him, the finitude of our cognition consists in the dependence of our cognitive faculty upon empirical objects for the content, or the object-relatedness or intentionality, of our possible cognition. Sensibility and the understanding are the two modes of this dependence. Through

sensibility, our cognitive faculty depends upon the affection by empirical objects for our possible intuitive representations to relate immediately to objects and have singular contents. Through the understanding, our cognitive faculty depends upon empirical objects being given in sensible intuitions for our possible conceptual representations to relate mediately to objects and have the synthetic contents that can be spontaneously taken up in judgment. These are Kant's methodological conceptions of objectivity and subjectivity. Empirical objects are essentially what our finite cognitive faculty depends upon for sensible and judgeable content. Finite cognitive subjects are essentially dependent upon empirical objects through the capacities of sensibility and the understanding.

The paradox can now be resolved. Since Kant conceives of our cognitive faculty as essentially dependent upon empirical objects for the contents of our possible cognition, his transcendental method is to analyze the modes of this dependence, sensibility and the understanding. Through this analysis, he can prove that what we depend upon through sensibility for the sensible contents of our possible cognition, and what we depend upon through the understanding for the judgeable contents of our possible cognition, must have a categorial structure in order to be what we depend upon in these ways. Since Kant conceives of empirical objects as essentially what we depend upon for our possible cognition's sensible and judgeable contents, this proof already suffices for the deduction's conclusion that empirical objects themselves have a necessary categorial structure.

6. I have just given a sketch of Kant's transcendental argument, and I will now fill in the detail by reconstructing his B-edition deduction. Strawson's reconstruction focuses solely on the principle of apperception, which states that our experience must be able to be self-ascribed. Kant formulates this principle as follows:

The I think must be able to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me that could not be thought at all, which is as much as to say that the representation would either be impossible or else at least would be nothing for me. (B131-132)

Kant's apperception principle states that all cognitive representations must be able to figure in at least self-ascriptive judgments. Consider some examples from perception. If I know that I am in standard viewing conditions, when I represent a pink cube in vision, I am in a position to judge, "I see a pink cube." But if I know that the lighting conditions are non-standard, I might represent a pink cube in vision, but be able to judge only, "I see a cube and I think it is pink," or perhaps

only, “I think I see a pink cube.” But in what case would I not even be able to judge, “I think I see a pink cube”? If I could not make even this minimal self-ascriptive judgment, then while what is in fact a pink cube might feature in my visual field, my representation would make no difference to my cognition – it would have no cognitive significance at all. Thus, Kant’s apperception principle states that cognitive representations must be able to figure in at least self-ascriptive judgments. From this principle, Kant concludes that cognitive representations must have a conceptual form that corresponds to judgmental form. Since he defines the categories as “concepts of an object in general, by means of which its intuition is regarded as *determined* with regard to one of the *logical functions* for judgments” (B128), he concludes that our cognitive representations must involve the categories.

This is where Strawson’s reconstruction stops. But the worry remains that while empirical objects must be categorial so that we can have cognitive representations of them, this is only what we require as a merely subjective necessity. The real work of Kant’s deduction is in answering this worry. He explains that it remains for him to prove that “the synthetic unity of consciousness is [...] an objective condition of all cognition, not merely something I myself need in order to cognize an object but rather something under which every intuition must stand *in order to become an object for me* (B137). The real work of Kant’s deduction is to prove that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure not because of any subjective imposition of ours, but rather because of what they themselves are.

Kant’s proof proceeds by analyzing our cognitive faculty. He first analyzes the understanding as follows:

I have never been able to satisfy myself with the explanation that the logicians give of a judgment in general: it is, they say, the representation of a relation between two concepts. [...] I remark only that it is not here determined wherein this relation consists.

If, however, I investigate more closely the relation of given cognitions in every judgment, and distinguish that relation [...] from the relation in accordance with laws of the reproductive imagination [...], then I find that a judgment is nothing other than the way to bring given cognitions to the *objective* unity of apperception. [...] I do not mean to say that these representations *necessarily* belong to one another in the empirical intuition, but rather that they belong to one another *in virtue of the necessary unity* of the apperception in the synthesis of intuitions. Only in this way does there arise from this relation *a judgment*. (B140-142)

Here, Kant distinguishes judgment from the mere association of ideas. He argues that both are relations of concepts, but that associations are subjective and contingent. Paul Guyer interprets

Kant as defining judgment as a *necessary* relation of concepts.⁸ But Kant explicitly rejects this definition. He defines judgment as an *objective* relation of concepts. For Kant, judgment is a relation of concepts that are related because of the way things objectively are. Kant then argues that since empirical objects must be able to provide a rational basis for judgment, they must have the same rational structure as judgment. John McDowell has interpreted Kant as arguing that the empirical world must have a propositional structure.⁹ But Kant argues by drawing an analogy between rational and inferential relations. His analogy is this. Just as the premises upon which a conclusion is inferentially based must have the same propositional structure as the conclusion, so too the empirical objects upon which a judgment is rationally based must have the same rational structure as the judgment. Kant concludes that empirical objects must have a categorial structure not because of any subjective imposition, but because they themselves are essentially judgeable.

It will be objected, however, that all this argument shows is that *if* there are forms of judgment, and *if* there are corresponding categorial concepts, then judgeable objects would necessarily have a categorial structure. According to the objection, however, Kant's attempt in his metaphysical deduction to derive the forms of judgment and to coordinate them with categories is a failure. This objection stands, but its bark is worse than its bite. For, not just any way of combining concepts nets a judgment. So, it is reasonable to assume that there are some forms of judgment, and some corresponding categorial concepts. Perhaps, these forms cannot be set in advance, or once and for all. But if we suppose that judgment has some structure, and that there are some corresponding categorial concepts, it follows from the above argument that empirical objects must have a categorial structure in order to be judgeable at all.

This still leaves open a worry, however. The worry is that while empirical objects must be categorial in order to be judgeable, they might be sensible without being categorial. Kant's own Aesthetic may even seem to support this worry. There, he argues (i) space and time are forms of our faculty of sensibility, (ii) space and time are also the forms of sensible objects, and (iii) space and time are the latter because they are the former. Now, (iii) is Kant's transcendental idealism, which I have already rejected. But even if Kant's own arguments for (i) and (ii) are not

⁸ Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 109-121.

⁹ For this view of McDowell's see his *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), and his first two Woodbridge Lectures "Sellars on Perceptual Experience" and "The Logical Form of an Intuition" in *Having the World in View* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). Charles Travis criticizes this view of McDowell's in his "Silence of the Senses," *Mind* 13 (2004), and McDowell repudiates it in "Avoiding the Myth of the Given" in *Having the World in View*.

convincing, it is still reasonable to assume that space and time are the principles of ordering of our sensible intuitions and also the principles of individuation of sensible objects. Thus, the worry is that if empirical objects can be sensible just by being spatiotemporal, then empirical objects might be sensible without being categorial.

Kant answers this worry by analyzing our sensibility. He argues that space and time are not only the forms of our sensible intuitions and the forms of sensible objects, but also themselves formal intuitions. He writes,

[S]pace and time are represented *a priori* not merely as forms of sensible intuitions, but also as intuitions themselves (which contain a manifold), and thus with the determination of the unity of this manifold in them. (B160)

He continues in a footnote:

Space, represented as object (as is really required in geometry), contains more than the mere form of intuition, namely the comprehension of the manifold given in accordance with the form of sensibility in an intuitive representation, so that the form of intuition merely gives the manifold, but the formal intuition gives unity of the representation. (B160-161n.)

Kant's argument here proceeds by reflection upon the geometrical method of construction in pure intuition. For Kant, the geometer is able to construct spatial figures in pure intuition, only because space is a form of our faculty of sensibility. Moreover, the geometer is able to attain geometrical knowledge of the world, only because space is also a form of sensible objects. Most important, the geometer is able to rationally base her geometrical knowledge of sensible objects on the spatiality of the figures constructed in pure intuition only because space itself is a formal intuition, which as such is able to provide a rational basis for judgment. Here, it will be objected that construction in pure intuition is not a viable geometrical method, and that Kant gives no parallel argument regarding time. Again, however, the bark of these objections is worse than their bite. All Kant needs to point out is that space and time are themselves able to provide a rational basis for objective judgments. Given the reasonable assumption that sensible objects essentially have spatiotemporal properties, and the observation that space and time themselves are judgeable, it follows that sensible objects are essentially judgeable. Thus, from the result of the deduction's first argument, it follows that empirical objects have a necessary categorial structure not because of any subjective imposition, but because they themselves are essentially sensible.¹⁰

¹⁰ My interpretation offers a middle course between Robert Pippin's and John McDowell's respective interpretations of the relationship between Kant's Aesthetic and his deduction. According to Pippin, Kant's Aesthetic draws a

This completes my reconstruction. I said that Kant's first insight is that the justification of our use of the categories in experience must be grounded in the necessary categorial structure of empirical objects themselves. We can now see that this insight into the nature of justification is inseparably connected with a second Kantian insight into the nature of objectivity and subjectivity. While pre- and post-Kantian philosophers, and even interpreters of Kant, have conceived of objectivity and subjectivity either as essentially independent or as one unidirectionally dependent upon the other – and as a result have acquiesced in unacceptable forms of dualism or one-sided accounts of mind and world – Kant's second insight is that empirical objectivity and our finite cognitive subjectivity are interdependently intelligible, in such a way that the transcendental investigation of the mind can discover the metaphysical of the world.

Kant's transcendental methodology may provoke a thing-in-itself worry. To be sure, if God, the soul, and the cosmos as a whole are independent of our cognitive faculty altogether, then Kant's methodology entails that we can have no knowledge of such things in themselves. And, if there is a God's eye point of view from which empirical objects would be known as they are independently of our cognitive faculty altogether, then Kant's methodology would entail that we can have no such knowledge of things in themselves either. But it is not the task of philosophy to attain knowledge of the unknowable, either unknowable reality or reality as it unknowably is. To restrict our knowledge to knowable reality is no restriction at all.¹¹

6. In this paper, I have aimed to show the payoff of understanding Kant's transcendental methodology for understanding his deduction in particular and Kantian transcendental arguments in general. I said that Strawson distinguishes the forward-looking face of Kant's transcendental argument from the backwards-looking face of his transcendental subjectivism. I have

“strict distinction between intuition and understanding,” which his deduction “takes back.” (Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 30) McDowell criticizes Pippin, writing, “[R]ather than say Kant [...] takes something back, it would be more charitable to say he tells us he never intended to give such an appearance.” (McDowell, “Hegel's Idealism as a Radicalization of Kant,” in *Having the World in View*, 74, n.11) In my view, Kant gives a partial account of our sensibility in his Aesthetic, by arguing that space and time are the forms of our sensibility and the forms of sensible objects. Because he does not label his Aesthetic's account as partial, he does give the false impression, *pace* McDowell, that the forms of sensibility are independent of the understanding. However, *pace* Pippin, his deduction does not take anything back. Rather, Kant completes his partial account in his deduction, by arguing that space and time are not only forms of our sensibility and forms of sensible objects, but also formal intuitions, which, as such, are judgeable by the understanding.

¹¹ Our task in philosophy is not to attain *knowledge* of the unknowable, but it may be to make possible *belief* or *faith* in the unknowable. As Kant states, his aim is to “deny *knowledge* in order to make room for *faith*” (Bxxx).

distinguished Kant's unacceptable subjectivist doctrines of transcendental psychology and transcendental idealism from his philosophically respectable transcendental method and methodological idealism. Thereby, I have shown that Kantian transcendental argument is itself Janus-faced. These two faces are empirical objectivity and our finite cognitive subjectivity, mind and world. These faces do not look in opposite directions, but are two sides of the same coin.

There is a further payoff as well. I mentioned that Hegel and Heidegger seek to appropriate Kant's transcendental method. In fact, each significantly develops this method. While Kant himself denies that the transcendental analysis of our cognitive subjectivity can proceed by introspection, he still conceives of it as a direct endeavor that can be completed once and for all. Hegel rejects the notion of a direct first-personal analysis of our subjectivity, and proposes an indirect phenomenology of Spirit. According to him, Spirit's observation of its successively more adequate attempts to overcome the contradictions in its conceptions of objectivity, subjectivity, and intersubjectivity, ultimately reaches its culmination in a final account. Heidegger rejects not only the notion of a direct analysis, but even the notion of any final account. According to him, since we always already find ourselves with an understanding of Being, the existential analytic of Dasein can discover a horizon against which to more adequately interpret Being, but any such interpretation will always remain provisional. The further payoff, then, is to have at least indicated the genuine philosophical credentials of this tradition that takes its influence from Kant's transcendental methodology.