

KANT'S TRANSCENDENTAL DEDUCTION – A WITTGENSTEINIAN CRITIQUE

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1. *Kant and Wittgenstein*

Although Wittgenstein read at least parts of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he never wrote about it. His comments on Kant and Kant's philosophy are few and brief.¹ There are interesting convergences between their respective philosophies, but also deep differences. Despite Kant's brilliant criticisms of the Cartesian and empiricist traditions, there are four very general principles, rooted in Cartesian methodology, which Kant never questioned. Wittgenstein, by contrast rejected them all.

First, Kant's approach to the resolution of his master-problem: 'How are synthetic a priori judgements possible?' is steadfastly epistemological. He seeks to explain the possibility of synthetic a priori *knowledge* by reference to the a priori conditions of the possibility of experience – understood as objectively valid perception, i.e. *knowledge* of nature.

Secondly, his approach is unwaveringly, if abstractly, subjective. 'In transcendental science everything must be derived from the subject' (*Notes and Fragments* 5058) – and that abstract subject is I, not He. Kant's primary inquiry is not into the conditions of the possibility of other-ascription of experience, but into the *bare form of consciousness*, conceived as the abstract framework for the possibility of empirical self-consciousness.

Thirdly, the concept of consciousness that he deploys in his investigations into the conditions of the possibility of (a subject's own) experience is the heir to the concept of consciousness introduced into philosophy by Descartes, developed by Locke and refined into the concept of apperception by Leibniz. Although he advances powerful criticisms of Descartes's use of the concept to prove his nature as a thinking substance, Kant never challenges the fundamental features of the concept of consciousness that he inherited. On the contrary, what he does is to investigate the a priori conditions of the possibility of self-consciousness thus conceived.

Finally, in conformity with the Cartesian and empiricist traditions, Kant held that the possibility of conceiving of experience as one's own was *logically independent* of the possibility of other-ascription of experience. For he held that experiences are ascribable to others on the basis of analogy with one's own case.

I cannot have the least representation of a thinking being through an external experience, but only through self-consciousness. Thus such objects are nothing further than the transference of this consciousness of mine to other things, which can be represented as thinking beings only in this way. (A 347/B 405)

It is obvious that if one wishes to represent a thinking being, one must put oneself in its place, and thus substitute one's own subject for the object one wants to consider (which is not the case in any other species of investigation). (A 353)

We have no grounds for conceiving of experiences as our own. So Kant did not think that the concepts of experience thus groundlessly self-ascribed are logically bound up with behaviour.² Consequently, he implicitly committed himself to the possibility of mastering the use of such concepts in self-ascription of experience independently of mastering their use in other-ascription of experience. For if such concepts are not partly determined by reference to constitutive behavioural grounds for their other-ascription, then they must be determined in inner sense. But if they are determined in inner sense, there is no way for them to be determined other than by private ostensive definition employing a representation as a defining sample. So Kant implicitly committed himself to the logical possibility of a private language. (This will not be discussed here.)

In the following essay, I shall be concerned with the third issue: the nature of consciousness and apperception. These concepts are pivotal for Kant's enterprise in the 'Transcendental Deduction of the Categories'. That chapter lies at the very heart of transcendental philosophy. It is, I think, possible to bring Wittgenstein's thought to bear directly upon Kant's account of the unity of apperception and the conditions of the possibility of experience. This will shed critical light on Kant's conceptions of consciousness and self-consciousness. I believe it will show that while Kant

effectively destroyed the Cartesian/empiricist framework of philosophical thought, he was still entrapped in the rubble.

2. *Kant's transcendental deduction*

Kant's master problem was 'How are synthetic a priori judgements possible?' The answer to this question will also answer the question of whether *metaphysics as a science* is possible (*Prolegomena*, 256f., 365-71). We know synthetic a priori propositions of geometry and arithmetic. We also know, Kant thought, synthetic a priori propositions of pure natural science. Metaphysics lays claim to knowledge of the truth of synthetic a priori judgements: for example, that every event must have a cause, that substance must persist throughout change, that objects must stand in reciprocal causal relations. But how *can* we know such truths? They are not derived from experience, since experience can yield only contingent truths. They are not projections of associative habits (as Hume had argued). They are known a priori, and are both universal and necessary. But how is such knowledge possible, if is neither analytic nor empirical? Kant's critical step was his so called Copernican Revolution – the thought that our knowledge of such synthetic a priori truths does not have to conform to objects, but that objects, in so far as we have synthetic a priori knowledge of them, have to conform to the a priori conditions of our sensible and cognitive capacities. So his aim is to show that the truth of synthetic a priori judgements is an a priori condition of the very possibility of experience (cognition that arises out of perception).

Synthetic a priori knowledge is ampliative. So the possibility of such knowledge cannot be explained by reference to apprehension of direct (analytic) links between concepts (e.g. as with the concepts of *body* and *divisibility*). Rather the concepts (e.g. of *cause* and *event*) associated in a synthetic a priori judgement (viz., that every event has a cause) must be shown to be linked by some third thing. The link is forged by *the possibility of experience* (A 783/B 811). To show that such a connection of categorial concepts is a condition of any possible experience (and hence, in Kant's view, of the objects of experience) is to give a transcendental proof of a principle: a synthetic a priori judgement concerning experience that is both universal and necessary. It is by means of such

transcendental proofs that we can attain transcendental knowledge, i.e. ‘All knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects in so far as this mode of knowledge is to be possible *a priori*’ (A 12; B 25).

The pivot upon which the arguments turn is the ‘Transcendental Deduction of the Categories’. In it Kant argued that appearances ‘must stand under conditions of the necessary unity of apperception’ (A 110). Experience, he averred, requires a twofold unity. First, the unity of the object of experience. What is given in intuition is a manifold of sensory data in different sensory modalities at successive times. If this is to constitute experience, it has to be synthesized into the perception of a unified object. Secondly, the unity of consciousness of the subject of experience. Experience must be such as to be self-ascribable to a single persisting subject of experience – it must be conceived by its subject to be the experience *of* a single persisting subject.³ Otherwise it could not constitute anyone’s *knowledge* of appearances. With remarkable ingenuity, Kant argues that ‘inner experience . . . is possible only under the presupposition of outer experience’ (B 275). And it is in this necessary co-ordination of the possibility of subjective judgements and the possibility of objectively valid judgements that the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge of nature is rooted.

I shall sketch Kant’s account. I shall then suggest that the ‘Transcendental Deduction’ and the subsequent transcendental arguments are rooted in an array of questionable presuppositions concerning consciousness and self-consciousness that he inherited from his predecessors. I shall argue that despite his brilliantly challenging the empiricist and rationalist tradition, and shifting the parameters of the debate from ideas to concepts (conceived to be ‘predicates of possible judgements’⁴), and from actualities to possibilities, he did not, to use a phrase of Wittgenstein’s, ‘put the question marks deep enough down’ (CV 62).

A legal ‘deduction’ was an argument justifying a legal right by reference to the source of its legitimacy (*quaestio juris*). A deduction of a concept, in Kant’s philosophy, is an argument justifying the objective validity of a concept. A concept is objectively valid if and only if it applies to objects. The objective validity of empirical concepts is determined by empirical deductions by reference to

actual experience. The objective validity of pure a priori concepts must be demonstrated, independently of any experience, by reference to their source in the understanding (the faculty of judgement) and its operations on intuitions (given by the faculty of sensibility). The applicability of the pure a priori concepts to objects of experience must be shown to be *a condition of any possible experience* (A 96). A transcendental deduction of concepts is an explanation of how pure a priori concepts *can* relate a priori to objects (A 85/B 117). If the categories (the pure a priori concepts derived from the fundamental forms of judgement in the ‘Metaphysical Deduction of the Categories’) can be shown to be presupposed by any possible experience, then they will have been shown to be objectively valid.

Kant’s argument begins from the examination of the subjective sources which form the a priori foundation of the possibility of experience (A 97). Intuition (receptivity, sensibility) presents us with a synopsis of sensory data. That synopsis requires a transcendental synthesis – a unity-creating combination of the elements of a manifold. A *synthesis of representations* given in intuition is ‘the act of combining different representations and grasping their multiplicity in one cognition’ (A 77/B 103). Kant distinguishes, within the synthesis of representations, three different syntheses. The first is the synthesis of *apprehension* of the manifold given in intuition, which, as it were, welds the manifold into a synchronic unity. The second is the synthesis of *reproduction* in imagination, which ensures diachronic unity of representations – that successive representations be apprehended as representations of one and the same object. The third is the synthesis of *recognition* of a representation in accordance with a concept.⁵

Before we proceed further, some words are needed to clarify the concept of apperception. The term originates in Leibniz’s *Nouveaux Essais* (written in 1703-5, publ. 1765), replacing Pierre Coste’s *s’apercevoir de* (*awareness*), by which Coste, Locke’s French translator, had rendered Locke’s ‘perceiving one’s perception’. According to Locke, ‘Consciousness is the perception of what passes in a Man’s own mind’ (*Essay* II-i-19). According to Leibniz, *perception* is ‘the transitory state which enfolds and represents a multiplicity in a unity’ (*Monadology*, §14). It is ‘the inner state of the monad representing external things’. *Apperception* is ‘consciousness or the reflective knowledge of this inner

state'.⁶ It should be noted that this notion of consciousness has as its object not the perceived objects in reality that we apprehend by the use of our senses (e.g. the visible room in which I am sitting), but rather *their alleged subjective reproduction in the mind* (as it were, the 'visual room' I have).

According to Locke, it is 'impossible for anyone to perceive, without perceiving that he does perceive' (*Essay* II-xxvii-9). Leibniz disagreed, holding that there are indefinitely many '*petites perceptions*' or 'insensible (minute) perceptions' which are not apperceived (i.e. of which we are not aware). The term 'apperception' was picked up by Wolff and through his writings transmitted to Kant. Pure apperception, according to Kant, is distinct from inner sense or empirical apperception. It is, Kant wrote in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, §24, 'a consciousness of what the human being *does*' [in transcendental synthesis (see below)] and 'belongs to the faculty of thinking', whereas inner sense 'is a consciousness of what he *undergoes*, in so far as he is affected by the play of his own thoughts. It rests on inner intuition, and consequently on the relations of ideas in time' (7:161).

The transcendental unity of apperception is 'the supreme [principle] in the whole of human cognition' (B 135). It requires the satisfaction of three a priori conditions. If a manifold given in intuition is to amount to anything for a subject of experience – even merely to enter the sphere of consciousness as representations, not only must it be unified, it must be apprehended *as belonging to a subject* (the (formal) ownership condition). The data of sense are only *data* if they are given to one and the same persistent subject at different times (the (formal) persistence condition). Contrary to Hume, representations (Humean perceptions) are not a field upon which one can apply a principle of differentiation to distinguish those that are mine from those that are not. That all the intuitions that I 'encounter' (that I 'have') are *mine* is not something derived from the character of the intuitions. It is, in Kant's jargon, 'original' or 'underived' – a transcendental condition of the possibility of experience (the immediacy condition).

All intuitions are nothing for us and do not in the least concern us if they cannot be taken up into consciousness. . . . We are conscious *a priori* of the thoroughgoing identity of ourselves with regard to all representations that can ever belong to our cognition, as a necessary condition of the possibility of

all representations (since the latter represent something in me only in so far as they belong with all the others to one consciousness . . .) This principle holds *a priori* . . . (A 116)

So, Kant argues, it must be *possible* for the 'I think' to accompany all my representations (B 131). Why the modal qualification? Apperception, *pace* Locke, is not universally necessary – I do not have to be conscious of *all* my perceptions. Kant accepted Leibniz's conception of minute perceptions of which I am not conscious. But, *pace* Leibniz, it must be *possible* for me to be conscious of them. Otherwise I could have a sensible experience (a representation) without being able to conceive of it (to represent it to myself) as *mine*. If so, Kant says, it 'would be nothing to me'. So, the manifold given in an intuition would not constitute *my* representations if they did not belong to one persistent self-consciousness (B 132).

As *my* representations (even if I am not conscious of them as such) they must yet necessarily accord with the condition under which alone they *can* stand together in a universal [i.e. general] self-consciousness, because otherwise they would not throughout belong to me. (B 133)

This *analytic* unity of consciousness itself presupposes a *synthetic* unity. For it does not suffice that each representation be accompanied (or be capable of being accompanied) by consciousness. For then I would merely have 'as multicoloured, diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious' (B 134). The ultimate condition of the transcendental unity of self-consciousness is that *I* synthesize the manifold given me in intuition, and *am conscious* of so doing.

this thoroughgoing identity of the apperception of a manifold given in intuition contains a synthesis of representations and is possible only through the consciousness of this synthesis. . . . [It] does not yet come about by my accompanying each representation with consciousness, but by my *adding* one representation to the other and being conscious of their synthesis. Therefore it is only because I can combine a manifold of given representations *in one consciousness*, that it is possible for me to represent the *identity of the consciousness in these representations* itself . . . The thought that the representations given in intuition all together belong *to me* means accordingly the same as that I unite them in one self-consciousness, or at least can unite them therein; and although it is itself not yet the

consciousness of the *synthesis* of the representations, it presupposes the possibility of the latter, i.e., only because I can comprehend their manifold in a consciousness, do I call them all together *my* representations. (B 133-4)

The synthesis of the manifold of intuitions is the ground of the unity of apperception, which antecedes all determinate experience. But our understanding ‘is able to bring about the unity of apperception a priori *only by means of the categories*’ (B 145, emphasis added). The categories are held to be derivable from the general forms of judgement, and are implicit in every act of judging. So the conditions of the possibility of self-consciousness are precisely the synthesis of intuitions and their subsumption under the categories that are the pure a priori concepts of an object in general. So ‘The a priori conditions of a possible experience in general are at the same time the conditions of the possibility of objects of experience’ (A 111).⁷ For representations to satisfy the conditions of the unity of apperception, they must have such a character as renders them in general experiences of an objective spatio-temporally unified realm of nature.

We must note Kant’s unclarity regarding the ‘I think’ that must be able to accompany all my representations. It is itself a representation, but not an intuition (B 132). For it is an act of spontaneity and so cannot be regarded as belonging to sensibility. Kant equivocates between characterizing the ‘I think’ as a *concept* (although not a concept signifying a thinking being in general (A 354)), and characterizing it as a *judgement* (although by itself it has no content). It is not a category, but it belongs to the table of categories in as much as it is the ‘vehicle of all concepts’ – serving only ‘to introduce all our thought as belonging to consciousness’ (A 341/B 400). It is ‘a representation that another representation is within me’. Unlike the categories, it is not a condition of the possibility of the knowledge of objects, but rather ‘the form of apperception, which belongs to and precedes every experience’⁸ (A 354). So it is both *form* and *possible accompaniment*. But although it is merely a *form*, it is Kant holds, a *necessary form*. And although it is merely an *accompaniment*, it is *necessary* that it be a (possible) accompaniment. Finally, it is a *representation* that must be capable of accompanying all other representations (intuitions), but cannot itself be accompanied by any further representation (B 132). (Roughly speaking, any appearance that ‘Things are thus-and-so’ can be

accompanied by an 'It sensibly seems to me that . . .'. But it cannot sensibly seem to me that it sensibly seems to me that . . .')

The 'Transcendental Deduction' provides the background for Kant's transcendental arguments in the 'Refutation of Idealism' and in the 'Analogies of Experience'. In the former, he attempts to show that 'the mere, but empirically determined, consciousness of my own existence proves the existence of objects in space outside me'. The consciousness of my own existence, he argues, 'is at the same time an immediate consciousness of the existence of other things outside me' (B 276), for 'inner experience in general is possible only through outer experience in general' (B 278). Inner sense involves consciousness of successive perceptions; but all determination of succession in time requires something permanent in perception; there is nothing permanent in inner sense; so my awareness of myself as existing in time presupposes something permanent outside me (and not merely a representation of a thing outside me (B 275)). In the Analogies of Experience, Kant attempts to validate such synthetic a priori propositions as the law of causality and the permanence of substance from the contrasts between the possible temporal order of experiences and the determinate temporal order of its objects. In both texts he argues from the temporal nature of apperception to the existence, permanence and causally determined character of nature, which is presupposed by the very possibility of apperception. He argues from the necessary character of conscious experience to how the objects of such experience must be in order for it to be possible that experience should have such a character.

Let me try to summarize Kant's achievement in respect of our concerns. He realised that the Cartesian/Lockean conception of empirical (perceptual) knowledge is radically mistaken. Our perceptual knowledge of objects is not *derived* from subjective knowledge of impressions, and our perceptual knowledge of how things in nature actually are is not derived from our knowledge of how things subjectively seem to us to be. On the contrary, outer sense is immediate or direct, not mediated by inner sense. Kant realised that self-ascribability of subjective experiences does not imply knowledge of a persistent *thinking substance* that is the subject of experience. The Cartesian arguments for the indivisibility, persistence, and bodily-independence of the soul, and hence for its immortality, are paralogisms. Kant saw that the Humean question 'What makes an experience my

experience?’ is incoherent. He realised that Hume’s quest for the principle of unity of experience in empirical relations between experiences (causation and similarity) is likewise incoherent. He saw clearly that Hume’s quest for a self in inner sense was a bogus quest. And he realised that inner sense – what he thought of as knowledge of how things subjectively are with one – is possible only on the condition of the possibility of outer sense. For such inner sense is temporally ordered, and temporal ordering presupposes something permanent throughout change, which is not given in inner but only in outer sense. These insights were momentous in the history of modern philosophy. They shattered the house that Descartes and Locke had built. But Kant was unable to clear the ground of the rubble or to find a way out of it. That was a task left for Wittgenstein.

3. Kant and Wittgenstein: divergent pathways through the jungle

Wittgenstein would agree with Kant that self-ascription of experience is groundless, or, as Kant put it, ‘original’ (the underived condition). But where Kant asks what are the a priori conditions of the possibility of apperception (of the ‘I think’ that must be capable of accompanying all my representations), we might imagine Wittgenstein asking what is presupposed by the possibility of groundless self-ascription of predicates of perception (of the ‘I perceive’ that must be capable of accompanying all my perceptions, as Kant did not put it). While Kant answers his question in terms of the threefold synthesis and the subsumption of intuitions under the categories, Wittgenstein would answer his in terms of public criteria for possession of the concepts of seeing, hearing, feeling, etc. What, logically speaking, must a speaker *already be able to do with words*, if he is to be able groundlessly to avow or aver a sensible experience?

Kant’s transcendental idealism and his transcendental arguments are deliberately crafted to answer the master-question ‘How is synthetic a priori knowledge of nature possible?’ How can we *know, independently of experience*, that substance in nature must persist; or that objects must stand in reciprocal causal relations; or that every event must have a cause. His explanation of the possibility of such meta-physical knowledge is by reference to what he conceived to be the a priori conditions of the possibility of experience. As long as one thinks of these judgements as describing necessities in nature

that are known in advance of experience, Kant's strategy of linking our *knowledge* of them to the conditions of the possibility of experience and hence to transcendental apperception will seem not only ingenious, but profoundly compelling. Wittgenstein's account of what seem to be natural necessities ('*Naturnotwendigkeit*' (PI §372), i.e. metaphysical necessities in nature) is utterly different. What *appear* to be necessary and universal truths about the world are *norms of representation*. They are not expressions of knowledge of necessities constitutive of the realm of nature, but rather rules for the use of words in the guise of descriptions. They are not rules for nature, but rules for the *description* of nature. They are *grammatical propositions*. Wittgenstein's account of the nature of such propositions is wholly independent of his account of the conditions of the possibility of self-ascription of experiential predicates (or, more accurately, of avowals of experience).⁹ This is of capital importance.

So, Kant and Wittgenstein take different paths through the conceptual jungle. To be sure, that does not show that Kant got lost. But if Wittgenstein's arguments are correct, then Kant's path can never emerge from the jungle. The source of Kant's troubles lies in his taking the questionable conception of apperception as a reliable compass with which to find his way. To put things epigrammatically:

The 'I say' that must be capable of accompanying all my representations is not an 'I think'.

Or, more perspicuously:

Kant confuses a fictitious form of self-consciousness with the ability to say what one perceives and that one perceives it – and, occasionally, to hedge one's bets.

Let me explain.

One can be conscious of objects in one's field of perception. Perceptual consciousness is a mode of non-voluntary attention.¹⁰ It is a form of *cognitive receptivity* – a reception, rather than attainment or achievement, of knowledge. That is why one can order someone to observe something, but not to become or be conscious of something observed. One can try to discover something, but one cannot try to be conscious of something. One can succeed in detecting something, but one cannot succeed in becoming or being conscious of something. Because it is a form of cognitive receptivity,

being conscious is a cousin of *noticing*, *realizing*, *recognizing* and *being aware*. Unlike its cousins, however, perceptual consciousness is limited to what catches and then holds one's attention. One may become and then be conscious of the ticking of the clock, or become and then be conscious of the smell of dinner wafting in from the kitchen. The objects of perceptual consciousness are not one's perceivings but the objects of one's perceivings (typically, but not only, objects of peripheral perception). The moot point is whether one can be conscious of one's perceiving what one perceives. This is not an empirical question to be resolved by examining what goes on while we perceive (cf. PI §316). Rather, we must investigate what, *if anything*, could be *meant* by phrases of the general form: 'being conscious of one's sensible experiences'? In short, is there any such thing as *apperception*?

One perceives things in one's immediate environment by the use of one's senses. So, Wittgenstein queries, 'Do I observe myself, then, and perceive that I am seeing . . .?' (PI §417). That is, presumably, absurd – and it was no part of Kant's tale to construe either pure apperception or the empirical apperception of inner sense as *perceiving* that one perceives. But – according to Kant – 'I think' *must* be capable of accompanying all my representations. For only when it does do they amount to what he calls 'perceptions' (*representations with consciousness*). So, we might imagine Wittgenstein going on to ask, 'Am I then my own *witness* that I am perceiving something?' (cf. PI §416). Kant's answer seems clear: for me to have a perception I must be conscious, or at least capable of being conscious, of it *as my perception* – as the sensible experience I have (the Humean worry that it might be another's cannot arise). How might Wittgenstein respond?

In a remarkable passage that can be viewed as a challenge to the whole Kantian conception, Wittgenstein noted the temptation to claim that when one sees objects, one *has* something – the current experience, the contents of which are subsumed under the very same concepts as the objects perceived:

You want to look about you and say: "At any rate only *I* have got this." – What are these words for?

They serve no purpose. – Indeed, can't one add: "There is here no question of a 'seeing' – and therefore none of a 'having' – nor of a subject, nor therefore of the I either? Couldn't I ask: In what sense have you *got* what you are talking about and saying that only you have got it? Do you possess it? You do not

even *see* it. Don't you really have to say that no one has got it? And indeed it's clear: if you logically exclude other people's having something, it loses its sense to say that you have it.

But what are you then talking about? It's true I said that I knew deep down what you meant. But that meant that I knew how one thinks to conceive this object, to see it, to gesture at it, as it were, by looking and pointing. I know how one stares ahead and looks about one in this case – and the rest. I think one can say: you are talking (if, for example, you are sitting in a room) of the 'visual room'. That which has no owner is the 'visual room'. I can as little own it as I can walk about it, or look at it, or point at it. In so far as it cannot belong to anyone else, it doesn't belong to me either. Or again: in so far as I want to apply the same form of expression to it as to the material room in which I sit, it doesn't belong to me. The description of the latter need not mention an owner. Indeed, it need not have an owner. But then the visual room *cannot* have an owner. "For" – one might say – "it has no master outside it, and none inside it either." (PI §398)

Clearly, the 'visual room' consists of subjective experience – one's visual experience of things being thus-and-so (shorn of its factivity). The 'material room' consists of the public objects of experience: things being thus-and-so. Both are described in terms of concepts of objects subordinate to the a priori categories of experience. Kant and Wittgenstein agree that the visual room *could* contain no owner – that nothing in one's perceptual experience could warrant its ascription to a subject. (That is why Hume's search for himself among his fleeting perceptions was a bogus search.) But Kant thinks that the visual room *must be owned* (the ownership condition of transcendental and empirical self-consciousness). For any sensible experience to be mine, *I must be able to conceive of it formally as mine*. For any series of sensible experiences to be mine, I must be able to conceive of them as *belonging to a persistent subject of experience* – to my 'transcendental self' so conceived (the formal persistence condition). To be conscious of my experiences as mine is to *know* that I am having those experiences – for consciousness is a form of cognition (the subjective cognitive condition). The condition of the possibility of this self-consciousness, according to Kant, is precisely awareness or the possibility of awareness of the synthesis of the manifold given in intuition and its subsumption under

the categories, which are a priori concepts of an object in general. Only then can the visual room I have also be (for the most part) the visible room I perceive.

Wittgenstein's response to this might be imagined to be fourfold. First, he would agree that the first person pronoun, the 'I' of apperception, is formal. It belongs to our form of representation, not to its matter. But it is *merely* formal, and precisely because it is merely formal, it is *unnecessary*. It is unnecessary in the following sense: We can readily envisage alternative forms of representation that dispense with it. Instead of 'I have a pain', a speaker S would say 'There is a pain' (after all, even in our existing form of representation, we say 'It hurts'), whereupon others would say 'S is in pain'. Instead of 'I see . . .', S would say 'There is a visual perception of things being thus-and-so', and others would say 'S sees that . . .'. And instead of 'It sensibly seems to me that . . .', S would say 'There is a sensible seeming that . . .' and others would say 'It sensibly seems to S that . . .'.¹¹ In short, self-ascribability of experience, irrespective of whether it is objective perception, or subjective seeming-to-perceive, or even mere sensation, is *merely* a formal feature of a possible verbal expression or report of experience. The role of the personal pronoun is to *signal* the subject of experience – the speaker.¹² Or, to put it slightly differently, the role of the pronoun 'I' is to *index* the experience – like the point of origin on Cartesian co-ordinates (cf. BT 523). But the 'I' is dispensable for the fulfilment of that role, since the speech-act itself fulfils it. In this new form of representation, the apprehension of the unity of the manifold is exhibited in the description of the object of experience and in the behaviour appropriate in the context to the object perceived.¹³ The unity of the subject *qua* subject of experience is exhibited in the behaviour, including the utterances, of the perceiver. But no 'I' need accompany anyone's own representations. On the other hand, 'he', 'she' or 'it' *must* accompany all representations. For there can be no representings without representers.

Secondly, Wittgenstein would emphasize that the possessive 'to have' is likewise purely formal. 'To have a pain' is simply to be in pain, 'to have a visual perception' is just to see. We *represent* experience in the possessive form – but that is all the ownership of experience amounts to. *It is merely a representational form*. Its dispensability is evident if we represent experience (as above) in the form of 'there is' (or our being in pain in the form 'It hurts'). For example, instead of S saying 'I

have a visual experience of . . .’, he would say ‘There is a visual experience of . . .’, and others would say ‘S sees . . .’. Instead of saying ‘I have a pain’, S would say ‘There is a pain’, and others would then say ‘S is in pain’. Nothing would be lost by the impersonal non-possessive form, and its third-person correlate would not be in the possessive form.

Of course, we are deeply tempted to think that *only* the subject of experience can *have* the experience he has. You can’t have my pain, Frege wrote, and I can’t have your sympathy. Another’s pain is another pain.¹⁴ *Having* experiences, Strawson argued in a similar vein, is a form of *logically non-transferable ownership*.¹⁵ But that is quite mistaken. Ownership is a relation between an owner and the item owned. But to have a sensible experience is not to stand in any *relation* to anything (other than to an object perceived). In particular, it is not to stand in a relation of ownership *to the perceiving*. Perceiving is something one does or something that happens to one, not something one possesses. Moreover, while ownership may be legally or morally inalienable, it cannot be *logically* inalienable. For logical inalienability *excludes* ownership of *any* kind: ‘if it can’t belong to anyone else’, Wittgenstein remarked, ‘then it can’t belong to me either’ (PI §398 *supra*). Of course, two people may indeed have the same experience, just as two objects may have the same colour. Being A’s is not a criterion of identity of a colour; or of an experience. If someone asserts ‘You can’t have my experience’, the correct response is the query ‘Your experience! What experience is that?’ (cp. PI §253). And if the answer is ‘Listening to *Tosca* at Covent Gardens’, one may well respond ‘Yes – I was there too’ – in which case we enjoyed the same experience.¹⁶

Thirdly, not only are ‘I’ and ‘have’ misconstrued, so too is the ‘think’ of the ‘I think’ that must be able to accompany all my representations. *I think* is neither a *form* of consciousness of anything, nor is it an *object* of consciousness, i.e. something one is conscious *of*. Or, to give the dove some air-resistance in which to fly: to think I see something or for it visually to seem to me that things are thus-and-so, is *neither* to be conscious of seeing, nor is it to be conscious of things being thus-and-so. It is not anything I could be conscious of *or* not conscious of. This denial may seem counter intuitive. – So it should, otherwise three and a half centuries of thinkers would not have been persuaded by the

Cartesian/Lockean prestidigitations and their Kantian refinements. Let me explain the flight of the dove.

(a) Thinking that one sees that things are so, and its sensibly seeming to one that things are so, are not something one could be *conscious of* (or *fail* to be conscious of). For

I am conscious that I think I see that the lights are on.*

if it means anything, can hardly mean more than

I think I (can) see the lights.

Similarly,

I am conscious that it visually seems to me that the wall is red.*

if it means anything, means no more than

It looks to me as if the wall is red.

That is, the sentence-forming operator on sentences ‘I am conscious that’, in such cases, is vacuous (like multiplication by 1). But, ironically, one may become and then be conscious that things visually *seem to another person* to be thus-and-so – as when our attention is caught and held by Macbeth’s grasping for a dagger in thin air. There is no such thing as being conscious that it sensibly seems to me that things are thus-and-so, or as being conscious that I think I see that things are thus-and-so. (I shall elaborate below.) Rather, any mature language-user *can truthfully say* (i) that he perceives things to be thus-and-so; or (ii) that it sensibly seems to him that things are thus-and-so. Of course, the former, but not the latter, may be false for all one’s truthfulness. Kant confuses the ability to *say* what we perceive or think we perceive with the fictitious ability to *apperceive* all our ‘representations’.

(b) ‘It sensibly seems to me that ...’ (‘It seems to me just as if I were seeing/hearing ...’) is not (contrary to what Descartes suggested) the expression of indubitable and infallible subjective knowledge. Rather, its truthfulness guarantees its truth (cp. PP §319) – and that is what confused Descartes. ‘It sensibly seems to me that *p*’ is not an assertion *of consciousness* that *p* (and hence of knowledge that *p*). Nor is it the description of something (a ‘representation’) *of which* one is conscious, and so knows (infallibly and indubitably) to be as one apperceives it to be. On the contrary, its role is to qualify the assertion that *p* or the assertion that I see that *p*.

(c) Its sensibly seeming to me that . . . (the representation that another representation is in me, as Kant put it) is *not* a possible accompaniment of all my representations. On the contrary, it is *excluded* when I correctly and confidently perceive that . . . Seeming to see (I think I see) is not a common constituent of both seeing and having illusions and hallucinations.¹⁷ Macbeth seemed to see a dagger, but he did not *seem to see* the blood on his hands – he saw it. Seeing is not successful seeming to see. But one might say that seeming to see is often unsuccessful seeing. If someone satisfies the criteria for seeing a dagger, he *thereby* fails to satisfy the criteria for seeming to see a dagger. The two ‘experiences’ could not be more different – since one involves the visible presence of a dagger in the subject’s visual field and the other requires its absence. The fact that Macbeth could not, for a moment, distinguish the two does not show that they contain a common core of *seeming to see*. What it shows (unsurprisingly) is that he was hallucinating. It is not as if, when he previously did see the real dagger in his hand dripping with Duncan’s blood, his seeing the dagger was a successful seeming to see it.

In short, we must disentangle the knotted threads in the putative concept of self-consciousness that is conceived to be both accompaniment and form of experience (perceptual cognition). Let us distinguish:

(i) The object of my perception, i.e. *what* (relative WH-pronoun) I perceive, namely: a material object array.

(ii) The content of my perception, namely: *that things are thus-and-so* (including, for example, that there is such-and-such a material object array before me).

(iii) My perceiving what I perceive, i.e. my seeing what I see, my hearing what I hear, etc. ‘To perceive’ and verbs of perception signifying species of perceiving are *factive*. However, ‘I perceive that things are thus-and-so’ is not, according to Descartes, the expression of a *cogitatio*. For it is neither indubitable nor infallible. But it is a Kantian *cognition* (i.e. an ‘objective perception’ (A 320/B 376)).

(iv) Its sensibly (visually, auditorily, etc.) seeming to me that things are thus-and-so (a Cartesian *cogitatio*). But now we are faced with a dilemma. Is *my thinking* (of apperception)

(a) identical with *my being conscious of . . .* ?

or is it

(b) *what* I am conscious of ?

It seems to have to be both; but that it cannot be. Nor indeed can it be the one or the other. Let us examine both possibilities.

(a) Suppose that 'It visually seems to me . . .' amounts to much the same as 'I am conscious that I see // a so-and-so // things to be thus-and-so//' or 'I am conscious of seeing // a so-and-so// things to be thus-and-so//'. Then this, far from cancelling the factivity of 'I see . . .', reinforces it. For if I am conscious that I see, then it follows that I see. But the whole point of the Cartesian 'It seems to me' was to cancel the factivity of the verb of perception. Equally, the Kantian 'I think that . . .' does not amount to an *objective* perception – a cognition. For it is supposed to be common to both 'subjective' and 'objective' perception, and does not guarantee that the representation it accompanies is an objective representation.

(b) So suppose that 'It seems to me that I see . . .' and 'I think my representation is . . .' are expressions of thoughts (*cogitationes*) or of apperception. Then they seem to be candidates for being *what I am conscious of*. According to Descartes, I cannot think without being conscious of my thinking. So when it seems to me that I see that things are thus-and-so, *I must be conscious of its so seeming to me*. According to Kant 'I think' must be capable of accompanying all my representations. It is, he says, *a representation of a representation*. But the representation that is the object of the 'I think' (that is the 'content' of consciousness) must be a *seeming*. Otherwise it would be tantamount to an objective perception, i.e. a perceptual cognition. So Kant is either in the same boat as Descartes, or he is in the deep blue sea. But now: what is the difference between 'it sensibly seems to me that . . .' and 'I am conscious that it sensibly seems to me that . . .'? What conceivable role can the operator 'I am conscious that' fulfil when prefixed to 'It seems to me that I see . . .' or 'It visually seems to me that . . .'?

It is all too easy to suppose that its role is to declare *subjective knowledge of thoughts*. The factivity-cancelling, thought-specifying operator on statements of perception – 'It seems to me that' –

seems to secure the indubitability and infallibility of thoughts. For while I may doubt whether I really see a given material object array, and while I may be mistaken as to whether I actually do perceive that things are thus-and-so, I cannot, it seems, doubt or be mistaken that things sensibly seem to me to be thus-and-so. Certainly, for Descartes, it is precisely this that ensures that perceptual thoughts can function as premises in the *cogito*. But the very idea of perceptual *cogitationes* or of consciousness of representations thus conceived is a dire confusion. We confuse the grammatical fact that, in such cases, *truthfulness guarantees truth* with the idea that thoughts are indubitable and infallibly known to be as they are. But it is precisely because truthfulness guarantees truth that thoughts thus conceived are *not* objects (or contents) of subjective knowledge, and so too *not* objects (or contents) of consciousness. Why so?

One role of 'I know' is to declare that grounds for doubt and error have been excluded. They may be excluded by evidence, by the satisfactory concept-laden exercise of a cognitive faculty (e.g. sight, hearing), by reliable hearsay or authority. But if truth is already guaranteed by truthfulness, then ignorance (doubt and error) are *logically* excluded anyway. It makes no sense to say: 'Either it sensibly seems to me that *p*, or it sensibly seems to me that *q*, but I don't know which.' (If someone were to say, 'Either it (sensibly) seems to me that there is a rose in the vase, or it (sensibly) seems to me that there is bread in the bread-bin— but I don't know which' we would not understand him.) But if ignorance of such an empirical truth is *logically* excluded, if 'I don't know which' makes no sense here, then so too is knowledge – *for there is no epistemic work for it to do*. What it normally serves to exclude (viz. grounds for doubt and the possibility of error) is already precluded by logic. There is no logical space within which knowledge may be located.

So the apperception of a sensible representation can be neither a form of consciousness nor an object of consciousness. So a transcendental deduction is impossible.

4. *The way out of the jungle*

What has gone wrong? As usual in philosophy, the fault lies in the fundamental questions asked, or even further back – in their presuppositions. The first mistake lay in Kant's master-question: How are

synthetic a priori judgements possible? Or: how is knowledge of synthetic a priori propositions possible? The correct questions to ask are: What is it for a proposition to be a necessary proposition? and: What is the role of necessary propositions? These are indeed the questions that lie at the heart of Wittgenstein's treatment of the variety of propositions that we deem to be necessary truths.¹⁸ The questions, *pace* Kant, are *not* epistemological, but logico-grammatical ones. Wittgenstein's answers were that necessary truths are either norms of representation in the misleading guise of descriptions, or internally related to such norms of representation. Their role is as inference rules. They are not descriptions of anything, but rules of description. How is it possible for us to know them? To know them is to know rules. We learn these in the course of learning our language – for they are partly constitutive of the meanings of the words we use.

The treatment of the philosophical questions about necessity is to be detached from epistemological considerations. So the treatment of the philosophical problem of the conditions of the possibility of original (underived, groundless) self-ascription of experience is to be detached altogether from the treatment of the Kantian epistemological question of the conditions of the possibility of knowledge of synthetic a priori judgements. How then is *this* problem to be characterized? – *Not* by reference to the misguided question of what experience must be like in order to constitute cognition.¹⁹ Nor is the answer to the problem to be by reference to the imaginary 'science' of transcendental psychology according to which I must be aware, or be able to be aware, of a transcendental synthesis of intuitions.²⁰ Rather the question is to be transposed to the linguistic plane: how is it possible for a language-user to apply present-tense perceptual verbs to himself without any grounds whatsoever? Or: not 'what must *experience* be like to be groundlessly self-ascribable by a subject of experience?', but rather: 'what must the logico-grammatical character of *predicates of experience* be in order for their groundless self-ascription to make sense?'

Wittgenstein's treatment of self-ascribed predicates of sensation (e.g. 'to have a pain') is too well known, I hope, to need much rehearsing. Criterionless self-ascription of psychological concepts is possible only on condition of mastery of the concept self-ascribed without criteria. Mastery of the concept self-ascribed without criteria involves grasp of the criteria for its other-ascription, and

mastery of the language-games in which both self- and other-ascription are embedded. In the case of *having a pain*, the primitive roots of the language-game lie in natural behavioural expressions of pain. For the child learns to say ‘Ow’, ‘Hurts’, ‘It hurts’ and later ‘I have a pain’ as extensions of natural pain-expression – first as avowals, later as averrals. In learning this, the child also learns that his own pain-expressions and pain reports are a reason for others to ascribe *having a pain* to him, and hence too that the pain-utterances and pain-behaviour of others is a reason for saying of them that they are in pain. But this form of linguistic graft onto natural behavioural stock is *not* a general pattern. Each concept must be examined in its own right, and located within its own language-games.

So, how is it possible for a language-user to apply predicates of sensible experience to himself, defeasibly – but without grounds, and to apply them to others on the basis of behavioural grounds? A full reply would be lengthy. All that I aim to do here is indicate what sort of reply a Wittgensteinian approach would yield. But what I here briefly sketch is, I hope, in the spirit of his thought. Mastery of the perceptual vocabulary (the use of verbs of perception and their cognates), and hence possession of concepts of perception, presuppose antecedent mastery of an observational vocabulary of perceptibilia, and, by and large, a vocabulary of perceptual qualities (both special and common sensibles). This, with us, requires competence in its use in description, interrogation and command.²¹ Once a significant fragment of that is mastered, indeed, *while* it is being mastered, perceptual verbs come into play: ‘Can you see . . .?’, ‘Did you hear . . .?’, ‘Does that feel cold?’, and so forth. In response to an assertion of how things perceptibly are, the question ‘How do you know?’ can now arise. So the child learns to reply ‘I saw him in the garden’, and ‘I can hear her outside’. He learns to play ‘I spy with my little eye’, and so on, and so forth. In short, he learns the use of verbs of perception as operators on descriptions of perceptibilia, and as indicative of validating sources of knowledge. He learns the first-person use *and* the third-person use. He learns the groundless application of verbs of vision as operators on descriptions of visibilia qualified by visual sensibles, which he has been able to report on using his sight, i.e. on looking, watching, glancing and spotting. (He would not have been able to do so with his eyes closed!) And so too, *mutatis mutandis*, he learns the first-person use of the other perceptual verbs. At the same time, the child learns the use of these

verbs in respect of his parents, siblings and friends: he learns to say ‘Look!’, to ask ‘Can you see?’, to order ‘Listen!’ and to query ‘Did you hear?’, not to mention ‘Mummy, taste!’ or ‘Daddy, smell!’. So too, he learns to apply this battery of verbs to others on the grounds of what they do and say – of their looking, listening, tasting, smelling and feeling, and the evident upshot of their perceptual activities.

Once this expansion of vocabulary and concept-acquisition is under way, illusion and error are made explicit. Perceptual descriptions and claims are not always right. Observation conditions are sometimes sub-optimal, the sense-organs are sometimes defective (temporarily or permanently), the objects of perception are sometimes deceptive and look or sound other than they are. Parental or peer correction commonly follows error. The child himself learns to correct error – by looking again, or improving the observation conditions (moving closer, turning on the light), and so forth. So he learns to budget for the defeat and defeasibility of observation claims and perceptual self-ascriptions. He learns the use of the operators ‘It seems to me as if’, ‘I think it’s a . . .’, ‘As far as I can see’ and so forth. The *fundamental* role (others will come later) of these sentence-forming operators on observation-sentences and on perceptual sentences is not to report the ‘representation of a representation that is in me’, but to *qualify* an observation-sentence or perceptual sentence. The *basic* role is to indicate that the operand is not wholly reliable, that the employment of the cognitive faculty of sense was, in one way or another, non-optimal (either by way of sense or by way of recognition), that defeating conditions cannot be ruled out. Once that basic role is in place, other roles can be assigned to the operation, e.g. characterization of the manner of perceiving (at the oculist’s, for example), qualifications on thought rather than on perception, characterization of the objective appearance of the object perceived by ‘It looks like’, ‘It appears’, ‘It seems to be’.

Self-consciousness, as conceived in the Cartesian/Lockean tradition culminating in Kant, was, I suggest, a grammatical red-herring. There is indeed such a thing as self-consciousness.²² But it is not a matter of the capacity for self-ascription of experience. That a child has learnt to say ‘Mummy, I can see you’, ‘Daddy, I heard a noise’, or ‘That feels hot!’ does not imply any increase in, or development of, self-consciousness. That a language-user has advanced to this stage does indeed imply that he can *think about* and *express his thoughts about* his own perceptual experiences (‘Oh, it is so nice to see

that garden', 'I enjoyed listening to you'). Is this a mark of achieving self-consciousness? One *might* say so. It is true that language-users such as ourselves, unlike the other animals, can think about our current perceptual experiences and say what we think about them. But is that sufficient for self-consciousness? To think about something (e.g. Julius Caesar) is not in general to be conscious of what one is thinking about. Why should thinking about one's perceiving what one is currently perceiving be conceived to be a mode of self-consciousness? One might rather opt for a weightier notion. Self-consciousness, taken weightily, is *related* to the bare idea of thinking about one's experiences. It is indeed *cogitative* rather than cognitive – so it belies its etymological ancestry. But unlike mere *thinking about* one's currently perceiving something, it is a reflective, cogitative *disposition*. Moreover, its objects are not current perceptions. To be self-conscious, in this sense, is a matter of having a disposition to *think about* one's tendencies, attitudes, character traits, actions and the reasons and motives one has or had for them – but it is *not* being *conscious of them*. For those who are, in this sense, self-conscious (introspective) personalities are also much given to self-deception.²³

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