

Review

Transcendental Philosophy and Naturalism, by Joel Smith and Peter Sullivan (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 212 pp. ISBN 978-0199608553

The book collects essays that have been presented in workshops of the project *Transcendental Philosophy and Naturalism*, conceived and led by Mark Sacks. It shares with a wider audience some of the conversations of these workshops and invites the reader to continue them. The invitation will be gratefully accepted.

An introduction by the editors Joel Smith and Peter Sullivan sketches a frame for the contributions to the volume by expounding a concept of transcendental philosophy. The essays fit into this frame. And this limits the volume. For the frame rests on a conception of transcendental idealism that excludes Kant's fundamental thought. His transcendental idealism is to hold together two ideas: the insight that thought is spontaneity and the doctrine that thought relates to the object only through sensory representations. The transcendental idealism of the introduction, however, abstracts from the difference of thought from sensibility.

This limits, specifically, the way in which transcendental philosophy can be seen to relate to naturalism. Naturalism rejects idealism by denying the spontaneity of thought. If the relation of thought to sensibility is left unthematized, then the opposite response to Kant's idealism – opposite to the response of naturalism – cannot come into view: the response that denies that thought does not relate to the object directly. The volume does not consider this response; it does not consider *absolute* idealism. In consequence, even the essays that are friendly to the spontaneity of thought fail to think through what that would be: a philosophy that is not naturalism.

None of the essays reflects on this difference: thought is infinite, the senses are finite. Most plaster over it, speaking indifferently of experience or cognition or mindedness; Kant's two stems of cognition appear merged into one. This is a cause of unclarity. Either 'experience' or 'mind' is conceived in a manner appropriate to Kant's lower stem: as finite. Then, as the term still carries a memory of the higher stem, it will not be transparent that, on that view, philosophy is not, but only empirical science. Or 'mind' or 'experience' is conceived in the manner appropriate to Kant's higher stem: as infinite. Then, as the term still carries a memory of the lower stem, it will not be transparent that, on this view, philosophy is absolute idealism. Either way, the relation of transcendental philosophy to naturalism is obscured.

I first represent the 'transcendental idealism' of the introduction. Then I distinguish it from Kant's transcendental idealism. This will involve reflecting on the difference of thought from sensibility. Then I consider the essays: their conception of thought and knowledge, its infinity, its limits.

1. Transcendental Argument and Transcendental Idealism in the Introduction

A transcendental philosopher, say Smith and Sullivan (henceforth S&S), is someone who deploys transcendental arguments and inclines toward transcendental idealism. A transcendental argument bears the form: If there is to be A, there must be B. There is A. Therefore, there is B. This form is not distinctive of transcendental arguments. So a

transcendental argument is transcendental on account of its content: A, a necessary condition of which is B, is, for example, experience, knowledge, language. The first premise of a transcendental argument (if there is to be A, there must be B) S&S call a transcendental claim; it specifies a condition under which alone A, experience, say, is possible.

If an argument is to yield knowledge of its conclusion, its premises must be known to be true. How do we know a transcendental claim to be true? A transcendental claim says what, for example, experience is. It articulates the nature—the structure, the form—of experience. So how do we know what experience is? From experience? Do we encounter experience among the objects of experience, acquiring knowledge of its nature from this encounter? If this seems absurd, we may try thinking that transcendental claims are analytic, articulating the concept of experience. Then we would know them to be true simply by possessing this concept. However, suppose a given claim articulates a certain concept. Then we must ask whether this concept is valid of an object. For, if it is not, then an analytic statement articulating its content may elaborate a fiction, but it will not be knowledge. Now, if a concept originates in experience of what is thought in it, then this establishes its validity. Hence, if we acquire the concept of experience, and therein knowledge of what experience is, through encountering in experience, as one of its objects, experience, then this explains how a transcendental claim can be knowledge. But it was because we thought this absurd that we tried to think of transcendental claims as analytic.

S&S suggest that a transcendental claim may be – neither empirical nor analytic, but – synthetic a priori. They explain that transcendental arguments, therefore, may depend on transcendental idealism. For, transcendental idealism promises to show how synthetic knowledge a priori is possible (8). (This is the first of two ways S&S mention in which, they say, transcendental arguments may be taken to rest on transcendental idealism.) This should give us pause. Kant claims to show how synthetic knowledge a priori of *nature* is possible. He does not think experience part of nature. What did he think he was doing describing the form of thought and experience? We shall return to this question.

For now we remain with the philosopher of transcendental arguments. He thinks of these as proceeding from synthetic judgments a priori about the form of experience. So he holds that our consciousness of this form is not empirical. Rather, we know what experience is by having experience; we know what it is to think because we think. The consciousness of the form of thought and experience is *self-consciousness*. Being conscious of the form of experience, we know ourselves, namely, our mind. So the transcendental philosopher seems to think.

Now, our mind—this is, for the most part, held as a matter of course—is a certain object, distinct from others. Specifically, it is distinct from the objects of our mind. However, transcendental arguments seek to establish knowledge of those; B in the above schema relates to them. And it seems clear that this is impossible. Transcendental claims represent the structure of our conceptual scheme, the way in which we are minded, etc. It cannot establish anything regarding objects outside our mind. Here, say S&S, transcendental idealism helps. (This is the second way in which transcendental idealism they say supports transcendental arguments.) For, transcendental idealism distinguishes appearances from things in themselves, empirical reality from transcendental reality, reality for us from objective reality. Making this distinction, we limit the objects we know by transcendental argument to appearances, empirical reality, what is for us. The argument is sound because and insofar as these objects are inner objects of our thought and nothing outside our way of thinking them.

This manner of introducing transcendental idealism does without mentioning the distinction of thought from sensibility. So in this representation of it, transcendental

idealism cannot be recognized as the attempt to cling to the infinity of thought in the face of its apparent dependence on sensibility. Naturalism disowns the infinity of thought. It is not enough, against this, to insist on the infinity of thought. We must reflect on the apparent dependence of thought on sensibility, which appears to render it finite, at least insofar as it relates to an object and is knowledge.

The introduction suppresses Kant's reference to the dependence of our thought on sensibility. S&S quote this passage: 'I understand by the transcendental idealism of all appearances the doctrine that they are all together to be regarded as mere representations and not things in themselves, and accordingly that space and time are only sensible forms of our intuition, but not determinations given for themselves or conditions of objects as things in themselves. To this idealism is opposed transcendental realism, which regards space and time as something given in themselves (independent of our sensibility).' Kant says we have no knowledge of things in themselves because *space and time*—a general character of all objects *given to our senses*—do not determine things in themselves, but are merely *forms or our intuition*. S&S interpret the passage writing: '... the transcendently real, which is that which is independent of the a priori necessary conditions of cognition (our sensibility), and the transcendently ideal, which is that which is necessarily subject to such conditions' (3). In the next paragraph, the reference to sensibility has disappeared: 'To say that appearances are transcendently ideal is to say that they are necessarily subject to the a priori conditions of cognition' (3–4). It never comes back.

2. Kant's Idealism

Kant is different. His thought may be put as follows. An act of knowledge is an act of thinking an object and as such bears the form of thought. But as the object known is not given in this act of thinking, but in a *distinct* act of sensibility, the form of knowledge is *not* simply the form of thought; it also reflects the form of our sensibility. And these differ: thought is spontaneous, and that is, infinite; sensibility is receptive, and that is, finite. This conception of the difference of thought from sensibility is not peculiar to Kant. It is ancient. I expound it through a bit of Plato.

In the passage in the *Theaitetos* that finally refutes the idea that knowing is perceiving, Plato asserts that the soul apprehends being not through an organ, but through itself. The negative determination—not through an organ—is founded in the positive one—through itself.

Not through an organ. The soul apprehends something through an organ as this organ makes it available to be apprehended. An organ through which the soul apprehends delimits a range of things that are apprehended through it. Thus the power to apprehend through organs—sensibility—is articulated into senses, each with an organ and a range of things it apprehends. The concept of a thing within this range represents the formal object of the sense: through this concept we think something solely as an object of that sense. For example, color is the formal object of vision, the concept of color, the formal concept of an object of vision. The concept of the formal object of a sense and the concept of this sense are one: the formal object is defined as the object of the sense, the sense as the power to apprehend this object.

The act in which the soul apprehends being is thought. Thought apprehends things as being a certain way; it apprehends things as being so. 'So it is', it says. So thought relates to being as color does to vision. Being is the formal object of thought, the concept of being, the formal concept of an object of thought. It is the concept of an object of thought *überhaupt*.

Now, being is not apprehended through an organ. For, being subjects of thought, we apprehend whatever we do so—no matter through what sense, no matter what senses we have—as being. But what is apprehended through an organ falls within a limited range. It would be an accident if it so happened that nothing fell outside this range. By contrast, it is no accident that there is nothing beyond what is. This is a tautology. The tautology shows that, in the concept of being, we have always already reached beyond any limit. Therefore the idea that we apprehend being through an organ is empty.

Being is not apprehended through an organ because it is unlimited. It has been asserted that we apprehend being through an organ, the brain, perhaps. According to this idea, thought is a special sense, a sense of being, we might say. A given organ, its given nature, delimits the range of things that are apprehended through it. Hence, if we hold that we think through an organ, we are led to speculate that there are certain things or aspects of things that we cannot think because the organ of thought is not such as to make them available to be thought. Certain things fall outside the range of thought, just as certain things—sounds, say—fall outside the range of vision. This is nonsense because the concept of being, the concept of the formal object of thought, is unconditionally general. It transcends any limit we think in the concept of a given organ, its determinate nature, its delimited range.

The soul apprehends being not through an organ, Plato asserts. He goes on: it apprehends being through itself. What determines the formal object of thought, Plato says, is—nothing other than—thought. Thought determines its own formal object, and this is, it determines itself. This explains its infinity.

Consider the central act of thought: judgment. In judging, I am conscious of judging. I do not judge anyway, and then, in a second act of the mind, am conscious of doing so. Were I not conscious of judging, judging would not be what I do. Judging and being conscious of judging are one act of the mind; any judgment applies the concept of judgment. I call this the self-consciousness of judgment. So when I say, judgment is self-conscious, I mean: judging things to be a certain way and being conscious of so judging are *one act of the mind*.

Being self-conscious, judgment apprehends what it does through itself: it apprehends what it does through its own concept, the concept of judgment. Now, the concept of judgment is the same as the formal concept of an object of judgment. As I apprehend what I do through the concept of judgment, I am conscious of apprehending it in the manner of judging; I apprehend it through the concept of the formal object of judgment: as something that is. Any judgment applies the concept of being, the concept of an object of judgment *überhaupt*. Judgment represents its object through itself, and that is, through the concept of its formal object.

The self-consciousness of judgment, its representing its object through the formal concept of its object, is its infinity. We see this when we inquire into the source of the content of the concept of judgment. The concept of judgment is in any judgment. Hence, this concept – the concept of judgment – does not reflect a reality – judgments – that is there anyway. Judgment is not a given reality, which has the character it happens to have and which character then comes to be known, if it does, in a suitable concept. So the concept of judgment does not receive its content from the given nature of a psychic power, a power that precedes it, this concept. Rather, the concept of judgment is the self-constitution of the power thought in it. It does not receive its content from a given reality that it captures, but is itself the source of its content; it is the self-determining concept. Therefore the nature of judgment—what is thought in this concept—is not a brute fact, whose ground may be sought in *something other*, which gave judgment that

character. As the nature of judgment is nothing other than the self-determining concept of judgment, the nature of judgment is *unconditionally necessary*.

Thought is infinite: it does not apprehend what it does through an organ whose nature delimits what is apprehended through it. Rather, the soul apprehends being through itself, Plato says; thought represents its object through its own concept, I said. The concept of thought therefore does not reflect, is not bound to, a given nature, a nature that defines thought anyway, and then is represented in this concept. Kant expresses Plato's thought in this way: the concept of thought is an act of spontaneity. A spontaneous representation is not one that springs from a psychic machine that spits it out irrespective of the input from the senses. This is not an intelligible idea. The spontaneous representation is the act of a power that constitutes itself in this representation.

I asked: what did Kant think he was doing when he described the form of thought and experience? Here is the answer for the form of *thought*. Thought is self-conscious; it apprehends what it does through itself, through its own concept. The concept of being, as Plato puts it, the concept of an object *überhaupt*, as Kant puts it, is nothing other than the self-consciousness of thought. Describing the form of thought is articulating this self-consciousness.

Given the two-stem-doctrine, the answer to our question insofar as it relates to *experience* cannot be the same. Suppose the self-consciousness of thought were knowledge. This consciousness is the concept of being, the concept of an object *überhaupt*, the category. If it is knowledge, then it is knowledge of what is insofar as it is, and of what belongs to it essentially; it is knowledge of the ultimate principle and ground of what is insofar as it is. As this concept does not reflect anything given, but is self-determining, the knowledge which this concept is (we are supposing that it is knowledge) does not depend on anything other than it. So if the category, the consciousness that is the form of thought, were knowledge, then the object of *this* knowledge would *not* be given in a sensory representation. Its object would be nothing other than the knowledge of it.

The two-stem-doctrine entails that the self-consciousness of thought is not knowledge. It is the form of knowledge, not knowledge, not on its own. (We may put this by saying – Kant puts it by saying – that it is the *mere* form of knowledge.) Thought is incapable of relating to the object save by way of the object's being given to thought in an act of sensory intuition. Therefore the category is knowledge only insofar as it relates to something given. As the category thinks the object given to the senses a priori, namely, according to its form, the form of sensibility, the category acquires a content. This content is articulated in the principles of the understanding, which lay out the form of experience. The form of experience, then, is the a priori determination of sensibility by the self-consciousness of thought.

Let us compare Kant's notion of the form of thought and experience, and our consciousness of it, to that of the philosopher of transcendental arguments. The latter conceives our consciousness of the form of thought as knowledge of the mind, which is an object distinct from others, specifically from those objects that the mind apprehends. According to Kant, the self-consciousness of thought—the concept of the object *überhaupt*, the category—is not knowledge of the object. And it would be confused to think of it as, instead, knowledge of the mind. This would be knowledge of an object that is not an instance of knowledge of the object. In contrast to the form of thought, the form of experience *is* knowledge. But it, too, is not knowledge of the mind. Rather, it is knowledge of the object given to the senses according to the form of our sensibility. Neither the form of thought, that is, the consciousness of this form, nor the form of experience, that is, the consciousness of this form, is knowledge of the mind.¹

Kant's idealism conjoins the recognition of the infinity of thought with the two-stem-doctrine, the notion that thought does not relate to an object directly, but must be given an object in a distinct act of sensory intuition. It does so by limiting our knowledge to appearances. As transcendental idealism is to secure the infinity of thought, it does not hold that the objects of our knowledge are mere appearances on account of being represented in thought. *Precisely not*. If they could be known through thought alone, they would be known as things-in-themselves. The objects we know are mere appearances because we know them only through sensory affection and therefore according to our form of intuition. In contrast to the form of thought, the form of our sensibility is a *given* reality. Kant does not focus on the nature of specific sense organs, but on the general character of our sensibility. Yet his thought is Plato's: *sensibility has a given nature*. And to think this *is* to think a limit to what is apprehended through sensibility.

Therefore, in 'our form of sensibility', 'our' has a meaning it does *not* have in 'our form of thought'. As the nature of our sensibility is given, a brute fact, there is space for the idea of finite thinkers whose form of sensibility differs from ours. By contrast, the idea of finite thinkers that differ from us in thinking different categories is empty. The category is the self-determining concept; it is the self-constitution of the intellect. Therefore it does not admit a manifold of instances that are, as instances, not fully determined by it. 'Our' in 'our form of thought' only indicates that our consciousness of this form is *self*-consciousness. It does not signify the possibility of a form of thought different from ours.

There is no meaning in the statement, 'Our knowledge is only of appearances because the objects of our knowledge necessarily conform to the form of thought.' If we think that the form of thought—the category—could limit its object in any way, we fail to recognize the difference of thought from sense. We fail to recognize the self-consciousness of thought, its spontaneity, its infinity. In Kant, the category, far from limiting knowledge, is that through which we think its limitation. We think the limitation of our knowledge through the category when we free it from its reference to sensibility. Therefore, while the principles of the understanding—relating the category specifically to *our* forms of sensibility—are knowledge only of those subjects whose form of sensibility are space and time, the transcendental dialectic is thought, *mutatis mutandis*, by any subject of finite thought, regardless of her form of intuition.

Our knowledge is limited to appearances because our thought does not relate to the object directly. This is obscured by the widespread notion that, had we knowledge of things in themselves, it would be knowledge of things *more independent* from our knowledge of them than are the appearance of which we have knowledge. But it is quite wrong to think that Kant holds that we cannot have knowledge of things in themselves that exist independently of our knowledge of them. He holds, rightly, that *that* idea, the idea of knowledge of things in themselves that exist independently of the knowledge of them, is empty. If we want a name, we may call a manner or thinking informed by this seeming idea 'uncritical metaphysics'.

Kant considers the notion that space and time belong to things in themselves. As things in space and time exist independently of our knowledge of them, knowing them as things in themselves would be to know things in themselves that are independent of our knowledge of them. Kant rejoins that things in space and time cannot be things in themselves, for this reason: If space and time were characters of things in themselves, then these things, spatial and temporal, would be afflicted by an internal contradiction. For, there would have to be, and yet there could not be, a sufficient ground of their existence. Kant argues that this shows that space and time are forms of intuition, a given character of our given sensibility. For, if they were not, reality in space and time would be contradictory.²

It is unclear whether this is a *reductio* of the premise. Plato accepts the conclusion; so does Hegel. Both accept that reality insofar as it is known only through the senses is essentially contradictory. And yet this is how Kant argues. But even then he cannot make the contradiction disappear. It remains in the form of an irresolvable illusion. In explaining appearances in the manner of the Second Analogy, we relate them to the idea of an explanation that satisfies reason, which idea, however, in spite of its necessary involvement in knowledge, is incapable ever to be itself knowledge. Arguably, this is a contradiction in the self-consciousness of our knowledge. Kant avoids the idea of a contradictory reality by limiting the contradiction to our knowledge. This is the point of confining knowledge to appearances. Indeed, this rendering of transcendental idealism—'knowledge is confined to appearances'—makes explicit the internal contradiction with which it saddles knowledge.

There is knowledge of things in themselves only if the two-stem-doctrine is false. There is knowledge of things in themselves only if the concept relates to what is *through itself*. Then knowledge, originally, is nothing other than that of which it is knowledge. For the concept, originally, is nothing other than the self-consciousness of thought. Kant's idealism rests on this insight: there is no such thing as holding to the infinity of thought, thinking of the object of knowledge as existing independently of being known, and rejecting transcendental idealism. The illusion that there is such a thing is uncritical metaphysics (if we can bear the sublime name of metaphysics to be sullied by this adjective).

The distinction of thought from sensibility as we have expounded it is unfamiliar today. An exception is Thomas Nagel. His *Mind and Cosmos*³ has a discussion of reason and its difference from sensory consciousness that follows the course of reflection we found in Plato.

The distinctive thing about reason is that it connects us with the truth directly. Perception connects us with the truth only indirectly. When I see a tree, I see it because it is there, but not just because it is there. [. . .] Rather I am aware of it because the tree causes a mental effect in me in virtue of the character of my visual system, which we may suppose has been shaped by natural selection to react in this way to light reflected from physical objects. [. . .] So it is only in a complicated and indirect sense that when I see a tree, I see it because it is there. But suppose I observe a contradiction among my beliefs and 'see' that I must give up at least one of them. [. . .] In that case, I see that the contradictory beliefs cannot all be true, and I see it simply because it is the case. (82–83)

Sense perception, Nagel observes, relates to an object through affection. Therefore it is limited by the nature of the organ of sense (the visual system). By contrast, reason (judgment, thought) relates to the truth (relates to what is) directly. This means, Nagel explains, that the fundamental act of reason is an act of knowledge which is such that things' being as they are known to be in this act is sufficient for them to be known to be so. (I know that it is so because—just because—it is so.) This description of the fundamental act of reason describes it as self-knowledge. Nagel identifies, as contained in the fundamental act of reason—he identifies as reason's self-consciousness—the consciousness of the law of noncontradiction, which stands in for the logical law in general. However, the knowledge in question—the self-consciousness of reason—will comprise all metaphysical knowledge, all knowledge of what is insofar as it is and its ultimate principle. As we noted above, the self-knowledge of reason is conscious of itself as unconditionally necessary: it 'is grasped as valid in itself' (81), as Nagel puts it. This unconditional

knowledge is the basis of any empirical knowledge (which, as empirical, has conditions not provided by itself).

The process [of constructing larger conceptions that contain and explain appearances; that is, scientific inquiry] is highly fallible, but it could not even be attempted without this hard core of self-evidence, on which all less certain reasoning depends. (83)

The ultimate act of reason (the hard core), that is, the self-knowledge of reason in which reason knows itself to be the ultimate principle of what is, has always already enclosed any scientific endeavor. Science seeks knowledge of an object insofar as it exists independently of being known. (The endeavor is fallible.) Therefore, it would be wrong to say of *it* that its object's being as it is on its own explains its being known to be that way. Empirical knowledge, knowledge of something other, can comprehend its own possibility (it can be attempted) only through its relation to absolute knowledge, the self-knowledge of reason.

Nagel is an absolute idealist: he recognizes that judgment relates to its object directly, through itself, which means that the self-consciousness of thought is knowledge, which knowledge, because it is self-knowledge, is knowledge of things as they are in themselves. Nagel knows that he is an absolute idealist. He says so.⁴ He is led to absolute idealism because he reflects on the nature and limits of naturalism. Together with the essays collected in the present volume, his book makes a case for the necessity of confronting naturalism with idealism.

3. The Essays

The essays by Joel Smith and Hilary Kornblith explore the idea that what is articulated in claims about the form of thought or knowledge is an object of natural science. Patricia Kitcher, Adrian Haddock, Adrian Moore and Peter Sullivan, by contrast, work to articulate the infinity of thought and knowledge. There are two further essays in the volume, which are at a greater distance and which, for this reason, I shall not discuss. One is Robert Stern's, which takes the topic into the field of practical philosophy. While this is worthwhile, perhaps even necessary, it would overtax this review to try to comprehend it. The other is Penelope Maddy's. While it speaks about naturalism, it does not seem to relate to the topic of transcendental philosophy and naturalism.

I begin with Kitcher because she expounds the spontaneity of judgment in a manner that brings out why it resists comprehension in naturalist terms. Then follow Kornblith and Smith. Their discussion lets us want to hold to the infinity of thought, as Haddock, Moore and Sullivan do. We consider what it is to do that.

A. Kitcher

The spontaneity of judgment is its self-consciousness: in judging, I am conscious of judging. This self-consciousness of judgment extends to the unity of judgments that is essential to them as judgments. This thought and its role in Kant has been developed by Patricia Kitcher in *Kant's Thinker*.⁵ Her essay in the volume is a brief exposition of the central idea of the book.

Kitcher argues that the unity exhibited by judgments that relate to each other as grounded to ground is, on the one hand, the form of rational knowledge; on the other

hand, it constitutes the unity of the thinker, the unity comprehended in her 'I think'. I discuss only the first aspect of the unity of judgment.⁶

Kitcher calls the knowledge that is her topic 'rational knowledge' and defines it by the condition that, in knowing rationally, the subject knows the basis on which she knows.⁷ The idea is easiest to introduce by reflecting on inference: the act of inferring one thing from certain others, judging one thing on the basis of certain others, concluding that one thing is so-and-so on the basis of other things' being so-and-so.

A statement 'C; for, A, and B' expresses three judgments: A, B, and C. And these are united: she who infers C from A and B judges C *because* she judges A and B. But this is not all. Someone who judges A, judges B, and judges C, *being conscious of no relation among A, B, and C*, cannot be said to judge C on the basis of A and B. So we try thinking that she infers C from A and B if, *in addition to* judging A, B, and C, she thinks that A and B provide sufficient grounds for judging C. But it is the famous lesson of Lewis Carroll's Achill and the tortoise that, if this were so, there would be no such thing as inference. She now judges A, judges B, judges that A and B entail C, and judges C. Again we can add that she judges the last thing because she judges the former three. Yet, if she recognizes no relation of these to C, she does not infer C from them.

It seems that the subject must be conscious, not only of the rational relation among A, B and C, but of the dependence of her judgment C on her judgments A and B. So we try thinking that she infers C from A and B if she not only judges C because she judges A and B, but, *in addition*, is conscious of doing so. However, if someone who judges C because she judges A and B does not on that account infer C from A and B, then this does not change if she has further thoughts about her judgment and its causes. These thoughts, being *further* thoughts about a *given* judgment, do not change the character of this judgment.⁸

And this is Kitcher's point: the consciousness of dependence of judgment on judgment in inference is not a consciousness of something that exists independently of this consciousness. If it were, it would depend on sensory affection; in the given case, it would have to spring from *inner* sense. Locke posited, Kitcher quotes, 'Perception of the Operation of our own Minds within us'. Through this perception, the relevant operations 'do furnish the Understanding with another set of *Ideas*, which could not be had from things without: and such are *Perception, Thinking, Doubting, Believing, Reasoning, Knowing, Willing*, and all the different actings of our own Minds' (60). According to Locke, then, the concepts of thought, knowledge, experience, are concepts derived from (inner) affection by the objects comprehended in them. The reality thought in these concepts precedes these concepts; it provides them with a content, which thus is empirical. And this misrepresents the nature of all the acts that Locke lists.

Someone who judges one thing on the basis of certain others recognizes that these provide sufficient grounds for judging as she, *thereby*, judges. Thereby: her recognition of the grounds as sufficient *is not a separate act from* the judgment; it is this judgment. This is the lesson of Achill and the tortoise. As the subject's recognition of the grounds as sufficient for her judgment *is* her judgment, this recognition, and that is, that judgment, is a consciousness of its dependence on the judgments that it recognizes as sufficient grounds for it. So the subject's recognition of the grounds as sufficient is her consciousness of judging on the basis of these grounds. It follows that the dependence of judgment on judgment in inference is a consciousness of this very dependence.⁹ A judgment depends on other judgments through the concept of this very dependence. Conversely, this dependence is not a given reality, to be represented in a suitable concept. Rather, this dependence is itself an act of its concept.

Kitcher calls the consciousness of dependence of judgment on judgment in inference a synthesis. In general, a synthesis is a consciousness of unity that is nothing other than this unity. Being a synthesis, the unity of judgments in inference is an act. In saying this, we do not appeal to an unexamined notion of activity. We give an account of the relevant meaning of 'act'. In one use of the term, any actualization of a faculty is an act. In a narrower sense, 'act' signifies spontaneity. Now, the consciousness of dependence in question does not register a reality that obtains independently of it; it *is* the dependence of which it is the consciousness. Therefore, this consciousness cannot be traced to a power of the subject to receive representations by being affected. It is explained by the relevant power alone, which determines itself in this act. This power, then, has no given nature; its nature is nothing other than the self-determining concept of this power.

This shows how we must read Kitcher when she calls the consciousness of unity of judgments in inference 'act-consciousness' and 'mental act awareness'. We must read this in a way that leaves no room for the question how we come to be conscious of the relevant act, whether, perhaps, we do so through the way in which the act affects inner sense. Kitcher intends 'act-consciousness' to signify a consciousness that does not derive from its object; hence the question *how* it derives from it has no meaning. 'Act-consciousness', in Kitcher, signifies a consciousness that *is an act*, active, spontaneous. It is spontaneous as it is not consciousness of a given unity of judgments, but *is* the unity of which it is the consciousness.

Its spontaneity places inference outside the sphere of the natural sciences. Kitcher notes that this may be found surprising. While sensory consciousness has been thought to be especially resistant to naturalist forms of comprehension, intelligence, specifically inference, has been taken to be easy to represent in naturalist terms: by a description of the causal role of relevant states in reasoning and action. But as Kitcher points out, any state describable in this way is on that account not rational knowledge. The concept of a belief-forming mechanism is contradictory, if it pretends to signify a mechanism that yields belief that, in the good case, is rational knowledge. Perhaps it is sensible to dream of some development of natural science by which sensory consciousness comes to be within its reach. However, this dream is *obviously* incoherent in the case of act-consciousness. Natural science, as empirical, has an object that exists independently of our comprehension of it; act-consciousness, spontaneity, *is* its own comprehension. A science (a *Wissenschaft*, an episteme) of spontaneity, if there is such a thing, articulates the self-consciousness of the spontaneous act. Hence, it is not empirical, and no part of the science of nature.

Kitcher finds current philosophy of mind (a certain strand of it) to have no concept in which to think act-consciousness. On the one hand, the consciousness of dependence of judgment on judgment in inference is not a second-order belief about those judgments and their causes. 'The problem with modelling Kant's mental act awareness as monitoring consciousness is that the latter is a modern reincarnation of Locke's reflective consciousness' (72). On the other hand, it is not phenomenal consciousness, as if a series of judgments sometimes felt inferency. As all acts on Locke's list are act-consciousness, the point extends to them all. Our consciousness of none of them is the second-order representation of a given reality. And our consciousness of none of them is grounded in feeling. So current philosophy of mind, Kitcher contends, lacks the concepts of all of the acts on Locke's list insofar as these signify rational acts; current philosophy of mind has no concepts with which to think the mind of subjects of reason.

B. Kornblith

Kornblith seeks to defend the view that knowledge is a natural phenomenon, to be studied in the manner of the natural sciences, by showing that the opposing view, which he calls Kantian and finds in, for example, Robert Brandom, John McDowell, Michael Williams, and Richard Moran, is unsupported. I shan't consider whether these authors hold the view Kornblith attributes to them. From Kitcher's essay, we know that the rejection of the view Kornblith calls 'Kantian' is the foundation of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. For, the 'Kantian' of Kornblith holds to Locke's conception of the way in which we are conscious of judgment and knowledge. Kornblith's Kantian knows nothing of act-consciousness, and instead distinguishes the rational subject by second-order representations of its beliefs and belief-forming processes. Kornblith has no difficulty showing that the idea that there may be something nonnatural in *this* has nothing going for it.

It is worthwhile to rehearse how bad the idea is that Kornblith calls 'Kantian'. This will secure our grasp of Kitcher's, of Kant's, concept of spontaneity. The 'Kantian' holds that subjects of reason not only have belief-forming mechanisms, but in addition form beliefs about them, and thus can change the mechanisms if their second-order beliefs show them to be wanting. 'Unlike other animals, we are capable of reflecting on our beliefs and the ways in which they are produced, and when we find that our beliefs fail to meet our standards, we are able to intervene in the belief-producing process, making changes in the ways in which we come to form our beliefs' (100). In this way, 'we take an active role in moulding our cognitive processes' (100) and exhibit 'epistemic agency'.

This thought does not represent rational belief as an act, or activity. Second-order beliefs differ from first-order beliefs in their content. And for all the thought shows, the difference of second-order from first-order beliefs is like the difference of beliefs that are about bananas from those that are not. No one would be inclined to think that this shows that, let alone explains why, beliefs about bananas are active, more active than beliefs about things that are not bananas.

Activity, if there is any on this view, must reside not in believing, be it first or second order, but in fussing with the processes of belief formation. The sense in which this fussing is activity, however, remains obscure. In particular, it cannot be explained as a guise of the spontaneity of thought: the active character of an act of changing a given object cannot be recognized to consist in its being a consciousness of its ground. (This is the account I give in *Self-Consciousness*, Chapter 2, which extends Kitcher's thought about judgment to action.)

Kornblith finds in the Kantian authors he mentions the idea that a rational subject, responding to reasons, recognizes them as reasons. Now—not those Kantians, but—his 'Kantian' conjoins this with the idea that the recognition of the reason is always a distinct act from the response to it. It is a belief about reasons, a belief that is distinct from the belief that may be based on this reason. And now—this is easy to see—the thought that responding to reasons requires recognizing them as reasons entails that there is no such thing as responding to reasons. 'We should not think that responsiveness to reason requires beliefs about reasons. If in order to be responsive to A as a reason for believing B, one must not only believe A, but also believe that A is a reason for believing B, then in order for the belief that A together with the belief that A is a reason for B to be a reason for believing B, one would also have to believe that these two beliefs constitute a reason for believing B. An infinite regress results' (111). Here are Achill and the tortoise. And what they show is this: recognizing such-and-such to be a sufficient ground for judging something is not a different act from judging it.¹⁰ Rational subjects respond to reasons as

reasons. Their response *is* their recognition of what they respond to as a reason. Rational subjects respond to reasons through the concept of a reason. Therefore a response to a reason is not a response to a stimulus. It is an act of spontaneity. (For this reason, it is misleading to speak of subjects' being 'sensitive' to reasons. The apprehension of a reason is no act of sense. This will come up again.)

Kornblith also finds the Kantian authors assert that only human beings have beliefs. Now, they do assert that the concept of belief comprises two species, animal belief and human, or rational, belief. The 'Kantian' of Kornblith can find no meaning in this, for he distinguishes beliefs that are not about beliefs from beliefs that are about beliefs, and it would be ludicrous to hold that these are two species of belief, as ludicrous as that claim would be did bananas take the place of beliefs. However, if we see that judging that things are so is being conscious of so judging, that judging one thing on the basis of another is being conscious of this dependence among one's judgments, that is, if we recognize the spontaneity of thought, then we may find it helpful to be explicit about this distinction; we may wish not to wash over it with a general concept of belief, but deploy, for example, the term 'rational belief'.

C. Smith

Kornblith lacks the concept of act-consciousness. Therefore he is puzzled why someone would think that knowledge is not an object of empirical science. The power of knowledge, he finds no difficulty thinking, is a limited object with a limited nature, alongside other objects and their natures. This idea is explicit in Kornblith. It is implicit in the concept of transcendental argument of the introduction. A transcendental argument is to reason from knowledge of the mind to knowledge of things other than the mind, thus encountering the difficulty of 'inferring to reality'. However, a transcendental argument cannot, and therefore never does, argue from knowledge of a limited object. It articulates the self-consciousness of thought. This consciousness, and therefore its object, is infinite. So the philosopher of transcendental argument does not understand himself. In his practice, he articulates the self-consciousness of thought. In his account of his practice, he represents this consciousness as having a limited object. Joel Smith's essay acts out this tension. Smith resolutely insists that the argument proceed from knowledge of a limited object; it emerges that then the practice of transcendental argument makes no sense.

Transcendental idealism and absolute idealism conceive the form of thought, that is, the consciousness of this form, not as knowledge of *an* object, but as knowledge of *the* object.¹¹ By contrast, the philosopher of transcendental argument thinks of our consciousness of the form of experience, or thought, as having a limited object, an object alongside other objects. Now, how do we know this distinguished object? If we know it in the same way as we do other objects, then transcendental arguments have no point. For then it is needlessly roundabout to seek knowledge of these objects (reality) by investigating that object (the mind). It is less cumbersome to study the other objects directly. Therefore, anyone who mounts a transcendental argument, reasoning from a transcendental claim, in fact articulates the self-consciousness of knowledge. Unless he did so, he could not fool himself into thinking that he has knowledge of the transcendental claim in a manner that does not render its use in a transcendental argument pointless. This holds true of Strawson, whom Smith discusses. Yet Strawson himself asserts that his arguments pertain to a limited object: our conceptual scheme. Smith shows that, if this is so, Strawson's reasoning falls apart. We cannot both comprehend his reasoning and hold it to be of a limited object.

Smith discusses Strawson's argument against skepticism about other minds. The argument concludes that it is not true that the only way in which we can judge others to be in pain is on the basis of behavior that indicates pain; rather, we can, and therefore do unless conditions are unfavorable, directly perceive that others are in pain. The relation of this to skepticism is the following. If the only available basis on which we can judge that someone is in pain is behavior—which may be as it is whether or not she who so behaves is in pain—then it seems we can never know that someone else is in pain. By contrast, if the basis on which we judge that someone is in pain may be nothing less than our perception that he is—something we could not perceive were he not in pain—then we can know that he is in pain, namely on the basis of this perception.

Strawson reasons to this conclusion from the following transcendental claim: there is no such thing as having the capacity to think oneself to be in pain without having the capacity to think others to be in pain. The conclusion follows from this claim and the following conditional by *modus tollens*: If we could judge others to be in pain only on the basis of behavior that indicates pain, then our capacity to think others to be in pain would rest on our capacity to think ourselves to be in pain. Strawson argues for this conditional as follows. In order to judge that someone is in pain on the basis of behavior that indicates pain, we have to know that this behavior goes with pain. As we are considering what first enables us to judge another to be in pain, we cannot know this from having found it to be so in others. So if we know it, we must know it from our own case. Hence, if judging another to be in pain is possible only on the basis of behavior, then our capacity to judge others to be in pain—the capacity, not any specific act of it—depends on knowledge that, in my case, pain goes with such and such behavior. My capacity to apply to someone else the concept of pain then rests on knowledge that is an application of this concept to myself. Hence, the capacity to think others to be in pain rests on—a specific act of and thereby on—my capacity to think the same of myself. And this is incompatible with holding that there is no having the latter capacity without, therein, having the former.

Let us go over this with a view to the concept of thought at work in this argument and to the source of its claims. I could not think another to be in pain on the basis of behavior, did I not know that pain went with that behavior, says Strawson. So he speaks of rational thought: thought that is conscious of its grounds. If I judge someone to be in pain on the basis of behavior, then, in so judging, I recognize the behavior as a sufficient ground for judging him to be in pain: I know that his behavior indicates pain. Hence, if the only way to judge another to be in pain is on the basis of behavior, then any act of judging another to be in pain depends on—includes in the consciousness of its ground—knowledge that this behavior indicates pain. Strawson then inquires into the conditions of this knowledge, the knowledge on which the capacity to judge another to be in pain would depend, if judging another to be pain were possible only on the basis of behavior. The conditions he considers are the grounds on which someone may have this knowledge. So he considers, considers only, the conditions a consciousness of which is internal to the act of which they are conditions. As, *ex hypothesi*, there is no knowing the nexus of pain and behavior *a priori*, it can be known only from observation. And as, again *ex hypothesi*, it cannot be observation of the nexus in another, it can only be observation of it in me. So the argument reflects on the consciousness that would have to be internal to the judgment that another is in pain, were one to judge in the manner that the conclusion rejects. Given the transcendental claim (the claim that there is no such thing as having the capacity to think oneself to be in pain without having the capacity to think others to be in pain), there is no way coherently to articulate this consciousness and therefore no such thing as the act to which it would have to be internal. The theme of the argument, namely, applying

the concept of pain, is a rational act: 'In applying concepts, rational animals know the basis or ground for the application.' And the argument articulates the self-consciousness in which such an act constitutes itself.

This character of transcendental arguments, that they articulate self-consciousness, has been recognized, but not understood. It is recognized as the argument is said to rest on knowledge of *our* mind; that it is ours must inform the character of our knowledge of it. But then this knowledge is thought to have a limited object: it is knowledge of the structure of our minds, of our conceptual scheme, etc. It follows that the argument cannot establish anything with respect to things outside the mind, but only with respect to the way in which we are bound to think them. When we apply this understanding of transcendental arguments to the one under discussion, then the thought is not that, in order to judge another to be in pain on the basis of behavior, I must know that this behavior indicates pain, but that I must *take myself* to know that. And the conclusion is not that, in the fundamental case, I judge others to be in pain on the basis of nothing less than an awareness of their being in pain, but that I so judge on the basis of *what I take to be* nothing less than an awareness of their being in pain. Smith calls this the 'modest reading' of the argument (190ff).

Smith defends the argument, read modestly, against objections that find it lacking in objectivity, universality and necessity (194ff). It is objective, as it is anyway only about the mind, its necessity is secured when we think of it as the inconceivability of the contrary, and there is no reason to doubt its universality when we appreciate its limitation to skepticism about other minds. However, Smith goes on to argue (200ff) that the modest argument is not sound for different reasons. A justification of it would have to rest on (possible) findings of developmental psychology. And then the argument would have no point, for, in securing its premises, we would lay claim to the sort of knowledge whose validity the argument was meant to establish: knowledge of other minds (205ff).

The modest reading of the argument, which has it speaking about the constitution of a limited object, destroys it. Consider Strawson's reasoning: In order to judge that someone is in pain on the basis of behavior, I must know that behavior to indicate pain. I *must* know, in this sense, knowing what is internal to the consciousness in which a judgment is conscious of its grounds. This 'must' signifies the unconditional necessity of an act of spontaneity, an act that comprehends its ground within it. When we rephrase the argument modestly, in terms of what we must take ourselves to know, not only the thing that we must is changed, but the sense of the 'must'. The necessity now is a brute fact, the brute character of the given nature of a given thing, namely, our mind. This necessity is not unconditional; it is sensible to ask what *gave* our mind that character. So a transcendental claim now describes a way in which we *must* think, where the necessity of so thinking is *not* the necessity of knowledge: it is not the necessity of a judgment that rests, being conscious of resting, on sufficient grounds.

Is this so bad? Well, a transcendental claim, modestly read, entails that knowledge is impossible: it entails that a judgment cannot contain a consciousness of its own non-accidental truth. For, thinking the judgment necessary in the way of the modest argument is leaving it open whether it is true. And this does not change if we add a further judgment, which re-assuringly asserts that things have been arranged (by evolution, or a benevolent creator) such that the way in which we must think on account of the given nature of our intellect yields judgments that agree with what is. For this added judgment, again, is not conscious of itself as knowledge and therefore provides no re-assurance. (Consider the parallel: thinking that there is a way in which we must act, the necessity of acting in which way is not a recognition that so to act is to act well, is to think that

there is no such thing as acting well.) And a claim that entails, not that we may not know anything, but that we *do* not know anything, cannot be the premise of an argument that, as argument, pretends to yield knowledge of its conclusion.

The modest reading of the transcendental argument is not a reading of anything. But let us forget this for a moment, and pretend there is an argument, concerning this limited object: our mind. And let us ask how we could comprehend its unity, the rational nexus of its claims. To this end, it may help to be slightly formal: (P1) If I could ascribe pain to others only on the basis of behavior, then I would have to do so on the basis of knowledge of my pain (and its correlation with behavior). (P2) The capacity to ascribe pain to myself is the same as the capacity to ascribe it to someone else. (C) It is not true that I can ascribe pain to others only on the basis of behavior.

The unity of the argument requires that P2 be incompatible with the consequent of P1: If one can ascribe pain to others only on the basis of knowledge of one's own pain, then it would have to be possible to have the capacity to think oneself to be in pain without having the capacity to think others to be in pain. How could we know this to be true, on the modest reading? On this reading, the necessity claimed in a transcendental argument is not the necessity of knowledge. Hence, when the argument is read modestly, P2 cannot speak of an order among capacities *that resides in justificatory relations*, relations that obtain as acts of the capacities are rational knowledge and conscious of their ground. The modest reading, then, will have it that P2—having the capacity to think oneself to be in pain is having, ipso facto, the capacity to think others to be in pain—'places no requirements on justification' (202). It follows that this claim, P2, cannot be incompatible with *any* idea of how one may know that someone else is in pain. For example, as Smith observes, on the modest reading of the argument, P2 it is not incompatible with the idea that one knows others to be in pain on the basis of knowledge of a correlation of pain with behavior, which one has observed to obtain in one's own case. The argument has nothing to say to, and therefore nothing to say against, this account of how we know other minds, given by Chalmers, quoted by Smith: 'We note regularities between experience and physical or functional states in our own case, postulate simple and homogenous laws to explain them, and use those laws to infer the existence of consciousness in others.' (201) So the modest reading dissolves the rational connection that, in our representation of it, holds the argument together: the connection between the way in which we (would have to) think ourselves justified in thinking someone else to be in pain, and the way in which the capacity for such thought stands a priori to the capacity to think oneself to be in pain.

One might think the argument has fallen apart. What *did* Strawson want to rule out, if not Chalmers' account of how we may know other minds? Smith finds something: Strawson wanted to rule out a hypothesis about the route by which we acquire the concept of others' being in pain: the hypothesis that we do so by first ascribing this concept to ourselves and only subsequently to others. So P1 now is a developmental claim asserting that, did one ascribe pain to others on the basis of behavior, the capacity so to ascribe pain would depend on a capacity, acquired earlier, to ascribe pain to oneself. But now the unity of the argument is broken a second time, for, this new P1 cannot be known to be true a priori, and thus the antecedent of P1 cannot be known a priori to be incompatible with P2. This is 'pretty clear', says Smith (213).

In a last step, Smith imagines that the argument might be re-assembled if P1 turned out to be an empirical fact: perhaps developmental psychology finds that, as a matter of fact, the only way to get into ascribing pain on the basis of behavior would be by first ascribing pain to oneself. However, the re-assembled argument no longer has a point. To

secure its soundness, we now need knowledge of the very kind whose validity we sought to verify by the argument: knowledge of other minds (206–7).

Smith shows that the idea of transcendental argument of the introduction is incoherent. If the argument is to proceed from a claim about a limited object, describing a given reality, then its premises cannot be known and its rational unity cannot be recognized. So let us turn to the idea that unites transcendental with absolute idealism: the self-consciousness of thought is not consciousness of a limited object; this consciousness, and that is, its object, is infinite.

D. Haddock

When I said that none of the essays reflects on the difference of the form of thought from the form of sensibility, I did not speak the truth. For one essay does so, the one by Adrian Haddock. Yet there is justice in my representation because Haddock, too, does not consider what it would be to conceive the self-consciousness of thought as, itself, knowledge.

Haddock returns to Davidson's argument that the very idea of a conceptual scheme is empty. Following Jonathan Lear, he distinguishes two kinds of transcendental idealism, which he associates with Kant and Wittgenstein respectively. Both begin with the notion that we know a priori the form of our experience; we know a priori how we are minded. And both argue that, on the basis of this knowledge, we have a priori knowledge of the objects of our experience. Wittgensteinian idealism holds that we do so because in the phrase, 'we know the form of our experience; we know how we are minded', 'we' and 'our' bear no meaning by which they distinguish us from possible others. We have a priori knowledge, not of our mind, but of *the mind*, not of our experience, but of *experience*. Kantian idealism, by contrast, holds that knowledge of how we are minded provides a basis for knowledge of the object because and insofar as the object is limited to what is given to us according to the way in which we are minded.

Very briefly, Davidson's argument is this: We can make sense of the notion of a language we cannot interpret using our language only if we have a viable criterion of language-hood by which we can tell whether a given practice is a language or not. However, the only way to tell whether a given activity is language is by seeing whether it can be interpreted in our own language. It follows that nothing can be known to be a language and yet fail to be interpretable in our language. Haddock asserts that this argument cannot establish that there is no language that is not interpretable in ours, but only that no language we encounter and recognize as such is not interpretable. This conclusion shares the structure of Kant's thought that, while we cannot know that outer things are spatial and temporal, we can know that all things we know through the affection of our senses are that.

Davidson claims to have transcended the dualism of scheme and content. That is doubtful. As Haddock remarks, the guise in which this dualism appears in Kant is that of a distinction of the form of thought, the category, from the form of experience, the schema (the category determining a priori the object given through our sensibility). And one cannot transcend *this* guise of the dualism by restricting, from the beginning, the object to what is known through sensory affection. For then one has no way to argue that, even in this respect, in its receptivity, our mind is, ultimately, not a given reality, not a brute fact, but a power constituted in its own concept.

Haddock does not discuss the Wittgensteinian in his own right; he only asks whether Davidson may be one. And therefore it is not explicit in his essay that 'Wittgensteinianism' must be another name for absolute idealism.¹² The Wittgensteinian

holds that we have knowledge of the way we are minded. The 'we' enters because, unless the knowledge is of *our* mind, we do not have it a priori. So 'we' indicates the kind of consciousness we have of our mind: it is self-consciousness. The Wittgensteinian further holds that 'we', in this context, does not distinguish us from possible others. So the 'we' does not fall away because we generalize away from our case; it has always already fallen away in the kind of consciousness in question. This is to say, if we say it clearly, that this consciousness is originally infinite. And this is true of the self-consciousness of thought: it is not the consciousness of a given reality, which happens to be as it is; it is the self-constitution of the power of which it is the consciousness. Now, if this is why 'we' drops out, then knowledge of the mind is a basis for knowledge of the object because, ultimately, knowledge of the object *is* self-knowledge of thought, self-knowledge of knowledge. Wittgensteinianism, if there is such a thing, is absolute idealism. Davidson is not a Wittgensteinian; he is not an absolute idealist. He restricts the object to what is given through the senses and thus has always already embraced Kant's idealism.

As Davidson does, so do Moore and Sullivan want to leave behind Kant's transcendental idealism. Bearing in mind Haddock's distinction of Kantian and Wittgensteinian idealism, we shall consider whether and how they affirm absolute idealism.

E. Moore

Moore's essay is a reflection on Putnam's brain in a vat and the way in which it may motivate transcendental idealism. He suggests that transcendental idealism must be rejected, and he appears to rest this rejection on an affirmation of the infinity of thought. However, if the infinity of thought is to be the basis on which we reject transcendental idealism, we must think of thought, not only as self-conscious, but as capable of relating to the object directly. We must reject the two-stem-doctrine. As Moore does not do this, he ends in a muddle.

Moore speaks of thought as sensitive to certain things, or aspects of them, and as answerable to certain things, or aspects of them. In these terms, we may represent Putnam as arguing that what thought is answerable to cannot diverge from what it is sensitive to, for what it is answerable to is determined by what it is sensitive to. This gives rise to the worry that, while both may coincide, the totality of things to which thought is sensitive and therefore answerable may be limited. The object of our thought may be, as Moore puts it, a 'phenomenal bubble'. Moore distinguishes two ways in which this idea may be further articulated: it may be thought that our thought is limited to a phenomenal bubble while we have no inkling that it is so limited; and it may be thought that we have an insight that it is so limited, which insight, however, as it cannot be thought, is either inexpressible or an unusual kind of thought. The former some people claim to find in Wittgenstein; the latter, Moore maintains, describes Kant's transcendental idealism (45–48).

Moore refutes the first, the idea that our thought is limited to a bubble, while we have no idea of its being so limited, by noting that the act of thinking it proves it untrue (49). I am to think that my thought may fail to be of everything, but this very thought, the thought that my thought may fail to be of everything, is of everything. This argument gives expression to the original infinity of thought. While Moore registers this infinity, he does not inquire into its ground. He makes Plato's negative point: thought does not apprehend its object through an organ; no given nature of an organ limits the object of thought. He fails to make Plato's positive point: thought apprehends being through itself.

The object of thought is unlimited because thought represents its object through its own concept, which concept, therefore, does not reflect the given nature of an organ, but is an act of pure spontaneity. His failure to attend to this ground of the infinity of thought affects the way in which Moore thinks about transcendental idealism.

Moore explains that his argument shows that it is impossible that thought be limited to a phenomenal bubble and thereby shows that there can be no inexpressible insight that our thought may be so limited (52). So the idea of certain readers of Wittgenstein is out. Moore states that he also rejects the idea he associates with Kant—we have an insight that our (normal) thought is confined to a bubble, which insight is an unusual thought—but remarks that he cannot discuss that within the given essay (51). He concludes by reflecting how we should conceive things in themselves once we appreciate the infinity of thought: ‘We should not conclude . . . that things in themselves are just ordinary middle sized dry goods and their like. It is possible, for instance, that the phrase “things in themselves” is best viewed as syncategorematic, so that “thinking about things in themselves” means something like “thinking about things in a way that is totally free of perspective, whether cultural, biological, or of any other kind,” in which case we may have to conclude that things in themselves “are”—to the extent that it is appropriate even to talk in these terms—the fundamental particles of physics or something of this sort’ (52–53).

Kant held that specifically physics is knowledge only of appearances. For, physical knowledge is of an object insofar as the object is given to the senses, and sensibility, and its object, are finite. Moore appears to think physics is absolute knowledge, ‘knowledge that is totally free of perspective’. But there is no such thing as knowledge that depends on sensory intuition and is totally free of perspective. Physics is an empirical science, and therefore exhibits the inner limitation of knowledge of objects insofar as these are known through affection; it exhibits the essential imperfection and incompleteness of this knowledge, and therefore of its object. The object of physics, as an object of empirical knowledge, is not unconditionally necessary. Insofar as it is known by physics, it remains, ultimately, a brute, inexplicable reality, which is as it happens to be. This is to say, the object of physics, insofar as it is known by physics, is inside the phenomenal bubble. The assertion that *it* is everything and the last thing is incoherent. This is the point of Kant’s dialectic, which we considered above, and which Kant thinks proves that knowledge is limited to appearances. If we want to reject transcendental idealism, the way to do this is not to proclaim physics, and therewith its object, to be absolute. We must reject the two-stem-doctrine. (If we dare.) Physics is knowledge of things in themselves only if physics and, more generally, empirical knowledge is a mere aspect of knowledge, knowledge that is, ultimately, the principle of what is.

The dialectic—Kant’s topic, the topic of idealism and naturalism—cannot act itself out in Moore because in his text the two-stem-doctrine is invisible as a doctrine. He conducts his entire discussion in terms of the notion that thought is sensitive and answerable to its object. This is good for introducing the topic, but the terms cannot be left unexamined. Recall that Moore’s train of thought begins with the idea that the object of thought (surreptitiously represented as something to which thought is answerable) is determined by what thought is sensitive to. Then the worry arises that that to which thought is sensitive may be a phenomenal bubble. The appeal to sensitivity, sensibility, affection, resonates in the notion of the ‘phenomenal bubble’. The bubble is phenomenal because it is circumscribed by the manner in which things appear. When the phenomenal bubble goes, so must the idea of sensitivity. And with it the idea of answerability.

So this is what Moore would have to say: thought is not sensitive because it neither is nor depends on a sense. Thought is not answerable to its object because it is its principle. For, the infinity of thought, on which Moore insists, is its self-consciousness: its concept does not reflect the nature of a given power, but is the self-constitution of this power. Therefore, if the infinity of thought is the infinity of knowledge (and the thought that it is not is transcendental idealism, which Moore rejects), then knowledge ultimately is self-knowledge and the principle of what is insofar as it is.

F. Sullivan

Sullivan wants to show that logic is transcendental: our consciousness of the laws of logic is a priori knowledge of what is. He expounds an argument for this, which he extracts from Nagel, finds it wanting, and supplies the lack by an idea from Sacks. I shall leave to the side Nagel and Sacks, the first because Sullivan explicitly and repeatedly notes that the thought he extracts from Nagel may not be Nagel's, the latter because it is hard even for Sullivan to do justice to Sacks; for me, with far less space, it is impossible.

Sullivan introduces the topic in this way: A law of logic, for example, the principle of noncontradiction—it is impossible that things both be a certain way and not be that way (adding all the qualifications familiar from Plato and Aristotle)—is a proposition that we feel drawn to affirm. However, we wish to inquire into the ground of our conviction of its truth. We may dramatize the source of our wish imagining someone who says: 'You may well believe that it is impossible that things both be a certain way and not be that way. But perhaps that is false.' And now we cannot just say: no, it is true. We have to say something more.

The first thing we may try saying in response is that, in raising the question, indeed, in raising any question, as well as in giving any answer to any question, we already affirm the proposition in question. In fact, in thinking anything at all, we always already affirm this proposition, and therefore it is not possible to imagine that it may be false. The law of logic then is a proposition whose truth is presupposed in any one of our thoughts. Sullivan represents this thought as follows—and this is the way of thinking he wishes to supersede: "The status this argument assigns to logic is one attaching to a distinctive position "in my [our] system of beliefs," a position that is identified [...] through its presuppositional relations to other elements of this system' (163).

We may want to stop right here. The setup is already skewed. It is nonsense to think of the law of noncontradiction as a proposition presupposed in other propositions. The law of noncontradiction is in act in the unity of judgments in which one presupposes another. Therefore, it is nonsense to think of the law of noncontradiction as occupying a *position* in our system of beliefs. It is what constitutes any position as a position and makes the system a system. But we suppress this objection, first, because Sullivan arrives at it later, and secondly, because the objection only serves to raise the question what it is for a law of logic to have the described character, the character of being involved in any act of thinking anything, if it does not mean that it is a presupposition that lies very very deep.

So let us think of logical laws in this manner: as propositions that lie very very deep within the system of propositions we hold true. Then two ideas appear intelligible: First, we are led to wonder whether there may not be ways of thinking that differ from ours in that they are not built around the propositions that are our laws of logic; in these ways of thinking, different propositions occupy that position. Secondly, we may wonder

whether the proposition which we cannot but affirm if we are to think anything at all is valid of what is. Perhaps our thinking, precisely on account of being built around this proposition, is cut off from what is.

Following Sacks, Sullivan proposes that, if we find a way to dissolve the apparent intelligibility of the first idea, the second idea will fall apart as well (167–69). This proposal expresses what Sacks calls ‘metaphysical abstinence’. She who is not so abstinent will, by contrast, seek to establish that the proposition whose affirmation lies at the bottom of any of our thoughts is valid of what is. Once she has established this, she will be able to assert that any way of thinking that is not built around this proposition is defective as thinking; it fails to serve its internal end, which is to represent what is.

The use of ‘metaphysics’ in ‘metaphysical abstinence’ is the same as in ‘uncritical metaphysics’. This ‘metaphysics’ conceives the law of noncontradiction as a thought about something other, to which, therefore, it must answer. In order to be vindicated, it must be shown to be anchored in an independent reality. Now, a thought about something other, as such, is not a consciousness of the unconditional necessity of things’ being as it thinks they are. A thought about something other, ultimately, is a thought about how things happen to be. So ‘metaphysics’—that from which she who is ‘metaphysically abstinent’ abstains—is the ‘attempt to stabilize basic norms by anchoring them in brutally given metaphysical structures’ (164). Of course, one can use words as one may. But it would have been good to note that being ‘metaphysically abstinent’ is a condition of holding open the possibility of metaphysics. Metaphysics is knowledge of what is insofar as it is, of its ultimate principle and ground. It takes little reflection to see that this principle must be unconditionally necessary and therefore *cannot be* a ‘brutely given structure’. The only thing that can be unconditionally necessary—the only thing such that the question what *makes* it necessary is meaningless—is the self-determining concept, a concept that *is* the object known in it. Metaphysics, if there is such a thing, is self-knowledge of knowledge. This is explicit in Aristotle; it is implicit in the passage from Plato discussed above.

Sullivan, practicing ‘metaphysical abstinence’, dissolves the intelligibility of the first idea—the idea that there are ways of thinking governed by a logic different from ours—by showing that thought, knowledge, the mind is not a limited object. He brings this out in the way in which Plato does: the concept of a way things are (the concept of what is, of being) is nothing other than the form of thought; the laws of logic articulate this form. (Our reflections on the infinity of thought allow us to skip over some pages in which Sullivan develops the present thought through a reading of Sack’s idea that the concept of a way things simply are is internal to the form of experience. Cf. 172–73; 176–79.) This shows, Sullivan argues, that the form of thought cannot be conceived as a limited element of what is. (The form of thought does not reflect the given nature of an organ.) Thus he asks us to consider ‘the way in which Sacks distinguishes his proposal from the idealist claim that the appearance of a way things simply are is “merely a construct of ours, . . . something that we project onto the world” . . . If we recognize this appearance as a construal in accordance with an imposed form, we cannot at the same time hold that this form is imposed by any way things (our minds) simply are’ (177).

As Moore, Sullivan makes Plato’s negative point: the soul apprehends being not through an organ. As Moore, he does not make the positive point: the soul apprehends being through itself. The latter is the ground of the former: thought is infinite because the concept of thought does not reflect the given nature of a given power. Rather, it is self-determining, and its self-determination is the self-constitution of the power thought

in it. This explains why the notion that there may be ways of thinking governed by a logic different from ours is empty. For, as Sullivan rightly remarks, this notion supposes that the concept of thought subsumes a manifold of kinds whose differences from each other are not known in this very concept. However, as Sullivan does not attend to the self-consciousness of thought as the ground of its infinity, he can give no account of the reason why 'we' in 'our thought' does not signify a limitation.¹³

Sullivan's failure to reflect on the self-consciousness of thought as the ground of its infinity blinds him to the motive of Kant's transcendental idealism. He proceeds as though it were irrelevant whether the form, which is to be revealed as absolute, is the form of thought or of experience.¹⁴ And this leads him into a contradiction.

It is true, as Sullivan asserts, that the form of thought is the concept of a way things are (or simply are). If this concept is knowledge, as Sullivan wants it to be, then this knowledge is not answerable to anything but itself. For the form of thought is its self-consciousness. And this is what Sullivan wants: logic, thought's last thought, is not answerable to anything. 'A solution must instead explain how it was a mistake to regard the structuring principles of thought as answerable to anything' (169). And yet, Sullivan conceives thought as essentially answerable to something other. Therefore the 'solution' must show how laws of logic, that is, thought itself, makes thought answerable to an object that exists independently of being thought. 'A thought just is something for which the question of truth can arise [...] so something subject to the laws of truth [that is, the laws of logic; S.R.]. So we appreciate what thought is, and what answerability amounts to, in acknowledging these laws' (176). And this makes no sense. The laws of logic are a condition of knowledge of the object, namely, the internal condition of the agreement of thought with itself. In them, thought is answerable *to itself*. Now, if thought, as such, is of something other, that is, if it relates to an object only through sensory representations, then its self-agreement, its answerability to itself, does *not* constitute it as knowledge. The source of its answerability *to the object* then does not reside in the form of thought on its own, but in the a priori determination of a sensibility that is given. This is Kant's idealism.

Sullivan, by contrast, maintains that thought's last thought—the logical law—opens up a space of knowledge of objects. That is, the thought in which thought is answerable to nothing but itself constitutes its answerability to the object. And yet this object, in its ultimate conception, is to exist independently of the knowledge of it. And this is a contradiction. If thought, being answerable to nothing but itself, is, as such, not empty, but knowledge, thus opening up, on its own, a space of, not only thought but, knowledge, then knowledge is, ultimately, answerable to nothing but itself. Kant saw this. So did Hegel. Reading the volume makes the reader wish that they be included in the conversation about transcendental philosophy and naturalism.

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NOTES

¹ Kant recognizes knowledge of the mind, namely, by inner sense. This knowledge is not a priori and contributes nothing to explaining the possibility of knowledge a priori.

² Here, and in general for my understanding of the significance of absolute idealism, I am indebted to the groundbreaking monograph of Wolfram Gobsch *Conditions of the Unconditioned*, Ms.

³ Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*, Oxford: OUP 2012. All numbers attached to quotations from Nagel refer to the pages of this book.

⁴ The passage is earlier (17). It, too, shows that Nagel holds that the ultimate act of knowledge is self-knowledge of reason. I refrain from discussing it because it does not introduce absolute idealism through a reflection on the distinction of thought from sensibility.

⁵ Oxford: OUP 2011.

⁶ I discuss the second in my contribution to the symposium on *Kant's Thinker in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol 87/1, 2013.

⁷ 'In applying concepts, rational animals know the basis or ground for the application.' (62)

⁸ As Kitcher puts it: 'Inner sense is too little and too late to contribute to the rationality of inference or judgment' (64). I explain the reference to inner sense in the next paragraph.

⁹ Here is how Kitcher puts it: 'With that consciousness, however, the cognizer creates a relation of rational dependence across his states in part by being implicitly cognizant of that relation' (69). My wording differs in two ways: I speak, not of states, but of acts of judgment. As Kitcher affirms, judgment is an act in the sense in which inference is: it is synthesis. And I drop 'in part'. For, nothing in addition to synthesis is necessary for the relevant relation to obtain.

¹⁰ Thus Achill and the tortoise show that the idea of beliefs about reasons and the attendant idea of realism about reasons are empty. The concept of reason is in act not in a belief that there is a reason, but in believing one thing on the basis of another.

¹¹ Transcendental idealism differs from absolute idealism in that it holds that the form of thought is knowledge only insofar as it determines a priori a sensibility with a given form.

¹² Jonathan Lear represents Wittgensteinianism as a form of transcendental idealism. And there is justice in this appellation as absolute idealism comprehends itself to be, and thus comprehends the possibility of, knowledge a priori. However, on account of the historical resonances, it seems better to restrict the term 'transcendental idealism' to the idea that we have knowledge only of appearances.

¹³ Instead, he explains why the relativist cannot impugn the claim that it does not signify a limitation: 'So it is important to see why the relativist cannot fault the proof of L, and then the overall case for C, on those grounds. Here the starting point is that the relativist and his opponent are agreed that the apparent content of L . . .' (180). Earlier, he seemed to harbor no high opinion of this form of argument: 'It is just a consequence of trying to extract an understanding of "transcendental" from that of "transcendental argument," where those arguments are characterized by an external feature of their conclusions—whether philosophical skeptics have chosen to doubt them' (160). But perhaps I am wrong in hearing this as a disparaging remark.

¹⁴ At one point, he urges the reader 'to reconsider Sack's construction, and to imagine *the very structure of experience* as replaced throughout by *the structure of thought*' (175), suggesting that Kant's inquiry into the principles of experience and Frege's inquiry into the laws of thought are the same.