

Kant on Justification in Transcendental Philosophy

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Abstract. Kant's claim that the justification of transcendental philosophy is a priori is puzzling because it should be consistent with (1) his general restriction on the justification of knowledge, that intuitions must play a role in the justification of all nondegenerate knowledge, with (2) the implausibility of a priori intuitions being the only ones on which transcendental philosophy is founded, and with (3) his professed view that transcendental philosophy is not analytic. I argue that this puzzle can be solved, that according to Kant transcendental philosophy is justified a priori in the sense that the only empirical information required for its justification can be derived from any possible human experience. Transcendental justification does not rely on any more particular or special observations or experiments. Philip Kitcher's general account of apriority in Kant captures this aspect of a priori knowledge. Nevertheless, I argue that Kitcher's account goes wrong in the link it specifies between apriority and certainty.

I

Since Kant wrote the Critique of Pure Reason, philosophers have been intensely self-conscious about the way the claims within their discipline are justified. The dominant view until recently has been that philosophical

claims are justified a priori in some strict sense. Although there is a surprisingly strong tendency to read strict apriorism about philosophy into Kant, the texts themselves do not comply. One of Kant's primary aims in the Critique of Pure Reason is to lay to rest the strict apriorist claims made for philosophy by his rationalist predecessors and contemporaries. Consequently, the temptation to attribute to Kant a strict apriorism about the justification of philosophical claims should be

resisted. Nevertheless, Kant clearly believes that his transcendental philosophy is a priori in some sense. I shall attempt to explain the sense in which Kant's transcendental philosophy is a priori, and to resolve the apparent conflict with his rejection of rationalism.¹

The view that philosophy is a priori in a strict sense finds its clearest twentieth-century expression among the logical positivists. In their tradition, philosophical claims are understood to be a priori in virtue of their analyticity. Perhaps it is not surprising then that several contemporary commentators who wish to attribute to Kant a strict apriorism about philosophy should maintain that he also conceives philosophy to be a body of analytic truths. However, Kant believes that analytic knowledge is degenerate and not genuine knowledge, and, as I shall argue, he rejects the view that transcendental philosophy is analytic for this very reason.

One of Kant's most deeply held philosophical positions is that the justification of all genuine, nondegenerate knowledge (Erkenntnis) requires intuitions, immediate and singular mental representations. We have intuitions of two types, a priori and empirical. Given Kant's actual transcendental arguments, it is highly implausible that a priori intuitions alone are sufficient to justify the claims of transcendental philosophy. His general account of knowledge thus raises a problem for the apriority of transcendental philosophy: if philosophical claims cannot be a priori in virtue of being analytic, and if they cannot be justified on the basis of a priori intuitions, in what sense can it be a priori at all?

According to one solution, the claims transcendental philosophy are a priori only in a genetic, and not in any justificatory sense. On one genetic conception of a priori knowledge, a proposition is a priori just in case it is true solely in virtue of the contributions the mind makes to experience. For Kant, these contributions are the a priori concepts and the a priori intuitions, and the organization that the mind effects by means of them. That a proposition is a priori in this genetic sense is consistent with its being justified on the basis of empirical intuitions.

Much support can be found in the Critique for a genetic interpretation of the a priori. Indeed, when Kant calls concepts a priori, it is difficult to see how he could fail to have a genetic notion in mind.² The categories must be a priori in virtue of having their source in the

understanding, and not sensory experience. Moreover, when Kant characterizes a priori knowledge at the beginning of the second edition of the Critique (B1-3), he uses genetic language: "It may well be that even our empirical knowledge is made up of what we receive through impressions and of what our faculty of knowledge... supplies from itself." (B1)³

But Kant is not solely interested in a genetic notion of a priori knowledge. I shall argue that Kant advocates a weaker sense in which transcendental philosophy is justified a priori. In addition, I shall attempt to explain how the genetic notion of a priori knowledge plays a role in explaining how transcendental philosophy can be a priori in a justificatory sense, and how the Kantian connection between these two notions of apriority is different from the link assumed by the rationalist tradition.

Our investigation of the justification of transcendental philosophy has implications for Kant's overall characterization of a priori knowledge. If my discussion of Kant's position on transcendental justification is correct, then Philip Kitcher's well-known account of Kantian a priori knowledge comes close to applying here. However, an examination of Kant's views on the justification of transcendental philosophy reveals that Kitcher's characterization misrepresents Kant's view on one important point: the relation between a priority and certainty. Understanding this relation is crucial to a deeper understanding of the Kantian picture of a priori knowledge.

Let me begin the argument for my interpretation by examining Kant's concept of the transcendental. Understanding how the notion of a transcendental point of view contrasts with the rationalist's transcendent perspective will set the stage for the reading I wish to advance.

II

Kant applies the adjective 'transcendental' in various contexts; he speaks of transcendental deductions, aesthetic, logic, ideas, idealism, unity, synthesis, reflection, knowledge, and philosophy. These applications reveal three aspects of the meaning of this term. The first is that 'transcendental' indicates the modes or ways by which we can attain a priori knowledge. Consider Kant's characterization of transcendental knowledge and philosophy:

(A) I entitle transcendental 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 system of such concepts might be entitled transcendental philosophy.

(All-12=B25)

Knowledge of objects, whether or not it is a priori, is not transcendental knowledge. Rather, transcendental knowledge is of the modes or ways by which we can know objects a priori (and the system of transcendental knowledge is transcendental philosophy).⁴ A further aspect of the meaning of the term 'transcendental' derives from the fact that the modes or ways in which we can know objects a priori are the conditions for the possibility of (knowledge of) experience, and these conditions are found in the self, or, more specifically, in the faculty of knowledge:

(B) ...the word 'transcendental'....does not signify something passing beyond all experience but something that indeed precedes it a priori, but that is intended simply to make knowledge of experience possible. (Proleg. Ak IV 373n)

(C) ...the word "transcendental"...for me, never means a reference of our knowledge (Erkenntnis) to things, but only to our faculty of knowledge..(Proleg. Ak IV 293)

The second aspect of the meaning of the term 'transcendental' is that it modifies any aspect of the conditions of the possibility of experience, or as Kant suggests in (B), conditions of the possibility of knowledge of experience. As passage (C) indicates, these conditions originate in the faculty of knowledge. They are the pure concepts of the understanding, the forms of intuition, and the mental activity by means of which we apply these elements to experience.

The third aspect of the concept of the transcendental appears in the discussion of the topic of transcendental reflection in the Amphiboly:

The act by which I confront the comparison of representations with the cognitive faculty (Erkenntniskraft) to which it belongs, and by means of which I distinguish whether it is as belonging to the pure understanding or to sensible intuition that they are to be compared with each other, I call transcendental reflection (Überlegung). (A261-B317)

This application of the term 'transcendental' suggests the idea of a transcendental point of view.⁵

When we achieve the transcendental point of view, we are in a position to trace our different representations to their origins in various mental faculties. By contrast, from the empirical point of view, which we ordinarily occupy (A359ff), we cannot investigate the genesis of experience. When we attain the transcendental point of view, we can consider more than just the world of ordinary experience as subject matter for investigation, since we are in a position to reflect on the origins of our representations in the understanding and in the faculty of a priori intuition. Perhaps the notion of a transcendental point of view supplies the most inclusive meaning for term 'transcendental.' The transcendental is at the deepest level a point of view that provides knowledge of the nature and source of the modes by which we can gain a priori knowledge. These modes are the conditions for the possibility of experience--the forms of intuition, the pure concepts of the understanding, and the organizing activity by means of which we apply these elements to experience.

III

Several philosophical traditions reject the Kantian picture of a transcendental point of view. For instance, Wittgenstein and the logical positivists deny this feature of Kant's vision to some degree or other.⁶ Kant's detractors share the conviction that we cannot attain a transcendental point of view from which we can acquire knowledge, and some go so far as to say that it is not a possible point of view at all. Behind this lies the idea that talk of such a point of view manifests a desire for a type of objectivity which is either beyond human capacity or altogether illusory. But Kant shares this type of worry, and thus we should heed his restriction on what kind of knowledge the transcendental point of view can provide for us.

We might receive helpful instruction from Thomas Nagel, who in The View From Nowhere analyzes objectivity with the aid of the notion of a point of view.⁷ To acquire objectivity about something, he thinks, one must assume a point of view which is a step back from the original perspective one has on it. This process of stepping back has two features: first, removing oneself from unreflective involvement with the thing, and second, seeing it as it relates to other

things in the world. Kant's restriction on the transcendental point of view can be stated in terms of the notion of stepping back. In one sense the transcendental point of view is a step back from the empirical. When one attains the transcendental point of view one not only removes oneself from unreflective involvement with one's ordinary experiences and proceeds to see them as elements in the empirical world, but one also comes to see the whole empirical world, including one's ordinary experiences, as produced by the self's organization of the sensation by the categories and the forms of intuition. One has thus acquired a more inclusive, further removed view of one's ordinary experience than the empirical standpoint yields. The transcendental point of view is thus a step back with respect to what is apprehended.

Nevertheless, the transcendental point of view is not a step back with respect to the criteria for the justification of knowledge. Kant believes that there is a limiting condition on knowledge and cognition for the empirical standpoint: no knowledge is possible without intuition, without direct awareness or cognition of objects. I will argue that he applies this condition to the transcendental point of view as well. All of our genuine knowledge, including transcendental knowledge, is subject to this condition.

Kant's conviction that the transcendental knowledge is subject to the same limiting condition as governs the empirical standpoint can be discerned most clearly in his attack on the rationalists, the advocates of a metaphysics of pure reason. They maintain that through reason alone one can know one's own self, other minds, and external objects as they are in themselves. Kant contrasts his transcendental principles with the rationalist's transcendent principles:

In the case of [transcendent principles], I am not referring to the transcendental employment or misemployment of the categories.... I mean actual principles which incite us to tear down all those boundary-fences and to seize possession of an entirely new domain which recognizes no limits of demarcation. Thus transcendent and transcendental are not interchangeable terms. The principles of pure understanding, which we have set out above, allow only of empirical and not of transcendental employment, that is, employment extending beyond the limits of experience. A principle, on the other hand,

which takes away these limits, or even commands us to actually transgress them, is called transcendent. (A296=B352-3)

If we could attain a transcendent point of view, then by means of pure reason alone we could know the metaphysical structure of our own minds and of the physical universe. As rational beings, unrestricted by the Kantian conditions on knowledge, we would have the capacity to step back from the ordinary empirical standpoint, to proceed beyond sensation and its deliverances, beyond the relative confusion of sensory ideas, to a point of view from which we could view ourselves and other things as they are in themselves. A fundamental feature of Kant's philosophy is his rejection of this rationalist picture.

In the Prolegomena, Kant indicates how his endorsement of the transcendental point of view relates to his rejection of the rationalist conception. The following passage is part of an attack against Christian Garve, an unappreciative reviewer of the Critique of Pure Reason:

In order to take a position to easily set the whole work in a most unfavorable light, without venturing to trouble himself with any special investigation, he begins and ends by saying: "This work is a system of transcendental (or, as he translates it, of higher) idealism."*

[note]*By no means "higher." High towers and metaphysically great men resembling them, round both of which there is commonly much wind, are not for me. My place is the fruitful bathos of experience: and the word "transcendental," the meaning of which is so often indicated by me but not once grasped by my reviewer (so carelessly has he regarded everything), does not signify something passing beyond all experience but something that indeed precedes it a priori, but that is intended simply to make cognition of experience possible. If these concepts overstep experience, their use is termed "transcendent", which must be distinguished from the immanent use, i.e., use restricted to experience. All misunderstandings of this kind have been sufficiently guarded against in the work itself, but my reviewer found his advantage in misunderstanding me. (Ak IV 374)

Thus in one respect attaining the transcendental point of view is not a step back from the

empirical. By a transcendent use of concepts we cannot pass beyond the bounds of experience. More generally, the justification of transcendental knowledge is not independent of the limiting condition on the empirical standpoint, since, like empirical justification, it must appeal to intuition.

But if the transcendental point of view is restricted by the limiting condition on justification at the empirical standpoint, how is the transcendental perspective attained? The account I shall advance has two features. First, transcendental philosophy is not analytic but synthetic. Kant is opposed to Leibniz's position that analytic knowledge can be genuine and nondegenerate, and thus since transcendental philosophical knowledge is genuine, it must be synthetic. Second, since one cannot remove oneself from the conditions on the justification of knowledge at the empirical standpoint, transcendental knowledge is not justified a priori by virtue of being completely independent of all experience for its justification. Rather, transcendental knowledge is a priori because it is independent of particular experiences or observations for its justification, although it is dependent on information derivable from any possible human experience.

IV

Let us first discuss my contention that transcendental philosophy is not analytic, but synthetic. According to a fairly widespread interpretation of Kant's views, transcendental philosophy is indeed analytic a priori. Ermanno Bencivenga endorses this position in his Kant's Copernican Revolution. He says "...according to Kant, philosophy is a purely conceptual enterprise, in which there is no room for intuitions."⁸ Admitting that Kant explicitly distinguishes between general logic, the system of logical truth, and transcendental philosophy, he claims that "the project of distinguishing (general-)logical from transcendental activities is a delusive one, and the search for objects at the conceptual level collapses into a play with predicates, (or, perhaps, just words)."⁹ I understand Bencivenga to be making two claims: Kant primarily characterizes transcendental philosophy as an enterprise which involves only analysis of concepts, and even though Kant attempts to divorce himself from this view at times, actual transcendental philosophy

is best understood as involving only concepts, and no intuitions, at its basis for justification. I will contest both of these claims. First, Kant explicitly denies that transcendental philosophy is analytic, and second, Kant's actual transcendental justifications are not best understood as a purely conceptual procedures.

Let us first consider the textual evidence. In the Discipline of Pure Reason Kant clearly rejects the view that Bencivenga attributes to him:

In transcendental knowledge, so long as we are concerned only with concepts of the understanding, our guide is the possibility of experience. Such proof does not show that the given concept (for instance, of that which happens) leads directly to another concept (that of a cause): for such a transition would be a saltus which could not be justified. The proof proceeds by showing that experience itself, and therefore the object of experience, would be impossible without a connection of this kind. Accordingly, the proof must also at the same time show the possibility of arriving synthetically a priori at some knowledge of things which was not contained in the concepts of them. (A783=B811)

Here Kant says that transcendental knowledge is not analytic, but its justification must appeal to features of experience and its objects. He denies that a mere analysis of concepts would yield interesting results for transcendental philosophy. Analysis is not a sufficiently fruitful procedure.

Furthermore, in the Transcendental Logic Kant actually says that analytic truths, the truths of general logic, cannot extend our knowledge, and that consequently, they cannot be constitutive of philosophy:

Now it may be noted as a sure and useful warning, that general logic, if viewed as an organon, is always a logic of illusion, that is, dialectical. For logic teaches us nothing whatsoever regarding the content of knowledge, but lays down only the formal conditions of agreement with the understanding: and since these conditions can tell us nothing at all as to the objects concerned, any attempt to use this logic as an instrument (organon) that professes to extend and enlarge our knowledge can end in nothing but mere talk--in which, with a certain plausibility, we maintain, or, if such be our choice, attack, any and

every possible assertion.

Such instruction is quite unbecoming the dignity of philosophy. The title 'dialectic' has therefore come to be otherwise employed, and has been assigned to logic, as a critique of dialectical illusion. This is the sense in which it is to be understood in this work.

(A61-2=B86)

In addition, in his 1799 "Open Letter on Fichte's Wissenschaftslehre" Kant objects to Fichte's system precisely because it is supposed to be analytic. Indeed, Fichte maintains that his system can be derived from nothing other than the premise 'A=A':

I hereby declare that I regard Fichte's Theory of Science [Wissenschaftslehre] as a totally indefensible system. For the pure theory of science is nothing more or less than mere logic, and the principles of logic cannot lead to any material knowledge. Since logic, that is to say, pure logic, abstracts from the content of knowledge, the attempt to cull a real object out of logic is a vain effort and therefore a thing that no one has ever done. If the transcendental philosophy is correct, such a task would involve metaphysics rather than logic. (Zweig 253; AK XII 370-1)

Kant objects to Fichte's system on the grounds that it is supposed to be analytic, and he conceives transcendental philosophy as synthetic. Kant believes that analytic truths are not significantly informative. Opposing the Leibnizian tradition, he maintains that knowledge of analytic truths is degenerate, "unbecoming of the dignity of philosophy."

Bencivenga cites several passages to support his view that Kant primarily characterizes the justification of transcendental philosophy as purely conceptual.¹⁰ The following might be seen as posing the deepest obstacles to my interpretation:

(D) All knowledge arising out of reason is derived either from concepts or from construction of concepts (Alle Vernunftkenntnis ist nun entweder die aus Begriffen, oder aus der Konstruktion der Begriffe). The former is called philosophical, the latter mathematical. (A837=B865)

One cannot finesse Bencivenga's claims for this passage by saying that Kant's concern is solely

with the regulative principles of reason and not with transcendental philosophy, because as is clear from a nearby passage, here 'reason' ('Vernunft') is used in a special way:

By reason I here understand the whole higher faculty of knowledge, and am therefore contrasting the rational with the empirical. (A835=B863)¹¹

Another text Bencivenga cites is from the Critique of Judgment:

(E) We proceed quite correctly if, as usual, we divide philosophy, as containing the principles of the rational cognition of things (Vernunftkenntnis der Dinge) by means of concepts (durch Begriffe) (not merely, as logic does, principles of the form of thought in general without distinction of objects), into theoretical and practical. (Ak V, 171)

One obvious problem with Bencivenga's interpretation of these passages is that it makes Kant's view of the justification of transcendental philosophy inconsistent. Kant denies that transcendental philosophy is analytic, and Bencivenga has him saying that its justification is based on concepts alone. Kant is consistent, however, if the above passages are read as making a claim about the genesis rather than the justification of transcendental knowledge. Thus in passage (D) Kant would not be saying that transcendental philosophy can be justified on the basis of concepts alone, but that the understanding is the source of the elements of the content of transcendental knowledge. This interpretation is even more appealing when we consult the German, rather than Kemp-Smith's somewhat misleading translation. Kant does not literally say "All knowledge arising out of reason is derived either from concepts..." but rather "All knowledge arising from reason is out of concepts (aus Begriffen)..." 'Derivation' is a justificatory notion, but only the genetic 'arising out of' appears in the Kantian text.

In passage (E) Kant says that philosophy contains the principles of the rational cognition of things through concepts (durch Begriffe), which is ambiguous between a claim about genesis and one about justification. Yet the theme of the entire passage recalls what Kant says in passage (D) above, which is very probably about genesis. Moreover, as we shall see in the next section, rendering these passages as claims about genesis allows them to reflect Kant's actual transcendental philosophical procedure.

Bencivenga thinks that the actual transcendental philosophy of the Critique is best understood as purely conceptual and analytic. Jonathan Bennett makes the more modest claim that Kant's philosophical project is fruitfully reinterpreted as analytic, partially on the grounds that besides trivial analytic truths there are truths acquired through subtle and complex conceptual considerations.¹² Let us examine the plausibility of these views.

In the second edition transcendental deduction (in contrast to the first (A117n)) Kant specifies that a first premise in a transcendental philosophical argument

It must be possible for the 'I think' to accompany all of my representations. (B131) is analytic: "The principle of the necessary unity of apperception is itself, indeed, an identical, and therefore analytic, proposition...." (B135) One might take Kant's claim for the status of this principle as representative of transcendental philosophy in general. On this interpretation, transcendental knowledge is analytic of our concept of experience or of our concept of possible experience. But this position is implausible for several reasons. First, it is essential to all of Kant's transcendental proofs that our experience involves passively received, atomistic, sensory Vorstellungen. Only on this assumption can Kant arrive at the conclusion that synthesis by means of an active understanding is required for the unity of consciousness. Hence, to know that we have experience of this kind is crucial to transcendental philosophy. However, the fact that experience involves this passive element can only be known through reflection on experience itself.

One might suggest that Kant believes having a passively received element is analytic of the concept of experience. But this cannot be, since he claims that some possible experiences lack such a passively received element:

An understanding which through its self-consciousness could supply to itself the manifold of intuition--an understanding, that is to say, through whose representation the objects of the representation should at the same time exist--would not require, for the unity of consciousness, a special act of synthesis of the manifold. (B138-9)

God's experience contains only what is actively produced. Thus we would have to look to our own experience to see if it involves a passively received element. To this extent philosophy requires information from experience.

One could reply that transcendental philosophy is nevertheless analytic of the concept of experience or of the concept of possible experience because God does not have an experience. But if containing a passively received element is analytic of the concept of experience, then we would still have to check whatever it is we have to see whether it is experience in order to find out whether the results of transcendental philosophy apply to us. This is an empirical undertaking.¹³

Moreover, suppose that the first step in the above argument is justified a priori because it is analytic. It is yet implausible that Kant believes the next step in the argument is justifiable by conceptual analysis. For this step, that the passively received element must be organized by means of synthesis, invokes an explanation for the unity of experience. Kant would deny that an explanation of this sort is simply a matter of conceptual analysis. For example, he denies that his non-trivial version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, that everything that exists has an explanation for its existence, is analytic.¹⁴ If he believes such a general and formal explanatory principle to be synthetic, then he would surely think the same about the explanatory principle that he employs in the inference to the existence of a synthesis, something like "anything that is organized requires an explanation for its organization." And if a synthetic principle has been invoked in the derivation of a proposition from a concept, then the proposition can no longer be said to be analytic of the concept.

I suspect that the tendency to interpret transcendental philosophy as analytic is an anachronistic reading of the logical positivist conception into Kant. It is evident from Kant's reflections on his own philosophical method and from the actual procedure of transcendental philosophy that he regards analytic knowledge as too insubstantial for genuine philosophical knowledge. The idea of philosophy as an analytic discipline is simply not Kantian.

VI

Transcendental philosophy is synthetic, and the justification of synthetic knowledge must reach beyond an analysis of concepts. What, in addition, must the justification of transcendental knowledge appeal to? Let us reexamine a passage from the Discipline of Pure Reason:

In transcendental knowledge, so long as we are concerned only with concepts of the understanding, our guide is the possibility of experience. Such proof does not show that the given concept (for instance, of that which happens) leads directly to another concept (that of a cause): for such a transition would be a saltus which could not be justified. The proof proceeds by showing that experience itself, and therefore the object of experience, would be impossible without a connection of this kind. Accordingly, the proof must also at the same time show the possibility of arriving synthetically a priori at some knowledge of things which was not contained in the concepts of them. (A783=B81l, last emphasis mine)

The justification of a transcendental proposition shows how experience would be impossible if the proposition were not true. Kant's actual procedure in the Transcendental Deduction is consonant with this description. In the argument from above at A115ff he claims that the self-conscious aspect of our experience would be impossible unless a synthesis by means of a priori concepts takes place. In the argument from below at A119ff he argues that unless there is such a synthesis, certain features of the objectivity of experience would be impossible.

Experience is somehow implicated in these justifications. But if there is no limitation on what relevant features of experience may be involved, then no room remains for a priori justification of transcendental knowledge. An earlier passage in the Discipline suggests that a restriction to possible experience preserves the apriority of transcendental justification:

...in the Transcendental Logic, although we can never pass immediately beyond the content of the concept which is given us, we are nevertheless able, in relation to a third thing, namely possible experience, to know the law of its connection with other things, and to do so in an a priori manner. (A766=B794)

This passage, in conjunction with the one previously quoted, indicates that justification of transcendental knowledge begins with a premise about possible experience. One might suppose that our knowledge of the features of possible experience does not require empirical justification, because our knowledge of possibilities requires only pure thought. Kant agrees that merely logical possibilities can be known completely independently of experience, but this is not so for real possibility. Speaking of the categories, Kant states:

For to substitute the logical possibility of the concept (namely, that the concept does not contradict itself) for the transcendental possibility of things (namely that an object corresponds to the concept) can deceive and leave satisfied only the simple-minded.

(A244=B302)

(footnote) In a word, if all sensible intuition, the only kind of intuition we possess, is removed, not one of these concepts can in any fashion verify itself, so as to show its real possibility. Only logical possibility then remains... (B302-3, note added in B; cf.

A597=B625, A218=B265ff)

A proposition or concept is merely logically possible in virtue of not being self-contradictory. But Kant consistently disparages logical possibility as a tool in the philosophical investigation of reality. Real possibility is the significant kind, and we need to appeal to sensible intuition, to experience, to know whether a proposition or a concept is really possible. For instance, at the end of his attempt to refute the ontological argument Kant makes this remark about the concept of a supreme being:

The analytic criterion of possibility, as consisting in the principle that bare positives (realities) give rise to no contradiction, cannot be denied to it. But the realities are not given to us in their specific characters. Even if they were, we should still not be in a position to pass judgment, since the criterion of the possibility of synthetic knowledge is never to be looked for save in experience... (A602=B630)¹⁵

In order to know whether the concept of the supreme being is of a possible entity, it is not sufficient that the concept contains no logical contradiction. Rather, the only significant

knowledge we can have of real possibilities requires empirical justification.

Given these types of reference to experience, in what sense is transcendental justification a priori? It will not do to say that it is a priori because only so much appeal to experience is required as to justify knowledge of real possibilities. To know whether it is really possible that a date palm survive sub-zero temperatures, or that a horse and a zebra successfully mate, very detailed experiences are required. Another passage from the Discipline of Pure Reason provides an important lead:

...although we can never pass immediately beyond the content of the concept which is given us, we are nevertheless able, in relation to a third thing, namely possible experience, to know the law of its connection with other things, and to do so in an a priori manner. If, therefore, wax, which was formerly hard, melts, I can know a priori that something must have preceded, ([that something being] for instance [in this case] the heat of the sun), upon which the melting has followed according to a fixed law, although a priori, independently of experience, I could not determine, in any specific manner, either the cause from the effect, or the effect from the cause. (A766=B794)

Here Kant is saying that a general principle can be known a priori on the basis of possible experience, whereas the specific nature of the causal relationship cannot. Perhaps, then, we should seek the apriority of transcendental knowledge in the specificity or particularity of the experience required for its justification. In an introductory section to the Principles of Pure Understanding, Kant makes the following remark:

Synthetic a priori judgments are thus possible when we relate the formal conditions of a priori intuition, the synthesis of imagination and the necessary unity of the synthesis in a transcendental apperception, to a possible empirical knowledge in general. (A158=B197, emphasis mine)

Here Kant is saying that possible experience in general is required to justify the synthetic a priori judgments of transcendental philosophy. 'Possible experience in general' plausibly means any possible experience. I propose, then, that transcendental justification is a priori because the only

empirical information it requires is derivable from any experience that is possible for us, that is, any possible human experience. Providing this restriction on the empirical character of transcendental justifications yields a significant sense of a priori knowledge. The type of information on which the special sciences depend, derivable only from particular experiments or observations, is ruled out. But the type of information on which Kant actually relies in transcendental justifications, for instance, that my experience is objective in various ways, and that my experience is potentially self-conscious, is allowed.¹⁶

Let us consider some additional textual evidence for this proposal. In the Architectonic of Pure Reason, Kant attempts to explain the possibility of acquiring transcendental knowledge of certain types of synthetic a priori principles about experience:

First of all, how can I expect to have knowledge a priori (and therefore a metaphysics) of objects in so far as they are given to our senses, that is, given in an a posteriori manner? And how is it possible to know the nature of things and to arrive at a rational physiology according to principles a priori? The answer is this: we take nothing more from experience than is required to give us an object of outer or of inner sense. The object of outer sense we obtain through the mere concept of matter (impenetrable, lifeless extension), the object of inner sense through the concept of a thinking being (in the empirical inner representation, 'I think'). As to the rest, in the whole metaphysical treatment of these objects, we must entirely dispense with all empirical principles which profess to add to these concepts any other more special experience, with a view to our passing further judgments upon the objects. (A847-8=B875-6)

To justify this sort of transcendental knowledge we require empirical information about the objects of inner and outer sense, and to acquire this information must have empirical intuitions. But we need no particular or special empirical intuitions, since this information is derivable from any possible human experience.¹⁷

I believe that Kant's own accounts of specific transcendental justifications confirm my proposal. His favorite example is the justification of the principle of the second analogy, that

every alteration has a cause. (A635=B663, B289-90, A737=B765) Here Kant specifies the extent to which this justification requires an intuition:

Now how it is possible that from a given state of a thing an opposite state should follow, not only cannot be conceived by reason without an example, but is actually incomprehensible by reason without an intuition. The intuition required is the intuition of a movement of a point in space. The presence of the point in different locations (as a sequence of opposite determinations) is what first yields to us an intuition of alteration. (B292)

The justification requires an intuition of a point in space, and this, I believe, is of the type of information that is derivable from any possible human experience. Other transcendental justifications in the Critique also confirm the account I propose. They appeal, for instance, to the information that I can become conscious of my mental representations (A116, B132), that my experience is of objects (B137), that my experience manifests objective successions (B139), and that my experience is intentional (A191=B236), and none of this information requires particular experiments and observations for its justification.

One might object that we cannot discover what would be confirmed on the basis of information derivable from any possible experience unless we have independent and prior knowledge of the conditions of any possible experience.¹⁸ Hence, according to my interpretation, Kant would be involved in a vicious circle: we need to know the conditions of any possible experience for justification in transcendental philosophy, but we need to do transcendental philosophy in order to know what these conditions are. But in my view, Kant does not maintain that for justification in transcendental philosophy to be a priori, we must know that the justification is based only on information derivable given any possible human experience. Rather, for a philosophical justification to be a priori, it need only be the case that in fact the justification has this feature. Hence, to produce a priori justifications in transcendental philosophy, we do not need to have knowledge, or any kind of grasp, for that matter, of a theory about the conditions of any possible experience. Once we have in our possession a theory of the conditions of any

possible experience, then we can go back and see that our original justification for this very theory was a priori in the requisite sense. At that point we can actually come to know that the justification was a priori.

VII

I have claimed that Kant's deepest interests for a notion of a priori knowledge are justificatory rather than genetic, and that Kant is mainly interested in a genetic account for the sake of the justificatory. Given the Kantian view about how transcendental philosophy is justified, let us explore how genetic a priority contributes to its justificatory counterpart.

Kant's remarks about the Copernican revolution seem to suggest the justification of transcendental philosophy consists in immediate perception of the process or results of the self's experience-constructing activity:

If intuition must conform to the constitution of the objects, I do not see how we could know anything of the latter a priori, but if the object (as object of the senses) must conform to the constitution of our faculty of intuition, I have no difficulty in conceiving such a possibility....[E]xperience is itself a species of knowledge which involves understanding: and understanding has rules which I must presuppose as being in me prior to objects being given to me, and therefore as being a priori. They find expression in a priori concepts to which all objects of experience necessarily conform....we can know a priori of things only what we ourselves put into them. (Bxvi-xviii)

One might take Kant to be suggesting here that transcendental philosophy is justified by Cartesian rationalist immediate access to a priori synthesis and its results. But this could not be Kant's position, since the "putting into", the synthesis, is "a blind... function of the soul, ...of which we are scarcely ever conscious." (A78=B103) Furthermore, Kant provides complex arguments for certain features of experience having their source in the self. These arguments would be otiose if he thought we could immediately perceive which features of experience have their source in the self.

Since Kant is not presenting an account of the justification of transcendental philosophy in the above passage, perhaps it should be read genetically. In that case Kant's dictum that we can know a priori of things only what we put into them (Bxviii) becomes an account of the nature of (genetic) a priori knowledge, not an explanation of the knowability of certain propositions independently of any empirical justification whatsoever. On this proposal, the passage states that if knowledge is genetically a priori its content consists in elements that our minds have contributed; it does not say that we have immediate access to the process of contribution.

We must look elsewhere for a link between the genetic and justificatory notions; not in immediate access to the constructive processes, but in what these processes add to experience. I suggest the following account: The mind's contributions provide the structure of experience. A significant characteristic of this structure is that all of its features are present throughout all of experience. Consequently, given any possible human experience, we have access to some information about this structure. From this basis, we can justify transcendental philosophical knowledge of this structure and how it is produced. The universality of the structure provided by the genetic processes, rather than Cartesian rationalist immediate access to these genetic processes, explains how transcendental philosophy can be a priori in a justificatory sense.

Admittedly, more needs to be said to spell out this connection, but I will not do so here. But if my interpretation is correct, then Kant's account of the justification of philosophical knowledge differs from strict apriorist rationalism in two ways. First, philosophical knowledge is not a priori in the sense that its justification proceeds completely independently of experience. Instead it depends for its justification on information derivable from any possible human experience. Secondly, the justification of philosophy does not depend on immediate access to the contents of the mind. The self contributes the structure of experience, but we have no immediate, non-empirical, access to this contribution. Rather, the pervasiveness of this structure in experience allows us gain knowledge of how it is produced on the basis of information derivable from any possible human experience.

VIII

Let us consider two objections to my view that transcendental justification is not a priori in some strict sense (not necessarily in virtue of its being analytic). First, according to Kant a transcendental deduction, a prominent part of transcendental philosophy, concerns a question of right and not a question of fact. (A84=B116) Kant explicates this distinction in this way:

The explanation of the manner in which concepts can thus relate a priori to objects I entitle their transcendental deduction: and from it I distinguish empirical deduction, which shows the manner in which a concept is acquired through experience and through reflection upon experience, and which therefore concerns, not its legitimacy, but only its de facto mode of origination. (A85=B117)

A transcendental deduction is not the Lockean project of showing how concepts are "acquired through experience and through reflection upon experience." Kant's specification here might seem to conflict with the (minimally) empirical justification for transcendental deductions that my account allows. But the contrast Kant draws between his Deduction and Locke's project is this: whereas Locke just wants to show how concepts arise, Kant wishes to prove that we have the right to use them. In particular, Kant wants to show that we have the right to use concepts that originate in the self. He attempts to accomplish this by showing that synthesis by means of concepts that originate in the self is required for an account of possible experience. From this Kant thinks it follows that we are justified in applying such concepts in judgments about experience. Such a project establishes more than just the "de facto mode of organization" of concepts. It yields the right to use them in judgments about experience. Reliance on information derivable from any possible human experience presents no problem for the project characterized in this way. Whether Kant's proof amounts to an a priori justification in a strict sense is irrelevant to the success of the project as Kant construes it.

Barry Stroud's reflections on transcendental philosophy suggest a second objection. He writes that according to Kant transcendental philosophy cannot be studied empirically
....because any investigation of that subject-matter will be occupied with that knowledge,

or those features of 'the understanding', which must be present for any empirical knowledge to be possible, and for Kant we cannot discover those necessary conditions of knowledge by empirical means. Experience, Kant says, can teach us 'that a thing is so and so, but not that it cannot be otherwise.' (B3)¹⁹

Here is the objection: If the claims of transcendental philosophy are not justified a priori in a strict sense, then they cannot be known as necessary. But transcendental philosophy is the study of "the necessary features of any human understanding."²⁰ Thus it must be justified a priori in a strict sense. However, there is no reason to attribute to Kant the view that if a judgment in transcendental philosophy is necessary, it must be justified a priori in a strict sense. Rather, for Kant only the genetic notion of apriority is intrinsically connected to necessity. Kant would endorse neither of these two arguments for this type of link between necessity and a strict justificatory notion of a priori knowledge:

(1) All necessary truth is analytic. Further, analytic truths can be known a priori in the strict sense. Consequently, if a proposition cannot be known a priori in the strict sense, then it is not necessary.

Kant would not endorse this argument because he denies the premise that all necessary truth is analytic.

(2) If a proposition is necessary, true in every possible world, then the nature of the actual world is irrelevant to the justification of this proposition. But the only role experience can play in justification is to support knowledge about the actual world. Therefore experience can play no role in justifying necessary truths.

Kant does not actually argue this way, and furthermore, he would not make this argument because he believes that the necessary truths of transcendental philosophy are necessary truths about the kind of experience we have, and, as we have seen, one would need to reflect on our actual experience in order to know what kind of experience we have.

Perhaps Kant thinks there is a connection between necessity and a strict justificatory notion of a priori knowledge in the case of mathematical knowledge. Yet the necessity of

mathematical truths is not connected to their being knowable a priori in a strict justificatory sense, but rather to their special genesis. In a discussion of a priori intuition Kant says

this intuition must be a priori; that is, it must be found in us prior to any perception of an object, and must therefore be pure, not empirical, intuition. For geometrical propositions are one and all apodeictic, that is, bound up with the consciousness of their necessity...

(B421, emphasis mine)

The necessity of mathematical truth is explained by the fact that it is about the very forms which structure any possible human experience.

But further, in Kant's view, there is no intrinsic connection between the necessity of any proposition and its justifiability in complete independence from all experience. Rather the necessity of a proposition is linked to its content originating in the self. Consider the discussion of necessity and strict universality in the introduction to the second edition of the Critique. Kant distinguishes strict universality from merely comparative universality by its element of necessity, and connects strict universality to apriority: "If...a judgment is thought with strict universality, that is, in such a manner that no exception is allowed as possible, it is not derived (abgeleitet) from experience, but is valid absolutely a priori." (B4) Here a priori validity is clearly a genetic notion: "When strict universality is essential to a judgment, this indicates a special source of knowledge, namely, a faculty of a priori knowledge." (B4, cf. Proleg. Ak IV 298-9) Similarly, in the A deduction Kant says of the unity of nature "...this unity can be known a priori and therefore as necessary. Were the unity given in itself independently of the first sources of our thought, this would never be possible." (A114) Again, the link Kant forges is between necessity and its genetic apriority, and not between necessity and a justificatory notion of a priori knowledge.

IX

My account of a priori knowledge in transcendental philosophy has much in common with Philip Kitcher's interpretation of the more general notion of a priori knowledge in Kant. Kitcher begins his account in this way:²¹

when Kant contends that a proposition (judgment) is [knowable] a priori, he would be read as maintaining that there is some special type of process which could serve as an a priori warrant for our belief in that proposition.

The term that requires further explication is 'a priori warrant.' For this purpose, Kitcher first defines two technical notions:

- i) X's life at t is the total sequence of experiences which a subject X has up to time t.
- ii) A life E is sufficient for X for p just in case, given exactly E, X could have acquired sufficient understanding to entertain the thought that p.

Kitcher then characterizes an a priori warrant as follows:

A given process is an a priori warrant for X's belief that p if and only if it is a process such that, given any life e, sufficient for X for p

- a) some process of the same type could produce in X a belief that p.
- b) if a process of the same type were to produce in X a belief that p, then it would warrant X in believing p.
- c) if a process of the same type were to produce in X a belief that p then p would be true.

In summary, "a priori knowledge is knowledge produced by a special type of process [1] which would have been available whatever (sufficiently rich) experience the subject had had and [2] which would have produced warranted true belief whatever (sufficiently rich) experience the subject had had."²²

I believe that Kitcher's characterization is a substantially correct representation of Kant's position on the justificatory notion of a priori knowledge. Yet I also believe that there are some ways in which [2] is incorrect. The required revisions can be motivated by reflecting on the way Kant believes justification in both mathematics and transcendental philosophy is a priori.

By [1], Kitcher specifies that the process producing the knowledge should be available given any experience rich enough to provide the concepts involved in the proposition known. This condition is met by mathematical knowledge on Kant's account, since for Kant the process producing it is available to us independent of any sensory experience at all.²³ [1] is also fulfilled

by analytic knowledge in Kant's picture, since in his view any experience rich enough to provide us with the concepts involved in the analytic proposition is rich enough to provide us with a justification for it. (In Kitcher's scheme, a posteriori knowledge requires more than just experience rich enough to yield the concepts involved, because an experience might yield the concepts of an a posteriori proposition while providing insufficient evidence to justify it.) How is this condition met by transcendental philosophical knowledge? In my view, transcendental philosophy is a priori because its justification depends only on empirical information derivable from any possible human experience. Hence, knowledge in transcendental philosophy meets condition [1] because it is what Kitcher calls universally empirical knowledge, knowledge of "propositions which are true in any world of which we can have experience, and that, given sufficient experience to entertain those propositions, we could always come to know them on the basis of perception."²⁴

The less convincing feature of Kitcher's formulation is [2], that the a priori process would have produced warranted true belief whatever (sufficiently rich) experience the subject had had. One aspect of [2] is that processes which meet condition [1] not only warrant belief, but are also, in Kitcher's terms, ultra-reliable. That is, such processes fulfill

c) if a process of the same type were to produce in X a belief that p then p would be true. According to Kitcher, a priori knowledge differs from ordinary knowledge not only because the warranting process is independent of experience in some important sense, but also because the warranting process guarantees the truth of the belief produced. I will argue that Kant would deny that the characterization of a priori knowledge should specify that it is ultra-reliable, and furthermore, that he is right about this.

In the Introduction to the first edition of the Critique, Kant seems to allow that an a priori process might produce a false belief:²⁵

(F) ...if we eliminate from our experiences everything which belongs to the senses, there still remain certain original concepts and certain judgments derived from them, which must have arisen completely a priori, independently of experience, inasmuch as they enable us to

say, or at least lead us to believe that we can say (wenigstens es sagen zu können glaubt), in regard to the objects which appear to the senses, more than mere experience would teach--giving to assertions true universality and strict necessity, such as mere empirical knowledge cannot supply. (A2, emphasis mine)

Kant seems to be allowing that an a priori process might produce a false belief about the objects of the senses. But we find an apparently opposing view in the Preface to the First Edition:

(G) Any knowledge that stands fast a priori (die a priori feststehen soll), itself indicates (kündigt...selbst an) that it should be regarded as absolutely necessary (dass sie für schlechthin notwendig gehalten werden will). This applies still more to any determination of all pure a priori knowledge, since such determination has to serve as the measure (Richtmass), and therefore the paradigm (Beispiel), of all apodeictic (philosophical) certainty. (Axv)²⁶

Given that the determination of a priori knowledge is a priori justification, Kant seems to be asserting the opposite of what he claims in passage (F), that an a priori process must result in a belief that is certain and thus true.

The same apparent ambivalence is present in Kant's views about mathematical knowledge. A passage in the Architectonic of Pure Reason supports Kitcher's position:

(H) ...the sources of knowledge... lie nowhere but in the essential and genuine principles of reason, and consequently cannot be acquired by the novice from any other source, and cannot be disputed; and this, in turn, is owing to the fact that the employment of reason is here in concreto only, although likewise a priori, namely in intuition which is pure, and which precisely on that account is infallible, excluding all illusion and error. (A837=B865, emphasis mine)

But another passage about mathematics seems to undergird an opposing view:

(I) Through the determination of pure intuition we can acquire a priori knowledge of objects, as in mathematics, but only in regard to their form, as appearances; whether there can be things which must be intuited in this form, is still left undecided. Mathematical

concepts are not, therefore, by themselves knowledge, except on the supposition that there are things which allow of being presented to us only in accordance with the form of that pure sensible intuition. (B147, emphasis mine, see also the rest of the passage)

Here Kant seems to say that one could go through the a priori process necessary to acquire a mathematical belief, and yet, because the belief is not true, lack a priori knowledge.

All of these passages are consistent, but the view that makes them so is at odds with Kitcher's formulation. The reconciling view is that although a priori processes are in fact always ultra-reliable, this is not part of the definition or conception of a priority. Rather, the ultra-reliability of a priori processes must be won by philosophical argument that appeals to considerations other than the apriority of the process. A priori processes are not ultra-reliable just in virtue of being a priori, but rather because of their special relation to the production of our experience.

In passage (I), Kant says that in order for an a priori mathematical process to count as yielding knowledge, objects in experience must conform to the mathematical structure that the process presents. Later, in §26 of the B deduction, he claims to demonstrate that for any experience which is possible for us, a priori processes which engender mathematical beliefs indeed have this characteristic. Kant justifies this claim by showing that a priori mathematical processes are intimately intertwined with the processes which produce experience and its objects. (B159-161) Consequently, for any experience that we can have, if the same processes that produce mathematical beliefs occur, then the mathematical beliefs must indeed be true. Hence, a priori mathematical processes are in fact ultra-reliable, as Kant states in passage (H). But these processes are not ultra-reliable simply in virtue of being a priori. Rather, if the a priori mathematical processes did not hook up with experience in the way that Kant's demonstration shows, then they might well produce false beliefs.

In passage (F), Kant makes similar but more general suggestions about a priori concepts and the principles that arise from them. An a priori process does not yield a true belief unless the process is appropriately linked to ways in which experienced is engendered. In the transcendental

deduction Kant attempts to prove that there is such a link for any experience that is possible for us. Thus if Kant is right, in any possible experience, if the a priori process which produces p is present, p would be true. Hence these a priori processes are, in fact, ultra-reliable. But again, an a priori process might have produced a false belief had it not been intertwined with the production of experience in the right way. Hence, according to Kant, an a priori process is not ultra-reliable simply in virtue of its definition. Thus I believe that Kitcher is in error about Kant's position when he claims that an a priori process is by definition ultra-reliable.²⁷ The account should be revised by eliminating (c) from the definition of an a priori warrant.²⁸

I believe that not only according to Kant, but on the correct conception, (c) should be eliminated. There certainly is a philosophical notion that encompasses (c), but I do not think that it is a philosophical natural kind, nor is it the traditional notion of a priori knowledge. One way of classifying knowledge specifies how it is justified, and the a priori-a posteriori distinction performs this function. Another natural way of classifying knowledge turns on considerations of reliability. Perhaps all knowledge that is a priori is also ultra-reliable. Nevertheless, this would not make ultra-reliability part of the concept of a priori knowledge. Although every creature with a heart is a creature with a kidney, we would not want to make having a kidney part of the concept of having a heart.

I suggest that both according to Kant, and on the correct conception, a priori knowledge should be characterized as follows: First, it must be produced by a special type of process, one which would have been available whatever (sufficiently rich) experience the subject had had. This is what makes the process a priori. Second, since the process would not be knowledge-producing unless it was also a warrant, the process must have produced warranted belief whatever (sufficiently rich) experience the subject had had. But this leaves open the question that a process be both a priori and produce a false belief. So thirdly, we must specify that an a priori process, to count as producing a priori knowledge, must in fact produce a true belief.

X

In summary, Kant's claim that the justification of transcendental philosophy is a priori is

consistent with (1) his general restriction on the justification of knowledge, that intuitions must play a role in the justification of all nondegenerate knowledge, with (2) the implausibility of a priori intuitions being the only ones on which transcendental philosophy is founded, and with (3) his professed view that transcendental philosophy is not analytic. Transcendental philosophy is justified a priori in the sense that the only empirical information required for its justification can be derived from any possible human experience. Transcendental justification does not rely on any more particular or special observations or experiments. Kitcher's account captures this aspect of a priori knowledge. Nevertheless, Kitcher's account goes wrong in making ultra-reliability part of the definition of a priori knowledge.

Kant's picture of transcendental justification provides an illuminating contrast to competing views on what distinguishes justification in philosophy from justification in the special sciences. According to rationalism, philosophical justification is special because it is purely rational and does not appeal to sensory experience at all. In the positivist paradigm, it is unique because the analytic process does not require an appeal to experience beyond what is required to acquire the concepts to be analyzed. These differences map onto corresponding views about the aims of philosophy. For classical rationalism, philosophy desires an unclouded view of ultimate reality; for positivism, philosophy seeks a clarification of our ideas or of our language. For Kant, however, philosophy aims to arrive at a knowledge of the pervasive structure of our experience. If indeed there is such a pervasive structure, then any possible human experience can serve as the touchstone by which knowledge of that structure can be grounded.²⁹

Notes

1. Commentators have remarked that Kant says very little about the justification of transcendental philosophy (Allison (1983), p. 331; Walsh, (1975), pp. 249-255.) I believe that a substantial account of this project can be found in the texts. This account does not amount to a full-fledged "meta-critique"; for instance, it does not include a complete theory of the justification of everything Kant says about the justification of transcendental philosophy. But it is an account of the justification of transcendental philosophy itself.

2. An opposing view is expressed by Robert Pippin (1982):

A priori does not mean "not derived from experience" but "known without appeal to experience." The question the deduction will pose is thus not: Can we discover in the understanding (as birthplace) concepts which lie there (like seeds) prior to any actual experience? but: Can we identify and justify a use of concepts which establishes a relation to all possible objects of experience which does not justify that use by appeal to what we have experienced? (p. 102)

I believe that this does not do justice to much of what Kant says about the apriority of concepts, but that it nevertheless describes one of Kant's interests.

3. Stephen Palmquist (1987) emphasizes this point.

4. See Allison, (1983) pp. 10-13.

5. Stroud (1984), pp. 150ff.

6. Carnap (1956), pp. 205-221, Wittgenstein (1974).

7. Nagel (1986), especially pp. 3-12.

8. Bencivenga (1987), p. 5.

9. Bencivenga (1987), p. 8.

10. Bencivenga (1987), p. 218, note 2.

11. Bencivenga (1987) also refers to a passage from the Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science (Ak IV, 469) which is virtually identical to the above passage from the Architectonic.

12. Bennett (1966), p. 27.

13. Philip Kitcher (1981, pp. 217-249) observes that "There is a revealing passage written by Kant's disciple Schultz in response to Eberhard's objections to the emphasis on the synthetic a priori which dominates the Critique. Eberhard had suggested that Kant's favored propositions could be replaced by analytic judgments if one expanded the subject concept. Schultz replied as follows:

Let one put into the concept of the subject just so many attributes that the predicate which one wishes to prove of the subject can be derived from its concept merely by the law of contradiction. The critical philosophy permits him to make this kind of analytic judgment, but raises a question about the concept of the subject itself. It asks: how did you come to include in this concept the different attributes so that it [now analytically] entails synthetic propositions? First prove the objective reality of your concept, i.e. first prove that any one of its attributes belongs to a possible object, and when you have done that, then prove that the other attributes belong to the same thing that the first one belongs to, without themselves belonging to the first attribute. (Ak VIII, 175; Kitcher believes that similar thoughts can be found at A242n and A252-4/B308-10)

Kitcher concurs with Lewis White Beck that the passage reflects Kant's ideas; it was written by Schultz under Kant's supervision (Beck (1967), pp. 3-22.)

14. Kant takes J.A. Eberhard to task in On a Discovery for making the claim that this principle is logical and formal and can be demonstrated by means of conceptual considerations alone (Ak VIII 193-198; cf. A783-4=B811-2).

15. Changed slightly from Kemp-Smith.

16. In my interpretation, knowledge of p is a priori if it is in fact true that the only empirical information required for its justification is derivable from any possible experience. For knowledge of p to be a priori there need not be, in addition, an a priori justification for the knowledge that p is a priori. It need not be the case that the knowledge that the justification of p is a priori have a justification that relies only on information derivable from any possible experience. I do not know how Kant would justify the claim that a proposition is knowable a priori. Indeed, I do not think

that a full-fledged meta-critique can be drawn from the text.

17. In this passage Kant says that the object of outer sense is obtained through the mere concept of matter, and that the object of inner sense is obtained through the concept of a thinking being. One might take this to suggest that transcendental philosophy is a matter of conceptual analysis. But given Kant's repeated protest that transcendental justification is not a matter of conceptual analysis, and given that some of its justifications appeal to, say, the concept of an object of outer sense, these justifications will appeal to something empirical. I believe that the following account of the passage makes most sense given these strictures on interpretation: Since we get the concept of matter from experience, whether the concept of an object of outer sense is derived from the concept of matter analytically or synthetically, the transcendental proofs which appeal to the concept of an object of outer experience will also appeal to the empirical element that is transferred from the concept of matter to the concept of an object of outer experience.

18. I owe this objection to an anonymous referee for Synthese.

19. Stroud (1984), p. 154.

20. Stroud (1984), p. 155.

21. This characterization is taken from Kitcher (1981), pp. 218-219. See also Kitcher (1980, 1984ab).

22. Kitcher (1981), p. 219.

23. A complication: Kant does not think that mathematical beliefs count as knowledge unless they are actually applicable in experience:

... the pure concepts of the understanding, even when applied to a priori intuitions, as in mathematics, yield knowledge only in so far as these intuitions -- and therefore indirectly by means of the pure concepts also -- can be applied to empirical intuitions. (B147)

24. Kitcher (1984a), p. 31.

25. Donna Summerfield (1988) points out this passage and the apparent problem it raises for Kitcher's characterization.

26. Changed from Kemp-Smith.

27. Kitcher might respond by arguing that whenever an experience-independent process is not ultra-reliable, we shall have to show that the background conditions allow the process in fact to produce a true belief. But a check to see if the background conditions are right will always involve an appeal to particular experiences. Hence the resultant knowledge will not be a priori in any sense. But first, even if this is so, it doesn't show that ultra-reliability is part of the definition of an a priori process. It would only show that there are in fact no cases of a priori knowledge that are not produced by ultra-reliable processes. Second, Kant makes the case that some checks on background conditions may be empirical only to the extent that they require information derivable from any possible experience. Kitcher needs to rule out the possibility that the background check for an experience-independent process that is not ultra-reliable cannot itself be a priori in his own sense.

28. Furthermore, a process is at root a priori when it is in some sense independent of experience. If a belief produced and warranted by such a process is in fact true, it would be odd to class the resultant knowledge as a posteriori. Perhaps such a process cannot produce false beliefs, but the characterization should not make this demand.

Kitcher also claims very strong conceptions of unrevisability for Kant's notion of the a priori. Kitcher focusses on a priori concepts rather than on a priori knowledge in his account. He suggests two alternatives: The first is

(i) A priori concepts are inevitably instantiated and anyone whose experience suffices for the instantiation of the concepts could not be justified in doubting that they are instantiated. (Kitcher (1981), p. 230.)

The second is

(ii) A priori concepts are those which have to figure in propositions which the subject believes if she is to qualify as having experience at all. (Kitcher, (1981), p. 231)

About (ii) Kitcher says "One who jettisons an a priori concept in the light of experience has, on this interpretation, ceased to be a subject of experience." (Kitcher (1981), p. 231)

As an exposition of Kant's views, perhaps the first formulation has some plausibility with

regard to mathematical concepts. But neither conception is plausible in the case of the pure concepts of the understanding. Kant would certainly allow that Hume's doubts about the applicability of the categories of cause and substance are justified. Kant does argue that we can know that these concepts are instantiated, and hence attempts to expunge the doubt that they are, by means a philosophical demonstration. But given the complex and abstract nature of this proof, Kant would want to claim that although Humean doubts can ultimately be overcome, it is not that they are unjustifiable. In fact Kant praises Hume for "subjecting the facts of reason to examination" and indicates that this "censorship of reason" "must certainly lead" to doubts of the sort that Hume has (A760-1=B788-9). Kant indicates that Humean doubt is the second step in the healthy progression from dogmatism to skepticism to criticism (A761=B789). As regards (ii), Kant would want to say that the concepts of cause and substance are instantiated in Hume's experience, and that he would not be a self-conscious subject of experience if they weren't. But Kant would not want to claim that Hume's refusal to believe that the categories of cause and substance are instantiated disqualify him as a subject of experience.

According to the genetic notion of apriority, a proposition is a priori when it is true solely in virtue of the contributions the mind makes to experience. Given these contributions are not necessarily consciously manifest to the subject, this subject may have mistaken beliefs and ultimately misguided but not unjustifiable doubts about them. On the justificatory side, the processes whereby such knowledge is acquired may be complex and difficult. Consequently, mistaken beliefs about whether a priori concepts are instantiated are clearly possible, and certain types of errors in reasoning, of the sort that Kant would say that Hume makes, would result in justified although ultimately mistaken doubts.

29. I would like to thank Robert Adams, Tyler Burge, David Christensen, Hilary Kornblith, Arthur Kuflik, George Sher, and the referees for Synthese for comments on this paper.

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