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Strawson and Kant

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Introduction

The United Kingdom is very fortunate to have an active Kant Society. It is also fortunate to have in Peter Strawson not just one of the greatest living philosophers, but also the leading proponent of analytic Kantianism. Strawson's seminal *Individuals* rehabilitated metaphysics as a respectable enterprise within analytic philosophy. It also inaugurated a distinctly Kantian project—descriptive metaphysics—and placed the idea of transcendental arguments at the centre of epistemological, metaphysical, and methodological debate. It was followed by *The Bounds of Sense*, a brilliant and provocative discussion of the first *Critique*, which continues to influence Kant scholarship by way of inspiration and opposition alike.

It was only natural, therefore, for the UK Kant Society to devote one of its annual conferences to Strawson. The conference was hosted by the Department of Philosophy at the University of Reading, and took place on 17–19 September 1999. It was the first conference on Strawson in Britain for a long time, and the very first to concentrate on his relation to Kant. In this latter respect, the proceedings of the conference complement three other collections of essays on Strawson, in which Kantian themes are mentioned only in passing.¹ Furthermore, the date was particularly appropriate in that Sir Peter turned 80 in 1999.

I was fortunate to secure the collaboration not just of Sir Peter himself, but also of some of his eminent pupils, admirers, and critics. The papers divide loosely into three kinds. Some of them, namely those by Strawson, Hacker, Bird, Cassam, Stroud, and myself, deal with general questions concerning the nature of Strawson's Kantianism and of his rehabilitation of metaphysics. Others, by Westphal, Rosefeldt, de Gaynesford, Allison, and Förster, are devoted to more specific topics in Kant. In the remainder, by Grundmann and Misselhorn, Stern, and Hyman, the focus is more on Strawson than on Kant. Taken as a whole, the collection ranges from Kant interpretation and the history of analytic philosophy through philosophical logic, metaphysics, and epistemology to the philosophy of mind and

¹ Z. van Straaten (ed.), *Philosophical Subjects: Essays Presented to P. F. Strawson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); P. K. Sen and R. R. Verma (eds.), *The Philosophy of P. F. Strawson* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1995); and L. E. Hahn (ed.), *The Philosophy of P. F. Strawson*, *The Library of Living Philosophers*, xxvi (Peru, Ill.: Open Court, 1998).

aesthetics. In this, it reflects the range of Peter Strawson's own philosophical interests and achievements. The following abstracts, provided by the authors themselves, give a more detailed picture of their contents.

Peter Strawson's opening essay falls into three parts. The first discusses his relationship to Kant, and in what respect Kant's influence on him is a special one. The second part features a (partly appreciative, partly critical) discussion of Rae Langton's recent interpretation of Kant in *Kantian Humility*. The third part returns to the topic of intellectual autobiography. It turns to some other influences on Strawson's work, especially that of Wittgenstein. Among other things, it mentions points of contrast, such as Wittgenstein's disregard for the constructive and systematic aspects of philosophy, and his more sceptical view of subjective experience and, in particular, of abstract objects.

My own contribution first discusses the role of Strawson's *Individuals* and *Bounds of Sense* in the rise of what I call 'analytic Kantianism', the distinctly analytic interpretation, defence, and elaboration of Kant's ideas. In the sequel I defend Strawson's particular branch of analytic Kantianism against some widely accepted criticisms: that it is unfaithful to the general idea of transcendental philosophy; that it wrongly dismisses transcendental idealism and transcendental psychology; and that transcendental arguments could only ever establish that we must believe certain things to be the case, not that they are the case. I end by arguing that Strawson has provided us with a special kind of conceptual analysis, one that combines certain methods of the analytic tradition with important Kantian ideas.

Peter Hacker's essay places Strawson's rehabilitation of metaphysics within the history of metaphysics. Periods of metaphysical system building tend to be followed by brief periods of anti-metaphysical reaction. In this vein, Strawson's *Individuals* marks a return to metaphysics following the attacks on it by the logical positivists. The paper starts with a sketch of Strawson's distinction between descriptive and revisionary metaphysics. In the second section it argues that descriptive metaphysics preserves only the letter but not the spirit of traditional metaphysics. Instead of purporting to delineate the ultimate structure of the world, descriptive metaphysics investigates the connections between the fundamental concepts we use to describe the world. The final section discusses whether revisionary metaphysics as Strawson describes it conforms to the intentions behind the metaphysical systems of the past, and whether it constitutes a coherent enterprise.

Graham Bird discusses the relation between Kant's descriptive metaphysics and that of Strawson. In *Individuals* Strawson outlined what he called a 'descriptive metaphysics', and it is at least natural to suppose that the views of Kant that Strawson approved in *The Bounds of Sense* fall under the same heading. Bird takes it that both Kant and Strawson share such a project of descriptive metaphysics; but he argues that their projects

are nevertheless not the same. He distinguishes them under three headings: relations to traditional scepticism and the appeal to transcendental arguments; the two projects' methods; linguistic analysis and transcendental psychology; the nature of necessary, a priori, features of experience.

In his essay on a priori concepts Quassim Cassam distinguishes between the view that a priori concepts are justificational a priori and the view that they are derivationally a priori. He discusses various ways of understanding the notion of justificational apriority, and questions the derivational apriority of at least some of the Kantian categories.

Barry Stroud deals with the synthetic a priori in Strawson's Kantianism. Kant's question of how synthetic a priori judgements are possible was in part a question of how philosophical results with the distinctive status of those he reached in the *Critique of Pure Reason* could be reliably arrived at. Stroud asks whether there is a parallel question about the results of the more 'austere' Kantian project Strawson pursues, while repudiating transcendental idealism and even, apparently, any appeal to a priori knowledge. Stroud argues that conclusions with the special, distinctive status Strawson has in mind can be reached if necessary connections can be discovered between the possession of certain conceptual capacities and others, and that no reliance on the analytic/synthetic distinction or on the idea that we know some things a priori is required for the success of that project.

The main topic of Kenneth Westphal's piece is Kant's Refutation of Idealism. Mainstream analytic Kant commentary has sought a purely conceptual, broadly 'analytic' argument in Kant's Refutation of Idealism, and then has despaired and criticized Kant when no such plausible argument can be reconstructed from his text. According to Westphal, these disappointments overlook two key features of Kant's response to scepticism: his non-Cartesian philosophy of mind and his non-Cartesian method of 'transcendental reflection'. His paper highlights the nature and role of transcendental reflection in four key thought-experiments through which Kant purports to show that we sense, and do not merely imagine, objects and events in the spatio-temporal world around us.

The contribution by Tobias Rosefeldt is concerned with the problem of the self. Kant would accept Strawson's claim that we can have genuine knowledge about ourselves only if we refer to ourselves as persons, i.e. beings whose bodies provide empirically applicable criteria for their identity through time. But he also holds that beyond empirical self-knowledge we have a priori self-consciousness whose object is not the 'real subject of inherence' or the self as a real entity but the 'logical subject of thought' or 'the logical I', which has only 'logical identity'. In his paper Rosefeldt tries to elucidate these notoriously obscure remarks by giving a detailed account of what Kant means by characterizing something as 'logical'.

Max de Gaynesford is also concerned with Kant and Strawson on the first person. One influential explanation of the divergence between the two is as follows: Kant's 'criterionless self-ascription' thesis (that the immediate self-ascription of thoughts and experiences involves no application of empirical criteria of personal identity) was an unparalleled insight; but, because of residual Cartesianism, Kant failed to press it home. The paper expresses certain reservations about this diagnosis; in particular about whether, for all Strawson shows, Kant held the thesis, and whether it would have been correct, or even consistent, for him to have done so.

With Henry Allison's piece we leave the first for the third *Critique*. Allison analyses the principle of the purposiveness of nature and the deduction that Kant provides for it in the introduction to the *Critique of Judgement*. He argues that, in spite of its merely subjective nature as a principle of reflective judgement, this principle is a genuine transcendental condition of empirical knowledge *qua* empirical, and that Kant's justification of it constitutes his definitive answer to Hume regarding the vindication of induction broadly construed.

Eckart Förster is also concerned with the third *Critique*, but with the nature of aesthetic judgement. In his recent 'Intellectual Autobiography' that opens the Library of Living Philosophers volume in his honour, Strawson reviews, among other things, his various publications on Kant subsequent to *The Bounds of Sense*. In this context he writes: 'More recently I paid tribute to his [Kant's] insight into the nature of aesthetic judgement.' It is this tribute, or rather its two central claims with regard to Kant's aesthetics, that Förster discusses in his paper.

Thomas Grundmann and Catrin Misselhorn consider the relation between transcendental arguments and realism. Transcendental arguments are supposed to show on a purely a priori basis that the necessary conditions of thought and experience are not only psychological conditions of our thinking and experiencing objects, but also conditions that are true of these objects. Realists protest that psychological facts cannot entail any conclusions whatsoever about non-psychological reality. For this reason Stroud and Strawson have recently argued that transcendental arguments can establish at most psychological truths about what we must believe. In their paper Grundmann and Misselhorn discuss the prospects of a more ambitious strategy for realists, namely the attempt of vindicating our basic procedures of justification in general by means of semantic externalism.

Robert Stern's paper concerns Strawson's appeal to a certain kind of Humean naturalism, particularly in his response to scepticism. First, it argues that Strawson's naturalistic turn is in tension with his earlier positions. Second, it argues that the naturalism Strawson appeals to is not adequate as a response to scepticism, and that many of Strawson's earlier arguments can be better understood and defended on their own terms,

without any such appeal, so that it was misguided of Strawson to take this naturalistic path.

John Hyman, finally, discusses the modern causal theory of perception, of which Strawson is a leading advocate. The causal theory combines two claims: first, that it is a conceptual truth that our perceptions are caused by the material objects we perceive; and, secondly, that we are immediately aware of these objects themselves, rather than their mental proxies. Since this theory is not committed to the doctrine that the immediate objects of perception are mental entities, it is generally thought to escape the difficulty faced by the classical causal theory in explaining how the ordinary beliefs we acquire when we perceive material objects can be justified. Hyman argues, first, that it faces the same difficulty; and, secondly, that the theory depends on a false view about the nature of perceptual experience.

I

A Bit of Intellectual Autobiography

P. F. STRAWSON

Most of what I have to say under the heading of intellectual autobiography has already appeared in the Library of Living Philosophers volume published in 1998.¹ But perhaps I can add something bearing mainly, though not exclusively, on my attitude to the work of Kant.

Instead of coming at this directly, I would like to begin by recalling Kant-related episodes in the lives of two other English philosophers of this century. In a well-known passage in his autobiography² R. G. Collingwood relates that at the age of 8 he read Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, presumably in an English translation. He did not, he says, understand it; but he knew at once that *this was for him*; that the climate of this kind of thinking was to be *his* climate, the air of philosophical thought the air *he* must breathe; as he did (though not exclusively, since he was also an eminent historian).

The other episode concerns a younger philosopher; namely, A. J. Ayer. His biographer³ reports that while sailing to Africa in 1943 to undertake a special-operations exercise Ayer undertook to reread Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and, in the early stages of sunstroke, underwent a remarkable epiphany during which he understood for the first time the full force of Kant's argument. Unfortunately, once he had recovered from his fever he was unable to regain the insight.

Sympathetic though one may find both these Kant-inspired experiences, I cannot myself report any close parallel to either. Nevertheless, Kant, or more exactly Kant's first *Critique*, does have a distinctive place in my own intellectual history, such as it is, in a way I will try to make clear. For some years after my first academic appointment just after the war the questions I was

¹ L. E. Hahn (ed.), *The Library of Living Philosophers*, xxvi, *The Philosophy of P. F. Strawson* (Peru, Ill.: Open Court, 1998).

² R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938).

³ B. Rogers, *A. J. Ayer* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1999).

mainly concerned with fell in the general area of philosophy of language and logic: questions about reference, truth, entailment, the constants of formal logic and their natural-language counterparts, analyticity, etc. Wrestling with these problems, one had, of course, to wrestle with the work of those philosophers whose views on the questions concerned were at the time, and sometimes still are, influential or even dominant—most notably Russell, Quine, and Austin. Indeed, it was sometimes precisely the views that one or another of these had expressed that fired my concern with the question. Nevertheless, closely as one might study the relevant passages in the writings of the philosopher concerned, it was precisely and only because of their relevance to the question at issue that those passages demanded and received such close attention. It was not because those passages were, or seemed to be, an integral part of some wider system of thought associated specifically with the name of that philosopher, perhaps because initiated by him.

And this is where the difference with my relation to Kant or, to be more exact, to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* comes in. It was that complete work itself, rather than any of the many particular issues with which it deals, that became the focus of my concern. Indeed, it is the only work, and Kant the only author of such a work, of which, and of whom, I can say this. The reasons for it are, of course, largely internal to the work itself; but also, I must confess, partly historical—to do, in fact, with the structure of the PPE school in Oxford before the war. Anyone reading for that school at that time who wanted to specialize in philosophy was offered no choice of philosophical special subjects; there were just two on offer, and no more: Logic and Kant, the latter to be studied in just two works, the first *Critique* and the *Groundwork*. The *Groundwork*, though like Collingwood I found it deeply impressive, conceived its subject, as I thought then and still think, altogether too narrowly, whereas in the *Critique of Pure Reason* I found a depth, a range, a boldness, and a power unlike anything I had previously encountered. So I struggled with parts of it as an undergraduate, and later as a college tutor teaching those few pupils intrepid enough to take it on, until finally, having been subtly and in part consciously influenced by it in my own independent thinking about metaphysics and epistemology (in *Individuals*⁴), I decided I must try to get to grips with the work as a whole. So I began to give a regular series of lectures on it, a series that ultimately issued in the publication of *The Bounds of Sense*.⁵

In that book I tried to preserve and present systematically what I took to be the major insights of Kant's work, while detaching them from those parts of the total doctrine that, if they had any substantial import at all, I took to

⁴ P. F. Strawson, *Individuals* (London: Methuen, 1959).

⁵ P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense* (London: Methuen, 1966).

be at best false, at worst mysterious to the point of being barely comprehensible. My book was, you might say, a somewhat ahistorical attempt to recruit Kant to the ranks of the analytical metaphysicians, while discarding those metaphysical elements that refused any such absorption. My position on all this I have subsequently sought to elaborate or clarify a little, particularly in the first two of the four Kantian studies included at the end of the collection *Entity and Identity*.⁶ Of course I am not foolish enough to suppose that I have got all or any of these things quite right; and I am sure that there are plenty of philosophers willing to show me where I have gone wrong. But I can take some comfort in the thought that, when I have erred, I have done so in the company of most, if not all, of those who have been brave enough to undertake the interpretation and criticism of Kant's critical philosophy.

I shall not here and now undertake anything by way of further elaboration, modification, or defence of the views advanced in my book or the subsequent articles. Instead I should like to consider briefly a recent and, I think, novel attempt to elucidate and defend a central Kantian thesis: the thesis, namely, that we are and must remain ignorant of the nature of things as they are in themselves. I refer to a book published in 1997 by Rae Langton, which is called *Kantian Humility*⁷ and which is certainly a most interesting, impressive, and scholarly exercise in Kantian interpretation. Early on in the work she refers, effectively by way of comparison and contrast with her own, to another philosopher's solution of the problem posed by the Kantian doctrine of our necessary ignorance of things as they are in themselves. The view in question is Professor Allison's, and, as she rightly remarks, his solution is both elegant and ingenious. It also has what in her view are distinctive merits. It preserves the objective reality of the natural world as studied by the physical sciences; and it disposes completely of the picture of two distinct realms of being: the one the realm of supersensible things in themselves, the other the realm of phenomena, however conceived. But also—and this is where her approval ends—it completely draws the sting of the doctrine of necessary ignorance, rendering it harmless, anodyne, even trivial. For it does not have the consequence that there must be anything real at all of which we are necessarily ignorant, though of course there may be much of which we are and may remain contingently ignorant.

And this is where Professor Langton jibs. For in her view it is an essential part of Kant's doctrine that there really is something substantial of which we are necessarily ignorant and of which our necessary ignorance is a source of necessarily vain, but humanly natural, regret. Things in themselves affect our sensibility and thereby make knowledge possible; but they affect us in virtue

⁶ P. F. Strawson, *Entity and Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁷ R. Langton, *Kantian Humility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

of their extrinsic, relational, causal properties, which are essentially *forces* constituting the natural world, phenomenal substance, the subject matter of physical science. But these forces, phenomenal substances with which we are acquainted and of which we can have knowledge, though real enough are but extrinsic, relational properties of things in themselves; and as subjects of these relational properties—substances in the pure sense—things in themselves must also have *intrinsic* properties; and these intrinsic properties are necessarily *unknown* to us, since it is only the matter-constituting forces of which we can become sensibly aware. So, though we have knowledge of their *relational* properties that constitute nature, of things as they are *in themselves* or intrinsically we remain necessarily ignorant.

Of course these few sentences of mine are only a sketch—possibly, though I hope not, a travesty—of what is a very subtly and carefully worked-out position. It is a position, moreover, that Professor Langton skilfully supports with an impressive array of references, not only to the *Critique* itself and Kant's other writings, but also, and often in a critical vein, to the work of his philosophical predecessors, most notably Leibniz; and to that of many commentators.

At the end of her book Professor Langton acknowledges one prima-facie difficulty for her position. This is Kant's clear and repeated assertion of the ideality of space, its subjective source; for this may seem to bring into question her firm belief that the objective reality of the material world, the subject matter of the physical sciences, is an integral part of the critical doctrine. It may seem to threaten us (and Kant) with commitment to a kind of phenomenalistic, or even to the Berkeleyian, idealism that Kant himself emphatically repudiates. Professor Langton is convinced that the threat is only apparent, and considers briefly a number of ways of circumventing it. The solution that she finds most satisfactory consists in drawing a distinction: the dynamical forces that constitute bodies are genuinely objective properties, but relational not intrinsic properties, of things as they are in themselves; space, though its source is subjective and hence spatial relations are ideal, is simply the *form* in which we have intuitive awareness of real dynamical relations; *spatial* relations are ideal, but they make *experience* of real dynamical relations possible.

Professor Langton is aware that more work would need to be done on this solution. She says: 'the connection Kant sees between dynamical and spatial relations must be regarded as unfinished business.'⁸ But she seems to have no doubt that a solution on these lines must be correct.

It seems to me, however, that there is another and quite different difficulty for Professor Langton's interpretation, a difficulty of which she takes no account at all. This difficulty relates not to the objects of outer sense, of

which space is the form, but to the contents of inner sense, of which time is the form: in other words, the contents of empirical self-consciousness, which Kant, somewhat like Hume, represents as a succession of constantly changing subjective states, a flux (his own word) of thoughts, perceptions, feelings. How are these to be accommodated in Professor Langton's scheme of interpretation? They are certainly not *intrinsic* properties of any *thing* (presumably, in this case, a self) as it is in itself. They are firmly declared, like the objects of outer sense, to be appearances. But again they cannot have the reality of those real, but extrinsic, relational, causal, dynamic properties of things in themselves that constitute the objects of outer sense, the subject matter of the physical sciences. Yet they cannot just be left in the air, as it were; they must be found a place in the scheme of things, since without them no experience, and hence no knowledge of the objective world, the subject matter of the physical sciences, would be possible at all. They are indeed recognized by Kant as a fit subject for what he called empirical (as opposed to rational) psychology and picturesquely describes as a kind of physiology of inner sense.

If Professor Langton is to find a place for them, then, it looks as if she must find besides those real but extrinsic dynamic properties of things in themselves that constitute bodies some analogous real but extrinsic properties of things in themselves that are capable of constituting minds or, perhaps better, empirical consciousness. No such account is forthcoming, however; and, even if it were, she would face a problem parallel to that apparently created for the objective reality of bodies by the ideality of space; for time also, the *form of inner sense*, is declared to be ideal.

For these reasons, though not for these alone, I am unconvinced by Professor Langton's work, interesting, impressive, and scholarly as it is. Yet I recommend it for these, its own, certainly intrinsic, properties.

After that critical interlude, perhaps I should say a little more to justify the title of this chapter. It might reasonably be thought that in order to do that I should at least say, first, whether any other philosopher has had an influence upon me at all comparable with that of Kant, and, second, whether any particular view I have come to hold seems to me of outstanding importance.

For reasons I have already made clear, no single other philosopher and no single work of any other philosopher has had in my philosophical history the position that Kant and the first *Critique* have had. But I can mention other more diffuse influences. First, then: Russell and Moore, the founding fathers, at least as far as England is concerned, of analytical philosophy in our period. Their influence related to the questions and problems they discussed rather than the answers and solutions they gave. Second: the brightest lights that shone on the Oxford philosophical scene in the 1950s—those of Ryle, Austin, and Grice—though here too it was more

⁸ R. Langton, *Kantian Humility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 217.

a matter of style of thought than any particular doctrines to which I responded. And, finally, I must mention Wittgenstein; for, if I share anyone's conception of what our general philosophical aim or objective should be, it is, if I have understood him correctly, that of Wittgenstein, at least in his later period. That is, our essential, if not our only, business is to get a clear view of our most general working concepts or types of concept and of their place in our lives. We should, in short, be aiming at general human conceptual self-understanding.

Wittgenstein saw that a necessary condition of achieving this was to liberate ourselves from false understanding; to tear away the veil of simple seductive illusions or pictures that pervaded or constituted much existing philosophical theory and that prevented us from seeing clearly, from getting the clear view we needed. To this task Wittgenstein devoted much of his formidable powers and did so with the unique effectiveness of genius. But I must add, as I think, that his almost obsessive anxiety to liberate us from false pictures, from the myths and fictions of philosophical theory, led to a certain loss of balance in his thinking. It did so in two ways. First, it led to a distrust of systematic theorizing in general—and hence to a disregard of the possibility, indeed, to my mind, the fact, that the most general concepts and categories of human thought do form in their connections and interdependencies an articulated structure that it is possible to describe without falsification. Indeed, what I tried to show in my work on Kant is that the first *Critique* contains, besides much else that is more questionable, the general outline of many essential features of just such a description.

Second, this same anxiety to liberate us from false theory led Wittgenstein, as I think, to minimize or dismiss, or at least give too little acknowledgement to, some pervasive features of our experience and of our ordinary non-philosophical thought. It is true of these features that they can, in philosophical thinking, lend themselves to gratuitous inflation, to mythologizing, to false imaginary pictures—all of these proper targets of Wittgenstein's hostility and scorn, the 'houses of cards' it was part of his mission to destroy. But that is no reason for failing to acknowledge them fully as the harmless, inescapable features that they are.

So what are these features? I have in mind two things: the first is the reality of subjective experience in all its richness and complexity or, as one of our most distinguished contemporaries expressed it, in all its 'heady luxuriance'—the phrase is Quine's; the other is the inescapable presence in our thought of abstract intensional objects. Both, as I remarked just now, are easily misunderstood, prime sources of the generation of 'pictures to hold us captive'. But neither should for that reason be downplayed or denied the character it actually has in our experience or our thought.

Another thing I suggested I should do in order to justify my chapter title is to answer the question whether there is any particular view that I have

come to hold that I regard as of outstanding importance. Well, there is such a view: it is by no means new and I do not think I am alone in holding it. It is not exciting: it is even, I think, a truism. But it has been overshadowed and regarded with suspicion in recent times. It is not a view that I myself have come to merely recently. Indeed, I had already grasped it in an incomplete and inchoate form before 1950. But a sense of its importance and ramifications has steadily grown with me since. It is this: that the fundamental bearers of the properties of truth or falsity, the fundamental subjects of the predicates 'true' and 'false', are not linguistic items, neither sentences nor utterances of sentences. It is not, when we speak or write, the words we then use, but what we use them to say, that is in question. It is whatever may be believed, doubted, hypothesized, suspected, supposed, affirmed, stated, denied, declared, alleged, etc. that is or may be true. Any of these verbs may be followed by a noun clause of the form 'that *p*', and it is precisely the items designated or referred to by these noun clauses, as used on this or that occasion, that are the bearers of the properties of truth or falsity.

We do not have, in common use, a general word for these items. We do not have such a word because we do not in practice need it; in practice, we always use a nominalization of one of the verbs in question as the subject of the predicate (for example, 'your belief', 'his allegation', 'that statement', etc.) or a noun phrase such as 'what she has just said' or even the form 'that *p*' itself. Philosophers have, at various times, made various attempts to supply this deficiency. Frege's 'thought' is one; Austin groped towards it when he distinguished the 'locutionary' act (in terms of sense and reference) from the 'phatic' on the one hand and the 'illocutionary' on the other;⁹ G. E. Moore and others have happily used the term 'proposition', which, more recently, has shown a tendency to be replaced by 'propositional content' or merely 'content'; an older term still is 'judgement'. Whatever term we use for items of this kind—and I perhaps date myself by being content with old-fashioned 'proposition'—the essential point is that such an item is not to be identified with an inscription or an utterance or a type of inscription or utterance; it is an abstract, intensional entity, but nonetheless an item of a kind such as we constantly think of and refer to whenever we think of, or comment on, what someone has said or written (in the declarative mode) or indeed on a thought that has, as we say, just entered our own heads.

It is objected that there is no clear general criterion of identity for such items. Never mind: we get on well enough, and communicate well enough, without one. With the admission of propositions or judgements or thoughts as abstract intensional entities there goes along of course the admission of

⁹ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

others: of senses, of concepts, of properties and universals in general. It is here, most obviously, that the risk of inflation comes in: the risk of seductive images, pictures to hold us captive, myths and fantasies that are often fathered, justly or not, on Plato. But in order to acknowledge the items in question as the harmless necessary things they are, regularly recognized in ordinary thought and talk, there is no need to be thus seduced, no need to be taken captive by such pictures.

So I have spoken up for subjective experience on the one hand (the contents of inner sense, as Kant would say) and for abstract intensional entities on the other. And this prompts me to remark, in conclusion, on one mildly ironical feature of our subject in the early twenty-first century. If anyone is entitled to be called the founder of our subject, it is generally acknowledged to be Plato: and if anyone could be called the father of its modern development, most of us would nominate Descartes. The irony is that to accuse a philosopher of Platonism or Cartesianism is currently felt to be a seriously damaging charge. But if, and in so far as, I have exposed myself to it, I am unrepentant. Of course both these great men were guilty of exaggerations and more or less grave mistakes. But each had a grasp, however uncertain, of features of our thought and experience that it would be a much graver mistake to overlook, to deny, or to minimize.

Strawson and Analytic Kantianism

HANS-JOHANN GLOCK

It is a commonplace that the reputation of, and interest in, philosophers of the past waxes and wanes from decade to decade. But while even the greatest members of the philosophical pantheon can become unfashionable, some of them have never been neglected entirely. Plato and Aristotle belong to that select group, and so do the founder of modern philosophy, Descartes, and its most eminent representative, Kant. Still, there was a time when interest in Kant was mainly historical in nature, roughly between the 1920s and the 1960s. After the First World War the neo-Kantianism that had dominated academic philosophy on the Continent for fifty years finally ran out of steam. As a dynamic motor of philosophical development neo-Kantianism was replaced by phenomenology and its hermeneutic offspring on the one hand, by analytic philosophy on the other.

The rise of analytic philosophy is often described as a sustained revolt against Kant. There is some truth in this idea. After flirtations with Kant and Hegel, Moore and Russell rebelled against idealism and initiated the complementary programmes of conceptual and logical analysis. Subsequently, the credo of the most influential school of analytic philosophers, the logical positivists, was the rejection of Kant's idea that there are synthetic judgements a priori. Next, proponents of Oxford conceptual analysis frowned upon the system building that characterized both Kant and neo-Kantianism, and replaced it by piecemeal investigations into the use of philosophically relevant expressions. Finally, in the wake of Quine, analytic philosophy has increasingly been dominated by naturalism, and hence by the anti-Kantian idea that philosophy is identical or at least continuous with empirical science.

Nevertheless, the received contrast between Kant and analytic philosophy is untenable. For one thing, there is a distinctive anti-naturalist tradition within analytic philosophy, which insists that philosophy—especially logic, epistemology, and semantics—differs from natural science not just quantitatively but qualitatively. Among its godfathers are not just proclaimed adversaries of

Kant, like Bolzano and Moore, but also Frege and Wittgenstein. Both of these thinkers developed Kant's anti-naturalism, albeit in strikingly different ways.¹ For another, Kant's account of metaphysics and a priori knowledge set the agenda even for those who rejected the synthetic a priori. More importantly, in spite of their anti-Kantian rhetoric, many logical positivists accepted the Kantian idea that philosophy is a *second-order discipline*. Unlike science or common sense, philosophy is a priori not because it describes objects of a peculiar kind, such as the abstract entities or essences postulated by Platonism and Aristotelianism, but because it reflects on the conceptual scheme that science and common sense employ in their empirical descriptions and explanations of reality.

This Kantian undercurrent is no coincidence. The *Tractatus*, arguably the most important text in the rise of analytic philosophy, sets philosophy the Kantian task of drawing 'the limit of thought', rather than that of adding to our scientific knowledge of the world. Schlick and Carnap accepted the division of labour suggested by Wittgenstein, presumably because they were steeped in neo-Kantian ideas through their philosophical apprenticeship in Germany. Indeed, there is only a single step from the claim of the Marburg school that philosophy is the meta-theory of science to Carnap's slogan that philosophy is the 'logic of science',² that step being the linguistic turn of the *Tractatus*, according to which the logical limits of thought are to be drawn in language.

Accordingly, the mainstream of analytic philosophy from Frege to Quine is not just decisively shaped by Kantian problems, it also includes important Kantian strands. At the same time, none of these strands amounts to anything one might call analytic Kantianism; namely, a distinctly analytic interpretation, defence, and elaboration of Kant's ideas.³ It is hardly surprising that the

¹ See, respectively, my 'Vorsprung durch Logik: The German Analytic Tradition', in A. O'Hear (ed.), *German Philosophy since Kant*, Lectures of the Royal Institute of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) and 'Kant and Wittgenstein: Philosophy, Necessity and Representation', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 5 (1997), 285–305.

References to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* are to the first (A) and second (B) edition, and to his other works according to the *Akademie Ausgabe* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902–), volume number followed by page number.

² *The Logical Syntax of Language* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1937), 279.

³ In the German literature one often encounters the term *Analytische Transzendentalphilosophie* (e.g. R. Aschenberg, *Sprachanalyse und Transzendentalphilosophie* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), 28–34; T. Grundmann, *Analytische Transzendentalphilosophie* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1994). But 'analytic Kantianism' is superior to 'analytic transcendental philosophy', and not just for reasons of elegance. In Kant himself we find conflicting accounts of what *Transzendentalphilosophie* amounts to. For example, he often seems to equate transcendental philosophy with the critique of pure reason (explicitly in *Reflections* §4897), while officially regarding it as the complete critical metaphysics for which the critique provides the foundations (A 10–16/B 24–30). In the same passage he unequivocally confines transcendental philosophy to theoretical reason, which implies that the label is unsuitable for the important attempts to develop Kant's moral philosophy in an analytic vein (see below).

initial pioneers of analytic philosophy—Frege, Moore, Russell, Wittgenstein, and the logical positivists—were not interested in this kind of endeavour, even if they were indebted to Kant. To be sure, there were soon philosophers who combined an acquaintance with analytic philosophy with a sympathetic interest in Kant. C. D. Broad, for example, regularly lectured on Kant in Cambridge both before and after the Second World War. But these lectures were published only in 1978. Stephan Körner's *Kant* of 1955 was far more influential. But, although it has deservedly been popular in courses on Kant, it did not spark a flurry of publications by analytic philosophers.⁴

A major breakthrough came in 1959 with Peter Strawson's masterwork *Individuals*.⁵ Together with Ryle and Austin, Strawson was the leading representative of conceptual analysis, a loose movement inspired by Moore and Wittgenstein that flourished mainly though not exclusively in Oxford between the 1940s and the 1970s. Ideal-language philosophers like Frege, Russell, and the logical positivists held that natural languages engender philosophical confusion because they suffer from various logical defects, and that they must therefore be replaced by an ideal language—an interpreted logical calculus. By contrast, conceptual analysis tries to resolve philosophical problems by clarifying rather than replacing the concepts that give rise to them. And this analysis or clarification proceeds by describing the use of those words in which philosophically troublesome concepts are expressed.

That analytic Kantianism should receive its main impetus from conceptual analysis rather than from ideal-language philosophy is unsurprising. While conceptual analysts tended to be suspicious of metaphysics, they did not display the anti-metaphysical fervour of the logical positivists. They were far less obsessed with denouncing the synthetic a priori, and showed a fair degree of sympathy towards Kant. In Ryle this sympathy may have been reinforced by reading the *Tractatus* and by conversations with its author. In any event, in articles from the 1930s and 1950s Ryle applauded Kant's separation of philosophy from science. He also commended his programme of identifying the categories by looking at forms of judgement while sharply condemning its execution, setting a precedent that later analytic commentators on the Metaphysical Deduction were to follow.⁶

There was also an institutional reason for the association between Kant and Oxford conceptual analysis. As Strawson informs us in Chapter 1, students specializing in philosophy as part of the PPE course at Oxford

⁴ See C. D. Broad, *Kant: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) and S. Körner, *Kant* (London: Pelican, 1955).

⁵ *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Methuen, 1959).

⁶ See G. Ryle, *Collected Papers*, ii (London: Hutchinson, 1976), 366, 176–9, and J. Bennett, *Kant's Analytic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), ch. 6.

were forced to study Kant. As a result, Strawson struggled with the *Critique of Pure Reason* both as an undergraduate and as a college tutor. But there is no direct sign of this struggle in his early writings. Rather, Strawson came to fame by criticizing orthodoxies of logical analysis. Natural languages, he maintained, are distorted by being forced into the Procrustean bed of formal logic, and hence the latter is not a sufficient instrument for revealing all the logically and philosophically relevant features of our language. For my current topic, the most interesting case in point is Strawson's attack on Russell's theory of descriptions.

According to Strawson, a sentence like 'The present king of France is bald' is *neither true nor false* rather than simply false. Furthermore, it *presupposes* rather than entails the existence of the present king of France; i.e., that existence is a necessary precondition of the statement being either true or false. Finally, by trying to paraphrase away singular referring expressions of the form 'the so-and-so', Russell ignores the distinctive and indispensable role that these expressions play within our language.

The tenor of *Individuals* is more constructive than that of Strawson's previous work. The focus shifts from the description of ordinary use to what Strawson calls *descriptive metaphysics*. Descriptive metaphysics differs from the *revisionary metaphysics* one finds in Descartes, Leibniz, or Berkeley, among others, in that it 'is content to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world', rather than attempting 'to produce a better structure'. It differs from previous Oxford analysis in its greater scope and generality, since it seeks to 'lay bare the most general features of our conceptual structure'. These are visible not in the motley of ordinary use, but in fundamental functions of thought and discourse, notably those of *reference*—picking out an individual item—and *predication*—saying something about it (pp. 9–10). In spite of the shift marked by *Individuals*, therefore, there is an abiding concern in Strawson's work; namely, with describing the most general and pervasive features of human thought about the world, in particular 'the operation of reference and predication', and with the presuppositions of such operations.⁷

Alongside Aristotle, *Individuals* lists Kant as the most eminent representative of descriptive metaphysics. Strawson's conception of metaphysics also owes a more specific debt to Kant. As Peter Hacker points out in Chapter 3, by contrast to traditional metaphysics, descriptive metaphysics yields insights not into the necessary structure of reality, but into our 'conceptual scheme', the connections between the fundamental concepts we use to think about and describe the world. This shift of focus from reality

to our thought or discourse is familiar from the linguistic turn of analytic philosophy, yet it is also a Kantian legacy (see Sect. I below). At an even more specific level, part I of *Individuals* elaborates a Kantian idea; namely, that our reference to objects depends on our capacity to identify and reidentify them, which in turn depends on the possibility of locating them within a single public and unified framework, the framework of the spatio-temporal world (pp. 62–3, 119). Finally, *Individuals* maintains that philosophical scepticism distorts or ignores the essential structure of our conceptual scheme. Making his debt to Kant explicit, Strawson used the label 'transcendental argument' for a type of argument that rebuts scepticism on the grounds that these distortions are self-refuting.

The Kantian themes in *Individuals* are unmistakable, though diverse and combined with distinctly Strawsonian ideas in philosophical logic. It is no coincidence, therefore, that among the results of the book was a new kind of debate about Kant. On the one hand, this debate was less historical and deferential than previous Kant scholarship, including anglophone commentaries like those of Paton or Kemp Smith. On the other hand, it was more exegetical and scrupulous in its treatment of Kant than the passing animadversions and commendations of previous analytic philosophers.⁸ One important early instance of this new style was Graham Bird's *Kant's Theory of Knowledge* of 1962. Its main positive aim was to clarify the relation between appearances and things as they are in themselves, a topic that does not feature in *Individuals*. But the book explicitly sets out to provide an exegetical basis for the kind of analytic discussion of Kant exemplified by *Individuals*, and it includes a sustained comparison of Kant and Strawson on the self and personhood (p. ix; ch. 11). A slightly later example of analytic Kantianism is Bennett's *Kant's Analytic* of 1966. It sets out to fight Kant 'tooth and nail' (p. viii), and treats him as a contemporary analytic philosopher to be compared and contrasted with other contemporaries, Strawson pre-eminent among them.

In the same year Strawson himself entered the fray once more. Having been 'subtly and in part consciously influenced' by the first *Critique* in his independent work on metaphysics and epistemology, he decided to get to grips with the work as a whole, and for its own sake. He started offering lecture courses on the *Critique* in 1959, and these lectures eventually led to the publication of *The Bounds of Sense* in 1966.⁹ The book is not a straightforward commentary on Kant's masterpiece, but an essay that

⁸ In some respects, Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* had a similar impact in the sphere of moral philosophy. It is a highly original work, yet subtly influenced by Kant. And although it did not itself purport to interpret Kant's moral philosophy, it spawned numerous such attempts.

⁹ *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Methuen, 1966). Unless otherwise specified, page references in the text are to this book.

⁷ See 'My Philosophy', in P. K. Sen and R. R. Verma (eds.), *The Philosophy of P. F. Strawson* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1995), 1.

provides a reconstruction of some of its central ideas in the style of analytic philosophy. As Strawson puts it in this volume, it was a 'somewhat ahistorical attempt to recruit Kant to the ranks of the analytical metaphysicians, while discarding those metaphysical elements that refused any such absorption'.

The basic interpretative idea of *Bounds of Sense* is ingeniously epitomized by the title. There are three strands to the *Critique*. On the one hand, against empiricism Kant maintains that 'a certain minimal structure is essential to any conception of experience which we can make truly intelligible to ourselves' (p. 11, see pp. 24, 44). On the other hand, against rationalism he insists that concepts—including the categorical concepts that define this minimal structure—cannot be applied beyond the limit of possible experience. In these two regards, Kant seeks to draw, respectively, the lower and the upper bounds of sense. But he does so from within a framework that itself transgresses the bounds of sense, a framework that consists of the untenable metaphysics of transcendental idealism and the 'imaginary subject of transcendental psychology' (p. 32). The first two strands constitute the fruitful side of the *Critique*, the third constitutes its 'dark side', which is 'no longer acceptable, or even promising'. The central task of the interpreter is that of 'disentangling' an 'analytical argument' that 'proceeds by analysis of the concept of experience in general' from its idealist and psychologistic surroundings (pp. 16, 31).

Strawson has done more than anyone else to stimulate interest in Kant among analytic philosophers, and to show how the *Critique* can be approached in an analytic spirit. To this extent he is the most important source of analytic Kantianism in a *wide* sense of the term. Furthermore, his own approach amounts to an analytic Kantianism in a *narrower* sense: it maintains that the central insight of the *Critique* is an analysis of complex connections between concepts such as experience, self-consciousness, objectivity, space, time, and causation. This kind of analytic Kantianism is shared by some other commentators, notably by Bennett, but repudiated by many analytic admirers of Kant. Strawson's interpretation and appropriation of Kantian ideas have provoked a heated controversy that lasts to this day. The positive project of descriptive metaphysics and the technique of transcendental arguments have been vigorously attacked and tenaciously defended, and his attempt to separate the wheat from the chaff in the *Critique* has continued to influence Kant scholarship by way of inspiration and provocation alike. He has elaborated and modified his reading of the *Critique*, but also commented on other aspects of Kant's philosophy. In the remainder of this chapter I want to comment on some of the issues raised by Strawson's brand of analytic Kantianism: the general nature of transcendental philosophy, the content and tenability of transcendental idealism and of transcendental psychology, the prospect and scope of transcendental arguments, and the implications for the aims and methods of metaphysics.

I. THE GENERAL NATURE OF TRANSCENDENTAL PHILOSOPHY

The first readers treated the *Critique* primarily as a contribution to metaphysics, both positive and negative. On the one hand, there was the 'all-destroying' Kant who had swept away the 'pre-critical' or 'transcendent' metaphysics of post-Cartesian rationalism and of traditional philosophy more generally. On the other hand, the German Idealists soon treated Kant's own 'critical' or 'transcendental' metaphysics as a mere stepping stone towards metaphysical systems that were even grander and more pretentious than those of pre-critical metaphysics. With the collapse of German idealism in the middle of the nineteenth century, however, the focus of Kant interpretation shifted from metaphysics to epistemology. For the neo-Kantians, Kant's lasting legacy was to establish the theory of knowledge as the fundamental discipline of philosophy.¹⁰ Similar views are evident among analytic philosophers. Russell regarded it as one of Kant's few achievements to have 'made evident the philosophical importance of the theory of knowledge'.¹¹ Admittedly, some of the analytic foes of metaphysics realized their debt to Kant's attack on transcendent metaphysics, but this was far outweighed by their reservations about transcendental metaphysics and the idea of synthetic judgements a priori.

Strawson has generally been read as adopting a thoroughly epistemological approach to Kant. In fact, many critics treat it as a defining feature of his 'analytic interpretation' that it seeks to refute scepticism by way of transcendental arguments.¹² This picture is misleading. The prime concern in *Individuals* is with sketching a new type of *metaphysics*. Scepticism is mentioned only a couple of times and transcendental arguments only once. The sceptic features primarily not as someone who doubts the possibility of knowledge but as someone who distorts our conceptual scheme. And that certain forms of scepticism are self-refuting is a mere corollary of delineating the structure of our conceptual scheme.

¹⁰ 'All representatives of "Neo-Kantianism" have been agreed on one point: that the heart of Kant's system is to be sought in his theory of knowledge, that the "fact of science" and its "possibility" constitute the beginning and aim of Kant's putting of the problem' (E. Cassirer, 'Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik', *Kant-Studien*, 36 (1932), 2 (my trans.)).

¹¹ *Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980; 1st edn. 1912), 46.

¹² E.g. S. Gardner, *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Routledge, 1999), 32. Gardner's characterization of the difference between analytic and idealist interpretations is particularly puzzling, since he presents the latter as preoccupied with the 'problem of reality', the Cartesian problem of explaining how our representations can agree with their objects in reality. According to Gardner, Kant is concerned with a *general* problem about our representations of reality, i.e. a problem that includes synthetic judgements a posteriori. As we shall see instantly, however, at least in his critical writings, Kant explicitly confines himself to a *specific* problem about our a priori representations of reality, the problem of the synthetic a priori.