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Chapter 8

The Fate of Transcendental Reasoning in Contemporary Philosophy

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1. Introduction

Analytic and continental philosophers differ on the worth of transcendental reasoning. Analytic concern with transcendental reasoning was evident from the beginning of the movement, and although the analytic literature saw a brief mini-industry on the subject following Peter Strawson’s prominent use of the method, discussion of their acceptability has always been more common than their actual use, and the trend of the discussion has run against the argument form. To the extent that continental philosophy persists in the use of such modes of reasoning, then, it comes under analytic question. By contrast, in the continental traditions (from Kant to the present), it seems to us that transcendental reasoning is close to ubiquitous⁷ - although what the transcendental involves has been significantly and separately reconfigured by phenomenology and the genealogical turn, as well as by a more constructivist understanding of philosophy emphasizing the transformative potential of the method in concept creation. There are continental concerns about the status of transcendental reasoning, but continued creative use persists and there is no general agreement that transcendental argumentation is especially problematic. In fact, it is sometimes claimed and frequently implied that a transcendental dimension is of the essence of philosophy: any philosophical activity that does not reflect on its own conditions of possibility is naïve or pre-critical; and reflections on the conditions of contemporary philosophical discourse, subjectivity, and cultural life more generally lead to an appreciation of the ‘problem of modernity’. And, of course, this is one way of throwing the analytic project into question. On the other hand, any suggestion that a transcendental dimension is necessary to philosophy need not automatically exclude analytic philosophy. To the extent that analytic philosophers do meta-philosophy of some kind (as very many do), especially in dwelling on the relationship between experience and reflection on that experience (not so much from nowhere but rather from ‘within’), they are also perhaps minimally transcendental philosophers, even if a certain commonsense attitude or commitment to naturalism might quickly short-circuit or limit
the significance given to such reflections. Tom Baldwin, the current editor of *Mind*, exemplifies the resulting attitude when he suggests, in a paper on Derrida and death, that where transcendental analyses collide with common sense the former should be eschewed. But of course, such an attitude, even though not explicitly hostile, radically diverges from the spirit of Kantian ‘critique’ that has continued in much continental philosophy.

In this chapter, we trace these divergent attitudes vis-à-vis transcendental reasoning, with the goal of identifying some of the background differences in each tradition that (internally) justify the divergence. We begin with the analytic attitude to transcendental reasoning, which we argue is due in part to the explicit objections to transcendental reasoning absorbed by the analytic community, but also due in part to the methodological role of empiricism, the analytic understanding of transcendental argument as a *form*, and to a wider analytic attitude to ‘necessity-mongering’ claims. We then look at continental appropriations of such arguments, making use of Mark Sacks’ notion of a situated thought to outline transcendental reasoning involving embodiment and time, and considering the extent to which analytic criticisms apply to such usages.

2. Analytic attitudes to the transcendental

In *Transcendental Arguments and Scepticism*, Robert Stern observes that there is a ‘widespread conviction that there is something vaguely disreputable or even dishonest’ about transcendental arguments. This accurately captures the peripheral status of transcendental argument in contemporary analytic philosophy; that is, in the period after Strawson’s influential defence of the argument form and the subsequent objections by Stephen Körner, Barry Stroud and others. For the past thirty years or so, transcendental arguments have neither been used nor analysed extensively in the analytic journal literature, and when such prominent analytically trained philosophers as Putnam, Davidson, and McDowell do make use of them, it appears to be taken as something of a sign of non-analyticity. Beyond the situation of these well-known ‘postanalytic’ philosophers, there are other indications that the transcendental has become problematic for analytic philosophy. For instance, Pascal Engel denies that many of those who are generally taken to be French analytic philosophers should be considered thus, precisely because of their residual allegiance to the transcendental. Analytic and continental philosophy of religion is also largely separated on this point, and a related methodological division is arguably apparent within pragmatism.

The analytic and continental understandings of transcendental argument share common ground in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. It might seem, then, that differing views about the transcendental across philosophy could be understood as differences about how to handle the Kantian heritage – differences about the

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dependence of transcendental argument on transcendental philosophy, or about the most fruitful way to generalize on or depart from the model established by Kant’s usage. Given the well-known differences in the interpretation of Kant in the two traditions, this is not an unreasonable view. But the move back to Kant brings into prominence a basic problem in discussing differing analytic and continental receptions of transcendental reasoning. There is arguably no common referent here. Kant is indeed read across both traditions, but it does not follow that there is a neutral characterization of the transcendental argument form common to both analytic and continental philosophers as the locus of disagreement. Consider, for instance, the following ‘minimal’ characterization of the transcendental argument form:

A transcendental argument is an inference from a state of affairs that indisputably obtains, to the existence of a further, contested, state of affairs that is recognised to be a necessary condition for this obtaining (a ‘condition for its possibility’). The uncontested state of affairs is almost always subject-involving—it might involve such first personal matters as having knowledge, or certain experiences, or beliefs, or conceptual capacities, or it might involve intersubjective relations or practices of some kind. The contested state of affairs may or may not be subject-involving. The structure of such an argument is then as follows:

1. Subject-involving state of affairs \( p \) obtains.
2. A necessary condition for \( p \) obtaining is that \( q \) obtain.
3. So \( q \) obtains.

If this is all a transcendental argument comes to, it is a special case of reasoning by modus ponens and so not a distinct argument form at all. One might seek a different inferential frame for the argument (interpreting it as a species of inference to the best explanation, say), but again the result is nothing distinctive. More must be said if we are to get at the contested nature of the form. Much of Kant’s own practice is missing in this skeletal characterization—most obviously the intended role of such demonstrations as in some sense securing synthetic a priori principles or concepts—and one can select from the two post-Kantian traditions many different ways of adding flesh to these bones, in the form of further conditions or constraints that attempt to capture the distinctive feature (and so the distinctive possibilities) of such reasoning. For instance, it might be that the notion of necessity in play in (2) is not simply conceptual or logical; or that the condition it expresses is to be thought of as a type of non-logical, non-psychological dependence relation; or that the goal of the transcending manoeuvre is to re-conceive the two states of affairs so as to understand them as distinct though connected. Or the contextual surrounds of a transcendental argument might be critical—it might be that it has an essentially anti-sceptical function; or that it starts from the explanatory question ‘how is \( p \) possible?’, or that the kinds of conclusion that it can establish are themselves premises for

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a further (transcendently idealist) project. There is no general agreement
across the traditions (or within each) on each of these matters; different ways
of understanding transcendental argument have developed in parallel. Indeed,

it is not unusual for this state of affairs itself to be celebrated as a mark of the
vitality of the method. For instance, Ameriks remarks:

Even if Kant’s system is a multilayered complex that has only one root in
common sense . . . it is no crime if the other root of his work (the ‘transcendental’
arguments), like all good philosophy, is inextricably involved with
some abstract and endlessly disputable concepts. The fertile ambiguity of
these concepts . . . has by now surely demonstrated their worth.14

Although one might dispute Ameriks’ contention that there is an inextricable
connection between good philosophy and endlessly disputable concepts;

historically speaking (and in continental philosophy), the ‘fertile ambiguity’
he celebrates is certainly present here. But, of course, much of the fertile ambiguity
of transcendental reasoning is not on show in analytic treatments, even
though it is the analytic movement that has been more concerned with the
identification and discussion of a transcendental argument form. This needs
explanation. Analytic work in other cases vectors in on such ‘fertile ambiguity’
precisely to see whether it is indeed so fertile. Contemporary analytic discussions
of the ontological argument form distinguish Anselmian, Cartesian, Kantian,
and Gödelian forms, with numerous variations depending on whether conceptual,
experimental, modal or other circumstances are used to launch them. Why
is there not the same sustained analytic persistence with transcendental modes
of reasoning? Why is the project of explication dropped so quickly? So it seems
to us that what needs to be explained here is how the analytic interest in trans-
cendental argument as a form arose, without being accompanied by this same
exploration of potential variation.

In the early analytic context, at least, the answer seems clear, and it involves
the way that empiricism functioned as a methodological constraint, rather than
merely as a truth claim. Even non-empiricists among the early anlytics — such
as Russell at some times — took empiricist scruples very seriously as a mark of
epistemic respectability (in his last major work, Russell is concerned to show
that his deviations have ‘what may be called an “empiricist flavour”’15), and
empiricist scruples faltik at transcendental methods. Methodological worries
of this kind are never with just the particular issue at hand (a particular use of
transcendental reasoning, say), rather the potential cost is in the confounding
of the whole research program. Hostility to transcendental reasoning was
thereby part and parcel of Russell and Moore’s formative attempts to distance
themselves from British idealism.16

The move within the early analytic period to a more thoroughgoing empiricism
made transcendental reasoning even more difficult to take seriously. The logical
positivists influentially rejected the synthetic a priori, suggesting that such

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knowledge claims amounted to poetry, mysticism or nonsense. Of course, in
different ways, Wittgenstein's Tractarian picture, the verification principle
and the pluralist view involved in Carnap's semantic phase seem to have a synthetic
a priori status by their own lights, as has often been noted, but this was
not taken as any kind of spur to transcendental reasoning. Instead, epistemologi-
ical self-application difficulties were seen as theoretical problems arising
within the overall empiricist project, and were hardly to be solved by jettisoning
that most basic commitment. Rather, within the empiricist analytic tradition
such problems were most obviously to be resolved by adopting a more thorough-
going coherentism and the radical empiricism of Quine. At this point, then,
transcendental reasoning ran squarely against the research program of the
emerging analytic movement; to take it seriously was to be some other kind
of philosopher.

Given this attitude, it is hardly surprising that analytic discussion of transcen-
dental reasoning could only come about with the rise of obviously non-positivistic
and even non-empiricist schools, constrained not in the least by methodological
empiricism. These conditions obtained for the mid-century ordinary language
movement in England. And from the start there is a conception of transcendental
argument as a separate argument form with a logical or semi-logical structure,
capable of being recognized in the work of other philosophers, past and present,
and perhaps available for use in analytic projects. The first clear attempt at this
is J. L. Austin's isolation of transcendental argument as a distinctive (if limited)
method of reasoning in his 1999 paper 'Are there A Priori Concepts? When
the argument form makes its appearance in the analytic tradition, it does so in
the teeth of a characteristically pointed piece of Austanian rhetoric:

People (philosophers) speak of 'universals' as though these were entities
which they often stumbled across, in some familiar way which needs no
explanation. But they are not so. On the contrary, it is not so very long since
these alleged entities were calculated into existence by a transcendental argu-
ment: and in those days, anyone bold enough to say there were 'universals'
kept the argument always ready, to produce if challenged.

Next Austin sets out a particular argument for the existence of universals, and
clarifies what he means here by 'transcendental argument':

This is a transcendental argument: if there were not in existence something
other than sensa, we should not be able to do what we are able to do (viz.
name things).

After a little discussion of the very limited knowledge of universals such an
argument can yield, Austin presents a further argument for the existence of
universals, notes that it is also transcendental in this sense, and then raises what
one could take to be a difficulty with any general strategy of using such arguments repeatedly (rather than as one-offs, as it were):

Now it must be asked: what conceivable ground have we for identifying the ‘universals’ of our original argument with the ‘universals’ of this second argument? Except that both are non-sensible, nothing more is known in which they are alike. Is it not odd to suppose that any two distinct transcendental arguments could possibly be known each to prove the existence of the same kind of thing?37

It is perhaps not surprising that the first analytic discussion of the transcendental argument form turns out to be an obituary, but there are other points worth noting here.

First, in treating transcendental argument as a form entirely detachable from its Kantian heritage, Austin is making a characteristically analytic move. The implication is that this is something we can lift out of the general milieu of transcendental idealism or critical philosophy and treat on its own, or recognize at work in other contexts, and thus it is also available for analysis as a logical structure.

Second, considered as such a form, in Austin’s hands the transcendental argument becomes much the same sort of device as the standard argument forms of the ordinary language school; say, the paradigm case argument, or the argument from excluded opposites. In each of these three cases, the argument form involves reasoning to a state of affairs from a capacity we have that presupposes it (our wielding of ‘red’ presupposes red things exist; our talk of ‘counterfeit coins’ presupposes there are real ones). One can see Austin, then, as offering a very ‘thin’ understanding of transcendental argument, on which the argument form comes down to a kind of logical or conceptual relationship between capacity and ground. This is surely in part due to the context of ordinary language philosophy itself, inclined to be suspicious of traditional metaphysical (or critical) terminology. In such a context, one can see Austin’s version of the transcendental argument, like Hume’s account of causation, as something of a revisionary clean-up job: the intention is not to engage in Kantian exegesis, let alone to enjoy the ‘fertile ambiguity’ that Ameriks celebrates. Rather it is to identify an argument form that can in theory be given general work to do (because sufficiently purified of links to the transcendental philosophy), but that is perhaps not as useful as its proponents suppose. Austin’s transcendental argument form is (by his lights) a bad argument form, but a clear one.

The ordinary language movement also offers the first explicit analytic rejection of this view, and the first sign of a more optimistic role for transcendental argument. Peter Strawson’s 1959 monograph, Individtials, endorses ‘descriptive metaphysics’ as a middle way between revisionary metaphysical activities and the ordinary activities of philosophical analysis (such as the appeal to paradigm
cases). In setting out the case for going beyond mere analysis, Strawson highlights the limits of analysis as a path to understanding:

Up to a certain point, the reliance upon a close examination of the actual use of words is the best, and indeed the only sure, way in philosophy. But the discriminations we can make, and the connexions we can establish, in this way, are not general enough and not far-reaching enough to meet the full metaphysical demand for understanding. For when we ask how we use this or that expression, our answers, however revealing at a certain level, are apt to assume, and not to expose, those general elements of structure which the metaphysician wants revealed.  

Descriptive metaphysics is the project of tracing such structures, and it requires arguments that are at the same time explanations and even, perhaps, dramas. This is the natural home of transcendental argument, Strawson regards Kant as a descriptive metaphysician, and the 'reidentification' argument he puts forward in section 2 of the first chapter of the book is the exemplar of the analytic transcendental argument. Our conceptual scheme of a single unified system of spatio-temporal relations is the framework within which we organize our individuating thoughts about particulars, but a condition of our having such a scheme is our acceptance of the persistence of at least some individual particulars through periods of non-continuous observation; hence we are justified in believing in the persistence of (some) individual particulars. Being descriptive, this argument is explicitly modest (as Austin's was not) – it concerns only the tracing of our conceptual commitments and the structure of our conception of the world. Nonetheless, Strawson holds that it has value in defeating the sceptic, since the argument shows the sceptic 'pretends to accept a conceptual scheme, but at the same time quietly rejects one of the conditions of its employment'.

To say the least, this conclusion has been strongly contested in the analytic literature (and Strawson himself came to drop it, and to adopt a more cautious attitude to transcendental argumentation). Two objections have had especially great influence in the analytic literature.

(i) First, as Barry Stroud points out, the sceptic has hardly been defeated. For the conclusion of a modest transcendental argument simply tells us a fact about how we think about the world. It is a further step from this claim to the claim that this is how things are. The proponent of the argument can only (immodestly) take this step if the premises of the argument are bolstered with a commitment to a thesis strong enough to bridge the gap (idealism, or verificationism, for instance). Yet this is a premise the sceptic will not accept. Stroud goes further, pointing out that the utility of the transcendental argument is in question even if such a background is assumed, since direct (non-transcendental) argument from idealism or verificationism is now sufficient to establish the conclusion.
(ii) Second, as Körner and Stroud both point out, the necessary connection identified in Strawson’s arguments (between experiential fact and transcendental ground) is itself difficult to defend against the skeptic. For the only necessity in play here is a necessity apparently arising out of our conceptual framework. Hence a suppressed premise of the argument is that no other conceptual framework is available. Yet it is difficult to see how this unique applicability is to be established. This is a version of a concern Russell set out in classical form in *The Problem of Philosophy*—the necessities established by transcendental reasoning must be relative necessities, in that they depend on features of our conceptual framework which themselves might well be contingent.

Both of these objections are widely known within the analytic community, having been discussed in the literature particularly in the decade after Stroud’s first paper on the topic. And, of course, this suggests a straightforward internal explanation of the current analytic attitude to transcendental reasoning. According to this explanation, the contemporary attitude is a function of the literature on the Körnerian and Strudian objections: analytic philosophers now simply have reason to regard transcendental arguments as bad arguments; as a result there has been a decline in interest in the argument form. There is indeed something to this explanation, but it is a little too straightforward as it stands, for two reasons.

First, it doesn’t explain a difference in the analytic treatment of what one might call dubious argument forms. Other historically influential argument forms are discussed in the analytic literature, even though they are generally regarded as unsuccessful. The ontological argument, as noted earlier, remains a lively subject of discussion in the analytic journals, and is the subject of several recent monographs. True, there exist proponents of the argument who believe it to be sound, but they are very much a minority. One might in the same way regard Putnam and Davidson as part of a minority on the subject of transcendental reasoning, but there is an important disanalogy—in the first case, but not the second, being in the minority is not taken as a sign of non-analyticity.

Second, it doesn’t explain the differences in the analytic treatment of these particular objections in this case as opposed to others. Objections much like those of Stroud and Körner can be raised against other argument forms that remain central to the analytic literature. Many argument forms that *ostensibly* see off the skeptic—argument patterns based on reliabilism, say, or those based on some form of contextualism—fall foul of sceptical replies of a Strudian flavour. Many argument patterns are only valid within the scope of particular assumptions, or can only lend coherence-building support to a position; they might therefore seem open to Stroud’s follow-up objections about the utility in argument of the transcendental argument form. Körner and Stroud worry about strong claims of necessity arise wherever an argument depends on a claimed necessity or impossibility— for instance, in arguments based on thought experiments of the kind Roy Sorensen calls ‘possibility refuters.’ These are certainly not the most common use of thought experiment in the analytic tradition, but

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they are a respectable minority, and they involve claimed necessities (thinly disguised as claims about impossibility). Each of these situations is one in which a Strawsonian or Körnerian move might be made or has been made, pointing to a sceptical countermove or an overly confident claim of necessity. Yet in none of these cases is the fact of objection of this kind taken as debate-ending in the way that it apparently has done for transcendental reasoning. So the internal explanation taken entirely by itself won’t do; at best it is incomplete. The analytic attitude to transcendental reasoning genuinely depends also on particular norms and habits peculiar to the analytic tradition.

One of these is simply the focus on argument form in general. Strawson’s sceptical objection can seem puzzling or nit-picking to continental philosophers who are generally unconcerned with the anti-sceptical role of transcendental arguments, but focusing on the sceptic the opponent can be a little misleading. Arguably Strawson’s objection causes far more general trouble to the argument form as a whole, assuming indeed (as the analytic tradition does) that such forms are in a sense universal, capable of use across differing contexts. Any argument form at all that can be taken without (too much) distortion out of its original context can be re-characterized as having an anti-sceptical function, in that it could in principle be wielded in a different context against someone sceptical about its conclusion. Similarly, any putatively anti-sceptical argument that has the same kind of potential transferability can simply be seen as an argument for its conclusion, no matter what the dialogic context it arises in. By contrast, if we do not think of transcendental reasoning as having such universal form, Strawson’s objection remains localized to sceptical debates, with which continental philosophers are not generally concerned.

A second feature of the landscape that comes into play here, we think, is the attitude of the analytic tradition to claims of necessity or necessary connection. The internal force of the Körnerian objection can be misjudged by non-analysts for precisely this reason. On the one hand, naturalized epistemology and radical empiricism have become far more significant in the analytic tradition under the influence of Quine. From this point of view, such exercises as Strawson’s can, at most, show the structure of a conceptual framework that we happen to hold, and no part of which is beyond potential revision. In many dialogues within analytic philosophy, necessity-mongering is regarded sceptically even by those who are not themselves Quineans; the attitude here is captured by Daniel Dennett’s oft-repeated remark that philosophers too often mistake a failure of imagination for an insight into necessity, and by the neo-Humean dictum that necessities are theoretical costs, to be minimized wherever possible. On the other hand, the early twentieth century development of modal logic led to an unexpected problem of massive overabundance which the analytic tradition still lives with. It rapidly became clear that formally specifiable alethic modalities are legion, each yielding a distinct sense of necessity, and that temporal, deontic and other necessities could be modelled in the same way, and post-Kripkean diagnoses of recurrent equivocation between types of necessity are habitual.

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As a result, contested philosophical argument forms that depend on alleged but unexamined necessities have to be treated with care even by those who endorse a priorist reasoning; clarity, rather than fertile ambiguity, is at a premium here.

Of course, these are general concerns, and much analytic argumentation does involve claims about what is necessary, so again a double standard might seem to be in play. Not so. First, some analytic necessity claims are just ways of pointing out the impossibility of contradiction, or unpacking an explicit definition for analysis and potential refutation. Transcendental arguments do not make similarly secure claims about the necessity of the connection between an agental and a non-agental state of affairs obtaining. Second, there is a difference for the analytic philosopher in what might be called the constructive potential of various premises. Suppose, as many analytic philosophers from Bertrand Russell on have declared, the task of philosophy is to refine and regiment, rather than replace, our common-sense stock of opinions. Such an attitude does not prevent the philosopher arriving at highly unusual places (David Lewis’s modal realism, Peter van Inwagen’s views on persons). But it does place certain limits on the kinds of premises that will be readily accepted; premises that do not receive the immediate backing of intuition and fail to be credentialed by common sense are open to doubt. If such premises are claims about the necessity or impossibility of a certain state of affairs obtaining, and it is not clear that the necessity or impossibility is logical or definitional in nature, then this doubt becomes a form of permanent contestation. No matter how detailed the philosophical work taking one to the claimed necessity, it remains an entirely provisional claim in the sense that its rejection is conceivable. Now, this conclusion was reached from a particular analytic conception of the role of common sense, but we submit that there are other analytic paths to the same conclusion. Van Inwagen, for instance, argues that the problem of evil is an unsuccessful argument because it has philosophically controversial premises, and so cannot move a person ideologically on the point at issue. At this point we have departed from Körner’s own concern about conceptual frameworks in transcendental reasoning. Körner’s concern is that a claimed necessity may simply reflect the limits of our conceptual framework; the current objection is that the necessitarian premises of transcendental arguments do not reflect the immediately apparent limits of our conceptual framework. As such, a transcendental argument will never or rarely be able to play a constructive role in the fruitful development of an analytic position. At best it will be met with a shrug and a ‘could be’—and that is just not enough to go on with.

3. Continental attitudes to the transcendental

In continental circles, transcendental reasoning is controversial and perhaps even permanently contested terrain. Certainly it is contested by all of the great

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philosophers of the tradition, and the risks associated with such forms of reasoning are acknowledged. But it is not controversial enough to induce general abstinence. Instead, the implicit rationale seems to be a bit like Pascal’s Wager – believing in the efficacy of transcendental arguments, if they work, may result in tremendous results (a Copernican revolution); if they do not, some important concepts will have nonetheless been created. Better that, on this view, than disbelieving and being the under-labourer of science.

While various continental philosophers have subjected Kant’s conception of the transcendental to critique, few have thought that this signalled the end of the transcendental project. Rather, the aim, scope and structure of transcendental reasoning is instead consistently reinvented by all of the major philosophers associated with this tradition. Indeed, the assumption is more that whatever his failings, Kant’s transcendental project (and the project of philosophical critique more generally) achieved something of the utmost importance. The German Idealists (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel) all described themselves as transcendental philosophers, and the revival of interest in Kant in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Neo-Kantianism (Cassirer, Brunschwig, etc.) produced significant revisions in the understanding of transcendental methods and arguments.

In the twentieth century, transcendental arguments, proofs, interpretations, etc., have continued to be frequently deployed in continental philosophy in very different ways. The roll call of the famous names includes: Husserl, and the phenomenological intention to use such arguments to reveal the transcendental, a whole ‘region of being’ that was previously unexplored (and so both a method and an object of inquiry, as with Kant); Heidegger, and the association of the transcendental project with both phenomenology and hermeneutics; Sartre, who synthesizes the work of Husserl and Heidegger and gives transcendental philosophy an existential turn, as well as a famous ‘proof’ of the existence of the other; Merleau-Ponty, whose account of omnipresent bodily intentionality seeking equilibrium with the world (through the refinement of our ‘body-schema’ and the acquisition of flexible habits and skills) is argued to be the condition ensuring that sensory experience is more than a fragmented relation to raw sense data; Deleuze, who espouses ‘transcendental empiricism’ and rejects the possible as a category, instead looking to show how particular specific things are actualized, and who deduces the necessity for the ‘virtual’; Derrida, who consistently talks about ‘quasi-transcendental’ in association with themes like difference despite also deconstructing the transcendental philosophy of Husserl, Heidegger, and others; and Vattimo, whose project has been characterized by one of his commentators as ‘temporalising the a priori’. Irigaray discusses the ‘sensible transcendental’, Stiegler and Nancy are both invested in transcendental philosophy, as are Marion, Henry and the thinkers of the theological turn in phenomenology. So too, are various contemporary German philosophers of recognition, including Habermas and Apel, whose concern is primarily with performative contradiction and the way they provide transcendental conditions.
for communicative rationality. For each of these philosophers, transcendental arguments operate differently, with more and less scope, and more or less claimed universality and more or less able to be formalized in deductive terms.

While we cannot offer an adequate survey of these differing continental treatments of transcendental reasoning, nor establish for each whether the analytic criticisms apply, we can usefully abstract from these varied projects to note that all of these philosophers make claims about anteriority. We will explore two particular claims of anteriority that we contend are major factors in contemporary continental philosophy: those revolving around body/perception, and those involving time. (These particular foci allow us to directly consider examples from some phenomenological and post-structuralist thinkers; moreover, family resemblance versions of one or another of these positions are in evidence in most of the usual suspects.) Each of these anteriorities has a reasonably clear role to play in what Sacks calls situated thought:

the thought that one would have from a particular point within a framework, the content of which is informed by it being grasped as if from that perspective. It is not bare propositional content as if from nowhere, but is rather informed by being phenomenologically embedded and directed.

According to Sacks, much of the difficulty associated with transcendental arguments arises because they are understood as articulating relations between concepts or propositional contents. Construing transcendental arguments as formally valid inferences cannot be adequate, and while they can be 'modestly' understood as conceptual claims, for any transcendently reached conclusion to be a priori true requires some kind of shifting to the level of experience. As a result, the thinker needs to be genuinely co-implicated with what is thought. This phenomenological (or performative) element thus links all transcendental arguments that are not merely analytic to a kind of minimal phenomenology, at least in the relation between the propositional content and the speaker/experiencer of such content. And while there is certainly a circularity here, it is one that is borne of reflection, and is not something that can be overcome. Sacks’ account usefully explains why time, place, space and the body (elements of any perspectival situation) are central to the continental preoccupation with transcendental reasoning. A transcendental argument must have some relationship to experiences that are possible (or actual) in this world, or to concepts that structure our world, as is the case with the 'historical a priori' of Foucault's early work, which is avowedly transcendental.

3.1 Embodiment, perception and being-in-the-world

We start with transcendental arguments about the body, perception, motor-intentionality, or being-in-the-world, most of which come from phenomenology. While Heidegger has a complicated relation to transcendental philosophy, there are many chains of priority claims in Being and Time, often posed in the
The Fete of Transcendental Reasoning

tellulate language of ‘primordiality’ and the ‘always-already’. Famously, the ready-to-hand is claimed to be a condition of possibility of apprehending objects as present-at-hand, or as unready-to-hand. Philosophy has traditionally prioritized the theoretical encounter with things; on Heidegger’s view Dasein associates with things first and foremost on a practical and immediate basis that he calls the ready-to-hand, which refers to the availability of things for our use and deployment in relation to the completion of tasks. The world is not primarily the scientific world, but the practical one of everyday life, and the transcendental claim is that any present-at-hand analysis never leaves behind the practical but presupposes it, in the sense that it is made possible by it.

Some closely related claims are put forward by Merleau-Ponty in Phenomenology of Perception. Often associated with the thesis of the ‘primacy of perception’, rather than rejecting scientific and analytic ways of knowing the world Merleau-Ponty argues that such knowledge is always derivative in relation to the more practical aspects of the body’s exposure to the world, notably our bodily intentionality that seeks equilibria or ‘maximum grip’ with the world through the refinement of our ‘body-schema’ and the acquisition of flexible habits and skills. For him, these aspects of bodily motility and perception are the transcendental conditions that ensure sensory experience has the form of a meaningful field rather than being a fragmented relation to raw sense data, and this kind of know-how (the ‘I can’) is also said to be the condition of possibility of knowledge that (the ‘I think’). Of course, there is a difficulty here (as there is with Heidegger), since philosophical reflection is required to illuminate this priority of know-how. (Whether or not this is an insuperable problem is debatable, but for most phenomenologists it is, rather, a fertile occasion for thought precisely of the transcendental variety.)

A concrete example of Merleau-Ponty’s claim is the argument that, to put it bluntly, grasping is a condition of possibility of pointing; the ability to point to one’s nose (an abstract, reflective activity), depends on one’s ability to grasp one’s nose (a practical response to solicitation from the world, say a mosquito bite, or a need to scratch), but not vice versa. Merleau-Ponty backs the claim by appeal to empirical studies of injuries, phenomenological descriptions of what is involved in these two ways of inhabiting space, the alleged inability of empiricism and intellectualism to adequately describe or explain either the phenomenology or the empirical facts of the case (a kind of inference to a better explanation), and also transcendental reflection about enabling conditions for our experience of the world (motor intentionality).

This kind of practical non-cognitive grasping is, for Merleau-Ponty (and Dreyfus, Sean Kelly, and others), largely what takes place in learning, and bound up with this privilege given to motor intentionality and skillful coping is a suggestion that such basic activities involve non-inferential perceptual norms. As Dreyfus and Kelly put it:

The agent feels immediately drawn to act a certain way. This is different from deciding to perform the activity, since in feeling immediately drawn to do
something the subject experiences no act of the will. Rather, he experiences
the environment calling for a certain way of acting, and finds himself respond-
ing to the solicitation . . . there is an irreducibly normative component to the
experience of perceptual objects . . . it is ‘right’ or ‘appropriate’ to stand a
certain distance from a picture. 6

While few phenomenological descriptions are uncontested, all phenomenolo-
gists will maintain that our perceptual field is normatively structured. Perception
has an orientational structure (up/down, figure/ground, etc.) that solicits us
to optimally come to grips with it, and we see things in terms of actions and in
relation to potential uses of them by others. If we grant for the moment that
there are non-inferential perceptual norms of this kind, then it is at least open
to make a case of the kind that Sacks puts forward – one on which beliefs can
be justified without appeal to inductive or other non-deductive evidence, and
yet not in virtue of anything like straightforward conceptual analysis. Of course,
an analytic philosopher suspicious of transcendental reasoning might well
maintain that to show that something is non-inferential is not to show that it is
infallible, 6 nor that it is prior to inference. Indeed, the more controversial part
of any such argument would be to establish in what sense these non-inferential
aspects (say Heidegger’s ready-to-hand, or Merleau-Ponty’s bodily intentionality)
are the ground for inference. Robert Brandom, for example, refuses to concur
with Heidegger on this. 6 It need not follow from this that transcendental argu-
ments are intrinsically misleading, however, but rather that they are deployed
as part of a package deal.

These kind of phenomenological arguments are not straight a priori argu-
ments. While they depend upon experience, and claim that certain enabling
conditions make possible this experience, phenomenological reflection also
allows us to attend through reflection (to some extent) to those so-called
enabling conditions which were previously in the background; they also become
perspicuous in cases of breakdown (when things are unready-to-hand). This
need not lead to a problem of infinite regress. Bodily intentionality is (claimed
to be) primordial, and not everyone must see the claimed necessity, nor indeed
need the process of coming to see this putative necessity itself be immediate.
On the contrary, it depends on detailed descriptions of phenomena and the
structures of experience, and the concepts involved in such descriptions
are capable of alternative understandings. 6 Empirical data will hence rarely
establish that a transcendental argument is wrong tout court, since the difficult
task is always to describe each of the premises/concepts in detail, and there is
often sufficient ambiguity in the situation to allow for the reconstruction of a
transcendental argument that fits with empirical findings. However, not any
reconstruction will be possible and the empirical hence remains an important
constraint. The important question for the continental philosopher here is just
when such reconstructions become a pathological attempt to immunize one’s
theory against any possibility of error. This is always a judgment call, depending

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on an array of background norms regarding justification and explanatory comprehensiveness. It does suggest, however, that cognitive and empirical science cannot be ignored by any phenomenologist working in this particular embodied transcendental tradition, and that empirical discoveries can and should (potentially) be able to cast doubts on the claims of transcendental philosophy.

There is, however, a strong and a weak (immodest and modest) way to interpret Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty’s claims to a primacy of the ready-to-hand and embodied perception. They might just be a timely reminder to any cognitivist philosophy that something is left out when structures of cognition are posited everywhi. The stakes are raised, however, when it is declared that the non-inferential coping of the lived-body necessarily could not be explained or understood within the mechanistic and inferential terms of science, psychology, biology, etc. 30 This is where the ‘anteriority complex’ becomes, perhaps, a more apt term. But if we do not take this more immodest step, how does what we have described thus far fare in relation to the standard analytic objections to transcendental reasoning?

The problem is that nothing seems to bridge the Strawsonian/Kantian gap between appearance and reality, although from the phenomenologist’s perspective that very gap itself presupposes the ready-to-hand, and bodily coping, as its condition of enunciation. From the analytic point of view, therefore, at best these kinds of thoughts are an appeal to some kind of coherence condition; for instance, a kind of reflective equilibrium concerning our judgments and pre-judgments. The ‘transcendental’ move is no doubt thought of by its proponents as involving more than just the transformative potential of concept creation, but (on this view) it then becomes rather unclear why the continental philosopher does not make out that part of the case that can be made in such theoretically contentious terms. In other words, what’s wrong with charitably interpreting Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty in such a way, and so protecting them from Strawsonian critique? A residual anti-scientism and the preference of many continental philosophers for anti-mechanistic explanation is certainly doing at least some work here.

3.2 Time

We have suggested that one of the other key trajectories vis-à-vis transcendental reasoning concerns time, a link that was first noted in Kant. 31 In his reflections on the phenomenology of internal time-consciousness, Husserl famously suggests that our integrated experience of a melody – even on first listening – implies that any so-called ‘now’ must have a retentive element that retains the past notes, and a protensive moment that anticipates future elaborations. No doubt there are other possible explanations one might give here, but these, Husserl would claim, presuppose these same aspects of time-consciousness. We have here a transcendental claim, and one that is developed by the existential
phenomenologists, perhaps especially by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, where temporality is claimed to be a necessary condition for Dasein.\(^{31}\)

But if philosophy of time is important to phenomenology it is an even more central feature of poststructuralism, where the conception of the transcendental is rendered more modest, localized to times and places, historicized in an effort to avoid some of the problems associated with the Kantian and Husserlian conceptions, and so often without the strong claims to synthetic *a priori* knowledge. Transcendental arguments have increasingly been buttressed by phenomenology, hermeneutics and genealogy; extra forces are marshalled, just as Stroud says they must be, to avoid begging the question. But for both genealogy and phenomenology the transcendental dimension remains crucial rather than an unnecessary add-on. Without it, the one arguably commits the genetic fallacy, and the other remains enthralled in a philosophically uninteresting form of subjectivism.

That said, there is an important sense in which poststructuralism’s genealogical or deconstructive analyses take the critical dimension of Kant’s Copernican revolution so seriously that they frequently put the lie to the necessitarian ambitions of transcendental philosophy. In archaeological, genealogical and deconstructive analyses, any claims to transcendental neutrality or to having established a uniquely applicable condition (or set of conditions) for experience that holds for all times and places is radically relativized. While this is often done immanently, by analysis of textual inconsistencies, or by contextualizing these claims historically (rather than by deductively formalizing the argument), the ultimate result is that many philosophers in this tradition can actually concur with the force of Stroud and Körner’s objections—although the pressing question then concerns the way their work is proffered in the name of transcendental philosophy itself. Deleuze, for example, criticizes Kant for tracing the transcendental from the empirical and reinvents transcendental philosophy so as to avoid this mistake,\(^{31}\) and Derrida’s deconstruction of logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence includes within its purview the problematization of transcendental projects like those found in Kant, Husserl and Heidegger, but doesn’t abandon transcendental philosophy. In Ashley Woodward’s terms, the minimal transcendental significance of this ‘temporal turn’ consists in the idea that ‘being are disclosed within changeable cultural horizons of interpretations, and these cultural horizons are the transcendental conditions (the temporized *a priori*) for the meaning and intelligibility of things in general’.\(^{31}\) Perhaps this historicizing doesn’t really avert analytic concerns, in that it continues to involve a question-begging kind of anti-realism. Or, if it does avert them, it might be that it brings with it other commitments that are equally anathema to many analytic philosophers (relativism, say). Transcendental reasoning in this guise is both modest (in the sense of not universalist), and, *prima facie*, inmodest, in arguing for the existence of discernible epochs in a manner that most historians would be wary of.
The fate of transcendental reasoning is manifold, emerging around questions about the condition of possibility for change, novelty and difference. Where there is difference, the question then concerns the genetic conditions of specific changes, and what might be deduced to hold more generally that explains these specific changes. Deleuze’s project in *Difference and Repetition* is a straightforward example. He attempts to establish that repetition is, and never could be, the simple repetition of the same, and a key part of this project is his demarcation of three different approaches to time—habitual time, memorial time and futural time—all of which, he contends, involve repetition, as well as difference in repetition.

The first synthesis of time, for Deleuze, is that of habit, which gives us the phenomenological experience of the ‘living-present’. On this view, time is constituted by an originary synthesis that operates on the repetition of instants; it contracts the independent instants into one another to constitute the living present. The past and the future then become but aspects or dimensions of this living present (which is not itself an instant): the future is that which is anticipated to occur, whereas the past is the preceding instants and background conditions that are retained in the contraction that makes up the present. This living present also sets up a directionality or arrow of time in that it goes from the past to the future, and from the particular to the general. On Deleuze’s partly Humean view, then, habit is the condition of the self or ego that accompanies the contractions of the living present; the ‘I’ is produced by myriad habitual syntheses of time. It is clear enough that habit involves some kind of repetition, but for Deleuze, habit also involves difference primarily because ‘habit draws something new from repetition — namely difference (in the first instance understood as generality)’ (p. 78). Habit is hence not simply a *mechanical* repetition. Rather, it also involves a pre-reflective recognition (based on the passive synthesis) that the activity that is being engaged in is something that has been done before. For example, in the Humean series $ABABAB$, it is habit that introduces a difference between one set of the series and the next, leading us to expect a $B$ whenever we encounter an $A$. As Deleuze suggests, ‘when $A$ appears, we expect $B$ with a force corresponding to the qualitative impressions of all the contracted $AB$s. This is by no means a memory, nor . . . a matter of reflection’ (p. 70). His point is that it is not that we reflect upon the past, or even consciously remember the past, but that we simply know how to go on in a non-reflective way. While this process partially depends upon the past experiences that are involved in the synthesis, at least according to Deleuze, there is no memory (except what is sometimes called procedural memory) involved in the living present of habit (p. 70). This passive synthesis of time occurs in the mind—it is not carried out by the mind.

Deleuze is not entirely satisfied with this habitual explanation of time, in which the chain of events, or passing present moments, constitute time. While it seems to offer an explanation of the constitution of the ‘living-present’,

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the present also passes in the time that is thus constituted (it can be exhausted and is hence not co-extensive with time per se), and his basic question is hence something like, ‘why is it that a habitual present, or temporal “now” moment, can pass’, or, ‘why is it that the present is not totally co-extensive with time?’ Deleuze suggests that this necessarily refers us to a virtual or transcendental condition for the living present. To put this another way, there needs to be a second synthesis of time that causes the present to pass, and this, he argues, is the time of the past, or memorial time (p. 79). The fundamental idea is that we cannot represent a former present (i.e. the past) without also making the present itself represented in that very representation. So, if we think about our past, we also in some sense bracket away the present, or cause the present to cease to be. This means that whenever we remember, there will be two main aspects to this: firstly, the ‘actual’ memory of that past, but also a representation of the present (or the self) as itself being engaged in remembering. Deleuze describes these two aspects as memory and understanding (p. 80). We can, perhaps, schematize his argument as follows: (1) the present passes; (2) ‘no present would ever pass were it not past ‘at the same time’ as it is present’ (p. 81); (3) hence to explain this we need to posit a ‘pure past’ (a virtual past) that has never yet been present. And, as Körner suggests, the perhaps suppressed premise here is that no other explanation will suffice. According to Deleuze, then, this second synthesis of time, the past, is the ground that means that any ‘present’ always necessarily passes (as it is bracketed away in the attempt to remember), and it hence allows for the arrival of another ‘present’ (p. 81–82).

Deleuze ultimately contends, however, that neither of these modes of time are sufficient, since they do not properly institute time in thought. Although we do not think habitually, and although there is ‘understanding’ involved in memory, this is not genuine thought. Deleuze argues that truly philosophical thought involves a futural form that breaks open time (p. 88), and interrupts time, even if it always also pertains to time. Deleuze associates this affirmation of pure difference, of the future, perhaps surprisingly, with Nietzsche’s famous thought of the eternal return of the same. Without dwelling on this, we can schematize Deleuze’s argument as follows: (1) there is actual change/difference (the new sometimes happens; creativity occurs); (2) neither of the above models of time adequately explain this, although they both presuppose change/difference: (3) there must, therefore, be a third temporal synthesis oriented to chance and difference. The synthesis that is involved in futural time is not conjunctive, but instead must be conceived of as disjunctive, in that the only unity of the eternal return is the negative unity that difference does, in fact, return (p. 126).

There are intuitive problems with the notion of difference returning, but in this brief account of Difference and Repetition we can see the manner in which the unknown future serves as a condition for explaining genetic change/difference, something that is also the case, albeit in different ways, with the

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other post-structuralist thinkers. Of course, these arguments will not convince everybody, either in summary form or in Deleuze’s own (far more nuanced) account. To those sceptical, this might all seem a bit murky, and murkiness is indeed one of the potential risks associated with transcendental arguments, both in Deleuze but also in other philosophers. While Derrida, for example, is one of the great (internal) critics of transcendental philosophy, there are arguably also some important slides in his work – from questions of transcendental priority to ethical priority, for example – that are made possible by the ambiguities that are part of transcendental philosophy. For example, it is not always clear how to understand statements like the following:

There where the possible is all that happens, nothing happens, nothing that is not the impoverished unfurling of the predictable predicate of what finds itself already there, potentially, and thus produces nothing new.  

Derrida’s language here is strong, but is he making simply a conceptual point about the limitations of our concept of possibility, something that could be by definition true (or at least true-given-our-genealogical-history), or is it a claim that bears on reality, however loaded that term may be? There is a difference between what Stern refers to as concept-directed and truth-directed transcendental arguments, but Derrida’s quasi-transcendental claims can almost always be read in both of these ways, and the problem (within which deconstruction avowely situates itself) revolves around whether we understand Derrida primarily as a genealogist of concepts, as a transcendental philosopher, or as an ethicist, albeit in a highly restricted sense. Derrida might contest Stern’s distinction, suggesting that concepts and metaphysics are inextricably intertwined, but is this opposition between the one and the predictable predicate a necessary one? Derrida claims it to be a condition of thinking the event, but is every philosophy of mediation, of continuums, necessarily condemned to be unable to think, or account for, the event? It is not clear that this is so. Presumably ‘tipping points’ of various kinds can still be theorized, and the risk is that transcendental reasoning of this sort depends upon a contrast that excludes other possibilities.

4. Conclusion

The key explicit objections that analytic philosophers raise – the ‘general objection from empiricism’, Straw’s ‘idealism/verificationism’ objection, and Körner’s worries about the uniqueness of the condition – are sufficient to make one at least appreciate the potential difficulties of transcendental arguments. From two different sides we have developed the point that the explanatory background genuinely differs across the divide. The suggestion is that we are in a situation akin to what Lyotard calls a différance: a dispute in which two parties.

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cannot agree on a common rule of judgement, or a meta-narrative which would act as a tribunal of arbitration. In conclusion, let us consider again how this might be so.

The empiricist objection has been in the background during much of the above discussion, but it is fundamentally a worry about the amplitudinal ambitions of the transcendental move, and the methodological disaster that unconstrained transcendental theorizing threatens to visit on philosophy. Moreover, the worry often concerns the naturalistic ambitions of much analytic philosophy quite as much as empiricism itself. How could such reasoning be sensibly incorporated within a framework that often regards the finding of the sciences as epistemically privileged and that seeks coherence between its disparate knowledge claims? Prima facie, not easily, although there are a couple of important points to note here. First, one would need to fill out just what the commitment to methodological empiricism or naturalism here means, since there are many different ways of understanding this, and perhaps the particular version of naturalism being endorsed or presupposed is itself dogmatic or problematic (partes extra partes). That is certainly what Merleau-Ponty would maintain. Second, a wide range of non-positivist variants on empiricism and naturalism have now been developed within analytic philosophy, and so the question of the compatibility of transcendental arguments with such views has to be rethought in this context. John McDowell engages in this kind of project, and it is not a coincidence that most of the major continental philosophers associated with transcendental arguments (including Husserl, Bergson, Heidegger, Deleuze) are either anti-naturalists, or involve a critical and transformative relationship to both nature and the natural sciences. Certainly elements of vitalism can be discerned in the work of the last three philosophers mentioned. In addition, various philosophers working with transcendental arguments in phenomenology and philosophy of mind are engaged in projects of naturalizing phenomenology, or perhaps more aptly ‘phenomenologising nature’ as David Morris puts it. On such views, empirical analyses must be relevant, and in a relationship of mutual constraint with any transcendental claim, and transcendental claims must be potentially refutable by empirical analysis, noting that empirical analysis is never completed once and for all, and that the negative heuristics associated with naturalism would be somewhat different from those that typically guide most analytic philosophers. Still, transcendental reasoning on this view earns its keep much like any other theoretical approach with predictive implications. Recall, for a moment, Merleau-Ponty’s analyses of the body. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, written in 1945, rich phenomenological analyses are coupled with transcendental claims about the primacy of bodily intentionality, along with other arguments that also rely on inference to the best explanation and engagement with the psychology, biology and social sciences of his day. Since that time, detailed analyses of proprioception, mirror-neurons in monkeys and other relevant studies have seemed to confirm some of his claims, and to challenge others. But his analyses have also made possible

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some of the subsequent empirical work, both in inspiring it, and framing it; we
might, for example, trace a lineage from Merleau-Ponty, to Hubert Dreyfus’s
What Computers Can’t Do, to Rodney Brooks’s embodied robotics, and to accounts
of the embodied mind that are increasingly influential in cognitive science.
The result is a conception of the relative roles of philosopher and scientist that
is not too dissimilar from that of naturalizing analytic philosophers (Daniel
Dennett, say) – philosophical theorizing is broadly constrained by the deliver-
ceances of the sciences, but philosophical accounts of subject matters relevant to
the sciences can guide inquiry or play an inspirational or transformative role in
theory development.

The Stroudian objection lends itself less to such middle-way approaches.
There does appear to be a question-begging assumption of something like
anti-realism in virtually all non-externalist uses of transcendental arguments
(we say ‘something like’ because, while to an analytic philosopher the dictum
‘being is phenomenon’ has to be idealistic, for many phenomenologists it is a
middle-way between idealism and realism). Two rejoinders might be offered.
One might concede the point, as Charles Taylor does, but nonetheless main-
tain that transcendental analyses still establish necessary conditions for our own
self-relation – for ourselves we are, for instance, necessarily embodied subjects –
and insist that this has significance for the humanities and social sciences writ
large, even if we should be metaphysically modest regarding what it means
about reality per se.59 Second, one might point out that Stroud’s influential
criticisms of transcendental argumentation are not premise free. As Anita
Avramides notes, the Stroudian position supposes a logical and metaphysical
gap between me and everything else, and further presupposes that knowledge
has primacy over action.60 From a pragmatic or action-oriented picture, how-
ever, this idea of a separated Cartesian subject attempting to know things seems
peculiar, as does the co-implicated idea of an objective reality that is indepen-
dent of subjectivity. It is certainly very different from the dominant holism in
continental philosophy in which the subject is co-implicated with the real.

This change of partiality could be extended to the analytic project of classifying
and formalizing different argument types. While undoubtedly useful in many
contexts, this can also create problems of its own. It seems to one of us that the
risk is that a characteristically analytic or decompositional approach obscures
the manner in which thought itself is (at least sometimes) synthetic. Effective
reasoning is arguably more complicated than this, and for the continental
philosopher to think otherwise would be to mistake the means of reasoning
for the end, that is, to confuse particular useful tools of thinking with the
task itself. In that respect, as we have seen, most continental philosophers will
maintain that there is inductive support (or support by inference to the best
explanation) for the ostensibly non-inductive method of transcendental
argumentation. Even for those not interested in the sciences, the history of
Western philosophy would be another such ground, including both its
problems and its successes.

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We have seen that transcendental arguments also depend on a certain active involvement. In that sense, they do beg the question against the sceptic, and they do call for a certain abeyance of incredulity (acertain trust) in reading and reflection. Philosophers have to be critical, but none are critical all of the time, and for a transcendental argument to work, one has to be taken along by a story of sorts (a description, a genealogy, etc.), one has to imagine and reconstruct experiences (from an embodied situation), and one has to critically and sceptically reflect in another moment, using various other devices of argumentation. One can, of course, err in navigating these demands. We can be bewitched by sophistry. But this also means that, without some trust, transcendental reasoning will never work, in the sense of being useful or helping to induce a perspectival shift. The analytic community has, by and large, decided not to trust such arguments; the continental community, by and large, has put a significant degree of faith in them. As William James made clear in a more general epistemic context, the precise trade-off between the goal of avoiding false beliefs and the goal of seeking true beliefs can differ from agent to agent, and that is the situation we have here between the traditions. The analytic decision is arguably reasonable given the difficulties there are in finding a constructive role that transcendental reasoning can play within the norms of the analytic community. The reasonableness of the continental decision requires consideration of the value of the activity of engaging in this Wager while also critically reflecting, and the value of the perspective that dual combination affords. Jeff Malpas has observed that the comparison of analytic and continental approaches to transcendental arguments might help to bridge the divide or to deepen it. Our feeling is that the latter is rather more likely in this case. Perhaps, however, these rather stark differences need to be made perspicuous in order for a genuine conversation to be possible.

Notes

1 We are indebted to the support of the Australian Research Council, and to James Williams, Andrew Benjamin, Jeff Malpas, Sherah Bloor, Ricky Sebold, Ashley Woodward, Chris Cottier, Jon Roffe, Paul Patton and Robert Sinnebriek for engaging with some of these views.

2 Some exceptions might include the structuralists and Quentin Meillassoux.

3 Thanks to Sherah Bloor for this idea, which she is developing in her MA thesis.


6 Davidson’s reflections on triangulation and his later formulations of the principle of charity are often thought to involve them, and it is perhaps not a coincidence that discussions of his work in central journals of analytic philosophy have dwindled from this date. In Mind and the Journal of Philosophy, those of Davidson’s papers...
that are most cited are: ‘Actions, Reasons and Cause’, ‘Truth and Meaning’ and ‘Mental Events’. In more ‘crossover’ journals, like *European Journal of Philosophy* and *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, it is essays after ‘On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme’ that are more frequently cited. Thanks to George Duke for his citation analyses of this.

7 Crispin Wright questions McDowell’s analytic status because of his lack of clarity, rather than because of a use of transcendental arguments, but the issues seem to us intertwined. See Chapter 2, endnote 51.

8 Sometimes this questioning is explicit; more often it is implied by the comparative lack of attention that they (or their late ‘transcendental’ work) receive in the standard-bearing analytic journals.


12 What we call a ‘transcendental argument’ is something of an abstraction from Kant’s practices of transcendental deduction and transcendental exposition: Kant does use the term (‘transcendentalen Argument’) in the *Critique of Pure Reason* at A627/B655, but in a different sense. The connection between transcendental exposition and transcendental argument is controversial.


16 While Russell on occasion maintained that mathematics involved synthetic *a priori* knowledge, transcendental justifications for such claims are always avoided.


18 Such self-application problems could also be viewed as inherent in epistemology itself, whether empiricist or not; consider the dialectic (the problem of the criterion), for instance.

19 One can find a number of earlier uses stretching back further; for instance, see A. J. Balfour’s ‘Transcendentalism’. *Mind* 5 (1878): 480–505. As far as we can tell, Austin is the first to explicitly generalize the argument form in the modern analytic way.


21 Austin, 34. In a footnote, Austin makes it clear he is referring to (or generalizing from) the Kantian argument form.


26 Strawson, *Individuals*, 55.
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Actually, the required premise is even stronger. Stroud points to the further need to distinguish between all such conditional necessities and necessities simpliciter; even if there could be no other conceptual schemes, it can still be the case that the existence of subjects is contingent, and in this case the inference will still only provide a contingent conclusion.


In the case of Kant, such warnings are backed by several awful historical examples—most egregiously, for the analytic tradition, his confidence in the finality of the logic of his day and his snubbing by the rise of non-Euclidean geometries.


Stiegler says 'I think one must pass through the transcendental in order to get beyond the transcendental. The misunderstanding between continental philosophy and Anglo-Saxon philosophy relates to this point, for one cannot short-circuit transcendental experience; it is impossible.' See Bernard Stiegler, 'Technics, Media, Teleology', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 24, No. 7-8 (2007): 340.


Some would claim that place subtends this opposition. See, for example, the work of Jeff Malpas and Edward Casey.


Ibid., 446.

Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), and Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. Sheridan (London: Routledge, 2002). Indeed, even in Foucault's middle genealogical period, which appears to be resolutely anti-transcendental, it might...
still be maintained that his genealogies derive their force from reflection between the performative act of thinking about the conditions of that and other thoughts/ experiences.


The suggestion that phenomenological arguments are committed to infallibility or incorrigibility is convincingly disputed in Taylor Carman's 'On the Inescapability of Phenomenology', *Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mind*, D. Smith and A. Thomasson eds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).


Charles Taylor makes this point well. See 'The Validity of Transcendental Arguments', *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).


That is, it is the ground without which there is no Dasein at all. Heidegger argues that what he calls 'understanding' depends upon the futural ecstatic of time; that 'attunement' (or mood) is structured by the past ecstatic of time (thrownness, having-been); and that 'fallenness' is an attachment to present things that denies these other ecstatics.


Ashley Woodward, unpublished paper.


Derrida notes that he is an 'ultra-transcendentalist or quasi-transcendentalist' and explains this in terms of his concern to avoid empiricism or at least certain forms of it. See *Arguing With Derrida*, ed. Simon Glendinger (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 107.
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68 Morris suggests this may herald a new conception of nature and hence naturalism: 'nature is not space-time-matter unfolding according to laws, nature is moving being organising.' We cannot address this here, except to say there is some support for this kind of view within continental-inspired philosophy of mind. See David Morris, 'Continental Philosophy of Mind', *Columbia Companion to Twentieth Century Philosophies*, ed. C. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 535, 541.

69 Charles Taylor, 'The Validity of Transcendental Arguments', 25.

