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The Nature of Transcendental Arguments

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Contents

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Abstract

This thesis aims to examine the viability of transcendental arguments, by considering the presuppositions involved in the use of such arguments.

In Chapter One, I consider what a 'transcendental argument' consists in. Certain difficulties with existing specifications of such arguments are identified and discussed, to yield a characterisation of this type of argument. I consider the role of an anti-sceptical purpose in the conception of a transcendental argument and argue that this purpose is not an element of that conception. The characterisation offered generates two types of issue. First, it is noted the characterisation offered is vague with respect to the type of necessity involved in a transcendental argument. Secondly, certain theoretical presuppositions that may be required by the type of argument specified are articulated, concerning the nature of a priority and the nature of our cognitive and conceptual capacities. It is argued that to give content to this notion of necessity and to examine whether the putative theoretical presuppositions are in fact made, specific transcendental arguments require examination.

To this end, in Chapters Two and Three, respectively, I interpret and analyse two paradigmatic transcendental arguments, Kant's Refutation of Idealism and Davidson's Argument for the Veridical Nature of Belief.

In Chapter Four, the results of these analyses are collated. A characterisation of the type of necessity involved in a transcendental argument is formulated and assessed, and the conception of a priority presupposed by such arguments is articulated and evaluated. It is also argued that transcendental arguments as a class do not presuppose the indubitability of our possession or exercise of cognitive and conceptual capacities, and consequently such arguments are consistent with a variety of conceptions of the mental. I conclude that transcendental arguments are a viable means of argumentation, at least with respect to the issues considered here.

Chapter One: The Nature of Transcendental Arguments

As was noted in the abstract, this thesis aims to examine the viability of transcendental arguments by considering the presuppositions involved in the use of such arguments. The first issue that needs addressing, therefore, concerns how we are to understand 'transcendental argument'.

Much of the literature on this subject appears to presuppose that we possess a clear, and relatively uniform, conception of what constitutes a transcendental argument. David Bell is representative in suggesting, in a recent collection of papers, that whilst there is some debate

"as to whether so-called 'transcendental arguments' can be philosophically effective, or sound, or even formally valid, that debate has nevertheless resulted in a widespread and apparently stable consensus as to what such transcendental arguments ought, in general, to comprise."[1]

In this chapter, I will explain what a transcendental argument is and suggest certain theoretical presuppositions that may be involved in the use of this type of argument. In section I, I first offer some evidence against the supposition that the "stable consensus" mentioned by Bell exists, by flagging unclarities in and differences between certain formulations offered in the literature. In section II, I begin the task of clarifying our conception of transcendental arguments, by considering in detail the character of the premises involved. In section III, I consider the role of the anti-sceptical purpose of the type of argument specified in section II, in the light of Barry Stroud's influential criticism concerning what such arguments can achieve. In section IV, I present a specification of the characteristics that a transcendental argument incorporates and note the theoretical presuppositions that appear to be involved in the use of this type of argument.

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[1] Bell (1999: 189)

The following passages offer three differing characterisations of a 'transcendental argument'. As each characterisation is presented, I shall note the salient features it mentions, and the respects in which it differs from the other specifications cited, although consideration of precisely what these respects amount to will be postponed until the following sections.

The most minimal specification is offered by Ralph Walker, who understands transcendental arguments

"to be anti-sceptical arguments which seek to justify their conclusions by exhibiting them as necessary conditions for experience, or knowledge, or language...[2]

[T]heir general form appears to be something like this:

We have experience (or, knowledge).

[It must be the case that] if there is experience (or, knowledge), p [is] true.

Therefore, p."[3]

Thus, Walker emphasises that such arguments (i) have an anti-sceptical purpose, and (ii) involve necessary conditions on some type of cognitive achievement.

Quassim Cassam offers a slightly more full-blooded conception of a transcendental argument, in claiming that

"[t]ranscendental arguments are concerned with the specification of *conceptually necessary conditions* of the *possibility of experience*. Characteristically, the point of such arguments is to demonstrate that the necessary conditions include the truth of propositions which certain familiar forms of philosophical scepticism have traditionally regarded as doubtful or

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[2] Walker (1989a: 56)

[3] Walker (1978: 10). I have altered the wording of the conditional premise. The text states that "If there is experience, p must be true", suggesting that the necessity operator falls within the scope of the conditional. This is a slip on Walker's part, since it is made clear later (p. 21) that the conditional is supposed to fall within the scope of the necessity operator, hence the rendering above. Another slip concerns the fact that in the conditional clause above 'p' is used as an object variable ranging over propositions, whereas in the conclusion 'p' is used as a substitutional variable for a declarative sentence. However, this is not significant in the present case.

false...Thus, the form of a transcendental argument will be this: there is experience; a necessary condition of the possibility of experience is the truth of P; therefore P."[4] (Italics added)

This specification agrees with that offered by Walker in suggesting that a transcendental argument should have an anti-sceptical point. However, it differs in two respects, highlighted in italics, concerning (ii) above. First, Cassam's formulation makes a claim about the subject matter of the necessary conditions involved in the argument, stating that they are *conceptually* necessary. Secondly, the conditions to be specified are held to be conditions on the *possibility* of a cognitive achievement, rather than on a cognitive achievement itself;[5] although precisely what this modification amounts to is not explained.

Robert Stern offers a view which appears to differ from both of those presented above. He suggests that

"these arguments involve a claim of a distinctive form: namely, that one thing (*X*) is a necessary condition for the possibility of something else (*Y*)...In suggesting that *X* is a condition for *Y* in this way, this claim is supposed to be metaphysical and a priori, and not merely natural and a posteriori: that is, if *Y* cannot obtain without *X*, this is...because certain metaphysical constraints that can be established by reflection make *X* a condition for *Y* in every *possible* world."

Like Cassam, and unlike Walker, Stern views the premise of a transcendental argument to concern the possibility of a cognitive achievement. However, he offers a characterisation of what he takes this to mean, which incorporates three claims, concerning the subject matter of the necessary condition specified, which is held to be non-natural and

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4 Cassam (1987: 355)
5 Cassam's characterisation might initially appear distinct from Walker's in another respect, insofar as it only mentions one cognitive achievement, "experience". However, this difference is merely apparent, since Cassam is using "experience" in the full-blooded Kantian sense, under which it incorporates a range of cognitive achievements, including our beliefs, judgements, and conceptual framework.

metaphysical; concerning the epistemological status of the claim 'X only if Y', which is held to be a priori; and concerning the modal status of this claim, which is held to be a necessary truth. Furthermore, whilst Stern admits that this type of argument "will usually be intended to have anti-sceptical results of some kind" he appears to view the purpose of a transcendental argument as less central to its nature than the other authors cited, suggesting that these arguments have a role "aside from their relation to the problem of scepticism as such."[6]

This textual evidence offers some support in favour of the claim that there is not an entirely "stable consensus" in the literature concerning what is understood by the notion of a 'transcendental argument'. It is clearly not decisive. It could be argued that these authors are operating with a uniform conception of a 'transcendental argument' even if this is not explicitly stated, or that the difference in these characterisations merely reflects an evolving conception of such arguments. However, even if this is the case, there is still a need to articulate what constitutes the current conception of a 'transcendental argument'. There are features of the above characterisations that remain unclear. To give examples of the issues that require clarification: it is not absolutely clear from the above what it means to say that X is a necessary condition for the *possibility* of Y, nor why this formulation in terms of necessary conditions of possibility, rather than necessary conditions, is putatively required for a transcendental argument. Furthermore, accepting Stern's explanation of what such a condition is does not resolve these difficulties, since there are factors which require explanation concerning how the various elements of Stern's characterisation interrelate. For instance: what is it for a claim to be 'metaphysical' and 'not merely natural', and does this entail that it can only be known in a particular (a priori) way, or have a particular (necessary) modal status? Or more broadly: why might it

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[6] Stern (1999: 3-5)

8

be thought that a transcendental argument should incorporate a claim with these features, and does this relate to its anti-sceptical purpose, if indeed it has one?

In the following section, I shall address some of these issues, in order to clarify our conception of a 'transcendental argument'.

II

In order to begin sharpening our conception of a 'transcendental argument', I intend to classify and examine the types of premise involved in such an argument. I shall consider the character of each type of premise, aiming to articulate in each case its subject matter, and the status – epistemological and modal – it is taken to have. I also aim to understand why each type of premise should have this distinctive character and how the different elements of the character interact.

How, then, might the premises of a transcendental argument be classified? I intend to classify them as follows, on the basis of this characterisation of the form of a transcendental argument:

p   *categorical premise*

$\Box[p \rightarrow q]$ *hypothetical premise(s)*

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q   *conclusion*

As will become apparent in discussion, there is an aspect of this characterisation, concerning the specified form of the hypothetical premise that may require defence; the reader is asked provisionally to accept the characterisation until the defence is offered.

The *categorical* premise of a transcendental argument is often viewed as stating "some indisputable fact about us and our mental lives."[7] The key feature of this premise concerns its *epistemological status.* It should, it is held, be immune to sceptical attack, thus be epistemically beyond reproach, given a particular context. It is worth emphasising

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[7] Stern (2000: 6)

that, in virtue of this relativity to a dialectical context, this need not entail that it be analytic, or self-verifying, or knowable a priori, although it may instantiate such a property. Rather, a premise will count as epistemically beyond reproach if it is something that *is* not doubted in the context of the argument or inquiry under execution, rather than something which cannot in principle be doubted.[8]

The requirement that this premise be relatively indisputable is held to determine its *subject matter* as concerned with 'our mental lives'. More specifically, the categorical premise of a typical transcendental argument will be concerned with our possession or exercise of certain cognitive or conceptual capacities. To give some concrete examples of such premises: Kant's Refutation of Idealism is premised on the fact that I possess a certain cognitive state, that of being able to 'determine my existence in time';[9] Strawson premises one of his transcendental arguments on our exercise of a certain conceptual capacity, that 'we think of the world as containing objective particulars';[10] and Shoemaker argues from the premise that we possess a certain linguistic capacity, that of being able to understand the term 'pain'.[11] The *modal status* of this type of premise is contingent, since it involves the *actual* possession or exercise of a certain cognitive or conceptual capacity.

An issue that will be flagged here concerns the question of how one must conceive of the nature of cognitive or conceptual capacities if one is to hold that the matter of our possession or exercise of them is to be 'immune to sceptical attack'. For it seems that if one views these capacities as relatively immune to doubt, one might be compelled to accept an 'internalist' conception of mental content, according to which the existence and character of one's mental life is conceived to be essentially distinct from the

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[8] There are *levels* of doubt. I leave it that there may be few *absolutely* indubitable propositions and that a proposition's being e.g. analytic need not entail its absolute indubitability.
[9] Kant, (1933: B275-6)
[10] Strawson, (1959: 1)
[11] Shoemaker, (1963: 168-9)

existence and character of the external world. This issue will be considered further in section IV.

The character of the *hypothetical* premise of a transcendental argument is especially difficult to pin down. What appears to be universally accepted is that this premise will be the result of a "regress back up a series of necessary conditions".[12] However, beyond this point, there appears to be some dispute about further aspects of its form, subject matter, and modal and epistemological status.[13] I shall first consider issues concerning form.

At the beginning of this section, it was claimed that the form of the hypothetical premise can be specified as:

(W) $\Box[p{\rightarrow}q]$.

What, then, might be thought to be problematic about this formulation? An initial worry is that this characterisation of the form of the hypothetical premise does not appear to cohere with some characterisations in the literature of a transcendental argument. As was noted in section I, certain proponents of transcendental arguments take it that the conditions to be specified are conditions on the *possibility* of a cognitive achievement, rather than on a cognitive achievement itself. This might lead one to think that the form of the hypothetical premise should be specified as:

(S) $\Box[\Diamond p{\rightarrow}q]$.

However, (W) and (S) are not equivalent. To address this potential difficulty, I intend first to consider why the notion of possibility should be thought to feature in a premise or claim that is taken to be distinctively transcendental.

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[12] Harrison, (1989: 43)
[13] There is actually a question concerning why the premise is conceived as constituted by necessary conditions, since whilst $\Box[p{\rightarrow}q]$ can be viewed as stating that 'q is a necessary condition for p', it can also be viewed as stating that 'p is a sufficient condition for q'. However, this question need not be addressed here, since my task is descriptive, not revisionary.

It seems clear that the involvement of this notion has its roots in Kant, who specifies that "[i]n transcendental knowledge...our guide is the possibility of experience."[14] Tracing precisely what Kant means here would require close exegetical work, which is not appropriate to the task in hand. However, we might sketch Kant's thought on this matter as follows. We are given a certain actual cognitive achievement, p, and inquire into what *makes* p possible, arriving at a certain result, namely q. Thus, q makes p possible. Furthermore, if we are then able to successfully argue that *only* q makes p possible, that is, that q is a necessary condition of the possibility of p, we will have established that q is actual also.[15] This view of the matter seems to corroborate the claim that a transcendental argument should be concerned with the specification of necessary conditions of the *possibility* of a cognitive achievement.

Does this entail that there exist two distinct conceptions of the form of the hypothetical premise of this type of argument, namely (S) and (W)? I shall argue not. Our response to this question depends on how we construe:

(1) [only q makes p possible].

Now, it is true that

(S) $\Box[\Diamond p \rightarrow q]$

is *a* formalization of (1). However, in the sense relevant to our inquiry, (1) is naturally read as

(2) [p without q is impossible].

This is accurately rendered as

(3) $[\neg \Diamond [p \& \neg q]]$.

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[14] Kant, (1933: A783).
[15] There is an oddity here, for the question 'what makes p possible?' is not naturally read as involving a specification of necessary conditions for p. (Consider the question: 'What makes it possible to travel around London?' A suitable answer would be 'The Tube', 'On a London Bus', and so forth. But these are sufficient, not necessary, conditions for 'travel around London'.)

However, this is equivalent to

(4) □¬[p&¬q]

Which is equivalent to

(5) □[p→q].

It does therefore seem legitimate to offer the following unitary specification of the form

of the hypothetical premise:

(W) □[p→q].

It remains to consider its subject matter, and modal and epistemological status. These

issues will be addressed via consideration of the type of necessity involved in the

hypothetical premise.

The hypothetical premise of a transcendental argument is held to incorporate a modal

claim. Indeed, it is sometimes held to specify a necessary truth to the effect that q is a

condition for p in every possible world. It is worth remarking that this feature is not a

consequence of the fact that this premise is concerned with the specification of necessary

conditions, for statements about necessary conditions need not themselves be necessary,

in the sense of necessarily true. To give an example: passing a certain test, 'The

Knowledge', is a necessary condition for driving a black cab legally in London, but that

this is so is contingent. We should thus examine why the type of necessary conditions

involved in a transcendental argument might be thought to be necessarily necessary, by

identifying the type of necessity that the claim □[p→q] exemplifies. To address this issue,

I shall consider some of Stern's remarks on the subject, although what is said is not

intended to be merely *ad hominem*. The point is rather that Stern provides a useful point

of reference insofar as he is one of the few authors who has considered this issue in

some detail.

13

According to Stern, the necessity involved in the claim that $\Box[p{\rightarrow}q]$ is held to be "metaphysical",[16] where this notion is distinct from logical or analytic necessity, yet exceeds "causal or natural necessity".[17] I shall not use this label, since there are existing conceptions of metaphysical necessity with which this notion of necessity may, or not, be identical.[18] In what follows, I shall refer to the type of necessity involved in the hypothetical premise of a transcendental argument as T-necessity, to avoid any possible confusion.

How, then, should the notion of T-necessity be understood? In order to explain this, I intend to employ the distinction between *absolute* and *relative* necessities. This distinction is, roughly, that

"between a truth's being necessary outright or without qualification, and its being a necessary consequence of some pre-assigned collection of statements which are taken to be true, but not (necessarily or typically) true by necessity."[19]

To characterise the notions cited above by Stern in these terms: logical necessity is absolute, since the logical truths are just those propositions which are consequences of the null set of premises. Thus, they are true irrespective of which other statements are true or taken to be true. Causal necessity is relative: given the truth of certain causal laws, the consequences of those laws will be causally necessary. However, the truth of those causal laws is contingent, thus what is causally necessary might be otherwise, i.e. not absolutely necessary. More generally, relative notions of necessity can be characterised as follows:

"whenever we have a more or less definite body of propositions constituting a discipline D, there can be introduced a relative notion of necessity – expressible by 'It is D-ly

[16] Stern, (1999: 3).
[17] Stern, (2000: 8-10)
[18] See e.g. that introduced in Kripke, (1981).
[19] Hale, (1997: 487)

necessary that' – according to which a proposition will be D-ly necessary just in case it is true and a consequence of D."[20]

Furthermore, a D-necessity will itself be absolutely necessary iff the propositions constituting the discipline D are themselves absolutely necessary.

Consider, in the light of this, the notion of T-necessity, letting T be the discipline the propositions of which are presupposed as true by this notion. An initial question concerns why the set of causal or natural laws should be excluded from T. One response turns on the general principle that none of the "premises of a given transcendental argument may contradict any of the commitments intrinsic to the particular form of scepticism which it is the purpose of that argument to refute."[21] For instance, if the target of such an argument is a Cartesian sceptic for whom this type of empirical knowledge is in question, then the argument cannot make use of premises that presuppose this type of knowledge. In this instance, the set T would be determined *epistemologically* as a subset of those propositions which are knowable without an empirical basis, that is, a priori.

Examples of transcendental arguments appear to substantiate the suggestion that T has this character. However, that it has this character is not *entailed* by the argument's relation to scepticism, although this relation will have relevance in certain instances. For as has been noted, there are different varieties of scepticism, and certain forms of scepticism – including scepticism about non-psychological subject matters – do not reject all forms of empirical knowledge. Rather, it again seems that the role of the a priori has its roots in Kant, whose concern was the identification of a priori conditions of experience. It is perhaps in virtue of this that the set T will be a set of propositions which are knowable a priori.

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[20] Hale, (1997: 488). The notion of consequence used here is logical consequence.
[21] Bell, (1999: 190-1)

The question of the legitimacy and extent of putatively a priori knowledge is a much disputed topic and, as will be discussed in section IV, it appears that a proponent of transcendental arguments must hold that the scope of a priori knowledge is considerable. However, the present discussion concerns the type of necessity involved in the hypothetical premise of a transcendental argument, and the claim that the discipline T is constituted by a set of a priori truths raises the following difficulty for the modal element of Stern's characterisation of a 'condition of possibility'. The above characterisation has allowed that if q is a necessary condition of possibility for p, then it is T-ly necessary that $[p \rightarrow q]$. However, in order for this claim to legitimate Stern's strong modal claim that q is a condition for p in every possible world, the propositions constituting the discipline on which this form of necessity is based will themselves have to be absolutely necessary. However, the set T is a set of a priori truths, the necessity of which should not be assumed. For as Kripke has noted, it is

"a philosophical thesis, and not a matter of definitional equivalence, either that everything a priori is necessary or that everything necessary is a priori."[22]

In the light of this, it is perhaps worth noting that whilst certain proponents of transcendental arguments, such as Stern, do conceive the claim specifying the necessary conditions to be absolutely necessary, it might be more careful to restrict this modal claim slightly. According to this restriction, the hypothetical premise $\Box[p \rightarrow q]$ is conceived to be merely relatively (in particular, T-ly) necessary, and the issue of whether this is a form of absolute necessity is left open. On this conception, the hypothetical premise still embodies a substantive modal claim, to the effect that in every possible world in which the propositions constituting T are true, q is a necessary condition for p.

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[22] Kripke, (1981: 36)

However, this modal claim is plausibly less controversial than that originally suggested.[23]

In what follows, therefore, 'necessity' should be read as 'T-necessity', where it will not be assumed that this form of necessity is absolute.

It is worth remarking upon one consequence of the above modal claim; a consequence which follows irrespective of whether T-necessity is held to be absolute or relative by the transcendental arguer. In either case, the transcendental arguer claims that q is a condition for p in a range of possible worlds. He thus makes a substantive modal claim, which will require some justification, given that, post-Kripke, a premise's (necessary) modal status cannot be assumed to follow from its (a priori) epistemological status.

How, then, is this type of modal claim to be justified? In certain cases, it may be that the type of a priori truths under consideration are the type of a priori truths to be necessary, as might be claimed for analytic a priori truths. However, in other cases this type of modal claim may require further defence. It is plausible that the need for this defence will involve the transcendental arguer's making an assumption about the putative link between *possibility* and *conceivability*. For it is difficult to see how the modal status of the propositions under consideration could be established without assuming the truth of a principle such as 'x could be ϕ iff it is possible to conceive of x's being ϕ'. The problem here is that even if it is stipulated that the verb 'conceive' is to be taken in a strong sense, for instance, as "think right through and in such a way as to count oneself as impeded by any incoherences or contradictions",[24] this 'thought' will be circumscribed by the nature of our limited and sometimes inaccurate conceptual capacities. Thus, we may not be able to conceive of what is in fact possible and may conceive of what is not

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[23] One of Stern's reasons for maintaining the absolute necessity claim is that if one allows that there are possible worlds in which the necessary condition does not obtain, we are opened "up to the sceptical challenge of showing that we are not in such a world." (Stern, (2000: 8)) However, if the basis upon which the claim to absolute necessity is not secure, the putatively absolutely necessary claim would appear to have negligible force in 'showing that we are not in such a world'. Whether the necessary condition is claimed to be absolutely necessary or not it may face a sceptical challenge.

[24] Wiggins, (2001: 111)

in fact possible.[25] It follows that an additional presupposition of the use of this type of argument would be the supposition of this type of link, unless an alternative means of justifying the necessity claim is suggested.[26]

To conclude the discussion of the character of the hypothetical premise of a transcendental argument: the *modal status* of this premise is (T-)necessary, its *epistemological status* is a priori, and its *subject matter* is constituted by a subset of those truths that can be known a priori. More content will be given to this specification in the chapters to come.

Discussion of certain aspects of the character of the *conclusion* of a transcendental argument will be postponed until section III. For, as will become clear, it is often held to be a consequence of Stroud's criticism of this type of argument that its conclusion can only have a certain character. However, bracketing such considerations for the moment, the various subject matters of the conclusion of a transcendental argument can be categorized as follows.[27] A given transcendental argument may be:

- *truth-directed* iff q specifies a non-psychological state of affairs,

- *belief-directed* iff q specifies a belief state, and

- *experience-directed* iff q specifies a way in which things must be experienced as being or must appear to be.

The *epistemological status* of these different types of conclusion is determined by the epistemological status of the categorical and hypothetical premises. Thus, if these are both a priori, the conclusion will be a priori also. The *modal status*, however, will be

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[25] Prior to the proof of Fermat's Last Theorem, one could conceive of its being false. However, it is necessarily true, thus its falsity is impossible, even if conceivable.

[26] If this type of presupposition were to prove problematic, one revisionary move that transcendental arguer could make would be to jettison the necessity claim involved in the hypothetical premise. For the argument may not require this modal claim, since first, it is not entailed by the a priori subject matter of the premise, and secondly, it is not required for the formal validity of the argument. However, this option will not be pursued here, since my task is descriptive, not revisionary.

[27] See Stern, (2000: 10-11), who builds upon the terminology used in Peacocke, (1989: 4-5).

contingent, since each q specifies something that is ultimately contingent on what is specified by p, thus could be otherwise.

<center>III</center>

The preceding section identified some of the distinctive features of a transcendental argument, and a comprehensive specification of these features will appear in section IV. At present, however, I should like to focus on one more of the putatively distinctive features of this type of argument, namely its *anti-sceptical purpose*. According to the characterisations of this type of argument cited in section I, one of the features held to be distinctive about transcendental arguments are that they are 'anti-sceptical' in some way. However, this may be thought to be problematic in virtue of an influential criticism made by Barry Stroud *against* the claim that transcendental arguments are able to possess anti-sceptical force. If Stroud's criticisms are persuasive, then one of the putatively distinctive features of a transcendental argument may not be instantiable. The question that needs to be addressed here concerns the extent to which Stroud's critique could put pressure on the claim that there exists a distinctive type of (transcendental) argument.

In order to address this concern I shall first explain some distinctions and issues related to the general question of what it is for an argument to have an anti-sceptical purpose. Discussion will then turn to what has been said against the possibility of a transcendental argument's having such a purpose, focusing first on Stroud's original contribution to the debate, then Strawson's response.[28] Discussion will then address the question of whether a transcendental argument need be 'anti-sceptical' in some way.

An argument has an anti-sceptical purpose if it counters some form of philosophical scepticism, where this is understood to be a position which questions by argument our cognitive achievements, supplying grounds to doubt the legitimacy of our claims to knowledge. Typically, such an anti-sceptical argument can take two forms. It can either

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[28] Stroud (1968); Strawson (1985)

<center>19</center>

refute scepticism, or *prevent* it. A refutation of scepticism disproves the sceptic's claim. For instance, if the sceptic constructs an argument for the conclusion that we do not know q, a refutation of this type of scepticism would consist in a proof that we do know q. On the other hand, a prevention of scepticism (more precisely, the prevention of a sceptical route) consists in showing the sceptic's argument to be mistaken or faulty in some way. Both forms of anti-sceptical argument must operate within the constraint that their premises must not contradict the commitments intrinsic to the form of scepticism which the argument is to refute.

It is worth emphasising that both these forms of anti-sceptical argument are important if the sceptic's challenge is to be addressed satisfactorily. For first, even if we possess a refutation of a certain form of scepticism, the sceptic is owed an explanation of where his argument has erred. This is to be supplied by an argument showing how this form of scepticism is to be prevented. Secondly, even if we have a preventative argument against a particular sceptical challenge, we may feel dissatisfied. That the sceptic's argument is mistaken does not entail that his claim is, and we may want to refute the claim itself.

What, then, is Stroud's criticism of transcendental arguments, and why might it be thought to impact negatively on their having an anti-sceptical purpose? Stroud may be represented as having reasoned as follows.[29] Suppose that a transcendental argument is under consideration. Suppose also that a seemingly persuasive argument has been given in favour of the claim that p only if q, where proposition p specifies some cognitive or conceptual subject matter and q is a proposition concerning the external world, which the sceptic doubts. (Stroud notes that it may be difficult to even establish this much, since the transcendental arguer will have had to defend this claim by eliminating all the possible alternatives to q, which is itself a challenging task). Suppose then that:

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[29] Stroud, (1968: 251-56)

(i)   p specifies that we possess some form of knowledge. Given the dialectical situation, p can only state the possession of knowledge about one's inner states. However, it is unclear how this type of knowledge could entail the truth of a proposition concerning the external world, unless the world is conceived to be mind-dependent in some way. To admit this is to admit some form of *idealism*, which is either a form of scepticism or least fails to provide a response to the sceptic's concern, viz. the possibility of knowledge of a mind-independent reality.

It must therefore be the case that:

(ii)   p specifies that we possess some conceptual capacity. However, if this is the case, it appears to be open to the sceptic to insist that "it is enough to make [p] possible if we believe that [q] is true, or if it looks for all the world as if it is, but that [q] needn't actually be true."[30] Furthermore, it is unclear how the existence of the belief that q could entail the truth of q, unless it is held that in order to intelligibly believe a proposition, one must be able to establish a knowledge claim regarding it. However, to admit this is to admit some form of *verificationism*, which would render the distinctively transcendental elements of the argument redundant, and plausibly the argument itself unpersuasive to the sceptic, given the controversial nature of the verification principle.

If correct, therefore, one of the things that Stroud's argument can be taken to show is that the conclusion of a transcendental argument is limited, unless some form of idealism or verificationism is invoked. To use the terminology introduced in section II, it is claimed that a transcendental argument may only be belief- or experience-directed, not truth-directed. Moreover, it is suggested that it will, as a result, lack the anti-sceptical force originally claimed for it.

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[30] Stroud, (1968: 255)

It would be impetuous to draw any hard and fast conclusions about whether this type of limitation applies from such a schematic and general argument. A consideration that will be addressed in subsequent chapters concerns the extent to which it can be seen to apply in (two) particular cases. However, it seems clear that Stroud has presented a challenge to the proponent of transcendental arguments to the effect that they may not have the type of anti-sceptical force that he conceives them to have, and the transcendental arguer needs to consider the effect that this challenge has to his conception of what constitutes a transcendental argument.

Strawson's response to Stroud's critique is to jettison the anti-sceptical purpose from his notion of a transcendental argument. He notes that

"Stroud seems to assume without question that the point of a transcendental argument in general is an anti-sceptical point; but the assumption may be questioned..."[31]

Strawson goes on to reject this assumption, and expounds an alternative, naturalistic philosophical position, suggesting that having rejected the possibility of and need for the project of "wholesale validation" or justification, "the naturalist philosopher will embrace the real project of investigating the connections between the major structural elements of our conceptual scheme."[32] However, this type of response to Stroud's critique is by no means universal. As section I suggests, a range of proponents of transcendental arguments maintain that these are anti-sceptical arguments. There thus appears to be some reluctance to delete the anti-sceptical purpose from the conception held of this type of argument, which is presumably grounded in some way.

What then, might this ground be? In particular, could it be argued that a characterisation of a 'transcendental argument' purely in terms of its subject matter and form, as given in section II would be insufficient to characterise this type of argument?

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[31] Strawson, (1985: 9-10)
[32] Strawson, (1985: 22)

In support of this claim, one might argue that although the type 'transcendental argument' *can* be specified in terms of subject matter and form, it *cannot* be specified purely in terms of subject matter and form. As was noted in section II, the categorical premise of a transcendental argument concerns some relatively indisputable cognitive or conceptual subject matter, and the hypothetical premise is taken to be an a priori truth. The subject matters of both these types of premise are, at least in part, circumscribed by the relation the argument has to scepticism, as is the form of the argument. One might think that if a transcendental argument did not have an anti-sceptical purpose, it would not have premises with these subject matters, or this form, for it would not need to. Thus, it might be suggested that the distinctive character of this type of argument is connected, albeit *via* its subject matter and form, to its anti-sceptical purpose.

This line of argument is unpersuasive in showing that the type 'transcendental argument' cannot be specified purely in terms of subject matter and form. For whether or not the anti-sceptical purpose of this type of argument may originally have played some role in determining its subject matter and form, these subject matters are specifiable independently of this purpose. More decisively, there is something like a category mistake involved in the inclusion of the *purpose* of a type of argument in one's specification of that type. For consider a situation in which a particular argument, consisting of certain premises connected in a certain way is used for two different purposes. In such an instance, the nature of the identity conditions for arguments entails that there is just *one* argument under consideration, irrespective of the ways in which it is used. In the present context of attempting to specify the type 'transcendental argument', what we are classifying are arguments, not *uses* of arguments, and the same arguments may be used in different ways, to different purposes. However, a difference in use is not a difference in argument. Thus, the type 'transcendental argument' can and should be characterised in terms of subject matter and form alone.

It cannot be denied that traditionally, the use to which such arguments have been put has been an anti-sceptical use, since such arguments have appeared to utilize resources acceptable to the sceptic; it is, of course, a further question whether they can reach a conclusion which will be effective against him. The relation between transcendental arguments and scepticism will be considered further in the chapters to come. However, for present purposes, the important point to note is that Stroud's critique, about the possibility of such an argument's having an anti-sceptical purpose, cannot put any immediate pressure on the notion of a transcendental argument. For that such an argument may, or may not, be used in this way is not an intrinsic feature of the type of argument under consideration.

IV

The preceding sections examined the nature of transcendental arguments in some detail, allowing us to formulate a specification of what constitutes a 'transcendental argument', summarised as follows. This type of argument will have the following form:

p	*categorical premise*
$\Box[p \rightarrow q]$	*hypothetical premise(s)*

————

q	*conclusion*

Each type of premise will have the following characteristics:

- The *categorical premise* concerns our *possession or exercise of cognitive or conceptual capacities*. Its modal status is *contingent* and its epistemological status is '*epistemically beyond reproach relative to a context* ϕ'.

- The *hypothetical premise* involves *some subset of the set of a priori truths*. Its modal status is *T-necessary*, in that $\Box[p \rightarrow q]$ and its epistemological status is *a priori*.

- The *conclusion* might involve a variety of subject matters, concerning the world, our beliefs or experience. Its modal status is *contingent* and its epistemological

status will be determined by the epistemological status of the premises from which it is derived.

Furthermore, the nature of this type of argument, as constituted by its subject matter and form, may make such arguments apt for anti-sceptical use.

An initial concern one might have about the above specification concerns the fact that it is less than precise in several respects. What it is for a premise to be 'epistemically beyond reproach' is perhaps left vague, and little substantive content has yet been given to the putative category of T-necessity. Moreover, the nature of the subject matter of the conclusion has been left open, *contra* certain interpretations of Stroud's criticism, since evaluation of this criticism plausibly requires consideration of specific cases. One might also worry about the fact that this specification has been formulated on the basis of meta-level discussion of what constitutes a transcendental argument. For what is to say that this type of discussion is legitimate, if taken in isolation from consideration of examples of 'transcendental' arguments.

These concerns indicate, I think, that whilst the above specification provides a useful starting point for discussing the nature of transcendental arguments, it can only take us so far. In order to give more content to the concepts mentioned within it, it is essential that specific transcendental arguments be considered. Similarly, this is required if one is to evaluate the accuracy of the general characterisation offered above.

Furthermore, consideration of specific transcendental arguments would appear to be required if the central question of the thesis, concerning the presuppositions involved in the use of this type of argument, is to be addressed. Some of these have been noted in the course of this chapter, and others can be extracted from the characterisation of this type of argument offered above. However, the nature of these presuppositions has not been fully explored. Below, I state the most obvious presuppositions involved in the use of these arguments, and (in italics) note certain issues which will need to be considered.

Consider the following:

(1) Our possession or exercise of certain cognitive or conceptual capacities is the type of thing that is relatively 'immune to sceptical attack'

How are we to conceive of the nature of cognitive or conceptual capacities if this is to be true? It was noted in section II that this presupposition may require that a proponent of transcendental arguments will have to take an 'internalist' view of mental content. The extent to which this may be the case will obviously depend upon the scope of the particular sceptical position under attack, and the transcendental argument being propounded in response, thus needs to be considered via discussion of specific examples.

(2) These cognitive or conceptual capacities have necessary conditions. Furthermore, the propositions stating that these capacities have such necessary conditions (a) are knowable a priori and (b) are necessary truths

It is perhaps uncontroversial that our cognitive and conceptual capacities have necessary conditions, that is, things that need to obtain if the capacity under consideration is to be able to function. For instance, it might be suggested that if I am to be able to think, I need to have a functioning brain. However, the use of transcendental arguments presupposes that the necessary conditions under consideration can be identified without any empirical investigation, since they are held to be knowable a priori. Furthermore, they presuppose that it is T-ly necessary that these conditions obtain.

Regarding the a priori knowability of these conditions: it was noted in section II that a proponent of transcendental arguments must hold that the scope of a priori knowledge is considerable. Examination of particular arguments in the chapters to follow will allow this scope to be circumscribed to some extent. However, there is a further issue, concerning what the use of a transcendental argument presupposes with respect to the nature of a priori knowledge. Are the a priori truths involved in transcendental arguments analytic truths, or do they have some other

character? Relatedly, is the epistemology of this type of claim based on logic and meaning, or does it rely on some alternative, perhaps intuitive, capacity?

As was noted above, consideration of specific transcendental arguments will allow more content to be given to the notion of T-necessity. The issue mentioned in section II, concerning the extent to which these arguments rely on a link between conceivability and possibility will not be considered in depth. However, the extent to which the nature of a priori truth involved in a transcendental argument entails the necessity claim or constitutes a further claim will be addressed.

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In this chapter, I have specified what constitutes a transcendental argument. However, it has been noted that this specification is incomplete or vague in certain respects. On the basis of this specification, I have suggested certain theoretical presuppositions that appear to be involved in the use of this type of argument. In the next two chapters, I shall examine two examples of transcendental arguments in order to obtain material which will enable the specification to be filled out, and the nature of the theoretical presuppositions to be fully understood, in the final chapter of the thesis. The first argument to be considered, in Chapter Two, is Kant's Refutation of Idealism.

Chapter Two: Kant's Refutation of Idealism

Kant's Refutation of Idealism is often accepted as a paradigmatic example of a transcendental argument.[33] However, this is not the only reason why it is an appropriate object of study, given the motivations for examining particular transcendental arguments, described at the end of the last chapter. Given that transcendental arguments originated with Kant it seems sensible to examine one Kantian argument, and the Refutation, in contrast with, for instance, the Transcendental Deduction, is of suitable length and comparatively clear. Furthermore, as Paul Guyer has noted, although Kant's idealism might play a role in this argument, it does not employ any explicitly idealist premises, thus "provides no internal reason to interpret its conclusion at any other than face value."[34] The Refutation also has a clearly defined sceptical target. Thus, we have a relatively straightforward context in which to address issues concerning the relation between transcendental arguments and scepticism, viz. the sense in which the dialectical context of argument constrains the premises involved; whether it is a *truth-directed* argument, which establishes a conclusion about the world, *contra* Stroud, or whether it is merely *belief-* or *experience-directed*.

The chapter will be structured as follows. In section I, I will clarify the type of scepticism which is the target of this transcendental argument, and shall describe the way in which the argument is to address it. In section II, I articulate the content of the categorical premise of the Refutation. In section III, I present David Bell's reconstruction of the hypothetical premise of the argument.[35] In section IV, I discuss the conclusion of the Refutation, in an attempt to evaluate its anti-sceptical force. In section

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[33] See Stern, (1999: 2). Stern gives seven such paradigms. The majority of these are squarely within the Kantian tradition: three are Kant's and two are Strawson's.
[34] Guyer, (1987: 282)
[35] Bell, (1999: 202-9)

V, I draw some preliminary conclusions concerning the theoretical presuppositions involved in the use of this particular transcendental argument.

It is worth remarking from the outset on two features of the type of reconstruction that will be offered both here, and in Chapter Three. First, the framework presupposed in the present examination of transcendental arguments is, broadly, that of metaphysical realism. For I take it that the some of the most interesting questions about transcendental arguments concern the role that such arguments can have in such a framework. This presupposition implies that a guiding factor in the interpretation of the arguments to be offered will be the desire to arrive at an argument that can allow these questions to be addressed, and this factor will override considerations of exegetical accuracy. Secondly, most arguments can be objected to, and those to be presented here are no exception. However, given the broader methodological inquiry under way, the main objective is not to construct watertight arguments, but to construct arguments that can form the basis of discussion. In each case, I intend to present the most cogent argument available, and shall identify difficulties for the argument as presented, but resolving these difficulties beyond dispute is not the central concern.[36]

<div align="center">I</div>

Kant's stated target in the Refutation is the *"problematic* idealism of Descartes" which "pleads incapacity to prove, through immediate experience, any existence except our own", declaring "the existence of objects in space outside us to be...doubtful and indemonstrable". [B274-5] [37] Kant's argument attempts to refute this claim, by demonstrating that

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[36] I have also chosen to present the arguments in a particular way. The hypothetical premises are presented as constituted by a series of constituent premises, numbered (i), (ii), ...and so forth, and condensed justifications for each such premise given in italics below. The reason for this is that subsequent discussion (in particular, in section V of each chapter) will discuss the character of these premises by reference to the arguments in support of them. These are presented in italics so that the reader may refer back to them.

[37] All references in this form are to Kant (1933).

"The mere, but empirically determined, consciousness of my own existence proves the existence of objects in space outside me." [B275]

This is held to be proven by specifying the necessary conditions of this form of consciousness.

Determining the precise relation between Kant's problematic idealist and the Cartesian sceptic is unnecessary for present purposes. However, it seems that Kant conceives this type of sceptic to be concerned with the radical doubt introduced by the possibility of the malicious demon, under which, according to Descartes, "all external things are merely the delusions of dreams."[38] For Descartes, 'external things' are objects in space, thus the claim that the sceptic is held to doubt is that 'spatial objects exist'.[39]

As should be apparent from the above, and from the fact that Kant has no apparent interest in the details of the sceptical argument propounded by the Cartesian, this transcendental argument is held to be anti-sceptical in virtue of *refuting* the sceptic's claim. In order to do this, Kant needs to employ the sceptic's own epistemic standards and resources. For the Cartesian, knowledge requires certainty;[40] thus, when Kant speaks of 'proof' here, he means 'demonstrative proof'. Furthermore, the resources with which this proof may be constructed are just those propositions whose truth would not entail that spatial objects exist. The Cartesian therefore accepts that we have some awareness of inner states, he accepts the validity of logic and demonstrative methods of proof, and he accepts that we have understanding.

II

The first task in interpreting the Refutation is to articulate the content of its *categorical premise*. The argument is premised on our possession of a form of self-consciousness,

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[38] Descartes, (1984: 15)
[39] Clearly, this is not the *only* claim the sceptic doubts, since he will also doubt any propositions p which are such that if p were true, spatial objects would exist.
[40] See Descartes, (1984: 2, 13): "I should hold back my assent from opinions which are not completely certain and indubitable".

namely, consciousness "of my own existence as determined in time", but what precisely this form of self-consciousness amounts to needs to be explained.

For Kant, time is the form of inner sense, that is, the faculty by which "the mind intuits itself or its inner state." [B37] Thus, it seems that the aspects of the self that we are conscious of just "as determined in time" will be those aspects of the self that can be known through introspection. However, according to Kant,

"No fixed and abiding self can present itself in this flux of inner appearances." [A107]

If this is the case, what one is conscious of in the type of consciousness upon which the Refutation is premised will be representations, rather than a substantial self. Furthermore, it seems that what it is for these representations to be 'determined in time' is for them to have a determinate temporal order. It thus seems that to be 'conscious of my own existence as determined in time' is to be conscious of a determinate temporal sequence of representations.

III

The argument for the *hypothetical premise* of the Refutation is contained in the following passage:

Thesis

The mere, but empirically determined, consciousness of my own existence proves the existence of objects in space outside me.

Proof

I am conscious of my existence as determined in time. All determination of time presupposes something *permanent* in perception. But this permanent cannot be an intuition in me. For all grounds of determination of my existence which are to be met with in me are representations; and as representations require a permanent distinct from them, in relation to which their change, and so my existence in the time wherein they change, may be determined. Thus perception of this permanent is possible only through

a *thing* outside me and not through the *representation* of a thing outside me; and consequently, the determination of my existence in time is possible only through the existence of actual things which I perceive outside me." [B275-6]

To recap: the categorical premise of this argument should be taken to be 'I am conscious of a determinate temporal sequence of representations', where the truth of this statement is held to prove the existence of spatial objects. Thus, the above should contain an argument for the following hypothetical premise: 'Consciousness of a determinate temporal sequence of representations requires the existence of spatial objects'. Kant's conclusion will then follow by *modus ponens*.

In his 'Transcendental Arguments and Non-Naturalistic Anti-Realism', David Bell offers a partial reconstruction of such an argument, which will form the basis of the argument to be given here.[41] In what follows, I shall present an interpretation and defence of Bell's reconstruction. The argument begins as follows:

(i)   Consciousness of a determinate temporal sequence of representations requires consciousness of a change in one's mental state[42]

If I am conscious of a determinate temporal sequence of representations, there must be a sequence of distinct representations, between which determinate temporal relations hold, of which I am conscious. Furthermore, if I am conscious of this sequence of distinct representations, then I will be conscious of a change in my mental state.

(ii)   Consciousness of a change in mental state requires an intuition whose content is that change

Suppose that I am conscious of a change in my mental state. What then, must be the case for this to hold? Whilst it does seem to be sufficient for this consciousness that I have an

[41] Bell, (1999: 202-9). All page references in this section will be to this text unless otherwise stated. The reconstruction is partial since Bell's argument stops short of claiming to prove "the existence of objects in space". [B275]
[42] Bell uses the term "an awareness" or "state of awareness"; I use "representation" as a stylistic variant. The argument does not require that the notion of a "representation" be taken in any stronger sense.

intuition whose content is that change, why should it be necessary? Consider the following possibility: I am conscious of mental state M_1 at t_1, and am conscious of mental state M_2 at t_2, but have no intuition whose content is a change. Why wouldn't this be sufficient for consciousness of change in my mental state? The key here is that if I am conscious of x, I am immediately *or non-inferentially* aware of x. *In the case articulated above, the awareness of a change in my mental state could only be grounded inferentially. Thus, it would not be a case in which I am* conscious *of a change in my mental state. Rather, what is needed is "an intuition that persists throughout the change in the object [of awareness] and whose content is that very change." [205] This just follows from the notion of what an intuition is, namely, a sensory representation, by means of which an object is immediately 'given to us'. It follows that immediate sensory awareness of any x will require an intuition of x.*

The argument appears plausible so far. Its next premise, however, can initially seem problematic:

(iii)   An intuition whose content is a change in mental state requires a distinction between intuition and object of intuition

According to Bell, what it is for this sort of intuition to exist is for there to "be one persisting intuition (I_1)...which has as its object a temporally ordered sequence of distinct conscious states (M_1, M_2,...,M_n)" [206]. Thus: given that ex hypothesi *we have here just one intuition, but more than one distinct mental state, the intuition must be distinct from its multiple objects.*

Why, then, should we accept that an intuition of this form should exist? It might be argued that, if I am to have an intuition with this content, my awareness must 'hold fast' — in some sense persist — whilst its objects change. If my awareness were to move in tandem with its objects, then I wouldn't be aware of a change in my mental state, as (i) requires. However, one might object to this response on the grounds that it accords primacy to objects

of experience, rather than changes in awareness. Without this, one could claim that the object of the intuition is the change, thus that any intuition whose content is a such a change in mental state does not require a distinction between intuition and object of intuition, if 'object' is construed in a suitably liberal sense.

It thus seems that the above premise rests upon the claim that what we are basically aware of in experience are objects, rather than changes. With respect to the case of vision, this seems to be the case: it does perceptually appear that changes happen to objects.[43] Although there is a question about whether this claim would be accepted by the sceptic, it seems plausible that it will be: to accept that our experience appears to be of certain items is not to admit that it is of those items, and it is the latter claim that the sceptic doubts. However, this claim does not appear true of auditory perception. It thus seems that if the argument is to succeed, it should be viewed as stating the necessary conditions of our awareness of change through the perceptual modality of vision. 'State of awareness' will therefore need to be read as 'visual state of awareness', 'intuition' as 'visual intuition', and so forth, throughout the argument.[44]

In order to proceed, we require an argument for the following premise:

(iv)   Items of inner sense cannot support this distinction between intuition and object of intuition

As will become apparent, Bell's argument for this premise is problematic. However, it is to be hoped that consideration of it may indicate an alternative approach. Bell's argument turns upon the claim that "items belonging to the category state of awareness have a peculiar property". [206] This "peculiar property" that states of awareness are held to possess is that "...with respect to any particular instance of such a state there is no

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[43] See Strawson, (1979), for an argument for the claim that 'inner' experience is experience as of spatial objects.

[44] This restriction to the visual case may be a tacit presupposition of Bell's argument: an example of his does mention "what is involved in *seeing* an object..." [206] (Italics added) However, this restriction is not made explicit.

possibility of distinguishing [ontologically or epistemically] (1) that state and (2) the simultaneous awareness that there is of it...for any conscious mental state M, the existence and nature of M is indistinguishable from the simultaneous intuition of M in inner sense: I(M)=M. In Kant's words, "objects of consciousness, simply in virtue of being representations, are not in any way distinct from their apprehension." [A190]".
[206]

Before assessing the content and truth of this passage, it is worth noting how an argument for (iv) is supposed to follow from the claim that 'I(M)=M' for any M that is a state of awareness. If this is the case, the intuition I_1 described in (iii), which, by (i)-(iii) is required if one is to be conscious of a determinate temporal sequence of representations, would not be possible. For if I(M)=M, in the manner suggested above, then there could not be a change from distinct M_1 to M_2 without a corresponding change in the intuitions of those states, as is required if I_1 is to exist. It would follow that items of inner sense alone cannot support the distinction between intuition and object of intuition required by and articulated in (iii).

Let us now look more closely at Bell's argument. In his explanation, Bell seems to run together several distinct claims, which are separable as follows. Concerning (1) a "state of awareness" and (2) "the simultaneous awareness that there is of it", he states that:

(O) "It is not possible, ontologically, that either (1) or (2) exist without the other."

(E) "It is not possible, epistemically, that there be an awareness of either (1) or (2) without there being a simultaneous awareness of the other."

The text suggests that these claims, taken in tandem, are supposed to be equivalent to the following claim, which is subsequently used in the argument for (iv):

(I) "The existence and nature of [any state of awareness] M is indistinguishable from the simultaneous intuition of M in inner sense: I(M)=M."

Perhaps the first point to note is that, given the nature of (1) and (2), (E) would appear to be entailed by (O), thus is strictly unnecessary to the argument. Bracketing (E) for clarity, and conceding the truth of (O), the following question arises: how does (O) relate to (I)? A difficulty here concerns how, precisely, we understand the term 'indistinguishable' in (I). However, irrespective of this concern, the truth of the proposed identity claim 'I(M)=M' contained within (I) seems dubitable. For consider the state of seeming to see a red patch. My awareness of (my) seeming to see a red patch does not seem to be identical to my seeming to see a red patch, indeed, there appears to be some type of category mistake involved in this supposition. It seems, therefore, that claim (I) should be rejected. However, some of what Bell argues above should perhaps not be. The idea that he is attempting to convey appears to be something like the following: if the mental state under consideration is a *conscious* state, then the nature of this state is such that that the fact of its existence entails awareness of it. This is the idea that (O) attempts to articulate.[45]

Whilst (I) is not entailed by (O), it seems that (O) does entail the following claim: for any conscious mental state M and intuition of that state, at any time t,

(I)* I(M) exists at t $\Leftrightarrow$ M exists at t.

Would it, then, be possible to argue for (iv) on the basis of (I)*? It appears so. For it seems that (I)* will then entail that there could not be a change from distinct M_1 to M_2 without a corresponding change in the intuitions of those states, as is required if I_1 is to exist. Thus, as in Bell's original argument, it would follow that items of inner sense alone cannot support the distinction between intuition and object of intuition required by and articulated in (iii).

Thus, we have:

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[45] There is, perhaps, a question about whether (O) (and hence (I)*) *does* articulate this idea, which will be addressed below.

(iv)   Items of inner sense cannot support this distinction between intuition and

        object of intuition

        States of awareness exhibit a mutual ontological dependence with the intuitions that have

        these states of awareness as their objects. That is, given any time t, any state of awareness

        M and the intuition (or state of awareness) of that state of awareness I(M):

        (I)* I(M) exists at t $\Leftrightarrow$ M exists at t.

        This claim, (I)*, entails that items of inner sense alone cannot support the distinction

        between intuition and object of intuition required by and articulated in (iii). For the

        intuition there described allows the possibility that at a given moment in time I(M) could

        exist without M, a possibility excluded by (I)*.

It seems that the plausibility of this argument appears to rest upon the plausibility of (I)*.

How plausible, then, is it? A potential problem with (I)* is that, whilst the nature of a

conscious state does appear to imply that the fact of its existence entails *some* type of

awareness of it, it is not at all clear whether this awareness need take the form of an

intuition of that state, i.e. a second-order mental state which has as its object the

conscious state itself. Furthermore, one might question whether the existence of I(M)

does require the existence of M. Although this cannot be pursued here, one might, for

instance, think that a situation in which I have a visual flashback to a nightmare is a case

in which I(M) exists without M.[46] If true, this would damage the argument. These issues

will be further discussed in section V, when considering the presuppositions this

transcendental argument makes with respect to the nature of our cognitive and

conceptual capacities.

    Bell's reconstruction concludes with the following step:

(v)   So, consciousness of a determinate temporal sequence of conscious states

        requires there to be an object of intuition that is not itself a state of awareness

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[46] Bell would presumably argue at this point that in such a case, M does exist *in some sense.*

Given (iv), the distinction articulated in (iii) can only be provided for if we "invoke an intuition whose object can change even while the intuition of it persists; and this is only an intelligible supposition if the object is not itself a mental state given only in inner sense...if S_1, S_2 are non-mental states of an object (for example, its spatial locations), then the sequence I_1 (S_1), I_1 (S_2), I_1 (S_3) makes perfect sense – it is precisely what is involved in seeing an object move from one place to another". [206-7]

IV

The preceding section reconstructs Bell's argument for the hypothetical premise of the Refutation: 'Consciousness of a determinate temporal sequence of representations requires the existence of spatial objects'. In this section I intend to discuss the conclusion of the Refutation, in order to consider issues relating to the possible anti-sceptical force of the argument. The first issue to note is that there exists an obvious disparity between the hypothetical premise as stated here, and (v) above. The consequents of the conditionals articulated differ, and as a result, (v) could only yield the conclusion that 'there exists an object of intuition that is not itself a state of awareness', *not* the stated conclusion of the Refutation, that 'spatial objects exist'. In order to obtain the latter, an additional premise would be required, to link what is not a state of consciousness with what is a spatial object. The argument as stated thus leaves a gap.[47]

However, an issue prior to this concerns a less obvious disparity, namely, that between Bell's statement of *(v)* and what is stated in the *argument for (v)*, both given above. For whereas (v) suggests that to have the form of consciousness articulated there needs "to *be* an object of intuition that is not itself a state of awareness", [204] the argument for (v) only states the requirement that we "*invoke* an intuition whose object can change even

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[47] Although the focus of our attention is Bell's reconstruction of Kant's argument, it is worth noting that Kant's own argument may incorporate a similar gap. The statement of what is to be proved mentions "the existence of *objects in space* outside me", [B275] the actual proof of the argument only mentions "the existence of *things* outside me." [B275-6] (Italics added) Since 'outside me' may be taken, by Kant, in an *ontological*, rather than a *spatial* sense, these formulations are not equivalent.

while the intuition of it persists...". [206] (Italics added) Although more content needs to be given to the notion of 'invocation' in this context, it does, at least prima facie, seem that this requirement may only entail that we *invoke* an object of intuition that is not itself a state of awareness, rather than that there *be* such an object.

How, then, might this claim be substantiated? Consider a situation in which I am in a perpetual and experientially coherent dreamlike state. In this situation, changes in my mental state are presented as changes in my visual field, despite the fact that I do not have 'an object of intuition that is not itself a state of awareness'. Furthermore, in dreams I am not aware of the representations being experienced *as* representations of my mind, for these representations are presented as representations of objects of intuition. This appears to constitute a scenario in which we attribute to ourselves or invoke 'an object of intuition that is not itself a state of awareness' despite the actual absence of such an object.

The validity of this type of example could perhaps be questioned. It might be claimed that one cannot intelligibly suppose a dreamlike state to be perpetual, in virtue of concerns about the conceptual resources available in the situation described: in particular, could one possess the concepts required in order to have a coherent stream of experience?[48] However, this type of response has not, arguably, been sufficiently developed to constitute a convincing counterpoint to what many consider to be plausible, intuitive examples. Furthermore, the sceptic under consideration is certainly amongst those who accept such examples as valid, since he holds that our experience is of a coherent nature in the malicious demon hypothesis. It thus seems that this example should be admitted as a possibility in the present context.

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[48] This line of thought can be found in Davidson: "[W]e can be massively wrong only about a world we have already experienced, the main and more or less lasting features of which we have right..." (Davidson, (1999a: 164))

This example suggests that whilst the argument given in section III demonstrates that a necessary condition of possessing the capacity to intuit the type of change articulated in (i) is that we have to *invoke* 'an object of intuition that is not itself a state of awareness', or *believe* that our experience involves such items, it does *not* demonstrate that the possession of this capacity requires there to *be* an object of intuition that is not itself a state of awareness. For the situation described is an instance in which our belief grounds this capacity in the absence of such an object.

It thus seems that, even before considering the 'gap' resulting from the disparity between an 'object of intuition that is not a state of awareness' and a 'spatial object', the reconstructed argument faces a significant problem. The Refutation appears subject to precisely the criticism articulated by Stroud in his methodological discussion of this type of argument, outlined in section III of the previous chapter. For it appears that in regard to this particular argument, to paraphrase Stroud slightly, the Cartesian sceptic can insist that "it is enough to make [consciousness of a change in one's mental state] possible if we believe that [there is an object of intuition that is not itself a state of awareness]",[49] even in the absence of such an object. Thus, the argument of the Refutation supports Stroud's suggestion that transcendental arguments are not truth-directed, in the sense specified in Chapter One, for its conclusion is not that 'there is an object of intuition that is not itself a state of awareness', but only that 'we believe that there is such an object'. There exists a 'belief-reality gap' between what the argument proves, and what it is claimed to prove. Moreover, there are good theoretical reasons for thinking that any such gap could not be closed in a way acceptable to either the sceptic or the transcendental arguer.

The Cartesian sceptic under consideration requires, for the hypothetical premise, a demonstrative proof that p only if q, as will the transcendental arguer attempting to

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[49] Stroud, (1968: 255)

refute him. Thus, both the sceptic and the transcendental arguer require that p should constitute a *conclusive* ground for q. It follows that, if 'p* only if q*' is any constituent clause of the hypothetical premise, p* should be a conclusive ground for q*.

Consider the case in which p* is the proposition that 'we believe that α' and q* is the proposition that 'α', where α concerns some non-psychological state of affairs. The question at issue is this: in this instance, could p* be a conclusive ground for q*? That is, could what we believe to be the case, be a conclusive ground for what is the case? It is arguable that a negative answer to this question is required by the very nature of the concept of belief. For it seems that an important part of this concept is constituted by "the potential gap it introduces between what is held to be true and what is true."[50] Thus, it might be argued that to adequately grasp the concept of belief, one must realize that one's belief cannot be a conclusive ground for what, in the world, is the case. If this is true, then it appears that the 'belief-reality' gap simply cannot be closed in the conclusive manner required.

It was noted at the beginning of this section that there appeared to be another gap in the argument, between the proven conclusion (which involved an 'object of intuition that is not a state of consciousness') and the stated conclusion (which involved 'spatial objects'). The observations made at the beginning of this section suggest that Bell's argument, at the very most, can only achieve

(v)* Consciousness of a determinate temporal sequence of conscious states requires that we believe there to be an object of intuition that is not itself a state of consciousness.

Consideration of how to close the original gap is, for present purposes, unnecessary. However, we should briefly consider the extent to which the transcendental arguer may extend the modest version of Bell's argument in order to prove a conclusion concerning

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[50] Davidson, (1983: 138)

spatial objects. To do this, it seems that he would require something like the following additional premise:

(vi)*   It must be the case that if we believe in such objects of intuition, then we believe that some of these objects are spatial.

To argue for (vi)*, it seems that one would have to identify some type of a priori conceptual link between the notion of an 'object of intuition' and the notion of a 'spatial object'. Is it, then, likely that this type of link between the concepts of objectivity and space should exist? Although there is not sufficient space to consider this issue in detail, it should be noted first, that these ideas do seem to be deeply connected, and secondly, that several plausible arguments have been given for this claim.[51] It thus seems that there are the resources to extend the modest argument to incorporate a claim about spatial objects.

<div align="center">V</div>

The final section of the previous chapter specified certain theoretical presuppositions that may be involved in the use of transcendental arguments. Although full consideration of these presuppositions is the concern of Chapter Four, it is worth articulating preliminary conclusions relating to this issue, which will be drawn on in this later discussion, whilst the argument of the Refutation is still fresh in the mind. The task of this section is to articulate these preliminary conclusions. To recap, it was suggested that transcendental arguments may presuppose that:

(1)   Our possession or exercise of certain cognitive or conceptual capacities is the type of thing that is relatively 'immune to sceptical attack'

(2)   These cognitive or conceptual capacities have necessary conditions. Furthermore, the propositions stating that these capacities have such necessary conditions (a) are knowable a priori and (b) are necessary truths

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[51] See e.g. Strawson, (1959), Evans, (1980).

In what follows, I outline some considerations relating to how these presuppositions are made in the case of the Refutation.

With regard to (1), it appears that a certain conception of the mental, one that might broadly be termed Cartesian, is presupposed. For consider

(I)* M exists at t ⟺ I(M) exists at t.

The assumption that (I)* is true seems to suggest that the argument views conscious states as 'internal objects' which cannot fail to be intuited whenever they occur.

It is worth noting that acceptance of this conception of the mental is not entailed merely by the nature of the type of scepticism being refuted. True: our sceptic is held to doubt the reality of external things, but this may not imply the above view of conscious mental states. Clearly, a full-blooded Cartesian will operate with this conception, but it is not obviously desirable to assimilate the views of our sceptical target to him in this way without considering more carefully whether the *sceptical* position entails this view of the mental. Given what an 'intuition' is conceived to be – a sensory representation by means of which an object is given to us – it follows that, *if* the sceptic views awareness of mental states as intuitive, then he will view mental states as objectual. Furthermore, if (as in the present case) the mental states under consideration are specified to be *conscious* mental states – just those states of which we *are* aware – then it seems that something like (I)* will follow. However, as was noted in section III, during discussion of premise (iv), it is not clear that the sceptic does need to view our awareness of mental states as intuitive, i.e. as requiring second-order mental states which have other mental states as their objects, thus whether he needs to employ an objectual conception of mental states.

However, the epistemic view of conscious mental states that the argument presupposes is perhaps more interesting from the stance of our methodological inquiry. Whilst there seems to be no principled connection between the ontological conception of conscious states presupposed by the argument and the fact that the argument under consideration

is a transcendental argument, this is plausibly not so in the epistemic case. For it seems that, since the sceptic has to accept the categorical premise if the argument is to get off the ground, he must accept that one is certain about one's present tense conscious mental states. In virtue of this, it seems that the transcendental arguer can presuppose and use in his argument the conception of the mental that grounds this acceptance, which he does in arguing for premise (iv). Moreover, it appears that something like this feature may be presupposed by all transcendental arguments, for it is implicit in their structure that the mental must be transparent in some way.[52] In turn this might entail that any philosophical position that does not subscribe to this transparency claim may have to reject transcendental arguments.

Issues relating to (2) will be addressed by considering the nature of premises (i)-(iv), from which, I shall take it, (v) follows. First, it is to be hoped that examining these premises may allow us to draw some conclusions to assist us in understanding the notion of T-necessity employed in transcendental arguments.[53] Secondly, this examination may enable some conclusions to be drawn about the epistemology of the a priori presupposed by these premises. I shall now discuss the nature of the premises individually:

(i)   Consciousness of a determinate temporal sequence of representations requires consciousness of a change in one's mental state

It is difficult to construe this premise as semantically analytic. First, it appears not to be transformable into a logical truth by the substitution of synonyms for synonyms, thus cannot be viewed as Frege analytic. Secondly, it appears that this construal is not possible even if semantic analyticity is understood in some broader sense, perhaps as being a property

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[52] Recent epistemology has argued against this type of conception, suggesting that mental states may not be *transparent*, where a mental state S is transparent iff "whenever one is suitably alert...one is in a position to know whether one is in S" (Williamson, (2000: 24)). See Williamson, (2000: 24) for counterexamples to the transparency claim.

[53] Bell claims that these premises are "analytic truths". [207] However, he does not make it clear how he understands this notion, nor offers significant defence of his claim. Bell's claim is, therefore, of little assistance in the present context.

possessed by a statement which is known by virtue only of knowledge of the logical truths and facts about language or meaning, where it is allowed that these need not be facts about synonymy. For it is simply not clear how the above premise might be known on the basis of knowledge of the linguistic properties of the expressions involved.[54]

Having said this, this premise might plausibly be viewed as analytic in another sense, which explains analyticity on the basis of relations between ideas or concepts.[55] It is beyond the scope of this section to explain what is involved in this conception of analyticity, which will be based on a worked-out theory of concept possession. However, the basic suggestion is that if one possesses the concept of a temporal sequence of discrete events and possesses the concept of change, one will know, without reflection, that one couldn't have consciousness of such a temporal sequence without consciousness of a change.[56] For the relations between these ideas or concepts are immediately apparent to one, as the possessor of those ideas or concepts.

If this is the case, it appears that truths involving relations between ideas or concepts fall into the category of T-ly necessary truths.

(ii)   Consciousness of a change in mental state requires an intuition whose content is that change

The argument for this premise primarily relies on two a priori claims. The first is the conceptual claim that 'to be conscious of x is to be immediately or non-inferentially aware of x'. It appears that this claim can be explained in a similar manner to (i) above, as a truth concerning relations between ideas. However, the second is essentially Kant's framework principle, an a priori principle about the nature of cognition which states that consciousness

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[54] If this premise were known on the basis of the linguistic properties of the expressions involved, a further question would arise in the present context. For plausibly, knowledge of meaning is not a priori, thus knowing the premise on this basis may be in tension with the claimed a priority of the hypothetical premise.

[55] The phrase 'relations between ideas' is intended to echo Hume (Hume, (2000: 50-2)). It is worth emphasizing that the notion of analyticity was introduced by Kant as involving *concepts*, [B10] rather than language, thus the sense of 'analyticity' invoked above is historically grounded.

[56] For an introduction to the ideas mentioned, see Peacocke, (1993: 175-82).

requires intuitions (and concepts, although this feature of the principle is not used here).

This principle cannot be viewed as semantically analytic: it is in no sense true in virtue of language or meaning. Moreover, it does not seem that this principle is naturally viewed as 'conceptually true', at least if this notion is understood as involving 'relations between ideas', as was discussed in (i) above.

What, then, is the nature of this proposition? Although this question is difficult, a natural suggestion turns on the observation that we just do not know what non-intuitive (or non-conceptual) consciousness would be like. To say this is not, it seems, to say that such a form of consciousness is 'inconceivable'. For it is not that we reflect on the nature of non-intuitive (or non-conceptual) consciousness, and discover some conceptual incoherence in that notion. Rather, it seems that we reflect on the states of consciousness that we have been aware of having, and conclude that the framework principle is true of the type of consciousness we have.

If this is the case, it appears that the T-ly necessary premise (ii) presupposes both a conceptual truth, and a truth concerning the nature of the type of consciousness we possess.

(iii)   An intuition whose content is a change in mental state requires a distinction between intuition and object of intuition

The initial argument for this premise relied on the claim that 'if I am to have an intuition with this content, my awareness must 'hold fast' whilst its objects change. If my awareness were to move in tandem with its objects, then I wouldn't be aware of a change in my mental state.' This required supplementation by a claim, to the effect that objects of awareness, rather than changes in awareness, are in some way basic items.

Both of these claims can plausibly be viewed as based on the nature of the phenomenology of 'inner' experience. In the case of the former, it seems that what allows one to recognise this claim to be plausible is consideration, at the phenomenological level, of what our awareness is like, and we believe needs to be like, if we are to intuit change. The latter

claim is substantiated by consideration of what appears to be the case in visual experience

(that is, changes seem to happen to objects)

   If this is the case, it appears that the T-ly necessary premise (iii) presupposes truths

concerning the phenomenological character of inner experience.

(iv)   Items of inner sense cannot support this distinction between intuition and

object of intuition

Regarding the 'Identity Thesis', Bell's correlate to (I)*, Bell notes that it is analytic in

virtue of being "merely an explicit statement of commitments tacitly involved in calling

something, precisely, a state of consciousness." [206] Can this type of explanation be given

of (I)*? Given the considerations outlined above, concerning the sense in which (I)*

presupposes an objectual view of conscious mental states, it would seem not. For it does not

appear to be implicit in the notion of a 'state of consciousness' that the awareness that one

must have of such a state is intuitive, or the corollary of this claim, that such a state is some

type of mental object. In fact, it is difficult to see how this claim may be justified at all.

The initial observations made above concerning the nature of the constituents of the

hypothetical premise will, it is to be hoped, enable some progress to be made both with

the notion of T-necessity and the conception of the a priori presupposed by the

transcendental arguer, when these issues are fully discussed in Chapter Four.

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In this chapter, I have offered a detailed interpretation and analysis of a paradigmatic

example of a transcendental argument, in order to address certain issues relating to the

nature and presuppositions of such arguments, raised in Chapter One. In brief summary:

this argument was found to be belief-directed, and did presuppose that the cognitive

capacity mentioned in the categorical premise was 'immune to sceptical attack'.

Preliminary conclusions were also reached concerning the character of the clauses which

constitute the hypothetical premise. These results will be analysed in Chapter Four.

However in the next chapter, I shall consider another particular example of a transcendental argument, propounded by Donald Davidson, in order to examine these issues further.

Chapter Three: Davidson's Argument for the Veridical Nature of Belief

Davidson's argument for the claim that "belief is intrinsically veridical", [155] [57] as given in 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge' is held to be a paradigmatic example of a transcendental argument.[58] In the previous chapter, a Kantian transcendental argument was examined; indeed, the majority of the arguments taken to be paradigms are part of this tradition. However, transcendental arguments are proposed by philosophers external to it. In the interests of breadth, therefore, it would seem prudent to examine an argument which is less obviously influenced by Kant. Since Davidson's argument and the philosophical system within which it is located are of considerable interest, I have chosen to analyse this particular paradigm.

The chapter will be structured as follows. In section I, I characterise the type of scepticism which is the target of this transcendental argument and describe the way in which the argument is to address this scepticism. In section II, I explain the categorical premise of the argument. In section III, an interpretation of the hypothetical premise of the argument is given. In section IV, I evaluate the anti-sceptical force of the argument by considering its conclusion. In section V, I discuss issues regarding the theoretical presuppositions involved in the use of this particular transcendental argument.

<div align="center">I</div>

Davidson's target in 'A Coherence Theory' subscribes to two key theses. First, he thinks that "[t]ruth is correspondence with the way things are". [139] Secondly, he holds that if he has a belief, he must have a justification or reason for that belief, but also that "nothing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief".[59] [141] As a result, he is open to a certain sceptical possibility, namely, that although his beliefs are

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[57] All references in this form are to Davidson, (1983) and (1987).

[58] However, what people take the transcendental argument to be differs. See e.g. Genova (1999), Nagel (1999), Stern (2000) for differing interpretations.

[59] Thus, he subscribes to a coherence theory of knowledge. See Walker, (1989b: 7).

justified, in the sense that they are appropriately supported by other beliefs, a significant majority of them should be "false about the actual world". [140] He thus doubts the extent of his knowledge about "the actual world", since he holds that this possibility of falsity will preclude the beliefs in question constituting knowledge, irrespective of their coherence or otherwise.[60]

The sceptic under consideration thus accepts that he has a coherent set of beliefs which can constitute reasons for one another, but thinks that this set of beliefs could be false in the main. There is a subtlety here, in that Davidson's sceptic does not doubt a particular knowledge claim regarding, for instance, the existence of a particular type of thing. Rather, he claims possible truth for a proposition which, if it were true, would rule out knowledge of the world, and asks why his claim is not justified. This argument therefore has an anti-sceptical use in virtue of its preventing this sceptical route, by showing that 'most of our (coherent) beliefs are true'. However, it does not establish a knowledge claim about the world in a direct sense, as would, typically, a refutation.

What, then, would it take for this proposition to be known? Davidson's sceptic does not, like the Cartesian, require that in order for a proposition to constitute knowledge it must be certain. [61] Rather, he requires a "*reason* for supposing most of our beliefs are true". [146] The sceptic may, therefore, accept the possibility of knowledge without absolute certainty. Thus, the methods of reasoning that can be used in argument against him may be broader than the demonstrative methods countenanced by the Cartesian. However, the resources with which the anti-sceptical argument can be constructed are still limited. For given the sceptic's claim that most of his beliefs about the actual world

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[60] There is some vagueness involved in the idea of a 'majority of beliefs' or 'most beliefs' (see [138-9]). However, the notion does appear to have some intuitive content. Whilst Davidson holds the sceptic to entertain the thought that his beliefs might be "*comprehensively* false about the actual world" [140] (italics added), I have made the sceptic's claim more modest, in order to widen the possible scope of the argument.
[61] See Klein, (1986: 373).

could be false, it seems that he cannot premise his argument on the truth of any of these beliefs.

<center>II</center>

The content of the categorical premise of Davidson's argument is as follows. Davidson notes, in commenting on "A Coherence Theory",

"I start from the observation that thinking, propositional thinking, is going on..."[62]

Thus, the argument is premised on the existence of propositional thought. In 'A Coherence Theory' and generally, Davidson appears to concentrate on the case of belief. I shall do the same, taking the categorical premise of the argument to be 'There are beliefs' or 'Beliefs exist'. This would appear to be an appropriate premise for a transcendental argument, to be used against Davidson's sceptic. It concerns the existence of a certain type of mental state – belief – where this existence claim appears acceptable to the sceptic, who holds that he has a body of beliefs.

What, then, is a belief conceived to be in this argument, in more detail? Davidson employs a *linguistic* conception of belief: to have a belief is to stand in a certain relation to sentences, in particular to hold them true. This conception appears plausible. Although it might be suggested that creatures without language might be said to have 'beliefs' in some sense, our beliefs are not of this kind.[63] Given that they have finely grained contents, they arguably cannot be. The premise of the argument is thus that 'There are beliefs', where beliefs are explained as "sentences held true by someone who understands them". [138]

<center>III</center>

The stated conclusion of Davidson's argument is that 'most beliefs are true'. As was noted above, the categorical premise of his argument is that 'There are beliefs' or 'Beliefs

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[62] Davidson, (1999c: 206)
[63] Davidson believes a stronger conclusion than this: "a creature cannot have a thought unless it has a language". (Davidson, (1982: 100))

<center>51</center>

exist'. It follows that an argument needs to be found for the following hypothetical premise: 'Beliefs exist only if most of those beliefs are true.' Davidson's conclusion will then follow by *modus ponens*. This section will start, however, not with a systematic presentation of an argument for the hypothetical premise, but with a description of 'radical interpretation'. For as will become apparent, interpretation plays a significant role in Davidson's argument, thus needs to be understood. It is worth stressing that at this point my aim is mainly expository rather than critical. There is much about this methodology that is controversial which will be elided at present, although certain concerns will be addressed in due course.

The theory of radical interpretation specifies a method which enables one to obtain a specification of what a subject believes, and what he means, on the basis of observable evidence.[64] As Colin McGinn notes, the "fundamental idea is to use evidence about the external causes of assent simultaneously to ascribe beliefs and meanings to the subject: the truth conditions of the subject's beliefs and sentences are given by the external states of affairs that prompt him to hold sentences true."[65] However, it is worth articulating from first principles what grounds this 'fundamental idea'.

The problem an interpreter faces in ascribing beliefs and meanings to a subject on the basis of observable evidence arises as follows. If he is in possession of a specification of what the subject *means* by his words, the interpreter can ascribe beliefs to a subject on the basis of observable evidence (chiefly, what he says) relatively unproblematically. If a subject asserts (as interpreter) 'u', for some declarative sentence u, and I know that in his language u means p, I can ascribe to him the belief that p.[66] Similarly, if he is in possession of a specification of what the subject believes, he will be able to ascribe meanings to the subject's utterances of sentences. However, *ex hypothesi*, the interpreter

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[64] Further explanation will be given later of why the evidence is limited in this way.
[65] McGinn, (1986: 357)
[66] An assumption about sincerity will need to be made.

has knowledge neither of what the subject of interpretation means, nor of what he believes, for neither of these phenomena are observable.

It follows that radical interpretation must proceed via a form of evidence which is suitably accessible to the interpreter and which is connected to, but does not presuppose knowledge of, belief and meaning. Davidson contends that this evidence is grounded in the relation of prompted assent,[67] which he holds satisfies the above requirements. For "it is possible to [observe] that a speaker assents to a sentence without knowing either what the sentence, as spoken by him, means, or what belief is expressed by it". Furthermore, "a speaker's assent to a sentence depends both on what he means by the sentence and on what he believes about the world." [147] For it appears that in appropriate circumstances, for a subject S, sentence u, and content p, S will assent to an utterance of u iff S believes p and u means p. Since a speaker will assent to a sentence just when he holds that sentence true, one can view the interpreter's evidence as constituted by facts concerning a speaker's holding sentences true, where for a subject S, sentence u, and content p,

(*) S holds true u iff S believes p and u means p.

However, as will become clear, more needs to be done if this relation is to yield the meaning of the speaker's sentence. The problem is perhaps implicit in the formulation of (*). For the interpreter will only be able to infer that u means p from S's holding true u if he knows that S believes p. To give a concrete example: suppose that I have no antecedent knowledge of French, and am interpreting a French man Pascal. All I know about Pascal is that, for some strange reason, he does not believe in the existence of fire. Even if Pascal holds true 'Voila un feu' only when there is a fire in his immediate perceptual environment, the fact that he does not believe that fire exists prevents me

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[67] And dissent. I follow Davidson in focussing on assent for simplicity.

from taking his holding true 'Voila un feu' as evidence that this sentence means 'There is a fire'.

It is this gap between the available evidence and what needs to be inferred from it that creates the need for Davidson's principle of charity. Precisely what this principle amounts to is controversial, and specifying it in detail is not strictly relevant to our present concerns. What is important is that this principle – or collection of principles[68] – is held to specify certain general, constitutive features of belief, features which articulate the ways in which propositional attitude states should relate to the world and the standards of logic that ought to be employed in reasoning about them. Thus, in a sense they articulate the normative principles of rationality that are taken to govern anything that is a propositional attitude state. To give examples of these principles: one such principle states that a belief that p rationally precludes a belief that not-p. Thus, if a speaker is rational, his beliefs will be subject to this principle: he will not believe that $p \& \neg p$. Another principle states that one should believe what one observes to be the case in one's surroundings; if a speaker is rational, he will do this, at least in the general case.

How, then, does the existence of this principle assist the radical interpreter? According to Davidson, the principle "is intended to solve the problem of the interdependence of belief and meaning by holding belief constant as far as possible" whilst the interpreter uses the fact that the speaker holds sentences true (in particular circumstances) to specify the meanings of those sentences. Moreover, interpretation according to the principle of charity will involve the interpreter's "assigning truth conditions to alien sentences that make native speakers right when plausibly possible, according, of course, to [his] own view of what is right."[69] For the principle of charity articulates what it would be rational or right to believe in various circumstances. Thus, an interpreter ascribing beliefs in

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[68] The 'principle of charity' is in fact a collection of principles; I shall use singular or plural as is idiomatic.
[69] Davidson, (1973: 137)

accordance with it will do his best to make his interpretee right, and 'his best' can only involve his own beliefs about what is the case.

Let us briefly consider how this method works in a basic case. Clearly, interpretation will become more sophisticated and complicated as the process progresses, but consideration of the process at this sophisticated level is unnecessary. Suppose, again, that I am interpreting Pascal, and that Pascal holds true 'Il pleut' whenever I observe (and thus, in normal circumstances, believe) both that it is raining and that Pascal is in a position to detect this fact. As a result, I ascribe to him the belief that it is raining in these circumstances, thus hold that Pascal holds true 'Il pleut' just when Pascal believes that it is raining. On this basis, I am able to specify a truth condition for the sentence as follows:

'Il pleut' is true-in-L iff it is raining in the vicinity of the speaker.

It was suggested earlier that the methodology of radical interpretation plays an important role in the argument for the hypothetical premise. This can be summarised as follows:

(i)   Beliefs exist only if sentences which are understood are held true

(ii)   Such sentences exist only if sentences have meaning

(iii)   Sentences have meaning only if meaning is determinable

(iv)   Meaning is determinable only if language is interpretable on the basis of observable evidence

(v)   Language is interpretable on this basis only if the principle of charity is used in any interpretation

(vi)   The use of the principle of charity in interpretation entails that the beliefs ascribed to the subject in interpretation will be true by the interpreter's lights

It is stages (v)-(vi) which involve interpretation. In what follows, I shall articulate the support for each premise in turn.

For present purposes, the first two premises are unproblematic. They merely draw on what a belief, and what a sentence, is. Thus:

(i)   Beliefs exist only if sentences which are understood are held true

A belief is just a 'sentence held true by someone who understands it'.

(ii)   Such sentences exist only if sentences have meaning

A sequence of marks or sounds is a sentence only if an act of communication can be performed by writing or uttering that sequence. However, this will be possible only if the sequence has meaning.

However, premises (iii) and (iv), to which I shall now turn, cannot be justified in quite this straightforward a manner.

Premise (iii) is naturally read as stating that a sentence u has meaning only if one can find out what u means. What underlies this claim is a commitment to the view that meaning is, and must be, public. This can be expressed as follows:

(P) All a speaker can mean by his words is what he can be known to mean by others.[70]

This constitutive claim about what meaning must be, which is, I take it, held to justify (iii), certainly appears to be accepted in some form by Davidson. In discussing interpretation he asserts,

"That meanings are decipherable is not a matter of luck; public availability is a constitutive aspect of language."[71]

However, he treats (P) as an assumption, rather than a claim that needs to be argued for.

How, then, might one argue for the thesis that meaning needs to be 'publicly available', as Davidson requires? The basis of a line of argument for this claim is offered by Michael

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[70] (P) is not entirely clear as it stands. It does not specify what is to count as an 'other', or the type of possibility expressed by the phrase 'can be known', or the basis upon which what a speaker means should be knowable.

[71] Davidson, (1990: 314). This type of claim is, however, scattered throughout Davidson's writings. Consider: "What a fully informed interpreter could learn about what a speaker means is all there is to learn", [315] or "there can be no more to the communicative content of words than is conveyed by verbal behaviour." (Davidson, (1999d: 80)

Dummett, as follows.[72] Suppose that there were aspects of the meaning of a language that were not publicly available. It is thus possible that a person could "behave in every way like someone who understood that language, and yet not actually understand it, or understand it only incorrectly. But to suppose this is to make meaning ineffable, that is, in principle incommunicable. If this is possible, then no individual ever has a guarantee that he is understood by any other individual...".[73] However, it is claimed that if we are to be able to communicate successfully, we need such a guarantee.[74] It thus seems that we can give the following line of argument:

(iii) Sentences have meaning only if meaning is determinable

If there were aspects of sentence meaning that were indeterminable, successful communication would not, in general, be possible. For successful communication requires that we can discern what others intend to communicate, which in turn requires that we can determine what their utterances mean. If there were aspects of sentence meaning that were indeterminable, it would be entirely possible for one language user to behave as if he meant the same by his sentences as another language user, although in fact he understood those sentences quite differently. Thus, if this were the case, we could not discern what he intended to communicate.

In order now to construct an argument for premise (iv), one needs to argue for a connection between the determinability of meaning, and the interpretability of language on the basis of observable evidence. Thus, it needs to be argued that meaning can only be determined on a certain basis, that is, on the basis of this type of evidence. If meaning is only determinable on this basis, its determinability will entail the interpretability of language on the basis of observable evidence.

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[72] Dummett, (1973). I appreciate the oddity of using an argument of Dummett's to justify an argument of Davidson's. However, both philosophers *are* strongly committed to the above thesis about the publicity of meaning, although adhering to the thesis leads them in very different directions.
[73] Dummett, (1973: 217-8)
[74] See Craig, (1982: 552-55) for an argument against this claim.

Davidson holds that the evidence available to one in determining meaning is limited to what would be available to a child in acquiring a language.[75] Furthermore, he seems to think that all that is available to the child is what can be given via observable behaviour and other evidence in the process of ostensive learning.[76] If this assumption is correct, it seems that (iv) should follow. However, one might question whether this basis *is* all that is available to a child in acquiring a language and also whether meaning is legitimately determinable only on this basis. For arguably, the child has more than observable evidence in learning a language, since we might hypothesise that human beings are naturally built so as to attach certain meanings to sentences in response to certain stimuli. Why, then, should this not constitute part of the basis upon which meaning may be determined? Davidson appears to think that to suppose this is to suppose that language has a private aspect, which would violate the publicity requirement on meaning and language argued for in (iii). However, although this matter cannot be pursued further here, this may not be the case if what more the child has is not 'private' to him but derives from a nature common to – thus in some sense accessible to – other language users. It thus seems the best that can be done for this argument is:

(iv)   Meaning is determinable only if language is interpretable on the basis of observable evidence

By (iii), the basis upon which meaning is determinable is limited to what is publicly accessible. However, an item is publicly accessible only if it is observable. Thus the determinability of meaning requires the interpretability of language on the basis of observable evidence.

However, the legitimacy of equating what is publicly accessible with what is observable appears questionable.

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[75] In this respect he follows Quine: "Language is a social art which we all acquire on the evidence solely of other people's overt behavior under publicly recognizable circumstances." (Quine, (1969: 26))
[76] See Davidson, (1999b: 192-3).

The final stages of the argument depend on the methodology of radical interpretation. Thus:

(v)   Language is interpretable on this basis only if the principle of charity is used in interpretation

As was noted in the earlier discussion of radical interpretation, it seems that if interpretation can proceed only on the basis of observable evidence, it must proceed via the relation of prompted assent. For we require a form of evidence which is both accessible to the interpreter and connected to belief and meaning, such as the relation of prompted assent.

It follows that I, as interpreter, need to find out what you mean on the basis of your assent to sentences. If a subject's words are to be understood, he cannot "deceive his would-be interpreters about when he assents to sentences", [147] thus when a subject assents to a sentence, the interpreter can view him as holding that sentence true. However, for a subject S, sentence u, and content p,

(*) S holds true u iff S believes p and u means p.

In order to interpret a speaker's language on the basis of evidence about when he holds sentences true, the interpreter needs to be able to make assumptions about what the speaker believes. How, then, can the interpreter do this? It appears that, in basic cases, he can only proceed by assuming that the speaker believes what he (the interpreter) thinks it is right to believe. The principle of charity articulates his conception of rationality, that is, what it is right to believe. Thus interpreting on this assumption is interpreting according to the principle of charity.

(vi)   The use of the principle of charity in interpretation entails that most of the beliefs ascribed to the subject in interpretation will be true by the interpreter's lights

If the principle of charity is used in interpretation, most of the beliefs ascribed to the speaker will be, at least in the main, the beliefs that the interpreter thinks it right to believe. In the

main, the interpreter will think it right to believe what he holds to be true. Thus, the beliefs

ascribed to the speaker in interpretation will be true by the interpreter's lights.

There is a question here about whether the interpreter *can* only proceed by assuming that the speaker believes what he believes to be true, maximizing the truth (by his lights) of those beliefs as he does so. This will, however, be postponed until consideration of the status of these claims involving the principle of charity, in section V. However before this, issues relating to the anti-sceptical force of the argument will be examined.

<div align="center">IV</div>

The preceding section reconstructed a line of argument for the hypothetical premise of Davidson's argument, 'The existence of beliefs requires the truth of most of those beliefs.' The task of this section is the evaluation of the anti-sceptical force of that argument. Discussion will focus on two areas, both related to the argument's conclusion. As was the case in the argument of the Refutation given in the previous chapter, there appears to be a disparity between the hypothetical premise as stated here, and that proven by stages (i)-(vi) of the argument above. For it seems that (i)-(vi) only yield the conclusion that 'The beliefs ascribed to the subject in interpretation will be true by the interpreter's lights', *not* the stated conclusion that 'Most of the subject's beliefs are true'. It thus seems that the proven conclusion and the stated conclusion differ in two respects. The first concerns a possible disparity between the 'beliefs ascribed to the subject in interpretation' and the 'subject's beliefs'. The second concerns the disparity between what it is for a belief to be 'true by the interpreter's lights' as opposed to 'true'. I shall discuss these issues in turn.

In addressing the first of these issues, it will be useful to articulate in full how the argument given in sections II and III is supposed to impact upon the sceptic's position, as specified in section I. The *argument* as stated above is premised on the existence of a set of beliefs, and is held to spell out one of the necessary conditions of those beliefs

<div align="center">60</div>

existing, namely, that they should be mostly true. The *sceptic* claims that it could be that a majority of his beliefs are false about the world. The argument is intended to relate to the sceptic's position in the following way. The sceptic accepts that he has a set of beliefs. The argument is then held to specify a necessary condition of his having those beliefs, namely that those beliefs are mostly true. If the argument is correct, the sceptic's claim that whilst he has beliefs, it could be that most of them are false, is refuted.[77]

Even if we elide, for the moment, the disparity (to be considered later) between 'true by the interpreter's lights' and 'true', the following issue regarding the argument's anti-sceptical force may arise. The argument (i)-(vi) can establish of a set of beliefs ascribed in interpretation that those beliefs are true. If this argument is to impact upon the sceptic's position, then the sceptic's beliefs will have to be identified, at least in the main, with the beliefs which would be ascribed to him in interpretation. For unless this is the case, it appears that the sceptic can maintain that the possible falsity of *his* beliefs are unaffected by the truth or falsity of the beliefs that would be ascribed to him in interpretation. In what follows, I intend to consider the plausibility of the claim that the sceptic's beliefs should be identified, at least in the main, with the beliefs which would be ascribed to him in interpretation.[78] [79]

How might one argue, then, for this identification? Consider any methodologically basic case of interpretation. In such a case, the interpreter will assign contents to the subject's beliefs and sentences on the basis of what he thinks has caused the subject to

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[77] The sceptic claims that $\Diamond$[S has beliefs & ¬most of S's beliefs are true]. This is equivalent to ¬□ [S has beliefs →most of S's beliefs are true], which is the negation of the hypothetical premise of the argument.

[78] To deny that the argument impacts on his position, the sceptic would need to argue not only that there is *a* difference between his beliefs and the beliefs ascribed to him in interpretation, but also that this difference will be large enough to prevent the truth of the ascribed beliefs affecting the possible falsity of his beliefs.

[79] From Davidson's perspective, it is immediate that the sceptic's beliefs are just those beliefs that would be ascribed to him in interpretation. For the content of a belief state is the meaning of a sentence held true, and the meaning of a sentence held true is the interpretation it would get from a radical interpreter. However, in order to evaluate the anti-sceptical force of the argument, we need to consider the sceptic's perspective, as well as Davidson's.

hold sentences true. If Pascal utters 'Voila un lapin', just as it appears to me that he has noticed, as I have, a rabbit running across the field, I will assign the content 'There goes a rabbit' to that sentence. Is it, then, the case that an interpretation will be 'right' if the interpreter correctly identifies what causes the utterance? It seems not. For if what ran across the field was in fact a dog, which Pascal had mistakenly identified as a rabbit, this fact would not cause Pascal's belief to have the content 'There goes a dog'. Plausibly, to be correct, the interpreter must identify what, in the speaker's opinion, has caused his (the speaker's) utterance.[80]

In normal contexts, we are quite good at identifying the states of affairs which, according to speakers, cause their utterances; consider how one does interpret when one is learning a foreign language. This is grounded in the fact that, if two subjects, Pascal and I, are in a public situation containing mutually observable states of affairs, certain similar types of events will cause certain beliefs in us. Instances in which we differ in our judgements of what has caused an utterance, such as that above, are the exception, rather than the rule. This, in turn, seems to be grounded in the fact that our belief forming mechanisms – in this instance, our perceptual systems – are relevantly similar, and that there exist uniform causal laws. Furthermore, we take ourselves to know all of these facts. However, if Davidson's sceptic is to accept that the argument as stated is to have bearing upon his position, it seems that he will have to take himself to know these facts also. For this appears to be required if he is to concede that the beliefs ascribed to him in interpretation will be sufficiently similar to his beliefs for him to accept that the truth (in the main) of the latter follows from the truth (in the main) of the former.

If this is right, it will entail that the argument will not have 'bite' against a sceptic who doubts the existence of this type of 'interpretative context', in particular, a sceptic who

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[80] It is not clear that Davidson, as a strong content externalist, would think this.

claims that all of his beliefs could be false about the world. [81] For given that he doubts

the possibility of such an interpretative context, he will doubt any claim which requires

that possibility. In particular, he will doubt whether his beliefs, known to him presumably

through introspection, can be identified with the beliefs that would be ascribed to him in

interpretation.

Should we, then, give up on Davidson's argument, or are there other, legitimate forms

of scepticism according to which the existence of an interpretative context, such as that

outlined above, would be accepted? Initially, it might seem so. For consider a sceptic

who concedes the truth of certain of his very general beliefs about the world. Thus, he

concedes the existence of an external world containing publicly available objects, the

existence of causal laws and another language user, but doubts the truth of his more

specific beliefs, and seeks a reason for supposing that these are true in the main. He may

even justify the limitation of his doubt as follows. The existence of a sceptical position

might be thought to be dependent on the existence of a scenario which is consistent with

a sceptical hypothesis. Cartesian scepticism, as presented in Meditation I,[82] entails that it

be possible that there does not exist a world of mind-independent objects located in

space; if one is a Cartesian sceptic, one may need to accept this scenario *as* a possibility.

However, if one accepts this, one may have to accept the possibility of Cartesian

immaterialism,[83] which one might not want to do. For arguably, this position is

incoherent, since Cartesian minds are not equipped with adequate principles of identity

or individuation.[84] As a result, one may want to consider an alternative sceptical scenario

that is able to generate a similar problem, for example, the possibility that I am a Brain-

in-a-Vat, being caused to have certain experiences by a scientist. Insofar as this scenario

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[81] Brueckner (1999: 234-8) argues that Davidson's argument lacks force against Cartesian
scepticism for this type of reason.
[82] Descartes, (1984: 12-15)
[83] See McCulloch, (1999: 261-5), for discussion of the extent to which Cartesian scepticism can
be detached from Cartesian immaterialism.
[84] See Strawson, (1974).

involves the existence of an external world containing publicly available objects, causal laws and the existence of another language user, it might be thought to supply an interpretative context. Yet, it *is* still a sceptical scenario, thus may yield a legitimate form of scepticism against which Davidson's argument can be used.

Does, then, the scenario associated with Brain-in-a-Vat scepticism supply an interpretative context by virtue of which the sceptic's beliefs can be identified with the beliefs which would be ascribed to him in interpretation? The problem with supposing that this is the case is that it seems in this situation, the same event is not causing the same type of belief in the speaker (our sceptic, his brain envatted) and the other language user (our scientist). A certain stimulation of nerve-endings by this scientist will make it appear perceptually to the speaker that there is a rabbit, whereas it will do no such thing for the scientist. It thus seems that the argument will not affect Brain-in-a-Vat scepticism, since an 'interpretative context', the existence of which needs to be conceded by the sceptic if the argument is to be useful against him, requires that speaker and interpreter be in a relatively similar context.

Davidson himself would not concede this point, since for him,

"what [methodologically basic beliefs] are about is a matter of the causal interaction of the world with the speaker. There is no 'internal' content of a belief..." [85]

However, his position is not intuitively plausible. More importantly in the present context, it is difficult to think of a sceptic that will accept it. For sceptical scenarios typically require that one's thoughts do have an 'internal' content which does not, in some appropriate sense, match its external content. It thus seems to be the case that Davidson's argument may only be used against a sceptic who concedes the existence of

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[85] Klein, (1986: 379)

an 'interpretative context', where it seems that to accept this is, at least typically, to accept a lot.[86]

I shall now turn to the second issue that may affect the anti-sceptical force of the argument. Let us, for ease of presentation, elide the apparent disparity between the 'subject's beliefs' and the 'beliefs ascribed to the subject in interpretation'. As was noted earlier, it seems that the argument, as stated in section II and III, faces another difficulty. For whilst it does seem to be a condition of interpretation that the subject's beliefs are 'true by the interpreter's lights', it does not seem to be a condition of interpretation that those beliefs are *true*. Premises (v) and (vi) of the argument given above do appear to entail that if an interpreter believes that a subject believes a certain range of propositions, he will also believe that those propositions are true. However, whether those propositions are in fact true is a further question.

The existence of a belief-reality gap in this instance can perhaps be substantiated by appeal to possible situations in which it would be exemplified. There currently exist virtual reality simulators which are sufficiently sophisticated for subjects to be able to act upon and be acted upon by one another via sensors, on the basis of shared perceptual illusion. Consider a situation in which this state is extended and the participants — say Pascal and myself — in the illusion are unaware that the course of their experience is illusory. It appears that my interpretation of Pascal would proceed, at least as far as Pascal and I were concerned, precisely as it was described in the discussion of radical interpretation in section III. Pascal (apparently) assents to 'Il pleut' whenever I believe that it is raining, and as a result, I ascribe to him the belief that it is raining in these circumstances, and so on. On this basis, I am able to specify truth conditions for his sentences and understand his utterances of them. It thus seems entirely possible that

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[86] A sceptical scenario will, in fact, be introduced shortly which does involve an interpretative context. However, the example is somewhat baroque.

"speaker and interpreter [should] understand one another on the basis of shared but erroneous beliefs", [150] as would be the case here for Pascal and me. It thus appears that in regard to this argument, Davidson's sceptic can, to paraphrase slightly, insist that "it is enough to make [belief] possible if we believe that [a subject's beliefs are true]...but that [the subject's beliefs] needn't actually be true."[87]

There have been efforts by Davidson and others to close this gap, most notably in the case of the 'Omniscient Interpreter Argument', given at [150-1].[88] These efforts will not be considered here. For it seems that plausibly, the only way in which the argument will be able to yield the claim that the beliefs of the *subject of interpretation* are largely true, is if it is also claimed that the beliefs of the *interpreter* are largely true. However, it seems clear that the sceptic is under no obligation to accept this additional claim, at least without further argument.

It thus appears that this transcendental argument is, as was the Refutation, merely belief-directed rather than truth-directed. The very most that interpretation requires is that most of a subject's beliefs are believed to be true, and this does not entail the truth of those beliefs.

<center>V</center>

The final section of Chapter One specified certain theoretical presuppositions that may be involved in the use of transcendental arguments. I shall now use this section to articulate certain preliminary conclusions relating to these presuppositions, which will be drawn on in Chapter Four. To recap, it was suggested that transcendental arguments may presuppose that:

(1) Our possession or exercise of certain cognitive or conceptual capacities is the type of thing that is relatively 'immune to sceptical attack'

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[87] Stroud, (1968: 255)
[88] See also Davidson, (1977: 200-1). For pertinent criticism of this argument see Rasmussen, (1987).

<center>66</center>

(2) These cognitive or conceptual capacities have necessary conditions. Furthermore, the propositions stating that these capacities have such necessary conditions (a) are knowable a priori and (b) are necessary truths

In what follows, discuss issues relating to whether and how these presuppositions are made in the case of Davidson's argument.

With regard to (1), it is clear from section IV that Davidson's argument does not make use of this presupposition. The argument is premised on our exercise of the capacity for a certain type of propositional thought, that is, belief. According to the sense of 'belief' used in the argument, the claim that we have beliefs – in *this* sense – is precisely the type of claim that a sceptic will reject. For in the argument, 'belief' is elliptical for 'belief as ascribed in interpretation'. Given that this is so, the claim that 'Beliefs exist' is open to a variety of sceptical doubts, for its truth is dependent on the existence of an interpretative context, involving an external world containing publicly available objects, causal laws and another language user in a relatively similar context, for whom my beliefs are knowable. It is thus difficult to see our exercise of the capacity for this type of thought as even relatively 'immune to sceptical attack'. In the case of this argument, (1) was not presupposed, and as a result, the argument will lack anti-sceptical force.

In order to reach some preliminary conclusions relating to (2), we need to consider what can be said about the status of the premises employed in the argument. It will be useful to consider these premises in adjacent pairs, for the premises in each pair appear to have similar types of status. To begin, consider:

(i) Beliefs exist only if sentences which are understood are held true

(ii) Such sentences exist only if sentences have meaning

These premises are plausibly viewed as expressing relations between ideas or concepts, namely the concepts of belief, communication and sentence meaning. In the case of (i): if one possesses the concept of belief, one will, at least implicitly, know that to have a belief is to

hold a sentence true. (It may be the case that one comes to the explicit realization about the nature of belief by reflecting on the nature of beliefs we actually have.) In the case of (ii): if one knows what a sentence is, one will know that sentences essentially have a communicative role, which can only be fulfilled via their having meaning.

It thus seems that these T-ly necessary premises presuppose truths about the concepts of belief, communication, and sentence meaning.

Consider now:

(iii)   Sentences have meaning only if meaning is determinable.

(iv)   Meaning is determinable only if language is interpretable on the basis of observable evidence

In what follows, I shall concentrate on the nature of, and argument for, premise (iii). For it seems that (iv) follows from this claim and the supposition that what is publicly accessible is just what is observable. As was indicated earlier, this supposition appears dubitable, thus I shall not consider how (iv) might be justified. Thus:

(iii)   Sentences have meaning only if meaning is determinable.

This premise appears to specify an a priori, conceptual requirement on anything that may count as sentence meaning. It seems that this type of conceptual truth will be known through the process of conceptual analysis, which may be viewed as revealing relations between concepts which are grounded in the possession conditions for those concepts. Consider the argument as offered here. A constituent of an analysis of sentence meaning is proposed, namely determinability, and a hypothetical situation considered where this constituent is absent. One then follows through the consequences of this, and discovers that the absence of this constituent generates incoherence elsewhere in one's conceptual framework, in that it violates one's conception of what it is for us to communicate successfully. Thus, the justification for this claim is grounded in our conceptions of communication and language.

It thus seems that this T-ly necessary premise presupposes truths about our concepts of

communication and language.

The final premises to be considered are:

(v)   Language is interpretable on this basis only if the principle of charity is used

in interpretation

(vi)   The use of the principle of charity in interpretation entails that the beliefs

ascribed to the subject in interpretation will be true by the interpreter's lights

In considering the nature of these premises, I intend to focus on the nature of Davidson's

principle of charity, for it is the invocation of this principle that is central. The principle is

initially introduced as methodologically necessary: an interpreter needs to make assumptions

about what the speaker believes, and in order to do this, the interpreter needs to assume that

the speaker's beliefs are subject to the principle of charity.

However, it is not clear that this principle should be viewed as specifying some type of

empirical, procedural constraint. For consider an objection of Quine's to what is claimed in

(v) and (vi). Quine suggests that:

"I would maximize the psychological plausibility of my attributions of belief to the native,

rather than the truth of the beliefs attributed. In the light of some of the natives' outlandish

rights and taboos, glaring falsity of their utterances is apt to be a psychologically more

plausible interpretation than truth."[89]

Thus, there is a suggestion not only that the interpreter need not proceed in this way, but

also that his interpretation will be more successful if he does not proceed in this way.

An insight into the status claimed for the principle of charity can be gleaned by

consideration of how Davidson would respond to this objection. Consider the following:

"The methodological advice to interpret in a way that optimizes agreement should not be

conceived as resting on a charitable assumption about human intelligence that might turn

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[89] Quine, (1999: 76)

out to be false. If we cannot find a way to interpret the utterances and other behaviour of a creature as revealing a set of beliefs largely consistent and true by our own standards, we have no reason to count that creature as rational, as having beliefs, or as saying anything."[90]

It thus seems that this principle is held to articulate the nature of whatever we can count as rational or as a belief, that is, it is held to state a truth about our concepts of rationality and belief. However, it is not clear that knowledge of this principle can be explained purely in terms of relations between concepts which are grounded in the possession conditions for those concepts. The principle of charity requires that speaker's thoughts display "a degree of logical consistency", but also that they be caused by certain "features of the world".[91] *Whilst it seems that the former requirement could be involved in the concept of rationality and belief, this is not clear of the latter.*[92] *As a result, it is difficult to see how Davidson's claim about the conceptual connection between the principle of charity and the concepts of rational belief might be substantiated.*

In any case, it seems that the T-ly necessary premises (v) and (vi) will presuppose certain truths about our concepts of rationality and belief.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

In this chapter, I have offered a detailed interpretation and analysis of a paradigmatic example of a transcendental argument, in order to address certain issues, relating to the nature and presuppositions of such arguments, raised in Chapter One. In brief summary: this argument was found to be belief-directed, but did not presuppose that the cognitive capacity mentioned in the categorical premise was 'immune to sceptical attack'. Preliminary conclusions were also reached concerning the character of the clauses which constitute the hypothetical premise. These results, as well as those reached in the

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[90] Davidson, (1973: 137)
[91] Davidson, (1991: 211)
[92] At least, it is not obvious from a non-Davidsonian perspective.

previous chapter, will be used in the following chapter, to explicate the notion of T-

necessity, the conception of a priority presupposed by transcendental arguments, and the

issues relating to transcendental arguments and scepticism.

Chapter Four: Necessity, A Priority, and Scepticism

The task of this chapter is to draw some general conclusions about the nature of transcendental arguments on the basis of what has been discussed in the preceding three chapters. In Chapter One, a specification of this type of argument was constructed, and certain questions were raised about such arguments. Transcendental arguments were specified as involving a category of T-necessary truths. However, what precisely this category amounted to was unclear. It was noted that transcendental arguments involve a priori knowledge. However, questions were raised about what such arguments require with respect to the nature and scope of such knowledge. The relation between transcendental arguments and scepticism was considered, in the light of Stroud's critique of such arguments, and questions asked about the anti-sceptical force of such arguments, if it should appear that Stroud is right. It was also asked whether transcendental arguments require that one conceive of and describe our cognitive and conceptual capacities in a certain way, and if so, why.

At the end of Chapter One, it was argued that in order to address these issues, specific transcendental arguments would need to be considered. As a result, in Chapter Two I presented an interpretation and discussion of Kant's Refutation of Idealism, with the above questions in mind. In Chapter Three, I followed a similar course of action with Davidson's argument for the Veridical Nature of Belief. In both of these chapters, preliminary conclusions were drawn, and I intend to use this material in addressing the issues articulated above. Clearly, one must employ some caution in drawing conclusions on the basis of just two arguments in areas where generalization may be illegitimate. When such areas are under discussion, I shall draw attention to the fact.

This chapter will be structured as follows. In section I, I intend to examine what content can be given to the notion of T-necessity and to consider the extent to which

viewing transcendental arguments as involving such necessity requires one to postulate a link between conceivability and possibility. In section II, I shall address the question of what the transcendental arguments here considered have presupposed with respect to the nature and scope of a priori knowledge. In section III, I shall consider the relation between transcendental arguments and scepticism, in the light of the preceding chapters. Articulating this relation will involve consideration of what the use of transcendental arguments requires one to presuppose regarding the nature of cognitive and conceptual capacities, thus issues relating to this presupposition will also be discussed. In section IV, I will discuss the conclusions reached in this chapter, and thus the thesis as a whole.

<div align="center">I</div>

In Chapter One, it was noted that the hypothetical premise of a transcendental argument is T-necessary, in that $\Box[p \rightarrow q]$. However, it was also noted that it was unclear what this category of necessary truth amounted to. The task of this section is to address this issue, albeit incompletely, on the basis of the examples of transcendental arguments considered in detail in the previous chapters.

Plausibly, these chapters have yielded several examples of T-ly necessary truths. If it is allowed that the necessary condition specified in the hypothetical premise of any transcendental argument is T-ly necessary and that the arguments that have been given here are genuine examples of transcendental arguments, then each constituent clause of the hypothetical premise, i.e. (i), (ii), and so forth, in Chapters Two and Three, states a T-ly necessary truth. However, it seems that in order to give some content to the category of T-necessity, some general conclusions need to be drawn on the basis of these examples.

Before addressing how one might offer some type of general characterisation of this type of necessity, it will be worth mentioning some concerns that one might have about the validity of this approach. A characterisation of T-necessity is to be offered on the

basis of examples of premises of arguments which are claimed to involve this form of necessity. Whilst the transcendental arguments upon which the characterisation is based are accepted to be paradigmatic examples of this type of argument, it should be noted that only two such arguments have been considered. Furthermore, the interpretations of them may differ from those typically offered, and even if these interpretations are accepted, the conclusions reached about the nature of the premises employed may be disputed. One could thus object to the extrapolative approach in general, or to the basis of the extrapolation. I shall say little about the latter: the interpretations and analyses put forth are, I believe, plausible. Regarding the former: reasons independent of the extrapolation will be given for thinking that the characterisation to be offered here of T-necessity does satisfy certain of the characteristics sometimes ascribed to the type of necessity conceived to be involved in transcendental arguments. It will thus be argued that an extrapolation is justified, and that the specification of T-necessity to be offered may be viewed as a substantive, if perhaps partial, characterisation of the type of necessity to be involved in a transcendental argument.

To return to the main issue: how is the general characterisation of T-necessity to be arrived at on the basis of the examples of truths which are held to involve this type of necessity, namely, the constituent clauses of the hypothetical premises involved in the arguments which have been offered? In Chapter One, a distinction was drawn between absolute and relative necessities. It was suggested that relative notions of necessity could be characterized in the following way:

"whenever we have a more or less definite body of propositions constituting a discipline D, there can be introduced a relative notion of necessity – expressible by 'It is D-ly

necessary that' – according to which a proposition will be D-ly necessary just in case it is true and a consequence of D."[93]

Adapting this to the case of T-necessity, it seems that one can characterize what it is for a proposition to be T-ly necessary as follows: a proposition will be T-ly necessary where that proposition is true and a consequence of T, where T is a set of propositions.

This kind of specification will be vacuous unless the types of proposition that feature in T are specified. However, if they are specified, this will yield a characterisation of the notion of T-necessity. I thus intend to proceed as follows. As a result of the discussion in Chapters Two and Three, we are in possession of certain examples of T-ly necessary truths. If, therefore, we can articulate at some suitably general level, the types of proposition that are presupposed by these truths, we will arrive at a characterisation of T, which can be used to specify a general category of necessity. I shall then argue that the category of necessity thus specified satisfies certain criteria which the notion of necessity involved in a transcendental argument might be thought to involve. First, I shall specify the types of proposition that can be said, on the basis of our examples of T-ly necessary truths, to feature in T.

The interpretation and analysis of Kant's Refutation of Idealism, offered in Chapter Two, suggested that the following types of propositions will feature in T:

(a)   Propositions concerning relations between ideas or concepts[94]

(b)   Propositions concerning the nature of consciousness

(c)   Propositions concerning the phenomenology of inner experience

The interpretation and analysis of Davidson's argument for the Veridical Nature of Belief, offered in Chapter Three, suggested the following types of propositions in addition:

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[93] Hale, (1997: 488).
[94] If such conceptual truths are true in every possible world, then they need not be included in T. However, that they are so true is a substantive philosophical thesis, which shall not be assumed.

(d)   Propositions concerning the concept of belief

(e)   Propositions concerning our concepts of communication and language

(f)   Propositions concerning our concept of rationality

What, then, can be said at a general level about the types of propositions specified in (a)-(f)? These propositions appear to have a distinctive subject matter: they are concerned with the nature of our experiential lives and our conceptual framework.[95] Precisely what is being claimed here needs to be explained. It is claimed that propositions of types (a), and (d)-(f) are concerned with our conceptual framework. However, as will be argued shortly, it is also claimed that propositions of types (b) and (c) are not naturally viewed as having this subject matter, for such propositions are about the *nature* of our phenomenology or inner experience, and are not plausibly viewed as conceptual truths. Thus, the claim that these propositions are concerned with 'the nature of our experiential lives and our conceptual framework' is held to be distinct from the claim that these propositions are concerned with our conceptual framework, including those aspects of it that concern our experiential lives. It is the former that is intended here, but which also, perhaps, is more controversial.

This claim about the subject matter of the propositions to feature in T will be defended in the following way. I intend to recapitulate and build on part of the discussion of premise (ii) of the argument of the Refutation of Idealism, originally given in section V of Chapter Two. This is, I take it, a relatively uncontroversial example of the 'right' type of premise to feature in a transcendental argument.[96] It will be argued that the truth of this conditional claim presupposes the truth of a proposition, Kant's framework principle, which is a truth concerning the nature of our experiential lives which cannot be plausibly viewed as conceptually true. I shall then argue that there are reasons for

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[95] It will be argued in section II that they also have a distinctive (a priori) epistemological status, but this claim will not be considered in this section.
[96] This could not be said of all the constituent premises which have been discussed, especially in Davidson's argument.

thinking that this example is not an anomaly, but rather that the set T may be conceived as containing propositions of this type in the general case.

The premise that will be discussed is:

(ii)   Consciousness of a change in mental state requires an intuition whose content is that change

It was argued previously that the argument for this premise relies on two claims. The first *is* a conceptual truth, namely the claim that 'to be conscious of x is to be immediately or non-inferentially aware of x'. The subject matter of this premise, therefore, is that part of our conceptual framework which is concerned with the concepts employed to describe our experience. Thus, this proposition is *not* a proposition concerned with 'the nature of our experiential lives', as that notion has been introduced above. However, it will be claimed that the second proposition upon which the argument for this premise relies, Kant's framework principle, *is* such a proposition. I shall now defend this claim.

As has been noted previously, the framework principle is a principle about the nature of cognition which states that consciousness requires intuitions and concepts. It was suggested in Chapter Two that this principle about the nature of consciousness is a claim made on the basis of the nature of the conscious experience that we have been aware of having. We can, therefore, reasonably think that this principle is true of the consciousness that we have, and that – since the argument concerns ourselves – this principle can be invoked in, and is a legitimate constituent of, the argument under consideration. However, it is not naturally viewed as a conceptual truth. For first, it is not, at least according to the above account, justified on the basis of reflection on the *concept* of consciousness or conscious experience. Rather, it seems to be justified on the basis of something more like observation; observation of 'inner' conscious experience, true, but observation nevertheless. Secondly, it is not clear that such a claim could be justified on the basis of such reflection. For it does not seem that the notion of non-

intuitive, or non-conceptual, consciousness involves obvious conceptual incoherence; indeed, animals and babies are typically viewed as possessing the latter.

There appears to be nothing to rule out the possibility that there are other propositions of this type presupposed by the form of necessity involved in the hypothetical premise of a transcendental argument. Premise (iii) of the Refutation, 'An intuition whose content is a change in mental state requires a distinction between intuition and object of intuition', yields another example, insofar as it is justified by consideration, at the phenomenological level, of what our awareness is like, and we believe needs to be like, if we are to intuit change. It thus appears that one cannot assume that all the propositions that are presupposed by this form of necessity are accurately characterised as conceptual truths. There are, to be sure, propositions which are properly classified as having this character, however, the above reflections seem to suggest that some of the propositions in T are not of this type.[97]

Suppose that this claim about the subject matter of the types of propositions to be included in T is accepted. Thus, the following general characterisation can be offered of the propositions included in this set: they are propositions concerning the nature of our experiential lives and our conceptual framework. Suppose also that this set is used, in the way articulated above, to specify a general category of necessity. In the remainder of this section, I intend to consider whether the category of T-necessity thus specified can be plausibly viewed as an appropriate form of necessity to feature in the hypothetical premise of a transcendental argument. This will be done by assessing this notion

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[97] If the status of a philosophical proposition is unclear, it is frequently tempting to ascribe it the status of a 'conceptual truth', without examining whether it is genuinely of this type. It might be suggested that this type of 'catch-all' approach to the category of conceptual truth has, historically, resulted in creating confusion regarding the notion, which in turn has led to people supposing that it lacks explanatory utility.

according to certain characteristics that Robert Stern suggests that an appropriate form of necessity should satisfy, as follows.[98]

Stern's first suggestion is that an appropriate form of necessity for a transcendental argument should not presuppose the truth of any empirical propositions, for two reasons.[99] The first is that such empirical claims may be doubted by a sceptic who questions our empirical knowledge. As a result, a necessity claim that presupposes their truth will be dubitable for him. The second is that, generally, a philosophical claim "can rarely be overturned through empirical considerations, but will require conceptual arguments to show that it is incoherent, and on what grounds."[100] It seems that T-necessity satisfies the condition Stern suggests, and as a result avoids the difficulties that an empirically based form of necessity may face. T-necessity presupposes the truth of propositions concerning the nature of our experiential lives and our conceptual framework, which will not be doubted by the sceptic. Furthermore, it seems that although certain of these propositions are not conceptually based, they may still reveal incoherence in a philosophical claim, for the claim may be shown to be in tension with an incontrovertible feature of our experiential lives.

Stern also suggests that the hypothetical premise of a distinctively transcendental argument should specify "modal truths that constitute neither natural nor logical constraints, but something in between..."[101] For present purposes, we do not need to

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[98] See Stern, (2000: 8-9). I do not intend to question in depth what grounds these characteristics.
[99] Or, at least, two tenable reasons. Stern also gives two other reasons. The first was dispensed with in n. 23. The second relies on the claim that the hypothetical premise should be "distinctively philosophical", which it will not be if it presupposes empirical truth. However, what it is for a claim to have this putatively distinctive character is unclear, for we lack a criterion for distinguishing philosophical from non-philosophical claims. As a result, this 'reason' does not, without further explanation, appear to be significant.
[100] Stern, (2000: 9)
[101] Stern, (2000: 9)

understand precisely why this is held to be the case,[102] but merely whether T-necessity *does* specify a modal constraint which is neither natural nor logical. It seems plausible that T-necessity does not specify a merely 'natural' constraint on what is possible, for the propositions in T are not about the natural world. However, the issue of whether the constraint specified by this form of necessity is not logical is perhaps more difficult to decide. I intend to address this issue indirectly, by considering the following question: is the set of possible worlds in which T-ly necessary truths are true identical with the set of possible worlds in which logically necessary truths are true?

Logically necessary truths are true in every possible world. It is arguable that the same can be said of conceptually necessary truths, although this thesis is debatable. However, it is not clear that this will be true of the class of T-ly necessary truths, taken as a whole. For it is not clear that propositions concerning the nature of our experiential lives are true in every possible world. Consider, once again:

(ii)   Consciousness of a change in mental state requires an intuition whose content is that change.

The truth of the premise presupposes the truth of the framework principle. Previously in this section, it was argued that the framework principle does not specify a condition on anything that may be counted as a form of consciousness, but is (merely) true of the form of consciousness that we have. Let it be allowed that the notion of a non-intuitive consciousness is coherent, perhaps on the basis that we can conceive of a non-sensory, wholly intellectual form of consciousness, and consider a possible world in which this type of consciousness is the only form of consciousness possessed. It seems possible that this is a possible world in which the T-ly necessary proposition expressed by (ii) is false.

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[102] This necessity's distinctness from natural necessity has already been argued for; its claimed distinctness from logical necessity is in all likelihood inherited from the Kantian claim that transcendental claims are *synthetic* a priori, not analytic.

This example is clearly not conclusive. However, it does suggest that the set of possible worlds in which T-ly necessary truths are true may be non-identical with the set of possible worlds in which logically necessary truths are true. If this is the case, then T-necessity may be argued to specify a modal constraint which is not merely logical. It would thus seem that T-ly necessary truths may 'constitute neither natural nor logical constraints, but something in between...', as Stern requires. If these claims are correct, it appears that T-necessity may be an appropriate form of necessity to feature in the hypothetical premise of a transcendental argument.[103]

To conclude this section: what does viewing the hypothetical premise of a transcendental argument as involving a T-necessity claim imply with respect to the assumption of a connection between conceivability and possibility? It seems that a connection such as 'x could be ϕ iff it is possible to conceive of x's being ϕ' will need to be assumed. For suppose that the transcendental arguer views the hypothetical premise as T-ly necessary, that is, $\Box[p \rightarrow q]$. Thus, he claims that q is a condition for p in those possible worlds in which propositions of types (a)-(f), concerning the nature of our experiential lives and conceptual framework, are true. In justifying this type of modal claim, it seems that the transcendental arguer will have to rely on the existence of a link between possibility and conceivability. For it would seem to be based on his reasoning that he cannot envisage how p could obtain without q in any circumstance in which propositions of types (a)-(f) are true, thus that this circumstance would not be possible.

II

The task of this section is to articulate and evaluate the conception of a priority that is presupposed by the transcendental arguments that have been considered in Chapters Two and Three. This is important for two reasons. First, the term 'a priori' has been used

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[103] That is, on the assumption that we do want to view the hypothetical premise of such an argument as involving a necessity claim.

throughout the thesis, in connection with propositions, truths, and knowledge, without a precise specification of how this term is intended to be understood. This has been intentional, for I have not wished to presuppose a particular conception of the a priori. However, as will be discussed shortly, there are variant conceptions of this form of knowledge, and something should be said about which of these coheres with the claims and arguments here considered. Secondly, it is sometimes held that the notion of a priori knowledge has been discredited, in virtue of Quine's arguments against its possibility.[104] Clearly, it will be beyond the scope of this discussion to articulate these arguments in detail and, therefore, to explain in full the impact they will have on the notion of a priority presupposed by the transcendental arguments under consideration. However, some explanation of this latter issue will be given. For clearly, if the transcendental arguments considered here presuppose a conception of a priority which is problematic, and it is accepted that these arguments are representative of the class of transcendental arguments, this class of arguments will be viewed as problematic also.

This section will thus proceed as follows. First, I shall introduce a priority, explaining the central ideas involved in the notion. I shall also explain some differences in how this notion may be conceived. Secondly, I shall articulate the conception of a priority that appears to be employed by the arguments of Chapters Two and Three. Thirdly, I shall discuss whether this type of a priority appears problematic, in the light of Quine's arguments against the notion of a priori knowledge. Lastly, I shall discuss, briefly, whether the conception of a priority that has been employed in these arguments can be taken to be representative of the conception of a priority employed by transcendental arguments in general, and what may follow from this.

The notion of a priority can be explained in terms of what it is for a proposition to be a priori. An a priori proposition can be defined as a proposition "which can be known to

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[104] In Quine (1935) and (1951).

be true without any justification from the character of the subject's experience."[105] An a priori truth is a true a priori proposition. If an a priori proposition is known by a subject to be true, he will be in possession of a priori knowledge.

If an a priori proposition is a proposition which can be known without any justification from the character of a subject's experience, one's conception of a priority will be dependent, at least in part, on one's construal of 'experience'. This notion can be understood in several ways. One may take it to mean "perceptual experience of the world beyond the speaker's body". On this construal, 'I am in pain' is an a priori proposition, for the subject's belief that he is in pain is not justified by the character of any experience of the world beyond his body. One may take it to mean "any perceptual experience, whether of the external world, or of the thinker's own bodily states and events".[106] On this construal, 'I am in pain' would not count as an a priori proposition; however, 'I am thinking about what I will get for my birthday' will so count. One may offer a broader construal of 'experience', under which neither of these self-ascriptions will be a priori. In what follows, the question of how the notion of experience is to be understood in the notion of a priority presupposed by the arguments under consideration will be addressed.

Another issue that will be addressed concerns what the transcendental arguer under consideration presupposes regarding the scope of a priority, that is, the types of propositions which he conceives to be a priori. As the above discussion indicates, this will be influenced by the way in which he construes 'experience'. However, one's conception of the scope of the a priori is not determined by one's construal of 'experience'. It is also dependent on one's conception of the nature of the a priori, in particular, on one's conception of what we can have a priori knowledge about. For instance, on a 'rationalist' view of a priori knowledge, as traditionally conceived,

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[105] Boghossian and Peacocke, (2000: 2)
[106] Boghossian and Peacocke, (2000: 2)

propositions about the nature or structure of external reality are a priori. On an 'empiricist' view of such knowledge, as traditionally conceived, such propositions are not conceived to be a priori.[107] Typically, 'empiricism' of this form allows that there are propositions which are a priori,[108] but will hold that these propositions are about our concepts, or linguistic meanings, rather than external reality. In what follows, the question of scope will be addressed both by considering the transcendental arguer's conception of experience and his conception of what a priori propositions are about.

Another aspect of one's conception of the nature of the a priori, related to one's conception of its scope, is one's conception of its source. To inquire about the source of a priori knowledge is to ask: in virtue of what does such knowledge arise? One can respond to this question in a variety of ways, and the way in which one responds to it will need to complement one's view of the scope of the a priori. The 'rationalist' view of a priority mentioned above conceives of the source of a priori knowledge to be the faculty of rational intuition, since such a faculty is held to be required if propositions about the structure of external reality are to be knowable a priori. On the other hand, if one were to hold that the scope of a priori truths extends to certain 'conceptual truths', one may view a source of a priori knowledge to be our concepts having certain possession conditions. Alternatively, if one's conception of experience is such that self-ascriptions are counted as a priori, introspection will count as a valid source of a priori knowledge. In what follows, an account of how the transcendental arguer conceives of the source of a priori knowledge will be offered.

What, then, can be said about the conception of a priority that is presupposed by the arguments of Chapters Two and Three with respect to the issues articulated above? This question will be answered primarily by reference to the conception of a priority

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[107] Cassam (2000) offers these characterisations of 'rationalist' and 'empiricist' views of a priori knowledge in terms of 'scope' and (to anticipate) 'source'.
[108] See BonJour, (1998), for a discussion of a form of 'radical empiricism', which does not allow that there are a priori propositions.

presupposed by the hypothetical premises of these arguments. For as was noted in the discussion of the nature of the premises of a transcendental argument in Chapter One, it is the hypothetical premise of a transcendental argument that is standardly conceived to have an a priori epistemological status.[109] The first issue that I shall address concerns how these arguments construe the notion of experience.

The argument of the Refutation appears to involve a conception of experience that is something between the first and second construals of experience mentioned above. It was argued in the previous section that the justifications of some of the constituent clauses of the hypothetical premise involve the phenomenological character of our conscious experience. Thus, the character of the justification is certainly not independent of 'any perceptual experience, whether of the external world, or of the thinker's own bodily states and events'. However, in virtue of the fact that the phenomenological features invoked are not 'bodily', it seems that the character of this justification is not merely independent of 'perceptual experience of the world beyond the speaker's body'. Rather, it seems that – perhaps unsurprisingly, given the sceptical target of the argument – the construal of experience intended might be characterised as 'perceptual experience of the world beyond the speaker's mind', although the nature and accuracy of this construal need not be considered in detail.

Initially, Davidson's argument may appear to involve the broadest construal of 'experience' suggested above. For prima facie, it appears that the constituent clauses articulate conceptual relations, which may be known to be true without any justification from the character of one's particular conscious experiences, whether perceptual or otherwise. However, on closer inspection, 'experience' may be better construed as 'any perceptual experience, whether of the external world, or of the thinker's own bodily

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[109] The categorical premise *may* have such a character. However, the key feature accepted to pertain to its epistemological character is that it be 'epistemically beyond reproach relative to a dialectical context ϕ', where this need not entail its a priority.

states and events'. For it was suggested in section V of the previous chapter that certain of the claims about the nature of belief and rationality invoked in the hypothetical premise can be viewed as justified on the basis of our awareness of the character of the beliefs we actually have. Whilst, therefore, the justifications of these claims do not involve the character of a given, particular conscious experience – as would, for instance, the justification of the claim "I am thinking about what I will get for my birthday' – their justifications do seem to involve the character of various, particular conscious experiences. If these reflections are correct, it would seem that these arguments construe experience in a sense at least as narrow as 'perceptual experience, whether of the external world, or of the thinker's own bodily states and events'.

It was noted above that one's construal of 'experience' influences one's conception of the scope of the a priori, that is, what we can have a priori knowledge about. In the present case, the construal of experience used by these arguments entail that propositions about our thoughts, sensations, and experiences will be included in the propositions he accepts as a priori. Thus, for the transcendental arguer, the category of a priori knowledge includes what may be termed "particular self-knowledge".[110]

What else, then, can be said about the scope of a priority, according to the transcendental arguer? It seems that the arguments under consideration do not indicate that propositions about the nature or structure of external reality are a priori. For first, the subject matters of the constituent clauses of the hypothetical premises do not concern external reality. Rather, those of them that are not instances of self-knowledge appear most plausibly viewed as concerning relations between our ideas or concepts. Secondly, this feature of the scope of a priority is reinforced by the fact that the arguments under consideration are belief-, not truth-directed. For it would appear, at least in these cases, that the a priority of the premises of these arguments would entail

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[110] Cassam, (1994: 1)

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the a priority of their conclusions. [111] Thus, if an argument were truth-directed, and if it's categorical and hypothetical premises could be argued to be a priori, the scope of a priority presupposed by the argument would appear to include propositions about reality. However, since the arguments being discussed are belief-directed, this consideration does not apply.

This implies that the propositions conceived by the transcendental arguer to be a priori are self-ascriptive propositions, and propositions concerning conceptual relations. According to this conception, a priori knowledge has two sources: introspection and the possession conditions of our concepts. In what follows, I shall assess the acceptability of this conception of a priority, in terms of scope and source, in the light of Quine's influential critique of the notion of a priori knowledge.

Quine has two main lines of argument against the notion of a priority. The first runs as follows. Quine suggests that if a priori knowledge is to be accepted as a legitimate form of knowledge, we must have an explanation of how it can occur. However, such an explanation cannot take the form of postulating a faculty of rational intuition or insight, for the notion of such a faculty is both unclear and mysterious. If this kind of explanation is ruled out, a priori knowledge can only be explained on the basis of the assumption that grasp of meaning suffices for knowledge of truth, which requires that there be sentences that are true purely in virtue of meaning. But according to the argument of 'Truth by Convention', there can be no such sentences.[112] So a priori knowledge is not explicable, thus cannot be accepted as legitimate. Quine's second line of argument turns on the claim that sentences which are knowable a priori would be unrevisable. However, the correct view of our epistemic system, as articulated in the

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[111] This cannot always be assumed to hold, as the 'overshoot problem' which is sometimes held to be a consequence of content externalism, may demonstrate. See e.g. Boghossian (1997a) for an outline of the difficulty.
[112] Quine, (1935)

'web-of-belief' model,[113] entails that no sentences are unrevisable. Thus, there are no sentences which are knowable a priori.

Neither of these lines of argument affect the conception of a priority presupposed by the transcendental arguer. The first line of argument is an argument against the existence of sentences that are true purely by virtue of meaning, the existence of which is not required by the transcendental arguer's conception of a priority. The second line of argument is an argument against the existence of unrevisable sentences. In a similar way, the existence of these is not presupposed by the transcendental arguer's conception of a priority. For neither the existence of self-ascriptive propositions nor the existence of propositions concerning conceptual relations require the existence of sentences with these putatively uninstantiable properties. Furthermore, it seems that we do have an – albeit currently incomplete – explanation of how a priori knowledge can occur, in terms of introspection and the possession conditions of concepts, which is independent of the notion of rational intuition. Quine does not, therefore, create problems for the transcendental arguer's conception of a priority.

The preceding discussion focuses on the conception of a priority employed by the arguments of Chapters Two and Three. Detailed examination of whether it would extend to transcendental arguments more generally would require examination of those arguments. However, it does not seem unduly optimistic to think that it will be so extendable. The transcendental arguments that have been considered here are held to paradigmatic examples of such arguments, yet, they are very different in character. However, they employ a similar conception of a priority, and there is no obvious reason why this conception of a priority should be restricted to these particular arguments.

If this should be the case, two remarks can be made about a priority in the context of transcendental arguments. First, it appears that the viability of transcendental arguments

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[113] Quine, (1951)

is not adversely affected by the conception of the a priori that such arguments presuppose. This is a positive result for the proponent of such arguments. Secondly, it appears that, in order to examine in more detail the nature of the a priori propositions which constitute and ground the hypothetical premises of these arguments, the transcendental arguer will need to develop his understanding of both the nature of conceptual knowledge and of particular self-knowledge. Whilst the former is commonly accepted as an important factor in transcendental arguments, the latter is not. However, if the argument of this section and the preceding section is right, a significant amount of particular self-knowledge is presupposed by the nature of transcendental arguments, and as a result, our understanding of this form of knowledge will assist our understanding of this kind of argument.

<div align="center">III</div>

In Chapter One, several issues were introduced concerning the relation between transcendental arguments and scepticism. In the light of Stroud's critique of such arguments, the role of an anti-sceptical purpose in our conception of such arguments was discussed, and certain questions about the ability of a transcendental argument to fulfil such a purpose were raised. Also, it was suggested that the use of transcendental arguments may require a proponent of them to conceive of cognitive or conceptual capacities in a particular way, that is, as being 'relatively immune to sceptical attack.' These issues will be revisited in this section.

For the purposes of this discussion, Stroud's critique can be usefully represented in the following way: [114]

(i)   Transcendental arguments have an anti-sceptical purpose.

(ii)   Only truth-directed arguments can serve an anti-sceptical purpose.

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[114] Stroud would not himself present his critique as forcefully as this, nor would he necessarily subscribe to (v).

(iii)   Transcendental arguments can be truth-directed only if they invoke idealism or verificationism.

(iv)   If an argument invokes idealism or verificationism, it cannot fulfil an anti-sceptical purpose.

Therefore,

(v)   There is no genuine category of transcendental arguments.

In what follows, I intend to consider how, in the light of previous chapters, a proponent of transcendental arguments should respond to this critique. In particular, I shall consider which premises, of (i)-(iv), he should choose to reject.

I take it that (iv) is to be accepted, since an argument which involves either idealism or verificationism will fail to provide a response to the sceptic's concern. (iii) is generally accepted, for it is noted that transcendental arguments are premised on subjectively accessible psychological facts, and it is not clear how statements about facts of this kind can entail non-mental truths about the world, unless some form of idealism or verificationism is invoked.[115] Insofar as the arguments considered in Chapters Two and Three involve precisely the type of belief-reality 'gap' that Stroud suggests may only be bridged by invoking idealism or verificationism, they give no reason to reject (iii). If this is accepted, it follows that a proponent of transcendental arguments will need to reject either (i) or (ii).

In recent years, several proponents of transcendental arguments have argued, against (ii), that belief-directed transcendental arguments have force against the sceptic.[116] These arguments shall not be considered here, since it is beyond the scope of this section to present and evaluate them in any detail. Furthermore, I believe that whilst it may be the

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[115] See Stroud, (1994: 234).
[116] See especially Walker, (1989a); Stroud, (1994); Stern, (2000).

case that the transcendental arguer can reject (ii), there are strong arguments for his rejecting (i), irrespective of his view on (ii). I shall now argue for this claim.

In section III of Chapter One, it was argued that a claim such as (i) should be rejected, on the grounds that there is something like a category mistake involved in the inclusion of the (anti-sceptical) purpose of a type of (transcendental) argument in one's specification of that type. For the purpose to which an argument is put is a feature of the use of an argument, not the argument itself. (To recap: consider a situation in which a particular argument, consisting of certain premises connected in a certain way is used for two different purposes. In such an instance, the nature of the identity conditions for arguments entails that there is just *one* argument under consideration, irrespective of the ways in which it is used.) Similarly, the purpose which a type of argument may serve is a feature of the (successful) use of instances of that type, not the type itself.[117]

However, there are arguably additional reasons for rejecting (i), which relate to the way in which the transcendental arguer conceives of cognitive and conceptual capacities. In order to explain these, I shall first discuss the presupposition mentioned in Chapter One, which a transcendental arguer was hypothesised to make, concerning the nature of our cognitive and conceptual capacities, in the light of the results yielded by Chapters Two and Three. The hypothesised presupposition was:

(1) Our possession or exercise of certain cognitive or conceptual capacities is the type of thing that is relatively 'immune to sceptical attack'

It was suggested that for this to obtain, the transcendental arguer would have to employ an 'internalist' conception of the mental.

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[117] Note that what matters to (i), and what should matter to (i), is the purpose which the argument actually serves, not the purpose for which the argument is designed. The arguments of Chapters Two and Three may seem to have been designed for an anti-sceptical purpose; however, whether an argument has anti-sceptical force is primarily a feature of what it actually does, not what it is designed (but may fail) to do.

This hypothesis and its proposed corollary were found to apply in the example of the Refutation of Idealism, discussed in section V of Chapter Two. It was argued that since the sceptic had to accept the categorical premise of the argument if it were to get off the ground, he needed to view his present tense conscious mental states as transparent or knowable with certainty, irrespective of his doubt about the external world. To take this view is to accept an 'internalist' conception of mental content, according to which the existence and character of one's mental life is conceived to be essentially distinct from the existence and character of the external world. However, this hypothesis was found not have application in Davidson's argument. As was argued in section IV of Chapter Three, exercise of the capacity upon which the argument is premised – that is, the capacity for propositional thought – appears not to be 'immune to sceptical attack', according to any of the obvious conceptions of 'scepticism'. The reason that this is so is that the argument rejects an 'internalist' conception of mental content. The concept of belief it employs is equivalent to 'belief as ascribed in an interpretative context', thus, the existence and character of this aspect of one's mental life is not conceived as distinct from the existence and character of that public context. As a result, the argument has no obvious anti-sceptical use.[118]

What, then, should be concluded from these observations? A defender of (i) would, it seems, take them to entail that Davidson's argument is not a transcendental argument.[119] However, this seems to be a mistake, for the following reasons. First, Davidson's argument satisfies the specification of a transcendental argument, offered in Chapter One

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[118] There is obviously a question here about why, given that this is the case, Davidson *does* present his argument as being a response to a sceptical problem. My own view is that Davidson's conception of 'scepticism' is restricted in a certain way, for he regards externalism as an indubitable fact. Thus: he will not countenance even the coherence of any form of scepticism which rests upon an internalist conception of mental content, thus many of the forms of scepticism that are accepted by others to be denoted by 'scepticism'.
[119] Brueckner appears to take this view, in suggesting that Davidson's argument is not "a viable transcendental argument" in virtue of the fact that it "proceeds from an externalist theory of the content of intentional mental states". (Brueckner, (1999: 229))

on the basis of careful analysis of the literature.[120] Secondly, presupposition (1) is plausibly viewed as a presupposition of an argument's being used in a certain way, that is, to an anti-sceptical purpose, not of its being a particular argument, or type of argument. If one wanted to identify certain conditions of our awareness of mental change and used the argument of the Refutation for this purpose, one would not need to presuppose that our having this awareness is 'immune to sceptical attack'. One would need to accept that one had awareness of mental change: if one is to accept an argument, one needs to accept its premises as true. However, how one understood 'awareness of mental change', in particular, what one presupposed about the 'immunity to scepticism' of that capacity, would not be prescribed.

For these reasons, transcendental arguments do not presuppose (1), although if they are to be used to an anti-sceptical purpose, this presupposition may need to be made. In what follows, I intend first, to suggest a positive consequence of this fact. Secondly, I wish to ask the following question: if transcendental arguments do not presuppose (1), is there anything that they can be identified as presupposing regarding our cognitive and conceptual capacities? I shall address these issues in turn.

The positive consequence of the above is as follows. If transcendental arguments do not require presupposition (1), such arguments are not reliant on an internalist conception of the mental. This conception has been disputed in much recent epistemology and philosophy of mind, and may be mistaken. Arguably, therefore, it is desirable for the methodology of transcendental argumentation to be dissociated from this view of the mental.

If then, they are so dissociated, is there anything that such arguments do presuppose about our cognitive and conceptual capacities? Although this issue cannot be considered

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[120] The epistemological status of the categorical premise *is* 'epistemically beyond reproach relative to an (interpretative) context ϕ'.

in detail, it seems that, whilst these arguments may or may not presuppose something about the nature of our cognitive and conceptual capacities, they will presuppose something about the way in which these capacities are described. For the a priori methodology of these arguments suggests that a proponent of them will have to accept the validity of a certain level of description concerning the mind, namely, that which is available a priori.

<div align="center">IV</div>

This thesis aimed to examine the viability of transcendental arguments by considering the presuppositions involved in the use of such arguments. In Chapter One, a specification of this type of argument was formulated on the basis of existing specifications in the literature. Questions arose concerning three key areas. First, it was noted that whilst such arguments presuppose a form of necessity, what precisely this form of necessity amounted to was unclear. Secondly, it was claimed that whilst such arguments presuppose a priori knowledge, the conception of a priority that is presupposed required articulation, and subsequent evaluation. Thirdly, it was suggested that transcendental arguments presuppose that cognitive and conceptual capacities are relatively immune to forms of sceptical doubt, and as a result, presuppose what might be termed an 'internalist' conception of the mental.

In Chapters Two and Three, interpretations of two paradigmatic transcendental arguments, Kant's Refutation of Idealism and Davidson's Argument for the Veridical Nature of Belief, respectively, were given. These arguments were analysed with the intention of addressing the questions above.

In this final chapter, the results of these analyses have been collated. In section I, a substantive characterisation of the notion of necessity involved in a transcendental argument was constructed and assessed, with favourable results, according to certain criteria that an appropriate form of necessity was held to satisfy. In section II, the

conception of a priority presupposed by transcendental arguments was articulated, and found to be unobjectionable. In section III, it was argued that transcendental arguments as a class do not presuppose that our cognitive and conceptual capacities be relatively indubitable, and consequently do not presuppose an internalist conception of the mental. However, it was recognised that if such arguments are to be used against the sceptic, this presupposition will need to be made.

What, then, do these conclusions imply regarding the viability of transcendental arguments? The results are, I believe, positive. Whilst the characterisation, offered here, of the form of necessity involved in a transcendental argument may not be entirely correct, it has been possible to give the notion some content. It has, therefore, been shown that this form of necessity is not intrinsically vague or unclear. The notion of a priority presupposed by transcendental arguments is not objectionable, thus these arguments are not discredited by their reliance on the a priori. Finally, transcendental arguments do not presuppose an internalist conception of the mind, thus need not be rejected by those who reject such a conception.

We may, therefore, conclude that transcendental arguments are a viable means of argumentation, at least with respect to the issues considered here.

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