

The willful overthrow of Kantian consciousness

The preceding chapter is no more than an introduction to the philosophy of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, by which Western consciousness was raised for the first time into a higher cognition. This text should be allowed to speak for itself. But, it is a matter of some concern when **regressive forces** bring down such an achievement and involve the whole of civilisation in that fall. If it is done sincerely, then that is at least one thing; but if it is done unfairly, then that cannot in the fullness of time escape notice.

The trial of Immanuel Kant. When a person is accused of a crime, he is allowed a defence. Lawyers are appointed, and if the crime is a serious one, the accused is tried before a jury. The witnesses are enjoined to speak the truth, and the accused is also permitted to speak in his own defence. He may call his own witnesses and cross-examine those of the prosecution. We understand that Immanuel Kant could not defend himself in person, but when the twentieth century Positivists put him on trial, his defence was not conducted according the rules of justice, the witness of the text was not permitted to stand forth and speak for itself, and we may talk in terms of judicial malpractice.

Motives can be considered. I will not allow that a person's life, character and motives may be separated from his philosophy, for that is also an illusion of dogmatism. Since truth does not stand forth on the ground of indubitable method, then to take up a position is an expression of the person that one is. The true method is not only an examination of the evidence before one, but an examination of oneself. If the circumstances of one's childhood are such that one is brought to conceive an instinctive hatred of, say, Christianity, then it behoves one to be very careful when constructing a polemic against Christianity, lest one exposes oneself to the charge of *not knowing who one is*.

The **history of twentieth century philosophy** is a subject so vast, so encumbered by numberless documents that it would take an army of scholars working for hundreds of years to compose it, and still there would remain the problem of bias. The secret recesses of a person's motives and passions are hidden. An army of scholars working through mountains of letters, diaries and private papers might come to some conclusions, but only if they wanted to. How can one know a person who does not know himself? Strictly, the thing is too big for examination. But I will use the method of Alexander the Great (no great man) and cut through the Gordian knot: it is manifest that if a scholar fails to abide by the usual rules of scholarship, which include fairness to the dialectical opposition, and at least to quote his opponent plainly when he attacks him, then there is an ulterior motive; the scholar is not only not in command of the material, he is not in command of himself.

But before I use the sword of truth to cut the Gordian knot tied by the shameful prosecution of Immanuel Kant, I must explore those aspects in the work of Kant that have exposed him, perhaps more than needful, to an attack.

Hume. Kantian consciousness is not the work of one man. Kant is but the product of the age he lived in – Locke, Berkeley and Hume were significant. It was on reading Hume that Kant is said to have been awoken from his “dogmatic slumber”.¹ Kantian consciousness emerges through three stages: (1) realisation of the ideality of all appearances; the external world is understood to be a mental representation; (2) realisation that the mind is creative in the construction of this mental representation by imposing universals, structure upon appearances, rendering the external world intelligible; (3) realisation that that the mind in rendering the external world intelligible must also impose fundamental categories upon experience, and hence that the mind has a transcendental faculty of Imagination that synthesises subjective space and time; hence also, the mind is not a being in space and time, and as Self transcends it.

In Berkeley and Hume, the first of these stages had been reached.² Hume was led to posit that it was the mind itself that constructed our instinctual beliefs in such things as the uniformity of nature and substance; he transcended Locke’s view of the mind as a *tabula rasa*; in so doing, he posited the unconscious mind in the most mechanical description he could find.

¹ “I freely admit that the remembrance of David Hume was the very thing that many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave a completely different direction to my researches in the field of speculative philosophy.” Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (1783).

² For example, Hume writes: “To begin with the question concerning external existence, it may perhaps be said, that setting aside the metaphysical question of the identity of a thinking substance, our own body evidently belongs to us; and as several impressions appear exterior to the body, we suppose them also exterior to ourselves. The paper, on which I write at present, is beyond my hand. The table is beyond the paper. The walls of the chamber beyond the table. And in casting my eye towards the window, I perceive a great extent of the fields and buildings beyond my chamber. From all this it may be infer’d, that no other faculty is requir’d, beside the senses, to convince us of the external existence of body. But to prevent this inference, we need only weigh the three following considerations. First, That, properly speaking, ‘tis not out body we perceive, when we regard our limbs and members, but certain impressions, which enter by the sense; so that the ascribing a real and corporeal existence to these impressions, or their objects, is an act of the mind as difficult to explain, as that which we examine at present. Secondly, Sounds, and tastes, and smells, tho’ commonly regarded by the mind as continu’d independent qualities, appear not to the sense as situated externally to the body. The reason, why we ascribe a place to them, shall be consider’d afterwards. Thirdly, Even our sight informs us not of distance or outness (so to speak) immediately and without a certain reasoning and experience, as is acknowledg’d by the most rational philosophers.” – David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge. Book I, Part IV, II – Of scepticism with regard to the senses. p. 190.

... as we call every thing CUSTOM, which proceeds from a past repetition without any new reasoning or conclusion, we may establish it as a certain truth, that all the belief, which follows upon any present impression, is deriv'd solely from that origin. When we are accustom'd to see two impressions conjoin'd together, the appearance or idea of the one immediately carries us to the idea of the other.³

Hume concludes that the mind unconsciously constructs the reality we experience, but he uses the term “custom” to describe the mind’s unconscious power to do this, which he conceived of as a mechanical principle. Hume had not wholly ascended to the second stage of Kantian consciousness and had failed to realise in full the active principle of the mind in the construction of human reality; and beyond that, the transcendental aspect of human identity. Nonetheless, custom (mechanical instinct) stands to the sensible world in Hume as Imagination stands to the intelligible world in Kant.

The ascent into Kantian consciousness presents difficulties; there is the pull of Cartesian cognition upon it, pulling Kantian consciousness back into the Either/Or of Cartesian consciousness – it is difficult to grasp that all explanation in terms of time, space, causality and substance belong primarily only to the realm of phenomena, and that the mind itself cannot be explained using such terms.

The **Either/Or** of Cartesian consciousness presents itself and intrudes: Either Cartesian dualism and the ethic of ascetic denial of the Flesh, Or Positivism/Stoicism and subjectivist ethics, that may issue in ethical egoism or utilitarianism, depending on the subjective bias of the individual.

The ethical argument against the Either/Or: either asceticism leads to the problem of shadow, and constellates its opposite in cruelty, or Positivism leads to the conviction that the person/soul is an illusion, or, if not an illusion in life, it is annihilated at death, and hence constellates despair and nihilism.⁴

³ *Ibid.*, p. 102

⁴ Consider the following statement made by a contemporary doctor: “... in my humble opinion dying is probably not as bad, as you’re expecting. We’ve stopped talking about dying. We’ve stopped mentioning the D words. Instead of saying ‘dead’, we say ‘passed’ or ‘passed away’. Instead of saying “dying” we might say “seriously ill”. And families don’t understand that death is approaching, when those words are used. And that is in fact a bit of a problem for us. And so now a family will sit around the bed of someone so sick that they will be dying and not know what to say, and not know what to say to each other, and not know what to say to the dying person. And the dying person does not know what to say either. And doesn’t know what to expect, wondering whether each breath might be their last breath. A scene of sadness and anxiety and despair.” [Kathryn Mannix, Free Thinking Festival, March 2018.] We cannot talk about death, or celebrate it, because we have concluded that it is certain that death is annihilation. One cannot go up to a loved one and say, “By tomorrow you will be permanently annihilated from the universe.” So much for Stoicism. Some Romans managed it, but they had the Roman archetype to support them; all we have are doctors.

Revolution in ethics. The Kantian revolution of consciousness is also a transcendence of this Either/Or. It is above all a revolution in ethics. Kantian consciousness liberates us on both sides of the Either/Or.

Transcendence of despair. We transcend the despair of Positivism/materialism in the realisation that at the minimum our uncertainty about death has been restored; we realise that in faith we either are a transcendent being, not a part of space and time, which is merely a theatre before the mind, or at least *might be*. So, we can go towards our death cheerfully, because it is in faith a “lifting of the veil”.

Transcendence of puritanism. We transcend the ascetic conclusion of dualism – we are not a Fallen being, corrupted by original sin, our Flesh and our desires are as inalienable to us as our reason. Our incarnation is not the trapping of a soul in a body, but a manifestation of the soul to itself, as in a mirror. The business of life is to get on with living, replete with all its fructifying passions.

Was Kant himself thus liberated? Kant existed on the boundary between his own revolutionary consciousness and the other species of consciousness that were contemporaneous to him, and hence his own statement is a complex mixture of (a) Kantian consciousness, including its ethical revolution; (b) Enlightenment consciousness, with the Either/Or; (c) Positivism. It is because of this complex melange that Kant excites contradictory opinions and emotional responses from opposed camps.

His puritanism. Although Kant subscribed in *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* to the heresy that early Christianity falsified the original message of Jesus of Nazareth into a religion of sin as desire – he in the same book signs up to the fundamental medieval Christian notion of original sin. Hence, at one and the same time he takes us forward into a new religious consciousness while allowing himself to be pulled backwards into the old one.

Kant was a complex of emotional ties that pulled him in different directions, and his placidity was to an extent merely apparent. Emotively, there were elements in the old Enlightenment world that he wished to preserve, elements of Christian puritanism. Nonetheless, “During his thirties, Kant appears to have loosened, or completely broken, the commitments he once had to organized religion; he began to lead a lively social life and (contrary to common caricatures of the lifelong bachelor) even had several love affairs.”⁵ So, Kant was a flesh-and-blood man after all, prone to colourful dressing and drinking parties! On the other hand, Kant was brought up in a pietist community, and his mature ethics did not express any part of the possibly licentious activities of the younger or perhaps older Kant.

⁵ Stephen Palmquist’s *Introduction to Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* xvii, in Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. Indianapolis/Cambridge, 2009, Translated by Werner S. Pluhar. It is possible that the expression “several love affairs” is an exaggeration; one would like to believe it were true.

Kant and Positivism. Kant was also as subject as anyone living to the “temptations” of popularity and modified his own theories to make them more acceptable to the public. He stood in the very centre of the Positivist spirit of the age and he made his reputation in the service of it. Kant was an outstanding natural scientist. In his early work, the *General History of Nature and Theory of the Heavens* (1755) he was the first scientist to propose the nebular hypothesis that the solar system was formed from gas; he deduced that the Milky Way was a disk of stars formed from the condensation of a spinning cloud of gas. In his tracts on the Lisbon Earthquake (also 1755) he was the first to form a theory of the causes of earthquakes, explaining them by means of the movement of huge subterranean caverns of hot gasses, not far in principle from the theory of plate tectonics; he is said to have founded the science of seismology. These works are said to have been bestsellers.

Reaction to hostile public reaction. Kant’s development of the consequences of Kantian consciousness were met with by hostility or incomprehension. His *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* was subject to censorship by the German government, and his *Critique of Pure Reason* was regarded as difficult. Under the threat of imprisonment, Kant agreed not to publish anything more on religion during the lifetime of Friedrich Wilhelm II, and he rewrote the *Critique*, dropping those parts that most clearly express his breakthrough into Kantian consciousness. His *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* suppresses yet further “transcendentalism” and slips into the mainstream Positivist passion for providing an epistemology for science.⁶ Heidegger in his *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* points out the differences between the First Edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) and the Second (1787).

... in the second edition Kant struck out both the principal passages in which he had earlier expressly included the power of imagination as a third basic faculty, along with sensibility and understanding. The first passage is replaced... The second passage, however, was omitted in

⁶ On the question of the alleged difficulty of Kant, I think this must stem from the dislike people have for reading, because I cannot find a single page of this work which is not crystal clear. However, I have heard it said that German scholars prefer to read the English translation by Norman Kemp Smith because it is easier than the German original, and I can see that that might be true. Ultimately, what is intellectually difficult about the proposition that the Mind, equipped with a transcendent faculty of Imagination, makes the natural world by “constructing” space and time? “Thus the order and regularity in the appearances, which we entitle nature, we ourselves introduce. We could never find them in appearances, had not we ourselves, or the nature of our mind, originally set them there.” *Critique*. A 123. “The reproductive synthesis of the imagination is to be counted among the transcendental acts of the mind. We shall therefore entitle this faculty the transcendental faculty of imagination.” *Critique*. A.101. What could be clearer than this?

the course of the revision of the Transcendental Deduction as a whole.⁷

Heidegger observes that in the Second version Kant suppressed the centrality of the doctrine of Imagination. Already by 1783 the *Prolegomena*, ostensibly written to introduce the *Critique* and clarify it, makes no mention of this doctrine and places the *Critique* wholly within what will be the Positivist concern with the grounding of natural science.⁸ Heidegger points us in the direction of an aspect of Kant's motives.

In the radicalism of his questions, Kant brought the "possibility" of metaphysics to this abyss. He saw the unknown. He had to shrink back. It was not just that the transcendental power of imagination frightened him, but rather that in between [the two editions] pure reason as reason drew him increasingly under its spell.⁹

Kant shied away from **the potential revaluation of all values**. There is contained in Kantian consciousness an opportunity for a complete revaluation of all our moral thinking. But this may be perceived as a threat. Neither Kant nor his public were ready for it. In contemporary times we are in the throes of a moral revolution caused by the destruction wrought by Positivism on the norms of Christian ethics – the situation is debilitating for us. But in Kant's time, Positivism had not yet made its assault on Christian ethics, and the consensus remained that the Christian ethic was the right one. A Christianity divested of its embarrassing claims to immediate revelation was urbane and congenial; it supported the on-going patriarchy and by it men regulated the sexual conduct of women; marriage was the central pillar of public morality. But the Enlightenment had already called into question the theoretical foundation of that public morality, and Kant believed he saw a way out. He thought he saw a way of saving "objective" morality through **pure practical reason**. He thought he could ground faith in immortality practically, and he thought

⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Fifth Edition, Trans. Richard Taft. Indiana University Press. 1990. Section 31.

⁸ That Heidegger shares my interpretation of Imagination in the synthesis of space and time can be inferred from his work, but even he shies away from explicit clarity. (1) "How, then, are space and time there as well? ... they are intuited in the manner of an original, formative giving." [Section 28.] (2) "... this pure schematism, which is grounded in the transcendental power of imagination, constitutes precisely the original Being of the understanding, the 'I think substance,' etc." [Section 29.] Apparently, this reading of Kant that I share with Heidegger is opposed by the Marburg School of Kant Interpretation which is "to apprehend space and time as 'categories' in the logical sense..." Heidegger has usefully pointed us in the direction of understanding the regressive nature of the revision Kant made to the *Critique* and illustrates the embarrassment that Kant's theory of the Imagination has caused. Heidegger, *Kant, Op cit.*

⁹ Heidegger, *Kant, Op cit.*, Section 31.

that should be enough to put off the apprehension of despair that a deterministic universe conjures. The doctrine of the transcendence of Imagination subordinates Reason and raises the prospect in morality of an absolute and transformed Freedom; hence, Kant had a motive in reversing that tendency, and subordinating Imagination to Reason in his subsequent revisions; he dropped the doctrine of Imagination.¹⁰

Kant's moral philosophy is radical in its formation, but conservative in application. He drops the concept of sin as desire as the defining aspect of moral transgression and reverts to the Golden Rule – do unto others only as you would be done by – only more formally expressed in his first variant of the **categorical imperative**.

... The categorical imperative is “Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should be a universal law.”¹¹

The need for such a technical formulation arises because he believes that he can derive it in this form from pure reason alone.¹²

Kant's ethical theory fails to achieve what it sets out to achieve. We must consider what life is first. If I walk down a street I must have a reason for it – that is a purpose, end, motive or goal. Ends are stacked up in sequence: I am on my way to the shop, to buy food, to feed myself and my family, to survive, and be happy. The categorical imperative in its first formulation is purely a formal constraint on my conduct. It says, that in walking down the street I cannot treat any other person on that street as a mere obstruction; I must treat persons as persons. The categorical imperative is the law against sin as transgression that Jesus of Nazareth and others have so eloquently expressed. But that law does not tell me why I am on the street in the first place. We cannot derive ends from formal constraints on means. The constraint to means is by no means trivial; nor for that matter is it easy to live by. Certainly, the morality of a nation can be tested by how long it takes for any piece of property left unguarded in a public place to be purloined. People are struggling right now with respecting the Golden Rule; breaking it daily – many start the morning

¹⁰ What Heidegger says about Kant's motives in the whole of Section 31 of his book is instructive. I am following Heidegger's analysis in agreeing that Kant made Reason central to his ethics, and consequently dispensed with his troublesome doctrine of Imagination. I agree also with Heidegger that his was a retrograde error.

¹¹ Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

¹² His argument proceeds along these lines: man is not free if he makes his morality conditional upon consequences; his Reason dictates that only in following the dictates of Reason is he free. Therefore, in obeying Reason, he must make his morality wholly independent in principle of consequences. Hence, the categorical imperative.

with the very intention to “prosper” by breaking it. The categorical imperative is not trivial.

Limitations of Kantian ethics. Does it achieve what it must achieve? Kant thinks it does, and in his *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals*, he sets out four examples whereby he seeks to derive an end-directed motive from this formal constraint on means. These examples are: (1) against suicide; (2) against making a false promise to obtain money in need; (3) against neglecting self-improvement and against indolence as a way of living; (4) against living without acts of charity. In each case a rule governing ends is held to follow from the principle of contradiction expressed in the Golden Rule. My view is that none of these examples succeed in that respect.

Even if it is granted that the examples prove everything Kant hopes they prove, we have still not gained thereby a purpose in life. Suppose I grant that his first example proves that it is immoral to commit suicide, what should I do next? Suppose I know that I may not make promises intending to break them, but what work should I do? Suppose I know that I may not neglect my talents, but which of my talents should I nurture first, and how? Suppose I know that I should be charitable, if I can be, but to whom should I give this money? We cannot live by Kant’s ethic alone; we need something more.

Vulnerability to attack. By his twofold abandonment of his own Kantian consciousness, Kant exposed his ground-breaking *Critique of Pure Reason* to a double attack. Firstly, by allying himself with the incipient spirit of positivism, Positivists could argue that his theory was not sufficiently empirical; that as a positivist, he failed. Secondly, by allying his ethics to the Reason/Desire dichotomy, he motivated those ethically opposed to medieval Christianity to bring his philosophy down. That in principle Kant became the last defence of Christianity against the onslaught of Positivism is correct; hence, those Positivists opposed to Christianity that did not care to look too nicely into the ground-breaking core of his philosophy, were content to bring the whole structure down.

So-called Nineteenth Century Idealism. The Positivist attack upon Kant was occasioned by the apparent fact that the nineteenth century was the century of Kantian idealism. This is an illusion because the nineteenth century idealists owed more to Descartes and Hegel than they did to Kant, so Kant was barely understood in it. Nonetheless, the Positivists were right to attack Kant, because in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, any future positivism is already overthrown. So, the regressive Positivism had to pull down the progressive tendency of Kantian cognition, so that it could regress.

While everyone everywhere in the nineteenth century praised Kant, there is little evidence that Kant was well-understood, and almost every act of praise is tainted with a little or a lot of criticism. When philosophers were claiming to build and go beyond Kant, they were reverting to Descartes, and in the case of Hegel,

Schopenhauer and Husserl this is explicit. Hegel goes to great pains to distinguish his philosophy from that of Kant, and he explicitly takes as his epistemological foundation the Cartesian cogito.

Reason is the certainty of being all reality. ... It is the first positive character which self-consciousness *per se* is aware of being, and ego is, therefore, merely the pure, inner essence of existence, in other words, is the *Category* bare and simple. The category, which heretofore had the significance of being the inmost essence of existence – of existence indifferent to whether it is existence at all, or existence over against consciousness – is now the essential nature of simple unit of existence merely in the sense of a reality that thinks. To put it otherwise, the category means this, that existence and self-consciousness are the same being, the same not as a matter of comparison, but really and truly in and for themselves.¹³

In what is underlined above, Hegel affirms the Cartesian cogito as the foundation of certainty (no Socratic mincing there) – I am conscious, he says, therefore, I am a being endowed with substance – or in Hegel's words, I am "a reality that thinks" or in me "existence and self-consciousness are the same being". He inaccurately attaches this dogma to the Kantian term "category". Elsewhere, he is at pains to deny the Kantian distinction between phenomena and noumena or interpret it differently. The appearance of idealism in his philosophy is superficial. He thinks that we know reality directly.¹⁴

¹³ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, Section C (Free concrete mind), V. Certainty and Truth of Reason. Trans. J. B. Baillie. Dover. New York. 2003. p.135. It has been noted by many authors that Hegel is a turgid writer, and it is not my place to apologise here for the obscurity of the above writing.

¹⁴ It is another huge project of exegesis, to sort out the history of nineteenth century philosophy, and to debunk the myth that it had very much to do with Kant. Under the pretence of an evolution of Kantian philosophy, nineteenth century philosophy was a late attempt on behalf of Cartesian sympathisers to bolster the Cartesian system, albeit tinged with aspects of eighteenth century idealism. Schopenhauer agrees with Hegel in this. "Descartes was probably the first to attain to the degree of reflection which this fundamental truth demands, and consequently he made it the starting-point of his philosophy, though provisionally only in the form of sceptical doubt. By his taking the *cogito, ergo sum* ['I think, therefore I am'] as the only certainty, and by his provisionally regarding the existence of the world as problematical, the essential and proper starting point of all philosophy was found, and at the same time its true focus, which is essentially and inevitably the subjective, the individual consciousness." *The World as Will and Idea*, Supplement to Book One: the Standpoint of Idealism. It is ironic that Hegel and Schopenhauer concur in their agreement over the *Cogito*. Schopenhauer hated Hegel so much that he deliberately chose to lecture in the same time-slot as Hegel at Berlin university, where they were both professors. Schopenhauer's lectures were poorly

The damage to Kant goes further. Hegel hoisted on the back of lip-service to Kantian idealism a philosophy of “Spirit” and the “Absolute” that amounted to the affirmation of German Lutheranism as the pinnacle of all human spiritual development – it was the story of the chosen people all over again – but this time with the Germans standing for the providentially saved and saving.¹⁵ It is little wonder that a counter-movement to all this posturing and spiritual humbug was constellated: Hegel, Kant, German idealism, Christianity (never mind the “medieval” part), metaphysics and humbug came to be more or less synonymous. It had to come crashing down.

That **Positivism brought Kant down** should not be in question – for as a fact it is all around us. Positivism is the name of that general movement that has brought science to the forefront of everything we do and has raised it in our esteem as if onto a pedestal. In philosophy, Positivism stands for a suite of concepts of which empiricism, scientific rationalism, and realism are prominent. Materialism in its widest sense is everywhere implicit within the Positivist movement.¹⁶

A **trivial contemporary illustration** of the treatment by Positivists of Kant is provided by D.H. Mellor’s *Real Time II*; it is a tract dedicated to objective time, which is the object of investigation; the context is empirical science. There is only a token reference to phenomenology in this work – for example, Mellor writes, “These changes [in beliefs] in us, mostly prompted by our senses, are what makes us think of time as flowing, even though it does not flow.” He acknowledges “our undeniable experience of time flowing” but argues it “is no evidence that time really does flow.”¹⁷ The distinctive nature of subjective time makes no other appearance in this work.¹⁸

Subjectively, time flows.¹⁹ Subjectively, time is presented before consciousness, which for it is an extended, continuous present. This experience that can be directly

attended at first. No advocate of Kant could possibly agree to revert from the Sum (“I am”) back to the Cogito (“I think, therefore, I am.”).

¹⁵ Talking of the reformation and its rejection of medieval corruption, he writes, “The time-honoured and cherished *sincerity of the German people* is destined to effect this revolution out of the honest truth and simplicity of its heart.” He is referring to Luther, and it goes on. This is thinly veiled nationalism, and quite upsetting really. But his absolute philosophy was adopted in England and America and became for a time the academic philosophy of the universities.

¹⁶ In his polemic *The Trouble with Physics*, Lee Smolin protests the dominance of realism, abbreviating it to *RWOT*, and remarking that quantum mechanics “did not fit easily with realism”. Lee Smolin, *The Trouble with Physics*, Penguin. 2006. p.7.

¹⁷ D. H. Mellor, *Real Time II*, Routledge. 1998. p. 4.

¹⁸ That objective time requires disambiguation is the basis of the book, but there is no consideration of the question whether such a disambiguation is possible – that objective time is transcendent, and hence, in some sense, not knowable whatsoever does not appear as a feature of the work.

¹⁹ From a phenomenological point-of-view, it is true that time is experienced as flowing, but it does not follow even to a Kantian (or idealist) that time does actually flow. To say it flows is to place the

intuited by anyone who pays attention to it, by self-observation, is sometimes called the “specious present” to indicate its flowing, extended and continuous nature. Mellor expresses his attitude to this concept in a pun: “what is specious is the idea of a specious present, not the present itself.”²⁰

In contemporary academic philosophy, Kant continues as a lingering presence, as if there were the memory that sometime ago, Kant said something both important and potentially damaging to Positivism, and that something should be done to accommodate or neuter him.

In Mellor’s book there is an attempt to account for Kant’s statement that time is “nothing but the form of inner sense” – designated Kant’s *definition* of time – as if time required a definition – what possibly could a definition of time look like?

Thus if, to revive the example of chapter 1.5, I see a clock hand pass ‘1’ before it passes ‘2’, I know that I do, and similarly for other experiences: their time order is self-intimating. But then we could use this fact, as Kant does, to define time as ‘nothing but the form of inner sense’ (1781 B50), meaning that it is the dimension of our experiences, thus defining time order as the self-intimating order of these experiences.”²¹

Compare Mellor’s gloss concerning Kant’s “definition” of time as “the self-intimating order of these experiences” to what Kant writes.

Time is nothing but the form of inner sense, that is, of the intuition of ourselves and of our inner state. It cannot be a determination of outer appearances; it has to do neither with shape nor position, but with the relation of representations in our inner state.”²²

Not a definition, but an appeal to direct (phenomenological) experience distinguishing the experience of time from the experience of objects in space. Thoughts, for instance, occur in time, but not in space; hence we have inner sense of objects in time alone, which we call mental objects, and outer sense, of objects in space and time, which we call physical objects. The quotation Mellor has used to

movement of time within another objective time, and then argue that consciousness moves along that time, as if it were a vehicle in motion on a track.

²⁰ Mellor, *Time*, *Op. cit.*, p.9.

²¹ Mellor, *Time*, *Op. cit.*, p. 114. The quotation Mellor provides is from the second edition (B text) of the *Critique*, so the date is 1787.

²² Kant, *Critique*, B.50.

construct a “definition” has been cut-off mid-sentence by him, omitting the important “intuition of ourselves and of our inner state”.²³

An important event in the attack upon Kant was the essay by G.E. Moore entitled *Proof of an External World* (1939). I recollect a story that G.E. Moore toured with this essay/talk, or something like it, and holding up first one hand and then another, claimed to his audience that he had proven the existence of external things. My memory tells me that this “proof” was greeted with rapture by audiences in America. They positively shouted with delight, like being at a rock concert. G.E. Moore was decidedly influential. Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein, both influenced by him, are said to be the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century, but I suspect Moore took the prize, hurtling through the philosophical one hundred meters. I could refer the reader to Passmore’s excellent history of Modern philosophy.²⁴

Moore’s *Proof of an External World* is an extraordinary polemic. It is one hundred percent an attack on Kant, in which Kant is quoted – if at all – in isolated fragments – and the only extensive quotation is from the Preface to the second edition of the *Critique*.

It still remains a scandal to philosophy ... that the existence of things outside of us ... must be accepted merely on *faith*, and that, if anyone thinks good to doubt their existence, we are unable to counter his doubts by any satisfactory proof.

Moore’s essay contains ironic, if not downright sarcastic, statements that loosely relate to Kant’s philosophy, occasionally incorporating an extract from the *Critique*, but wholly without exposition. The implication is that Kant’s work is meaningless twaddle.

Now Kant, as we saw, asserts that the phrases ‘outside of us’ or ‘external’ are in fact used in two very different senses; and with regard to one of these two senses, that which he calls the ‘transcendental’ sense, and which he tries to explain by saying that it

²³ The context in which Kant makes this remark begins: “1. Time is not an empirical concept that has been derived from any experience. For neither coexistence nor succession would ever come within our perception, if the representation of time were not presupposed as underlying them *a priori*. Only on the presumption of time can we represent to ourselves a number of things as existing at one and the same time (simultaneously) or at different times (successively). 2. Time is a necessary representation that underlies all intuitions. We cannot, in respect of appearances in general, remove time itself, though we can quite well think time as void of appearances. Time is, therefore, given *a priori*. In it alone is actuality of all appearances possible at all. Appearances may, one and all, vanish; but time (as the universal condition of their possibility) cannot be removed.” *Critique*, B.46, A.31. p. 74-75.

²⁴ Passmore, *A Hundred Years*, *Op. cit.*

is a sense in which ‘external’ means ‘existing *as a thing in itself* distinct from us’, it is notorious that he himself held that things which are to be met with in space are *not* ‘external’ in that sense. ... What this supposed sense is I do not think that Kant himself ever succeeded in explaining clearly; nor do I know any reason for supposing that philosophers have ever used ‘external’ in a sense, such that in *that* sense things that are to be met with in space are *not* external.

Regarding the meaning of “outside of us” I refer my reader to my earlier discussion.²⁵ Here Moore’s argument goes, *I don’t understand Kant’s distinction (between the empirical and the transcendental); therefore, it is meaningless*. In a court of law, the accused can call his own witnesses, and cross-examine the witnesses for the prosecution. Here not just Kant, but all the eighteenth-century philosophers, Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume are arraigned on a charge of writing such twaddle that they did not even understand themselves, and it is sufficient to simply make the accusation for the accused to be found guilty.

What of the proof of the existence of external things? For “things” (plural) to exist, there must be at least two external things, so the problem in Moore’s conception resolves itself into just proving the existence first of one external thing, and then of another.

I can prove now, for instance, that two human hands exist. How? By holding up my two hands, and saying, as I make a certain gesture with the right hand, ‘Here is one hand’, and adding, as I make a certain gesture with the left, ‘and here is another.’

If seems in one sense that Moore is collapsing into naïve realism,²⁶ but his position is a little more systematic than that. In fact, Moore perfectly well understands what Kant is saying, but he *chooses to ignore Kant’s distinctions*. We might, perhaps, say that Moore was an existentialist after all. But a genuine (a sincere) existentialist would recognise the ground of faith on which he stands and acknowledge it in others. For Moore, it is common-sense that the external world (and it is just the one he is seeing) exists, and he elevates common-sense into a source of certainty. Moore’s realism is a species of philosophical realism, not “naïve realism”, for, on the grounds of “common-sense” he deliberately advocates realism; we can call it

²⁵ [Part II, Chapter 6, The body/soul problem, and also in the preceding chapter p.154 ff.]

²⁶ It is called naïve realism when a person unwittingly assumes that the external world that he sees and/or experiences exists independently of his mind; it is naïve, because he has failed to take into account the presence of his own consciousness in the act of perception and has failed to grasp that *if he were not conscious, the external world, the one that he is currently experiencing, would cease to exist*.

academic, “Positivist realism”. *The real world of “science” exists unambiguously; it is given to common-sense; all speculation as to the dependency of experience upon consciousness and of the presence of universals in experience (intelligible matter) is to be ignored.* Moore is being disingenuous when he says he does not understand Kant – he understands him well-enough.

There is a passage²⁷ in which Kant himself says that the expression ‘outside of us’ ‘carries with it an unavoidable ambiguity’. He says that ‘sometimes it means something which exists *as a thing in itself* distinct from us, and sometimes something which merely belongs to an external *appearance*’; he calls the things which are ‘outside of us’ in the first of these two senses ‘objects which might be called external in the transcendental sense’, and things which are so in the second ‘*empirically external* objects’; and he says finally that, in order to remove all uncertainty as to the latter conception, he will distinguish empirically external objects from objects which might be called ‘external’ in the transcendental sense, ‘by calling them outright things which are *to be met with in space*’.

Moore understands Kant well enough, and we observe in the above, that clarity emerges in cognition as soon as any part of Kant’s text is permitted to stand forth and present itself on its own merits. As Moore is dead, I can call him a liar. Moore deliberately choose to obfuscate the distinctions of Kant. The springs of his motivations seem to be lost in the blank aspect of his private life. All we know is that his father was a Quaker.

What materialism is. Regarding G.E. Moore’s proof of the external world, it is appropriate to quote Schopenhauer: “For materialism is the philosophy of the subject that forgets to take account of itself.”²⁸

“Common-sense” philosophy. In Moore’s earlier paper, *A Defence of Common Sense*, the things which he thinks are “common sense” beliefs and therefore certain are such things as the existence of his body, the external world, and the existence of the past and objective time. We then stumble upon **an extraordinary statement**, an entire subsection of the paper.

I have just explained that I differ from those philosophers who have held that there is a good reason to suppose that all material things were created by God. And it is, I think, an important point in my position, which should be mentioned, that I differ also from all

²⁷ He cites the *Critique*, A.373.

²⁸ Schopenhauer, *World as Will, Op. cit.*, Supplement to Book One: the Standpoint of Idealism.

philosophers who have held that there is good reason to suppose that there is a God at all, whether or not they have held it likely that he created all material things.

And similarly, where as some philosophers have held that there is good reason to suppose that we, human beings, shall continue to exist and to be conscious after the death of our bodies, I hold that there is no good reason to suppose this.

For two millennia the Western world has been committed to Christianity with its belief in the existence of God, that God created the World, and in the immortality of the soul. G.E. Moore announces that *it is common-sense that God does not exist, that the soul does not exist, that death is annihilation of the person*. Did the philosophy faculty of Cambridge University officially become atheist on the grounds of “common sense”?

There is no such thing as “common-sense”. There is cognition, which comes in types and stages, relative to epoch and culture. What Moore calls “common-sense” is the product of his education and socialisation; from childhood we Westerners are inducted into a way of cognising experience that predisposes us, should we become interested in philosophy at all, to Positivism.²⁹ “Common-sense” is **the lazy epistemology of Positivism**. It evades the problem of having to do some phenomenology; it is a form of fundamentalism, in which the Scriptures are *what you learned at primary school*.

All of this would not be worth mentioning were it not for the scope of Moore’s influence. That one man may get up on a soap box and preach, say, that ‘ $2 + 2 = 5$ ’ is not worthy of attention, unless he has a large body of followers who believe him. Moore was editor of the important journal *Mind*. And what a mass of followers Moore had – it is not Moore to whom we should give attention, but to the followers.

²⁹ The use of technology is accompanied from the earliest stages with explanations that construct for contemporary consciousness the model of an objective reality. At primary school this “objective reality” is socially constructed for us, as we are taught mathematics and science. Though mathematics has been for Platonists the very paradigm of a conceptual structure, demonstrating the transcendence of the mind over matter, this is by no means how it is presented in early schooling, and assuredly mathematical concepts are instrumental in constructing the notion of a stable and objective real world; reality is reflected in its uniformity; its uniformity is the ground of our ability to measure it. As for the appeal to “common-sense”, the reader should consider the degree of mathematical illiteracy in our society today, which should not be underestimated. Most people do not know their times-tables, and there are many adults who do not understand the distinction between an odd or an even number, nor could tell you what a prime number was. Yet, they live and breathe in this common world as well as you or I. It is quite possible that being “good” at mathematics is the abnormal state. There is no such thing as “common-sense”; it is a social construct.

What happened to the opposition? Did dialectical opponents spring up and reaffirm those Kantian distinctions so vital to the advance of consciousness?

We see in the work of Husserl and Heidegger that it is possible on the border of contemporary consciousness to defend a Cartesian/Kantian position – in other words to practice phenomenology. Husserl is the founder of that philosophical school.³⁰ Why then are there not more phenomenologists in the contemporary academic scene?

Self-perpetuating dogma. Contemporary academic institutions, wittingly or unwittingly, filter out the potential opposition. Once a dogma is established, members of the faculty are selected on the criterion of their affiliation to that dogma. It happened in the medieval period, when the dogma was Augustine. Today the dogma is Positivism. A uniform academic philosophy emerges – and in this case, it is Positivism that perpetuates itself.

The whole sorry problem would quickly resolve itself, if it were not possible to earn a living whatsoever in state-funded academia by being a professional philosopher. If, as in the ancient world, the philosopher had to recruit his own pupils and make his own school, or sell his books directly to the public, we would quickly see the full restoration of the dialectic. Students would know in advance what they were signing up to – whether it is Stoicism or Neo-Platonism. What does “linguistic philosophy” mean or stand for? It is state money channelled by academic governing bodies, that gives rise to a monolithic, self-perpetuating academic philosophy, which in this case is Positivism, and in the Middle Ages was medieval Christianity.

A detailed history of the triumph of Positivism cannot be undertaken here, but some of the landmark occasions, opening moves and seminal figures need to be mentioned. We should not shy away from asking that very big question – what were the motives? I take it that the main target of this movement is Christianity. Kant was understood to have sided in the final analysis with Christianity, with his duty ethic, so his work was also placed in the frame.

In the case of **Bertrand Russell**, the mainsprings of his motivation are transparent. His father, Viscount Amberley was a notable atheist, and his godfather was John Stuart Mill. Both his mother and father died suddenly, while he was still a child, and he was left in the care of his grandmother, Countess Russell, a Scottish Presbyterian. His elder brother is said to have rebelled against the atmosphere of emotional repression; Bertrand had a lonely adolescence, and suicidal thoughts. He found consolation at the age of eleven in the works of Euclid. At the age of fifteen he wrote in his diary:

³⁰ The story of Husserl’s visit to the United Kingdom would provide material for a witty tale. His conference was chaired by G.E. Moore. It is a pity Evelyn Waugh did not undertake to write the story.

I do wish I believed in the life eternal, for it makes me quite miserable to think man is merely a kind of machine endowed, unhappily for himself, with consciousness.

He touched upon the **despair** that is creeping everywhere into contemporary life. By sixteen, his doubts had increased.

I should like to believe my people's religion, which was just what I could wish, but alas, it is impossible. I have really no religion, for my God, being a spirit shown merely by reason to exist, his properties utterly unknown, is no help to my life. I have nor the parson's comfortable doctrine that every good action has its reward, and every sin is forgiven. My whole religion is this: do every duty, and expect no reward for it, either here or hereafter.

At the age of eighteen he decided that the cosmological argument for the existence of God was invalid and became an atheist. From all of this we can infer a confused opposition to Christianity, whose emotional sources lie in his dislocated childhood, and a confused, emotive commitment to the cause of his natural and spiritual fathers. Early influences upon him will include many contradictory forces – does Shelley, whom he is said to have loved reading, stand for atheism or pantheism?³¹ The main thrust of Russell's ideology is very simple – a strong tendency to deify science in opposition to the metaphysics of Christianity. He was an instinctive Positivist.

As a student at Cambridge in the last decade of the nineteenth century, Russell was educated in an idealist and rationalist tradition; therefore, his whole philosophical career can be interpreted as a migration from an early mixed position adopted in which positivism and rationalism coexist uneasily, to a yet more confused position akin to Moore's common-sense philosophy. He is said to have been the most influential philosopher of the twentieth century, so his migration from one form of confused Positivism to another is very important, for he had a lot of followers. I will here identify just a few salient features of this migration.

The terminus of this development is the "common-sense" philosophy of G.E. Moore. But Russell was brought up in the intellectual milieu in which the arguments of Berkeley and Hume were intelligible, potentially valid, and had to be discussed and countered by a realist. That this is true can be seen from his *Problems of Philosophy*; for example, he writes:

³¹ Shelley's ideas may be gauged from his beautiful poem, *Adonais*, written in defence of immortality in memory of Keats. Shelly was opposed to Christianity in his early work, which manifested a superficial atheism that he later transcended.

Thus it becomes evident that the real table, if there is one, is not the same as what we immediately experience by sight or touch or hearing. The real table, if there is one, is not *immediately* known to us at all, but must be an inference from what is immediately known. Hence, two very difficult questions at once arise; namely, (1) Is there a real table at all? (2) If so, what sort of object can it be?³²

Russell was educated in the tradition of Descartes and Hume's search for an indubitable foundation for knowledge; his epistemology had not yet migrated to the common-sense, linguistic philosophy of Moore and Wittgenstein. Hence, there followed an intermediate stage in the construction of the external world, which is the attempt to construct material reality out of atoms of sense experience, called sense-data. He was led into or close to **phenomenalism**.³³

Historically, between the positivism of the late nineteenth century and the "common-sense" positivism of G.E. Moore, wherein the problem of the existence of the external world was buried, an intermediate solution was attempted, a kind of compromise, which is called phenomenalism. It was tried out in detail, particularly in the **Vienna circle**, was immensely influential, was adopted by A.J. Ayer in *Language, Truth and Reality*, was adopted by Russell in *Analysis of Mind*, and was eventually deemed to have failed on its own criteria. By the time its failure was acknowledged, philosophical culture had moved on to the crude position of G.E. Moore. Phenomenalism had paved the way for this, by making realism seem the natural and "common-sense" solution to the problem of external reality. It chimed with the whole cultural current in which Positivism was ever in the ascendancy, so that by the late thirties and early forties, a less sophisticated position – that the real world just exists, no questions asked – could seem natural. This then become self-perpetuating through academic selection, training and indoctrination. The dialectic was abandoned; it no longer became possible to seriously defend Berkeley, Hume and Kant, for they had been castigated as "meaningless".

³² Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 1912, Chapter 2 – Appearance and Reality. p.4.

³³ This was in line with the evolution of the more rigorous forms of nineteenth century Positivism represent by Mach, the father of phenomenalism. Phenomenalism is not to be confused with phenomenology. Phenomenalism is the attempt to build positive science on the foundation of empirical facts – observations – and evolves in the direction of postulating atoms of experience called sense-data. Strictly, then, it is an inheritor of the idealist position, because observational facts exist only as mental phenomena, and hence asserts the primacy of the mind in epistemology. It will be seen on close examination that even Russell's *Problems of Philosophy* is a hybrid work in which Russell is migrating towards the phenomenalist interpretation, taking the sense-data as no longer mental objects, but quasi physical raw atoms not "in" the mind but "before" the mind.

Russell also made a decisive contribution to a second transition taking place during this epoch, the transition from metaphysics/epistemology to logic/philosophy of language.³⁴

³⁴ Russell graduated at Cambridge in mathematics, and together with A. N. Whitehead he endeavoured to create a rational construction of all of mathematics from foundations in logic – the program known as **logicism**. This was in his mind part of the project of making science into a completely rational structure, to be ultimately based on empirical observation. In this, he thought he was following the German logician Gottlob Frege.

Positivist legend-making. By the post-war, post-modern period the Positivist victory had already been achieved, and philosophers were building their own legends about the past – and in the legend, Frege was made into a kind of hero or demi-god and a Frege industry was established. I will make a couple of observations. **Gottlob Frege**, whatever later philosophers have made of him, was a **Kantian**. In the *Foundations of Arithmetic*, he writes: “I have no wish to incur the reproach of picking petty quarrels with a genius [Kant] to whom we must all look up with grateful awe; I feel bound, therefore, to call attention also to the extent of my agreement with him, which far exceeds any disagreement. To touch upon what is immediately relevant, I consider KANT did great service in drawing the distinction between synthetic and analytic judgements. In calling the truths of geometry synthetic and a priori, he revealed their true nature. And this is still worth repeating, since even to-day it is often not recognized. If KANT was wrong about arithmetic, that does not seriously detract, in my opinion, from the value of his work. His point was, that there are such things as synthetic judgements a priori; whether they are to be found in geometry only, or in arithmetic as well, is of less importance.” Frege *Foundations of Arithmetic*, trans. J. L. Austin. Basil Blackwell, Oxford p. 101 et seq. It is somewhat ironic that J.L. Austin, a pupil of Wittgenstein and the author of *Sense and Sensibilia* should be the translator of the above.

Thus, Frege is not the precursor of Positivism that he may be held by some to be. Furthermore, his paper *On Sense and Reference* distinguishes meanings from objects (denotations) which is consistent with Kant and Platonism.

Two other heroes of the construction of Positivist mathematics are **Gregg Cantor** and **David Hilbert**. Both were Kantians. Cantor expresses his preference for Kant in the following quotation from the *Grundlagen*, Section 5: “For in addition to or in place of the mechanical explanation of nature, (which has all the aids and advantages of mathematical analysis at its disposal, and yet the one-sidedness and inadequacy of which has been exposed so well by Kant), previously there has not been even one attempt to pursue this beginning [i.e. Kant’s] armed with the same mathematical rigor for the purpose of reaching beyond that far-reaching organic explanation of nature.” [Quoted in Joseph Warren Dauben, *Georg Cantor – His Mathematics and Philosophy of the Infinite*, Harvard University Press, 1979. p.293.] Hilbert divided mathematics into a synthetic and an analytic part; the synthetic part was conceived along Kantian lines. The interpretation of Hilbert would be too much of a digression here, but I may cite a remark of G.H. Hardy, [*Mathematical Proof*, Mind, 38, 149 (1929): 1 – 25.] in this respect: “Hilbert’s philosophy appears indeed to be in broad outline much the same as Weyl’s, as Weyl himself has very fairly pointed out. There is the same rejection of the possibility of any purely logical analysis of mathematics: ‘mathematics is occupied with a content given independently of all logic, and cannot in any way be founded on logic alone.’ There is the same insistence on some sort of concrete, perceptible basis, for which Hilbert (with what justice I have no idea) claims the support of ‘the philosophers and especially Kant’: ‘in order that we should be able to apply logical forms of reasoning, it is necessary that there should first be something given in presentation, some concrete, extra-logical object, immediately present to intuition and perceived independently on fall thought ... In particular, in mathematics, the objects of our study are the

The third strand that I wish to pick out is **Russell's direct attack on Christianity**. His disgust with medieval Christianity can be seen from the following selection of quotations from his paper *Why I am not a Christian*.

There is one very serious defect to my mind in Christ's moral character, and that is that He believed in hell. I do not myself feel that any person who is really profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment. Christ certainly as depicted in the Gospels did believe in everlasting punishment, and one does find repeatedly a vindictive fury against those people who would not listen to His preaching – an attitude which is not uncommon with preachers, but which does somewhat detract from superlative excellence.

... You will find that in the Gospels Christ said, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of Hell." That was said to people who did not like His preaching. It is not really to my mind quite the best tone, and there are a great many of these things about Hell. There is, of course, the familiar text about the sin against the Holy Ghost: "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him neither in this World nor in the world to come." That text has caused an unspeakable amount of misery in the world, for all sorts of people have imagined that they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, and thought that it would not be

concrete signs themselves.' There is, I think, no doubt at all that Hilbert does assert, quite unambiguously, that the subject matter of mathematics proper is the actual physical mark, not the general formal relations between the marks, properties which one system of marks may share with another, but the black dots on paper that we see."

In other words, contrary to later perceptions, the set theory, logic and philosophical logic of Frege, Cantor and Hilbert were not the purely mechanical devices that they evolved into. In this evolution of logic from a form of Fregean "concept writing" – with the emphasis on concept, meaning or intension – to a logic of things – called extensions, Russell represented a decisive intermediate stage. Russell's paper, *On Denoting* (1905) is rightly seen as a milestone in this development as he eliminates Frege's irreducibly mentalistic *sense* from the philosophy of logic, in favour of non-mental structures of truth-functions. The technical details are already too involved for further consideration here. The main point is that Russell's work in logic, philosophical logic and the foundations of mathematics was mid-wife to the birth of the twentieth century movement of formal logic, which is the very fruit of the Positivist rejection of all that belongs to Kant. Contemporary philosophy is very complex; it mixes quasi-mathematical structures of immense complexity in themselves, requiring the most developed of mathematical cleverness to manipulate, with epistemological, metaphysical and linguistic problems. It constructs a fortress around academic philosophy that is impenetrable to the layperson and should any outsider get a whiff of some criticism of it that can be expressed in its own symbolic language, and hence rendered open to a critique in their symbolic language, as this philosophy controls all the media channels too, then that criticism will never reach the light.

forgiven them either in this world or in the world to come. I really do not think that a person with a proper degree of kindness in his nature would have put fears and terrors of that sort into the world.

... He repeats that again and again also. I must say that I think all this doctrine, that hell-fire is a punishment for sin, is a doctrine of cruelty. It is a doctrine that put cruelty into the world and gave the world generations of cruel torture; and the Christ of the Gospels, if you could take Him as His chroniclers represent Him, would certainly have to be considered partly responsible for that.³⁵

These extracts express the strong negative emotions that inform Russell's attitude to Christianity. It is not an unprejudiced examination of the problems. The quotations are extremely selective, and he has not considered either the context or the layered nature of the gospels, which was already known to the West for at least one-hundred years. His polemic does, however, illustrate **the disgust Positivists felt for the shadow problem.**

In this paper Russell runs through the standard deist arguments for the existence of God (cosmological, ontological, the argument from design, and some others, not genuinely independent) and concludes that as none of these are valid, he has no ground for believing in Christianity. What makes the paper superficial is that he steps over the tradition of two millennia (and more) without so much as a cursory look at any text. He quotes very selectively from the gospels. He makes no reference to Kant's moral argument, or to Kant's profound discussions of the same deist arguments, that Kant also refutes without loss of faith; Russell does not attempt to touch upon and engage with any living aspect of the Christian movement, such as Christian existentialism or neo-Protestantism. He is not trying to understand the religion of his forebears, he is simply moving on. As a personal and private statement, one would not regard it, but as it is a public statement from the world's most influential philosopher, with colleagues who are Christians, some greater responsibility accrues.

Hollow victory of Positivism. Hence, the victory of Positivism over Kantian consciousness (and Christianity) is hollow. It has not come about through any superiority of argument, but merely because *the tide was moving in that direction*, not so much within society, but within academia generally and Cambridge University specifically. So rapidly did the tide turn at the beginning of the twentieth century that hardly a "champion" of the old Cartesian dualism was left standing; the Kantian breakthrough had been wilfully misunderstood and ignored. Then

³⁵ Bertrand Russell, *Why I am not a Christian*, lecture given to the National Secular Society, Battersea Town Hall, 1927, from, Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays*, ed. Paul Edwards, 1957.

Positivism became self-perpetuating and built a defensive structure in the form of a complex and opaque private language of logical symbolism that prevented direct scrutiny.

We acknowledge that Kant himself did not consistently adhere to his own insights, and what followers he had in the nineteenth century muddled the waters by attaching to their confused interpretations of his work backward elements of Cartesian cognition and idiosyncratic elements of their own.

Some further landmarks in the Positivist demolition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* may be mentioned. Some of this may be technical, and the reader may omit the following numbered paragraphs without loss to the general exposition.³⁶

(1) **The problem of the justification of logic and mathematics.** A profound insight of Kant is to realise that logic requires justification. Logic concerns any system of inference; that is, a system whereby the movement from a premise or premises *A* to a conclusion *B* is held to be “valid”. In the widest sense, also, mathematics is also a system of logic, for in mathematics we also argue from *A* to *B*. Hence, the question arises – what makes deductions in logic and mathematics valid?

(2) **Empiricist philosophy of mathematics.** To be self-consistent, Positivism must seek justify logic in terms of empirical observation, so that ultimately any logical inference just rests upon scientific observation. In addition to the crude empiricist epistemology of J.S. Mill, sophisticated attempts at such a theory have been proposed during the twentieth century, and the proposals of W.V.O. Quine are worthy of mention, because he is one of the few philosophers of the age who, despite his Positivism, respects that there are problems that need to be solved, such as the presence in mathematics of abstract concepts. From the Kantian point-of-view, the whole project is doomed to failure, because Kantian consciousness just is the awareness that the world we know and experience (the same one that G.E. Moore claims to know) is imbued with conceptual structure – it has already been rendered intelligible to us. Therefore, the nominalist hope of eradicating the mind-origin of concepts from the epistemology of logic and mathematics is utterly futile.

(3) **Pure content in logic and mathematics.** Neither logic nor mathematics appear devoid of pure content that could not possibly be derived from experience, nor could be a formal definition. That is the *prima facie* position. To clarify this problem, Kant introduced the dual distinctions of *analytic/synthetic* and *a priori/a posteriori* in his Preface to the first edition of the *Critique*. These distinctions are introduced with absolutely clarity, as any impartial reader may confirm for himself, in terms of the relations between subject and predicate in a proposition and their corresponding concepts of object and property; together these distinctions present a devastating analysis of the problem that challenges empiricism profoundly. It is a high-school exercise to classify sentences according to these distinctions. In the history of the

³⁶ [The reader may resume at the section on Ludwig Wittgenstein at p.191.]

twentieth century we see innumerable attempts on the part of Positivists to denigrate these definitions, one of the most arbitrary of which can be found in A. J. Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic*. A more sophisticated attack is presented by Quine in his *Two Dogmas of Empiricism*, in which he endeavours to subvert the distinctions Kant has made. I mention these for the sake of outlining the historical record; it would take another volume to go into it all, and probably it would not make very entertaining reading.

(4) **Kant's solution** to the problem of the justification of logic and mathematics is to connect it to the transcendental act of the Imagination. The sources of pure knowledge lie in the way in which the Imagination (we might equally say the Mind) constructs for consciousness an intelligible world. This construction, according to Kant, is made in conformity to certain fundamental categories, and it is these categories that lay the foundation of pure knowledge. *The certainty in a mathematical or logical inference derives from the operation of the mind in rendering the world intelligible*. The usefulness of Kant's solution stems from its explanatory power – for in Kantian consciousness we certainly grasp that the world that we know and experience has already been rendered intelligible to us, so Kant's theory is a good description of that process, and its effects. It forms a starting point for further enquiry. But it has “limitations” as well.

The critique of pure reason. If logic and mathematics are true descriptions of the structure of experience, then they are wholly inapplicable when used outside the realm of experience, to objects-in-themselves, to the transcendental. Therefore, reason is thus limited, and this was Kant's devastating answer to the claims of medieval scholastic philosophy, and to the claims of Descartes to know such things for certain. It is why the *Critique of Pure Reason* has its title: it demonstrates the limitations of reason. But to call this a “limitation” is potentially misleading. This is a very salutary observation by Kant, for it gives dramatic and articulated meaning to the **Socratic wisdom** and cognition that is encompassed in Kantian consciousness – namely, to be content with what one can and does know, and to limit one's speculations beyond that domain.

(5) Notwithstanding the huge leap in consciousness that Kant represents, Kant the man was more self-constrained by the cognitive structures and cultural forces of his day than might have been good for that revolution. We have seen that his ethics was conservative, and that he wished to the detriment of his major discoveries to appear at the forefront of the incipient positivist movement.

Kant and the concept of category. In logic and mathematics, he took the theories of the day as given certainties. He had a liking for symmetry, so his fundamental categories of the mind display a symmetry worthy of a classical architect. A certain chaotic, shall we say Dionysian principle, that might be unleashed by recognising the creative power of the Mind in constructing its own reality was kept well in check by what we might figuratively call straight lines.

Unfair exploitation by Positivism. These limitations of Kant, not substantial in themselves, were subsequently exploited as if they were glaring chasms in his theory. His theory is not an expression of this or that detail, but the embodiment of a new form of consciousness – Kantian, subjective consciousness – and this cannot be brought down on a technical matter. The technical problem in question concerns **Euclid's fifth postulate** that parallel lines do not meet, or alternatively, meet only once at infinity. Kant took Euclidean geometry to be a thing given, but the history of the nineteenth century mathematics exposed the conceptual possibility of other geometries. Hence, the Positivists developed out of this minor error on Kant's part, a whole fake demolition of Kantian epistemology. That it was an error is clear. It never was given to the Greek consciousness that formulated the problem of the fifth postulate that this fifth postulate was given directly to intuition. On the contrary, it was because it was not certain that the research program of deriving that postulate from the other four axioms of Euclidean geometry was initiated. Therefore, Kant made that technical error is supposing that the fifth postulate was certain and apodictic, and with his penchant for symmetry he incorporated it into his categories too. The exaggerated claims made against Kant on account of this error can be studied in many places, but Reichenbach's *Philosophy of Space and Time* is a good place to pick up the thread.

(6) **Neutralisation of Kant by pretence that he is a Positivist.** That Kant was himself an incipient positivist is an observation here; hence, there is also a species of twentieth century literature that seeks to make some use of Kant and incorporate aspects of his philosophy within Positivism. This has the effect of neutering his great insights, by the pretence that he is a confused and failed Positivist. An example is Strawson's work on Kant entitled *The Bounds of Sense*. It is too much of a digression to plunge very far into the critique of this work. It reflects what positive use a Positivist can make of bits-and-pieces of the *Critique of Pure Reason* without being ever willing to consider the main proposition – that the world is a conceptual construction of the mind, hence it is not a certainty that the mind is circumscribed by the mechanical structures that are seen in that world and studied by natural science. The title of Strawson's book is a good indicator of what Strawson's version of Kant is to be: "There are limits to what we can conceive of," he writes, "or make intelligible to ourselves, as a possible general structure of experience."³⁷ This statement is not a statement of Kant. Kant exposes not the limits of what we can conceive, but the limits of the use of our reason; pure reason is not justified in forming conclusions about the transcendental, but it does not follow that we cannot form concepts of the transcendental. What we see in the work of Strawson is a neutering of Kant by a transposing of selected aspects of his work into the consciousness of a Positivist, for whom the scientific, empirical process is the fount

³⁷ P.F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, Routledge. 1975. p. 4.

of knowledge, and remains the primary boundary. The lack of sympathy and actual miscomprehension of Kant is betrayed by the usual refusal to acknowledge Kant's meaning whenever it gets sensitive for science. He writes: "Kant nowhere gives an even moderately satisfactory theoretical account of the dichotomy between analytic and synthetic *a priori* propositions; nor can any be gleaned from his casually scattered examples."³⁸ It is the case of a court where the prosecution, judge and jury are all one and the same person, and the unfairness of the attack is illustrated by the fact that he does not set forth the text for itself. *There is no problem of construing the meaning Kant gave to those terms.* It is a High School exercise. If the reader wishes, he or she may revert to the Preface of the *Critique*. But reading Strawson's work will not help the reader to understand Kant, because Strawson has *a priori* made up his mind not to understand it. There is a good deal of cheating going on.

The extraordinary case of Ludwig Wittgenstein. I may not leave this subject of the hollow victory of Positivism over Kant (and Christianity) without discussing Ludwig Wittgenstein. This is the most extraordinary case of all.

Positivism can be defined by its antipathy to Christianity, and yet it is surprising to discover where the Positivists are buried. G.E. Moore is buried in the Parish of the Ascension Burial Ground, St. Giles, Cambridge. Russell was cremated without religious ceremony. Wittgenstein's grave is also in the Ascension Parish Burial Ground, Cambridge.

His "conversion experience". When one thinks of the destruction wrought by twentieth century philosophy on Christianity, there is no greater contributor to this than Ludwig Wittgenstein, so it comes to a surprise that this man, who attended the same school as Adolf Hitler, who had either three or two Jewish grandparents depending on whether one accepts Hitler's verdict or not³⁹, and who was brought up as a Catholic, underwent a conversion experience while serving in the Austrian army during the First World War, and returned to the Catholicism of his upbringing. It is rumoured that he embraced the Catholic cross on his deathbed – "attended by four of his former students and, at their behest, a Dominican monk. He was buried the next day (30 April 1951) by Catholic rite in the cemetery of St. Giles, Cambridge."⁴⁰ The pain occasioned by Wittgenstein's conversion to Christianity is recorded in Russell's obituary printed in *Mind*, which concludes:

He was in the days before 1914 concerned almost solely with logic. During or perhaps just before, the first war, he changed his outlook and became more or less a mystic, as may be seen here and there in

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.43.

³⁹ Hitler himself agreed that one of the Wittgenstein grandparents had been a cuckold, and thus saved the Austrian family from being persecuted under the race laws.

⁴⁰ Alexander Waugh, *The House of Wittgenstein*, Bloomsbury, London, 2008. p. 290.

the *Tractatus*. He had been dogmatically anti-Christian, but in this respect he changed completely. The only thing he ever told me about this was that once in a village in Galicia during the war he found a bookshop containing only one book, which was Tolstoy on the Gospels. He bought the book, and, according to him, it influenced him profoundly. Of the development of his opinions after 1919 I cannot speak.

The tone is bitter: to have nothing to say about a fellow chair of Philosophy's contribution to philosophy after 1919 is extraordinary.

(1) **Genius and charlatan.** While I am partly forced to acknowledge "genius" in the Wittgenstein's work, he is one of the greatest and most successful charlatans in all the history of philosophy. Iamblichus was said to have levitated when he prayed. If Iamblichus did levitate, then he was not a charlatan. If he did not levitate, then he was a greater charlatan than Wittgenstein. Yet, **the thrall of the spirit of Wittgenstein** – the mesmeric power of his *genius* – in the Roman sense of the term – continues to exert itself. It seems he is worshipped as a demi-god somewhere in East Anglia.

(2) **Hatred of meaning indicative of a psychological complex.** As a flash of insight: "This man must have hated his father." Psychologically, his philosophy is defined by hatred of a father-figure – there is an intense hatred of *meaning* running through the whole corpus – it is the work of adolescent rebellion. His father was a brute – not merely a brute, but a charlatan of his own kind – a kind of swindler who made himself into the second richest man in Austria by shady and deceptive business deals, which embarrassed his family. He nonetheless demanded to be worshipped by his family *as a god* and bred up his sons to follow him in business, none of whom did. (Perhaps one attempted to do so, but he died under mysterious circumstances during the First World War on the Italian front.) His mother was accessible only through music. The family sponsored all the greatest composers of the times, and all the children, including Ludwig, were very talented in music. Ludwig's brother, Paul, who lost his right arm in the First World War, made himself famous as a one-armed pianist. The father, who died relatively young, was a tyrant. Two or perhaps three of Ludwig's older brothers committed suicide – Ludwig was the youngest sibling.

(3) **The charlatan aspects** of Wittgenstein's work can be illustrated by two details. (a) His *Tractatus*, written in the trenches during the First World War, was accepted by Russell and G.E. Moore for the doctorate. The *Tractatus* makes not one direct reference to a single work of philosophy; within it there are references only to two other philosophers: "3.318. Like Frege and Russell I construe a proposition as a function of the expressions contained in it." There is no bibliography, and no evidence of research. I do not believe that in the entire history of Cambridge any other doctoral submission has been accepted on such scant evidence of research. By

1929 when the *Tractatus* was submitted, the work already commanded an international renown. (b) Wittgenstein's *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief* – three subjects, not one – is a slim volume of 72 pages composed of lecture notes taken by some of his students and records of conversations. *There is not a single new idea in the whole work.* He trots out at some very early point his characteristic comments on language as a set of tools and there may be some connection with his *meaning is use* philosophy; but otherwise, *nothing*. Wittgenstein may be credited with the invention of the emoji (an image or icon used to express an idea or emotion – now used in digital communication) – these can be seen on page 4 – complete with crude drawings of the kind of images we now attach to emails and text messages. Without going so far as to outline a subjectivist theory of aesthetics he cynically hints that all aesthetic evaluations can be reduced to emojis. If he advanced a subjectivist theory of aesthetics he might at least stand with Collingwood or some such, but there is no content at all. Not a single poet, novelist, painter, sculptor, musician or other artist is discussed in the work, except for the following remark in the section on religious beliefs: “Take ‘God created Man’. Pictures of Michelangelo showing the creation of the world. In general, there is nothing which explains the meaning of words as well as a picture, and I take it that Michelangelo was as good as anyone can be and did his best, and here is the picture of the Deity creating Adam.”⁴¹ Such comments are facile and would not be tolerated in an adolescent, but in Wittgenstein's case Rush Rhees, Yorick Smythies, James Taylor, Casmir Lewy, Theodore Redpath and Maurice Drury are anxious not to miss a word; they record and publish it all. Wittgenstein's lack of comment on any specific composer, musician or artist is all the more remarkable given that he was in music pitch-perfect, that his brother was a concert pianist, and his family had financially supported composers and artists. He himself donated 100,000 kronen on receipt of his inheritance from his father to the painter Oskar Kokoschka (no less) and the poets Rainer Maria Rilke (no less) and Georg Trakl (no less). He might have explained why he chose those artists to patronise. The sensitive reader will see that throughout the notes, Wittgenstein is thinking privately of his brother Paul, the one-armed pianist, with whom he had become estranged. The absence of detail is extraordinary. If a normal person is asked to lecture on aesthetics, he devotes himself to hours of research; not so Ludwig Wittgenstein – he just goes to the lecture room and delivers – or flies by the seat of his pants. If a reader wishes to garner anything about aesthetics, psychology or religion, he won't find a single substantive clue in the whole work. Wittgenstein was a charlatan.

⁴¹ Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett, Blackwell, London, 1966, p 63.

(4) He had extraordinary **personal charisma**, and mesmerised Cambridge, which allowed him to get away with blue murder. He was mentally unstable, and his vanity was expressed in the way he sought to dominate any forum he frequented. He made himself so obnoxious at the Moral Sciences Club (the debating club of Cambridge) that his attendance of that Club had to be regulated. He had a mesmeric effect on people and projected his presence like that of a prophet or seer. Why was this permitted to happen?

(5) **Odd behaviour.** On many occasions Wittgenstein demonstrated traits very odd in a serious philosopher. These could be interpreted as expressions of a kind of mystical humility. He often worked as a gardener. During the Second World War, he worked as a hospital porter. After the First World War he worked as a primary school teacher. He got angry with his pupils and beat one of them so hard that the pupil was knocked unconscious; after which he ran away. His family, to whom he had given his inheritance, endeavoured to hush up the matter, a move rendered unnecessary, for the victim of his beating died before the case came to trial, not of his injuries at Ludwig's hands, but of other causes. Is any of this indicative of a man who is happy in his vocation? Does the moral track record of Ludwig Wittgenstein speak of a man elevated in some religious way? To me, it suggests that he was uncomfortable in his own skin. It seems he was trying to run away from the role assigned to him of guru-philosopher.

(6) There is about his work an **aura of mystery** – it is not perspicuous even by the standards of modern academic philosophy – and it has the character of revelation – of meaning more than mere words could imply. However, the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein in both his phases of development is not problematic, though it is technical.

(7) **The Tractatus.** (This paragraph is technical; the reader may skip it without loss to the argument.) The *Tractatus* is a technical work on **first-order logic**. The *Tractatus* anticipates in minor ways developments in logic and mathematics by up to twenty years, but it is not a mathematical exposition, which would render it commonplace. The fundamental idea is that all human knowledge can be systematically organised by a mathematical structure known as a **Boolean algebra**. Such a structure is a systematic organisation of propositions by means of conjunctions (p and q) and disjunctions (p or q); technically, it becomes complex when dealing with predicates and infinity. It seems that Wittgenstein invented the **truth table**, which is the starting point of this idea. Fundamentally, there is no other idea whatsoever in the whole corpus of modern first-order logic – such an organisation is the guiding principle of the whole project. The technical ramifications of this idea are complex beyond the imagination of a layman, who may, if he wishes to prove it, simply pick up and weigh (not read) the two-volume work by Tarski, Henkin and Monk on *Cylindric Algebras*. The *Tractatus* is presented in a mysterious way, which adds to the aura, and the mathematical

treatment of Boolean algebras, a branch of **lattice theory**, was only subsequently developed by Garrett Birkhoff in the 30s, so Wittgenstein was ahead of his times, which would enhance the mystique of the work, as well as its opacity. However, it is not truly opaque, nor would even appear to be so, had it been presented with less mystique.

As a work of philosophy as opposed to a mathematical treatment, the project of embedding all knowledge whatsoever into a lattice stumbles on two problems. Firstly, it is not even remotely true, since only scientific knowledge could even possibly be treated in this way. To Positivists that would be a bonus, not a defect. Secondly, more problematically, it assumes that there is a ground level of **atomic facts** which supply the raw data for the construction, for which there must be atomic statements to serve as the elements out of which the construction is made. It runs into all sorts of technical problems not addressed by the *Tractatus* and uncovered in the subsequent mathematic development of lattices,⁴² and more pointedly in epistemology to the problem of how the facts get established in the first place. Establishment of the relationship between a proposition *p* and the fact that it designates is a relationship of *meaning*. At this point, Wittgenstein simply reverts to mysticism; there are facts, the propositions are pictures of the facts; end of story.

1. The world is all that is the case.
- 1.1 The world is the totality of facts, not of things. ...
- 1.13 The facts in logical space are the world.
- 1.2 The world divides into facts.

The “logical space” in the above would correspond to a Boolean algebra, which is also called a Boolean or Stone space. The other statements are just so many mystical waving of hands to circumvent the problem of where the facts come from in the first place, and how they are hooked up with the propositions, that would force him in the direction of a genuine epistemology.

(8) **The Blue and Brown Books etc.** Wittgenstein is said to have himself rejected the *Tractatus*, and it is easy to see that its implicit reliance on a relationship between mind and world to establish the facts is the problem. Wittgenstein did everything he possibly could to present a philosophy in which mentation, meaning, mind, were reduced to mere mechanisms. So, the mentalistic elements of the *Tractatus* had to be eliminated – and the elimination of conscious meaning is the entire purpose of the rest of his philosophy – the second phase of the *Blue and Brown Books* and *Philosophical Investigations*.

⁴² Technical remark: the distinction between finite and infinite lattices, and when the latter are atomic and non-atomic.

Problem of communication. How two people communicate with each other, and how they do so when they speak different languages, or in a language native to one and foreign to the other, is a genuine mystery. We are aware that much of the time our attempts at communication misfire, and what we think is implied by our words is not understood by the recipient in the way we intend them. Misunderstanding is commonplace. Nonetheless, the intuitive and natural feeling that we all do have is that we exchange meanings with each other, and that not all our communication misfires. Such a realisation immediately lands us in a Platonistic world more than we might feel comfortable with, for meanings are not physical entities and yet somehow, when we exchange tokens – spoken or written words – non-physical concepts – meanings – are also exchanged. This goes hand-in-hand with the realisation that our world is intelligible, that there are sensible universals expressed in the very things we see, so that when I see a green tree, I see not only an individual tree, but also that it is a tree like other trees, and its colour is akin to the colour of other green things. My world embodies concepts, and somehow, I exchange those concepts with fellow human beings. Then, I am elevated in my understanding of myself and mankind, for I see that there could not possibly be a mechanistic explanation for the exchange of those meanings, and thus I realise that all science appertains only to material things in their individual aspect and appearance, and that the world and mind are transcended by meaning.

Meaning as use. Not so Wittgenstein; he must pull all this sacred intuition down, and that is all *meaning as use* amounts to. It conjures the image of communication between two persons along the lines of stimulus and response. Person *A* says one thing, say “Fetch me a pencil”, and person *B* responds to the stimulus. Perhaps *B* fetches the pencil, or perhaps he says, “Which pencil do you want?” or perhaps he crosses his arms and refused to budge. But it is response to stimulus. Certainly, there is an aspect of communication that this theory describes; but to make it into the entire theory of meaning/communication is to use brute strength to force the data in the direction of mechanism, which is precisely what Positivism requires.

(9) Hence, **the mystery of Wittgenstein’s appeal** is clear enough. Firstly, his nominalist, anti-mentalistic and mechanistic theories were useful to Positivism – they stood right in the mainstream of that movement. Secondly, far from subtracting from this use, the aura of religious revelation enhanced their potency. It is a mistake to think that an atheist has no religious consciousness – the atheist’s atheism is his religious consciousness. An atheist is as much as any man prone to believe that the truth is speaking to him – to “hear voices”. He too can surrender to a “superior” will, to a man of greater charisma, who utters, as if divinely inspired, the very things that he would be frightened to say, for fear of making a fool of himself. Wittgenstein was the fool that made it permissible to deny the obvious. So, he was very useful to Positivism, and that was why he was tolerated, pampered and allowed to vainly strut.

(10) **His religiosity was a sham.** A religious man does not go out of his way to deny the very basis of religious revelation – that life has meaning – that communication has meaning. And if life has meaning, that meaning is expressed in art. Hence, art, music, painting, literature, poetry are not things upon which a religious man has nothing to say. A man is not religious just because he attends Church; nor because he has a funeral in a Church. If Wittgenstein did some good for any religion other than that of atheism, then it will be a simple matter for his defender to point concretely to that good. How, practically speaking was Catholicism, or religion in general, enhanced by his being in the world? What did he do for them?