**Mind, Body, Space and Time: Reflections on the Transcendental Psychology of Consciousness Experience**

The topics taken up in this essay are essential for the study of both pneumatology and the psychology of consciousness. In this essay, my primary concern will be with the analysis of some of the most primitive elements of consciousness *as such*. Ideally, this investigation would proceed independently of the relation of consciousness to external objects or to mental contents just as such. However, since conscious experience never occurs in the absence of these contents or these relations, it is not entirely possible to discuss these primitive elements without advertence to them. However, using the “double abstraction” method I have recommended in a previous paper[[1]](#footnote-1) we can, in fact, beginning *in media res*, isolate in experience and then examine at leisure in the occurrent imagination those elements of conscious experience that, being ubiquitous and generally in the background of consciousness, tend to be taken for granted in discussions of consciousness – most notably by empiricists like Berkeley and Hume.

To begin with, then, let us briefly review what I have said elsewhere on the topic of soul/body interaction. The soul is the immediate or proximate *per se* cause of the existence, and thus of the operation, of the body *qua* living thing.[[2]](#footnote-2) Its influence as *per se* cause is exercised through a simple, uniform act by means of which it sustains the existence of the body for as long as it operates. Since the soul is a simple, unextended, and sempiternal substance, it is thus an endurant entity. For this reason, on its side and thus as far as the exercise of this power goes, this exercise shrinks to a single, dimensionless point. However, since the object of that exercise and thus the terminus of that act is a perdurant entity, the body, as the exercise of that act terminates in the body it becomes the *per se* cause of an extended entity precisely as such. The act of sustaining the body’s existence, then, is present to a spatially and temporally extended thing, and thus to that thing at all places and times at which it exists. It thus becomes extended in its act of sustaining the operation of the body as that exercise terminates in its object, and does so without itself being or becoming extended in or as the substance from which that act originates.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Consciousness itself testifies to this. Because the soul is present everywhere in the human body in the same way, pains typically are localized where bodily damage or illness is present. Therefore, we feel pain in the body wherever pain nerves are stimulated or nerve damage occurs, rather than in the brain (where we never experience pain) despite the essential role that brain-processing of nerve information plays in the actual production of pain-awareness. Further, the soul is present to each moment of our conscious lives in a simple, uniform way. The simplicity of the soul and the uniformity of the exercise of its sustaining power in relation to its object thus the guarantee of the unity of consciousness *so far forth*.

**The Subject** Let us then turn, in good Cartesian fashion, to the nature of the subject in relation to the soul, not as it is known through introspection but instead posited as a simple, immaterial substance possessed intrinsically of only one, simple, uniform activity. From this point of view, it is a noumenon understood as a theoretical entity possessing only those features required to account for the data revealed to us in consciousness. A soul that has become conscious is a *mind*, and thus a subject of awareness by that very fact. A mind capable of reflective, rational self-awareness is a *person* and thereby capable of self-consciousness as well. A soul that has realized its personhood and achieved self-consciousness is a thereby a self-conscious, rational subject: a *self*, *ego*, or *I*. Such a being is capable of abstract thought, language, and theoretical inquiry. Now God can know through being the cause of what He knows, and angels can know through divine illumination, such that immaterial beings of this sort are *intrinsically* conscious. However, finite conscious selves such as human beings, being passive rather than productive with regard to the connatural objects of knowledge to which consciousness directs them, are incapable of knowing anything beyond what they can acquire through the examination of and rational extrapolation from their own mental contents. They are not intrinsically conscious and neither are the souls that become them. Even if our souls are naturally conscious in the sense of made for and made to be capable of consciousness, their actually being so depends on conditions external to themselves not entirely under their (or our) control.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Consciousness, then, is something extrinsic to the human soul and additional to it *qua* noumenal substance, and consists in an *intentional field of awareness* and its *contents*, which Descartes calls thinking and thoughts respectively.[[5]](#footnote-5) A self-conscious rational subject is thus a *res cogitans* or thinking thing, ontologically grounded in the soul but dependent in important ways on the body for most of its contents as well as certain features of its intentional field. Mental contents include those received passively by the mind, such as sensations, feelings, percepts, appetitive impulses, passions, and desires insofar as these latter are constituted by feeling or possessed of motive force. Contents of these kinds serve as the matter of consciousness generally, but especially of what I call *mental states*. In rational beings, perceptual contents as are also capable of intending external objects, material things existing outside of and independently of our minds, and thus become not merely collections of ideas or mental images but *representations*. Representations, in turn, are the foundation for spontaneous judgments concerning the objects represented to us in (e.g.) perceptual experience. These judgments, in their turn, become the objects/contents of *mental acts*, intellectual operations over those contents expressed in propositional attitudes, constituting abstract thought and grounding theoretical inquiry. In being active in this way, the conscious mind exercises the free, immaterial powers that belong to it in virtue of *intellect* (what, as actualized, Kant calls the understanding) and *will*, which, while belonging to the essence of the soul as powers and are exercised by the soul only in and through consciousness. Without the intellect and its operations – both conscious and preconscious – knowledge would be impossible. We can examine and describe these faculties only by means of an examination of the exercise of these powers as these affect consciousness by producing introspectible effects in the intentional field of awareness. In the case of the intellect, we discover its basic structures and principles through the science of logic in the broad sense, in which this study is both descriptive and normative and constitutes an *organon*, or method/procedure for inquiry. So much, then, for the subject; now let us turn to the object, beginning with the relation of the soul *qua* conscious to the body the soul sustains.

**Consciousness and the Body** Some of our mental contents are intentional, putatively representing external, non-mental *objects* present in and to consciousness by means of those contents. However, the term “object” can be used in different senses within the psychology of consciousness and refers in different ways in different contexts. For example, the object as apprehended in and by empirical consciousness is the *phenomenal* object or object as it appears to us *via* sense perception. While perhaps the most familiar philosophical use of “object,” it is not the only, or only important one of concern to us here. We can also use the term object to refer to the *intentional* object, *represented* in consciousness by the phenomenal object and thus apprehended by us as an external, non-mental object constituted independently of our phenomenal awareness of it. Following Kant, I call the intentional object understood as intrasubjectively present in and to the same consciousness at different times and intersubjectively present in different consciousnesses at the same the *transcendental* object. The transcendental object is thus conceived of as an ideal construct that, while present in experience, is not exhausted by it and thus transcends actual (though not necessarily all possible) experience. In turn, I call the transcendental object as theoretically reconstructed by means of the categories of natural science the *noumenal* object. In my view, these are not four objects, or four kinds of objects, but simply one object related to the intellect, and thus known by it, in four ways or from four different, interlocking and interdependent perspectives. The phenomenal object is the object as apprehended in consciousness in a mental image, exhausted by our subjective awareness of the aspects of that object as they appear to us in conscious experience. The phenomenal object, then, is present in and to consciousness as a structured collection of “sense-data.” The phenomenal object, then, is individual and unique for each knowing subject. The intentional object is the thing-in-itself existing and as constituted independently of our awareness of it while nevertheless being present in and to individual consciousnesses in a partial and incomplete way by means of a phenomenal object present in each of those consciousnesses. The transcendental object is that intentional object as apprehended by the intellect/understanding and reconstructed in imagination as a stable, externally existing *intersubjectively* public object of which the phenomenal objects in individual consciousnesses are partial, private, and subjective presentations, and never exhaustively apprehended in or by any individual finite consciousness. The noumenal object is that transcendental object comprehended as a theoretical entity, not apprehended as such in individual consciousness, but posited for the purpose of the theoretical inquiry that takes the phenomenal object as data for the reconstruction of the transcendental object in the categories of philosophy and natural science. Objects must first be sensed in order to be perceived, perceived in order to be apprehended and then only when apprehended comprehended through theoretical inquiry. The phenomenal object is a mental image, the intentional object an external existing thing as the cause of that mental image, the transcendental object the intentional object imaginatively conceived as a thing-in-itself both immanent in and transcending experience, and the noumenal object the transcendental object conceived of as noumenon, as it really is in and of itself independently of experience. Here we will focus on the phenomenal object, or rather realm of such objects, known as the phenomenal world, in relation to the introspectively apprehended fact of the unity of consciousness.

Kant argues that unity of consciousness on the side of the object – that is, such as to constitute the experience of a phenomenal world, rather than simply a “booming, buzzing confusion” consisting of dissociated, merely random *disjecta membra* in consciousness – cannot be secured by unity of consciousness in the subject by itself. Instead, further necessary conditions are required to make this possible; his Transcendental Analytic is largely devoted to explaining these conditions. One such condition, which he defends in the First Analogy and the Refutation of Idealism, is that experience of a phenomenal order in which objects and events are internally and externally related to each other, even by relations of space and time, requires something permanent and unchanging serving as the metaphysical subject of change; this is substance as *substratum*. Substance in this sense is neither phenomenal nor merely a theoretical posit. Instead, we apprehend substance as a necessary condition for the very possibility of experience as we enjoy it, as transcendental rather than transcendent, as present to and thus affecting consciousness, and thus apprehended in its effect on consciousness without itself being present in consciousness as one of its contents. Since it structures experience without appearing in experience in its own right, substance as substratum is thus both a transcendental posit and a noumenal object; it is not surprising, then, that it is what Locke called “a something I know not what” and that Berkeley and Hume questioned the intelligibility of this notion. However, Kant insists that the concept of substance in this sense is, after all, indispensible to explain the unity of conscious, even though, not being an object of apprehension, it cannot be known by us as it is in itself.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Kant’s own argument for this claim is obscure and no satisfactory reconstruction of it exists. However, using an argument that Kant would likely not approve, we can see the point of his claim.[[7]](#footnote-7) Change, by its very nature, is paradoxical. Change requires that one and the same thing both continue to be the same through the process of change (otherwise, it has not changed) and yet not be the same as it was at the end of the process of change as it was at the beginning (since otherwise that no change has occurred after all.) Since everything in the phenomenal world is subject to coming-to-be and passing away in experience, no element of the phenomenal world can play the role of the persisting object that allows us to constitute all phenomenal experience as an ordered, related whole – a point that Hume himself seems to have dimly realized. Further, we spontaneously distinguish between *merely* successive sequences in experience and *ordered* sequences in experience, which we could not do if Humean phenomenalism were true. Therefore, in apprehending a phenomenal world *as such*, we apprehend something that is neither merely phenomenal nor merely noumenal, but which structures consciousnesses in such a way as to make the experience of a changing world that is also a world of changing things possible.

Despite his strictures on our knowledge of the noumenal, Kant does not hesitate to treat this transcendental posit as something in itself, using the opportunity to find a place for his continuum theory of matter in his theoretical philosophy. However, a much more obvious candidate for the role of transcendental cyclorama for the human mind is the human body. Now, the body is the intentional object of some of my mental states, those associated with looking at my face in a mirror, looking at or touching my arm or face, smelling or tasting my hand, hearing my stomach growl, and so on. In these cases, I experience the perceptible surface qualities of my body in the same way that I would those of any other material thing, through my five senses, taking an external, third-person perspective on my body. In that case, those mental contents are going to be intentional with regard to my body *qua* external, material thing. At the same time, arguably every mental content I entertain is *proximately* mediated by some state of my body, in most and perhaps all cases some state of the brain. Yet none of these mental contents is intentional with regard to the body, not even those most directly produced by and revelatory of bodily states such as pains, tickles, feelings of hunger and thirst, sensations of heat and cold, feelings of pressure, and so on. These are mental contents with causes but not objects, whose causes we either discover by further percept-enabled investigation or recognize as similar to those we have had before and first learned in that way, as when I feel a stabbing pain in my hand and look down only to discover that it has picked up a sliver. Even those mental contents that are intentional with regard to the body *qua* perceptual object are not intentional with regard to the states that proximately mediate/cause those states in us. These too we can discover only by percept-enabled external observation of my brain and nervous system from an external point of view. The continuous existence of, and presence to the mind to, the body is thus the necessary condition for unity of consciousness on the side of the object *so far forth*.

One phenomenological testimony to this ongoing presence is the experience of pure *duration*, i.e. the passage of time without change in the elements of our perceptual field and thus independently of the temporal succession of mental contents. Thus, we can be aware of the passage of time even though we do not experience any (significant) change occurring in our perceptual field. Further, we are also aware that this experience of *duree*, while experienced as temporal passage, has no intrinsic metric. Rather, duration is experienced as fast or slow solely based on how centrally our attention is directed on its passing *as such*. Thus, when I am busy working hard or am engaged in a stimulating conversation, I may “lose track of time” – what I would normal experience as an extended period of time in consciousness “flies by” and seems to have occurred very quickly or to have taken no time at all. In the same way, time spent waiting in traffic or in a doctor’s office tends to go very slowly so that we experience it as an excruciatingly extended period of time, when in fact it may last only a few minutes or last only slightly longer than normal as measured by the clock. While normally in the background of conscious awareness, this experience of duration is always present there, and is not constituted or measured by any mental contents as such – time never goes more slowly than when one is watching the clock! Instead, I suggest that it is our primitive awareness of the relation of soul and body due to the presence of the soul to the body as its proximate *causa in esse*. It is only through this presence that *contentful* consciousness, hence the experience of temporal succession in mental contents by what Kant calls “inner sense,” is possible. This, then, refutes any form of subjective idealism, such as that embraced by Berkeley and Hume, which supposes that we can reduce all of our experience to the contents of consciousness and relations between them. We thereby secure Kant’s conclusion in the Refutation of Idealism, though not on terms that he would necessarily accept.

In turn, consciousness serves as the *interface* between mind and body. The soul is the substantial form of the human organism by being the proximate *per se* cause of the operation of the body. This simple, undifferentiated activity of the soul, which shrinks to a dimensionless point on the side of the soul as its origin becomes, on the side of its effect, a spatially and temporally extended field of contentful awareness. This field is differentiated by the presence of multiple contents that are not merely successive, but internally and externally related in such a way as to constitute a phenomenal world containing perceptual objects, events, and processes all purporting to be revelatory of a world of external, independently existing objects. Through presence to and awareness of these contents, the soul becomes a finite mind possessing that intentional field of awareness and, through awareness of its own awareness, becomes a self-conscious subject or person capable of using personal pronouns, and thus an ego, self, or I. By monitoring the bodily states that help produce those mental contents, themselves the product of external stimulation ultimately grounded in the external world, the soul is able to detect changes and variations in its otherwise undifferentiated activity of sustaining the life of the body, and thus becomes aware of its changing states. This can continue only so long as the body remains as the substratum of those states and changes, thus only if the body is a itself a substance.

**Space, Time, and the Categories** However, although the constant and unchanging presence of the body to consciousness is a necessary condition for unity of consciousness as far as the perception of the phenomenal world as object is concerned, even this is not sufficient by itself for full-blown experience as we live it. Undoubtedly, the successive states of the body associated with conscious contents possess some internal and external relations to each other accounting for some aspects of their occurrence in consciousness and their relations to each other. However, these relations and connections have no relevance to the relations between the contents as we experience them precisely as elements of the phenomenal world of perceptual objects, events, and processes. If they did, then we could never know anything except those states, and could never know anything else by means of them. Such states, then, can at best be a necessary, and not sufficient, conditions for our knowledge of the external world. If we are to know anything about the external world, including the brain as a perceptually apprehended material thing, the relations and connections that bind the elements of appearances into an organized world of perceptual objects, events and processes in consciousness must be other and distinct from those holding between the elements composing (e.g.) brain-states and their relations to one another just as such.[[8]](#footnote-8)

This means that the constitution of the phenomenal world requires other, transcendental conditions in order to be possible as a going, and ongoing, concern. While some of these (and more of them than Kant believed) derive from outside of us, it nevertheless remains that the mind *qua* intellect must be the source of most of them through its pre-conscious, constitutive activity. Being transcendent to experience due to its being prior to it in operation as a transcendental condition for its very possibility, the intellect and its pre-conscious activity is present in consciousness by means of those features of conscious experience that exist there as the effects of its activity. It is thus apprehended in consciousness as affecting it through the exercise of its transcendental constitutive activity rather than by being apprehended there as a mental content or as represented there by any such contents. The soul *qua* mind in this sense parallels the body. We thus know the mind as their immaterial source and (like the body) as a transcendental object in its relation to the possibility of experience. However, since this transcendental object cannot be the actual principle or cause of those effects in consciousness unless it actually exists, we posit it precisely in its noumenal (pre-conscious, non-introspectible) operation and thus as substance. However, unlike Locke’s substance, we posit this immaterial substance not as a characterless substratum, but rather as *active* in the exercise of its constitutive powers in producing the effects in consciousness by means of which it structures consciousness in relation to experience *as we actually live it*.[[9]](#footnote-9) We are surely justified in so positing and thus in investigating the soul *qua* mind theoretically by reference to those effects.

As to the soul *qua* mind’s pre-conscious contributions to phenomenal experience, Kant is still our best guide, though we best grasp the significance of his doctrines by ignoring (at least in this context) his own *entrée* into the transcendental conditions of cognition – the question “How is *a priori* synthetic knowledge possible?” Instead, let us draw some further implications from the difference between the divine and the embodied human intellect in relation what it knows. As we have already noted, God does not know through passively reflecting realities that exist independently of Himself, for there are no such realities. God’s perfectly comprehensive knowledge of things is a consequence of the fact that He creates them in accordance with His will in every aspect of their being. Even in those cases where His will does not directly determine the specifics of what happens (as in quantum indeterministic events or human free choices) it nevertheless remains that God knows the outcome of each such event through His creating the positive reality of their outcomes in accordance with His permissive will (which could always have overridden those outcomes). God’s knowledge, then, is always positive and acquired through the contemplation of His own act of creation. Angels, we are told, are immaterial beings whose intellects, while passive, are directly illuminated by superior intellects and thus know by contemplating, each in his own unique way, the ideas contained in the divine essence; they thus have fully intuitive knowledge of what they know. The embodied, finite human mind, however, is both passive and at best partly intuitive with regard to its knowledge – this intuitive faculty being the passive intellect or, as realized, what Kant calls the *understanding*, to which the conscious subject has less than fully occurrent access. Thus, the finite, embodied intellect knows only through the instrumentality of the body and the information about the external world it supplies. This does not come to us from the world ready-made, a fact strongly attested by what we know about the physiology of perception.

**The Unity of Consciousness over Time** The passivity of human knowledge, i.e. that fact that it has to be acquired from experience rather than (as in the case of God) through its own constitutive activity, raises special problems for our understanding of cognition and its product, knowledge of the external world. For this reason, there needs to be an *interface* between the soul and body, which I have identified with the intentional field of consciousness constituted by a dimensionless conscious subject on the one hand, and a spatially and temporally extended intentional field serving as the focus of that subject’s power of awareness/attention as actualized/exercised.[[10]](#footnote-10) The structure of that intentional field thus recapitulates in consciousness the metaphysical relation between the endurant soul and the perdurant body, with the self-identical conscious subject as the non-localized observer of a spatio-temporal manifold of constantly changing, structured sense-contents. This intentional field is thus a *tertium quid*, the joint product of the interaction of soul and body. Even so, as I have argued elsewhere, the soul and not the body becomes conscious in this intentional field and, in the case of the rational soul, a self-conscious subject or *self*.[[11]](#footnote-11) The soul becomes a self-conscious subject in its own intentional field as the *empirical* self, as well as acquiring certain powers that it exercises as a conscious agent. However, not all of the powers acquired by the soul *qua* mind are consciously introspectible or capable of conscious exercise or control by the empirical self. There is thus more to the mind than simply those features of the mind of which we can be occurrently aware in consciousness. Thus, the empirical self has to be distinguished from the mind as transcendental self, which is the union of the soul with *all* of the powers it acquires in relation to consciousness through becoming a rational conscious subject, regardless of whether they are introspectible by the empirical self. We must thus conceive of the empirical self as *only* a proper part of the mind *qua* transcendental self, namely the part introspectible by that self-conscious rational subject which is both the transcendental self (in the operation of its pre-conscious constitutive powers in the constitution of rational self-consciousness) and the empirical self (as realized in occurrent self-conscious awareness). At the same time, the non-introspectible part of the mind *qua* transcendental self is not another, noumenal self of which the empirical self is a mere appearance, but rather the transcendental machinery of the mind operating automatically to structure consciousness *as lived* by that self-conscious rational subject *qua* empirical self. In order to refer to the soul insofar as it exercises the powers that pre-consciously structure consciousness as lived experience understood in this way, we can use Kant’s phrase “the transcendental unity of apperception.” We apprehend this transcendental unity of apperception through its effects in consciousness *given along with* rather than apprehended by means of such contents.

Among these effects are the spatio-temporal structure of experienced conscious contents, and thus space and time as forms of intuition. While the soul *qua* conscious subject possesses personal identity as an ego, self, or I simply through the simplicity of its substance, this is not sufficient for us to account for unity of consciousness through time or in the contents of consciousness considered as a manifold of sensuous intuition at any particular moment in time. In order for it to be possible for us to represent a world of perdurant entities in conscious experience, consciousness, as the interface between soul and body has to be a perdurant entity in its terminus as intentional field of awareness. More than this, it must account for the unity of consciousness that is indispensably necessary for the very possibility of experience as we actually live it in and through consciousness. Following Kant, I propose to explain how time and space, as the forms of “inner” and “outer” sense, make unity of consciousness in these senses possible. In this context, it is the body, rather than the soul, that takes the leading part. This should not surprise us, since the ontological basis for the intuition of perdurance shared by both space and time in different ways cannot come from the soul, at least in relation to experience. The body, then, is the natural candidate to supply this need.

If four dimensionalism is true, the world, like God, is sempiternal and timeless, constituting a tenseless, McTaggartian “B series” constituting a ‘block universe.” Since God creates that universe, it would be possible for God to have timelessly eternal *scientia visionis* of His creation. We, however, must passively depend on sense perception, mediated by bodily states, for our knowledge of external states-of-affairs. A simultaneous apprehension of everything in a single intuition would be an impossibly complex mishmash of things and events that would overwhelm our puny intellects and make coherent experience impossible. The relations between things and events that exist in the four-dimensional realm that exceeds our powers of imagination and apprehension must be depicted for us in a manner that, while not directly reflecting the noumenal world as it is in itself, nevertheless represents them to us in a manner that makes it possible for us to theoretically comprehend it. More than this, it must theoretically comprehend them in such a way as to make our experience intelligible as an experience of those objects. Thus, space and time, understood as Kantian *forms of intuition*, are necessary in order for this to happen. Things and events are arrayed before us as spatially separated and successive in time, so that our limited intellects can apprehend their relations to one another and use this information to theoretically reconstruct the world through philosophy and natural science. This phenomenal space and time must therefore be capable of translation, in some analogous fashion, into the idiom of theoretical inquiry, even if not imaginable using those terms. However, it remains that space and time as experienced by us are not things-in-themselves, and thus nothing beyond structural features of consciousness. For this reason, we can agree with Kant that phenomenal space and time are merely potentially infinite in thought without being either finite or infinite in themselves, because in the last analysis, they are nothing in themselves, but merely *for us* as forms of intuition.

Since a perdurant entity such as the body has temporal parts, it cannot be represented passively in finite consciousness as a simple complex or completed totality, as it could for an infinite, creative intellect like God’s. This would completely misrepresent the nature of its object, and could never yield us knowledge of any external object, even if (e.g.) four-dimensionalism is true. Temporal parts exclude each other just as such and so cannot accurately be represented in consciousness as parts of one homogeneous experience. At the same time, the temporal parts of perdurant objects are nevertheless temporal parts or *stages* of one, self-identical object united by EOG relations (what Kant calls relations of “ground and consequent”).[[12]](#footnote-12) A perdurant entity, then, can only (or can best be) represented in consciousness as a single thing that consists of a series of states or stages represented serially in consciousness that both (a.) exclude each other in time as experienced but which are (b.) nevertheless represented as united into a single object by relations of causal dependence. In turn, these causal relations are represented by constant conjunction, regular precedence in experience, and as expressible by a well-confirmed inductive generalization or *law*. The causal mechanisms that provide the ontological ground for these laws are not represented in experience and belong to the noumenal realm investigated (as I shall argue elsewhere) by the special sciences and are thus theoretically comprehended rather than perceptually apprehended. Thus, the mutual exclusion of the temporal parts of endurant entities is represented in consciousness by the phenomenon of temporal succession among its contents, whereas the unity of the object over time is represented by the representation of relations of ground and consequent as temporally ordered and irreversible not for the experiencer but in the object experienced.

In a similar manner, the pre-conscious production of experiencable mental contents, the product of the operation of the transcendental faculty of *imagination*, essentially concerns the organization of mental images. Kant’s view that the sole contribution of the noumenal, external world to consciousness is the raw “sense-data” that the imagination organizes into a phenomenal world is to be rejected, because such a product could never amount to anything more than a collection of organized sense-data and thus could not represent the external world to us. Nevertheless, considered as rules for the production of mental images, Kant’s *schematized* categories have some genuine explanatory power, representing some of the necessary conditions for a collection of mental images to represent a world of external objects.[[13]](#footnote-13) There is more to say on this point, but I shall reserve this for another occasion.

**Unity of Consciousness in the Object** For the present let us simply note that Kant hopes to use his account of space and time to turn aside the apparently skeptical implications of empiricism, especially as Hume presents and defends them. Kant wants to concede to Hume that he has refuted traditional metaphysics and that, as far as they go, Hume’s psychological observations (his “empirical psychology”) is correct. However, Kant wants to turn the Humean challenge aside by taking this sort of analysis to a deeper level and showing that Hume himself presupposes certain features of his own consciousness that cry out for explanation and for which Hume himself can offer no plausible account consistent with his principles. Having refuted Hume, Kant then claims that only his own doctrine of categories can provide the needed explanation, so that both Wolffian rationalism (refuted by Hume and, following Hume, Kant himself) and Humean skepticism are shown to be superseded by the Kant’s own “critical philosophy.” In particular, Hume and the other empiricists suppose that our awareness of space and time is an unproblematic feature of consciousness. Despite his obvious sympathies with Hume in certain respects, Kant argues otherwise.

According to empiricism, the meaning of any term is the idea that arises in the mind when the one utters the term internally. Ideas, in turn, are either mental images or precisively abstractible elements of such images, and always consist of sensible qualities or collections of such qualities. However, although space and time are ubiquitous features of sense-experience, they are neither sensible qualities, collections of such qualities, nor reducible to such qualities. When Kant says we cannot experience space and time *as such*, we can take him to be making this point. We have, therefore, no ideas (i.e. mental pictures) of space and time understood as discrete sense-contents, any more than we have of matter, of God, or the self. Neither can we reduce space and time to observable relations of distance, position, or succession in experience, since these already presuppose space and time in order for us to experience them. Nor can we arrive at these concepts by simply abstracting away all the contents from our intentional field of consciousness. While we can conceive of empty space and empty time, and even approximate to these notions in imagination, we cannot experience space and time apart from sense-contents. More than this, we experience space and time as indefinitely extended (not bounded by any intrinsic limit), infinitely divisible, yet without and proper parts, thus as simple, homogeneous, and particular.[[14]](#footnote-14) Kant is surely suggesting that Hume does not have, within the limits of his principles, any way to account for space and time as elements of conscious experience. Instead, Kant proposes that space and time are given in and through experience, not as sensible qualities or relations between such qualities, which comprise the *matter* of consciousness, but instead as prior to and necessary for the conscious experience of such contents, and thus as *a priori*, pure *forms* of intuition.

More pointedly, Hume’s account of causation, as a habit formed from the observation of a constant conjunction of events in time, with the one designated the cause preceding that designated as the effect, cannot even get off the ground without an account of temporal succession. Hume’s regularity theory of causation presupposes the experience of time, and thus, from Kant’s point of view, time as the form of intuition irreducible to its content/matter. Further, in the Third Analogy, Kant notes that we routinely distinguish between subjective and objective temporal sequences in experience. We intuitively regard some (like our temporally extended examination of a building) as merely an artifact of our own subjective point of view on the object, which remains unchanged throughout, and others as qualifying the object of experience itself (as when we see a boat travelling toward us down the river.) Some we regard as merely arbitrary and such that they could have occurred in a different order in temporal experience, others as irreversible in temporal experience, even if not in the occurrent imagination exercised by the empirical self. At the same time, there seems to be no intrinsic difference between these two sets of experience such that we can distinguish between them, either on the side of the subject or by reference to occurrent imagination, and thus no way for an empiricist like Hume to account for these familiar facts. If I drive down the same street every day at the same time and see the same objects and persons, fully anticipating what I will see based on past experience, and find that my expectations are routinely gratified, nevertheless I will never arrive at the judgment that there is any causal connection between temporal antecedents and consequents in this case. There is more to our experience of what we intuitively identify as causal sequences than what is given to us by means of sense-contents. Kant suggests that this extra is an intimation that the sequence we are experiencing has been determined in accordance with a rule, i.e., governed by a causal law that dictates that the sequence must occur in experience in a certain order independently of our wills. If so, Hume’s attempt to reduce causation simply to a set of facts of empirical psychology comes to grief, a result of the inherent limitations of his empiricism and phenomenalism.

**The Unity of Consciousness in “Outer Sense”** What, then, of so-called “outer sense,” which represents putatively external objects to us? We note that this issue raises some interesting questions. The unstated assumption that dominates almost all thinking on this topic takes it for granted that all of our perceptual states are causally mediated by states of the body. In this sense, there is nothing in the intentional field of consciousness existing there as content that is not first in the senses, which have their roots in the brain. At the same time, it is clearly necessary for the senses to operate in this way at all that the bodily states that perform this mediating function not themselves be present in consciousness as mental contents since, as we have seen, if this were the case we could never be aware of anything other than such states. This is confirmed by the fact that, other than our general kinesthetic or proprioceptive awareness, which itself depends on the perception of external objects, we can perceive our own bodies as such only through the senses and have no direct apprehension of our bodies or their properties simply through the soul’s relation to the body as its *per se* cause. Contrary to what Descartes says, *in this respect*, the soul is “in” the body (by means of its presence to it and its states) as a pilot in the ship. We never apprehend bodily states directly as such, but only through the mediation of the senses. Even bodily sensations, though immediately apprehended by us, are merely natural signs of the states that cause them, rather than apprehensions of those states. My pain informs me of bodily injury or damage by breaking into my consciousness and directing my attention to the current state of my body in at best a certain location. However, the nature and extent of that injury or damage we can determine only by the independent use of the senses. Pains thus have contents but no objects and thus are not intentional states of consciousness.

Perceptual states can represent external objects only by having intentional objects as well as being mental contents that direct our attention and this, as I have argued, requires that bodily states as such not be represented in consciousness except as seen, etc. by means of the senses. The body is, in this sense, necessarily part of the external world, and is thus simply itself another external object. It is thus no more a part of me *qua* self-conscious subject than any other external object represented to me by my mental contents. This, again, is what we would expect to be the case if substance dualism is true. What makes a body *my* body is not my identity with it *qua* person, let alone as conscious subject, but instead the unique EOG relation that holds between that body and my soul acting as the proximate *per se* cause of its operation *qua* living thing. This relation my soul bears only to that body and none other, thus individuating it as *mine*, thus part of me *qua* living *organism*, the composite substance consisting of soul and body. The body constitutes “outer sense” in the individual case not through any mental contents I may derive from perceiving it (looking at my hand, or seeing my reflection in a mirror, etc.) but instead by providing me with an orientation to and perspective on the phenomenal world functioning as the representation of the external world. This external world thus exists for me as a transcendental object, present in and to consciousness while at the same time transcending it, so that my apprehension of it is limited, partial, incomplete – *and perspectival*. It is this last for which the body is especially and directly responsible. The body contributes this incommunicable “perspectivity” to consciousness by means of the external spatio-temporal predicates that attach to it independently of my consciousness of them, precisely as a material thing existing external to the mind.

The body, *qua* external material thing, is located outside of consciousness in the external world, and bears spatial, temporal, and causal relations to other such objects in that world. The body’s contribution to my awareness of that world, i.e. to the way that world appears to me in consciousness by means of representational contents, is the result of these relations. It is present in consciousness as an orientation to the external world and a perspective on it that is uniquely and incommunicably personal and capable of individuating each stream of consciousness from every other. This is sufficient to constitute the unity of consciousness in relation to “outer sense” while at the same time identifying the body as that which individuates one stream of consciousness from another. Again, the body accomplishes this through the soul’s EOG relation to that unique body as revealed to the empirical self in its unique personal orientation and perspective on the external world, one including even the body itself considered as an object of external perceptual awareness.

At the same time, precisely because my body is an external material thing, and thus a transcendental object existing in relation to other such objects as part of the external world, it belongs with them as one order of nature constituted by those relations and thus reflected in the phenomenal world that represents them to me. Due to this fact, our individual perspectives on that world are going to be complementary in such a way that we can usefully speak of a common world of external objects, of publically observable external objects, and even of several people having the same experience each from his or her unique point of view. It thus constitutes each of them as a transcendental object, thereby grounding the interpretation of the phenomenal world as a realm of stable, intrasubjectively and intersubjectively experiencable objects about which we can have a common discourse. Further, this will hold despite the fact that each stream of consciousness is unique, hermetically sealed off from every other stream of consciousness, and accompanied by a unique and incommunicable perspective on that common “world.”[[15]](#footnote-15) In this way, we are thereby able to have objective knowledge about the external world without either apprehending noumena or having to deny the facts of human subjectivity.

1. See my “Dualism and Neuroscience,” also posted to PhilPapers. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The soul affects the body by sustaining its existence and remains unchanged by its association with it. The body, being a composite substance (specifically, a material thing) has a natural tendency to wear out and disintegrate which eventually causes the body to fall apart, thus terminating the soul/body relation. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A traditional metaphor that may help the imagination here is to think of rays of light emanating from a candle in an otherwise dark room. All of these rays emanate from a single point but illuminate the entire space of the room to the limits of its walls. A similar, though somewhat more fanciful metaphor would be this: imagine two parallel lines, select a point on one of those lines, and then draw lines from that point intersecting each point on the other line constituting a one-inch segment of that line. If that point were conscious, and those lines connecting to the points on the other line the exercise of *per se* sustaining causality, then that point would be related to, and thus present to all of the points of the line to which it is connected by those lines and connected to each of them in the same way. Thus, a power emanating from a dimensionless point at its origin would become extended as related to its object/terminus without that point itself becoming extended. Again, these are merely metaphors offered in aid of the imagination. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. More on this below; see 12-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See CSM, Vol. II, 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. I do not follow Kant in assuming, as he did following the empiricists, that we can know something only insofar as we apprehend it. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This argument is, broadly speaking, Aristotelian and perhaps a plausible reconstruction of Aristotle’s own view of change; it does however incorporate some of the considerations that Kant used to argue for a similar position. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. I argued this previously in my paper, “How is Neuroscience Possible?” [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See my paper, “The Inescapable Self” on this point. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Awareness, so far as it concerns us here, I understand as focused or selective awareness. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See my “Dualism and Neuroscience,” also posted to PhilPapers. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. For the notion of an EOG relation, see Duncan, The Proof of the External World, 91-95. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Kant’s schematized categories bid fair to function in the transcendental unity of apperception as principles of synthesis. By contrast, his categories themselves (or at any rate, the ones worth keeping) are merely innate ideas we arrive at by reflection on our power of judgment and thus need not be regarded as either ontologically or explanatorily prior to those schematized categories as powers exercised by the soul in constituting the phenomenal world in consciousness. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Kant makes these points, as well as others, in the Transcendental Analytic. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Kant uses a similar scheme to explain the convergence of aesthetic judgments in the *Third Critique* despite the fact that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” Since we share a common nature, we tend to agree concerning what things are beautiful and ugly, despite the fact that aesthetic judgments are nothing more than expressions of feeling in the form of judgments of taste, and thus completely subjective. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)