

*Transcendental structures and presuppositional arguments: Round three*

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In this paper I have tried to sketch – and no more than sketch – how an austere version of presuppositional analysis with ‘transcendental import’ can be achieved.

The methodological scaffolding of such an austere version is given by the twin procedures of the exposition and interpretation of performative self-contradictions of the ‘right’ kind and the attendant – and necessary – constructionism of formations of ‘developed concepts’.

Both ‘methods’ are an integral part of the same procedural framework which cannot be reduced to either component or eliminated altogether without giving up transcendental analysis as such. For to do so with a ‘good conscience’ we would need arguments stronger than those offered for projects of de-transcendentalization within the debate on transcendental arguments, which, as should have become transparent by now, always was a debate on how to ‘do’ transcendental analysis (or transcendental philosophy) – and not ‘just’ some attempt at an account of a ‘strange’ part of argumentation theory.

Transcendental constructionism is an ongoing affair: whether a satisfactory formation of notions of experience and/or social experience can be achieved remains to be seen. Substantive analyses must follow.

Keywords: ultimate justification (Letztbegründung), transcendental argument, bifurcation, truthless validity, evidential universalization.

If anything the so-called ‘debate’ on transcendental arguments has ended inconclusively – even though the Bifurcation Thesis – categorial frameworks and/or presuppositional structures of a loosely pragmatic kind might possess ‘transcendental status’ – could conceivably be taken to restructure the ‘Dimension of the Transcendental’.

The paper tries to develop this point in the direction of an argumentative model of the identificatory justification of such presuppositional structures (whether in ‘theoretical’ or ‘practical’ philosophy) in the hope that one can make sense of what the tradition has called ‘transcendental claims’ in a newly illuminating manner. And not only ‘make sense’, but show that some structures do have that status, which, of course, this paper does not attempt for – at least – some respectively ‘promising’ candidates.

Since a sufficient understanding of the Bifurcation Thesis or Theorem – or of separate versions thereof – is basic to all that follows, some explanatory remarks are in order.

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Within the Kantian paradigm of transcendental philosophy the Bifurcation Theorem can be understood in a *twofold* manner: firstly as an *ontological* thesis about the contents of the 'realm of the transcendental' - categories and basic propositions delineating the form of an objectively valid experience in addition to forms or 'functions' of synthesis given the overarching architectonic of the transcendental unity of apperception; and secondly as a *methodological* thesis about the 'machinery' of how to do transcendental philosophy as a *critical* endeavour, i.e. transcendental deductions and transcendental 'proofs'.

Both theses are heavily interlinked: in a classical Kantian context the one cannot be had without the other. Since according to Kant the notion of category is not to be understood without a notion of synthesis, criticism of that notion - and the attendant ontological thesis about the content of the 'realm of the transcendental' - tends to demolish or at least throw into doubt this first or classical version of the Bifurcation Theorem.

The debate on transcendental arguments has come up with a further version of that Thesis. The Bifurcation Theorem can now be taken to consist in (ontologically) claiming that *basic pragmatic structures and conceptual or categorial frameworks* people the 'realm of the transcendental', whereas on the 'methodological side of things' *exploring pragmatic self-contradictions* (of a certain kind) points to structures of possible transcendental import in conjunction with a *method of constructing categorial frameworks* around presumably basic conceptual elements.

Not surprisingly this new, non-Kantian interpretation of the Bifurcation Theorem has come under heavy criticism: the very notion of categorial or conceptual framework has been put into doubt as a repository of 'transcendental content' and the 'new' methodology of exhibiting performative self-contradictions seems in persistent danger of entangling itself in trivialities without any 'transcendental meaning'.<sup>1</sup>

Earlier endeavours - which one might call rounds one and two - have established the Bifurcation Thesis within the broad context of attempts - mainly inspired by R. Rorty and D. Davidson<sup>2</sup> - to put forth arguments for the necessity of *detranscendentalization* in a very strong and sweeping sense, by accepting these criticisms at least for notions of conceptual or categorial frameworks understood as apriori structures of sorts (Round one).<sup>3</sup>

Round two was initiated by taking up the successor notion(s) of lines of argument aimed at exposing performative self-contradictions as a means of establishing transcendental claims for - *prima vista* - pragmatic structures or 'presuppositions' as witnessed in the 'classic' paper by H.L. Ruf (and also attempts by other philosophers).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For further comment see below.

<sup>2</sup> See: *Davidson, Donald.*, On the very idea of a conceptual scheme, in: Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association 47 (1973-74) S. 5-20 and *Rorty, Richard.*, Transcendental arguments, Self-reference, and Pragmatism, in: P. Bieri et. al (Hrg.): Transcendental arguments and science, Dordrecht 1979, S. 77-103. For a somewhat wider context see: *Davidson, Donald.*, The Structure and Content of Truth, in: The Journal of Philosophy 88 (1990), S. 279-328

<sup>3</sup> See: *Niquet, M.*, Transzendente Argumente: Kant, Strawson und die Aporetik der Detranszendentalisierung, Frankfurt/Main 1991.

<sup>4</sup> *Ruf, Henry L.*, Transcendental Logic. An Essay on Critical Metaphysics, in: Man and World 2 (1969).

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The idea of a pragmatic Apriori with strong transcendental import does not seem to be exposed to prominent detranscendentalizing criticism - at least not in ways aiming at notions of categorial frameworks or conceptual schemes.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately a methodology of (merely) exposing performative self-contradictions in arguments proposing 'candidates' for the status of 'transcendentally valid' presuppositional structures seems to be too weak per se to establish such claims.<sup>6</sup> The attempt to strengthen this model or methodology by introducing the notion of a 'strictly performative self-contradiction' unfortunately also fails - simply because there seem to be no such contradictions at least along the lines of this model.<sup>7</sup>

But - as one might say - not all is lost. In what follows my argument can also be understood as a third round-attempt to interpret and apply a version of the Bifurcation Theorem - hopefully with better luck than in rounds one and two.

Taking up some earlier endeavours<sup>8</sup> I want to initiate round three of the debate by proposing two steps:

- a. 'Rescuing' the pragmatic model by introducing some additional and necessary structure.
- b. Proposing a 'constructionalist' methodology for exposing and justifying categorial frameworks or 'conceptual schemes' as structures of possible transcendental import inspired mainly by (the early) P.F. Strawson and some arguments by R. Harrison and others.<sup>9</sup>

## I

We need some introductory clarifications. 'Presupposition' is an analytically well-established term<sup>10</sup>; in the context of this paper I am only interested in what one might call 'transcendentally pregnant or loaded' presuppositions. Such structures resp. their representations are the outcome of (successfully conducted) 'transcendental discourses'.

Now, to conduct such a discourse is tantamount to examine or 'test' a sentence or assertion A which can be taken to formulate a 'candidate' for being a de facto presupposition of argumentative discourse (or 'experience as such') for transcendental validity. 'Transcendental validity' is to be taken to mean: 'necessary or non-circumventable validity for every possible subject of discursive utterances or 'experience as such' in every possible kind of discourse' or model of experience. This condition counts as satisfied for an assertion or asserted proposition P if and only if it can be demonstrated that the validity of P must be presupposed or taken for granted in every possible discourse by every possible subject able to engage in discourse. Propositions thus 'testable' count as 'candidate-formulations'. Such hypotheses can be found in two main areas: firstly in the realm of those intuitions of discourse-enabled native speakers concerning

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<sup>5</sup> For some arguments see: *Niquet* (1), p. 277 and passim.

<sup>6</sup> See: *Niquet* (2).

<sup>7</sup> My attempt in *Niquet* (2) was not 'good enough'.

<sup>8</sup> See: *Niquet* (2).

<sup>9</sup> *Strawson, P.F.*, *Individuals. An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*, London, 1959 and *Harrison, Ross*, *On what there must be*, Oxford 1974.

<sup>10</sup> For example see the respective entry on page 641 in: *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Cambridge 1995.

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what it is to engage in argumentative discourse, secondly within (philosophical or non-philosophical) theories which deal reconstructively with the foundations or basic conditions of our knowledge of the world, of meaningful thought, speech and action.<sup>11</sup>

'Talking transcendently' can encompass four 'dimensions of the transcendental':

- 1) *semantic* dimension: what is the meaning of the predicate 'transcendental'?
- 2) *methodological* dimension: how can we establish or come to know whether something X, a proposition or sentence-token, is in fact transcendently valid?
- 3) *objectual or material* dimension: what - either as a condition, a structure or presupposition - is transcendently valid?
- 4) *conditional* dimension: the respective preconditions and presuppositions of the idea of the transcendental must be taken to consist in what?

In what follows we will primarily be concerned with the methodological dimension and, to focus ideas, I propose to initiate the discussion with the 'pragmatic model' emphasized by H. Ruf and others.

This model can be taken to be represented as follows:

'I hereby assert [and presuppose that p], that non-p'

It contains three clauses: the assertive introductory clause, the presuppositional clause, and the propositional clause equivalent to a negation of the presuppositional clause. This clause is taken to 'contain' the 'candidate formulation' of the presupposition to be 'tested'.<sup>12</sup> In contradistinction to merely trivial examples of openly paradoxical or simply wayward uses of language, f.ex. 'I hereby assert [ ... ], that I assert nothing' or 'I hereby negate [...], that no negation is possible' philosophically serious uses of the model are meant to feature 'promising' presuppositional candidates: only then are we obviously dealing with 'philosophical subject matter'.<sup>13 14</sup> Interestingly the version of the pragmatic model which K.O. Apel has championed<sup>15</sup> only presents it as part of a more complex structure: the so called 'Letztbegründungsprinzip' (principle of ultimate foundation) adds a clause claiming that for a presupposition to be of 'genuine' transcendental validity it should also fail any attempt at deductive justification. We will come back to consider this point later.

Unfortunately the 'mere' criterion of a performative contradiction (or self-contradiction) is not sufficiently 'potent' to distinguish intuitively promising transcendental from 'trivial' presupposi-

<sup>11</sup> See: *Niquet* (2).

<sup>12</sup> See: *Ruf* and *Niquet* (2).

<sup>13</sup> Examples might be the so-called private language argument, or attempts at a 'refutation' of some version of solipsism etc.

<sup>14</sup> It should also be mentioned that use of the model is not necessarily bound to illocutionary verbs and other forms of linguistic usage - a 'Fregean version' of affirmation and negation 'in thought' should likewise be possible.

<sup>15</sup> See: *Apel*, K.-O., *Das Problem der philosophischen Letztbegründung im Lichte einer transzendentalen Sprachpragmatik*, in: B. Kanitscheider(Hrg.): *Sprache und Erkenntnis. Festschrift für G. Frey zum 60. Geburtstag*, Innsbruck 1976.

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tions. A speaker S who (*ceteris paribus*) asserts: 'I am not speaking English now' seems to generate a performative (self)contradiction without - apparently - negating in his very act of uttering this sentence a transcendently valid presupposition of all discourse or meaningful speech. The evidence of the manifested performative self-contradiction must be taken to amount to a kind of *indicating evidence* and must be transferred as such to some further operation of transcendental discourse, i.e. an interpretative operation of exposing or uncovering further properties, an operation which must be understood as an instance of *evidential universalization* or testing.

It appears to be trivially true that one can engage in transcendental discourse using Portuguese (or Russian), but the 'intuition', that nobody, using an assertoric sentence S of a natural language L will be able to performatively and successfully negate that he thereby generates an utterance-token of L, is not so 'transparent'.

And furthermore we seem to be conducting our argumentative search for transcendently valid presuppositional structures under a possibly severe restriction. If some candidate C1 to be tested actually does represent a structure of this type, then it is also true that C1 represents a presupposition of that very argument, which appears to show that we can only hope for a kind of negative evidence for presuppositional status, i.e. the negative evidence of a 'clash' between presuppositional and propositional clauses of some instantiation of the pragmatic model.

But, on second thought, the discursive context need not be so austere. We need to distinguish between knowing *that*, if C1 is valid, then C1 is a presupposition of that very argument and knowing *whether* that really is the case for C1!

Since we do not and cannot know this antecedent to some successful instance of transcendental discourse featuring specifically C1 as a candidate formulation to be investigated (and - hopefully - confirmed), we seem to be free to use other discursive resources available, among those - perhaps - resources offering inferentially positive evidence for C1.

This non-classic, i.e. non-Kantian approach to raising and investigating transcendental claims seems to be another consequence of the Bifurcation Thesis in conjunction with the idea that presuppositional structures with transcendental import are not necessarily (only) those of a type of a possible 'objective and synthetically unified experience'. If suitable non-classical 'candidates' can be established (the existence of 'other minds' qua persons; the self-and other-ascribability of certain types of personal predicate; the 'pragmatic' coherence of 'language' taken as a system of utterances) using arguments of this kind - so be it. And if not:- well, then those arguments are just shown to represent failed attempts without transcendental meaning. Having to recognize this possible fact does not come as a surprise, considering the following circumstance. Harking back to the fourfold distinction suggested above, it can be asserted that an objectual ascription of 'transcendently valid' to some state of affairs, condition or structure S is only possible if the second question can be affirmatively answered for some suitable propositional representation of S: something S is something objectually transcendental if its representation R(S) can be shown to be transcendently valid.

*Considered in itself there is no independent objectual or 'ontological' meaning of 'transcendental'!*

Propositional representations of states of affairs or the propositional part of affirmations of such states or their respective knowledge-claims do not contain in themselves a logical index that they indeed objectually represent something *de facto* transcendently valid. In each case something must be added, namely the discursively supported insight that they are respectively valid, i.e.: 'It is

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transcendentally true, that so-and-so'. *The insight that S is de facto a transcendental condition or structure is a function of the insight, that R(S), the propositional representation of S, is de facto transcendently valid.* The mere - or for that matter - any mere knowledge of S is not necessarily subject to that condition: *not every knowledge of S must be a piece of transcendently valid knowledge of S in order to be able to represent S in an epistemically illuminating manner.* But this simple recognition opens up the possibility that we can indeed have knowledge of S, namely a type of knowledge the validity of which is different from that sense which is expressed in ascriptions of the predicate 'transcendental' to (R)S. It seems possible that we could recognize such a state of affairs or structure S as valid in the context of a mode of discourse different from that of a transcendental argument or sequence of such arguments. Transcendental knowledge TK(S), i.e. knowledge gained through some suitable transcendental argument or arguments TA(1..n), namely that de facto some propositional representation R(S) possesses transcendental validity, can refer to some state of affairs S which we can identify and recognize as valid in other kinds of argument - i.e. in the sense of valid insights procured in non-transcendental arguments or discourses. 'Transcendental' is a discursive meta-predicate. We cannot exclude the possibility that different types of discourse, f.ex. those of a transcendental nature or those which 'merely' proclaim empirico-reconstructive validity, attach different modes of validity *to one and the same representation R(S) of S. One and the same state of affairs S, propositionally specified, could very well be represented as a transcendently valid presupposition f.ex. of argumentative discourse itself and at the same time represent a condition which simply 'is the case' given suitable descriptions of a different type of discourse.* To understand the predicate 'transcendental' in this manner is based on an overarching property of the language of argumentative discourse, namely an internal relation between 1. some propositional content which was or can be asserted, 2. the asserted or assertable validity of this content and 3. the type of argumentative validation or verification of this claim in the context of some kind of discourse. It is easy to understand that the discursive meaning of a validity claim C, presumptively treated as substantiated, is a function of the argumentatively supporting evidence SE of the respective type of discourse.

It is *empirically* true, if true at all, that protons consist of quarks, because we can muster the necessary physically valid evidences for that conviction or claim; it is *necessarily* true, if true at all, that the Turing problem of general provability is not effectively solvable, because we can prove this to be so in a meta-mathematical discourse; it is *transcendentally* true, if true at all, that a private language is conceptually impossible, because we can (presumably) produce a transcendental argument to that effect. Of course the meaning of the validity expressed through and represented by the respective modal predicates is also the meaning of the discursive validity of the (respectively) asserted proposition; but likewise it is easy to understand that one has to distinguish *the semantic meaning of a sentence or proposition of some asserted or assertable propositional content and the discursive meaning of the respective validity claim.* In order to understand what it means that - *ceteris paribus* - there are three million kangaroos in Australia it can be sufficient to simply know the truth-conditions of the respective sentence; whereas knowledge of the discursive meaning or validity of such an assertion encompasses more than just knowing the (standard) truth-conditions of such an assertively used sentence or assertive utterance. The validatory meaning of an asserted proposition (or group of propositions) is a function solely and necessarily of the respective discourse - *to understand it one must understand the argumentative language-game of the evidence-based confir-*

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*mation or falsification of the respective validity-claim.* Now such a reconstruction lets us understand the possibility that more than one type or kind of discourse can be attached to some asserted (or assertable) propositional content, i.e. that the discursive meaning of such contents is *indeterminate*, because not a function of its semantic meaning (whether explained via some suitable truth-predicate or other semantic predicate). *The validity meaning can only be clarified in the context of discourse, a discourse which is not attached to some discursive type in a strictly aprioristic manner.* A genuine transcendental discourse is therefore internally connected to its argumentative success. *Realizing the necessary validity of the respective candidate-formulation as tested counts as both knowing and recognizing eodemque actu the transcendental status of the respective argument.* At this point of our disquisition I want to stop and reconsider. It seems that presuppositional structures of transcendental import can only be 'negatively' identified. Representing conditions of the identifying argument itself the evidentiary *clash* between presuppositional and propositional clauses within the 'test bed' of performative (self)-contradiction points to their irrefutable validity. Presuppositional structures of this type cannot be 'positively justified' - on pain of introducing a (fatal) *petitio principii* or a *petitio tollendi*.<sup>16</sup> There appear to be no 'sparks' of positive (non-circular) evidence comparable to clash-generated negative ones. A context like 'I hereby assert [and presuppose that p], that p' is 'mute' evidence-wise and necessarily so, since its instantiations are 'ok' as asserted: the presuppositional clauses simply represent a validity condition of the propositional clauses asserted. But, on second thought, perhaps we are being led astray - at this point - by adhering too closely to the schema of performative self-contradiction. To fix ideas, a change of schema might help - a change to something like 'p because of q and q because of r' or 'p because of q --> r'.<sup>17</sup> And furthermore - and this really is crucial - *Presupp(p)*<sup>18</sup> *does not follow deductively from p: p --> Presupp(p) is not a valid deductive inference!* And that of course does not mean *that the evidence-based recognition of the presuppositional status of p is necessarily limited to 'exhibiting' or 'commenting on' a respective performative self-contradiction only. This 'negative' evidence can and must be completed with and supplemented by types of non-deductive inferential evidence featuring a 'full' transcendental discourse.* To think that some suitable *Presupp(p)* follows deductively from p is to fall prey to a simple non-sequitur; and substituting p for *Presupp(p)* in the schema above, i.e. arriving at '*Presupp(p)* follows deductively from *Presupp(p)*' simply begs the substantial question at hand: namely whether the 'specific candidate' *Presupp(p)* really does belong to the set of statements or propositions so qualified. To repeat: *Presupp(p)* does not follow deductively from p and it does not follow from the (tentative) logical negation of p, either. What is needed or required is a transcendental discourse understood as a kind of discourse *positively affirming and establishing the presuppositional validity of p*, which, of course, *is not equivalent to a sequence of arguments merely elucidating a performative self-contradiction.* Such a discourse, if successful, can be termed *justificatory*, in contradistinction to justifying discourses of a deductive kind, which would merely stipulate conditions like *Presupp(p)* as part of their premise-set. Justificatory (transcendental) discourses must also be understood as *constructive* for conditions of *Presupp(p)*. *They clarify, expose*

<sup>16</sup> See: K.O. Apel and W. Kuhlmann

<sup>17</sup> The very tentative symbol '□' is not meant to represent a standard first order material implication, of course!

<sup>18</sup> The formulation of '*Presupp(p)*' does not, of course, introduce a 'new' and 'formal' expression. It is simply meant to indicate that whatever can be substituted for 'p' hypothetically possesses the status of a factually true presupposition - for arguments sake.

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and lay bare presuppositions or conditioning structures  $CS(q \dots n)$  for  $Presupp(p)$ , thereby functioning in a positive justificatory manner. Harking back to the distinction explained above between 'knowing-that' and 'knowing-whether', we can now add a third type of (transcendentally relevant) knowledge, consisting of 'knowing-how':  $Presupp(p)$  can be established in some affirmative, positive series of arguments or discourses. At this point of our disquisition we can take stock: Procedures of evidentiary universalization for  $Presupp(p)$  are not of course limited to mere commentary on the respective schema of a performative self-contradiction. *Such argumentative procedures can and must address themselves to necessary conditions of  $Presupp(p)$ .* To take an example from Sir Peter Strawson's early work: for a certain type of predicate to be self-ascribable, it must also be other-ascribable; and for self-ascription of this type to be possible, self-ascribers must understand themselves as persons.<sup>19</sup> As can be noticed necessary conditions of  $Presupp(p)$  can be positively inferred in justificatory argumentation, even though one might find that truth of  $Presupp(p)$  is not possible without truth of the conditioning clause  $q$ , therefore since  $Presupp(p)$  is taken to be true,  $q$  and/or  $r$  and possibly more of that kind also hold and necessarily so. Transcendental discourse in the full sense of that term seems to deal with or involve something like phenomena of conceptual *incoherence* of sorts. This requires further explanation.

## II

'Conceptual incoherence' is a troubled and troubling notion. It belongs to a group of concepts no less difficult to come to terms with in an ordered manner. 'Alternative conceptual scheme' or 'radically alternative conceptual scheme'.

A notion  $N$  can count as conceptually incoherent relative to or in the light of some conceptual scheme  $CS1$  if we cannot 'make sense' of  $N$  given the conceptual resources of  $CS1$  or if we cannot 'translate'  $N$  into  $CS1$ .  $N$  either belongs to an alternative conceptual scheme  $CS2$  or to a radically alternative scheme  $CS_{\text{unknown}}$ .

As D. Davidson seems to have shown, a truth-theoretic account of the 'idea' of a radically alternative conceptual scheme does not get off the ground<sup>20</sup>, and it appears to involve reference to a 'capacity' of which Sir P.F. Strawson has famously written: "We lack words to say what it is to be without them."<sup>21</sup>

We take this as good advice and will attempt to continue to develop our account of affirmative or 'positive' presuppositional discourse along different lines. One of these goes as follows:

(1) 'Without concept  $X$  concept  $Y$  is not a 'developed concept', i.e. applicable or usable as it seems to be used.' 'Developed concept' can also be read as 'deployed or deployable concept'. Concepts like ascription, self-ascription, person, act, other-ascription count as developed concepts.

(2) 'If concept  $Y$  is a developed concept,  $Y$  is also connected to other concepts  $Z1..n$  of that kind'

<sup>19</sup> For the 'classic' argument to that effect see the chapter on Persons in: *Strawson* (1).

<sup>20</sup> *Davidson* (1).

<sup>21</sup> *Strawson, P.F.*, (1) p. 123.

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(3) 'Developed concepts are connected in various ways to other developed concepts and other types of concepts: developed concepts are part of *conceptual formations*.'

Within conceptual formations we acknowledge different types of conceptual connections, some (of course) of the standard logical type, others not so standard.

Take the formation of 'person': predicates can be ascribed, some predicates can be ascribed to oneself and others, as such they appear to have self-ascriptive and other-ascriptive uses. Persons engage not only in acts of such uses, they also seem to be 'objects' (or 'subject-objects') of such acts undertaken by others (other persons). In 'Individuals' Strawson declares such predicates to be P-predicates: they are 'simple' predicates and cannot be analyzed into a 'mental' and 'corporeal' component. Expressions like 'going for a walk' and 'looking for the lost book' are of that type. Now, a formation of developed concepts like the formation 'person' can be regressively analyzed or - in the same manner - be *regressively constructed*. The (developed) elements of such a formation *condition* each other: no ascription of personal predicates without self-ascription, no self-ascription without ascription to others. Such self-and -other ascribers count as persons (not just 'individuals') as actors and objects of such ascriptive acts. The respective group of predicates are P-predicates, often semantically 'complex', but not analyzable into a mental and corporeal component. Regressively constructed conceptual formations of developed concepts can also be recognized as exhibiting presuppositional structure. Do they also have 'transcendental import'? Of course, *prima facie* not, taking the example given above. Even if the concept of person possesses (via its formation) presuppositional structure, it seems to sorely lack what we are after in searching for 'transcendental' import. The critical question appears to be: if 'person' has presuppositional structure, does it also possess a 'transcendental core'? Or have we just given a (sketch of a) - somewhat non-standard - semantics of central features of the factual use of that 'everyday' term? We need to introduce the second element of presuppositional 'transcendental' argumentation. The idea is that of an *eliminative constructionism* of either candidate concepts or their propositional formulations.

*Can we eliminate the concept of persons from our understanding of what it is to ascribe a certain type of predicate or at least whittle down that everyday concept to a core-structure of 'inescapable' presuppositional content?*

Can we eliminate the notion of spatio-temporal particulars as primary reference-points of 'object-oriented' experience as 'ascribable' experience? Or must we accede to at least a core-notion of 'external reference' so as not to lose altogether the idea of reference to objects? And if not, what 'objects' and in what sense objects exactly? It seems that constructing presuppositional conceptual formations with eliminative intent successfully would at least ensure a sort of transcendentalism to some presuppositional elements which 'hold fast' - if they do. The 'Sounds'-chapter in Strawson's 'Individuals' and some of R. Harrison's 'reductive' attempts in his delineation of a 'general model world'<sup>22</sup> can be counted as exercises in eliminative constructivism.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> See: *Harrison*.

<sup>23</sup> If we can establish the 'formation' of persons as 'transcendentally loaded', the same might hold for a notion of 'social or communicative experience'. In contradistinction to 'mere' experience of spatiotemporal 'outer' objects qua 'particulars' such an argument might draw on resources which seem already at hand as part of engaging in the activity of (transcendental) discourse as a form of deliberation itself.

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And harking back to our explication of sameness of propositional content across different types of discourse given above, it is easy to understand how some parts of 'Cognitive Science' have witnessed attempts to eliminate or at least 'whittle down' the everyday 'commonsensical' concept of person as 'subject of mentation' to something more 'respectable' in terms of a neurophysiologically informed new regime of a general Cognitive Science. Whether we can eliminate such concepts altogether, i.e. must surrender to a strong version of *constructionist eliminativism* remains to be seen, but similar 'cooperative' endeavours should not come as a surprise. Of course, babies must keep their bathwater at all times, and presuppositional discourse with transcendental import must be understood to be open-ended - construction of formations can go either way. But, again on second thought, have we not committed a major blunder in construing constructivism as the affirmative side of presuppositional argumentation possibly featuring such open-ended consequences? Should we not remind ourselves of the 'fact' that, 'scientific' or presuppositional, *as types of discourse*, both seem to partake in and presuppose, 'inescapable' commitments, which, as such, cannot be 'distanced' or 'overcome'? Certainly, we should remind ourselves of that, but at the same time ought to remember that the procedures of testing *specific* candidates and construing *specific* formations of developed concepts need to be factually executed to really make that point stick. So and in that sense, back to square one<sup>24</sup>.

In this paper I have tried to sketch – and no more than sketch – how an austere version of presuppositional analysis with 'transcendental import' can be achieved.

The methodological scaffolding of such an austere version is given by the twin procedures of the exposition and interpretation of performative self-contradictions of the 'right' kind and the attendant – and necessary – constructionism of formations of 'developed concepts'.

Both 'methods' are an integral part of the same procedural framework which cannot be reduced to either component or eliminated altogether without giving up transcendental analysis as such. For to do so with a 'good conscience' we would need arguments stronger than those offered for projects of de-transcendentalization within the debate on transcendental arguments, which, as should have become transparent by now, always was a debate on how to 'do' transcendental analysis (or transcendental philosophy) - and not 'just' some attempt at an account of a 'strange' part of argumentation theory.

Transcendental constructionism is an ongoing affair: whether a satisfactory formation of notions of experience and/or social experience can be achieved remains to be seen. Substantive analyses must follow.

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<sup>24</sup> A slightly different square, of course: namely one, where the actual and – hopefully – substantial arguments are given or proposed.

## SEZIONE II: PENSIERO / SEKTION II: DENKEN

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