

## Replies

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I should like to begin by expressing my deep thanks to Sorin Baiasu for organizing the 2020 Rousseau Annual Conference at which early versions of the essays in this volume were first presented, and for inviting me to deliver the Rousseau Annual Lecture that preceded the conference and that is the subject of his own contribution to the volume. I should like to express equally deep thanks to all the contributors for the great care and generosity with which they have engaged with my work. I have found it enormously gratifying to see some of my own ideas developed in such interesting ways, often taking them beyond anything that I had envisaged myself.

What unites all these essays? They range widely, but there is one significant concern that they share, both with one another and with the work to which they are responding: namely, the concern with limits and with what is involved in recognizing and acknowledging them. There is also a more specific concern, implicit if not explicit throughout, which is the concern with various problems that may afflict our acknowledging limits of our own. The most basic of these problems is that, in the case of at least some of these limits, it looks as though we cannot acknowledge them as long as we are subject to them.<sup>1</sup>

In Sarah Patterson's and Jonathan Head's essays, the crucial limits are limits to what we can recognize as possible. In Sorin Baiasu's and Zachary Verbeke's essays they are the limits to our knowledge set by transcendental idealism. In Jenny Bunker's and Pablo Montosa's essays they are limits imposed by our very finitude. And in Michael Morris's and Oliver Spinney's essays they are limits to what counts as a sentence, on a technical conception of a sentence that I introduce in the work to which they are responding.

### 1. REPLY TO SARAH PATTERSON AND JONATHAN HEAD

There is a great deal in Sarah Patterson's essay to suggest that she and I are close in our understanding of Descartes – closer, I think, than either of us is to Jonathan Head. One way to appreciate this is to consider the third paragraph of Head's essay in which he provides a summary of Patterson's exegesis, about which he subsequently expresses reservations: I would be happy to acknowledge his summary of her exegesis as a good

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[1] This is connected with what I have elsewhere called "the Limit Argument". The Limit Argument has two premises: that we cannot properly draw a limit to what we can make sense of unless we can make sense of the limit; and that we cannot make sense of any limit unless we can make sense of what lies on both sides of it. The argument's conclusion is that we cannot properly draw a limit to what we can make sense of. See Moore 2012, 135. For an earlier reference to the argument, though not with that label, see Moore 2019c, 96.

summary of my own. Crucially, Patterson and I agree that, on Descartes' view, God's free creation of such truths as that one plus two is three is not antecedently constrained in any way by what is or is not possible, but rather that God Himself decides what is or is not possible by not only decreeing that such truths are true, but also decreeing that they are necessary. Patterson and I also agree that God's decreeing that these truths are necessary does not just mean that things could not have been otherwise with respect to any of them; it means that God could not have decreed that things be otherwise with respect to any of them. One of the issues with which Patterson, Head, and I are all concerned is how this last consequence is to be reconciled with the freedom of God's decrees.

A caveat before I proceed. Head puts the issue in terms of what he calls Descartes' "voluntarism".<sup>2</sup> This is a term that is often used in this context (though it is not used by either Patterson or me). Typically, what is meant is the view that necessary truths depend on God's free creation. If the term is understood in this way, then it is quite wrong for Head to claim that I claim that "the voluntarism expressed in [...Descartes'] correspondence and elsewhere is an unfortunate lapse."<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, as I indicated in the previous paragraph, I take this to be Descartes' fully considered view. So I assume that Head's use of the term is unorthodox and that he has in mind some other view, presumably a view of the very kind that Patterson and I want to dissociate from this, about what God could have decreed with respect to any given necessary truth.<sup>4</sup>

Be the terminology as it may, the issue, as I have indicated, is how to reconcile the claim that God could not have decreed that things be otherwise with respect to any given necessary truth with the claim that God's decreeing that things are that way is an act of free creation. How, for example, can it be an act of free creation on God's part to decree that one plus two is three if God could not have decreed that one plus two be anything other than three? Towards the end of his essay Head answers this question by distinguishing senses: "*in some sense*," he writes, "things could have been otherwise with regard to the necessary truths and God could have (*in some sense*) created things that way [...but] (*in another sense*) God could not have created things in another way."<sup>5</sup> The second of these senses is supposed to be connected with Richard LaCroix's idea, to which Patterson has recourse in her essay, that although God is *undetermined* in His

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2] PR, 13.

3] PR, 13.

4] Another possibility, of course, is that he has misinterpreted me, though there is plenty of evidence to the contrary in the rest of his essay, which seems to me to show a good grasp of my exegetical stance. I cannot however resist taking this opportunity to mention someone who *has* misinterpreted me, in precisely the way indicated: I have in mind James Conant, whose own exegesis of Descartes is the subject of the essay by me on which Patterson and Head are commenting, namely Moore 2021. Conant's misunderstanding occurs in his response to my essay: Conant 2020, §§I – VII, esp. §VII. For a corrective see the postscript to my essay.

5] PR, 21, emphasis added.

creation of the necessary truths, He is, in creating them, *self-determined* by His own creation.<sup>6</sup> This in turn is supposed to be connected with God's simplicity – with there being no difference between God's willing that something be so, His creating it to be so, and His understanding that it is so.<sup>7</sup>

I am not entirely sure how the distinction that Head draws on the strength of these supposed connections is to be understood. But, however it is to be understood, it surely compromises the necessity of the necessary truths. For the first of the senses that Head distinguishes involves the concession that, whatever the nature of the necessity that attaches to these truths, there is a more fundamental level at which they admit of alternatives (just as we can say that, whatever the nature of the necessity that attaches to the laws of physics, there is a more fundamental level, notably that of logical possibility, at which they admit of alternatives). To be sure, Head insists on Descartes' behalf that the alternatives in question are alternatives that we can only apprehend, not conceive. But alternatives that we can only apprehend, not conceive, are none the less alternatives – unless *what it is* for them to be alternatives is for us to be able to conceive them (as in fact I think Descartes thinks), in which case what Head insists on Descartes' behalf makes no sense. It seems to me that a proper approach to this issue needs to eschew distinctions of the kind that Head draws in favour of a single absolute conception of necessity whereby the necessity of one plus two's being three means that it admits of *no* alternatives and that there is *no* relevant sense in which God could have decreed that things be otherwise. The challenge is to understand this in such a way that it poses no threat to the freedom of God's decree. It is something of this sort that I attempt in the essay to which Patterson and Head are responding,<sup>8</sup> and I still see no reason to retract my attempt.

It is something of this sort that Patterson attempts too. As I have already intimated, we are exegetically close. Nevertheless, we differ. As Patterson points out at the beginning of §5 of her essay, some of what we both think we think for different reasons. The pivot of my interpretation of Descartes is an identification that I take him to make of what is possible with what does not conflict with our human concepts. In note 5 of my essay I admit that Descartes does not commit himself to this identification outright: he commits himself only to the hypothetical that, *if* this is what it is for something to be possible, then such and such follows. But I also claim that, in the context in which he says this, it is clear that he has no stake in endorsing any other conception of what is possible. Patterson demurs. She notes that Descartes does in fact go on to advert to other conceptions of what is possible without repudiating them. On her interpretation,

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6] LaCroix 1991.

7] See Descartes 1984b, Pt I, §23.

8] Moore 2021.

what is possible depends, for Descartes, “not on human concepts, but on the essences freely created by God.”<sup>9</sup>

Even here, however, the disagreement between Patterson and me does not strike me as great. For one thing, I am happy to admit that what is possible depends, for Descartes, on the essences freely created by God. For I am happy to admit that God’s decrees about what is possible consist, for Descartes, in His creation of essences, where what Descartes means by essences, as Patterson reminds us towards the end of her essay, are true and immutable natures. The point, however, is that there is still an issue about what the immutability of such natures consists in; and I still think that Descartes understands this in terms of our human concepts. But even if I am wrong about this – even if Descartes has a more ontologically robust conception of the possible, as Patterson thinks – he still regards non-conflict with our human concepts as a symptom of possibility, if not a criterion.<sup>10</sup> And that is enough for my purposes in the essay to which Patterson and Head are responding.<sup>11</sup>

The fact remains that, on my interpretation, non-conflict with our human concepts is a criterion of possibility, not a symptom. It therefore behoves me to say something in response to Patterson’s explicit argument that this cannot be right. She cites a passage from Descartes’ *Fifth Meditation* in which he appears precisely to reject the idea that our human concepts determine what is or is not possible. The issue with which Descartes is concerned in this passage is the existence of God. Descartes not only thinks that God exists, he thinks that it is necessary that God exists. He insists, however, that it is the necessity that determines his thinking, not *vice versa*; he also insists that, just as his thinking that God exists does not make it true that God exists, neither does it “impose necessity on any thing”.

None of this troubles me, however. There are three propositions at stake here:

- (E) the proposition that God exists;
- (T) the proposition that Descartes thinks that God exists;
- (N) the proposition that it is necessary that God exists.

On my interpretation, (N) is true, not because of what Descartes thinks, nor therefore because (T) is true, but because of what Descartes, in common with the rest of us, *cannot help* thinking. And it is what Descartes cannot help thinking that determines what he actually does think. In other words, it is what Descartes cannot help thinking

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9] PR, 13.

10] Cf. Patterson’s concession that, for Descartes, “we know or recognise possibility through compatibility with our concepts.” (PR, 20)

11] That said, I must acknowledge the obvious complications that arise if non-conflict with our human concepts is only contingently a symptom of possibility. One way of addressing these complications would be to argue that, for Descartes, it is not only contingently a symptom of possibility: it is necessarily a symptom of possibility, because of God’s benevolence.

that determines that (T) is true, in line with what he insists in the passage from the *Fifth Meditation*. Moreover, Descartes is self-conscious about this. In particular, he acknowledges the truth of (N). And it is this that enables him to acknowledge the truth of (E), which in turn gives him reassurance concerning (T). For he infers the truth of (E) from that of (N). And his justification for making this inference – despite the fact that the truth of (E), but not that of (N), is independent of him – has to do, ultimately, with God’s benevolence,<sup>12</sup> which ensures that what Descartes, in common with the rest of us, cannot help thinking is true. Nothing in the passage from the *Fifth Meditation* seems to me incompatible with any of this. And indeed the sentence immediately preceding the passage seems to me rather neatly to encapsulate it: Descartes writes, “From the fact that I cannot think of God except as existing, it follows that existence is inseparable from God, and hence that He really exists.”<sup>13</sup>

There is another difference between Patterson and me. Patterson takes a somewhat different approach from mine to Descartes’ claim that he “would not dare to say that God cannot make [it...] that one and two should not be three.”<sup>14</sup> I say that such reticence is misplaced. Not that I am totally unsympathetic to Descartes: in note 10 of my essay I advert to the possibility that his reticence is due to a scholastic scruple of some kind, and later, relatedly, I mention Descartes’ reluctance to declare anything to be beyond the power of God – though I also add that he could and should have followed Aquinas by insisting that not being able to do the impossible is no limitation on the power of any being.<sup>15</sup> But Patterson, again following LaCroix, sees Descartes’ reticence more as a matter of rhetoric. She thinks that Descartes would not dare to say such a thing about God because doing so would be liable to misinterpretation. Even if she is right, however, it does not affect my principal contention. It remains the case, on my account, that what Descartes would not dare to say is something that he *should* say, however misleadingly, since it is a consequence of his basic conception of these matters.

Finally, in §6 of her essay, Patterson also takes issue with the way in which, at the end of my own essay, I relate my exegesis of Descartes to the question of what he thinks a deceiver of supreme power could do. Although I find Patterson’s alternative gloss on what Descartes says in this connection very attractive, I am not in the end persuaded that she does full justice to it (that is, to what he says). However, I shall leave the matter there. Patterson herself admits that what she proffers by way of elaboration

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12] This of course brings into sharp relief the so-called Cartesian Circle, though this is not the place to address that.

13] Descartes 1984a, 46.

14] Descartes 1991a, 359.

15] I am therefore delighted by Patterson’s reference to Descartes 1991b, 363, a passage with which I was previously unfamiliar and in which, as Patterson points out, Descartes does precisely what I say he could and should have done. I thank Patterson for drawing my attention to this passage.

of her alternative gloss is both brief and contentious,<sup>16</sup> and it would be inappropriate for me, especially within these confines, to speculate on what a detailed version of what she proffers would look like.

## 2. REPLY TO SORIN BAIASU AND ZACH VEREB

I will begin my reply to Sorin Baiasu and Zach Vereb by addressing various issues about the relations between what I have in mind when I talk about knowledge in the essay to which they are responding and what Kant has in mind when he talks about related notions.<sup>17</sup> Indeed I will devote the bulk of my reply to addressing these issues. They are admittedly not the most interesting issues. They are not even the issues where the most interesting disagreements between Baiasu, Vereb, and me arise. But they do affect almost everything else, and until they are addressed there is considerable scope for confusion.

We can start with the Kantian distinction between *cognition* and *knowledge* that Baiasu discusses in §3 of his essay. The two German terms that Kant uses are “*Erkenntnis*” and “*Wissen*”. To allow for the possibility that Kant is using these terms in a quasi-technical way, and to avoid begging any questions about how his use of either of them relates to my own use of “knowledge”, I shall retain the German originals.

What does Kant mean by “*Erkenntnis*”? This is a notoriously difficult question. I agree with Baiasu and Vereb that Kant gives at least two accounts of what he means which appear straightforwardly incompatible with each other. According to what he says at one point in *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Erkenntnis* requires both intuitions and concepts.<sup>18</sup> Later, he suggests that intuitions on their own and concepts on their own also count as instances of *Erkenntnis*.<sup>19</sup> Baiasu accordingly says that Kant has a single (ambiguous) label for two distinct notions.<sup>20</sup> Baiasu himself distinguishes these notions by labelling the former, narrower notion “EK” and the latter, broader notion “EM”. He further claims that, when I refer to *Erkenntnis*, I am referring to EM; and Vereb follows him in this regard.<sup>21</sup> But in fact this is not so. On the very few occasions on which I refer to *Erkenntnis*, either in my essay or in my book *The Evolution of Modern Metaphysics*, to which Baiasu and Vereb both also refer,<sup>22</sup> I have in mind EK, which I take to be, of the two, the notion that is of greater concern to Kant.

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16] PR, 21.

17] The essay to which they are responding is Moore 2021.

18] Kant 1998, A50 – 51/B74 – 76.

19] Kant 1998, A320/B376 – 77.

20] A less charitable view would be that Kant is simply being careless in one of these passages.

21] Baiasu 2021, Vereb 2021 respectively.

22] Respectively Moore 2021, nn. 19, 50, and 53, and Moore 2012, Ch. 5, n. 13.

One of the occasions on which I refer to *Erkenntnis* is in a lengthy note in the chapter on Kant in my book.<sup>23</sup> And one of the things that I do in that note is to identify something which, in my own terms, counts as knowledge but which, in Kant's terms, does *not* count as *Erkenntnis*, a kind of knowledge that I in turn characterize as "purely conceptual". What I have in mind is analytic knowledge that concerns things in themselves, in the attenuated sense of "concern" that I introduce in my essay – knowledge in which no intuitions are involved.<sup>24</sup> (This is itself an illustration that what I think of as *Erkenntnis* is EK, not EM.) An example that I give in the essay is knowledge that things in themselves are things irrespective of how they are given to us.

Later in the chapter on Kant, where I give what might be deemed further examples of knowledge that is not *Erkenntnis*, I include the very knowledge that there *are* things in themselves, along with the knowledge that things in themselves are non-spatio-temporal. Baiasu interprets me as holding that these too are examples of purely conceptual knowledge concerning things in themselves.<sup>25</sup> However, given that by purely conceptual knowledge I mean a kind of analytic knowledge,<sup>26</sup> it follows, as I point out, that they cannot be so regarded. For they cannot be regarded as analytic. True, the idea that Kant accedes to synthetic knowledge of this kind concerning things in themselves should give pause. But, as far as that goes, the critical point is that, whereas the note is intended as an outline of what Kant himself would be prepared to say, the later material is intended as an indication of what, possibly despite himself, he is committed to saying.

Why do I say that these examples of knowledge cannot be regarded as analytic? In the case of the knowledge that there are things in themselves, partly because of what I see as Kant's recoil from the very idea that an existential judgement can ever be analytic.<sup>27</sup> But is it as simple as that? In note 64 of the same chapter I allude to the possibility that our use of the expression "knowledge that there are things in themselves" may be a misleading label for knowledge that is not about what there is, but is rather knowledge that how things appear is *only* how they appear, in which case it may seem to be a compelling candidate for analyticity after all. Nevertheless in the same note I deny

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23] Moore 2012, Ch. 5., n.13. Incidentally, by highlighting Kant 1998, A320/B376-77 in that note, I certainly incur some blame for the misunderstanding to which I have just referred: this is the passage already mentioned in which Kant suggests that what *he* means by "*Erkenntnis*" is EM.

24] For arguments against the view that Kant would acknowledge any such knowledge see Kreis 2023, esp. §6. I remain unpersuaded.

25] PR, 64.

26] See Moore 2012, pp. 133-4. But if this too is a locus of misunderstanding, then I think I can explain why: in the note to which I have already referred (Moore 2012, Ch. 5, n. 13) I talk about purely conceptual knowledge that makes no reference to any object and then add parenthetically that this is not the same as what I am about to identify in the main text as analytic knowledge. My point, however, is not that the purely conceptual knowledge in question is not analytic. My point is rather that some analytic knowledge does make reference to an object and is (therefore) *not* purely conceptual. I hope that some of what I say below will cast further light on this.

27] See Kant 1998, A225/B272 and A594/B622ff.

that it is. This is because of the “only”, which adverts to a contrast to which the mere concept of appearance does not.

Baiasu argues that the most that Kant thinks we have insight into is the logical possibility of things in themselves, not what Kant would call their “real” possibility, still less anything that might be characterized, however misleadingly, as their existence.<sup>28</sup> Vereb, towards the end of §2 of his essay, presents a similar argument, fastening on the idea that, for Kant, the concept of “things in themselves” is a “boundary concept” – which means, among other things, that it has a merely negative use.<sup>29</sup> I readily acknowledge the force and the importance of these arguments. All I can do in this context is to respond with the cavalier suggestion that any tension between what Kant allows himself to say concerning things in themselves and what I think he does say, or is committed to saying, is Kant’s problem, not mine. That said, it is not obvious to me that Kant’s granting us knowledge that there are things in themselves *is*, in itself, a problem for him (except insofar as the very distinction between appearances and things in themselves is a problem for him). He denies us *Erkenntnis* concerning things in themselves. But there is no suggestion, in anything I say, that the knowledge in question is *that*.<sup>30</sup>

In this respect, if not in respect of its syntheticity, our knowledge that there are things in themselves is like the analytic knowledge that Kant grants us that is (likewise) not *Erkenntnis*. Let us reconsider such analytic knowledge. As I have already indicated, it too concerns things in themselves, in the attenuated sense of “concern” that I introduce in my essay. But it does not make reference to any object in the way in which *Erkenntnis* – understood as EK – does. This is because it does not involve intuitions. It is *not* because it is analytic. We should not think that analytic knowledge, simply by virtue of the fact that it is justified by nothing but appeal to the concepts involved, automatically fails to count as EK. To say that such knowledge is justified by nothing but appeal to the concepts involved is not to deny that it involves intuitions too. In all but the exceptional case of analytic knowledge concerning things in themselves, it does involve intuitions too.<sup>31</sup> Thus when Kant himself refers to analytic *Erkenntnis*,<sup>32</sup> there is no reason to think that he is referring to anything other than a kind of EK. To repeat: what prevents analytic knowledge concerning things in themselves from being a kind of EK is that it does not involve intuitions.

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28] PR, 64.

29] See Kant 1998, A255/B310-11.

30] What Baiasu says in §6 of his essay therefore strikes me as less opposed to what I say than it initially appears.

31] Cf. n. 26 above: this is what I had in mind when I said that some analytic knowledge is not purely conceptual.

32] E.g. Kant 1998, A151/B191.



But now two questions arise, one that Vereb urges directly and one that Baiasu urges indirectly. The question that Vereb urges directly is what I mean by this attenuated sense of “concern”. The question that Baiasu urges indirectly is whether I am justified in thinking that *Erkenntnis* and knowledge ever overlap, in other words that some instances of *Erkenntnis* are also instances of knowledge. (If I am not, then *that* is what prevents analytic knowledge concerning things in themselves from being a kind of EK.)

To begin with the former question, Vereb complains that I am not clear about this.<sup>33</sup> The complaint is, in a way, entirely justified: I am not. Even so, given the context in which I invoke this sense of “concern”, the complaint is unfair. This is because my main point is that, *even if* we accept an attenuated sense of “concern” in which, on Kant’s view, we can have analytic knowledge concerning things in themselves, it will be sufficiently attenuated for this not to be a problem for him – just as it will be sufficiently attenuated for there not to be any need to invoke transcendental idealism in order to account for our analytic knowledge concerning things that are beyond us. Kant’s problem, as I try to indicate in §5 of my essay, lies elsewhere.

Now to the second question. The reason why I describe Baiasu’s urging of this question as indirect is that his focus is on the relation between *Erkenntnis* and *Wissen*, not on the relation between *Erkenntnis* and what I call “knowledge”. Were “knowledge” just my term for “*Wissen*”, then I would need to confront Baiasu’s intriguing challenge, endorsed and reinforced by Vereb, to the very idea that any instance of *Erkenntnis* can also be an instance of *Wissen*.<sup>34</sup> The challenge is grounded in the idea that *Wissen* includes assent while *Erkenntnis* precludes it. I am not entirely convinced,<sup>35</sup> though I regret that I do not have scope to pursue the issue here. However, what matters here is that, fascinating and difficult though these questions about the relation between *Erkenntnis* and *Wissen* are, I can simply bypass them on the grounds that I am *not* committed to an equation of knowledge with *Wissen*: even if Baiasu is right that *Erkenntnis* and *Wissen* are incompatible, it does not follow that *Erkenntnis* and knowledge are incompatible.

Very well, but is it not time, in that case, that I said what I meant by “knowledge”?

Perhaps it is. But my answer is simple. I intend my use of “knowledge” to be none other than its normal use. On its normal use, “knowledge” has a vast and varied range. It embraces: knowledge that  $7 + 5 = 12$ ; knowledge of the character of space and time; knowledge of Smith; knowledge of how to tie one’s shoelaces; knowledge of how to act rationally; and many more besides. I intend my use of “knowledge” to embrace all of these.<sup>36</sup>

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33] E.g. n. 9.

34] Pp. 56-62 and 78-79 of their essays respectively.

35] For one thing, I wonder what Baiasu makes of Kant 2002, 4:371.

36] It is partly for this reason that Baiasu is wrong to say, near the beginning of §2 of his essay, that I use the term “armchair knowledge” to refer to a particular type of *a priori* knowledge. He is certainly right that I would classify some *a priori* knowledge, but not all of it, as armchair knowledge. But I would also classify some knowledge that is not *a priori* as armchair knowledge, for instance knowledge of one’s own ex-

This, incidentally, helps to explain why I am no more committed to an equation of knowledge with *Erkenntnis* than I am to an equation of knowledge with *Wissen*. For instance, and as we have seen, I grant that, on Kant's view, there is knowledge concerning things in themselves, even though there is no *Erkenntnis* concerning things in themselves. (Moreover, as I point out in the lengthy note in my chapter on Kant to which I have already referred, some instances of *Erkenntnis* contain error in a way that precludes their counting as instances of knowledge.)

I mention this because, at the beginning of §3 of his essay, Baiasu says something that might be interpreted as a claim that I *am* committed to an equation of knowledge with *Erkenntnis*. He is commenting on something else that I say in that lengthy note in my chapter on Kant, namely that throughout the chapter I put in terms of knowledge what Kant himself typically puts in terms of *Erkenntnis*. Baiasu goes on to say that I use the word "knowledge" for Kant's "*Erkenntnis*". But that is misleading, for the reasons given. Later Baiasu is more careful: he ascribes to me the belief that, in the relevant contexts, what Kant means by "*Erkenntnis*" overlaps with what I mean by "knowledge". It is certainly true that, later in the note, I say that *Erkenntnis* overlaps with knowledge – and indeed I remain convinced that this is so, notwithstanding Baiasu's challenge to the very idea that *Erkenntnis* is compatible with *Wissen*. (In fact I am even prepared to allow for the possibility that there are non-EK instances of EM that are instances of knowledge: the concept of gold, for example, may perhaps be identified with knowledge of what it is for something to be gold.) However, the crucial claim, which I also make later in the note and which appears similar to the claim that what Kant means by "*Erkenntnis*" overlaps with what I mean by "knowledge", can nevertheless be interpreted much more loosely than that. It is the claim that "the questions that Kant raises about [*Erkenntnis*], and the answers that he gives, are equally questions and answers about knowledge". That, I think, holds however exactly these various notions stand in relation to one another. If there is what I call synthetic armchair knowledge of necessities, then Kant's questions undeniably pertain to it, as does the transcendental idealism that he champions in response to these questions.

In sum, then, my concern both in the essay and in the chapter on Kant is – quite simply – with *knowledge*, as it is normally understood. I do not refer to *Wissen* at all. And I refer to *Erkenntnis* only, in effect, to put it to one side.<sup>37</sup>

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istence (see §7 of my essay, and in particular n. 58). For the same reason Vereb is quite unwarranted in claiming, as he does in (the very puzzling) n. 4 of his essay, that "armchair knowledge for Moore includes both analytic and synthetic varieties *so long as the knowledge 'concerns what is beyond the subject'*," (emphasis added).

[37] I am far from thinking, incidentally, that a satisfactory discussion of these issues, let alone a satisfactory discussion of these issues that is also intended to serve as serious exegesis, could allow for such nonchalance concerning how knowledge, *Erkenntnis*, and *Wissen* relate to one another. All I am doing is indicating what my own focus is. – Note: much of my response to Baiasu and Vereb so far has taken the form of bookkeeping. I have one final piece of bookkeeping, which in turn provides me with a welcome opportunity to record a debt to Baiasu. In n. 52 of his essay Baiasu mentions parenthetically that he reads Kant 2000, S:197, n. 1 differently from how I suggest it should be read in n. 50 of my essay. And he is quite

Let us now turn away from these taxonomical questions about the relations between knowledge, *Erkenntnis*, and *Wissen* and consider one of the principal questions that I raise in my essay: why would Kant reject an appeal to transcendental idealism to account for analytic knowledge? The answer I give is that this would make all our thoughts thoughts about appearances, never about things in themselves – whereas it is important for Kant’s purposes that we should be able to have thoughts about things in themselves. Baiasu seems to take my point to be that if our conceptualization of things contributes as much as our intuiting of things to the *a priori* structure of our minds, then it will follow that even our thinking, not just our intuiting, is only ever of appearances.<sup>38</sup> And he rightly rejects that – as would Kant. For Kant clearly does think that our conceptualization of things contributes as much as our intuiting of things to the *a priori* structure of our minds,<sup>39</sup> without supposing that this precludes thoughts about things in themselves. Baiasu has misunderstood me, however. My point is that if our conceptualization of things – that is, our *sheer* conceptualization of things, never mind the character of the concepts being exercised – contributes as much as our intuiting of things to the “*i-dependence*” that is posited by transcendental idealism – where by the “*i-dependence*” that is posited by transcendental idealism I mean the dependence that it posits of the form of what we have knowledge of on us – then it will follow that even our thinking, not just our intuiting, is only ever of appearances. And to invoke transcendental idealism in order to account for our analytic knowledge, including our analytic knowledge concerning such matters as God, freedom, and the immortality of the soul, is to be committed to the view that our conceptualization of things does indeed contribute as much as our intuiting of things to that *i-dependence*. Hence it is to be committed to the view that our thoughts must be as much thoughts about appearances as, on Kant’s view, our intuitions are intuitions of appearances.

Baiasu also attempts to rescue Kant from my claim that, in acceding to the possibility of truths that are both necessary and synthetic, Kant is bound to admit the

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right to do so. The final sentence of my n. 50, in which I myself retract that suggested reading, appears in the published version of my essay, but did not appear in the version to which Baiasu had access. This sentence was prompted by Baiasu’s parenthesis, for which I am grateful.

38] Cf. his n. 31.

39] On page 55 of Baiasu’s essay, incidentally, he says that the *a priori* structure of our minds, on Kant’s view, includes pure intuitions, categories, and ideas, but not other concepts. This goes to show that he understands “the *a priori* structure of our minds” as designating something more restricted than merely the *a priori* content of our minds, presumably something ordinary: otherwise it would include concepts that are associated with pure intuitions, such as mathematical concepts (e.g. Kant 1998, A715/B743 ff.), as well as what Kant calls “predicables”, concepts that can be derived from the categories (Kant 1988, A81-82/B107-8). – While I am on this subject, I shall mention what I take to be a slip in Vereb’s essay: in his n. 5 he alludes to the possibility that Kant is correct that there is only one set of pure concepts, but then qualifies this by adding that the concepts in question may be Eurocentric and there may be human cultures that make use of different concepts. I take it that Vereb should not have included the *correctness* of Kant’s doctrine in the possibility to which he alludes. Otherwise this is extremely difficult to make sense of.

possibility of truths that are somehow both necessary and contingent. Baiasu considers an item of geometrical knowledge that Kant would classify as both necessary and synthetic: that any triangle has angles that sum to two right angles.<sup>40</sup> He agrees that there is a contingency here. But he insists that what is contingent is a truth concerning the relation between the subject and the predicate of this item of knowledge, whereas what is necessary is a quite distinct truth concerning the geometrical objects themselves. No single truth, on this account, appears to be both necessary and contingent.

I confess I do not understand this. For one thing, I would have thought that the relevant truth concerning the relation between the subject and the predicate, which is that the latter is not contained in the former, is necessary, not contingent. (Surely we do not want to say that the concept of having angles that sum to two right angles *might* have been contained in the concept of a triangle, though it happens not to be?)<sup>41</sup> The closest that I can come to making sense of Baiasu's claim is to think of it, not as a claim about two distinct truths, but as a claim about a single truth – that any triangle has angles that sum to two right angles – viewed in two distinct ways, first by taking account merely of the concepts involved, second by taking account also of the intuitions involved. The thought would be that, in the former case, we can acknowledge the truth as a contingency, but in the latter case we have to acknowledge it as a necessity, there being no incompatibility between these because the contingency and the necessity would each be relative to how the truth is viewed.

But if that *is* the kind of thing that Baiasu has in mind, then my concern is different. If, when we view the truth in the latter way, we really do have to acknowledge it as a necessity, then the necessity determines what we have to acknowledge when we view it in the former way too. By way of analogy, consider someone who claims that various truths can be acknowledged as contingent if we take account merely of the concepts involved and do not take account of logic. Thus they might claim that, if we take account merely of the concepts involved and do not take account of logic, then we can acknowledge the truth that any natural number is either odd or even as contingent; for, they might say, even if the predicate of this truth is in *some* sense contained in the subject, it is only a matter of logic that it is. I want to say that, given the necessity that attaches to logic, the sense in which the predicate of this truth is contained in the subject is the only sense that is relevant here: the necessity is itself part of the essential nature of the concepts involved, and to prescind from *it* is not properly to take account of *them*. (Kant would count the truth in question as an analytic truth.) Similarly in the case of the truth that any triangle has angles that sum to two right angles. Given the necessity

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40] Let us for current purposes prescind from one awkward feature of this particular example, namely that it is not in fact an item of geometrical knowledge, because it is not in fact true.

41] Cf. Baiasu's n. 39. What Baiasu is discussing here seems to me quite unlike the Wittgensteinian contingency that I discuss in my essay, which is not a matter of what any concepts are like, nor of what any rules are like, but is rather a matter of what concepts are actually exercised or what rules are actually in force.

that Kant thinks attaches to geometry, then the sense in which the predicate of this truth is contained in the subject is the only sense that is relevant here – *unless* Kant can find some pertinent difference between the necessity that attaches to geometry and the necessity that attaches to logic. To be sure, it might be countered on Kant’s behalf that he can indeed find a pertinent difference between these: the necessity that attaches to geometry, unlike the necessity that attaches to logic, can be duly relativized, albeit not in the way that was being considered above, namely to how truths are viewed, but rather in the way that I introduce in §4 of my essay, whereby it is necessity only from the point of view of beings with certain forms of intuition. In §5 of my essay, however, I urge that this creates further problems of its own.

I shall close this section by returning to Vereb’s essay. In §3 of his essay Vereb emphasizes the wider significance of the issues that I address in my essay about the alleged incoherence of transcendental idealism, and says that my critique, if successful, is “even more devastating than [Moore] sees.”<sup>42</sup> He goes on to mention the connection that these issues have for Kant with freedom, ethics, law, politics, religion, and more besides. I do not know whether there is an intentional suggestion here that I am unaware of these connections. I hope not. (Vereb would have to have a very dim view of my knowledge of Kant to think that I am.) Be that as it may, he is certainly right to emphasize the connections. And I am prepared to bite the bullet. To whatever extent any of Kant’s views rely on his transcendental idealism, then so much the worse, I say, for those views. But “to whatever extent” is the operative phrase. In very few cases, if any, is there *nothing* to be salvaged from the views, even once transcendental idealism is abandoned. And even if there are cases in which there really is nothing to be salvaged, to say so much the worse for the views is, for reasons that are implicit in the quotation from my book that Vereb gives on p. 73 and that he himself goes on to elaborate, very far from saying that they are worthless.

### 3. REPLY TO JENNY BUNKER AND PABLO MONTOSA

Jenny Bunker’s essay is in many ways the easiest for me to respond to, if only because she explicitly puts a series of questions to me. But before I turn to these questions, the first of which will also provide me with an opportunity to respond to Pablo Montosa, I wish to begin with a brief comment on Bunker’s exegesis. I think she gives a wonderful summary of my arguments in the two chapters of my book *The Infinite* on which she is focusing.<sup>43</sup> I even (absurdly) derived some satisfaction from the thought that my writing must have been exceptionally clear for Bunker to be able to summarize it so well! The credit, however, is hers, for her careful and patient reading. That said, I do have one small correction – although perhaps, in the light of some of what I shall say later, it will not

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42] PR, 80.

43] Moore 2019a, Chs 16 and 17.

seem so small. Ironically, it is a correction to something at the very end of her summary, and I mean at the *very* end: not even the final sentence, but the final clause, nay the final two words. Bunker makes a reference, *mea nomine*, to what surpasses our finitude and glosses this as “the infinite”. But I do not equate what surpasses our finitude with the infinite. What surpasses our finitude may just as well be some other finitude. And, very importantly, in the case of each individual among us, it may just as well be the finitude of any other individual among us. We shall return to these issues later.

Bunker’s first question is whether, in my interpretation of Spinoza, I acknowledge two kinds of differentiation; or better, whether I distinguish between delineation, understood as something that essentially involves negation, and differentiation, understood as something purely positive. And my answer is: yes, that is precisely what I do. But then the question arises how differentiation *can* be understood as something purely positive. And this is a very large question about which I try to say more both in the two chapters of *The Infinite* on which Bunker is focusing and at various points throughout *The Evolution of Modern Metaphysics*.<sup>44</sup> I do not doubt that far more needs to be said. Certainly far more needs to be said than I can proffer here. Nevertheless, it is worth reiterating one very simple point that I make in *The Infinite*, namely that I am, at least in part, appealing to an arbitrary stipulation, whereby positivity is aligned with whatever is and negativity with whatever is not.<sup>45</sup> Differentiation between two attributes can then be understood as purely positive on the simple grounds that it depends on the difference of kind that *there is* between these two attributes. Again, differentiation between two finite modes of the same attribute can be understood as purely positive on the simple grounds that it depends on the relations that *there are* between these two modes (in the case of bodies, relations of motion and rest). This is in contrast to the delineation of a finite mode, which has to be understood as involving negation on the equally simple grounds that it depends on where the mode *is not*.<sup>46</sup>

It is these and related issues concerning Spinoza’s ontology that are the foci of the various objections to my book that Montosa raises in his essay. Some of these objections concern what he sees as omissions, things that I do not say but should; others concern what he sees as errors, things that I should not say but do. Despite the fact that he includes some extraordinarily generous comments about my work elsewhere in his essay, for which of course I am grateful, each of his objections seems to me ill-grounded. In each case, with one exception, I agree with Montosa about what I should or should not say, but I disagree about what I do or do not say.

The exception is Montosa’s first objection. I claim that, for Spinoza, the being that is common to every entity is itself an entity and is what is meant by substance. Montosa’s objection is that I am thereby “[neglecting] the crucial distinction in

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44] See esp. Moore 2012, Ch. 21, §3.

45] Moore 2019a, 240-41.

46] The word “where” in this sentence need not be understood in literally spatial terms.

Spinoza's thought between [...] substance and its modes."<sup>47</sup> Since there is nothing more prominent in Spinoza's thought than the distinction between substance and its modes, I would need to be guilty of singularly insensitive exegesis for this objection to hold. But I cannot see why Montosa thinks it does. He goes on to list various fundamental differences that Spinoza recognizes between substance and its modes, none of which I think I am committed to denying. He also says that, if modes of substance are entities at all, then they are not entities "in the same way" as substance is, and again I do not think I am committed to denying that. The word "entity", as I am using it, is nothing but a maximally generic word that applies to everything. The quantifier "all entities" therefore does exactly the same work for me as the quantifier "*omnia quae sunt*" does for Spinoza. The latter is the quantifier that appears in the very first axiom of his *Ethics*.<sup>48</sup> And indeed that axiom, in conjunction with Spinoza's third and fifth definitions, neatly captures what I have in mind by the claim to which Montosa takes exception. For what that axiom states, in my terms, is that all entities are either in themselves or in something else; and "entity that is in itself" is how "substance" has been defined in the third definition, while "entity that is in something else" is how "mode" has been defined in the fifth.<sup>49</sup> Since the fifth definition also includes an indication that what modes are in is substance, it follows that, for Spinoza, substance and modes alike are in substance. Indeed for both substance and modes to be at all is for them to be in substance. It does not seem to me a large step from there to an identification of substance with being. At any rate I cannot see why taking this step entails neglecting any of the fundamental differences between substance and its modes.<sup>50</sup>

Montosa's second objection is that, in my exposition of Spinoza's account of error, I align error with ignorance, whereas Spinoza himself carefully distinguishes them. I agree that Spinoza carefully distinguishes them. I disagree that I align them. My claim is that, for Spinoza, error comes about *because of* ignorance. Thus when a man errs, he errs because he lacks knowledge of what lies beyond him and thereby imagines that something quite different does; none of the contents of his mind, not even his imagining, is erroneous *in itself*, but his ignorance enables his imagining to lead him astray.<sup>51</sup> I cannot see any difference between what I have just claimed that Spinoza says,

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47] PR, 47.

48] Spinoza 2002b, Pt I, Ax. 1. In Shirley's translation this quantifier is rendered "all things that are".

49] Spinoza 2002b, Pt I, Defs 3 and 5.

50] It is worth noting what Spinoza says in Spinoza 2002a, p. 21, about Nature, which, in Spinoza 2002b, Pt IV, Pref., he identifies with substance: "This entity is unique and infinite; that is, it is total being, beyond which there is no being."

51] See e.g. Spinoza 2002b, Pt II, Prop. 17, Schol., and Prop. 35, Schol.

what Montosa claims that Spinoza says,<sup>52</sup> and what I claim in my book that Spinoza says.<sup>53</sup> Montosa's objection thus leaves me mystified.

The mystery is compounded when he extends the objection to the related issue of what constitutes the finitude of a body. Montosa says, supposedly *contra* me, that, in Spinoza's view,

finitude, understood as "delineation", can only have a privative sense: it is a property that supervenes on bodies by relating them to one another, but it does not define them. On the contrary, "delineation" presupposes the previous "differentiation" of bodies and is built upon it.<sup>54</sup>

Is that significantly different from what I say in my book? I claim that, in Spinoza's view,

given any finite entity *x*, there has to be something that lies "outside" it, *y*. This in turn means that, [...] whereas *whatever differentiates them* has being, which is [...] positive, *x*'s involvement in *y*'s being [...] has a *lack* of being, which is negative [...]. It is thus that the being of *x* is delineated.<sup>55</sup>

If there is a significant difference between that and what Montosa says, then, as before, I cannot see it.

Montosa makes some further moves in amplification of his conception of how bodies are distinguished from one another in Spinoza's system which amount to a third objection. He emphasizes the importance of relations of motion and rest; and, when focusing on the essence of a body, he invokes an analogy with the power of a chess piece. He concludes that we should think of bodies as "aspects" of something rather than as "parts" of something. With a few exceptions that do not matter for current purposes, everything that he says in the course of making these moves strikes me as admirable.<sup>56</sup> What I cannot see is why he thinks any of it tells against me. Thus consider the example that I give to illustrate what I say in the quotation above: a house, I say, lacks being in the garden outside it. Montosa says that this example "will simply not do".<sup>57</sup> But "will simply not do" for what purpose? *All* I take my example to illustrate is Spinoza's own claim that "to be finite is in part a negation".<sup>58</sup> Does my example not do that? I agree that it does not illustrate any claim about the involvement of negation in the essence of the house; nor about the involvement of negation in the essence of anything else; nor indeed about

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[52] Notice the pivotal rôle played in Molinero's examples involving Oedipus by Oedipus's ignorance that his mother is Jocasta. If Oedipus knew that his mother was Jocasta, he would not err in the way he does.

[53] Moore 2019a, 242

[54] PR, 48.

[55] Moore 2019a, 241, transposed from the past tense to the present tense, emphasis in the original.

[56] The exceptions include an unfortunate suggestion that there are infinitely many possible configurations of chess pieces on a chessboard (PR, 48-49)!

[57] PR, 48.

[58] Spinoza 2002b, Pt I, Prop. 8, Schol. 1; cf. Spinoza 2002b, Pt III, Prop. 3, Schol.



the involvement of negation in any other aspect of reality. Nor is it intended to. On the contrary, the very point of the section of my book in which this example occurs is that, for Spinoza, unlike for Hegel, *negation is not at work in being itself*. I struggle to see any of the moves that Montosa makes in the course of his third objection as rebukes.

Montosa's fourth objection is that, when I say that the relativity of values in Spinoza "makes it that much easier to embrace the nihilistic thought that all there is, ultimately, is how things (non-evaluatively) *are*,"<sup>59</sup> I have things back to front: the relativity of values is rather the antidote to such nihilism. A further aspect of this objection, directed at Bunker as well as at me, is that we ignore the way in which conceiving all finite things, including ourselves, as modes of substance is likewise an antidote to nihilism. The connection is that the relativity of values is reckoned to be a corollary of that way of conceiving things; for that way of conceiving things is reckoned to entail seeing value as a by-product of the interaction of such modes, specifically as attaching to some of them *relative to* others that desire them, and, importantly, as attaching to some of them *only* relative to others that desire them.<sup>60</sup> As Montosa puts it, "by conceiving things as modes, we will understand that ice cream is only good insofar as we like it."<sup>61</sup>

Again, I broadly accept what Montosa says I should say here. Moreover, I think I say it.<sup>62</sup> But I also think he has missed the crucial distinction that I draw in the relevant section of my book between viewing the world *sub specie aeternitatis* and viewing it *in mediis rebus*.<sup>63</sup> My point is that Spinoza's relativism makes it that much easier for us to embrace the nihilistic thought *when we view the world in the former way*; for when we view the world in that way such relativism leaves us with the blank thought that some modes desire other modes, which in turn leaves us with an unanswerable "So what?" Once we view the world from our own point of immersion in it as desirers, on the other hand, the nihilistic thought is no longer compelling. And that seems to me implicit in what Montosa says too. We must, he urges, view all things, including *ourselves*, as modes of substance. That use of the first person, of which there are many other examples in his discussion,<sup>64</sup> precisely indicates a view of the world from *our* point of immersion in it. Yet again it is unclear to me why Montosa thinks that he is either correcting or significantly supplementing any points of my own.

It feels very ungracious to resist so much of what Montosa says in his essay, given the kindness and the generosity that he brings to it. But perhaps there is some

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59] Moore 2019a, 253, transposed from the past tense to the present tense, emphasis in original.

60] Cf. Spinoza 2002b, Pt III, Prop. 9, Schol.

61] PR, 49.

62] See e.g. Moore 2019a, Ch. 17, §1.

63] Moore 2019a, esp. 252.

64] Many of these are uses of the first-person singular rather than the first-person plural, but that makes no difference to the point that I am making here. (One example of the use of the first-person plural, incidentally, is the very claim that ice cream is good only insofar as we like it. And notice the suppressed relativization "for us" that needs to be taken for granted in this claim after the "good".)

recompense in the fact that all I am really trying to do is to indicate the extent of my agreement with him.

Let us now return to Bunker. Her second question concerns what sort of endless change I think is involved in Nietzsche's eternal return; whether it is a matter of the same things appearing ever differently or whether it is a matter of ever different things appearing. Bunker suspects that my answer to this question will be that the question itself is shaped by a distinction that simply breaks down in Nietzschean terms. And she is exactly right. In a Nietzschean context, "appearing" amounts to being interpreted. But here we have to remember how radical Nietzsche's conception of interpretation is. He tells us in his notebooks that there are no facts, *only* interpretations.<sup>65</sup> That is, there is no more to reality, on Nietzsche's radical conception, than how it is interpreted. Hence the distinction between the same things appearing ever differently, which means the same things being interpreted ever differently, and ever different things appearing, which means ever different things being interpreted, is indeed a distinction, ultimately, without a difference.

Bunker's third question connects with some of what I said in response to Montosa. It is the question, in effect, whether I exaggerate the dangers of our thinking about the most basic practical questions of life from something other than a human point of view. Actually, it is not so much *a* question as a cluster of questions – about how we might be able to overcome our own humanity, about the dangers of our doing so, about the converse dangers of conservatism, and suchlike. And, as Bunker rightly intimates, many of these questions are my own.<sup>66</sup> Much of the material to which she is responding is deliberately very circumspect. The really crucial point is the point that straddles pages 258-59 of my book: whatever radical changes await us, we have to get to there from here, in a gradual piecemeal way, and "here", whether we like it or not, involves our humanity, at a very deep level, which means that, at least for now, the only way in which we can think sensibly about the costs and benefits of our coming to think about the most basic practical questions of life from something other than a human point of view is from a human point of view. That said, and in answer to Bunker's more specific question – do I countenance the possibility of an "us" that is other than human? – I must. I cannot rule anything out. The very possibility of our coming to think about the most basic practical questions of life from something other than a human point of view, while it is a possibility concerning us human beings, is at the same time the possibility of our coming to reckon with a first-person plural that extends beyond us human beings.<sup>67</sup>

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65] Nietzsche 1967, §481.

66] For related treatment of them see Moore 2021.

67] I am assuming that it is not the possibility of our coming to reckon with a first-person plural that does not extend as far as that. It is worth noting, however, that I am assuming this on ethical grounds, not on logical grounds. For any of us to think about the most basic practical questions of life in such a way as to exclude any of the rest of us from the first-person plural would itself, it seems to me, be an affront to our humanity.

Ironically, that relates back to the one quarrel that I had earlier with Bunker's exegesis of me. For what may be at stake here is our surpassing our own finitude; but "our own finitude" here means our own *current* finitude, and our surpassing it will consist in our arriving at a new finitude, not in our becoming in any sense infinite.

Bunker's fourth question is really more of a request: to say more than the little that I do say about why we need to reckon with the infinite as we negotiate how to be finite. I readily concede the paucity of what I say about this. This paucity is explained partly by the fact that I am as concerned to flag the possibility that this is something we need to do as I am with why, or how, or even whether we need to do it. That said, Bunker makes some comments of her own about what I might have in mind, and I simply note that in every case – except when she once again makes the assumption (which she flags as such) that I mean the infinite by what surpasses our finitude – she is exactly right. In particular: yes, I am envisaging our using the concept of the infinite as a regulative ideal; and yes, I think that our concept of the infinite can contribute something in that rôle towards protecting our sense of what ultimately matters. I try to say more in the book. What I say may not amount to much; but I am both gratified and grateful that it has proved enough for Bunker to see what I was getting at.

#### 4. REPLY TO MICHAEL MORRIS AND OLIVER SPINNEY

I need to begin this section with an apology and an explanation. Both are directed specifically at Oliver Spinney. The apology is that I have virtually nothing to say in response to his essay. The explanation is that I think it is superb: I find myself simply wanting to endorse it. Spinney has captured very well much of what I have to say in response to Michael Morris, and although I shall try to say some of it myself I am also content to defer to what Spinney has already said.<sup>68</sup>

Morris offers support for two key claims that I make in the essay on Wittgenstein on which he and Spinney are commenting.<sup>69</sup> Both claims concern the broad category of what I call "sentences", a category of items with which Wittgenstein is concerned in his *Tractatus*.<sup>70</sup> These items fall into two sub-categories: the first sub-category comprises, in the terminology of the *Tractatus* itself, propositions that have a truth-value; the second sub-category comprises, again in the terminology of the *Tractatus* itself, pseudo-propositions, which lack a truth-value.<sup>71</sup> Propositions that have a truth-

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68] Not that these remarks should be taken to imply that I do not think well of any of the other seven essays, still less that the more I have to say about any of them the less well I think of it! There are all sorts of ways in which one can admire and appreciate other people's work, and finding oneself wanting to endorse it, which is the form that my admiration and appreciation of Spinney's essay take, is merely one of these.

69] Moore 2019b.

70] Wittgenstein 1961.

71] Wittgenstein 1961, e.g. 5 and 4.1272 respectively.

value are arguably not all propositions, because Wittgenstein arguably construes items in the second sub-category as propositions too.<sup>72</sup> Items in the second sub-category nevertheless attract the epithet “pseudo” because they *appear* to have a truth-value: they appear to be items in the first sub-category.

The first claim, which Morris labels (1), is that sentences can be characterized as those items to which truth-operations apply, where this obviously requires a suitably broad conception of truth-operations whereby their application extends to items in the second sub-category, which merely appear to have a truth-value, and not just to items in the first sub-category, which really do. The second claim, which Morris labels (2), is that sentencehood has no independent essence of its own: a sentence just is anything that *either* belongs to the first sub-category *or* belongs to the second. But Morris does more than offer support for these two claims. He takes the underlying ideas in fascinating new directions and teases out consequences that they have beyond anything that I myself was envisaging. I naturally welcome all of this. There are nevertheless one or two points in his essay that I want to take issue with.

Before I do that, however, I should like to register an important point of convergence. In §4 of his essay Morris says that he is considering claim (2) in the stronger of two senses that he identifies, as a claim about what the explanatory essence of sentencehood is, and not merely as a claim about what all sentences have in common and thus as a denial that sentencehood has any *explanatory* essence at all. He also comments in parenthesis that he is not sure whether this is what I intended. I can confirm that it is, at least insofar as I intended anything so determinate – for I must add that I had not properly considered this matter. I thank Morris for his clarification.

I turn next to a very minor corrective. Morris characterizes what I call the Principal Distinction, in other words the distinction between the two sub-categories of sentences, as that between those sentences that are not nonsensical and those that are.<sup>73</sup> But unless “nonsensical” is intended in an unhelpfully question-begging way here, as just a synonym for “pseudo-propositional”, it ends up begging another question: it ends up begging the question against people like Michael Kremer and Cora Diamond who think that some of the items in the second sub-category, for instance mathematical sentences, are *not* nonsensical.<sup>74</sup> The cleanest and simplest way to characterize the

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72] See e.g. 6.2. This is one of the issues that I address in Moore 2019b.

73] PR, 83. Not that he puts it in these terms. Rather, he characterizes the distinction as that between sentences that have a truth-value and what he calls “nonsensical pseudo-propositions”. But he gives no reason to think that he intends “nonsensical”, in its application to sentences, as anything other than equivalent to “pseudo-propositional” – hence no reason to think that, in his use of the expression “nonsensical pseudo-propositions”, he intends “nonsensical” as anything other than pleonastic. If he does, then my corrective takes a different form, namely that he has not taken into account all pseudo-propositions: cf. what I go on to say in the main text.

74] See Kremer 2002 and Diamond 2011.

Principal Distinction is just this: it is the distinction between those sentences that have a truth-value and those that do not.

Now §6 of Morris's paper is intended to answer the question whether claim (2) is compatible with how Wittgenstein draws the Principal Distinction. The reason Morris canvasses for thinking that it is not is, very roughly, as follows. Any sentence has both what Morris calls an "external" form and what he calls an "internal" form. Its external form, which is what is captured in claim (1), is its capacity to combine with other sentences to yield further sentences, through the application of truth-operations. Its internal form is the capacity of its constituents to combine together, which includes of course their capacity to combine together to form, in particular, it. Claim (2) implies that the external form of a sentence is primary; that what *makes* something a sentence is its capacity to combine with other sentences in that way, or rather in one or other of those two ways, depending on whether it has a truth-value or not. Its internal form, by contrast, must somehow derive from that. And this in turn means that the following cannot be true:

(S) A sentence shares its internal form with something independent of it on which its truth or falsity might depend.

(S) cannot be true, since that would mean that the internal form of a sentence did not derive from its external form, but was rather borrowed or inherited from something independent of it. (There is a presumption here that for (S) to be true just *is*, at least in part, for the internal form of a sentence to be borrowed or inherited from something independent of it. We shall return later to the consequences of relinquishing this presumption.) On the other hand, Wittgenstein's drawing of the Principal Distinction seems to require that (S) *is* true; for the difference between a sentence that has a truth-value and a sentence that does not, on Wittgenstein's conception, is that while the internal form of each of them ensures that it has constituents that are suitably combined, in the former case there is also an assignment of *Bedeutungen* to those constituents such that whether the sentence is true or false depends on the obtaining or not of a possible combination of these *Bedeutungen* with the very same form, whereas in the latter case there is no such assignment.<sup>75</sup>

My concern about this train of thought, which I take to be essentially Spinney's concern about it too, is that I do not see why claim (2) implies that the external form of a sentence is "primary" in any sense that requires its internal form somehow to derive from its external form. Why should we not acknowledge both that what makes

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75] I have retained the original German word "*Bedeutungen*" here, rather than use the standard translation "meanings", in order to signal that, at least in the most basic case, what are assigned are the constituents of states of affairs: see Wittgenstein 1961, 2.01 and 3.203.

something a sentence is its external form and that (S) is true, with the consequence that neither its external form nor its internal form is in any relevant sense prior to the other?

Here it is worth reflecting that the internal form of a sentence is really due to nothing more than its being a part of the world, that is to its being a fact.<sup>76</sup> Not all facts are sentences, to be sure; but all sentences are facts and it is because a sentence is a fact that it is fit to have a truth-value, even if, as it happens, it is one of those sentences that do not.<sup>77</sup> The distinction between a fact that is a sentence and a fact that is not – what Morris calls the Background Distinction – is the distinction between a fact that appears to have a truth-value, which is as much as to say a fact to which truth-operations apply, and a fact that does not. The distinction between a sentence that really does have a truth-value and a sentence that *merely* appears to have one – the Principal Distinction – is the distinction between a fact whose constituents have been assigned *Bedeutungen* and a fact whose constituents merely appear to have been assigned *Bedeutungen* (where it is important to note that the appearances, in the latter case, are a matter of psychology, not a matter of semantics<sup>78</sup>). I see no incompatibility between this way of drawing of the Principal Distinction and claim (2).

Now I have been talking about sentences' sharing an internal form with possible combinations of *Bedeutungen* – thereby making (S) true. A more schematic way to put this would be as follows:

(L) Language shares a form with the world.

But, as Morris points out in §7 of his essay, (L) can be construed in different ways. The train of thought above, in which Morris raised doubts about whether the internal form of a sentence could derive from its external form and at the same time be something that it shared with some possible combination of *Bedeutungen*, was motivated in part by what Morris would call a “realist” construal of (L). On a realist construal, language borrows or inherits the form of the world. (This is connected to the point that I made in parenthesis above about the presumption that was being made concerning what was required for (S) to be true.) But (L) is also subject to what Morris would call an “idealist” construal, on which it is the other way round: the world borrows or inherits the form of language. This means that, whereas on the realist construal the form of the world is intelligible independently of the form of language, on the idealist construal it is not; on the idealist construal, as Morris himself puts it, “language is in itself already propositional, and [...] a world with propositional structure is somehow created as a counterpart of it”.<sup>79</sup>

76] Cf. Wittgenstein 1961, 1.1 and 3.14 ff.

77] Cf. Wittgenstein 1961, 5.4733.

78] Ibid, 5.4733 is relevant again, as is 6.53.

79] PR, 93.

In my remarks above I tried to resist the doubts raised by Morris; but not by resisting the underlying realism. What I said was entirely compatible with that.<sup>80</sup> The question therefore arises whether an alternative way of resisting these doubts would be to turn idealist.

Morris will say no, not without abandoning Wittgenstein's way of drawing the Principal Distinction, which is incompatible with such idealism. For if the world is "somehow created as a counterpart of language", how can there be any difference between those sentences whose constituents really have been assigned *Bedeutungen* and those sentences whose constituents merely appear to have been assigned *Bedeutungen*? Are the linguistic appearances not decisive?

I have posed these as rhetorical questions. But I certainly do not mean to suggest, either on my own behalf or on Morris's, that there is nothing more to be said about the issue. No doubt there are all sorts of answers that these rhetorical questions might attract; and no doubt there are all sorts of further questions that any such answers might prompt. However, I shall say no more about the issue here. For Morris suggests an even deeper reason why it would be unacceptable, in Wittgensteinian terms, to turn idealist: such idealism would offer no way of explaining the internal form of sentences. This reason too, I think, can be presented as a pair of rhetorical questions. If the world is created as a counterpart of language, how can there be *sentences* at all? How can there be facts whose constituents so much as *appear* to have been assigned *Bedeutungen*?

Morris's own view is that, granted claim (2), Wittgenstein must eschew both the realism and the idealism, then. But he believes that there is an intermediary position that Wittgenstein can adopt, whereby the world does not "in itself" share the form of language but the form of language is "projected back onto the world, to present it as a world that can be described."<sup>81</sup>

Let us reconsider (L). This was my schematic recasting of the claim that sentences share an internal form with possible combinations of *Bedeutungen*. The intermediary position that Morris considers is, in effect, a rejection of that recasting in favour of a subtler one in which the claim is recast rather as follows:

(L\*) Language shares a form with the *world-as-presented* (or the *world-as-describable*, or something of the sort).

But unless the *world-as-presented* (or the *world-as-describable*, or whatever else needs to be put in place here) is just that which is "somehow created as a counterpart of language" – that is, unless this supposedly intermediary position is just a notational

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80] It was also, arguably, compatible with its denial. I depicted language as sharing a form with the world simply by virtue of being a part of the world, but this arguably did not preclude the world's being "somehow created as a counterpart of language", any more than an author's appearing in their own fiction precludes the fiction's being the author's creation.

81] PR, 93.

variant of the idealism – its subtlety is surely a subtlety too far. More specifically, it surely requires a Kantian distinction between appearances and things in themselves that is every bit as recondite and as problematical as Kant’s own distinction between appearances and things in themselves. Not that this is a rebuke to Morris. He would agree. This is exegesis; it is not philosophy *in propria persona*. Morris would see the problems that arise here as precisely those that Wittgenstein is wrestling with in the *Tractatus*.<sup>82</sup>

I wonder, though. Could we not step back from these problems, for at least a while longer, by adhering to my original recasting of the claim in question as (L), rather than as (L\*), and by construing (L) neither in the realist way, whereby language borrows or inherits the form of the world, nor in the idealist way, whereby the reverse is true, but in a neutral way, whereby there is no borrowing or inheriting in either direction? Here I come back to the thought that the internal form of a sentence is due to nothing more than its being a part of the world. So too, more generally, language can be said to share a form with the world simply by virtue of being a part of the world. This would be a “no priority” view, of a piece with the view that I canvassed earlier whereby neither the external form of a sentence nor its internal form is in any relevant sense prior to the other.

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<sup>82]</sup> See §7 of his essay.



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