KANT'S DOCTRINE OF TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM

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Alexander Buchinski

Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Idealism

My dissertation proposes a novel interpretation of Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism as presented in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. I aim to give a consensus interpretation by overcoming past errors in interpreting this doctrine. I support my interpretation through a textual exegesis of the *Critique of Pure Reason* with a special focus on the direct and indirect proofs of transcendental idealism.

Transcendental idealism is the doctrine that objects of our experience, space, and time, when taken as they would be outside our possible experience, are nothing but mere representations. However, this does not make them into illusions. This is because Kant takes objects of our experience, space, and time to be empirically real.

Empirical realism is the doctrine that objects of our experience, space, and time, when taken within our possible experience, exist independently of us. Yet, their empirical reality is not grounded in things in themselves, about whose existence Kant is agnostic. Instead, the reality of objects of our experience, space, and time depend on a standard of empirical reality that differs from the standard of transcendental reality. This separate standard of empirical reality allows Kant to hold transcendental idealism and empirical realism at the same time.

Finally, while not strictly part of the doctrine of transcendental idealism, I answer the question of the relation of appearances and things in themselves. The distinction between appearances and things in themselves is a metaphysical distinction between two different ways of being, i.e., objectivity, properties, existence, reality. Yet, this is a metaphysical distinction within the same concept of an object. Thus, appearances and things in themselves are the same object conceptually that is determined metaphysically in two different ways.

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Chapter 1: Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Idealism

It would be my own fault if I made that which I should count as appearance into mere illusion.

– B69-70[1]

1. Introduction

In this dissertation, I provide an interpretation of Immanuel Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism. I argue for my interpretation of this controversial doctrine by considering a number of arguments in the *Critique of Pure* Reason. These arguments either argue directly for, or are significantly related to, Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism. A consideration of these arguments will show that, correctly interpreted, they support my interpretation of transcendental idealism.

My interpretation of transcendental idealism is distinguished by a series of claims. My first claim is that transcendental idealism is a metaphysical doctrine, which is a doctrine about cognitions of what and how things exist. Cognitions of existence, for Kant, always involve a subject relating to an object within a certain field. Thus, in making existence claims for Kant we must specify three parameters: a subject, an object, and a field of validity.

In the doctrine of transcendental idealism the subject is humans, the object is objects of experience (appearances), space, and time, and the field is the transcendental (outside our possible experience). The specification of these parameters leads me to my second and primary claim: my definition of Kant' s doctrine of transcendental idealism. **Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism is the existence claim that, for humans, objects of experience,**

[1] References to the first *Critique* will employ the standard A/B pagination, with translations from Kant 1998. References to other works by Kant will be by way of standard citation from the Akademie edition (abbreviated AA).

space, and time when in a transcendental field are ideal, i.e., do not exist independently of the subject (humans) and so are mere representations.

My third claim is that this definition of transcendental idealism does not mean that Kant is phenomenalist or Berkeleyan idealist (in Kant's sense). This is because I also stress that Kant is an empirical realist. Empirical realism is the doctrine that, for humans, objects of our experience, space, and time when in an empirical field (within our possible experience), are real, i.e., exist independently of the subject (humans). As Kant understands it, phenomenalism or Berkeleyan idealism is a dogmatic empirical idealism that claims that, for humans, objects of our experience, space, and time within the empirical field (within our possible experience) are ideal, i.e., do not exist independently of the subject (humans) and so are mere representations.[2] Such dogmatic empirical idealism is the opposite of Kant's empirical realism.

Supporting this third claim are three claims central to my position. These three claims argue for why Kant's empirical realism means he is not a phenomenalist/Berkeleyan idealist/dogmatic empirical idealist, despite his transcendental idealism.

The first supporting claim is that, in Kant's theoretical philosophy, empirical reality, i.e., existence in the empirical field within our possible experience, alone has metaphysical significance for us. By 'metaphysical significance' I mean that about which we can intelligibly make claims/have cognitions of existence or non-existence. Transcendental reality, i.e., existence in the transcendental field outside our possible experience, only has logical significance for us as a mere thought-entity in our heads. This is because we can only have immediate perception or

[2] This is the position Kant takes Christian Garve and J.G.H Feder to accuse him of in the Gottingen review and to which he vehemently objects (Sassen 2000: 53).

connection to these perceptions according to empirical laws of what is within our possible experience.

The second supporting claim is that Kant has an independent standard of empirical reality/existence that does not depend on reality/existence in the transcendental field. This means that objects within our possible experience do not depend for their existence on the existence of objects outside of our possible experience. Kant has a conception of an empirical object (an object of our possible experience) that exists independently of the empirical subject within the field of our possible experience. Objects of our experience do not essentially depend for their existence/reality/objectivity/properties (through any relation including identity or causation) on objects that exist in themselves outside of our possible experience. This means objects of our experience (objects of appearance) are not metaphysically identical with transcendental objects in themselves.

A third claim supports the second claim that the existence/reality/objectivity/properties of objects of our experience do not essentially depend on transcendental objects in themselves. This claim is that, for Kant, humans can never claim that objects in themselves exist transcendentally (outside our possible experience) and we can never claim that they do not exist transcendentally. This is Kant's agnosticism as to the existence of transcendental things in themselves. Kant holds this position while also claiming objects of experience exist within our possible experience. Thus, Kant holds that objects of our experience do not essentially depend for their existence on the existence of transcendental objects in themselves.

The first chapter outlines my interpretation of transcendental idealism. The second chapter contrasts Kant's theory of transcendental idealism with transcendental realism. In chapters three and four I interpret Kant's direct argument for the transcendental ideality of space

and time. The fifth chapter addresses the famous "Neglected Alternative" objection. The sixth chapter gives Kant's direct argument for the transcendental ideality of appearances. The seventh chapter interprets Kant's indirect argument for the transcendental ideality of appearances. The eighth chapter provides Kant's theory of agnosticism about the existence of things in themselves. The ninth chapter covers Kant's theory of empirical realism. The tenth chapter explains the relationship between things in themselves and appearances.

2. Kant's Theory of Cognition

Transcendental idealism is an original theoretical doctrine held by Immanuel Kant. Kant's theoretical philosophy is about cognizing what exists or does not exist as opposed to Kant's practical philosophy which is about cognizing what ought to exist (A634/B662). For Kant, metaphysics is a subset of theoretical philosophy that is a science (system) of pure *a priori* cognitions of existence and the conditions of their possibility through an investigation of our faculty of pure reason (critique) (A841/B869). Insofar, as transcendental idealism has to do with *a priori* cognitions of what does not exist outside of our possible experience it is part of metaphysics. Thus, to understand Kant's transcendental idealism we must understand Kant's theoretical philosophy and what it means for Kant to cognize what exists. Then we can understand what transcendental idealism says about what and how we can cognize what exists.

The starting point of Kant's theoretical philosophy is the human standpoint. This means that we start from being human beings whose cognitive access to the world (knowledge of the world) is limited by our human cognitive faculties. The subject from whose standpoint we make any claims, for Kant, whether as thoughts or knowledge claims about objects is always the human. Even when we are thinking about what a non-human being can possibly cognize this is always done from the human standpoint.

Kant also starts from the fact that as humans we have knowledge of the world, which Kant calls human experience. Kant defines experience as empirical cognition (B1). Empirical cognition is our cognition of objects of our perception (i.e., appearances) (A176/B218). To unpack this definition we must understand what 'empirical', 'cognition', and 'perception' mean for Kant. Empirical refers to that which is "within possible experience" (B2).

Cognition is the matching up and relating to (correspondence/conformity) of our representations to objects (B137). A representation is an inner determination of our mind (A197/B242). Kant will say that "For we have to do only with our representations; how things in themselves may be (without regard to representations through which they affect us) is entirely beyond our cognitive sphere" (A190/B235). By this Kant means that we only have direct access to our representations and cannot get at how things in themselves are apart from our representations. This means any cognition we have has to do with what is in our mind as a determination of it (representation) corresponding to an object, which is something that exists independently of us the subject.

Our cognitive faculties of sensibility and understanding are our means of producing representations that correspond to objects. Our sensibility is a receptive faculty that produces representations after receiving sensible impressions as a result of being affected by something. Our understanding is a spontaneous faculty that self-actively produces the representations called concepts. Concepts synthesize the manifold of sensible intuition we are given by our faculty of sensibility. This synthesis happens because concepts are representations under which an infinity of different things (manifold) can fall. As humans we require both intuition and concepts to produce representations in our minds that corresponds to objects that exist independently of ourselves, i.e., to have cognition (A50/B74).

Perception is conscious representation of objects to ourselves by means of sensation (B207, A374, and A320/B377). Sensation is a merely subjective representation (B207), (A320/B377), (A378). A sensation is our representation of the event of our faculty of sensibility being affected by something only insofar as this event takes place within the mind of the subject, i.e., insofar as the subject receives sensible impressions or modifications of its faculty of sensibility (A19-20/B34),(A51/B75).

Perception is "immediate" access to objects. This is not immediate access in the sense of non-representational access because all we have to do with is our representations (even sensations are only inner determinations of our mind). This is immediate access in the sense of non-inferential (A303/B359). We do not make inferences to the existence of objects of our perception. Instead, we are presented with intuitive representations of these objects as existing immediately in our experience. Cognition by means of perception, and so after receiving a sensation, is *a posteriori* cognition. Cognition before receiving a perception is *a priori* cognition.

An example of *a posteriori* cognition is knowing a book is on the table by looking at it. When I look at the book I gain a perceptual representation of the book through being conscious of a sensation and then I subsume this intuition under the empirical concept book. If my perceptual representation of the book corresponds to how the book is independently of me then I have *a posteriori* cognition of the book.

3. Kant's Empirical Realism and the Parameters of Theoretical Cognition

In the last section we learned that Kant starts his theoretical philosophy from the fact that we have experience. We learned that this means that we have empirical cognition of objects of experience (empirical objects), e.g., I cognize this book here on the table when I look at it. Empirical cognition is the correspondence of our perceptual representations with objects that

exist independently of us. Moreover, if something is real for Kant this means that it exists as an object separate from our consciousness and our representations. This means that the object of experience that I cognize is real, e.g., the book on the table here is real.

Thus, by starting from the fact that we have empirical cognition of empirical objects (i.e., we have experience), Kant starts from the fact that objects exist independently of us within our possible experience. This is what Kant means by empirical realism. Kant's empirical realism states that within our possible experience (empirically) objects exist distinct from our empirical consciousness and representations (realism). Empirical realism is a doctrine in Kant's theoretical philosophy. Kant holds both empirical realism and transcendental idealism simultaneously.

We now have a picture of Kant's theory of theoretical cognition of what and how things exist. This picture involves three parameters that must always be specified to answer whether and how something exists. The first parameter is the **subject**. For Kant, beyond mere speculation about non-human logically possible cognition, the subject will be human beings. The second parameter is the **object** that is being cognized and in what way it exists (either as a thing in itself or appearance). The third parameter is the **field** within which the cognition (subject-object relation) is set (either empirical or transcendental). The context is called sphere, field, or domain by Kant interchangeably in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (e.g. A254-5/B309-10).

The subject parameter defines not only the cognizer but also the context. Specifying the subject determines what is inside and outside of possible experience by defining possible experience and its boundary using the cognitive capacities of the subject. This also serves to define the object as appearance or of experience by determining who the object appears to or is experienced by. In short, the parameters of the field and the object depend on the subject for their specifications.

Using these parameters, we can now appreciate more clearly in what way Kant is an empirical realist. Kant starts from our having experience, i.e., empirical cognition of objects of our perception. In doing so, Kant has specified the **subject** is humans, the **object** is objects of our experience, space, and time, and the **field** is the field of validity of our possible experience. Kant's position given these specified parameters is realism: For humans (subject), objects of our experience, space, and time (object) within our possible experience (field) exist distinct from our consciousness/representations (realism). By calling this position "empirical" realism Kant is specifying the field within which this realism applies.

Kant reasons from his empirical realist starting point of having experience to the doctrine of transcendental idealism. Kant argues that features of our experience (e.g., it is in space and time), our universal and necessary knowledge of the world of our experience (e.g., of geometry, arithmetic, and the laws of physics), and the need to avoid contradictions in our reasoning about the world of our experience (the antinomies) lead us to transcendental idealism. The arguments Kant provides in the *Critique* are the direct argument in the Transcendental Aesthetic (considering features of our experience of space and time and our universal and necessary knowledge in geometry), the indirect proof in the Antinomies (considering contradictions in our reasoning about the world as a whole), and the Transcendental Deduction (considering how laws of nature can be universal and necessary).

4. Transcendental Idealism

a. What does 'Transcendental' mean?

We now arrive at Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism. To explain this doctrine we must first understand what 'transcendental' means. For Kant, 'transcendental' means outside of possible experience and is opposed to the empirical that means within possible experience

(B2),(A139/B178),(A238/B298), (A258/B314). So 'transcendental' refers to a domain, sphere, or field of validity in which a subject-object relation takes place. The transcendental field is defined relative to the empirical field.[3] The relation between the two contexts is one of being within a field (the empirical as within the domain of possible experience) and being outside of this field (the transcendental as outside of the domain of possible experience).

The transcendental vs. empirical distinction is also related to a boundary concept. The empirical is what is within the boundary of our possible experience. Our possible experience is defined by what we can empirically cognize. Thus, the boundary of the empirical field is defined by what our faculties of cognition of sensibility and understanding allow us to empirically cognize. As a result, the empirical is often defined as the field of our sensibility because sensibility is necessary for all our possible experience. Only what can conform to these faculties can appear to us, be empirically cognized and experienced by us, and so exist within the field of the empirical. Conversely, the transcendental is defined by what is outside this boundary of the empirical field. Thus, what is beyond what we can experience, as beyond what we can empirically cognize, is in the transcendental realm. The transcendental does not conform to our faculties of cognition, but is what exists completely independently of our cognitive faculties.

A useful metaphor for the distinction between the empirical and transcendental contexts is Plato's cave allegory. Kant had Platonic metaphysics in mind when he was thinking of his own

[3] This is captured when Kant distinguishes the transcendental from the transcendent. He says "**transcendental** and **transcendent** are not the same. The principles of pure understanding we presented above should be only of empirical and not transcendental use, i.e., of a use that reaches out beyond the boundaries of experience. But a principle that takes away these limits, which indeed bids us to overstep them is called **transcendent**." (A296/B352-3). Kant also says the transcendental misuse of the categories "does not attend enough to the boundaries of the territory in which alone the pure understanding is allowed its play" while the transcendent misuse "actually incites us to tear down all those boundary posts and to lay claim to a wholly new territory that recognizes no demarcations anywhere" (A296/B352). So the transcendental is defined by reaching beyond the boundaries of experience and so is defined relative to the boundary of the territory of experience. Conversely, the transcendent is more radical and is defined by tearing down of the boundary of experience and laying claim to a wholly new territory not defined by any boundary of experience.

metaphysics (A5/B8-9),(A312/B368-A319/B376). The realm inside Plato's cave of coming-to-be and passing-away, what Kant calls the world of sense, is the empirical field. The realm of Ideas, allegorically represented as the realm outside the cave on the surface of the earth, maps onto what for Kant is the intelligible world or the transcendental field. Plato's realm of Ideas is analogous to Kant's transcendental field in that both are defined by being on the other side of a boundary and outside of another realm. Plato allegorically represents this other realm as a cave within the earth, which matches up to Kant's empirical field as what is within the boundary of our possible experience.

For Kant, we can only represent the transcendental field in thought, since by definition this is a realm that we cannot empirically cognize. We cannot empirically cognize the transcendental field because empirical cognition is by definition experience and the transcendental is beyond experience. We can only think the transcendental by abstracting from our sensibility (Bxxvi).

This means anything purely transcendental is for us a mere thought and so only a thought-entity. A thought-entity is a non-contradictory concept of an object without an intuition of it of being possible for us. So we can never discern through intuition whether this object that we form a non-contradictory conceptual representation of does in fact correspond to an object that exists within the sum total of all reality. In short, a thought-entity is a mere thought in our mind about a logically possible entity. This is Kant's first type of nothing (A290/B347). Examples of thought-entities are positive noumena or things in themselves (A254/B310).

b. Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Idealism

Now that we understand Kant's theory of theoretical cognition and his empirical vs. transcendental distinction we can grasp his doctrine of transcendental idealism. Since

transcendental idealism is a doctrine about theoretical cognition, we should apply our model of Kant's theoretical cognition to it. This model requires setting three parameters. The subject in Kant's transcendental idealism is human beings as this is the assumed subject in Kant's theoretical philosophy. The field is the transcendental since that is specified in the name of the doctrine. However, the object is harder to specify.

Kant has a famous distinction between objects as appearances and objects as things in themselves. Objects as appearances (objects of our experience) are the way objects appear to us or the way of existence of an object as existing for us. A thing in itself is an object outside of our experience or as existing independently of its appearance to us. In his doctrine of transcendental idealism, Kant is referring to objects as appearances, e.g., the book in front of us. Kant is not referring to objects as things in themselves. Kant is also referring to space and time within our experience.

Definition of Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Idealism:

> The theoretical doctrine that, for humans (subject), when objects of our possible experience, space, and time (object) are taken as outside of our possible experience (transcendental field) they do not exist independently of us and our minds but are only mere representations (idealism).

This means that for humans, as the cognizing subject, when the objects of our experience are taken in the transcendental field we see that they do not exist outside our experience and us the subject. In this transcendental field outside our possible experience, objects of our experience are only inner determinations of our mind, i.e., mere representations. This means the objects of our experience are nothing or ideal in this transcendental field, i.e., outside of our possible experience.

My definition of transcendental idealism is borne out in the definition that Kant gives of this doctrine in the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

> that everything intuited in space and time, hence all objects of an experience possible for us [**object and subject**], are nothing but appearances, i.e., mere representations [**ideal**], which, as they are represented, as extended beings or series of alterations, have outside our thoughts [**subject**] no existence grounded in itself [**ideal**]. This doctrine I call **transcendental idealism**. [**field**] (A491/B519)

The field from which Kant is making these claims is the transcendental as indicated by calling this doctrine *transcendental* as opposed to *empirical* idealism. This means Kant is making these claims about things as they are outside of our possible experience. Kant designates humans as the subjects by referring to an "experience possible for us" and "outside our thoughts".

One may think "outside our thoughts" refers to the field. Actually, this refers to the distinction between being inside vs. outside of a subject's mind. This is a distinction between what is real or what exists outside of a subject's mind and what is ideal or what cannot be claimed to exist outside the subject's mind. The distinction between the real and ideal takes place within a field. This is why we can have both transcendental realism and idealism and empirical realism and idealism. The object is "all objects of an experience possible for us".

So Kant is claiming that for us as the subject, outside our possible experience, objects of our possible experience are mere representations thus ideal. This is a positive claim about the way of existence of objects of experience that when placed in this transcendental field they are mere inner determinations of our minds. Kant also makes the further negative claim of ideality that objects of our experience as temporal and/or spatial entities do not exist at all in themselves outside our minds.

The positive claim is that objects of our experience are mental entities produced by the subject when considered in the transcendental context. The negative claim is that we can know

definitively that they do not exist on as objects outside the subject as they are represented in space and time. The point of the negative claim is to claim definitive non-existence apart from the subject of the object of experience and its spatial and temporal properties This rules out the possibility that objects of our experience are representations that correspond to objects in themselves that exist independently of us. The way of existence of an object of experience as a temporal and/or spatial being is a way of existence that the object does not have apart from us. Therefore, the object of our experience does not exist as such apart from us. This does not mean that this object could not have another way of existence apart from us which we cannot logically rule out.

c. *Dogmatic vs. Problematic Idealism and Kant's Theoretical Doctrines for Humans as Subjects*

In the last section, we defined Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism and then interpreted the passage in which Kant defines this doctrine. In this passage, Kant made a definite claim of non-existence outside of the subject. This is a dogmatic claim of idealism or non-existence of objects of experience outside the subject. However, Kant distinguishes dogmatic from problematic idealism in which it is merely denied that we can ever be certain that something exists outside of the subject (B274). There is only one type of realism for Kant since this is the positive claim that something does exist apart from the subject. Thus, Kant does not distinguish between problematic and dogmatic realism.

Given Kant's picture of theoretical cognition and his distinction between two different idealisms, we can systematize Kant's theoretical doctrines for the human subject:

1. Regarding objects of our possible experience, space, and time (object) within our possible experience (field) Kant is an **empirical realist** (objects of our possible experience, space,

and time exist independently of us within our experience). The basis for this claim: it is immediately proven based on the testimony of our senses and by our perception (A370-A371).

2. Regarding objects of our possible experience, space, and time (object) outside of our possible experience (field) Kant is a **dogmatic transcendental idealist** (We can make the definitive claim that objects of our possible experience, space, and time do not exist outside of our possible experience). The basis for this claim: we can make this non-existence claim dogmatically because there is a contradiction in the concept (a non-entity) of something existing outside of our possible experience that is an entity of our possible experience. Thus, it is not even logically possible that an object of our possible experience, space, and time could exist outside of the context of our possible experience.
3. Regarding objects as things in themselves (object) insofar as they are within our possible experience (field) Kant is an **dogmatic empirical idealist** (we can make the definite claim that transcendental things in themselves do not exist within our experience). The basis for this claim: there is a contradiction in the concept (a non-entity) of something existing within our possible experience that is an entity that exists only outside of our possible experience. Thus, it is not even logically possible that a transcendental thing in itself could exist inside the context of our possible experience (A30/B45).
4. Regarding objects as things in themselves (object) insofar as they are outside our possible experience (field) Kant is a **problematic transcendental idealist** (we can never claim definitively whether transcendental things in themselves exist or do not exist outside of our possible experience). The basis for this claim: we cannot infer from having an object of experience (object as appearance) that objects in themselves exist. This is because

> Kant regards reasoning from given effects to determinate causes as always an uncertain inference (A372). So it must always be doubtful whether a transcendental thing in itself or our transcendental self affecting itself is the determinate cause of objects as appearances (B276). However, this also means that it is logically possible that a transcendental thing in itself could exist outside the context of our possible experience. So for us transcendental things in themselves outside of our possible experience are a mere thought-entity in our heads. This is Kant's first type of nothing as a non-contradictory concept for which no intuition can be given to us.

Kant always carries out his theoretical philosophy from the starting point of the human subject. He only invokes two fields: within possible experience (empirical) and outside possible experience (transcendental). Lastly, Kant's only distinction between objects is the distinction between the object as appearance/experience and the transcendental object as thing in itself. So the above outlined subject-object-field combinations encompass all of Kant's doctrines of the cognitions of the existence of objects.

There is another distinction concerning objects, but it does not designate any objects we have not already covered. Within the empirical field the object of experience exists independently of the mind of the subject and is opposed to the empirical appearance. So we can make a distinction between two types of "in itself" objects: the transcendental object in itself and the empirical object in itself.[4]

For Kant "in itself" simply means a way of existing of an object that is independent from a subject. Conversely, "appearance" means what appears to the subject, and so the appearance depends for its existence on the subject. So, an object can be "in itself" either empirically, i.e.,

[4] Stang (2018) and Abela (2002: 41) also emphasize that Kant has an empirical distinction between appearance and thing in itself, and so has a concept of an empirical object in itself.

existing independently of the empirical subject within the empirical field, or transcendentally, i.e., existing independently of the transcendental subject within the transcendental field. If an object does in fact exist "in itself" in either sense then the object is said to be actual or real. Thus, Kant has two senses of actuality and reality: empirical and transcendental. This means the distinction Kant commonly employs between a thing in itself and an appearance is more properly called a distinction between a transcendental object in itself vs. a transcendental object as appearance. Similarly, the space and time Kant refers to as just space or time is in fact limited to the space and time we experience and intuit and does not cover absolute spaces and times or spaces and times of other intuitions. This point will be explained in Chapter 5 on the Neglected Alternative.

d. A Seeming Contradiction in Kant's Theoretical Philosophy

Now that we have systematized all of Kant's basic theoretical doctrines it seems there is a contradiction in Kant's theoretical system. Kant holds both empirical realism and transcendental idealism at the same time about the same object. Empirical realism is the theoretical doctrine that objects of our experience (object) when viewed by us (subject) from within our possible experience (field) are **real** (they exist independently of our mind/consciousness and representations of them). Transcendental idealism is the metaphysical doctrine that objects of our experience (object) when viewed by us (subject) as they would be outside of our possible experience (field) are **ideal** (they do not exist independently of our mind/consciousness and representations of them). This means these same objects of our experience when considered by humans as the subject are **real and ideal**.

There appears to be a contradiction in Kant's theoretical philosophy that lies in holding objects of our possible experience to be real and ideal, i.e., to be both objects that exist

independently of us and objects that do not exist independently of us. This is a large problem in Kantian interpretation. Kant claims on many occasions that objects of our experience/appearance are mere representations. These claims led the original reviewers of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* to accuse Kant of being a Berkeleyan idealist or phenomenalist. On the other hand, Kant claims repeatedly that objects of experience are real. How can Kant be both an idealist and realist about objects as appearances/experience?

The clue to resolving this apparent contradiction lies in the modifier that is placed before Kant's claim of either realism or idealism. Kant is an *empirical* realist and only a *transcendental* idealist. As shown above, "empirical" and "transcendental" designate different fields of validity. The empirical designates what is within possible experience and the transcendental designates what is outside of possible experience. The possible experience that is considered for the purpose of Kant's theoretical philosophy is our human experience because the subject in Kant's theoretical philosophy is the human. So human cognitive capacities that are necessary conditions for human experience (empirical cognition) serve to demarcate the boundary of experience and thus of the empirical and transcendental.

Therefore, Kant does not contradict himself in asserting the transcendental idealism and empirical realism of objects of possible experience. Kant means his realism and idealism in two different senses. The difference of sense is a difference of field; in particular, whether we consider objects of experience as they would be outside of possible human experience or within possible human experience. Objects of our experience exist independently of our empirical consciousness and representations within our possible experience. Yet, when objects of our experience are taken outside of our possible experience they are mere representations produced

by our transcendental mind and cognitive capacities that do not exist independently of the transcendental self.

This means as an empirical realist Kant does not hold Berkeleyean idealism, at least as Kant understands it. According to Kant, the position of dogmatic empirical idealism is the doctrine that objects of our possible experience within our possible experience definitely do not exist outside of us (in space). Relatedly, Kant also does not hold Cartesian idealism or problematic empirical idealism. As Kant understands it, problematic empirical idealism is the position that we can never be certain whether objects of our experience exist or not outside of us in space.

Between Kant's two doctrines of empirical realism and transcendental idealism about objects of possible experience we must always remember to prioritize empirical realism. This is why I began my exposition of Kant's metaphysics and transcendental idealism from his empirical realism. Only by starting from a position of empirical realism can one properly understand Kant's theoretical philosophy and his transcendental idealism. We shall learn the full significance of this point in responding to an objection.

5. Platonic Objections

a. Objection from Prioritizing the Transcendental

We now confront the most important objection to my interpretation. Dealing with this objection will help us to properly understand Kant's transcendental idealism. The objection has multiple forms but comes from prioritizing (whether explicitly or not) the transcendental over the empirical, which is a way of thinking that has its roots in Plato. The objection starts by pointing out that the transcendental field is the field of how things are in themselves outside of our limited possible human experience. Then the objection asserts that how things are independently of our

limited possible human experience is how things really are and how they are for us is not how things really are.

Furthermore, how things are independently of our limited human experience in the transcendental realm is how things are for God (if God exists). This is because God is not subject to our limited human cognitive capacities. The objection points out that how things are for God and how God knows them in God's perfect knowledge must be how things more truly and really are.

Lastly, Kant has in mind Platonic metaphysics when conceiving of his own metaphysics. This means the empirical world is the world of sense or the world within the cave in Plato's cave allegory. Kant's transcendental realm is the world outside of the cave or the intelligible world. However, the realm outside of the cave or the transcendental realm is the realm of the Ideas that are what is most real for Plato. Therefore, the transcendental realm and what exists in it is meant by Kant to be what is most real.

The objection then goes on to point out what my interpretation says about objects of our experience as they would be in this transcendental context. Transcendental idealism is defined under my interpretation as:

> From outside our possible experience (transcendental field) for humans (the subject) objects of experience (object) are ideal, (they are mere representations that do not exist outside of our minds).

This means that objects of our experience in the transcendental field are what Kant calls "nothing" as the non-entity, contradictory concept, type of nothing. This is because we are talking about or conceptualizing a mind-dependent entity (objects of experience/appearance) as it would be outside of our possible experience and our minds. This is a human mind-

dependent entity as it would be independently of our minds, or an object of our experience as it would be completely independent of our experience. Those are contradictory concepts that are not even logically possible thought entities but are non-entities.

The objection concludes that surely the way things are independently of our limited cognitive capacities, for God's perfect knowledge or in Plato's realm of the Ideas, is the most ultimate sense of reality. Therefore, according to me, Kant is claiming that in the most ultimate sense of reality objects of our experience are mere illusion, nothing, and not real. This then leaves us victims of skepticism and empirical idealism. As a result, we should reject my interpretation.

There is a second objection to my interpretation that is related to the first. This objection grants that since Kant is an empirical realist there must be a sense in which objects of experience are not mere seemings but are real and exist. However, this objection emphasizes that since the ultimate sense of reality is the transcendental then objects of our experience must be grounded on things in themselves to be real and not mere illusions. This grounding can take the form of the identity of objects of experience and things in themselves (identity or one object view) or the causation of objects of experience by things in themselves (causation or two object view). Therefore, I must at least be wrong in my claim that objects of our experience are not grounded on things in themselves for their reality and existence. The moderate-metaphysical view takes this position whose main proponents include Lucy Allais in *Manifest Reality* and Paul Guyer recently in an article "Transcendental Idealism: What and Why?".

Moreover, this objection claims that to perform this metaphysical grounding things in themselves must exist and not be mere thought-entities. This means I am wrong to say that according to Kant we cannot claim things in themselves exist nor can we claim they do not exist:

problematic transcendental idealism. Instead, Kant must be a transcendental realist about objects in themselves, and these objects in themselves must be the metaphysical ground of objects of our experience. This resembles Plato's metaphysical theory in which objects in the empirical realm of coming-to-be and passing-away, i.e., in the cave, had to participate (be grounded in some sense) in the Ideas for their reality.

Both of these objections prioritize the transcendental over the empirical. In doing so, they assume the Platonic conception that the transcendental is most real. This means that for objects of experience to be real they must be grounded in a transcendental object in itself. The answer to these objections lies in showing how Kant breaks with Platonic metaphysics.

b. Answer to Transcendental Prioritizing Objections

The answer to these objections lies in understanding that Kant prioritizes empirical reality over transcendental reality. Objects of experience are not ultimately nothing or ideal for Kant, and they do not need a grounding in things in themselves to be real. This is because Kant thinks that empirical reality is the ultimate reality for humans. This is made clear in perhaps the most important passage in the *Critique of Pure Reason* for interpreting Kant's theoretical philosophy:

> It is possible experience alone that can give our concepts reality; without it, every concept is only an idea, without truth and reference to an object. Hence the possible empirical concept was the standard by which it had to be judged whether the idea is a mere idea and thought-entity or instead encounters its object within the world. (A489/B517)

So for humans it is only possible experience that can give our concepts reality and not things in themselves outside our experience. By "reality" Kant means the object of our concept exists independently of our mind. So Kant is saying that the only objects that our concepts can correspond to lie within our possible experience. For Kant, truth is correspondence of a concept

with an object, and so this also means our concepts can only have truth based on possible experience alone (A58/B82), (A191/B236).

This means concepts that do not find their object within possible experience cannot be given reference or correspondence to an object that exists independently of us. As a result, such concepts cannot have truth or reality. Thus, the possible empirical concept, i.e., a concept that is about what is within possible experience, is the standard for which concepts can have reality and which are mere ideas and thought-entities. Ideas and thought-entities are mere mental entities without possible correspondence/reference to objects that exist independently of us and so are without reality and truth.

Kant claims the only objects our concepts can correspond to are objects of our possible experience because these are the only objects we can intuit. Kant says "although appearances cannot be comprehended among the objects of pure understanding as things in themselves, they are nevertheless the only things by means of which our cognition can have objective reality, namely, where intuition corresponds to the concepts" (A279/B335). Moreover, what we have sensations and intuitions of must be within experience because the boundary of experience is defined by our sensibility. Only what is represented in our human sensibility as human intuition can furnish the intuition for empirical cognition and so make our experience possible. This fits with Kant calling the concepts that cannot reference an object within experience mere ideas or thought-entities. "Thought-entity" is Kant's technical term for his first kind of nothing: *ens rationis* or a concept without a intuition being possibly given for it (A290/B347).

In the bigger picture, this means objects of our possible experience are the most real and foundational objects in Kant's theoretical philosophy. Also, since these are objects of *our* possible experience, this means we are the primary subject of Kant's theoretical philosophy.

Finally, by saying that our concepts and ideas are not real or true if they do not make reference to an object within our possible experience Kant is prioritizing the reality of the world of our possible experience over the transcendental field. In short, Kant is prioritizing his empirical realism over transcendental idealism as what is most or ultimately real and true for us.

For Kant, mere ideas or concepts about that which is beyond our possible experience, which we only think through reason, are less real and are not the standard of reality for us. This is a direct reversal of Platonic and traditional metaphysics. In such metaphysics, the transcendental realm beyond our possible experience, objects that we do not experience but merely know through reason, and a higher order subject such as God and God's knowledge are what is most real and true. The problem is that when Kant starts talking about God, God's knowledge, and the transcendental standpoint the reader drifts back into a Platonic prioritizing of the transcendental realm and God as what is most real.

The reader must remember that when Kant discusses God/God's knowledge and the transcendental standpoint he talks about them only as thought-entities. These discussions are Kant exploring only in thought these logically possible entities that may or may not exist. Thus, when Kant says that transcendentally (as God would view things) objects of our experience are mere representations and ideal, this is not to say that ultimately objects of our experience are unreal illusions. For Kant does not take the transcendental standpoint and God to be the ultimate standard of the real. Objects considered transcendentally are mere thoughts in our heads that may or may not correspond to any existing thing.

c. Kant's New Metaphysical Metaphor of the Flying Dove

Thus, Plato's cave allegory no longer serves to capture Kant's theoretical philosophical model beyond a similar distinction between two metaphysical realms. For both Kant and Plato, there are

two different metaphysical realms whose relation is captured by the spatial metaphor of one realm (transcendental field) being located outside of another realm (empirical field). For both, the transcendental realm is only accessible to the human intellect or reason. Also for both, the immanent metaphysical realm is a realm of our everyday experience that is only accessible to our senses (empirical field). However, Plato's cave allegory prejudices the reader to make the judgment that the inner, empirical realm is less real than outer, transcendental realm. This is because, for Plato, the inner, empirical realm is represented allegorically as a subterranean cave containing prisoners, shadows, and no natural light. Conversely, the outer, transcendental realm is represented allegorically as above ground with sunlight and free open spaces.

To overturn these metaphysical prejudices, Kant has to invoke a new spatial metaphor to redefine the transcendental vs. empirical distinction between different metaphysical realms. In particular, Kant supplies a new metaphor that emphasizes the foundational reality of the empirical realm and the unreality of the transcendental realm as far as humans are concerned. Kant provides this metaphor and makes clear his opposition to Plato when he says:

> The light dove, in free flight cutting through the air the resistance of which it feels, could get the idea that it could do even better in airless space. Likewise, Plato abandoned the world of the senses because it set such narrow limits for the understanding, and dared to go beyond it on the wings of the ideas, in the empty space of pure understanding. He did not notice that he made no headway by his efforts, for he had no resistance, no support, as it were, by which he could stiffen himself, and to which he could apply his powers in order to put his understanding into motion. (A5/B8-9)

Here Kant formulates a new metaphysical allegory that prioritizes the world of the senses and our possible perceptions over an intelligible world of the pure understanding. The allegory is one of a dove flying through the air. The dove represents the human cognizer, and the air represents the empirical realm of our possible experience. The dove's flight through the air represents the act of human empirical cognition by using both our concepts of the understanding and the

intuitions of our sensibility to cognize an object. The dove's wings in flight are our pure concepts and intuitions supplied by our cognitive faculties, and the air's resistance represents the contribution of our sensibility of our empirical intuitions.

Kant extends the allegory to encompass the failed metaphysical cognition of Plato. Airless space represents the transcendental realm of the pure understanding outside of our possible experience. The absence of air signifies not having intuitions (especially empirical). In the realm of empty space, the dove's wings have no resistance and so the dove cannot fly. This represents how in the realm of pure understanding we lack all intuition and so we cannot cognize any objects. Empirical intuition is necessary for human cognition just as air is necessary for a dove's flight. Thus, air-filled space is the only realm in which the dove can fly, and the empirical realm is the only realm in which the human can cognize objects.

Kant acknowledges the dove might think the resistance of the air is holding it back and it could fly better in airless space. This represents the justification that traditional metaphysicians and Plato give for the priority of the transcendental. They think that our senses limit our understanding to the realm of experience. They thought by abandoning the realm of our senses and using only our pure understanding we would cognize things as they really are.

However, Kant contends that by using only ideas in a realm of pure understanding beyond the world of our senses we do not cognize anything (the dove cannot fly at all in airless space). This is because our sensibility and empirical intuition put our understanding into motion and allow us to cognize anything at all. So, far from being viewed as a mere limitation, our senses should be viewed as what enables us to have cognition at all (provide the support necessary for the dove to fly). This allegory emphasizes the primacy of the empirical and human

sensibility for any possible human cognition and denies human cognition through pure understanding alone.

In this passage, Kant is urging us to abandon our Platonic metaphysical prejudices. I urge all interpreters of Kant to do the same in order to properly understand Kant. This prevents one from holding Kant to standards of reality that he explicitly abandons and reverses. If one holds Kant to Platonic standards of which realm and type of cognition are most real then one is sure to misread Kant and his critical theoretical project.

6. Objection From God's Perfect Knowledge and Rebuttal

Another objection is that, while I have dealt with Kant's reversal of Plato, Kant's position on God is another matter. Specifically, Kant accepts the traditional doctrine that God is omniscient and his knowledge perfect, while ours is limited and imperfect. This means that the way things are for God is the way things are most perfectly and truly. Under my interpretation of transcendental idealism, objects of our experience do not exist in the transcendental realm and so do not exist according to God. Thus, according to my interpretation, objects of our experience are most truly mere representations and illusions.

To respond to this objection, we need to remember that we occupy the human standpoint in discussions of theoretical philosophy and metaphysical cognition of existence. For humans, empirical reality is the ultimate reality. Moreover, for humans speaking transcendentally, God and God's knowledge are themselves problematically ideal (mere thought-entities we can gain no intuition of). As mere thought-entities, God and God's knowledge are for us only non-contradictory concepts of a logically possible entity that may or may not exist. It is true that according to Kant we can have practical cognition of God. This means only that we **should** posit God as what ought to exist because morality requires it. Yet, theoretical cognition concerns not

what **ought to exist** but **what exists** and so theoretically we can never claim that God exists or does not exist (A634-5/B662-3).

This being the case, why would we let a mere-thought entity undermine the metaphysical priority of our immediate empirical reality? Kant is saying that we should not. Instead, our empirical reality should have priority as what is immediately certain through perception. Although we have a logically consistent concept of God and his perfect knowledge, we do not know that such an entity or His knowledge actually exist. In short, a mere thought in our heads, whose referent may or may not exist, should not be taken as more metaphysically fundamental than our experience that we are immediately certain exists. Thus, we should not be worried that our empirical cognition, empirical objects, and empirical reality would seem to God to be ideal or a type of nothing.

Chapter 2: Kant's Transcendental Idealism vs. Transcendental Realism

1. Definition of Transcendental Idealism in the A Paralogism

In the first Chapter, I gave an overview of my interpretation of Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism. In this overview, I focused on the transcendental ideality of objects of our experience (appearances). Yet, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant first introduces transcendental idealism as a doctrine about space and time. In the next chapter, I will give an interpretation of Kant's direct[5] argument for the transcendental ideality of space and time. The current chapter lays the foundations for understanding that proof.

Last chapter, I showed how my definition of transcendental idealism maps onto Kant's definition given in the Antinomies. It is also useful to consider another formulation of the doctrine of transcendental idealism given in the A edition:

> I understand by the **transcendental idealism** of all appearances the doctrine that they are all together to be regarded as mere representations and not as things in themselves, and accordingly that space and time are only sensible forms of our intuition, but not determinations given for themselves. (A369)

In this formulation of the doctrine Kant includes space and time along with appearances (objects of experience) as what are transcendentally ideal. This formulation of transcendental idealism reveals the entire conclusion Kant is aiming at in the direct proof of transcendental idealism.

In the direct proof, Kant aims to establish that all appearances (all objects of our possible experience), space, and time (object) for us humans (subject) when taken transcendentally (field) (considered as they would be outside of our possible experience) are mere representations of our minds and not things in themselves (ideal). Appearances are objects of our perception and thus

[5] By "direct proof" Kant means the proof argues "directly" for its conclusion alone. In contrast, an indirect proof argues for its conclusion by first arguing the contradictory opposite of its conclusion is false.

are “objects of our consciousness” that appear to us in our empirical consciousness of sensation. Objects of our perception appear to us as objects independent of the subject, whether they really are or not.

These appearances (objects of perception) can be independent of the subject either empirically or transcendentally, and so the representation of an object in our perception can conform to an object and so represent a real object in two ways. Transcendentally, the object represented in perception is independent from the subject, i.e., is real, when the object represented exists independently of the sensibility and possible experience of the subject. This is to encounter a thing in itself in appearance.

Empirically, the object represented in perception is independent from the subject when the object represented exists independently of the empirical consciousness of the subject within experience. This is determined by the criteria for empirical actuality. When an object of perception (appearance) meets this criteria it is an object of experience though not necessarily a transcendental thing in itself.

Kant also claims that space and time (object) are only sensible forms of our (subject) intuition and not determinations given for themselves (ideal). Kant claims this idealism of space and time is transcendental (field), i.e., considered as they would be outside our possible experience. Thus, Kant also claims that space and time are transcendentally ideal as part of his doctrine of transcendental idealism.

This definition maps onto the definition I gave of transcendental idealism in the first chapter. The object is objects of experience (appearances), space, and time, the subject is humans, and the field is the transcendental. The result is idealism in this transcendental field. This is the claim that appearances, space, and time are mere representations and not things in

themselves or determinations of them, and so are nothing in themselves when outside our possible experience and separated from our sensibility.

2. Kant's Transcendental Realist is a Representationalist

a. Kant's Definition of Transcendental Realism

Part of Kant's definition of transcendental idealism is that appearances/objects of experience/space and time are "mere representations" and not things in themselves. To explain what this means, it helps to contrast Kant's definition of transcendental idealism with his definition of transcendental realism. On this topic Kant says:

> To this idealism is opposed transcendental realism, which regards space and time as something given in themselves (independent of our sensibility). The transcendental realist therefore represents outer appearances (if their reality is conceded) as things in themselves, which would exist independently of us and our sensibility and thus would also be outside us according to pure concepts of the understanding. (A369)[6]

Here we see that "given in themselves" means given independently of our sensibility and "as things in themselves" means existing independently of us and our sensibility. As independent of us and our sensibility, what is in itself occupies an outside according to pure concepts of the understanding. This is a transcendental outside that is outside of our possible experience and sensibility as opposed to being empirically outside us as existing in space.[7]

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[6] This passage runs counter to Stang's claim that "We have no concept of a third kind of intellect that intuits both kinds of objects. The reason for this is simple: a discursive intellect must be receptive (capable of being affected by an object), but an intuitive intellect cannot be receptive. So no one intellect can intuit both sensible and nonsensible objects" (Stang 2022: 315). Instead, we see here that we can think of a discursive intellect with sensible intuition that can intuit sensible and nonsensible objects. This is the concept of our intellect as a transcendental realist thinks of it. Under such a concept of our intellect, the sensible objects we represent to ourselves in sensibility conform to and accurately represent to us things as they are in themselves. Thus, according to the transcendental realist, objects of outer appearance are things as they are in themselves, and so we intuit both sensible and nonsensible objects. Stang thinks we can form a concept of our intellect as doing this only for practical cognition of ourselves, but denies it for our theoretical cognition. Yet, we see here that even theoretically we can form the concept of our own intuition being able to do this regarding all objects of our cognition. Kant denies this understanding of our sensible intuition because we have synthetic *a priori* cognition and under this understanding synthetic *a priori* cognition is not possible.

[7] Kant defines the difference between an empirical and transcendental outside us at A373. What is empirically outside us is outside us in space, e.g., empirically external objects or outer appearances. What is transcendentally

Kant specifies that the realism he is describing is "transcendental" because it concerns an existence apart from the subject in the sense of being independent of our sensibility. This is also an existence outside of our possible experience because our sensibility is a necessary condition for our possible experience. So transcendental realism is the claim that space, time, and appearances (object) exist independently (realism) of us (subject) in the sense of outside our possible experience (transcendentally). This is in contrast to existing outside us empirically as outside the empirical subject in space.

For the transcendental idealist, space and time are transcendentally in us as forms of our sensibility, and so space and time are mere representations seated in the subject (A370). According to the transcendental realist, for the representation of space or time in our experience to be real it must be a representation of absolute space or time that exists outside the sensibility of the subject. Conversely, the transcendental idealist can be an empirical realist and consider space and time to be real only within the field of our sensibility and experience.

b. The Transcendental Realist as Empirical Idealist

Despite their differences, both transcendental idealism and transcendental realism deal with appearances. They only differ as to whether they take appearances to be mere representations or things in themselves. Yet, how can appearances be anything more than mere representations? Appearances are what appears to us and so would seem to be by definition mere representations. Thus, it seems Kant's transcendental realist is actually a transcendental idealist.

The answer to this question is found in Kant's further description of transcendental realism. Kant says of the transcendental realist:

> It is really this transcendental realist who afterwards plays the empirical idealist; and after he has falsely presupposed about objects of the senses that if they are to exist they must

outside us is beyond our sensibility and so beyond our form of intuition of space, e.g., things in themselves that exist entirely independent of us.

> have their existence in themselves even apart from sense, he finds that from this point of view all our representations of sense are insufficient to make their reality certain. (A369)

In this passage, Kant explains that the transcendental realist falls into empirical idealism due to a presupposition they hold. The transcendental realist presupposes that objects of our senses have to exist apart from our senses, i.e., "in themselves", to exist. This seems to be a blatantly contradictory standard of existence because by definition an object of our senses cannot exist apart from our senses.

What the transcendental realist really means is that we only have to do *directly* with our representations. So, for the transcendental realist, objects of the senses are objects represented by our senses. For the transcendental realist, the standard of reality for objects represented by our senses is whether our sensible representations of objects correspond to objects that exist apart from our sensibility, i.e., objects that exist transcendentally in themselves. When this happens we can say that the objects of our senses exist and are transcendentally real.

For the transcendental realist, the only way to exist is to exist in the transcendental realm apart from human sensibility and outside our experience. However, the commitments of (1) objects that appear to us have to correspond to objects apart from our sensibility to exist and (2) all we deal with directly are our representations, i.e., inner determinations of our mind, lead the transcendental realist to empirical idealism. This leads the transcendental realist to empirical idealism because they find that "all our representations of sense are insufficient to make their reality certain". Since we only have to do directly with our representations, we can never be certain whether any of our representations of sense correspond to an object in itself independent of our sensibility and outside our possible experience.

If the transcendental realist did not hold commitment (2) then they would not be forced to play the empirical idealist. If we could access things in themselves directly (unmediated by

representations of sense) then the fact that "all our representations of sense are insufficient to make their reality certain" would not lead to empirical idealism. This is because, in this case, the transcendental realist would have direct access to objects in themselves apart from our representations of sense and so could affirm their reality with direct certainty. However, Kant claims the transcendental realist is lead to empirical idealism about objects of sense because they cannot be certain of their existence apart from our representations of sense, which are insufficient to establish this existence.

Thus, the empirical idealism of the transcendental realist is problematic empirical idealism: we can never be certain that objects of our sensibility exist apart from us. This is because, for the transcendental realist, the only way to justify claims that objects of our senses exist is if they correspond to objects in themselves outside our experience. Representations of sense will never suffice to make this certain, which Kant says leads the transcendental realist to empirical idealism. To explain this inference, we must interpret Kant's transcendental realist as having no direct access to things in themselves but only access mediated through representations of sense.

c. Proof the Transcendental Realist is a Representationalist

Kant's transcendental realist holds that for an object of the senses to exist our sensible representation of this object must correspond to an object that exists apart from our sensibility. Further support for this interpretation is given when Kant says:

> Transcendental realism necessarily falls into embarrassment, and finds itself required to give way to empirical idealism, because it regards the objects of outer sense as something different from the senses themselves and regards mere appearances as self-sufficient beings that are found external to us; for here, even with our best consciousness of our

> representation of these things, it is obviously far from certain that if the representation exists, then the object corresponding to it would also exist. (A371)

In this passage, we see that the transcendental realist takes objects of outer sense as self-sufficient beings that exist apart from our sensibility. Kant regards objects of sense as mere appearances. This does not mean the transcendental realist thinks we have direct access, i.e., access unmediated through representations, to objects in themselves independently of our sensibility. Instead, the transcendental realist takes us as having to do directly only with representations, and so all our access to objects is mediated through representations.

We can see this is the transcendental realist's position by interpreting this passage as advancing an argument that Kant takes to be valid with true premises. The conclusion is that "transcendental realism necessarily falls into embarrassment, and finds itself required to give way to empirical idealism". Given the commitments of the transcendental realist, he is forced to accept the position of problematic empirical idealism. Problematic empirical idealism is the position that, for humans (subject), objects of our possible experience and/or space and time (objects), when considered within our experience and sensibility (field), we can never be sure whether they exist separately from our minds.

To establish this conclusion about the transcendental realist position, Kant supplies the premise that the transcendental realist "regards the objects of outer sense as something different from the senses themselves and regards mere appearances as self-sufficient beings that are found external to us". This premise could be saying that the transcendental realist takes objects of outer sense to be given to us directly as they are in themselves without mediation by representations. Under this reading, objects of outer sense are not representations corresponding to but simply are self-sufficient beings that exist outside our sensibility (Reading 1).

An alternative interpretation of this premise is that the transcendental realist regards objects of outer sense to be representations of things as they are in themselves independently of our sensibility. Under this reading, objects of outer sense can be considered to be self-sufficient beings outside of our sensibility only through correspondence with things in themselves (Reading 2). On this interpretation of transcendental realism, our access to objects in themselves is mediated through our sensible representations of objects. Moreover, according to the transcendental realist, for the objects of our sensible representations to exist and be real they must correspond to an object in itself that exists independently of our representations. We will see Reading 2 is correct because it is the only one that allows Kant to draw his empirical idealist conclusion.

The second premise in Kant's argument is that "even with our best consciousness of our representation of these things, it is obviously far from certain that if the representation exists, then the object corresponding to it would also exist". In short, the inference from the existence of a representation of an object to the existence of that object in itself is not certain. Now which reading of the first premise combined with the second premise leads us to Kant's problematic empirical idealist conclusion? Only this reading of the first premise can be how Kant understands transcendental realism.

Reading 1 of the first premise does not lead to problematic empirical idealism. Instead, Reading 1 leads to empirical realism as the doctrine that within our possible experience objects of our senses exist apart from us and are not mere representations. Reading 1 of the first premise leads to this conclusion because its transcendental realist has direct access (unmediated by representations) to objects of our senses as objects that exist independently of our sensibility as self-sufficient entities. Such direct access would give us an immediately certain proof of the

existence of objects of our senses. This is because, in this case, having a perception of an object of our senses is to have direct access unmediated by representations to things in themselves independently of our sensibility.

Only Reading 2 of the first premise leads to problematic empirical idealism. This is because only the second reading allows for mediation between objects of sense and the objects that exist independently of our sensibility. This results from Reading 2 taking objects of sense to be our sensible representations of objects whose existence depends on correspondence to an object that exists independently of our sensibility. Therefore, only Reading 2 of premise 1 can combine with premise 2 (we can never infer with certainty from the existence of a representation of an object to the existence of that object) to lead to the position of problematic empirical idealism: we can never be sure that an object of sense exists outside our sensibility.

Reading 1 does not allow for mediation between sense and objects independent of our sensibility. Instead, Reading 1 gives direct, unmediated certainty about the existence of objects independent of our sensibility. Thus, Reading 1 cannot lead to empirical idealism when combined with premise 2. Consequently, Reading 1 of the first premise of this argument is correct and Reading 2 is false. This means Kant's transcendental realist is a representationalist realist and not a direct realist.

d. The Difference between Transcendental Idealism and Transcendental Realism

However, this argument leads to problematic empirical idealism only for the transcendental realist but not for the transcendental idealist. This is because a defining claim of transcendental realism is that for an outer object of sense (sensible representation of an object) to exist it must correspond to an object that exists independently of our sensibility. An object of sense is a species of representation. Yet, unlike other representations, it is called an "object" of sense

because its content has the potential to correspond to an object that exists independently of us. The transcendental realist pairs this correspondence standard of existence for objects of sense with the fact that our representations are insufficient to prove the existence of objects independent of our sensibility. This pairing leads the transcendental realist to problematic empirical idealism.

The transcendental idealist agrees with the transcendental realist that we only directly have to do with representations of objects and not objects in themselves. The transcendental idealist that is an empirical realist differs from the transcendental realist by not requiring that, in order to exist, an object of sense must correspond to an object independent of our sensibility, i.e., the transcendental object in itself. Instead, the transcendental idealist/empirical realist holds that to exist an object of sense must only correspond to an object that emerges from our representations, i.e., the empirical object. The empirical object is an object that is independent of the subject only within the empirical world of our experience. For the transcendental idealist/empirical realist, our immediate perception of the empirical object and its conformity with empirical laws proves its empirical existence.

However, an empirical object only becomes an object through a certain way of representation that depends on our *a priori* cognitive faculties. These cognitive faculties are transcendental because they are outside of our possible experience as conditions of the possibility of our experience. Thus, the empirical object (object of experience) is only an object through our representations and emerges from them. The empirical object is not an object that already exists in itself independently of our sensibility to which our representations must conform. Instead, the empirical object (object of experience) has to conform to our way of representing to be an object at all (Bxx),(Bxvi). Further, the empirical object (object of

experience) depends only on our way of representing for its existence and properties, which means it does not depend on the existence of a thing in itself apart from our sensibility for its existence.

e. Inability to Prove the Existence of a Thing in Itself for the Transcendental Realist

One might question why Kant thinks the transcendental realist can never know if their representation of an object corresponds to a thing in itself outside our possible experience. Why could the transcendental realist not use an indirect means, i.e., inference, to establish this correspondence? Kant answers this question when he discusses the transcendental realists who fall into empirical idealism:

> If one regards outer appearances as representations that are effected in us by their objects, as things in themselves found outside us, then it is hard to see how their existence could be cognized in any way other than by an inference from effect to cause, in which case it must always remain doubtful whether the cause is in us or outside us. (A372)

The transcendental realist cannot be certain that objects of our outer sense exist because they (1) regard objects of outer senses/outer appearances as representations that are effected in us by their objects that are things in themselves found outside us, and they think that (2) for objects of our senses to exist they must correspond to an object as a things in itself found outside our sensibility and possible experience. Yet, we can indirectly cognize the existence of an object outside our sensibility only by means of an inference from the effect in us (the appearance to us of an object) to its cause outside of our possible experience.

Both Kant and the transcendental realist regard this inference as doubtful because "one infers from given effects to determinate causes, only unreliably, since the cause of the representation that we perhaps falsely ascribe to outer things can also lie in us" (B276). This means the cause outside our possible experience for these representations could be an object in itself (transcendental object) or it could, with equal probability, be us ourselves (transcendental

subject) affecting our own sensibility spontaneously. Thus, we can never claim with any certainty that an object exists outside our sensibility. Since the transcendental realist requires certainty that there is an object in itself our sensible representation of an object corresponds to if this object of sense is to have empirical reality, the transcendental realist is led to problematic empirical idealism.

This is not simply skepticism that our representation of an object *accurately* conforms to an object outside of our possible experience. This is only to doubt whether we can accurately represent to ourselves in experience a certainly existing object in itself. More radically, both Kant and the transcendental realist are uncertain whether any objects exist outside our possible experience at all. They doubt we can have cognition of the existence of objects in themselves and so doubt the existence of any objects in themselves outside of our possible experience. They raise this doubt because our transcendental self, and not things in themselves, could be the cause of our sensible representations through transcendental self-affection.

3. Kant's Copernican Revolution and the Empirical Object

If they both share this doubt, how does Kant avoid falling into empirical idealism along with the transcendental realist? Kant avoids this by denying claim (2) made by the transcendental realist. Kant denies objects of our senses have to correspond to objects in themselves outside our sensibility (transcendental object in itself) to be empirically real. For Kant, objects of our senses must only correspond to things in themselves outside our sensibility to be *transcendentally* real. The transcendental realist does not distinguish between empirical and transcendental reality. For the transcendental realist, all reality of an object that appears to us only depends on whether the representation of the object corresponds to an object in itself outside our sensibility.

Kant's metaphysical innovation is that for objects of our senses (our sensible representations of objects) to be empirically real they must correspond only to objects within our experience (empirical objects) that arise out of our representations. This is Kant's Copernican Revolution which he describes as:

> Up to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects; but all attempts to find out something about them *a priori* through concepts that would extend our cognition, on this presupposition, has come to nothing. Hence let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the object must conform to our cognition, which would agree better with the requested possibility of an *a priori* cognition of them, which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us. (Bxvi)

Here Kant is proposing a major change in the way we think about our cognition of objects. Kant breaks with tradition by denying that all our cognition must conform to the objects. Instead, Kant makes the revolutionary suggestion, following Copernicus' assumption in his explanation of celestial motion that the observer revolves and the stars are at rest, that we assume the object must conform to our cognition. Kant suggests this as a better way of explaining synthetic *a priori* cognition of objects, i.e., knowing something about objects before they are given to us. Under this theory, the subject contributes to the characteristics of the object. The object conforms both to our faculty of intuition (Bxvii) and the concepts of our understanding (Bxvii).

The object's conformity to our way of representing seems limited to our *a priori* contributions. The reason for this is that the conformity of objects to our cognition is posited in order to explain *a priori* cognition. Kant seems to confirm this by saying "we can cognize of things *a priori* only what we ourselves have put into them" (Bxviii) and "in *a priori* cognition nothing can be ascribed to the objects except what the thinking subject takes out of itself" (Bxxiii). So it seems Kant is limiting what the subject contributes to the object to our *a priori* structures of our pure forms of sensibility and pure concepts of the understanding. This still

allows the matter of our cognition, i.e., sensations, to correspond to the thing in itself. Yet, this also is not possible.

Correspondence of our sensation to a thing in itself is not possible because the *a priori* structures of our cognition determine all our representations of objects, including sensation. This leads Kant to deny we have any cognition of things in themselves. Kant says "we can have cognition of no object as a thing in itself, but only insofar as it is an object of sensible intuition, i.e., as an appearance; from which follows the limitation of all even possible speculative cognition of reason to mere objects of **experience**" (Bxxvi). Despite this, one may think we can still claim things in themselves exist even if we cannot cognize them. Yet, this existence claim has to be based on cognition of the existence of things in themselves. We can only think things in themselves but cannot cognize them or their existence. Without cognition of their existence, we cannot make any claims of existence or non-existence about them (Bxxvi).

Moreover, cognition of the existence of things in themselves through cognition of objects of experience is not guaranteed through identity of existence. The existence of an object of experience depends on *a priori* conditions that come from the subject, which a thing in itself by definition cannot depend upon for its existence. This implies objects of experience exist differently from things in themselves. We see this when Kant says "space and time are only forms of sensible intuition and therefore only conditions of the existence of the things as appearances" (Bxxv). Space and time are only conditions of the existence of things as appearances and not of the existence of things in themselves. Thus, things as appearances (objects of experience) have a different way of existence than things in themselves. So, the existence of an object of experience does not imply the thing in itself must exist through a

relation of identical existence. Above I have refuted the claim that if the appearance exists the thing in itself must exist because it is the appearance's necessary cause.

The empirical object, i.e., object of experience, is an object that exists apart from the subject but only within the empirical world. An empirical object can be said to exist separately from the empirical subject, even though it originally emerges from our representations, because after it emerges from our representations it is not dependent on us or our representations. Kant states this by saying "but now external objects (bodies) are merely appearances, hence also nothing other than a species of my representations, whose objects are something through these representations, but are nothing separated from them". (A370). This is a puzzling claim, but I think it is less puzzling once one disentangles the empirical and transcendental senses employed here.

Kant is saying that, when considered as they are within our experience (empirically), these representations of external objects become objects in our experience (empirical objects). Conversely, when considered as they would be outside our possible experience (transcendentally), these external objects are mere representations in our minds because they do not have a corresponding object outside our sensibility and possible experience. The objects designated by these transcendental representations are not found outside our possible experience. Instead, these objects are made possible as empirical objects within our possible experience through these transcendental representations and their *a priori* structuring. These transcendental representations come logically and metaphysically first as the conditions of the possibility of empirical objects that are nothing separated from our transcendental representations. These transcendental representations are our empirical intuitions, pure forms of intuitions, and categories of the understanding.

Kant describes what it takes to be an empirical object (object of experience) when he says:

> The sensible faculty of intuition is really only a receptivity for being affected in a certain way with representations, whose relation to one another is a pure intuition of space and time (pure forms of our sensibility), which, insofar as they are connected and determinable in these relations (in space and time) according to laws of the unity of experience, are called **objects**. (A494/B522)

This passage captures what is required for our representations to become objects within our experience. Our sensible faculty of intuition supplies us with representations receptively by being affected in a certain way. This implies a transcendental cause, either ourselves or a transcendental object, of which our representations are the subjective effect in our minds. These effects are representations in our faculty of sensibility called sensations. Since representations are defined as an inner determination of our minds, sensations are only determinations in our minds or events in the subject.

These sensible representations take on relations through a structuring by pure forms of intuition (space and time) seated in us. All our sensible representations are necessarily represented in our forms of intuition because these forms are the condition of the possibility of our having any sensible representations. Our concepts of the understanding provide laws of the unity of experience that structure our sensible representations' connection in space and time. Representation in our forms of intuition and pure concepts of understanding is necessary because if things were not so represented they could not be represented (appear or be thought) by us at all. When these representations are connected and determined by empirical laws in our unified experience they become objects. These are objects, i.e., something that exists independently of the subject, only *within our experience* (empirically real but transcendentally ideal).

These representations and their structuring in relations and determinations in space and time according to laws of experience happens transcendentally. “Transcendentally” means that it happens outside of our experience and logically and metaphysically prior to it (*a priori*). This transcendental structuring of our representations makes our experience and the objects of within it possible. This is why our pure forms of intuition and pure concepts of understanding are the transcendental conditions of the possibility of experience. However, our lives and empirical consciousness begin with, and only take place within, this already structured and determined experience. Therefore, our empirical consciousness is always already within this structured experience. This means, from the empirical perspective of our empirical consciousness within our experience, these representations of our minds that are structured *a priori* by our minds are considered to be objects.

I have now explained why the transcendental idealist is not necessarily also an empirical idealist. The transcendental idealist can be an empirical realist and so accept a purely empirical standard of existence and reality for the objects of our representations. This new standard does not require our representations of objects to conform to things in themselves for their reality, but instead requires that they conform only to objects within our sensibility. Counterintuitively, the objects within our field of sensibility are made possible through the conformity of our representations of these objects to our cognition (The Copernican Revolution). This happens specifically through our sensible representations being “connected and determinable in these relations (in space and time) according to laws of the unity of experience”. The connection and determination in these relations refers to a structuring of our sensible representations according to the *a priori* structures seated in the subject, i.e., our pure forms of intuition and pure concepts

of the understanding. These *a priori* structures enable our sensations to be unified universally and necessarily in our experience and thereby to gain objective validity within our experience.

Chapter 3: The Direct Proof: Metaphysical and Transcendental Expositions

1. Introduction

The first two chapters set out my interpretation of transcendental idealism and empirical realism. Now I will show that Kant's arguments lead to my interpretation. This chapter examines Kant's direct proof of transcendental idealism in the Transcendental Aesthetic. In particular, I approach the direct proof with a view to defending it in the fifth chapter against a famous criticism: the Neglected Alternative. Confronting this criticism will focus my interpretation of the proof such that we can better understand the proof's conclusion and how it is established. A better understanding of the direct proof contributes to my larger aim of interpreting Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism.

The Neglected Alternative criticism accepts that Kant has established the transcendental ideality of space and time. As a result, the criticism also accepts Kant can deny that space and time are *only* transcendentally real. However, the problem is that Kant seems to have neglected an alternative originally proposed by H.A. Pistorius in 1786[8] and later famously formulated by Adolf Trendelenburg in 1862 (*Logische Untersuchungen*, Vo. 1, 163).[9] The "Neglected Alternative" claims that space and time are *both* transcendentally real and transcendentally ideal.

The suggestion is that space and time (or simply our representations of them) are ideal as produced by our faculty of sensibility, but they are also real as existing (or possibly existing) outside of our sensible intuition/experience. The criticism usually invokes Kant's noumenal ignorance thesis that we cannot claim any knowledge positively or negatively about things in

[8] Pistorius, Hermann Andreas "Erläuterungen über des Herrn Professor Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft von Joh. Schultze...," AdB 66, (1786): 92-123. English translation in Sassen, Brigitte (Ed.). *Kant's Early Critics: The Empiricist Critique of the Theoretical Philosophy* . Cambridge University Press, 2000, 93-106.

[9] For a very informative discussion of the "Neglected Alternative" see Specht, Andrew F., "Kant and the Neglected Alternative" (2014). *Dissertations - ALL*. 183.
https://surface.syr.edu/etd/183

themselves. This means Kant cannot deny space and time exist in themselves and so are transcendentally real. Thus, Kant cannot claim the transcendental ideality of space and time as the claim that space and time *only* exist in the subject as forms of our intuition, for they could also be transcendentally real.

The direct proof is given in the Transcendental Aesthetic through the metaphysical and transcendental expositions of the concepts of space and time and the conclusions drawn from these expositions. In this chapter, I examine the arguments in the metaphysical and transcendental expositions. I find Kant's argument that we must deny the transcendental reality of space and time is valid and is not restricted to denying that they are *only* transcendentally real.

In the direct proof, Kant is concerned with space and time only insofar as they appear to us in our representations and make up our experience. From this starting point, Kant discovers in the metaphysical and transcendental expositions of the concepts of space and time that our representations of space and time must originally be *a priori* intuitions. Then he deduces the conclusion that, since the space and time of our experience are nothing but our *a priori* intuitions and pure forms of our sensibility, they are nothing outside us (our experience and our sensibility), which is what it is to be transcendentally ideal.

2. Space and Time Are Understood As Representations From the Start

The most important point to grasp when interpreting the direct proof of the transcendental ideality of space and time is that from the start of the proof Kant understands space and time as our *representations.* Thus, in the direct proof, space and time are representations within which we represent to ourselves outer and inner objects. Failure to appreciate this point will lead to a misunderstanding of the proof and of transcendental idealism. This is a huge problem in the secondary literature.

From the first sentence of the First Section of the Transcendental Aesthetic we see support for this point: “by means of outer sense (a property of our mind) we represent to ourselves objects as outside us, and all as in space.” (A22/B37). Thus, from the very beginning of the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant is concerned with space as that in which we represent outer objects to ourselves by means of a property of our mind. This property of our mind is outer sense, and it is part of our faculty of sensibility (our mind). So space is something we represent outer objects to ourselves within.

From this it seems that space too is something we represent as part of the representation of outer objects by our mind (outer sense). This is because that within which our mind represents outer objects seems to also be a representation. How can our mind represent objects to ourselves as in space if it does not also represent space? Perhaps we immediately observe space and only represent outer objects in space even though they are not really in space. However, we will see that the former interpretation is correct.

After describing space, Kant says “time can no more be intuited externally than space can be intuited as something in us” (A23/B37). So space and time are “intuited”, and thus they are represented by our faculty of intuition and so are intuitions. Although, they are not intuited in the same way, i.e., externally vs. internally. Intuitions are representations (A32/B47). A representation is an inner determination of our mind (A34/B50). Intuitions are a particular species of representation defined by being “immediately related to the object and is singular” (A320/B377), and so they are “immediate representations, i.e., intuition” (B41)

The word “immediate” makes it seem as though intuitions are given to us without any mediation by representation. This is to take “immediate” to mean “non-representational”. However, since “immediate” modifies “representation” this cannot be the correct interpretation.

"Immediate" actually serves to differentiate an intuition from another type of representation, i.e., a concept, whose relation to an object "is mediate, by means of a mark, which can be common to several things" (A320/B377). So "immediate" designates a representation that represents the object in the representation directly in its unique, singularity. Conversely, "mediate" describes a representation that represents the objects *by means of* a mark common to many things and representations (A25/B40).

Both concepts and intuitions are a sub-species of representation under the species of representation called "cognition". Cognition is a representation that is "an objective perception", and a perception is a "representation with consciousness". So cognition (*cognitio*) is a conscious representation that attempts to represent an object.[10] In giving the taxonomy of the genus "representation" Kant claims a cognition is "either an intuition or a concept" (A320/B377). A cognition is immediately related to an object in intuition or mediately through a concept.[11] This taxonomy offers further proof that, since they are intuitions, space and time are considered in the direct proof as representations given to ourselves by our faculty of intuition.

Further support is given at the very beginning of the Transcendental Aesthetic. There Kant says that "in whatever way and through whatever means a cognition may relate to objects, that through which it relates immediately to them, and at which all thought as a means is directed

[10] Karl Schafer also thinks cognition requires representation, and so cognition, of an *object* and says "representations count as cognitions because they provide the subject with cognition of objects" (2022: 250). However, he fails to recognize the consequence that, since we do not have cognition of any object in itself, the empirical objects Kant claims we have empirical cognition of must be objects separate from objects in themselves. Moreover, in characterizing cognition as objective representation (Schafer 2022: 255) he does not differentiate, as I do, between cognition *qua* representation as conscious representation that *attempts* to represent an object, and cognition *qua* knowledge, which is the successful conscious representation of an object.

[11] One may be more familiar with Kant's talk of cognition as knowledge. This requires *both* intuition and concept together to achieve conformity of a representation (*cognitio*) to an object and so "yield a cognition"(A50/B74) and "only from their unification can cognition arise"(A51/B76). I take the difference to be that cognition *qua* representation is merely a conscious representation that attempts represent an object, but cognition *qua* knowledge is the successful conformity of our conscious representation of an object (*cognitio*) to the object (A156/B195). As Kant puts it, cognitions "consist in the determinate relation of given representations to an object" (B137).

as an end, is **intuition**." (A19/B33). This echoes what we saw in Kant's taxonomy of representations. An intuition is a means through which a cognition relates to an object. Yet, this relation is immediate, which seems to conflict with an intuition being a way or means through which a cognition relates to an object.

To overcome this apparent contradiction one should not read "immediate" as "without any mediation or means". Instead, one should read "immediate" here as modifying a means or "that through which", and so it is a type of means. This type of means is non-inferential. We see this when Kant says "we draw a distinction between what is cognized immediately and what is only inferred. That there are three angles in a figure enclosed by three straight lines is immediately cognized, but that these angles together equal two right angles is only inferred" (A303/B359). So intuition is defined by the oxymoron "immediate means", and so is not immediacy *simpliciter* as completely unmediated exposure to an object. Intuition is "immediate" in the sense of non-inferential.

We find further evidence that intuitions are a type of representation when Kant says:

> This, however, takes place only insofar as the object is given to us; but this in turn, <at least for us humans,> is possible only if it affects the mind in a certain way. The capacity (receptivity) to acquire representations through the way in which we are affected by objects is called **sensibility**. Objects are therefore **given** to us by means of sensibility, and it alone affords us **intuitions**. (A19/B33)

The immediate relation of cognition to an object happens only insofar as the object is given to us through the means of intuition. The object can only be given to us if it affects our mind in a certain way and affords us intuitions as a result. Only the faculty of our mind called sensibility can produce intuitions and it acquires only representations. So objects are only given to us through intuitions that are representations we acquire from our sensibility through the way it is affected by objects.

Thus, objects are not given to us directly with no mental or representational mediation. Instead, objects are only given to us through intuitions, which are representations afforded us by a representational faculty of our mind (sensibility) only insofar as it is affected. Therefore, our cognitions of objects through intuition are mediated both representationally and mentally.

The best explanation of the difference between the immediacy of intuition and the mediacy of concepts is given when Kant says:

> Since no representation pertains to the object immediately except intuition alone, a concept is thus never immediately related to an object, but is always related to some other representation of it (whether that be an intuition or itself already a concept). Judgment is therefore a mediate cognition of an object, hence the representation of a representation of it. (A68/B93)

Kant confirms intuitions are a kind of representation and are the only ones that relate to the object immediately. A concept does not relate immediately to an object because it always first relates to another representation of the object: an intuition or another concept. Kant states a mediate cognition of an object means that it is a representation of a representation. This implies an intuition is an immediate representation because it is not a representation of another representation, and not because it relates to an object non-representationally or non-mentally. An intuition is immediate because it does not relate to an object through another representation. On the other hand, concepts are mediate representations because they relate to an object through another representation and so are a representation of a representation.

Kant also speaks this way when he says ”sensible intuition is either pure intuition (space and time) or empirical intuition of that which, through sensation, is immediately represented as real in space and time” (B146-7). Kant further says “**things in space** and **time**, however, are only given insofar as they are perceptions (representations accompanied with sensation), hence through empirical representation” (B147). Thus, Kant understands empirical intuition

oxymoronically as “immediately represented” and so the immediacy referred to is not non-representational. Furthermore, all things in space and time are only given insofar as they are perceptions which are a type of representation with sensation that is also called empirical representation. Therefore, no things in space and time are given to us without being represented. In addition, our access to any object is representational since intuition is required for any object to be given to us and intuition only gives us objects as representations in space and time.

In conclusion, from the beginning of the direct proof space and time are understood as intuitions of our mind and thus as representations. The goal of the direct proof is to find out whether that is all they are. As representations, space and time could originate as pure intuitions produced by our mind (mere representations), or they could be something in themselves beyond our intuition (entities or determinations of entities in themselves) that we represent to ourselves through intuition.

3. What Kant Aims to Prove in The Direct Proof About the Representations Of Space and Time

In the last section, we learned that space and time are understood by Kant from the beginning of the direct proof as our representations. They are representations of that within which outer and inner objects are represented by our mind. However, this does not mean space and time are understood from the start of the direct proof as *nothing but* representations of our mind. On the contrary, this is what the direct proof aims to prove. Assuming this from the start would make the direct proof circular. Space and time are understood from the beginning as representations and we are to find out what these representations are of: (1) something independent of us or (2) something that comes only from our mind (or both, i.e., the neglected alternative).

Space and time can be representations without being *mere* representations because representations are special things. They are themselves something, i.e., determinations of our mind, but they are also representations *of* something. At issue is what the representations of space and time are *of*, and there are two possibilities available: (1) something beyond the representation or (2) nothing beyond the representation. In the first case, the representation represents something that exists beyond it, e.g. a painting of Wayne Gretzky. In the second case, the representation represents something that exists only in representation, e.g., a painting of a unicorn.

Kant's question about what space and time are is about whether our representations of space and time represent something beyond our representations of them or whether they represent something that only exists in representation. Representations are about something that exists beyond our representations and outside of us (in the transcendental sense) if they correspond to entities or properties in themselves. Representations are mere representations if what is represented in them does not correspond to anything that exists outside our mind (in the transcendental sense), but exists only in representation.

The exact question put by Kant is:

> Now what are space and time? Are they actual entities? Are they only determinations or relations of things, yet ones that would pertain to them even if they were not intuited, or are they relations that only attach to the form of intuition alone, and thus to the subjective constitution of our mind, without which these predicates could not be ascribed to any thing at all? (A23/B37-8)

Kant tries to answer these questions by expounding the concepts of space and time. Through this exposition, Kant wants to answer whether our intuitions of space and time are representations of entities or determinations of entities that exist outside our sensibility, or if our intuitions of space

and time only represent relations that only attach to the subjective constitution of our mind and nothing beyond it (mere representations). Kant concludes in favor of the latter.

Under the latter scenario, our faculty of intuition, thus our mind, is solely responsible for all of our representations of space and time. This includes all intuitions of space and time that make up our experience. Thus, the space and time we intuit is nothing outside of our field of sensibility and experience. This explains why our space and time exist only within our experience and not in themselves.

Moreover, as forms of our intuition, space and time are necessary for any intuitive representation and so the necessary conditions for any experience. This is because intuition is necessary for empirical cognition of objects, i.e., experience. So our experience must conform universally to our forms of intuition as the necessary conditions of its possibility. This explains how we can have synthetic *a priori* (necessary, universal, and prior to perception) cognition of space and time.

In short, our forms of intuition alone put space and time into the empirical world thus making experience possible.[12] To prove this, Kant exposes our concepts of space and time. Exposition is an analytic exercise of representing the marks contained in a concept. An exposition is metaphysical when it shows the concept to be given *a priori*. Through this process we find that our representations of space and time are originally not concepts but intuitions. So our concepts of space and time are originally derived from our representations of space and time as *a priori* intuitions.

4. The Direct Proof of Transcendental Idealism

[12] Supporting this point, Kant says when talking about the concept of cause and effect "the case is the same here as with other pure *a priori* representations (e.g., space and time) that we can extract as clear concepts from experience only because we have put them into experience, and experience is hence first brought about through them" (A196/B241).

a. The Metaphysical Exposition of The Concept of Space

By looking closely at the arguments of the metaphysical exposition of space and time, we find support for interpreting space and time as only our representations. Through exposing essential marks in our concepts of space and time we see they must originally be *a priori* intuitions. Our representations of space and time must be universal and necessary representations we have prior to perception that are not empirical, i.e., *a priori*. Our representations of space and time as infinitely given, single, unique wholes must originally be intuitions and not concepts. Establishing space and time are *a priori* intuitions is important for refuting the Neglected Alternative because this means space and time must be single, unique wholes that come from our mind, i.e., only transcendentally ideal.

The metaphysical exposition of space looks at the concept of space to see what belongs to the concept and shows it as given *a priori*. This involves unpacking what is contained in our concept of space without considering our experience or perception of space. Thus, we gain an analytic cognition of space. Through this exposition Kant determines what type of representation our representation of space is. The first two arguments determine whether space is an *a priori* or *a posteriori* representation. The third and fourth arguments determine whether space is originally a concept or intuition.

i. First Argument of the Metaphysical Exposition of Space

The first argument of the metaphysical exposition of space is positive by proceeding from what we represent to ourselves: sensation related to something that is in a different place from us and other objects. Thus, Kant starts from the fact that we have outer experience. Kant then asks what is logically prior: our representation of space or our representations of sensations and outer

appearances. He concludes that an *a priori* representation of space is first necessary to make representations of outer appearances possible.

Ultimate Conclusion: "Space is not an empirical concept that has been drawn from outer experiences"

First Premise (Hidden): We have outer experience, a necessary condition of which is the representation of certain sensations as related to something outside us in another place from ourselves and from each other. In short, we experience outer appearances and their relations. "By means of outer sense (a property of our mind) we represent to ourselves objects as outside us, and all as in space" (A22/B37).

Second premise: "For in order for certain sensations to be related to something outside me (i.e., to something in another place in space from that in which I find myself), thus in order for me to represent them as outside <and next to> one another, thus not merely as different but as in different places the representation of space must already be their ground."

Third premise (First conclusion): "Thus the representation of space cannot be obtained from the relations of outer appearance through experience, but this outer experience is itself first possible only through this representation" (A23/B38)

The argument assumes we have outer experience that consists of representing outer appearances in relations of different places in space. From this Kant deduces that space is not an empirical concept that we get from outer experience. This is because the representation of space makes the representation of sensations and outer appearances in outer relations possible, i.e., makes outer experience possible. Thus, our representation of space cannot be obtained from outer experience, but, as its ground of representation, our representation of space must precede and make possible outer experience.

Of particular note, the argument is all about our representations. It proceeds from our representations, reasons about our representations and representational capacities, and draws conclusions about our representations. Firstly, Kant deals only with our representation of space and not space in itself. Kant says "*the representation of space* must already be their ground", "*the representation of space* cannot be obtained from the relations of outer appearance through experience", and "this outer experience is itself first possible only through *this representation*". Kant concludes our representation of space, and not space in itself, is the condition of the possibility of outer experience. Moreover, this argument deals with what is required for outer experience as the representation of outer appearances in relations of place. The argument establishes that the most fundamental outer representation is space and not outer appearances in outer relations. Finally, Kant draws this conclusion based on which representation is representationally prior to enable our outer representations.

ii. Second Argument for the Apriority of the Representation of Space

The second argument is negative because it examines what is logically possible for us to *cease* to represent. What can we and what can we not represent in outer sense as lacking? Through this thought experiment, Kant is trying to determine what is most representationally basic: what is necessary for any representation in outer sense. We find that we cannot represent objects without space, but we can represent space without objects.

Ultimate conclusion: "Space is a necessary representation, *a priori*, that is the ground of all outer intuitions."

Hidden premise or assumption: We are talking only about representations of our outer sense: outer intuitions, outer appearances, and our representation of space.

First Premise: “One can never represent that there is no space” (when using outer sense to represent outer intuitions or outer appearances)

Second Premise: “one can very well think that there are no objects to be encountered in it”

Third Premise (first conclusion): “it is therefore to be regarded as the condition of the possibility of appearances, not as a determination depending on them”

Restatement of ultimate conclusion: “and is an *a priori* representation that necessarily grounds outer appearances” (A24/B38-9)

Kant is trying to prove that space is an *a priori* representation by proving it is a necessary representation. Kant argues our representation of space is necessary as the ground of all outer intuitions and outer appearances (both are also representations). So in exposing the concept of space, Kant is coming to conclusions about space *qua* representation as to what type of representation it is.

This argument makes sense only if, as I suggest, Kant is considering space as our representation. From the beginning of the Aesthetic, space is a representation within which we represent objects to ourselves as outside of us using outer sense (a property of our mind) (A23/B37). So we have reason to assume, as a hidden premise, a conception of space as our representation. Moreover, Kant is not drawing conclusions about space in general or absolute space in itself in this argument. Concluding that space is a necessary representation from how we can represent space does not follow from considering space as space in itself or in general. What we can or cannot represent has no bearing on a possible space in itself, but it does have bearing on our representation and experience of space.

Kant’s first step in proving that space is a necessary *a priori* representation is to show that it is the necessary ground of all outer intuitions and outer appearances. This means the

representation of space is representationally more basic than outer appearances in representations of outer sense. Kant's first premise to establish this is that one can never represent that there is no space, i.e., outer intuitions without space is not a possible representation in our outer sense. On this basis, Kant concludes that our representation of space is given necessarily before outer perceptions as the condition of their possible representation.

Kant is not arguing from what we can represent in general but only from what we can represent in outer sense. We know this because in thought we can represent that there is no space. This is the concept of a singularity or a point in geometry. Kant also allows for empirical objects that are not in space but only in time (inner sense), i.e., our empirical self as inner empirical object (A373). Finally, Kant entertains objects of possible thought that are not in space: our soul and God. We cannot cognize them but they are possible thoughts and so representable.

Kant's second premise is that we can represent in thought that there are no objects to be encountered in space (outer sense). We cannot think outer intuition and appearance without space, but we can think space empty of appearances. So, space is not derived from outer appearances, but outer appearances must be represented in a representation of space that is already given (*a priori*). Thus, space is a representation that must be given prior to other outer representations as the necessary condition of representing them in outer sense.

Seemingly contradicting this argument is that Kant does not allow empty space to be empirically intuited. For space to be an outer empirical intuition, and so empirically real, there must be appearances in it that determine it.[13] So Kant cannot be claiming in this argument that

[13] "Thus things, as appearance, do determine space, i.e., among its possible predicates (magnitude and relation) they make it the case that this or that one belongs to reality; but space, as something subsisting in itself, cannot conversely determine the reality of things in regard to magnitude and shape because it is nothing real in itself" (A431/B459)" and "empirical intuition is not put together out of appearances and space (out of perception and empty intuition)…if one would posit one of these two elements outside the other (space outside of all appearances), then from this there would arise all sort of empty determinations of outer intuition, which, however, are not possible perceptions" (A429/B457)

we can empirically intuit empty space. Instead, Kant establishes that we must have a pure formal representation of space prior to perception (*a priori*) within which we represent appearances that together enable the perception, empirical intuition, and empirical reality of space and outer appearances. In short, space is first a formal structure in our mind and only once we have sensation and represent appearances in it can we perceive it as something real in our experience.

From these premises Kant draws his first conclusion that the representation of space is the condition of the possibility of outer appearances and not dependent on them. This means in order to have outer sense we need to start with a formal representation of a space without objects in it, and any representation of outer appearances and outer intuition in outer sense must be represented in space to be represented at all. Thus, space is a necessary representation for outer appearances and outer intuition that we must have prior to them. This means space cannot be a representation that is a determination depending on appearances. Therefore, Kant draws his ultimate conclusion that space is an *a priori* and necessary representation that grounds outer appearances and outer intuitions.

iii. The General Conclusion of the First Two Arguments:

Kant concludes the representation of space is not *a posteriori* but is *a priori.* Space is an *a priori* representation because it is prior to perception due to the fact that it makes the representation of outer appearances in outer relations of place possible. This means space makes outer experience possible and cannot be drawn from experience. In making these arguments, Kant reasons about our representation of space and, based on what we are able to represent, he draws conclusions about our representation of space. Thus, we have further support that Kant is considering space throughout the direct proof as our representation of space.

Establishing the *a priority* of our representation of space shows that our representation of space cannot be about a property or determination of things in themselves or an actual entity. If our representation of space were of something in itself then we could only get it empirically through perception of this thing (*a posteriori)* and not before perception of it (*a priori*). Thus, the *a priority* of our representation of space means it must come from our mind prior to perception of anything in itself. This establishes the transcendental ideality of our intuition of space, which is also the space of our experience.

iv. Third Argument: First argument for the Representation of Space as Intuition and not Concept

This is the first of two arguments in the metaphysical exposition of space that our representation of space is not originally a concept but a pure intuition.

Conclusion: "Space is not a discursive or, as is said, general concept of relations of things in general, but a pure intuition."

First premise: For, first, one can only represent a single space, and if one speaks of many spaces, one understands by that only parts of one and the same unique space"

Second premise: "And these parts cannot as it were precede the single all-encompassing space as its components (from which its composition would be possible), but rather are only thought **in it**."

Third premise (first conclusion): "It is essentially single; the manifold in it, thus also the general concept of spaces in general, rests merely on limitations."

Ultimate Conclusion Restated: "From this it follows that in respect to it an *a priori* intuition (which is not empirical) grounds all concepts of it." (A24-5/B39)

The first premise concerns what we can represent due to our representational capacities. We can only represent a single space, and, although we speak of many individual spaces, they are only part of one and the same unique space. We do not originally represent space as many separate spaces. Since Kant is arguing from what we can represent, this argument can only reason and draw conclusions about our representation of space. It would not make sense for Kant to draw conclusions about space in itself from what we can represent. As one would expect from this, the only alternatives Kant considers as to what space can be are representations: a pure intuition or a general concept about general relations.

We originally represent space as a single, unique whole whose parts are merely limitations. These properties establish that our original representation of space must be an intuition and not a concept. This also means our concept of space is about a single, unique thing and so is a specific and not a general concept. We will see this point is important for proving the transcendental ideality of space and refuting the Neglected Alternative.

The second premise denies that the parts of space are primary and precede the single all-encompassing space as its components. Instead, these spaces are only thought in a single space as its limitations. Kant bases this premise on how we represent space, and this he gets from examining what is contained in our concept of space. If our concept of space were a general concept of spaces in general we would construct our representation of a single space from smaller spaces. Supporting these points, the third premise claims the space our concept is about is essentially single. We only think the manifold of many spaces in it. This is opposed to forming a general concept of spaces in general in which space is built up from adding together many spaces, in which case it would not be essentially single.

From these premises Kant concludes that space is an *a priori* intuition that grounds all our concepts of it. The *a priority* of our representation of space, and so it not being empirical, was already established in the previous 2 arguments. Its intuitivity was argued for here. The content of our concept of space is the reason it cannot be a general concept of the relations of things but only a concept grounded on an intuition. Our concept of space is about an essentially single, unique whole that contains parts only as its limitations. Only an intuition can originally represent something that is essentially single and unique.

Concepts do not originally represent what is unique and single. So their parts are not thought as limitations of an essentially single whole, but they build wholes from composites through the synthesis of a manifold of parts. Kant argues from how we originally represent space and how we can think about this representation. Kant concludes space is an intuition, i.e., a type of representation, and the only other thing he considers space could be is a concept, i.e., another type of representation. This means the space under consideration in this argument is a representation of space and specifically the essentially single, unique space of our representation. This line of reasoning from what we are able to represent and what is contained in our representation of space does not and cannot lead to conclusions about space in itself and in general. Thus, space is taken up in this argument insofar as it is our representation and not as absolute space in itself.

v. Fourth Argument: *Second Argument That Our Original Representation of Space Is A Pure Intuition and not a Concept*

First Premise: "Space is represented as an infinite **given** magnitude."

Second Premise: "Now one must, to be sure, think of every concept as a representation that is contained in an infinite set of different possible representations (as their common mark), which thus contains these **under itself**;"

Third Premise: "but no concept, as such, can be thought as if it contained an infinite set of representations **within itself**"

Fourth Premise: "Nevertheless space is so thought (for all the parts of space, even to infinity, are simultaneous).

Conclusion: "Therefore the original representation of space is an ***a priori*** **intuition**, not **a concept**" (B39-B40)

The first premise concerns how space is represented by us. So Kant reasons from a starting premise of how space is represented not how space is absolutely or independently of being represented. Space is represented as an infinite magnitude that is given to us with all its parts simultaneously.

The second premise makes a claim about the nature of concepts as representations. Concepts can only be contained in an infinite set of different possible representations as their common mark. Thus, a concept is said to contain these different possible representations *under itself*. An example is the concept of green, which is contained in an infinite set of possible representations of green things (grass, leaves, traffic lights, etc.). Yet, we are not given any individual green thing by the concept green.

The third premise denies that a concept can contain an infinite set of representations *within itself*. For example, the concept of green does not contain an infinite set of representations of green things in itself, but instead it is contained in an infinite set of different possible representations of green things. Thus, the concept of green contains green things *under itself* as if

these separate things were all filed under the heading "green things". Kant derives this premise from how a concept can be thought (represented), thus analytically exposing what is contained in the concept of a concept.

The fourth premise has to do with how space is thought by us. Space is so thought that it contains within itself all its parts to infinity as given simultaneously. Unlike a concept that is dispersed as a common mark in separate representations, space contains the representations it has to do with within its single, unique self. Thus, from the way our concept represents space, Kant concludes that our original representation of space is not a concept but an *a priori* intuition.

Importantly, this argument does not establish anything about absolute space in itself but only about what our original representation of space must be. This conclusion is derived from how we represent space. Kant reasons our representation of space could not originally be a concept because the way concepts represent things does not match our representation of space. Instead, our representation of space must be an intuition because the way intuitions represent things is the only way our representation of space is possible. This leads to a conclusion not about space in general, but about what our original *representation* of space must be: an *a priori* intuition. Therefore, in this argument Kant considers space as our representation of space and tries to determine what type of representation it must originally be for us. Supporting this point, is that in this argument Kant only considers whether space is an intuition or a concept, which are two types of representations.

b. The Transcendental Exposition of the Concept of Space

The transcendental exposition consists of an explanation of our concept of space as a principle "from which insight into the possibility of other synthetic *a priori* cognitions can be gained" (B40). To achieve this, Kant requires that "1) such cognitions actually flow from the given

concept and 2) these cognitions are only possible under the presupposition of a given way of explaining this concept" (B40)

Kant fulfills criteria 1) by saying "geometry is a science that determines the properties of space synthetically and yet *a priori*". Thus, Kant assumes we have synthetic *a priori* cognitions of space (in geometry). Kant then asks "what then must the representation of space be for such a cognition of it to be possible?". This representation of space can only be the one we have. Thus this argument shows these geometrical cognitions flow from our representation of space. Kant fulfills criteria 2 by showing that these geometrical cognitions are only possible under the presupposition of space as an a *priori* intuition that has its seat merely in the subject. The transcendental exposition consists of three arguments.

i. Argument that Our Representation of Space Must Originally Be An Intuition

Conclusion: "It must originally be intuition" (same conclusion as arguments 3 and 4 of the metaphysical exposition)

First premise: "for from a mere concept no propositions can be drawn that go beyond the concept"

Second premise: "which, however, happens in geometry (introduction V)" (B40-1)

Introduction V says at B16 that the principles of pure geometry are not analytic but synthetic because in geometry we draw propositions that go beyond the concept. Thus, our synthetic cognition of space in geometry means our representation of space must originally be an intuition and not a concept.

ii. Argument that Our Representation of Space Must Be A Priori Thus a Pure Intuition

First Conclusion: "but this intuition must be encountered in us *a priori*, i.e., prior to all perception of an object"

Second conclusion: "thus it must be pure, not empirical intuition."

First premise (supporting first conclusion and second conclusion): "For geometrical propositions are all apodictic, i.e., combined with consciousness of their necessity"

Second premise (supporting second conclusion): "Such propositions cannot be empirical or judgments of experience, nor inferred from them"

Third premise (Supporting first conclusion): (Introduction II) "if a proposition is thought along with its necessity, it is an *a priori* judgment"

Fourth premise (supporting second premise): "experience teaches us that something is constituted thus and so, but not that it could not be otherwise" (B41) so apodictic necessary propositions must be *a priori* judgments and not empirical or of experience.

Kant's argument starts from the fact that geometrical propositions are apodictic necessary, which is only possible for *a priori* and not for empirical or *a posteriori* cognition. This is because judgments of experience cannot be necessary, but are always capable of being otherwise. So the intuition of space that geometrical propositions are about must be *a priori*. Moreover, this intuition must be given to us prior to all perception of an object because this is what it means to be *a priori*.

iii. Argument That the Representation of Space Must be Seated Merely in the Subject as its Form of Outer Sense

First premise: "Now how can an outer intuition inhabit the mind that precedes the objects themselves,

Second premise: "and in which the concept of the latter can be determined *a priori*?"

First Conclusion: "Obviously, not otherwise than insofar as it has its seat merely in the subject, as its formal constitution for being affected by objects and thereby acquiring **immediate representation**, i.e., **intuition**, of them"

Second Conclusion: "Thus only as the form of outer **sense** in general" (B41)

Kant begins this argument by wondering what must be the case for our representation of space to originally be an *a priori* intuition, as has already been established. How is it possible for our representation of space to be an outer intuition that inhabits the mind before we perceive the objects and that also determines the concept of the objects universally, necessarily, and before we perceive them? Kant thinks the only explanation is if our representation of space has its seat merely in the subject as the formal constitution for our being affected by objects and acquiring intuitions of them.

Being seated merely in the subject explains the *a priority* of our representation of space. Only if our representation of space comes from our mind alone can we have cognition of it prior to the perception of objects. Moreover, only if our representation of space is the form necessary for acquiring outer intuitions of objects can it determine them universally and necessarily. As an outer intuition, our representation of space must be seated in our faculty of sensibility and not understanding. Also, since our intuition of space determines *a priori* the concepts of objects in their *formal* outer relations, space must be part of our formal constitution for being affected by objects as the form of outer sense.

This argument fulfills the second criterion for a transcendental exposition of the concept of space. Taking our representation of space as an *a priori* intuition that is seated merely in the subject as the form of our outer sense is the only explanation of how our synthetic *a priori*

knowledge in geometry is possible. As a result, Kant concludes "thus our explanation alone makes the possibility of geometry as a synthetic *a priori* cognition comprehensible."

This means our concept of space is specific and refers only to the single, unique form of our intuition that we have prior to perception. As a result, our concept of space cannot be about and so be valid of something that is not seated in the subject's faculty of intuition. An intuition is a special representation that represents an object or determination in its individual particularity. So as an *a priori* intuition, our representation of space gives us the specific objective space that makes up our world of experience, while coming from our mind alone.

For Kant, the space of my form of intuition seated in my mind is the same space that makes up my concrete experience. The space I traverse when I walk down the street to the grocery store comes from my mind. Thus, our concept of space cannot be valid of anything outside the subject but is only valid of this formal intuition that originates in our mind and goes on to structure our objective empirical world. Kant draws similar conclusions about time in the transcendental exposition of time, which involves the concept of motion or alteration of the same object at B48/49. So, for Kant, our forms of intuition (space and time) are not simply representations in our heads but also constitute the world of sense and experience that we live in (as real structures of relations in which objects of sense and experience exist).

Chapter 4: Direct Proof Conclusions

1. Conclusions from the Above Concepts

Kant draws conclusions from the metaphysical and transcendental expositions of the concept of space. Kant then explains how these conclusions follow from the metaphysical and transcendental expositions of the concept of space. These conclusions help explain the meaning of Kant's doctrine of the transcendental ideality of space and time.

a. Conclusion a)

Conclusion: "*a*) Space represents no property at all of any things in themselves nor any relation of them to each other, i.e., no determination of them that attaches to objects themselves and that would remain even if one were to abstract from all subjective conditions of intuition"

Premise: "For neither absolute nor relative determinations can be intuited prior to the existence of the things to which they pertain, thus be intuited *a priori*" (A26/B42)[14, 15]

Right before giving the metaphysical exposition of space, Kant entertained three possibilities of what space could be. This conclusion denies the possibility that space represents a property of things in themselves or "a determination or relation of things, yet ones that would pertain to them

[14] Guyer takes Kant to be denying that space is a genuine property of any object at all (1987: 362). However, this cannot be what Kant means. Kant's conclusion is limited to the claim that space represents no property/determination *of things in themselves*. To lead to this conclusion, in this premise Kant must be denying that we can intuit any relative or absolute determination of any *thing in itself* prior to its existence. Moreover, Kant says in the next paragraph that space is "a pure intuition, in which all objects must be determined" (A26/B42), and on the following page he says of space "this predicate is attributed to things only insofar as they appear to us, i.e., are objects of sensibility" (A27/B43). Clearly, Kant takes space to be a property/determination of objects of outer sense.

[15] This passage provides very good proof that Kant thinks of appearances (objects of our experience) as metaphysically distinct things from things in themselves. Kant proves that we have an *a priori* intuitions of space and time and they pertain to a class of objects. This passage makes clear that this means we intuit space and time prior to the *existence* of the things to which they pertain. (Kant also says to enable an *a priori* intuition there must be a way for "my intuition to precede the actuality of the object" (*Prolegomena*: AA 4: 282)).

Kant argues that determinations of objects in themselves cannot be so intuited. So the things to which space and time pertain cannot be things in themselves. This means that the things to which space and time pertain are things that exist in a different way from things in themselves. Thus, objects of experience have a different existence and objectivity from things in themselves, even if there is a sense in which they are conceptually same object. Objects of experience/appearance conform to our representations of space and time because they come to exist as objects from out of our representations of space and time. I will elaborate on this point in Chapter 10.

even if they were not intuited" (A23/B37). In short, space is not a property of things in themselves, which means it does not attach to them as objects abstracted from all subjective conditions of our intuition.

Of particular note, Kant does not say space *is not* a property at all of any things in themselves but says "space *represents* no property at all of any things in themselves". This fits with my interpretation that Kant is only concerned with *our representation of space* as that within which we represent outer objects to ourselves using the property of our mind of outer sense.[16] Kant is not discussing space insofar as we do not represent it. Instead, Kant is only talking about what our representation of space represents. Kant wants to determine whether our space is a representation of something outside of our sensibility, as a property or an entity that pertains to things in themselves, or whether it is merely a representation our subjective intuition produces and so represents nothing outside of our sensibility. Kant denies the first two options and concludes in favor of the latter.

Kant draws this conclusion because you cannot intuit absolute or relative determinations *of things in themselves* prior to the existence of the things to which they pertain, i.e., *a priori*. From the metaphysical and transcendental expositions of the concept of space, we know that our representations of space are *a priori* intuitions. Thus, we have an intuition of space prior to the

[16] This reveals Guyer's mistake in interpreting this passage and argument. Guyer takes Kant's conclusion here to be about space in general and so for Kant to be denying spatiality in general of all things in themselves. Guyer thinks Kant "infers that spatiotemporality is *merely* the form of our sensibility from the preceding argument that it is not a property of things in themselves" (Guyer 2017: 79, see also 1987: 355). In fact, Kant's conclusions in the Aesthetic are specifically about our space and time as that in which we represent empirical objects, and not about what properties things in themselves might or might not have. Kant takes the *a priori* intuitions we have of our space and time as incompatible with their being entities or properties of things in themselves because we can only have *a posteriori* intuition of things in themselves and their properties. Kant concludes from the fact of our *a priori* intuition of them that the specific, unique wholes of the space and time of our representations of empirical objects must be come from our mind as merely the form of our sensibility.

existence of the things to which they pertain. Therefore, our space cannot be a representation of an entity or determinations of things in themselves.

This suggests that the objects of our intuition exist only after we represent them in intuition. Otherwise, we could not have an intuition of their objective determinations prior to their existence and our perception of them, i.e., *a priori*. Yet, Kant has just proven we have this of their spatial properties. So objects of our intuition in space have a different existence from the object as thing in itself. If there were no difference in their existence and objectivity then Kant would be arguing that space does not pertain to any objects whatsoever. However, Kant only specifies that space does not pertain to any things in themselves. Conversely, Kant thinks we have synthetic *a priori* cognition of space in geometry that pertains to objects of outer intuition. Thus, we must conclude there are two different ways of existence and objectivity between objects as things in themselves and as appearances.

b. Conclusion b)

Kant then talks about space as applying to outer appearance by saying:

Conclusion: "*b*) Space is nothing other than merely the form of all appearances of outer sense, i.e., the subjective condition of sensibility, under which alone outer intuition is possible for us"

First Premise: "Now since the receptivity of the subject to be affected by objects necessarily precedes all intuitions of these objects, it can be understood how the form of all appearances can be given in the mind prior to all actual perceptions, *a priori*,"

Second Premise: "and how as a pure intuition, in which all objects must be determined, it can contain principles of their relations prior to all experience" (A26/B42)

Kant concludes that space is the form of all appearances of outer sense. This means space is merely the subjective condition of our sensibility under which alone outer intuition is possible

for us. This conclusion answers Kant's question at A23/B37 as to what space is. Kant's conclusion is a restatement of option three given there: "relations that only attach to the form of intuition alone, and thus to the subjective constitution of our mind, without which these predicates could not be ascribed to any thing at all" (A23/B37-8). Kant's conclusion also denies that space is something other than the form of all appearances of our outer sense and a subjective condition of our sensibility. Thus, Kant denies the other two options given at A23/B37 that space is a thing in itself or a relation or determination of things in themselves.

Conclusion a) was limited to what space "represents", but now the claim is made about what space is and is not. The question arises: "with what right can Kant claim space is limited to our sensibility, thus making it purely subjective?" How can Kant deny space is a thing in itself or a determination of things in themselves? These are important questions that will only be fully answered in the next chapter. The short answer is that by "space" Kant is only referring to the space of our representations, as is consistent with conclusion a) and the metaphysical and transcendental expositions.

Kant provides two premises supporting conclusion b). The first premise is the conclusion of arguments 1) and 2) of the metaphysical exposition of the concept of space: space is an *a priori* representation that necessarily grounds outer appearances. We see in the transcendental exposition that as given *a priori*, space is given prior to all actual perception and applied universally and necessarily to outer appearances (B41). The second premise states we have principles of the formal relations of all objects in space prior to all experience.

These possibilities can be explained only if space is seated merely in the subject as its pure form for being affected by objects. Thus, only if space is merely the subjective condition of our sensibility under which alone all outer intuition is possible. We can cognize the spatial

determinations of outer objects prior to perception of them only if space is a subjective formal condition of our sensibility because the receptivity of the human subject to be affected by objects necessarily precedes all intuition of these objects. In short, our faculty of intuition as part of our mind necessarily precedes and enables all perceptions. Thus, we can comprehend how we can have synthetic and necessary cognition of space and objects in space prior to all perception and experience.

Therefore, our *a priori*, i.e., universal, necessary, and prior to perception, intuition of space and synthetic cognition in geometry mean space must be a necessary subjective condition of our faculty of intuition. Space is a subjective way our faculty of sensibility must represent objects to represent them to ourselves as outer. Specifically, space is the formal constitution of our faculty of sensibility and also a pure a *priori* formal intuition that lies in our mind prior to our perception and experience of objects (A20/B34)

c. Further Conclusion Drawn From Conclusions a) and b)

Conclusion: "We can accordingly speak of space, extended beings, and so on, only from the human standpoint."

First Premise: "If we depart from the subjective condition under which alone we can acquire outer intuition, namely that through which we may be affected by objects, then the representation of space signifies nothing at all."

Second Premise: "This predicate is attributed to things only insofar as they appear to us, i.e., are objects of sensibility" (A26/B42)

Kant's ultimate conclusion here is that we are limited to the human standpoint when speaking about space, extended beings, and everything in outer intuition. Our claims about these things are only valid for us. This is because our representation of space is only the form of our

intuition and so only a subjective condition of our sensibility. All space for us is what we represent as space, which has been proven to be only a subjective form of our way of sensible representation. Thus, the predicate of space can be attributed to things by us only insofar as they appear to us as objects under our conditions of sensibility. However, if we depart from our sensibility then we depart from its necessary form of space, which is all space is for us, and so our representation of space signifies (applies to) nothing at all.

Third Premise (supporting the first premise): "Since we cannot make the special conditions of sensibility into conditions of the possibility of things, but only their appearances, we can well say that space comprehends all things that may appear to us externally, but not all things in themselves, whether they be intuited or not, or by whatever subject they may be intuited" (A27/B43).

The third premise spells out why our representation of space cannot be attributed to things in themselves. This is because our representation of space has been established as essentially a special condition of our sensibility. This means our representation of space can only apply to appearances we intuit using our sensibility and not to things in themselves that exist and have their properties independently of our sensibility. One may disagree with Kant and claim space can be thought of things in themselves. Yet, Kant's argument is valid because he considers space insofar as we represent it in intuition and then argues that this representation can only be a special condition of our sensibility as its necessary form. As a result, we can only speak of the space we intuit and attribute it to things as external appearances but not as things in themselves that do not appear to us in sensibility.

Fourth Premise (supporting the third premise): "For we cannot judge at all whether the intuitions of other thinking beings are bound to the same conditions that limit our intuition and that are universally valid for us" (A26-7/B42-3).

This premise further supports the claim that we cannot speak outside the human standpoint about space or even about the intuitions of other beings. The reason is we cannot have knowledge of their special conditions of intuition. Importantly, Kant asserts that the conditions that limit our intuition, specifically space, are *universally valid for us*. So Kant has a conception of universal validity that is only for humans, which seems contradictory. How can something be valid universally and only for us? Understanding the answer to this question is essential to understanding Kant's transcendental idealism and empirical realism.

The answer, argued for in the next section, is that Kant accepts something as universal when it applies to everything within a particular domain or field of validity. One important domain or field of validity, for Kant, is the empirical world or world of sense. This world consists of the possible experience of humans. Within this world, space (and time) are universally valid, thus real. Conversely, outside the field of validity of our sensibility and possible experience (in the transcendental field) our representation of space is not valid and so is ideal (a contradictory representation of our mind with no application to objects).

d. "Universal Validity For Us" as a Type Of Objective Validity and Reality compatible with Transcendental Ideality, i.e., Conclusions of the Empirical Reality of Space

Kant now embarks on an argument for the empirical reality of space. He also explains the transcendental ideality of space already proven above, i.e., that our representation of space is nothing apart from our sensibility.

First premise: "If we add the limitation of a judgment to the concept of the subject, then the judgment is unconditionally valid"

Second premise: "The proposition: 'All things are next to one another in space,' is valid under the limitation that these things be taken as objects of our sensible intuition."

Third premise: "If here I add the condition to the concept and say 'All things, as outer intuitions, are next to one another in space,' then this rule is valid universally and without limitation."

Conclusion: "Our expositions accordingly teach the reality (i.e., objective validity) of space in regard to everything that can come before us externally as an object"

Second Conclusion: "but at the same time the ideality of space in regard to things when they are considered in themselves through reason, i.e., without taking account of the constitution of our sensibility." (A27-A28/B43-4)

This is a puzzling argument. Kant seems to start talking about the unconditional validity of judgments out of nowhere. Kant proposes the principle of validity that we can make a limited judgment unconditionally valid if we add the limitation to the concept of the subject. Then Kant applies this principle to what we have learned about space.

The transcendental realist claims all things are next to one another in space, but we learned this claim is only valid under the limitation that these things be taken as objects of our outer intuition. So, this is a limited judgment that is not universally and unconditionally valid. If we apply Kant's principle of validity to this judgment, by adding the condition to the concept, then we can say all things as outer intuitions are next to one another in space. According to Kant, this provides us with a judgment that is universally valid without limitation and so unconditionally valid.

One may wonder why Kant's principle makes this judgment unconditionally or universally valid. There is still a limitation involved in the judgment, only it applies to the subject instead of the judgment as a whole. Kant thinks his principle allows the judgment to be universally and unconditionally valid because, although we have narrowed the scope of the subject in the judgment, the judgment itself is now without limitation. How is this relevant to the direct proof? Kant uses this principle to establish the empirical reality of space even though it has been proven to be transcendentally ideal, i.e., nothing but a representation of our mind.

The conclusion states that the expositions have shown the reality, which also means the objective validity, of space but only in regard to everything that can come before us externally as an object. This means space is real and objective in regard to everything that is an outer intuition and so is an outer object of sensibility for us. Thus, although it is ideal outside of our sensibility, space is real in regard to objects of our outer intuition.

So we can infer from this argument that reality is objective validity for Kant. Objective validity is universal validity without limitation and this can be established by adding the limitation to the subject. By incorporating the limitation into the subject, we are limiting the class of objects to those of our outer intuition alone. By making a claim about objects only as object of our outer intuition, we are limiting the field of validity to the field of our outer sensibility and possible experience. Thus, Kant's principle of validity makes a judgment universal only across a specific domain of judgment by specifying this domain in the concept of the subject.

This accords with Kant's claim of there being a universal validity *for us*. Kant allows for a universal and unconditional validity of objects that is only with regard to us, specifically our sensibility and experience. Kant also allows for an objective validity and reality that is limited to

objects of our sensibility and possible experience.[17] Without an objective validity and reality that is only valid within our field of sensibility, space is not objectively valid or real because it does not apply to objects as things in themselves. Space would also not be universally valid because it is not valid of objects in general outside of us, and it is not unconditional because it is only valid of objects under the conditions of our sensibility. Thus, space would not be real in any sense but only ideal.

Moreover, Kant limits space's ideality by saying "at the same time the ideality of space in regard to things when they are considered in themselves through reason, i.e., without taking account of the constitution of our sensibility". Space is ideal when we abstract from the constitution of our sensibility, specifically from space as its necessary form of outer intuition, and think about things in themselves. Kant claims the ideality of space only in regard to the field of validity of things in themselves beyond our sensibility. As ideal and not real in this sense, space is not objectively and not universally valid of things in themselves. This further explains Kant's doctrine of the transcendental ideality of space.

In particular, this explains what Kant means by "transcendental" when asserting transcendental idealism. By "transcendental" Kant means considering things as they would be "in themselves", which means as abstracted from our sensibility. When we abstract from our sensibility using our reason we get rid of all intuition possible for us. Since space is essentially our form of intuition, we abstract from space when we abstract from our sensibility by considering things transcendentally. Thus, considered transcendentally, space is ideal or nothing

[17] Further evidence that Kant holds this standard of reality is that, for Kant, we can establish the reality of what we immediately perceive if it is universally the case across our experience. Kant claims this in the Antinomies: "appearances are, in accordance with it, given not in themselves but only in this experience, because they are mere representations, which signify a real object only as perceptions, namely when this perception connects up with all others in accordance with the rules of the unity of experience." (A495/B523).

but our mere representation. Moreover, because we must abstract from our intuition to consider things in themselves, we can only think things in themselves using our reason with no intuition of them possible for us. Since cognition requires intuition, we cannot cognize things in themselves.

Space is real and ideal "at the same time" because its reality changes based the different consideration of what is in some sense the "same" thing. Considered in one way, as within the field of our sensibility and experience, space is objectively valid and real. In the world of our experience, we experience space as existing independently of the subject (our empirical consciousness). Yet, in regard to the same thing considered as it is in itself, i.e., outside the boundary of our possible experience and sensibility, space is a mere representation of our sensibility that is not objectively valid. When considered as it would be outside our possible experience, space is simply part of our mind and so does not exist independently of the subject (transcendental subject).

e. Final conclusion: The Empirical Realism and Transcendental Idealism of Space

Kant goes on to state the final conclusion of his direct argument for the nature of our representation of space.

Conclusion: "We therefore assert the **empirical reality** of space (with respect to all possible outer experience), though to be sure its **transcendental ideality**, i.e., that it is nothing as soon as we leave aside the conditions of the possibility of all experience, and take it as something that grounds the things in themselves" (A28/B44).

In this passage, Kant concludes that space is empirically real and transcendentally ideal. Kant also explains what this means. From the argument Kant has given, we know reality is objective validity which is unconditional or universal validity without limitation. According to

Kant, we can make a limited judgment unconditionally and universally valid by adding the limitation to the concept of the judgment's subject. Kant did this by adding "outer intuition" to the concept of objects in general and so specified a class of objects of our outer intuition. This class of objects is defined by being within the field of our sensibility.

Objects of outer intuition are contrasted with those considered in themselves through reason without taking account of the conditions of our sensibility. Considered with regard to objects in general not under our conditions of sensibility, space is ideal. This is because space is essentially a form of our intuition and so it does not exist outside of representation by our sensibility. This means the space we represent cannot be applied to objects as they are in themselves.

Thus, Kant has defined two different types of objects and the basis of that difference. Objects are either objects of our sensibility that can appear to us and are under the subjective conditions of our sensibility, or they are things in themselves that do not appear to us and are not under the conditions of our sensibility. This difference is proven from the concept of our representation of space (and later time) and what must be true about our sensibility to make this representation possible. We find that our representation of space must originally be an *a priori* intuition, and for this to be possible it must be seated in our mind. This leaves us with the strange conclusion that our intuition of space, within which objects are represented as outside us and which makes up our experience, must be contributed by our mind.

From these findings, Kant draws his ultimate metaphysical conclusion about space. Surprisingly, Kant does not conclude that space is only ideal. Kant also concludes space is real. Kant understands the reality and objective validity of something as its universal or unconditional validity. He also allows for the universal validity of a class of objects within a specific field. This

allows Kant to consider space as universally valid, and so real and objectively valid, of objects of our outer intuition in the field of our sensibility. Space is universally valid of objects of our outer intuition because it is the universal and necessary condition for any object being in the field of our outer sensibility.

In the conclusion I quote here, Kant calls this type of reality "empirical reality", which he defines as "with respect to all possible outer experience". Thus, the empirical defines a field of validity within the boundary of all our possible experience. This accords with Kant's claim that space is real with respect to objects of sensibility and the field of our sensibility because our sensibility demarcates the boundary of our possible experience. Our sensibility demarcates the boundary of our possible experience because it is the necessary condition of all our intuition. In addition, intuition is necessary for any cognition since cognition is a combination of intuition and concepts. Finally, as necessary for all cognition, intuition is necessary for all our possible experience because experience is empirical cognition. So space is empirically real because it is universally valid of all our outer possible experience and thus objectively valid of every object of our possible outer experience.

In this conclusion, Kant also says space is ideal. Kant specifies ideality as being *nothing*. Space is nothing when we leave aside or abstract from the conditions of the possibility of all experience and so take it as grounding things in themselves. Kant calls this type of ideality "transcendental". This maps onto the ideality of space described in the last section. According to that section, space is ideal if one considers things as they are in themselves by abstracting from the conditions of our sensibility using reason. Since the subjective conditions of our sensibility are the conditions of the possibility of all experience, and abstraction from them is necessary to consider things in themselves, Kant is referring to the same sense of ideality.

The empirical vs. transcendental distinction has to do with being inside vs. outside of our possible experience. The empirical is within our possible experience, and the transcendental is outside of our possible experience. The world of our possible experience is defined by what appears to us under the conditions of our sensibility. Things in themselves outside our sensibility define the transcendental.

Now we can understand Kant's ultimate metaphysical conclusion about space. Space is real and objectively valid within the world of our possible outer experience, i.e., empirically real. This is because space is universally valid in our possible outer experience. Space is universally valid because outer sensible intuition is a necessary condition for all our possible outer experience and space is a necessary form of all our outer intuition.

However, as an *a priori* intuition only seated in our faculty of intuition, at the same time space is ideal. This ideality is transcendental because, considered as it would be outside of our possible experience, our representation of space is nothing. It is nothing because to consider space as it would be outside of our possible experience we must abstract from the conditions of our sensibility, but space is a special condition of our sensibility. So this is to abstract from space, which means space is nothing as transcendentally considered.

So Kant is claiming an empirical sense in which space is universally valid, and so objectively valid and real, and at the same time a transcendental sense in which space is not universally or objectively valid and so ideal. Space and time are nothing outside of our possible experience and their appearance to us in sensibility, while being objective and real within our possible experience and sensibility.[18] Thus, empirical reality does not depend on transcendental

[18] In contrast to space and time, interpreting Kant's transcendental idealism as it applies to objects is more confusing. For Kant, objects are distinguished into appearances (object of experience) and things in themselves. Yet, both are also in some sense "the same" (Bxxvi-Bxxvii). So, the same object is thought as existing outside of our

reality, or space and time could not be empirically real. What empirical reality does depend on is universal validity within the realm of our experience and sensibility. This reveals Kant has two different conceptions of reality and objectivity that are independently valid.

An example may make this clearer. In my daily life, if I want to buy some ice cream at the grocery store, I have to travel through the space from my home to the grocery store and buy the ice cream. I cannot just represent myself at the grocery store buying ice cream in order to be at the grocery store buying ice cream. Space is an objective, real thing in the empirical world of my experience by being independent from my empirical consciousness.

However, if one were to view my trip to buy ice cream from outside my experience, i.e., transcendentally, instead of from within my experience, then one would see all the space I experience is in me as a representation of my transcendental mind. From this perspective, the space I traverse on the way to the grocery store (and all space) is merely a representation contributed by my transcendental mind. The representation of space by my transcendental mind is prior to and makes possible the space I experience on my journey to the grocery store.

Kant claims the reality of space only within our possible experience because our experience is conceived of as its own autonomous field of validity. This is in contrast to being conceived of as a limited or conditioned part of the world in general and in itself. This is Kant's biggest revolution in metaphysics. Kant acknowledges our experience as an independent field of validity that allows for an independent objectivity, reality, and existence, i.e., way of being. Without taking our experience as an independent field of being, space and time would be merely

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experience as a thing in itself, while also not existing outside our experience as an appearance. This problem will be dealt with in chapters 7-10.

ideal and have no reality, objectivity or existence since they are nothing outside of our possible experience.

Kant argues for an independent empirical field of validity, and so objectivity and reality, because it makes logical sense, i.e., we can make unconditional and universal empirical judgments out of limited transcendental judgments if we add the limitation to the concept of the subject. Yet, underlying this, Kant thinks he can claim an independent empirical sense of reality and objectivity because what is most real to humans is the world of our experience. We immediately perceive the empirical world and it is more concrete than the abstract thoughts of our reason about things in themselves of which we can gain no intuition. The empirical world is the world we live in. Kant thinks that which can be perceived by us, is universal and necessary, and exists separately from our empirical consciousness deserves to be called real more than what is outside our experience. In conclusion, space is real within our experience (empirically) and this does not depend on having reality outside of our experience, for it is nothing outside our experience.

2. How are Outer Objects in Time?

The arguments in the direct proof of the transcendental ideality of time are similar to those for space. They aim to establish similar conclusions but about our representation of time: that time is an *a priori* intuition, and so must be a pure form of our inner sense, and so is seated merely in the subject. Thus, time is also transcendentally ideal since it is nothing outside of our possible experience, and time is also empirically real as applying to all objects of sense. For the sake of brevity, I will focus on the most interesting difference between time and space: that time applies to all objects of sense and space only to outer objects of sense. Making sense of this claim will further support two of my key interpretive claims: 1) Kant considers space and time from the

beginning of the direct proof as our representations and 2) objects of sense/experience are a class of objects that emerge from our representations rather than being things in themselves outside us to which our representations try to conform.

Space is only the form of our outer sense as that within which outer objects are represented in different places from each other. Time is only the form of our inner sense such that only what is within the subject is represented in relations of time. From these claims one would think that, for Kant, outer objects must be in space but cannot be in time. However, Kant claims all objects of outer sense are in space and time objectively! How can this be? Kant argues that time is the *a priori* formal condition of all appearances in general:

Conclusion: "*c)* Time is the *a priori* formal condition of all appearances in general."

First Premise: "Space, as the pure form of all outer intuitions, is limited as an *a priori* condition merely to outer intuitions."

Second Premise: "But since, on the contrary, all representations, whether or not they have outer things as their object, nevertheless as determinations of the mind themselves belong to the inner state,"

Third Premise: "while this inner state belongs under the formal condition of inner intuition, and thus of time,"

Restated and expanded conclusion: "so time is an *a priori* condition of all appearances in general, and indeed the immediate condition of the inner intuition (of our souls), and thereby also the mediate condition of outer appearances" (A34/B50)

This argument seems to contradict conclusion b) given right before it. In b), Kant concludes that "time is nothing other than the form of inner sense, i.e., of the intuition of our self and our inner state. For time cannot be a determination of outer appearances; it belongs neither to

shape or a position, etc." (A33/B49). In c), Kant concludes that time is an *a priori* condition of all appearances in general. This is because time is an immediate condition of the inner intuition of our self; as a result, time is also a mediate condition of all outer appearances.

For Kant, all appearances and intuitions are representations no matter what object they represent (outer object or not). As representations they are determinations of our mind. As determinations of our mind, all representations belong to our inner state and so are subject to our form of inner intuition. Thus, all appearances (inner and outer intuitions), as representations and so determinations of the mind, belong under the formal condition of inner intuition: time.

Now we can see how conclusions b) and c) of the "Conclusions from these concepts" regarding time are compatible. In "b)" Kant claims time is not an outer determination of appearances *qua* outer like position or shape. So time is not an immediate condition of outer appearances. However, in argument c) Kant shows us that time is still a mediate condition of outer appearances. Time is a mediate condition of outer appearances because outer appearances and space are originally representations in our inner state, and, as a result, are in time because everything in the inner state is in time.

That Kant argues in this manner for c) proves he considers outer intuition, space, and objects in space to be representations because otherwise they could not be in time. Time does not apply directly to anything outside of our mind in space but only to our inner intuition, inner states, and so to what is in our mind. Thus, for Kant, if outer intuitions, space, and objects in space were not in our minds they could not be in time. So, outer intuitions and space must be representations in our mind.

In the last chapter, we saw that Kant takes space and all outer intuitions as representations. This argument for the temporality of all appearances reinforces this point. This

also means outer objects of sense, as universally and necessarily in time, must always be representations and so are a special class of objects as representations (empirical objects).

An objection to my interpretation, is that Kant is only claiming *our representations* of outer objects and not actual outer objects are in time. However, this is not Kant's position. Kant thinks outer objects of sense are objectively and not just subjectively in time, i.e., not only *our representations* of outer objects but the actual outer objects are in time. Kant says "If I can say *a priori*: all outer appearances are in space and determined *a priori* according to the relations of space, so from the principle of inner sense I can say entirely generally: all appearances in general, i.e., all objects of the senses, are in time, and necessarily stand in relations of time." (A34/B51). So all appearances, outer and inner, and all objects of sense, outer and inner, are necessarily in relations of time. This is the foundation for claiming the objective validity of time in regard to the field of our sensibility and experience, thus its empirical reality, even though time is also transcendentally ideal.

a. Argument that Time is Nothing (Ideal) if we Take Objects As they Are in Themselves (Transcendentally)

Conclusion: "If we abstract from our way of internally intuiting ourselves and by means of this intuition also dealing with all outer intuitions in the power of representation, and thus take objects as they may be in themselves, then time is nothing"

First Premise: "It is only of objective validity in regard to appearances"

Second Premise: "because these are already things that we take as **objects of our senses**"

Third Premise: "But it is no longer objective if one abstracts from the sensibility of our intuition, thus from that kind of representation that is peculiar to us, and speaks of things in general"

Restated Conclusion: “Time is therefore merely a subjective condition of our (human) intuition (which is always sensible, i.e., insofar as we are affected by objects), and in itself, outside the subject, is nothing” (A34-5/B51)

Kant begins with the conclusion that if we use our reason to abstract our way of internally intuiting ourselves and consider the logical possibility of how objects “may be” in themselves apart from our intuition then time is nothing. Moreover, Kant emphasizes that in abstracting from our way of internally intuiting ourselves we also abstract from all outer intuitions. This reinforces my conclusion in the previous section that outer intuitions and outer objects are in time because they are representations dealt with in the power of representation. As such determinations of our mind, outer intuitions, outer objects, and space are also subject to the form of our inner intuition of time.

The reason time is nothing, i.e., not objective, if one abstracts from our sensibility is because it only has objective validity in regard to appearances or objects of our senses. This is because time is essentially a form of our intuition and so tied to our sensibility, i.e., that kind of representation peculiar to us. Thus, abstracting from the sensibility of our intuition means we abstract from time. This leads Kant to conclude that time is merely a subjective condition of our human intuition and in itself, outside of us, it is nothing. That time is nothing outside of our human intuition is Kant’s doctrine of the transcendental ideality of time.

He sums up this doctrine by saying:

> We dispute all claim of time to absolute reality, namely where it would attach to things absolutely as a condition or property even without regard to the form of our sensible intuition. Such properties, which pertain to things in themselves, can never be given to us though the senses. In this there consists the **transcendental ideality** of time, according to which it is nothing at all if one abstracts from the subjective conditions of sensible intuition, and cannot be counted as either subsisting or inhering in the objects in themselves (without their relation to our intuition). (A35-6/B52)

Thus, by "the transcendental ideality of time" Kant means time is nothing at all if one abstracts from the subjective conditions of our sensible intuition. Kant further explains that calling time "nothing" when abstracted from our sensible intuition is to deny the absolute reality of time. "Absolute" here means without regard to our form of sensible intuition or considered outside of and without relation to the subject. So, to deny absolute reality of time is to deny that it attaches to things absolutely or in themselves as a condition or property, or subsists in itself.

This description of absolute reality should be familiar. It is one of the possibilities put forward in the metaphysical exposition of space as to what space and time are: actual entities or "only determinations or relations of things, yet ones that would pertain to them even if they were not intuited" (A23/B37). So, Kant denies those options and chooses the last option that time is "relations that only attach to the form of intuition alone, and thus to the subjective constitution of our mind, without which these predicates could not be ascribed to anything at all" (A23/B37-8). Thus, Kant canvases options at A23/B37 between space and time having absolute, i.e., transcendental, reality (as an entity or determination or relation of things in themselves) and transcendental ideality (as only attaching to the form our intuition alone and so only being part of the subjective constitution of our mind). Transcendental ideality limits the attribution of space and time to what is intuited by us, and denies it of what is outside our intuition.

Kant ascribes time to things only in their relation to our intuition. Kant denies that time applies to things in themselves *qua* absolutely, i.e., as abstracted from and without a relation to our sensible intuition. Thus, time is part of the subjective constitution of our mind and a subjective condition of sensible intuition that we ascribe to things only in their appearance to us in our intuition.

In addition, Kant states that properties that pertain to things in themselves can never be given to us through the senses. Kant cannot presupposes this premise at the beginning of the direct proof or the direct proof would be circular. To presuppose that space, time, and all properties of things in themselves cannot be given to us through our senses is to presuppose that our representations of them represent nothing beyond our representations, i.e., transcendental idealism. So Kant must draw the conclusion that space, time, and properties that pertain to things in themselves cannot be given to us from proving space and time are merely forms of our intuition necessary for any sensible intuition. This inference holds because the necessary forms of our intuition prevent the properties of things in themselves coming through to us in intuition. This is the basis of the direct proof of the transcendental ideality of all appearances, i.e., objects of our perception and their properties. I will cover this in chapter 6.

In short, the space and time of our experience, as mere forms our sensible intuition, are only subjective conditions for any intuitions to be represented in us. Since all objects of sense/experience must be given to us via our faculty of intuition, all objects of sense/experience must conform to the subjective form of time (and all outer objects of sense/experience to space). Finally, Kant thinks the space and time of our experience, while themselves transcendentally ideal, also do not allow us to represent anything of objects in themselves.

Time and space have been proven to be merely subjective conditions of our human intuition, and thus merely part of the kind of representation that is peculiar to us. Thus, it makes sense that, when one abstracts from the representation of our sensibility and goes outside the subject, space and time are nothing and so transcendentally ideal. Time and space apply merely to our representations (appearances) and not at all to objects in themselves. Hence, while it is a strange doctrine, the meaning of the transcendental ideality of space and time is clear. The real

problem is how space and time could ever be empirically real. In other words, how can they be considered objectively valid? How are space and time not merely subjective illusions our intuition falsely ascribes to objects in order to represent them?

b. Argument That Time is Necessarily Objective in Regard to all Things that can Come Before Us In Experience.

Kant does not consider time to be a mere subjective illusion. Kant thinks time is objectively valid and so real for all objects of sense and experience. Kant argues:

Second Conclusion: "Nonetheless it [time] is necessarily objective in regard to all appearances,"

Third Conclusion: "thus also in regard to all things that can come before us in experience."

Hidden Premise: all things that can come before us in experience are appearances (objects of sensible intuition)

First Conclusion: "We cannot say all things are in time"

First Premise: "because with the concept of things in general abstraction is made from every kind of intuition of them,"

Second Premise: "but this is the real condition under which time belongs to the representation of objects."

Third Premise: "Now if the condition is added to the concept, and the principle says that all things as appearances (objects of sensible intuition) are in time, then the principle has its sound objective correctness and *a priori* universality" (A35/B51-2)

Kant first concludes that time is necessarily objective in regard to all appearances. Kant extends this necessary objectivity to all things that can come before us in experience because all objects of experience must be appearances as objects of our sensible intuition. So Kant's ultimate

conclusion in this argument is that time is necessarily objective in regard to all objects of experience.

Kant limits this objectivity by saying it does not apply to all things in general. Things in general are abstracted from the conditions of every intuition. Time is merely a subjective condition of our intuition. So things in general that are not under any condition of intuition are not in time. Time only belongs to appearances as the representation of objects that are under the real condition of our intuition.

Of particular note, Kant invokes the same principle to establish the objective correctness and *a priori* universality of time as he did with space. Kant adds the condition (our sensible intuition) to the subject of the judgment's concept (object in general). This leads to the objectivity and universality of the proposition "all things as appearances (objects of sensible intuition) are in time". By adding the condition of our intuition to the concept of a thing in general we limit the class of objects to objects of our sensible intuition and limit the field of validity to our sensibility. Thus, Kant establishes objectivity by limiting the class of objects from things in general to those that only appear to our sensible intuition. Moreover, Kant establishes universality by limiting the field of validity to our sensible intuition. This shows that Kant has a conception of objectivity and universality relative to a field and to a class of objects.

With respect to the field of our sensibility and objects of our sensible intuition, time is universal and objective necessarily. As already seen with space, this leads to the empirical reality of time: objective, universal, and necessary validity within the field of, and for objects of, our possible experience. Kant argues for this point by saying:

c. Statement of Conclusion of The Empirical Reality of Time

Third Conclusion: "Our assertions accordingly teach the **empirical reality** of time, i.e., objective validity in regard to all objects that may ever be given our senses"

Premise: "Since our intuition is always sensible,

Fourth conclusion: "no object can ever be given to us in experience that would not belong under the condition of time" (A35/B52)

Hidden premise: no object can be given to us in experience without being at least partly given through intuition (This comes from experience being empirical cognition and empirical cognition requiring both intuition and concepts)

Here we see that reality means objective validity. Time is objectively valid because it applies necessarily and universally to all objects of our sensible intuition, i.e., objects of experience. Although, time does not apply to all things in general. Since it applies universally and necessarily to all objects of our experience, time is empirically real. "Empirical" means in regard to all possible experience.

Kant concludes time is empirically real because it applies to all objects that may ever be given to our sensible intuition or all appearances. Kant draws this conclusion from the premises that our intuition is always sensible and from the hidden premise that no object can be given to us in experience without being given through sensible intuition. Thus, time is universally and necessarily valid of every possible object in our experience, thus objectively valid of every possible object of our experience, and so empirically real.

Despite limiting the class of objects and the field of validity to our sensibility, time is still considered by Kant to not just seem real, objective, universal, and necessary, but to actually be so. Thus, for Kant, reality, objectivity, universality and necessity are just as valid within a limited field and class of objects as in general. This explains how Kant can maintain the transcendental

ideality of time, space, and objects of appearance, while simultaneously maintaining their empirical reality. For Kant, the reality or ideality of something depends on what field of validity and class of objects one is considering.

So Kant considers time to be transcendentally ideal and empirically real. Moreover, for Kant, only representations, i.e., determinations of our mind, can be in inner sense and so time. This means space, all outer objects of our experience, and the inner states of our mind exist in time objectively, but this objective time is also only a subjective condition of our mind not to be found outside it. This is only possible if space, objects in space, and the inner states of our mind are representations in our heads that then become objects in the empirical world as well.

This is Kant's Copernican Revolution in understanding the being of objects and our cognition. Cognition is the conformity of an object to our representation. Kant proposes that the objects conform to our way of representing instead of our representations conforming to the objects. This revolutionary proposal reconceives of our cognition as more like constructing a building (the object) according to blue prints already drawn up for its construction (the representation) than like painting a picture (the representation) of an already existing building (the object). According to Kant's revolutionary theory of our cognition, objects in the world conform to and exist because of a pre-existing representation of it.

We also learn about the nature of empirical reality and transcendental ideality from Kant's conclusions about time. We learn empirical reality and objective validity in the field of our sensibility and experience do not depend on transcendental reality, i.e., existing or pertaining to any thing outside of our sensibility or experience (things in themselves). This is because time is real and objectively valid in regard to all objects of sense/appearance/experience but is nothing outside of our sensibility/experience and does not pertain to things in themselves. From this we

learn that, even though things in themselves and objects of appearance/experience may be the "same" in some sense, they are not strictly identical. They are different in that objects as appearance really exist in space and time of our representations, but things in themselves do not.

Kant's conclusions about the nature of time show there is a different sense of reality, objectivity, and properties in the field of our sensibility and experience than for what is outside of our possible experience and sensibility. Empirical reality and objectivity is not dependent on transcendental reality and objectivity.[19] Instead, we see objective validity and empirical reality only depend on *a priori* universality and necessity for the field and class of objects of our sensibility and experience, and not on any relation to any absolute space or time.

3. Objectivity and Reality as Limited to a Field of Validity

I have given an interpretation of empirical reality as a unique type of reality, objective validity, and universal validity. Empirical reality is reality, objectivity, and universal validity in the field our sensibility and possible experience. Kant asserts the empirical reality of space and time and also their transcendental ideality. I take empirical reality to be independent from transcendental reality. Supporting this interpretation Kant says:

> Both [space and time] taken together are, namely the pure forms of all sensible intuition, and thereby make possible synthetic *a priori* propositions. But these *a priori* sources of cognition determine their own boundaries by that very fact (that they are merely conditions of sensibility), namely that they apply to objects only so far as they are considered as appearances, but do not present things in themselves. Those alone are the field of their validity, beyond which no further objective use of them takes place. This reality of space and time, further leaves the certainty of experiential cognition untouched: for we are just as certain of that whether these forms necessarily adhere to the things in themselves or only to our intuition of these things. (A39/B56)

[19] This is strictly true in that empirical reality and objectivity has been shown only to essentially depend on the universality and necessity of what appears to us in our field of our sensibility. No metaphysical grounding relation to anything transcendentally real is essentially required for something's empircial reality. Yet, contingently our sensibility is receptive, and so something transcendental must be *thought* as affecting our sensibility to allow for sensation, perception, and so appearances being given to us. We can only form an indeterminate thought of what affects us and never cognize its existence, which means it could be an object in itself, God, other minds, or our own self. Moreover, to fulfill this role, our self need only exist as pure spontaneity or affecting action and not as a mind-independent substance, i.e., purely transcendentally ideal. These issues will be taken up and in Chapter 8.

Kant starts this passage by stating the conclusion of the direct proof in the Aesthetic: space and time are pure forms of all sensible intuition. Only as pure forms of our intuition can they make possible our synthetic *a priori* propositions involving them. They determine their own boundary of objective use by the fact that they are only special conditions of our sensibility. So, our sensible intuition is the field of their validity and the boundary of their objective use. As a result, they apply universally and necessarily to everything that is within our sensible intuition, i.e., all objects insofar as they appear to us within our sensibility. Yet, they are not objectively valid in regard to things in themselves because these are beyond the boundary of our sensibility.

Kant specifies that objective use within the field of validity of our sensibility is a "reality of space and time". This supports my interpretation that reality is objective validity. This is the case even if the objective validity is limited to a field of validity, as long as it is universally valid in that field. Kant used this principle to argue that space and time are empirically real even though transcendentally ideal. Kant limited the field of validity to our sensibility and experience. He claimed that within this field of validity space and time are universally and objectively valid and so have empirical reality as opposed to transcendental reality. These two senses of reality are distinguished by the field of validity within which a thing has objective use and application. In particular, empirical reality and transcendental reality are distinguished by the boundary of our sensibility, i.e., either being within it (empirical) or outside of it (transcendental).

Kant indicates space and time have a specific type of reality by saying "this reality of space and time". This type of reality is empirical reality. Kant points out that the certainty of our experiential cognition, our cognition of empirical objects that makes up experience, is left intact regardless of the type of reality space and time have.

Thus we are certain about our experiential cognition, and so the reality of the objects we cognize, even though they have space and time as their necessary forms. Space and time necessarily adhere to the objects of our experience and so we have certain cognition of them whether space and time adhere to things in themselves, or whether space and time adhere only to the appearance of things in our intuition. Either way space and time adhere universally and necessarily to the objects of our experience, which is what underpins reality in a certain field.

Kant concludes space and time have no objective use outside the field of our sensibility or to things in themselves. Yet, he has also proven space and time have objective and universal validity, and so reality, only with regard to objects as appearances within our field of sensibility. This shows that universality within the field of validity of our sensibility is sufficient for the reality of space and time (empirical) and for their objective validity with regard to objects as appearances. This means the empirical reality of space and time does not depend on their transcendental reality, and so empirical reality does not essentially depend on transcendental reality. This also means appearances and their properties can have objective validity and empirical reality without being that way in themselves.

Chapter 5: The Neglected Alternative

1. Kant's Proof of the Transcendental Ideality of Our Space and Time Precludes The Neglected Alternative

The direct proof of the transcendental ideality of space and time (A23/B37-A36/B53) is about space and time *qua* representations of our mind. In this proof, space and time are representations (intuitions) within which we represent outer and inner objects to ourselves. This is the space and time that forms our experience. Kant wants to know whether our representations of space and time represent something outside of our intuition or only attach to our intuition alone. He proves that our representations of space and time are originally *a priori* intuitions from which we derive our concepts of space and time.

Space and time are possible as *a priori* intuitions only if they are found in us as pure forms of our intuition that are necessary for us to have any intuition. This alone makes it comprehensible how we can intuit space and time prior to perception and existence of the things to which they pertain, and how we can have synthetic *a priori* cognitions regarding them. Thus, space and time are merely part of the subjective constitution of our mind that do not represent anything beyond our sensibility. Therefore, our representations of space and time are not representations of an entity in itself or determinations in themselves. For space and time to be intuitions of things in themselves they would have to be *a posteriori* intuitions, but they are *a priori* intuitions.

So, our intuitive representations of space and time come from us (our sensibility) and our concepts of space and time refer only to that. This means if we abstract from our sensibility and its subjective contributions to our representations then our space and time are nothing and no longer exist. This is because our intuitions of space and time are solely the product of our

sensibility (a faculty of our mind), and this is the only space and time we can experience. Thus, Kant has established the transcendental ideality of our space and time. Insofar as we are acquainted with "a space" or "time" it is transcendentally ideal, i.e., considered as it would be outside our possible experience using reason to abstract from all our sensibility it does not exist in itself and is nothing. Thus, our space and time are only mere representations of our mind transcendentally considered. Limited in this way to the space and time we can intuit and experience, Kant's conclusion that space and time are transcendentally ideal is justified.

The further question is how to justify Kant's exclusion of our space and time from also representing something that could exist outside us, i.e., be transcendentally real. The answer hinges on our *a priori* representations of space and time being *intuitions* that come only from us. Kant explains:

> Space is not a discursive, or, as is said, general concept of relations of things in general, but pure intuition. For, first, one can only represent a single space, and if one speaks of many spaces, one understands by that only parts of one and the same unique space…It is essentially single… From this it follows that in respect to it an *a priori* intuition (which is not empirical) grounds all concepts of it. (B24-5/B39)

An intuition, unlike a concept, is a representation of a single and unique whole. So the space and time of our intuition are representations of something that is unique, single and whole, and as *a priori* it is something our mind puts into things (Bxvii, Bxviii). Thus, the singular, unique whole of our space and time could never be encountered outside of our faculty of intuition.

Even if a thing in itself had all the same properties of our space or time it could not, by definition, be the same *unique* whole that comes from our mind. This is the significance of Kant proving that our original representations of space and time are *a priori* intuitions rather than concepts in his direct proof. A concept is general and many different things can fall under it unlike an intuition that represents a specific, unique whole (individual particular). Moreover,

since our representations of space and time are originally intuitions, not only must we derive our concepts of space and time from our intuitions (its origin), but, as a result, our concepts of space and time must be *specific* concepts about single, unique wholes. As *a priori* forms of our intuition, this also means these single, unique wholes of our space and time only exist within our sensibility. Thus, our concepts of space and time do not refer to something else we, using our reason, speculate may exist apart from our sensibility. These specific concepts of space and time are about the specific, individual space and time that only comes from our faculty of sensibility.

Also, intuitions are a special kind of representation that not only represents objects as mental determinations, but also gives the objects to us to form our experience as an objective determination of the empirical world. Thus, our representations of space and time are not mere thoughts in our head. Instead, they are originally representations (intuitions) that also give us the space and time of our experience, while coming only from our faculty of intuition.

This means our minds, by supplying the space and time of our experience, are supplying representations that constitute the world we live in: the world of sense and possible experience. For example, on my walk to the grocery store I intuit objects in space and time, and I walk through space over a period of time. For Kant, that very space and time on my walk was put there prior to my perception of it by my mind (my faculty of sensibility). This is not a concept or idea of space and time, but instead the real space and time of all my experience. Kant is claiming the space and time of my experience comes from my mind as pure representations given prior to any perception, and it is a necessary condition for making my experience possible.

As explained in Chapter 3, the Neglected Alternative objection agrees Kant has proven that space and time are transcendentally ideal, but, according to the objection, space and time could be transcendentally ideal *and* real. Kant has proven the particular space and time of our

experience come only from our mind and are nothing outside of it, i.e., are transcendentally ideal. This refutes the Neglected Alternative, insofar as it refers to the space and time of our representations and experience. Space and time as unique, single wholes (individual concrete particulars), cannot both exist outside our sensibility, i.e., be transcendentally real, and not exist outside our sensibility, i.e., be transcendentally ideal.

The mistake of those who entertain the Neglected Alternative is clear. They take space and time to be general concepts about general relations, which Kant denies. Instead, our concepts of space and time are specific concepts about specific, unique wholes. These specific, unique wholes come from our faculty of sensibility, and so they could not come from things in themselves. Those who advocate for the Neglected Alternative misunderstand the significance of this and the restriction it places on our concepts of space and time.

What about the possibility that our representations of space and of time come from ourselves sometimes and from something outside of us at other times? Then only the parts that come from us could be *a priori* as universal, necessary conditions of our experience with cognition of them prior to perception. What does not come from us would be *a posteriori* and so contingent. But then our space and time would not be *a priori*, universal, necessary, infinite wholes, which Kant takes them to be.

Moreover, space and time would not be single wholes if they came partly from our intuition and partly from outside our intuition. Instead, they would be made up of parts and so be composites. However, Kant thinks space and time are essentially single wholes, whose parts come from limiting this whole. All our representations of space and of time must come from us because space and time are *a priori* intuitions.

In summary, Kant proves that our space and time are forms of our sensible intuition. This proves they are transcendentally ideal. Our space and time are excluded from being transcendentally real and ideal because Kant has shown that they are individual concrete particulars, which means their transcendental reality and ideality are contradictory opposites. Therefore, Kant precludes the conjunction of the transcendental reality and ideality of space and time (the Neglected Alternative). That Kant does not explicitly consider the Neglected Alternative is not surprising because to do so would be to consider a logical impossibility (the truth of two contradictory opposites).

a. How Kant Denies the Transcendental Reality of Space and Time In General

Up to this point I have defended the transcendental ideality of space and time, and refuted their transcendental reality, insofar as humans are concerned. Kant is concerned with space and time as what we represent objects within, as part of our experience, and as what we cognize *a priori*. Thus, the Neglected Alternative has been refuted insofar as the space and time of our possible experience and Kant's theoretical philosophy of our *a priori* synthetic cognition is concerned.

However, Kant goes beyond simply claiming that our intuitions of space and time come from our faculty of intuition and so are seated in the subject, i.e., are transcendentally ideal. Kant also asserts the non-spatiotemporality of things in themselves (objects of non-sensible intuition). The most famous passage demonstrating this is debated by Graham Bird and Edward Kantarian. The passage is:

> Space and time are valid, as conditions of the possibility of how objects can be given to us, no further than for objects of the senses, hence only for experience. Beyond these boundaries they do not represent anything at all, for they are only in the senses and outside of them have no reality… Thus if one assumes an object of a non-sensible intuition as given, one can certainly represent it through all of the predicates that already lie in the presupposition that nothing belonging to sensible intuition pertains to it: thus it is not extended, or in space, that its duration is not a time, that no alteration (sequence of determinations in time) is to be encountered in it, etc. But it is not a genuine cognition if I

> merely indicate what the intuition of the object is not, without being able to say what is then contained in it; for then I have not represented the possibility of an object for my pure concept of the understanding at all, since I cannot give any intuition that would correspond to it, but could only say ours is not valid for it. (B148-9)

Supporting my interpretation, Kant claims space and time have reality and validity only within the boundaries of our senses and experience (empirical reality). He denies that they have validity and reality beyond those boundaries (transcendental reality). Kant phrases this by saying "beyond these boundaries they do not represent anything at all", which is a puzzling formulation. Instead of simply saying space and time *are* nothing beyond these boundaries, he says they do not *represent* anything. This supports my claim that Kant starts from an understanding of space and time as our representations (intuitions), and he wonders whether they represent anything beyond our sensibility. Kant concludes our intuitions of space and time cannot be representations of anything, and so have no reality, beyond our field of sensibility and experience.

Kant then tries to represent an object of a non-sensible intuition, i.e., an object beyond our sensibility and experience. To do this he denies all the predicates belonging to our sensible intuition, which includes our space and time. However, Kant denies all space and time of things in themselves that are beyond our sensibility and experience. This seems to presume knowledge about things in themselves (noumena) which we do not and cannot have. Kant has only proven that the space and time of our intuition, representation, and experience come from our faculty of intuition. Why does this mean there could not also be space and time outside of us as a logical possibility?

Kant states that denying our sensible intuition, including the predicates of space and time, of non-sensible objects is not genuine cognition of these things. So Kant is not claiming noumenal cognition. But then how can Kant make these claims without genuine cognition? Answering this question is the key to explaining how Kant proves the transcendental ideality of

space and time not just for us but *in general,* and so how he can deny them of things in themselves. This will explain why a version of the Neglected Alternative regarding space and time *in general* is precluded logically, and so not explicitly considered, by Kant.

Kant reasons to the positive claim that the space and time of our representations are nothing outside us (transcendentally), without having genuine noumenal cognition, by using the negative criterion of truth.[20] Kant states the negative criterion of truth as:

> For although a cognition may be in complete accord with logical form, i.e., not contradict itself, yet it can still always contradict the object. The merely logical criterion of truth, namely the agreement of a cognition with the general and formal laws of understanding and reason, is therefore certainly the *conditio sine qua non* and thus the negative condition of all truth; further, however, logic cannot go, and the error that concerns not form but content cannot be discovered by any touchstone of logic. (A59-60/B84)

So for a cognition, as a representation of an object, to successfully agree with an object it must first be in agreement with logical form. This means the representation does not contradict itself.[21] If a cognition, as a putative representation of an object, contradicts itself then it cannot be true, i.e., cannot conform to any object. This is the negative condition of all truth, which is all we can get from logic alone, i.e., a necessary but not sufficient condition of truth. Supporting this we see Kant says "I can **think** whatever I like, as long as I do not contradict myself, i.e., as long as my concept is a possible thought" (Bxxvi), which we learn is logical possibility. However, if my concept contradicts itself then it is not logically possible and so not thinkable.

This self-contradictory, and so non-thinkable, concept describes a particular type of nothing for Kant. Kant describes this type of nothing as "empty object without concept, *nihil*

[20] By not having to allow any cognition of things in themselves, but only dealing with contradictions in the concept of a thing in itself, my proposal has advantages over Hogan's which requires Kant to have "substantive knowledge of the metaphysical constitution of things in themselves" (2009a: 60, see also 2009b: 527-8).
[21] This is proof that Kant thinks of cognition as the agreement of our representation of an object with the object. If this were not so then the self-consistency of our concept (representation) of the object would not matter for its cognition.

negativum" (A292/B348) and says "4) The object of a concept that contradicts itself is nothing because the concept is nothing, the impossible, like a rectilinear figure with two sides (*nihil negativum*)" (A292/B348). So we can call the object of a concept that contradicts itself nothing because the concept is logically impossible. Thought is prior to being for Kant. There could not be a rectilinear figure with two sides as an object because its concept is not even a possible thought. You cannot find an object that agrees with your representation because that representation collapses on itself before you get started.

Further supporting this point Kant says the "thought-entity is distinguished from the non-entity (No. 4) by the fact that the former may not be counted among the possibilities because it is a mere invention (although not self-contradictory), whereas the latter is opposed to possibility because even its concept cancels itself out, both however are empty concepts"(A292/B348-9). So the non-entity is opposed to possibility (logical) because it is self-contradictory and so its concept cancels itself out. Thus, it is an empty concept like the thought-entity, although a different type of nothing than the thought-entity because it cannot be coherently thought.

The merely logical, negative condition of truth provides a way Kant can claim, without cognition of things in themselves, that space and time are nothing (non-entities) if we abstract from our sensibility. This allows Kant to deny the existence of space and time in general outside our sensibility and experience. This is because the concept of space and time existing apart from our sensibility is self-contradictory and so logically impossible. Thus, there can be no object that this concept is of because it cannot even be thought.

The reason our space and time existing outside our sensibility is self-contradictory is that our space and time are forms of our intuition, and so depend for their existence on our sensibility. When we think about them as they would be outside of our sensibility, we abstract from an

essential feature and condition of them, namely our sensibility. This is to think of something that is essentially part of our subjective constitution as at the same time not part of our subjective constitution. The result is a contradictory concept like a rectilinear figure with two-sides, which is to think something that is essentially four-sided as not four-sided – a logically impossible nothing. It is the same with a special condition of our sensibility, e.g. space and time, that is thought of as existing independently of our sensibility (A27/B43).

Thus, the space and time of *our representations and experience* are nothing outside us (transcendentally) based on the negative criterion of truth as applied to our specific concepts of space and time. Does this apply to a concept of space or time in general? Any concept must be thinkable without contradiction (logically possible) if it is to be really possible and so be a concept about an existing object or determination. Thus, we can make negative claims, claims about what things in themselves are not, by finding logical contradictions in our concept formation about them. So do we have this regarding a concept of space and time in general, which includes a space and time of things in themselves?

It seems we do if we fully acknowledge the limitations imposed by Kant on our concept formation. In the metaphysical and transcendental expositions, Kant concludes our concepts of space and time are only about the unique wholes of our space and time (individual concrete particulars) given by our subjective forms of intuition. As a result, we do not have the cognitive capacity to form a general concept of space or time from our specific concepts of them.[22] This is

[22] This is to form a concept of a mind-independent space and time. To do so we have to abstract everything that depends on our mind from our specific concepts of space and time. However, these mind-dependent properties are the essential marks of our concept of space and time. Thus, we are left either with non-spatial and non-temporal concepts of space and time or mind-independent, mind-dependent concepts of space and time. Both of which are self-contradictory and so non-entities.

because we form such a general concept through abstracting our particular sensibility from our specific concepts. This removes what is essential for our concept to be about space and time.

In abstracting from our sensibility we remove from our concepts reference to the single, unique wholes of our space and time that are given by our sensibility. We also lose the *a priority* and intuitivity of space and time, which was made possible by being forms of our intuition. Finally, we lose synthetic *a priori* knowledge regarding space and time because this is only possible if space and time are our *a priori* intuitions. When we do this we form self-contradictory concepts of space and time that are both about space and time and not about space and time. They are about space and time in name, but without any of the essential properties of space and time. Thus, we can only speak about space and time from the human standpoint outside of which what we are saying signifies nothing (A26/B42). Specifically, the type of nothing is a *nihil negativiuum* – a self-contradictory concept like a round square (non-entity).

So Kant has proven the transcendental ideality of our specific concepts of space and time and any general concepts of space and time formed from them. In both cases, considering them as they would be outside our sensibility (transcendentally) results in self-contradictory concepts. This means the content of these concepts are nothing as non-entities outside our sensibility and so transcendentally ideal. This is because of Kant's negative criterion of truth in which a necessary condition for existence is that the concept of the thing be thinkable without contradiction. As logically impossible nothings outside our sensibility, the content of our specific concepts space and time, and of our general concepts formed from them, also cannot have transcendental reality. Thus, Kant has refuted the Neglected Alternative regarding these concepts.

b. The Neglected Alternative Revisited: Ideal in Origin but Real in Validity

In the last sections, we refuted the Neglected Alternative insofar as it targeted Kant's direct proof in the Transcendental Aesthetic. This refutation hinged on showing that Kant's direct proof was only concerned with the transcendental ideality of our space and time, i.e., the space and time of our intuition and experience.[23] Once this limitation was recognized, the direct proof succeeded in showing that our space and time are transcendentally ideal and not transcendentally real.

There is a tradition of interpretation that defends the "Neglected Alternative" as a thesis not about our space and time but about the possible *validity* of our *concepts* of space and time. Now we will consider whether the Neglected Alternative can be saved in this way. This version of the Neglected Alternative alleges we can extend the validity of our concepts of space and time beyond the origin of these concepts to things in themselves. Edward Kanterian says "to rescue Trendelenburg Vaihinger distinguishes between the (ontological) question of the validity (*Geltung*) and the (epistemological) question of the origin (*Ursprung*) of space" (Kanterian 268). Kanterian then goes on to say "what Trendelenburg, according to Vaihinger, must mean is: space is non-real (ideal) concerning its origin, but real concerning its validity. More precisely: the idea of space (*Raumvorstellung*) is ideal, because *a priori* and necessary, but the scope of its validity is real things (Vaihinger 1922b: 137-8)" (Kanterian 268). Kanterian claims this is actually what Trendelenburg already said in his reply to Fischer.

Following this tradition, the formulation Kanterian gives of the Neglected Alternative is "space and time are objective, concerning the scope of their validity (real things), and subjective, concerning their origin (their status as ideas)" (Kanterian 268). This formulation is a bit

[23] Kant's limitation of his consideration to the space and time of our experience, cognition, and representations may seem *ad hoc* and unnecessary. Yet, physicists do this today. They seek to explain our universe's space and time even though they can envision many different logically possible spaces and times. Moreover, they test "hypotheses" of different ways of conceptualizing our space and time against whether they are supported by empirical observation of our empirical world. This is the case even though it is physically possible our universe exists within another universe whose space and time is different from our own but which we cannot empirically observe.

confusing since Kanterian uses the term “idea” in a non-Kantian way (at least against the leading English translation of the *Critique* by Wood and Guyer). By “idea” Kanterian means “representation” and “concept”.

Adjusting for this, we can interpret Kanterian as saying that our original representations (concepts and intuitions) of space and time are derived from our mind (our form of intuition). Thus, our intuitions and concepts of space and time are subjective and ideal (epistemologically). However, according to Kanterian, these concepts can be objectively valid of something that is “real” meaning transcendentally real (and thus their scope of validity extends outside the subject). In this way our concepts of space and time are both transcendentally ideal (epistemologically) and transcendentally real (ontologically). Thus, proving the Neglected Alternative after all.

I hope by now the errors in this proposal as an interpretation of Kant are evident. The biggest error is in thinking of the space and time under consideration as space and time in general. Kant is concerned from the first sentence of the Transcendental Aesthetic with the space and time of our intuition and experience as that within which we represent objects to ourselves. This is a crucial limitation to understanding Kant’s arguments and claims regarding the transcendental ideality of space and time. Kant is not arguing for or claiming the transcendental ideality of space and time in general in the direct proof, but only of our experience.

Kant has proven the space and time of our experience are only forms of our sensibility. This means not only our representations of space and time come from our sensibility (epistemologically), but also the real space and time structuring the empirical world, to which our representation refer, comes from our sensibility (ontologically). Kant has also proven our concepts of space and time are specifically about the space and time of our experience that does

not exist outside our sensibility. So our concepts of space and time are specific concepts that are not valid beyond our sensibility. This is enough to refute the revised Neglected Alternative as an objection to Kant's transcendental idealism of space and time.

Moreover, as argued in the last section, we cannot form a concept of space or time that does not come from our *a priori* intuition. We lack any other source for these concepts. So we must get our concepts of space and time originally from our *a priori* intuitions of them. This means all our concepts of space and time are specific concepts that can only be about the space and time of our sensibility from which they were derived. This limits the validity of all our concepts of space and time to our sensibility and so they cannot be objectively valid of things in themselves outside our sensibility. Thus, a lot depends on our concepts of space and time being specific concepts.[24]

The metaphysical and transcendental expositions established that our concepts of space and time are specific concepts about our forms of intuition. Our concepts of space and time have distinctive marks that reveal they are about our *a priori* intuitions. These marks mean they are single, unique wholes as infinitely given magnitudes (intuitions and not concepts), they are universal and necessary representations as conditions for anything represented in them (*a priori* representations), and finally they support other synthetic *a priori* cognitions without another explanation for this cognition being possible. All of this means they are about a specific thing

[24] While my interpretation and defense of Kant against the "Neglected Alternative" share similarities with Allison's account (1976), the biggest difference is the most significant. Allison fails to argue that the space and time Kant claims are transcendentally ideal are the space and time of our experience, i.e., that in which we represent objects of our intuition. As originally intutions, the concepts we form of them that are derived from our intuitions are specific concepts about the singular, unique wholes of the space and time of our intuitions. The is the crux of how Kant avoids the Neglected Alternative objection. As seen in the next section, I also disagree with Allision that Kant's transcendental idealism rules out us entertaining thoughts of analogues of space and time (1976: 319-20), what I call something space-like and time-like, in which things in themselves might exist. I think Kant has a different argument against this that depends on a metaphysics of substance.

produced by our faculty of sensibility i.e., our *a priori* forms of intuition, and so are specific concepts.

The marks that reveal our concepts of space and time are specific concepts about our sensibility also mean these concepts cannot be about things in themselves. Things in themselves cannot be cognized *a priori*, i.e., prior to perception because by definition they cannot conform themselves to our cognition (unlike appearances). Further, our cognition of things in themselves can only be empirical and contingent. Yet, our concepts of space and time have the marks of universality and necessity. As lacking *a priority*, universality, and necessity a space and time in itself could not support our synthetic *a priori* cognition in geometry and of alteration/motion.

Furthermore, space and time in themselves could never be necessary conditions for the representation and existence of objects in themselves as our space and time are for objects as appearances. Things in themselves by definition do not depend on external determinations for their existence. Finally, a space and time of things in themselves could not be infinitely given magnitudes in which spaces and times are given only as limitations. This is only a feature of *a priori* intuition, which we could not receive if we empirically perceived things in themselves and got our concepts from that. This is because we cannot empirically perceive an infinity of times or spaces. Thus, our concepts of space and time as infinite given magnitude could never be about things in themselves. All together this means that our concepts of space and time are specifically about *a priori* intuitions of them produced by our sensibility. Thus, any use of our concepts of space and time that do not refer to our form of intuition lack objective validity.

We can better understand why our concepts of space and time cannot be objectively valid of things in themselves if we understand what is required for the "objective validity" of our concepts. Kant says "even space and time, as pure as these concepts are from everything

empirical and as certain as it is that they are represented in the mind completely *a priori*, would still be without objective validity and without sense and significance if their necessary use on the objects of experience were not shown" (A156/B195). Objective validity means having use on an object. Even though our concepts of space and time are pure, *a priori* concepts, Kant claims they need to be shown to have use on objects of experience. This is because concepts can have no *a priori* use on or conformity to objects in themselves (Bxvii, Bxviii).

Our concepts of space and time are specific concepts only about our unique space and time that come from our sensibility. So they cannot be applied outside our sensibility and experience. Therefore, our concepts of space and time cannot have objective validity (reality) of anything outside our experience (transcendentally). Thus, our concepts of space and time cannot have transcendental reality. This refutes the Neglected Alternative as a thesis about the validity of our specific concepts of space and time.

c. Can We Form Concepts of Something Space-like or Time-like as General Concepts That Are Valid?

Kant has proven our space and time and our representations of them only come from our sensibility, our specific concepts cannot be valid of anything outside of our sensibility, and we cannot form general concepts of space and time that would apply to things in themselves from our specific concepts of them. Yet, even granting the limitations on our general concept formation of space and time described in section a above, it still seems we could form a general concept of an absolute space and time resembling our space and time. Such a general concept of something "space-like or time-like" could be formed simply by adding non-sensible properties together, e.g., three dimensions, extension, duration, etc. This is a way to form general concepts

of space and time which are different from our specific concepts of space and time or any general concept derived from them.

This suggestion goes beyond what Kanterian, Vaihinger, and Trendelenburg have in mind as the Neglected Alternative. They thought our concept of space and time and our representations of them could be valid of things in themselves. They were not considering different and more abstract, general concepts of space and time.

These general concepts of an absolute space and time should be able to have some of the same properties of our space and time, although not *a priority* and intuitivity. However, Kant denies these general concepts could have properties like extension and alteration (duration is allowed but not as a time). This is strange. Kant seems to think absolute time is impossible because it is impossible to have a self-subsisting non-entity in itself (B72-3).

Thus, it seems Kant thinks general concepts of absolute space and time are impossible because he adopts a metaphysics of substance with regard to things in themselves. As a result, Kant thinks it is absurd that "two infinite things that are neither substances nor anything really inhering in substances must nevertheless be something existing, indeed the necessary condition of the existence of all things" (B70-1). Kant agrees with Berkeley here regarding the ideality of space and time concerning things in themselves. We do not get a clear argument for this position. However, it can at least be shown that Kant thinks a self-subsisting non-entity as a thing in itself is not thinkable and so an absurdity. One may not think a metaphysics of substance concerning things in themselves is justified. Therefore, one may think it is still possible to form a general concept of something space and time *like* that apply and so are valid of things in themselves.

So perhaps it is logically possible to form a general concept of something resembling our space and time, but not derived from our specific concepts, that is outside our sensibility. Kant

cannot deny this based on the direct proof. Moreover, he has not argued for a metaphysics of substance of things in themselves on which his explicit denial is based. Despite this, Kant has the resources to argue for the transcendental ideality of the content of this space-like or time-like general concepts.

While a general concept of something space-like or time-like that exists outside of us could be formed without contradiction, many properties could not be known by us. These are: universality, necessity, *a priority*, infinity as a given magnitude, being a necessary condition for the existence of objects in it, and supporting our synthetic *a priori* cognition in geometry and of alteration/motion. These properties could not be known of a thing in itself because they depend on having an *a priori* intuition that we can never have of things in themselves. Moreover, objects in themselves by definition cannot have necessary external determinations, e.g., space or time, as a condition of their possibility, but our space is a necessary *a priori* representation that is the condition of the possibility of objects of our experience.

There could never be an absolute space or time about which we could make the justified claim that they are universal and necessary. Knowledge about anything in itself can only be had through empirical observation and induction, which cannot give knowledge of universality and necessity. As Kant says "What is borrowed from experience always has only comparative universality, namely through induction. One would therefore only be able to say that as far as has been observed to date, no space has been found that has more than three dimensions" (A24).[25]

[25] Although this passage only appears in the first edition, one should always remember Kant claims that the second edition "fundamentally alters absolutely nothing in regard to the propositions or even their grounds of proof, but which departs so far from the previous edition in the method of presentation that it could not be managed through interpolations. This small loss, which in any case can be compensated for, if anyone likes, by comparing the first and second editions, is, as I hope, more than compensated for by greater comprehensibility" (Bxlii). So nothing of substance changes in the second edition. Kant only changes the method of presentation by omitting some material, and we are invited to compensate for the small loss of material by comparing the first and second editions.

This means our general concept of something space-like and time-like could never conform to or be about any universal or necessary absolute space or time.

Moreover, this general concept of something space-like or time-like could also never be used (objectively valid) by us even if it could be so thought. So it would be pure speculation and so an empty concept. This is because the only intuition of space and time we have that can apply to objects is our *a priori* intuition that necessarily applies to objects of experience. We are not given any other intuitions of space and time or other objects outside of our experience with which to apply these concepts that could give them objective validity. Thus, these general concepts of something "space-like or time-like" could never be objectively valid.

A universal and necessary space and time outside of our sensibility that would correspond to these general concepts is logically possible. Thus, without noumenal cognition, we cannot deny the real possibility of an absolute space or time that our general concepts of something space-like or time-like could be objectively valid of. Yet, without noumenal cognition we cannot affirm it either. However, cognition and objective validity require conformity of our representations to the objects. Our general concepts of an absolute space and time can only ever coincidentally match up with absolute space or time.[26] This is not conformity based on a relation between representation and object. Yet, we can never be given an intuition of such a space and

[26] I use the expression "match up" to distinguish this relation from the stronger "conformity". Both "match up" and "conformity" describe a relation in which a representation appears the same as something in reality (empirical or transcendental). Matching up simply describes the happenstance that a representation looks like an object. This is analogous to a painter painting a picture of a building only to go out for a walk and encounter a building he has never seen before that looks exactly like the building in his painting. Whereas conformity describes a relation in which a representation looks like an object because of correspondence, i.e., an exchange of information between the representation and object. Conformity can be achieved in two ways. The first is the more familiar way in which our representation conforms to the object in itself. Our representation takes on the object's characteristics from copying the pre-existing object in itself. This is analogous to a painter painting a picture of a building that he is looking at in front of him. The second way is that of Kant's Copernican Revolution in which the object conforms to our representation. In this case, the object's properties and existence are made possible by our *a priori r*epresentations that are conditions for the object's existence. This is analogous to a painter first painting a novel building that then inspires the construction of a building that looks like it.

time to allow for the required conformity. Without such intuition and so cognition, we cannot claim the existence or non-existence of such a space and time.

So, our general concepts of something space or time like is a concept for which no intuition could be given, which is the type of nothing of a thought-entity. As this type of nothing, general concepts of something space-like or time-like are transcendentally ideal in a problematic sense, i.e., we cannot make positive or negative claims about their reality. Thus, for us, our general concepts of something resembling our space or time outside our sensibility always remain nothing as thought-entities, and so are always problematically transcendentally ideal and never transcendentally real. Thus, Kant can refute this version of the Neglected Alternative.

d. One True Instance of Neglect

Kant neglects the alternative at the beginning of the Aesthetic when he sets out the options of what space and time could be at B37-8. Kant proposes space and time could be transcendentally real as actual entities in themselves or relations or determinations of things in themselves. Kant also proposes that space and time could be transcendentally ideal as relations that only attach to our form of intuition alone and thus the subjective constitution of our mind. Kant does not consider whether space and time could be both transcendentally real and ideal. This would require considering whether space and time could attach to the form of our intuition as the subjective constitution of our mind and also be valid of things in themselves as relations or determinations. This is perhaps one instance of Kant briefly neglecting the alternative of the transcendental ideality and reality of space and time.

More likely is that at B37-8 Kant already thinks our representations of space and time could not be of something that exists in our mind and also exists for things in themselves. The likely reason for this is that he already considers space and time to be intuitions and so

understands them as single, unique, wholes. Single, unique wholes can only exist in us or in themselves and thus only be transcendentally real or ideal, but not both. Supporting this, we see that from the first paragraphs of the direct proof at A22-3/B37 Kant takes space and time to be intuitions or means of gaining intuitions.

Thus, from the beginning of the Aesthetic Kant considers our concepts of space and time to be about our intuitions, and in the direct proof he simply makes this feature that was always there clearer through exposition. Specifically, arguments 3 and 4 for space in the second edition (A24-5/B39-40) and 4 and 5 for time (A31-2/B47-8) simply unpack features of the concepts of space and time that distinguish them as originally intuitions instead of concepts. Thus, Kant has good reasons for choosing not to take up the "Neglected Alternative" from the start and has not "ignored, or assumed the falsity of, 3A [the Neglected Alternative]"(2013: 269) as Kanterian has claimed.

e. Conclusion and Transition to Next Section

We can now understand how Kant can assert "the **empirical reality** of space (with respect to all possible outer experience), though to be sure its **transcendental ideality**, i.e., that it is nothing as soon as we leave aside the condition of the possibility of all experience, and take it as something that grounds the things in themselves."(A28/B44). Space has been shown to be an *a priori* intuition. The only way this is possible is if it comes from our faculty of sensibility as its pure form. This means our concept of space is a specific concept about this singular, unique whole that is seated in our mind, and which is a pure form that all objects of experience must conform to in order to be possible. Thus, space is necessarily objectively valid of all objects of outer experience.

Conversely, when we consider space as it would be leaving aside our sensibility as the condition of all possible experience and take space as something that applies to the things in itself then it is nothing. To take something as outside our possible experience and sensibility is to consider it transcendentally. Space is nothing so considered because it is self-contradictory. To think of space as a unique, singular, whole that is seated in our faculty of sensibility and as existing independently of this faculty outside the subject is a contradiction. To be ideal is to be a type of nothing. So if something is nothing when considered transcendentally, i.e., outside our possible experience and sensibility, then it is transcendentally ideal.

Kant is also clear about this in his discussion of time:

> Take objects as they may be in themselves, then time is nothing. It is only of objective validity in regard to appearances, because these are already things that we take as **objects of our senses**, but it is no longer objective if one abstracts from the sensibility of our intuition, thus from the kind of representation that is peculiar to us and speaks of **things in general**. Time is therefore merely a subjective condition for human intuition which is always sensible, i.e., insofar as we are affected by objects, and in itself, outside the subject is nothing. (A35-6/B51-2)

So taking objects in themselves, which are outside the subject, time is nothing. Objective validity means that something can be ascribed to an object. Time only has objective validity in regard to appearances (objects of our sense) because these are objects that exist under the subjective conditions of our sensibility and the kind of representation that is peculiar to us.

This means time is merely a subjective condition for human intuition. This is because time has been exposed as a specific concept about a unique, singular whole that comes from our form of intuition and constitutes our sensible world. Outside of this time is nothing. This is because it is a contradiction to have something that is a subjective condition for human intuition and a kind of representation peculiar to us and then consider it as it would be abstracted from the sensibility of our intuition and kind of representation. This is what takes place when we try to

apply our space and time to objects in themselves that are not under the conditions of our sensibility.

This would seemingly lead one to conclude space and time are only ideal and not objectively valid or real in any sense. This is because it has been shown that space and time do not apply to things in themselves and are nothing in that respect. Instead, they are merely a subjective condition of our mind that only apply to appearances (objects of experience) because we put these *a priori* intuitions into experience as its necessary conditions. However, Kant's position is that space and time are empirically real. How is this possible and what is this reality?

The answer is that space and time are objectively valid and empirically real only if one takes objects of the senses as objects in their own right with their own reality and objectivity. This is an objectivity and reality different from, and not derived from, things in themselves because space and time are not objectively valid of things in themselves but only of appearances. In fact, outside the subject space and time are nothing. Moreover, Kant claims objects of the senses (appearances) that only exist under the subjective conditions of our intuition are still objective and real. Thus, one must give empirical objects, space, and empirical reality their own status as objectively valid and real apart from transcendental reality and objectivity. This is a major metaphysical innovation by Kant, and it demands a very sympathetic reading on the part of the reader. Unfortunately, this is a sympathetic reading that interpreters have not been capable of giving. This is the root cause of the long history of misinterpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism and empirical realism, which will be taken up in detail in Chapters 9 and 10.

Chapter 6: Direct Proof of the Transcendental Ideality of Appearances

1. The Doctrine of the Transcendental Ideality of Appearances

Chapter 4 explained how Kant draws the conclusions of the transcendental ideality and empirical reality of space and time. The last chapter defended this interpretation from a famous old objection: the Neglected Alternative. Now the question is: "Where does this leave objects of sense (appearances) in space and time?" Are they transcendentally ideal? If they are, why, and what does this mean?

In the A edition Kant gives a direct answer to this question: "I understand by the transcendental idealism of all appearances the doctrine that they are all together to be regarded as mere representations and not as things in themselves" (A369). So Kant holds appearances are transcendentally ideal and in the same way as space and time. Transcendentally considered, appearances (objects of sense/experience) are mere representations that are not things in themselves and as mere representations they cannot exist transcendentally outside us.

That Kant accepts this doctrine is obvious from context, but he also goes on to say "now we have already declared ourselves for this transcendental idealism from the outset" (A370). Kant further says "external objects (bodies) are merely appearances, hence also nothing other than a species of my representations, whose objects are something only through these representations, but are nothing separated from them" (A371). Here Kant confirms that external objects, i.e., bodies, are merely appearances and so only a species of my representations, which are nothing separated from my representations. Thus, as with space and time, Kant states outer objects are only our representations and are *nothing* separated from them.

Importantly, this passage supports my interpretation that appearance/objects of sense /experience are objects emergent from our representations. Kant states that external objects in

space are mere appearances that are something only *through* our representations. This supports my claim that objects as appearance become objects after first (logically and ontologically but not temporally) being only our representations and as objects they are nothing separated from our representations. Thus, their objectivity and existence is different from that of things in themselves. Things in themselves are not first only our representations, do not become objects through representations, and are always something separated from our representations.

By "separated from them" Kant means outside our sensibility. Proof of this is given when Kant says of the transcendental idealist that:

> He allows this matter and even its inner possibility to be valid only for appearance – which separated from our sensibility is nothing – matter for him is only a species of representation (intuition), which are called external, not as if they related to objects that are **external in themselves** but because they relate perceptions to space, where all things are external to one another, but that space itself is in us. (A370)

Kant describes space and matter here in the same way he does in his conclusion of the transcendental ideality of space in the Aesthetic. Space and matter are valid only for appearance in the field of our sensibility but separated from our sensibility they are nothing. Matter is only intuition, and intuition is a species of representation. This gives further evidence that intuitions are a species of our representation. Finally, objects in space are external only in the sense of being located separately from each other in space, although they are not external to us and our sensibility. Instead, space is in us.

One may doubt these statements because they occur only in the A edition. However, Kant claims he has not altered anything in the B Edition regarding propositions or grounds of proof of his doctrines but only in presentation (Bxxxvii-Bxxxviii) (Bxlii). Kant even encourages the reader to compare the A and B editions to compensate for the loss of what was omitted in the B edition from the A edition (Bxlii). Even bracketing this important interpretive point, one can find

a lot of textual support for this interpretation of the transcendental ideality of appearances in the B edition.

2. The Transcendental Ideality of Appearances in Space (Outer Objects)

In the A edition, Kant claims that appearances are transcendentally ideal. This means appearances are mere representations of our sensibility that are nothing outside our sensibility and so not things in themselves. In the B edition, there is textual support for this interpretation of the transcendental ideality of outer objects as appearances in space when Kant states:

> The transcendental concept of appearances in space, on the contrary, is a critical reminder that absolutely nothing that is intuited in space is a thing in itself, and that space is not a form that is proper to anything in itself, but rather that objects in themselves are not known to us at all, and that what we call outer objects are nothing other than mere representations of our sensibility, whose form is space, but whose true correlate, i.e., the thing in itself, is not and cannot be cognized through them, but is also never asked after in experience. (A30/B45)[27]

First, we see nothing intuited in space is a thing in itself, which means outer appearances in space are not things in themselves. I take this to show a metaphysical separation of appearance and thing in itself. Not only that, but things in themselves are not known to us at all, which is Kant's famous noumenal ignorance thesis. Instead, we see that outer objects as appearances in space are "nothing other than mere representations of our sensibility" and so are nothing outside our sensibility. This further confirms the metaphysical separation of appearances and things in

[27] This passage precludes Stang's Ecumenical Reading of Kant's Idealism. This passage makes clear 1) nothing we intuit in space is a thing in itself 2) we know nothing of objects in themselves; 3) we do not cognize anything of the thing in itself through outer objects in space or in experience. Conversely, Stang says "it is one and the same reality that we first think as the reality of noumenal things and then cognize as the reality of phenomenal things. We first think it purely intellectually and then cognize it spatiotemporally. Although the objects we merely think as the loci of this noumenal reality are non-identical to the objects we cognize (as per my earlier argument), it is the same thinghood, the same intensively gradable causal force, that we merely think in things in themselves and cognize in spatiotemporal things. Phenomenal and noumenal things are distinct objects but have the same thinghood, the same reality" (Stang 2022: 323). By positing appearances (spatiotemporal things) and things in themselves as having the same thinghood and reality, Stang's interpretation would have Kant claiming the opposite of A30/B45, namely: 1) we intuit the thinghood/reality (intensively gradable causal force) of a thing in itself in space, 2) we know the thinghood, reality of an object in itself; 3) we know this thinghood, reality of an object in itself through cognizing outer objects in space and experience.

themselves. Finally, Kant cuts off any possibility that we can cognize the thing in itself through outer appearances or even inquire about it in experience. This shows the complete cognitive separation between outer appearance/experience and things in themselves.

Further supporting these points Kant states:

> The representation of a body in intuition, on the contrary, contains nothing at all that could pertain to an object in itself, but merely the appearance of something and the way in which we are affected by it; and this receptivity of our cognitive capacity is called sensibility and remains worlds apart from the cognition of the object in itself even if one might see through to the very bottom of it (the appearance). (A44/B61)

This passage confirms the complete separation of not just the object as appearance and thing in itself but also their properties. In outer appearance there is "nothing at all that could pertain to an object in itself", which precludes the representation in appearance of any properties that might pertain to the thing in itself. Nothing of objects in themselves comes through to us in our representations of outer objects in space. Their complete separation as objects and properties is the result of the radical divide our sensibility creates. Kant describes this divide by saying our sensibility remains "worlds apart" from any cognition of the object in itself. This divide holds no matter how deeply we investigate appearances. Our sensibility creates the radical divide of different worlds of cognition: a world of sense and an intelligible world. As I will argue, these are also different metaphysical worlds.

3. The Transcendental Ideality of Appearances in General

So Kant considers *outer* appearances to be transcendentally ideal in the same sense as space and time, i.e., as mere representations of sensibility that are nothing outside of our sensibility. Kant takes the same position on appearances in general. Kant states about appearances in general that:

> If one stands by it (as commonly happens) and does not regard that empirical intuition as in turn mere appearance (as ought to happen), so that there is nothing to be encountered in it that pertains to anything in itself, then our transcendental distinction is lost, and we believe ourselves to cognize things in themselves, though we have nothing to do with

> anything except appearances anywhere (in the world of sense) even in the deepest research into its objects. (A45/B62-3)

Kant makes clear that all empirical intuition is only mere appearance. This means there is nothing to be encountered in empirical intuition that has to do with anything in itself. So it is not just space and time that are mere appearances. Anything that appears in space and time (the world of sense) are also mere appearances, which includes all objects of sense. By claiming all we have to do with are appearances in the world of sense, Kant implies the absence of things in themselves from the world of sense and so a metaphysical separation of things in themselves and the intelligible world from appearances and the world of sense. Finally, Kant reiterates that no matter how deeply we investigate objects as appearances we do not encounter things in themselves at all. Thus, any object that appears in the world of sense is not a thing in itself, or in dealing with appearances we would also be dealing with things in themselves.

This is also another statement of Kant's property dualism. Nothing comes through to us in our intuition of objects as appearance that pertains to things in themselves; thus, no properties of things in themselves come through to us.[28] We do not cognize anything about things in themselves, including through appearances or empirical intuitions, which means our representations of objects in appearance do not conform to things in themselves.

Thus, appearances must be objects independent of things in themselves *qua* their objectivity and their properties. Cognition requires forming a representation that conforms to the object of cognition. Since we do not cognize things in themselves but only appearances, this means appearances must be objects in their own right apart from things in themselves. If this

[28] This passage rules out the metaphysical (ontological) two-aspect theory. This interpretation is defined by claiming "Kant's distinction between appearances and things in themselves amounts to a distinct between two kinds of properties that both belong to the same objects" (Rosefeldt 2022: 25) and "appearance properties are properties of objects that exits independently of our minds" (Rosefeldt 2022: 25). Supporters of this theory are Dryer (1966), Langton (1998), Collins (1999), Allais (2007, 2015), Rosefeldt (2007, 2022), Adickes (1924), and Westphal (1968).

were not the case, then to cognize an object as appearance we would have to cognize a thing in itself, which Kant denies. In summary, in whatever way things in themselves and appearances are the "same", they do not share their properties, objectivity, reality, or existence. This means the object *qua* thing in itself is completely metaphysically different than the object *qua* appearance.

So, the "transcendental distinction" Kant refers to here is a fundamental metaphysical distinction within the same object. The object as appearance vs. object as thing in itself distinction is so difficult to understand because it describes a difference and a sameness. The sameness, as we will see in Chapter 10, involves sharing a *concept* of an object in general. The difference is a metaphysical distinction of properties, objectivity, reality, and existence. Things in themselves and appearances are the same in general concept and different metaphysically.

Thus, the transcendental distinction is a radical distinction within the concept of an object of two totally different ways of being of an object. As a result, the difference between an object as appearance and as thing in itself should be emphasized more than their sameness. To call them two completely different objects is false but so is calling them two aspects of the same object. Both capture elements of the truth. The true relation involves sameness of concept of an object in general, which precedes being something or nothing (A290/B346), and two completely different ways of being something or nothing.

Finally, Kant also states that all our intuition, appearances, space, and time are transcendentally ideal by saying:

> We have therefore wanted to say that all our intuition is nothing but the representation of appearance; that the things that we intuit are not in themselves what we intuit them to be, nor are their relations so constituted in themselves as they appear to us; and that if we remove our own subject or even only the subjective constitution of the senses in general, then all constitution, all relations of objects in space and time, indeed space and time themselves would disappear, and as appearances they cannot exist in themselves, but only

> in us. What may be the case with objects in themselves and abstracted from all this receptivity of our sensibility remains entirely unknown to us. We are acquainted with nothing except our way of perceiving them, which is peculiar to us… (A42/B59)

In this passage, Kant summarizes the conclusions of the Aesthetic. The main conclusion is the transcendental ideality of space, time, and appearances, i.e., that they are nothing outside of us and our sensibility. Here Kant tries to make this conclusion clearer. The most important statement in this regard is that objects as appearance, space, and time, do not exist in themselves but only in us. To be transcendentally ideal is to exist only in the subject. So appearances do not share existence with things in themselves. This supports my interpretation of the distinction between appearances and things in themselves as metaphysical, which here includes a different way of existence/actuality.

All our intuition is only the representation of appearances that are not in themselves what we intuit them to be. So things in themselves do not exist in us but only appearances do that are not what things are in themselves. Appearances, space, and time exist only in us and not in themselves because they depend on the subjective constitution of our sense for their existence. The extremity of the division in existence between objects as appearance, space, and time and things in themselves is captured when Kant asserts that space and time and all constitution and relations of objects of appearance within them disappear if one removes the subjective constitution of our senses. Furthermore, the metaphysical division in existence between appearances, space, and time and things in themselves extends to the entire world of sense and the intelligible world. This is because the world of sense simply is the sum total of all appearances, space, and time (A506-7/B535).

So we see that the transcendental ideality of space, time, and appearances includes non-existence outside of us and our sensibility, while only existing in us. Finally, the epistemological

aspect of this division is no less extreme. Objects in themselves, i.e., objects outside our sensibility, are entirely unknown to us and nothing of things in themselves is in our intuition but only appearance. This means none of the properties or relations of appearances that we cognize represent the properties and relations of things in themselves. Instead, we are only acquainted with our peculiar way of perceiving objects in themselves.[29]

4. The Direct Proof in the Aesthetic for the Transcendental Ideality of Appearances (Objects of Perception)

I have established that Kant holds the doctrine of the transcendental ideality of appearances and explained what this means. Now I will consider Kant's argument for this position in the Aesthetic.

Kant argues:

Conclusion: "You must therefore give your object *a priori* in intuition, and ground your synthetic propositions on this."

First Premise: "If there did not lie in you a faculty for intuiting *a priori*; if this subjective condition regarding form were not at the same time the universal *a priori* condition under which alone the object of this (outer) intuition is itself possible; if the object (the triangle) were something in itself without relation to your subject then how could you say that what necessarily lies in your subjective conditions for constructing a triangle must also necessarily pertain to the triangle in itself?"

[29] Andrew Chignell thinks at A42/B59 Kant is claiming that we perceive things as they are in themselves, and only their "non-appearing" features are unknown to us (355: 2022). I think this is a misreading. Kant actually says we are only acquainted with our way of perceiving things in themselves, which is a way of perceiving peculiar to us. So he is saying we perceive nothing of things in themselves and what we perceive is contributed entirely by our way of perceiving. Further, Kant says that everything that may be the case with objects in themselves and abstracted from all this receptivity of our sensibility is entirely unknown to us and so nothing shines through to us of the things in themselves. This is actually a passage that strongly counts against Chignell's "One-World Phenomenalism".

Second Premise: "for you could not add to your concept (of three lines) something new (the figure) that must thereby necessarily be encountered in the object,"

Third Premise: "since this is given prior to your cognition and not through it."

Fourth Premise: "If, therefore, space (and time as well) were not a mere form of your intuition that contains *a priori* conditions under which alone things could be outer objects for you, which are nothing in themselves without these subjective conditions, then you could make out absolutely nothing synthetic and *a priori* about outer objects."

Hidden Premise: We have synthetic *a priori* cognition of objects of experience regarding space and time.

Conclusion: "It is therefore indubitably certain and not merely possible or even probable that space and time, as necessary conditions of all (outer and inner) experience, are merely subjective conditions of all our intuition, in relation to which therefore all objects are mere appearances and not things given for themselves in this way; about these appearances, further, much may be said *a priori* that concerns them but nothing whatsoever about the things that may ground them." (A48-9/B65-6)

This argument ultimately concludes in favor of the transcendental ideality of objects of our experience (appearances). This means these objects must be mere appearances that are not things given in themselves in our intuitions. Objects of experience are only objects under the subjective *a priori* conditions of our intuition "under which alone the object of this (outer) intuition is itself possible" and "are nothing in themselves without these subjective conditions". Kant reasons to this conclusion from the already established transcendental ideality and empirical reality of space and time. The crux of Kant's argument is that space and time and their relations have been proven to be mere subjective conditions of our intuition, but we cognize

objects of our intuition as having these properties objectively. Moreover, our objective cognition of objects of our intuition in space and time is *a priori* (prior to the perception of the objects and universal and necessary) and synthetic.

Kant wonders how to explain our objective, synthetic *a priori* cognition of objects of our intuition regarding space and time. According to Kant, the only way this is possible is if the subjective conditions of space and time as forms of our intuition are "at the same time the universal *a priori* condition under which alone the object of this (outer) intuition is itself possible" as an object. Yet, if the object of our intuition, in this case a triangle, were a thing in itself outside of us then we could not say that what is a necessary subjective condition for us to construct a triangle also necessarily pertains objectively to the triangle in itself.

The only way the subjective conditions of our intuition can be the universal *a priori* conditions under which the object of intuition is possible is if the object of our intuition is merely an appearance and not a thing in itself. A thing in itself's possibility as an object cannot depend on our subjective conditions of intuition, while a mere appearance can. This then is the only way to explain the synthetic *a priori* cognitions we have of objects of our intuition regarding space and time.

The crux of the direct proof for the transcendental ideality of objects as appearances is that we have **cognition** of objects of our intuition. Cognition means we objectively represent to ourselves an object and its properties. In cognition, we do not merely represent the object of intuition to ourselves as having these properties subjectively even though it does not have them objectively. Moreover, our cognition of an object of intuition is *a priori* and synthetic. As *a priori*, our cognition is prior to our perception of the object and yet universally and necessarily

encountered in the object. As synthetic, our cognition is not contained in the concept of this object.

Given all the limitations of this specific type of cognition (synthetic *a priori* yet objective), the only explanation for it is that space and time are subjective, *a priori* conditions of our intuition that are also the necessary conditions for the possibility of objects of our intuition as an objects. Further, objects of our intuition can only be made possible by subjective conditions of our intuition if all objects of our intuitions are mere appearances that exist only in us and are not things in themselves that exist outside us. Objects of our intuition (appearances) being nothing outside us and our sensibility is just what it is to be transcendentally ideal. Thus, the transcendental ideality of appearances is proven.

5. The Direct Proof in the Antinomies for the Transcendental Ideality of Appearances

In the Antinomies, Kant gives a similar direct argument for the transcendental ideality of appearances (objects of experience) that appear in space and time. This argument also depends on having first established the transcendental ideality of space and time. As was shown, the transcendental ideality of space and time was established in the metaphysical and transcendental expositions of the concepts of space and time. The argument from the ideality of space and time to the ideality of appearances in the Antinomies is:

> For that it [an appearance] should exist in itself without relation to our senses and possible experience, could of course be said if what we were talking about were a thing in itself. But what we are talking about is merely an appearance in space and time, neither of which is a determination of things in themselves, but only of our sensibility; hence what is in them (appearances) are not something in itself, but mere representations, which if they are not given in us (in perception) are encountered nowhere at all. (A493-4/B522)

The argument's premise is (1) It has been proven that our space and time are not determinations of things in themselves but only of our sensibility. It's conclusion is (C) Therefore what appears in space and time, i.e., all appearances, are not something in themselves but mere representations

that only exist in us (in our sensibility in perception). The conclusion encompasses everything in space and time, including all objects as appearances. Kant even says about the existence of objects of experience (appearances) that "objects of experience are **never** given **in themselves**, but only in experience and they do not exist at all outside it" (A492/B521). Something that only exists in us and is nothing in itself outside of our sensibility and possible experience is transcendentally ideal. So objects as appearances (objects of experience) in space and time are transcendentally ideal.

This argument depends on space and time as the forms of our intuition being so radically differentiating that nothing that appears in them represents anything in itself. By "radically differentiating" I mean that our forms of intuition prevent anything of things in themselves from being represented in our sensible intuition and as a result create a closed world of sense. This may not be fully convincing. Kant recognizes this and provides an indirect proof of the transcendental ideality of appearances in the Antinomies to give a more intuitive proof. I will go over this indirect proof in the next chapter.

6. Conclusion

Now that objects as appearances, space, and time have been proven to be transcendentally ideal the pressing question is how can they be empirically real? The answer is only if there is an objective world that is constituted from the representations of our mind. This is because transcendentally ideal appearances, space, and time are nothing and do not exist outside of us except as mere representations. For these mere representations to be empirically real there must be an objective and real world that is formed from our representations and exists only in us.

This objective and real world is the empirical world: the world of our senses and experience. This world is objective and real but it (all the objects in it, space, time, and the laws

that structure it) is constituted by the representations and the subjective conditions of representation of our mind. The only way the world of sense and all it contains can be real is if it is a metaphysically independent world. By "metaphysically independent" I mean this world and the things within it have their own existence, reality, properties, and objectivity that is not essentially dependent on transcendental existence, reality, properties, and objectivity outside of our sensibility. This is because, as has been shown over the last few chapters, space, time, and objects as appearance, i.e., everything we consider to be empirically real, are nothing and do not exist at all outside our sensibility and experience. Instead, so transcendentally considered, they are mere representations and so ideal.

This is Kant's dualist position of transcendental ideality and empirical reality. Kant holds objects of our experience, the space and time of our experience, the empirical laws of our experience, and our entire world of experience is real and objective. At the same time he holds, they are all constituted from our representations. This world is real and objective when one experiences things from within it, but it is nothing or a mere representation of our mind when viewed from outside it and our sensibility. I will further explain Kant's empirical realism in Chapter 9.

Chapter 7: Kant's Indirect Proof of the Transcendental Ideality of Appearances

1. Introduction

The last chapter dealt with Kant's direct proof of the transcendental ideality of appearances. Kant also provides an indirect proof of the transcendental ideality of appearances (A506-7/B534-5). In this chapter, I offer an interpretation of this proof to support my interpretation of transcendental idealism. I also aim to address two issues in the secondary literature on the indirect proof: (1) that it is circular, and (2) that it is unclear how transcendental idealism can prevent the idea of an absolute totality from being applied to the world. I provide an interpretation that argues against these points and tries to defend Kant. I conclude that the indirect proof leads us to interpret transcendental idealism as a metaphysical doctrine about the way objects of experience (appearances) exist when they are considered transcendentally, i.e., they exist only in representation.

Many distinguished Kant scholars have offered interpretations of the indirect proof, most notably Allen Wood, Henry Allison, Paul Guyer, and Michelle Grier. Unlike these interpreters I think this proof is only concerned with proving the transcendental ideality of appearances and not transcendental idealism in general. Unlike Guyer, I do not think Kant's indirect proof is circular. Unlike Allison, I think the indirect proof is an argument for a metaphysical doctrine. Lastly, unlike Wood, I think the category of totality is less applicable to appearances than to things in themselves and understanding why is the crux of the indirect proof.

I hope to show that the indirect proof successfully argues for the transcendental ideality of appearances, given Kant's own terms, with one condition. The condition is that Kant's proofs

for both the thesis and antithesis of any one of the antinomies are successful.[30] If Kant has established that condition then he has proven the world is neither finite nor infinite and so not an unconditioned whole. This shows the world (as the sum total of all appearances) does not exist as a thing in itself, and so appearances do not exist as things in themselves. Denying that the world of sense, and so all appearances, is a thing in itself means that the world of sense must be ***only*** an appearance, which proves the transcendental ideality of appearances.

2. Background for Kant's Indirect Proof of the Transcendental Ideality of Appearances

a. The Existence of Appearances As Mere Representations and Their Non-Existence as Things in Themselves

What is the goal of the indirect proof? Kant's indirect proof aims at "proving indirectly the transcendental ideality of appearances" (A506/B534). Appearances are defined by Kant as "objects of perception" (A182/B225) and "something existing in space or time" (A166/B207). Kant also equates objects of experience and appearances (Bxxvii)(A239/B298).[31] In the indirect proof Kant is trying to prove the transcendentally ideality of objects of our experience, i.e., objects given to us through perception that appear in space and time.

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30 Although proving this is beyond the scope of this dissertation, helpful discussions of the arguments of the antinomies can be found in Al-Aẓm (1972), Walsh (1975:195-214), Grier (2001:172-229), Malzkorn (1999), and Wood (2010).

31 Kant has been noted as using "appearance" in two different senses. One is as object of experience or empirical object, which is the sense I take him to mean here. The other is said by Rosefeldt to be "sensible mental contents that have not been determined by the subject as relating to such empirical objects" (Rosefeldt 2022: 31), who also cites Prauss (1971: 13ff.), Longuenesse (1998: 25), and Willaschek (2001: 682–83*).* The second sense is given when Kant says "the undetermined object of an empirical intuition" (A20/B34). Appearance in this sense contains matter as corresponding to the manifold of sensation, but also contains a form as the relations that allow us to intuit the matter as ordered in certain relations. As a result, I find Rosefeldt's definition not quite right, and to instead be describing the sensible manifold. I prefer to define "appearance" as a putative object that appears to us in our perception that can either be undetermined or determined (object of experience). Thus, I do not think Kant waivers between two meanings, but appearance is a broader concept that encompasses these two meanings. What unites both senses is the appearance is an object insofar as it is given to us in sensibility, i.e., what "pertains to it only in relation to the senses or in general to the subject"... and "is always to be encountered in its relation to the subject and is inseparable from the representation of the object, is appearance" (B70).

The conclusion of the indirect proof tells us what is meant by the "transcendental ideality" of appearances. What is meant is that appearances "are nothing outside our representations" (A507/B535). Kant defines 'representation' as "a mere determination of our mind" (A50/B74), (A34/B50). So the indirect proof aims to establish appearances as existing only in our representations (our mind) and being nothing outside of them (not things in themselves).

Supporting this reading, we see that transcendental idealism is defined in the Antinomy of Pure Reason as the doctrine that "all objects of an experience possible for us are nothing but appearances, i.e., mere representations, which, as they are represented, as extended beings or series of alterations, have outside our thoughts no existence grounded in itself" (A491/B519). So transcendental idealism is about how "objects of experience" (appearances) are nothing but appearances, i.e., mere representations, which means they "have outside our thoughts no existence grounded in itself" and so is a doctrine about the existence (and lack of existence) of appearances. So in arguing for the transcendental ideality of appearances in the indirect proof, Kant is trying to show that appearances exist as mere representations but do not exist in themselves outside our representations.

Further support for this reading of the indirect proof as a metaphysical inquiry about the way appearances exist is based on the antinomy of pure reason being removed:

> By showing that it is merely dialectical and a conflict due to an illusion arising from the fact that one has applied the idea of absolute totality, which is valid only as a condition of things in themselves, to appearances that exist only in representation, and that, if they constitute a series, exist in the successive regress but otherwise do not exist at all. (A506/B534).

Thus, Kant takes the resolution of the antinomies, which provides us with the basis of the indirect proof, to consist in understanding a fact about how appearances exist. This fact is that

appearances exist differently from how things in themselves exist, namely appearances "exist only in representation".

I take inquiries that are concerned with existence to be metaphysical. So I disagree with Allison who claims the indirect proof must be seen not as an argument for a metaphysical doctrine (2004: 395), (Wood et al. 2007: 30). I see the indirect proof as a decisive battleground for proving or failing to prove transcendental idealism as the metaphysical doctrine that appearances exist only in representation, i.e., are nothing outside our representations, and so I disagree with P.F. Strawson (1966: 206).

How will Kant conduct this proof? We learn how Kant will go about proving the transcendental ideality of appearances when he says:

> The idea of an absolute totality concerns nothing other than the exposition of appearances, hence it does not concern the understanding's pure concept of a whole of things in general. Thus appearances are considered here as given, and reason demands the absolute completeness of the conditions of their possibility, insofar as these conditions constitute a series, hence an absolutely (i.e., in all respects) complete synthesis... (A416/B443)

Appearances are our given. The world at issue in the indirect proof is the "sum total of all appearances" (A506/B534), i.e., the world of sense. Kant is trying to see if appearances can be given along with the absolutely complete synthesis of the conditions of their possibility *qua* series in an absolute totality (the world, i.e., the sum total of all appearances, given as a complete whole) and so is a thing in itself, or whether the world, i.e., the sum total of appearances, is always an indeterminate synthesis and so is "nothing but" appearance, i.e., mere representation. If the former is correct, then one who thinks appearances exist as things in themselves is right, but if the latter is correct the transcendental idealist about appearances is right.

Who is Kant seeking to convince with this proof? Kant says that he offers this indirect proof of the transcendental ideality of appearances "if perhaps someone did not have enough in

the direct proof in the Transcendental Aesthetic" (A506/B534). So this is "someone" who was not convinced by the direct proof for the transcendental ideality of appearances in the Aesthetic. This is also someone who accepts Kant's arguments in the Antinomies since Kant's indirect proof is based on them.

Kant says of the Antinomy of Pure Reason that "it turned out that it rested on a misunderstanding, namely that of taking, in accord with common prejudice, appearances for things in themselves" (A740/B768). Moreover, Kant thinks his indirect proof "uncovers a falsehood lying in this presupposition" and this presupposition is "that appearances, or a world of sense comprehending all of them within itself, are things in themselves" (A507/B535). So with the indirect proof Kant is trying to convince "someone" who holds the prejudice that appearances are things in themselves of the transcendental ideality of appearances (i.e., appearances are not things in themselves, but instead are merely representations). It is tempting to interpret this "someone" as a transcendental realist, but we will see there is good reason not to do so.

b. The Indirect Proof Is Not Circular

In the last section, I argued that the indirect proof is concerned only with appearances. For the purposes of the indirect proof, I defined 'appearances' as "objects of experience", i.e., objects we perceive that appear to us in space and time. Finally, I claimed the indirect proof's aim is to prove appearances exist in the way the transcendental idealist claims, i.e., as mere representations.

We are now in a position to confront a strong objection to the indirect proof provided by Paul Guyer that threatens to derail it before it gets going. Guyer charges Kant's indirect proof with being circular. By interpreting the indirect proof as only attempting to prove the

transcendental ideality of appearances and not space and time, I am suggesting a way around this objection.

Guyer says that in the indirect proof Kant "already identifies objects in space and time with representations" (1987: 406), and so Kant is assuming what he is trying to prove. Kant does limit the indirect proof to "appearances, or a world of sense comprehending all of them within itself" (A507/B535). Yet, I do not think we should read Kant as identifying appearances (objects in space and time) with representations at the start of the indirect proof. Instead, I read the indirect proof as neutral at its start as to whether appearances are either 1) representations of objects in themselves, i.e., objects of experience exist outside our representation of them in appearance (transcendental realism about appearances), or 2) mere representations, i.e., objects of experience do not exist outside our representations in appearance (transcendental idealism about appearances).[32]

Moreover, by specifically framing his indirect proof as "proving indirectly the transcendental ideality of appearances" (A506/B534), Kant avoids Guyer's other circularity charge that he assumes "that space and time are only representations" (Guyer 1987: 407), while simultaneously trying to prove this.[33] Guyer is right that Kant assumes space and time are only forms of our intuition in the antinomies,[34] and thus assumes they are transcendentally ideal.

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[32] Ian Proops removes all mention of "appearances" in his reconstruction of the indirect proof, and only talks about the world (2021: 272). This seems to be because he, along with Guyer, holds appearances to be by definition mere representations (2021: 273). However, Proops' reconstruction omits the first conclusion of the indirect proof: "thus it is also false that the world (sum total of all appearances) is a whole existing in itself"(A506-7/B535). This conclusion makes it clear that the world at issue in the indirect proof is defined as a sum total of all appearances and so appearances and the world cannot be separated. This conclusion also makes clear that the proof is meant to prove that the sum total of appearances does not exist as a thing in itself. Instead, as the second conclusion states, appearances are proven to be "nothing outside our representations" (A507/B535). Thus, appearances are not by definition mere representations in the indirect proof, but this is what the proof aims to establish.

[33] Bennet (1974: 124-5) takes a similar approach, as does Smith (2003: 485).

[34] That Kant assumes the transcendental ideality of space and time in the indirect proof is clear from examining the arguments and remarks on the antinomies. See especially: "Space is merely a form of outer intuition (formal intuition), but not a real object that can be outwardly intuited" (A429/B457), "thus one gets time and space out of the way. But here we are talking only about the *mundus phenomenon* and its magnitude, where one can in no way

However, I suggest Kant does not aim to prove the transcendental ideality of space and time in the indirect proof.[35] Kant only aims to prove the transcendental ideality of ***appearances*** in the indirect proof. Appearances and space and time are not identical, but are related as "matter and its form" (A429/B457), see also (A454/B482), (A20/B34). Appearances are the objects of perception that appear in space and time, and space and time are that in which these appearances are represented (intuited)(A490/B518).

So, I do not think Kant is guilty of Guyer's circularity charge that he "assume[s] precisely what is supposed to follow from the indirect proof of transcendental idealism" (Guyer 1987: 407), namely "that appearances in general are nothing outside our representations" (A507/B535). This is because of the neutrality of Kant's definition of appearances between conceptions 1) and 2) above, and the fact he does not claim to prove the transcendental ideality of space and time in the indirect proof. Instead, we should read Kant in a way that avoids circularity. We can do this by reading Kant as taking both the transcendental idealist and someone who holds the common prejudice that appearances are things in themselves to accept that we have perceptions of things in space and time, i.e., we are given appearances. Once the appearance to us of things in space and time and a world of sense is accepted, there still remains the further question of whether

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abstract from the intended conditions of sensibility without removing the being itself"(A433/B461), and "appearance (in which alone time is possible, as its form)"(A454/B482).

[35] Seemingly countering this claim, Kant writes in his *Notes on Metaphysics* that "The ideality of space and time is thereby indirectly proved, since self-contradictions follow from the opposite" (R5962 1785-89, AA 18:403). I do not think this should be interpreted as counting against my claim that Kant does not aim to prove the transcendental ideality of space and time with the indirect proof in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A506-7/B534-5). My reasons are 1) this claim does not appear in the *Critique* itself; 2) it appears in unpublished notes and fragments; 3) it is by no means clear what "thereby" refers to 4) the sentences preceding this sentence discuss Kant's resolution of the mathematical and dynamical antinomies, which is a resolution based on assuming transcendental idealism; 5) it is not clear whether this refers to the indirect proof given in the *Critique* or is a new indirect proof meant only to prove the ideality of space and time. As a result, I suggest we should read this note as Kant entertaining the idea of proving indirectly the transcendental ideality of space and time (perhaps after the publication of the second edition) without this proof being furnished either in the notes or in the *Critique*. Therefore, at the very least, this note should not preclude reading the indirect proof at A506-7/B534-5 as not aiming to prove the transcendental ideality of space and time.

these appearances represent things in themselves or are "only" representations with no existence outside our minds.

Moreover, as argued in the last section, Kant takes the opponent he is trying to convince with the indirect proof to only hold the common prejudice of transcendental realism about appearances, i.e., that appearances are things in themselves. There is no evidence that Kant's opponent in the indirect proof takes space and time to be transcendentally real, but we have good reasons to read them as taking space and time to be transcendentally ideal. These are that Kant only describes the indirect proof as "proving indirectly the transcendental ideality of appearances" (A506/B507) and only draws the conclusion from this proof that "appearances in general are nothing outside our representations, which is just what we mean by their transcendental ideality" (A407/B535). Thus, the indirect proof *prima facie* only has to do with the transcendental ideality of appearances and not space and time.

Furthermore, the indirect proof is based on the antinomies, which assume the transcendental ideality of space and time (see footnote 5). So while reading the indirect proof as proving the transcendental ideality of space and time would make it circular, we should not choose this reading. We should choose against this reading on the ground of interpretive charity. We should not prefer an interpretation of a philosopher that has the philosopher arguing in a circle if we can read the philosopher's argument otherwise. I have provided a consistent alternative interpretation that is not circular. So we should prefer my reading.

c. Objection to My Proposed Non-Circular Reading

To counter my reading, one could object that we cannot separate the transcendental ideality of space and time and appearances. I have shown above that Kant does conceive of them as matter and form, thus not as identical. Yet, can the ideality of appearances be conceptually distinguished

from the ideality of space and time? We can look at Kant's definition of transcendental idealism given in the first edition of the *Critique*:

> I must first remark that one would necessarily have to distinguish a twofold idealism. I understand by the **transcendental idealism** of all appearances the doctrine that they are all together to be regarded as mere representations and not as things in themselves, and accordingly that space and time are only sensible forms of our intuition, but not determinations given for themselves. (A369)

Kant defines his transcendental idealism as twofold. He starts by defining "the transcendental idealism of all appearances" as being regarded as mere representations and not things in themselves. Distinguished from this idealism about all appearances is an idealism about space and time as only sensible forms of our intuition. Both of these claims, 1) of the ideality of all appearances and 2) of the ideality of space and time, make up Kant's twofold transcendental idealism. Thus, there is a conceptual distinction baked into Kant's transcendental idealism between the claim of a transcendental idealism about appearances and one about space and time. One can think the transcendental ideality of space and time without thinking the transcendental ideality of appearances.

The further question is whether the transcendental ideality of space and time directly entails the transcendental ideality of appearances in them. If so, this would make the indirect proof of the transcendental ideality of appearances superfluous since it assumes the transcendental ideality of space and time. Kant says of appearances and space that "the empirical intuition is not put together out of appearances and space...rather it is only bound up with it in one and the same empirical intuition, as matter and form" (A429/B457). This suggests a conceptual independence but a metaphysical dependence. Further, Kant's twofold transcendental idealism includes both elements and from the transcendental ideality of appearances he infers the transcendental ideality of space and time with the use of the word "accordingly"(A369), but he

does not infer directly from the transcendental ideality of space and time to the transcendental ideality of appearances. Yet, he does infer directly from the transcendental ideality of space and time to the transcendental ideality of appearances in the direct proof in the Antinomies (A493-4/B522).

Moreover, Kant defines transcendental realism as that "which regards space and time as something given in themselves (independent of our sensibility). The transcendental realist therefore represents appearances (if their reality is conceded) as things in themselves, which would exist independently of us and our sensibility" (A369). The doctrine of transcendental realism claims that space and time are something given in themselves independently of our sensibility. The transcendental realist infers directly from the transcendental reality of space and time to the transcendental reality of appearances within them. This further suggests the metaphysical dependence of appearances on space and time and so suggests the transcendental ideality of space and time directly entails the transcendental ideality of appearances.

At minimum, this means that if Kant were arguing in the indirect proof against a transcendental realist, then Kant would be begging the question even if not circular.[36] This is because Kant assumes the transcendental ideality of space and time in the antinomies, bases the indirect proof on the antinomies, and the doctrine of transcendental realism assumes the reality of space and time. Thus, Kant is assuming a premise in the indirect proof (space and time are transcendentally ideal) with which the transcendental realist disagrees.

[36] The distinction in fallacies between begging the question and circularity is expressed by Kant in the *Jäsche Logic* as between *petitio principii* and *circulus in probando*. Kant says "by a *petitio principii* is understood the acceptance of a proposition as ground of proof as an immediately certain proposition, although it still requires a proof. And one commits a *circle in proof* if one lays at the basis of its *own* proof the very proposition that one wanted to prove" (LL, AA 9:135).

My response is that Kant avoids begging the question against the transcendental realist in the indirect proof because he is not trying to refute the metaphysical doctrine of transcendental realism with this proof. Instead, he is merely trying to disabuse "someone" of their common prejudice that appearances are things in themselves, and convince them appearances are mere representations. This is about exposing a transcendental illusion through argument.[37] The transcendental illusion at issue in the indirect proof is taking appearances to be things in themselves. While this forms a key plank of the doctrine of transcendental realism, Kant's indirect proof is not trying to refute the doctrine as a coherent theory.

Kant is simply trying to make "someone", not a professed transcendental realist who subscribes to that theory with all of its claims, aware that they are being duped by an illusion. Even after becoming aware of this one does not stop being deceived by this illusion, but only recognizes it as an illusion and so renders it harmless (A298/B354, A422/B449-50). The aim of the indirect proof is to expose an illusion, which is different from trying to refute someone who holds the doctrine of transcendental realism with all of its entailments.[38] We should no more consider someone who is duped by transcendental illusion to hold a sophisticated metaphysical doctrine than we would consider someone who is duped by an optical illusion to hold a sophisticated theory of optics.

Kant makes it clear his goal is only to remove this transcendental illusion, or false presupposition, with the indirect proof when he says (two paragraphs before the proof) that:

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[37] This also solves the potential problem of the indirect proof being superfluous if the transcendental ideality of space and time entails the transcendental ideality of appearances. The indirect proof is still useful in such a case to help disabuse someone who, while taking space and time to be transcendentally ideal, is still duped by the transcendental illusion that appearances are things in themselves. Indirect proofs are especially useful in such a case because they are more self-evident and have a greater clarity of representation than direct proofs (A790/B818)(see also footnote 40).

[38] Stang makes this mistake of conflating transcendental realism with transcendental illusion: "Transcendental realism is the commonsense pre-theoretic view that objects in space and time are 'things in themselves'", (2018) which he seems to have adopted from Allison (2004: 23).

> If one regards the two propositions, 'the world is infinite in magnitude,' 'the world is finite in magnitude,' as contradictory opposites then one assumes that the world (the whole series of appearances) is a thing in itself…But if I take away this presupposition, or rather this transcendental illusion, and deny that it is a thing in itself, then the contradictory conflict of the two assertions is transformed into a merely dialectical conflict, and because the world does not exist at all (independently of the regressive series of my representations), it exists neither as **an in itself infinite** whole nor as **an in itself finite** whole. (A504-5/B532-3)

Here we are given a number of important points for interpreting the indirect proof. First we see that Kant is trying to remove a contradiction we become involved in by assuming the world, understood as the whole series of appearances, is a thing in itself. Assuming appearances are things in themselves is the presupposition known as a transcendental illusion.[39] It is this transcendental illusion that Kant is trying to expose through the indirect proof in order to remove a contradiction from our thinking about the world. Kant endeavors to remove this transcendental illusion by proving indirectly that the world, and so all appearances, are not things in themselves, and so do not exist at all independently of our representations.

Further support for this reading is given in the paragraph after the indirect proof where Kant says:

> The above proofs of the fourfold antinomy are not semblances but well grounded, that is, at least on the presupposition that appearances, or a world of sense comprehending all of them within itself, are things in themselves. The conflict of the propositions drawn from it, however, uncovers a falsehood lying in this presupposition and thereby brings us to a discovery about the true constitution of things as objects of sense. (A507/B535)

The presupposition that leads to the fourfold antinomy is that appearances are things in themselves. Since the world of sense is understood as the sum total of all appearances this

[39] Here I disagree with Grier who says that the transcendental illusion is the premise P2: " if the conditioned is given then the whole series of conditions, subordinated to one another – a series which is therefore itself unconditioned, is likewise given, that is, is contained in the object and its connection (A308/B364)" (2001: 122). Grier claims that taking appearances to be things in themselves is only a defining characteristic of transcendental realism and not the illusion (2001: 179). I claim the transcendental illusion is taking appearances to be things in themselves, and it is in falling victim to this illusion that leads one to misapply P2, which is only valid of things in themselves, to appearances.

includes taking the world of sense to be a thing in itself. To remove this contradictory conflict of propositions that make up the antinomies we are led to uncover the falsehood of the presupposition that grounds these conflicts: that appearances are things in themselves.

As we have seen, this presupposition is the transcendental illusion Kant is trying to reveal as an illusion by uncovering its falsehood. Recognizing this illusion allows us to understand the true constitution of appearances as not things in themselves but mere representations. Notably, this realization about the true constitution of appearances is framed as being about "things as objects of sense". This emphasizes that the conclusion regarding appearances is about "things" and "objects of sense" and not space and time.

Finally, the indirect proof is given within the Antinomy of Pure Reason in Section Seven, and starts at A506/B534, which is a mere 45 pages in the A and B editions from the end of the Antinomy at A461/B489. Moreover, in the second edition of the *Critique* Kant offered a new version of a central proof (Bxxxix), i.e., the B Edition Refutation of Idealism (B275-6) replaced the Refutation of Idealism given in the A edition (A376-7). Kant could have done the same with the indirect proof if he thought it needed revision. Thus, in the interest of interpretive charity we should not read Kant as offering a blatantly circular proof if we do not have to, especially given the proximity of the proof to the Antinomies and given the second edition. Instead, we should prefer an alternative reading.

This supports adopting my non-circular, non-question-begging reading. As a result, we should interpret Kant as not arguing for the transcendental ideality of space and time in the indirect proof, and so as not concerned with refuting an opponent who held that space and time are transcendentally real. Likewise, we should not interpret Kant and his opponent in the indirect proof as taking appearances to be mere representations by definition. As a result, Kant is not

putting forward a circular argument in the indirect proof. Instead, Kant is only trying to make "someone" aware that they are being duped by the transcendental illusion that appearances are things in themselves.

3. Kant's Indirect Proof of The Transcendental Ideality of Appearances in Detail

In the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant's proof of the transcendental ideality of appearances is "indirect" because he argues for this position by disproving its contradictory opposite.[40] That is, Kant argues that "appearances, or a world of sense comprehending all of them within itself," (A507/B535) cannot be a thing in itself, and as a result it must be nothing outside of our representation of it. This is in contrast to the "direct" proof of transcendental idealism in the Transcendental Aesthetic. There Kant argues for the transcendental ideality of appearances by directly proving that appearances are nothing outside our representation of them.

Kant's indirect proof of the transcendental ideality of appearances:

First Premise (conditional, whose consequent is a dilemma): "If the world is a whole existing in itself, then it is either finite or infinite"

Second premise: "Now the first as well as the second alternative is false"

Third Premise (supporting second premise): "according to the proof offered above for the antithesis on the one side and the thesis on the other"

[40] It seems Kant precludes using indirect proofs when he gives the third special rule of pure reason that "its proofs must never be **apagogic** [indirect] but always **ostensive** [direct]" (A789/B817). However, we learn this is only because of a loss of insight into reason's sources and not due to lack of demonstration or certainty. Kant says the indirect proof "can produce certainty, to be sure, but never comprehensibility of the truth in regard to its connection with the grounds of its possibility. Hence the latter [indirect proofs] are more of an emergency aid than a procedure which satisfies all the aims of reason." (A789-90/B817-8). This fits with Kant's prefacing the indirect proof by claiming it is offered "if perhaps someone did not have enough in the direct proof in the Transcendental Aesthetic" (A506/B534), and so it is an "emergency aid" to the direct proof of the transcendental ideality of appearances. Moreover, indirect proofs "have an advantage of self-evidence over direct proofs" (A790/B818), which would make it more useful in clearly and intuitively disabusing someone of the transcendental illusion that appearances are things in themselves.

First conclusion (C1): "Thus it is also false that the world (the sum total of all appearances) is a whole existing in itself"

Second conclusion (drawn from the first conclusion) (C2): "From which it follows that appearances in general are nothing outside our representations"

Third conclusion (drawn from the second conclusion)(C3): "which is just what we mean by their transcendental ideality" (A507/B535)

To unpack Kant's indirect proof of the transcendental ideality of appearances we should begin by considering the third premise. This premise is made true based on any of the antinomies. Each antinomy involves proving whether a particular series of conditions regarding the world is finite (the thesis) or infinite (the antithesis). Kant regards all of these proofs as succeeding (*Prolegomena* AA 4: 340), and we will assume this is correct for the purposes of this dissertation. The third premise supports the second premise, which means the thesis that the world is finite and the antithesis that the world is infinite are both false.

How does it follow that the thesis and antithesis are both false if they have both been proven to be true in each antinomy? This conclusion follows because the first alternative that the world is finite is said by Kant to be proven false by the proof for the antithesis, and the second alternative that the world is infinite is said to be proven false by the proof for the thesis. This makes sense because Kant's proofs for the thesis and antithesis of each antinomy are in fact indirect proofs themselves, i.e., they prove the truth of their position by proving the falsity of the contradictory position. Thus, Kant offers a proof for the falsity of the finitude of the world in the argument for the antithesis of each antinomy and he offers a proof for the falsity of the infinitude of the world in the argument for the thesis of each antinomy. So, Kant has proven it is false that the world is finite and it is false the world is infinite. This means the consequent of premise (1)

(i.e., "it [the world] is either finite or infinite") must be false,[41] and so the antecedent of premise (1) (the world is a whole existing in itself) must be false because you cannot have a true antecedent and a false consequent of a true conditional.

One may want to deny the truth of the whole conditional – that is, premise (1). Kant thinks premise (1) is true because he thinks that if the world is given in itself as a whole then it must be either finite or infinite. We see this when Kant says "hence if it [the world] is always conditioned, then it is never wholly given, and the world is thus not an unconditioned whole, and thus does not exist as such a whole, either with infinite or with finite magnitude" (A505/B533). From parsing out this set of inferences, we see that the world existing as an unconditioned whole means that it exists as either infinite or finite. Existing as an unconditioned whole also means that it is wholly given or absolutely complete. This makes sense as being determinately either finite or infinite is to be wholly given.

To support these inferences, we see that Kant claims being unconditioned means to be either finite or infinite when he says "one can think of this unconditioned either as subsisting merely in the whole series, in which thus every member without exception is conditioned, and only their whole is absolutely unconditioned [series given as infinite and at the same time whole], or else the absolutely unconditioned is only a part of the series, to which the remaining members of the series are subordinated but that itself stands under no other condition [series

[41] Kant could also have proven the falsity of the statement "the world is either finite or infinite" by noting that he had proven both that the world is finite and the world is infinite in proving the truth of the antinomical propositions, i.e., the stated thesis and antithesis propositions of the four antinomies. This also proves the falsity of the statement "the world is either finite or infinite" because for Kant this statement is an exclusive disjunction on the condition that the world is a thing in itself. By proving the truth of the thesis and antithesis in the antinomies Kant proved the world is both finite and infinite, which shows the falsity of the consequent of premise (1). Kant chose not to go this route. Perhaps he did this to avoid basing his indirect proof on other indirect arguments since indirect arguments are to be avoided if possible (see footnote 10).

given as finite, e.g., a world with a beginning]" (A417/B445). Any series involving the unconditioned must be either finite or infinite.

To lend further support to these inferences, we see that the unconditioned is what is sought in the absolute totality of a series when Kant says "it is properly only the unconditioned that reason seeks in this synthesis of conditions, which proceeds serially, and indeed regressively, hence as it were the completeness in the series of premises that together presuppose no further premise. Now this **unconditioned** is always contained **in the absolute totality of the series** if one represents it in imagination" (A416/B443-4). The unconditioned is the absolute totality of a series, i.e., the world as wholly given. Therefore, to be given either as finite or infinite (given as unconditioned) are the only two ways to be wholly given (given as an absolute totality). I have thus elucidated why premise (1) holds, i.e., "if the world is a whole existing in itself, then it is either finite or infinite". This premise holds because to be wholly or completely given the world must be given as an unconditioned world series (absolute totality), which can only be either finite or infinite.

4. Why Can The Category of Totality Not Legitimately Be Applied to The World?

Why is it the case that if the world is not a whole existing in itself, and so is always conditioned and never whole, then it is a mere appearance, i.e., nothing outside our representations? How does (C2) follow from (C1)? Answering this question involves understanding why the category of totality cannot be applied absolutely to the world only if it is a mere appearance and must be applied to the world if it is a thing in itself. Wood broaches this key question when he comments on how Kant avoids the contradiction of the antinomies:

> Kant's way of avoiding the contradiction, then, comes down to the claim that the category of totality cannot be legitimately applied to 'the world' (to the various series of conditions that generate the antinomies). But it is not clear how he can avoid applying the category of *totality* to the series, any more than he could avoid applying the categories of *unity* or

> *plurality* to it. For surely each series is *one* series that has *many* members – and if so, why is it not a whole series – whose magnitude, therefore, must be either finite or infinite. (Wood 2010: 260)[42]

Kant answers Wood's question of why the category of totality cannot be legitimately applied to the 'world', if it is a mere appearance and not a thing in itself, when he says:

> The empirical synthesis, on the contrary, and the series of conditions in appearance (which are subsumed in the minor premise), is necessarily given successively and is given only in time, one member after another; consequently here I could not presuppose the absolute totality of synthesis and the series represented by it, as I could in the previous case, because there all members of the series are given in themselves (without time-condition), but here they are possible only through the successive regress, which is given only through one's actually completing it. (A500-1/B528-9)

The key here is to understand that an empirical synthesis can be "given only in time, one member after another", and it needs to be actually completed to be given as an absolute totality. Therefore, the empirical synthesis is never presupposed as given as an absolute whole but is an always on-going successive synthesis of one member after another in time. Consequently, if the world is only an empirical synthesis then the category of totality cannot be legitimately (i.e., absolutely) applied to it. To fully appreciate this point we need to understand that there are two types of givenness, i.e., actuality, at work in Kant's notion of given: transcendental and empirical.

Kant describes transcendental actuality by saying:

> Through common reason, when something is given as conditioned, we presuppose (in the major premise) the conditions and their series as it were **sight unseen**, because this is nothing but the logical requirement of assuming complete premises for a given conclusion, and no time-order is present in the connection of the conditioned with its condition; both are presupposed as given **simultaneously**. (A500/B528)

[42] See also Wood (2005: 95). For Wood's criticism of Allison's interpretation of the indirect proof see Wood et al. 2007: 1-10.

Givenness of a conditioned thing in itself through reason (transcendental actuality) requires the givenness of a complete series of its conditions sight unseen and simultaneously with it. This is because a thing in itself and the series of its conditions exist independently of our possible perception, space, and time. As a result, a thing in itself and the series of its conditions only falls under the intellectual synthesis of the pure understanding that considers the series of conditions for a given conditioned as a timeless logical presupposition.

Therefore, the transcendental actuality of things in themselves is logical and timeless in which "all members of the series are given in themselves (without time-condition)" (A501/B529). This means "If the conditioned as well as its condition are things in themselves, then when the first is given…the latter is thereby already given along with it; and, because this holds for all members of the series, then the complete series of conditions, and hence the unconditioned is thereby simultaneously given, or rather it is presupposed by the fact that the conditioned, which is possible only through that series, is given" (A498/B526). Thus, if the world is a thing in itself then it exists as an unconditioned whole.

Conversely, Kant describes empirical actuality or givenness in time of appearances that:

> If I am dealing with appearances, which as mere representations are not given at all if I do not achieve acquaintance with them, (i.e., to them themselves, for they are nothing except empirical cognitions), then I cannot say with the same meaning that if the conditioned is given, then all the conditions (as appearances) for it are also given; and hence I can by no means infer the absolute totality of the series of these conditions. For the appearances, in their apprehension, are themselves nothing other than an empirical synthesis (in space and time) and thus are given only in this synthesis. Now it does not follow at all that if the conditioned (in appearance) is given, then the synthesis constituting its empirical condition is thereby also given and presupposed; on the contrary, this synthesis takes place for the first time in the regress, and never without it. (A498-9/B527)

Here we learn that appearances, as mere representations, are given and actual only if we achieve acquaintance with them. To be given mere appearances (empirical actuality) depend on being

directly perceived by us or being a possible perception connected with this direct perception according to empirical laws (A225-6/B273), (A376).[43] We also learn that if the conditioned is given as appearance then we cannot presuppose the givenness of all of its conditions as appearances, and so appearances do not have to conform to the requirements of transcendental actuality.

Moreover, appearances are nothing other than, and are only given in, an empirical synthesis, which means this synthesis includes only the conditions we have achieved acquaintance with. This acquaintance must be within the conditions of space and time so that the synthesis must take place as the combining of one space and/or moment with another as possible experiences. Lastly, the empirical synthesis takes place for the first time in the regress of conditions for a given conditioned appearance. This leads us to the conclusion that the empirical synthesis is never wholly given.

We are led to this conclusion for three reasons. Firstly, we cannot presuppose the absolute totality of the series of conditions for a given conditioned appearance because the actuality of the

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43 Stang comes close to this definition of empirical actuality, but only applies it to empirical properties and not appearances, while I also apply it to the existence of appearances. He says "For any appearance x and empirical property F, if x is F, x is F in virtue of the fact that universal experience represents x as F" (Stang 2015: 15). My view of how empirical objects depend upon experience for their actuality is a hybrid of Stang's view and his "modal" account. Stang says "Kant describes empirical objects as dependent upon how we actually experience them [Stang's view], not on how we could experience them [modal view]" (2015: 17). However, I think Kant describes the existence of empirical objects and their properties as dependent upon both how we actually experience them *and* how we could experience them. Kant says "the existence of the thing is still connected with our perceptions in a possible experience, and with the guidance of the analogies we can get from our actual perceptions to the thing in the series of possible perceptions" (A226/B273). As a result, Kant thinks we can "cognize the existence of a magnetic matter penetrating all bodies from the perception of attracted iron filings although an immediate perception of this matter is impossible for us given the constitution of our organs" (A226/B573) because the magnetic matter is (1) connected with our actual perceptions, (2) according to empirical laws in one experience, and (3) is itself a possible perception. A possible perception is possible not in the sense of "possible for us given the constitution of our sense organs", but possible in terms of conforming to the "form of possible experience in general" (A226/B573) and a possible constitution of our senses (e.g. finer). So to be empirically actual, a property or object must be actually experienced as such or be both connected with our actual perceptions in accordance with the empirical laws of experience in one experience (Stang's view) and also be a possible (even if never actual) perception/experience (modal view).

given conditioned appearance (as empirical actuality and not transcendental actuality) does not depend on the givenness of the absolute totality of its conditions. Secondly, since it is impossible to complete a successive, regressive synthesis of an infinity of possible perceptions as moments in time, the empirical synthesis is never empirically actual as a wholly given infinite.[44] Thirdly, each condition of an empirical synthesis is an appearance, i.e., an empirical representation in space and time, and so it always presupposes another condition that determines it. So, the empirical synthesis is never wholly given as an unconditioned totality (A508/B536), (A793/B821). As a result, the category of totality cannot be applied absolutely to the world as a sum total of appearances because appearances only exist in an empirical synthesis that is never wholly given. So Kant's way of avoiding the contradictions of the antinomies is to assert that the category of totality cannot be absolutely applied to the world.

5. How is Transcendental Idealism Supposed to Help?

Not only does Wood doubt that the category of totality cannot be legitimately applied to 'the world', but Wood also says "It is also unclear how transcendental idealism is supposed to help out here. For why should the category of totality be less applicable to appearances than it is to things in themselves?" (Wood 2010: 260). The answer is this: transcendental idealism is supposed to help because it is the doctrine that the world is nothing but an appearance (i.e., mere representations). As seen in the last section, the category of totality is less applicable (i.e., only comparatively and not absolutely applicable) to mere representations because mere representations only exist in an empirical synthesis, and an absolute totality can never be given in an empirical synthesis.

[44] James Van Cleve comes close to accepting this point but rejects it as irrelevant (1999: 70-71). He seems to lose track of the fact that in the indirect proof Kant is denying the infinity of the world as a completely given infinity that is also an empirically existing infinity, since the world is a sum total of appearances. Thus, this point is relevant.

We are now in a better position to appreciate exactly how transcendental idealism is supposed to resolve the antinomies. The antinomies arise from a contradiction in our understanding of the world because of two contradictory commitments we have in thinking about the world. The first commitment is to the criterion of actuality of a thing in itself (transcendental actuality), which is the demand of reason that "**If the conditioned is given, then the whole sum of conditions, and hence the absolutely unconditioned, is also given,** through which alone the conditioned was possible" (A409/B436), see also (A497/B525). In the secondary literature, this principle is known as *P2* (Allison 2004: 359). The second commitment is that the world is the world of sense as the sum total of appearances, i.e., the world of our possible experience, that conforms to the structure of an empirical synthesis, space, time, and the criterion of empirical actuality.

The first commitment requires the unconditioned be given because we are given the conditioned. The second commitment prohibits the unconditioned from being given for the given conditioned. This is a contradiction that depends on our understanding of an appearance. We hold the first commitment because we fall victim to the transcendental illusion that appearances are things in themselves, and so take a conditioned appearance to be the same as a conditioned thing in itself. We hold the second commitment because appearances exist in the empirical synthesis and the empirical synthesis does not allow the unconditioned as either finite or infinite to be given within it.

If we combine a conception of empirical actuality with transcendental idealism we get the result that all members (and so conditions) of the empirical regressive synthesis are mere representations that exist only insofar as they are members of this regress. This is because transcendental idealism claims that "all appearances are not things, but rather nothing but

representations" (A492/B520). Furthermore, empirical actuality claims appearances (and the world as the sum total of appearances) only depend on our perception or connection with our perception for their existence, as opposed to depending on the conditions of existence of objects in themselves. So transcendental idealism limits appearances and every series of appearances to mere representations, and empirical actuality still allows them to exist but only in the empirical synthesis.

Thus, transcendental idealism disabuses us of the transcendental illusion that appearances are things in themselves. We are thereby freed from the first commitment of the actuality of a thing in itself (transcendental actuality), which is that if a conditioned is given then the sum total of all its conditions (thus the unconditioned) are also given. As a result, we no longer have to find an unconditioned for the existence of a conditioned appearance. This resolves the antinomies or contradiction in reason that arises from reason demanding conditioned appearances have transcendental actuality, which requires the unconditioned be given, and have empirical actuality in the empirical synthesis of appearances, which does not allow of the unconditioned. Thus, transcendental idealism frees us from having to entertain any of the cosmological ideas of the world being determinately finite or infinite in our understanding of the world of sense. This solution depends upon appearances being understood as mere representations and so having a different metaphysical constitution from things in themselves, i.e., having a different type of actuality/existence.[45]

[45] Lucy Allais also sees Kant's solution as depending on the distinctive nature of the existence of appearances, i.e., that appearances do not exist as an absolute totality, and so on their different metaphysical constitution. She says "he [Kant] thinks that it is only because we are dealing with mind-dependent appearances of things, which exist only in the possibility of their appearing to us, that we can make sense of the claim that they do not exist as a complete totality" (2015: 94). However, unlike my interpretation, Allais does not invoke a conception of perception or possible perception connected with this direct perception according to empirical laws that is necessary and sufficient for the existence of appearances, but only considers mind-dependence to be a necessary but not sufficient condition of the existence of appearances. Allais thinks appearances require a metaphysical grounding in things in themselves, that she considers are more real than appearances, while I do not. Allais' interpretation goes against Kant when he

6. Completion of the Exposition of the Indirect Proof

We are now in a position to complete the exposition of Kant's indirect proof of the transcendental ideality of appearances. Kant has proven that the propositions "the world is finite" and "the world is infinite" are both false. Since the world being finite or infinite encompass the only two ways the world can be as unconditioned or wholly given, the world is not unconditioned or wholly given. Moreover, the only way the world can be if it is a thing in itself is unconditioned or wholly given because of the requirements of transcendental actuality. Thus, the world is not a thing in itself. Consequently, Kant has established (C1) "Thus it is also false that the world (the sum total of all appearances) is a whole existing in itself" (A507/B535). This exposes the falsity of the transcendental illusion that appearances are things in themselves.

From this Kant can establish (C2) "From which it follows that appearances in general are nothing outside our representations" (A507/B535). Kant can establish this because, firstly, the only two ways for appearances to exist for Kant are either as appearances in which we encounter things in themselves or as mere appearances that are nothing outside our representations. Secondly, Kant has shown that the world (the sum total of appearances) does not exist as an unconditioned whole in itself (and so we do not encounter things in themselves in our appearances), but the world still exists for us as appearance in an empirical synthesis due to our immediate experience of it. Therefore, the world and appearances in general must exist as appearances that are nothing outside our representations, i.e., mere representations. Since Kant

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says "these [appearances] must nonetheless be able to be explained perfectly from their cause in appearance, in accord with natural laws, by following its merely empirical character as the supreme ground of explanation" (A545/B574) and "nothing justifies us in deriving any existence from a condition outside the empirical series"(A561/B589). Also, by not separating completely the conditions of existence of appearances from things in themselves, Allais still leaves reason seeking for the unconditioned (in things in themselves) for the conditioned (in appearance) since, for Allais, the existence of things in themselves are a necessary condition of the existence of things as appearances. James Kreines (2016) also criticizes Allais on the issue.

has established that the world or sum total of all appearances are nothing outside our representations then he has established (C3) “which is just what we mean by their transcendental ideality” (A507/B535) because C3 follows analytically from C2 as C2 is the definition of C3. Therefore, Kant has indirectly proven the transcendental ideality of appearances.

7. Conclusion

I have shown why the indirect proof of the transcendental ideality of appearances succeeds on Kant’s own term. I have done this by going in detail through the proof. In short, if Kant’s arguments succeed for both the thesis and antithesis of any one of the antinomies then the world cannot be wholly given as finite or infinite. The finite and infinite exhaust the possibilities of givenness of an unconditioned whole, and the world must be given as an unconditioned whole if it is a thing in itself. So if the world is not given as finite or infinite then it is not given as a thing in itself. However, we cannot deny that appearances are given due to our experience of them and so cannot deny the world (as the sum total of all appearances) is given. Therefore, the world of sense and so appearances in general are not things in themselves, but are given as nothing but appearances. Thus, we have proven the transcendental ideality of appearances, which is the doctrine that “appearances are nothing outside our representations” (A507/B535).

A separate standard of empirical reality/actuality enables Kant to jointly hold empirical realism and transcendental idealism, i.e., the position that what we experience is nothing but appearances, yet these appearances are real. The standard of empirical actuality allows the world as a sum total of appearances to still exist as a unified but never completed series of conditions without having to conform to the standard of transcendental actuality that requires a given absolute totality. This resolves reason’s problem that arises from trying to completely comprehend given conditioned appearances as things in themselves.

In trying to completely comprehend given conditioned appearances as things in themselves, reason has the problem of a contradiction in its laws (antinomy). This contradiction comes from reason being committed to the law of transcendental actuality, which requires that the absolute totality of conditions and so the unconditioned be given to explain the existence of a given conditioned appearance, and reason also being committed to the empirical laws of experience that require appearances to exist in the empirical synthesis that does not admit of an unconditioned. Under transcendental idealism, appearances are nothing but appearances and not things in themselves. This removes the need to apply the standard of transcendental actuality to appearances, and it means they must only conform to the standard of empirical actuality for their existence, which resolves reason's contradiction in its laws.

Chapter 8: Kant's Agnosticism

1. The Objection: Things in Themselves Must Exist

At this point in my dissertation, an objection arises that threatens the plausibility and coherence of my interpretation. I claim that Kant's transcendental idealism is the doctrine that objects of our experience, space, and time do not exist outside the field of our sensibility and possible experience. Likewise, as considered from outside our field of sensibility and possible experience, objects of experience, space, and time are mere representations and a type of nothing, i.e., non-entities. I further claim that Kant's empirical realism is the doctrine that objects of our experience, space, and time exist within the field of our sensibility and possible experience. The objection is that my interpretation of these doctrines does not assert the existence of a thing in itself, but Kant presupposes the existence of a thing in itself. Therefore, my interpretation is an unworkable phenomenalism that gets Kant wrong.

According to this objection, Kant presupposes the existence of a thing in itself.[46] He does this by claiming that to think objects of our experience as appearances without absurdity we must also think something of which they are the appearance. The relation between appearances and things in themselves can be understood as identity or causation between appearances and things in themselves. Further, identity and causation both require that we claim the thing in itself exists even though we cannot cognize it. If a thing in itself is identical with its appearance then if an appearance exists the thing in itself it is identical with must exist. On the other hand, if a thing in itself is the cause of an appearance then if an appearance exists the thing in itself must exist in order to cause the appearance. Appearances exist as proven immediately through our perception

[46] Among those who claim the existence of the thing in itself are Schaefer (2022: 269), Rosefeldt (2022), Stang (2022), Chignell (2022), Kanterian (2013), Vaihinger (1922), Allais (2015: 76), and Langton (1998: 205).

of them. So the thing in themselves must exist either as identical with appearances or as their cause.

This chapter establishes Kant's position on the existence of transcendental things in themselves as agnosticism. This means Kant claims we can neither affirm nor deny the existence of things in themselves.[47] All we can do is think things in themselves. Yet, as I will argue, thinking does not justify claims that things in themselves exist.[48] I will conclude that Kant is a problematic transcendental idealist about things in themselves as objects outside of our sensibility and possible experience.[49]

2. Kant's Agnosticism About the Existence Of Transcendental Things in Themselves

My picture of the transcendental conditions of the possibility of our experience seems to require that a transcendental object in itself causes the sensible representations in us. So according to me, a thing in itself must exist to get the cognitive process going that produces objects of experience.

[47] Robert Hanna also recognizes this is Kant's position. Although, he does not provide argument or textual exegesis to support this claim beyond recognizing the necessity of intuition for cognition and claims of existence for Kant. He says "both the existence and non-existence of things-in-themselves are equally uncognizable and thereby equally wholly unassertible. And for this reason, as Critical philosophers, we must remain aggressively and consistently agnostic about them" (Hanna 2006: 198). However, Hanna infers too much from this and takes this agnosticism to be "equivalent to what I will call Kant's *methodological eliminativism* about things-in-themselves… things in themselves are practically, explanatorily, epistemologically, and metaphysically superfluous. *We just don't need them*" (Hanna 2006: 198). This is not Kant's position. In this chapter, I will show Kant takes things in themselves something we *must think* for explanatory, epistemological, metaphysical and practical reasons.

[48] Dina Emundts shares this position on the existence of things in themselves and says "this thought of things in themselves does not justify the knowledge claim that things in themselves as mind-independent things exist"(2008: 136). Emundts goes on to conclude that "for Kant, there is no justification for the claim that things in themselves as mind-or subject-independent things exist" (2008: 136). However, Emundts does not make the same arguments for this position nor cite the same textual evidence as I do in this chapter.

[49] Emundts does not agree with the characterization of Kant as a problematic idealist (2008:141). I think she is mistaken because she thinks Kant does not "take the existence of the thing in itself as a doubtful hypothesis" (Emundts 2008: 141). However, Kant characterizes problematic idealism as taking the existence of an object to be "doubtful and **indemonstrable**" (B274). Kant takes the existence of things in themselves to be indemonstrable, as Emundts herself claims, which leads to "doubt" in the Cartesian sense of hyperbolic doubt, i.e., doubting the existence of anything whose existence is not indubitably certain. So Kant's doubt about the existence of things in themselves follows from their indemonstrability, which establishes Kant's problematic idealism regarding things in themselves. This does not make Kant a Cartesian problematic idealist though because Descartes doubted the existence of empirical objects outside us in space (according to Kant B274), which Kant does not.

This means, even if we know nothing else about a thing in itself, we must infer it exists. So, Kant must allow cognition and claims of the existence of the thing in itself.

Kant does not claim this knowledge and instead says "the non-sensible cause of these representations is entirely unknown to us, and therefore we cannot intuit it as an object; for such an object would have to be represented neither in space nor in time (as mere conditions of our sensible representation) without which conditions we cannot think any intuition" (A494/B522). First we learn that the non-sensible cause or transcendental cause of the representations of our sensible faculty of intuition are "entirely unknown to us". This would seem to preclude cognition of existence, since it is a type of knowledge.

Supporting this reading, we also learn that we cannot intuit this non-sensible cause as an object because by definition it is beyond our sensibility. This means it would have to be represented neither in space nor time as forms of our sensible representation. However, we cannot even think an intuition without space and time, never mind have it. This non-sensible cause that we can never have an intuition of, but only a concept of, falls under Kant's first type of nothing. Kant describes this nothing as: "Empty concept without object, *ens rationis*" that is "a thought- entity (No. 1) is distinguished from the non-entity (No.4) by the fact that the former may not be counted among the possibilities because it is a mere invention (although not self-contradictory), whereas the latter is opposed to possibility because even its concept cancels itself out" (A292/B348).

The first type of nothing is further defined as "the object of a concept to which no intuition that can be given corresponds is = nothing, i.e., a concept without an object, like the *noumena*, which cannot be counted among the possibilities although they must not on that ground be asserted to be impossible (*ens rationis*)" (A290/B347). So the non-sensible cause of

the representations of our sensibility is a mere thought-entity that we have invented. It is a concept that is not self-contradictory, thus this non-sensible cause is thinkable. Yet, because an intuition is not capable of being given for this concept, this non-sensible cause cannot be counted among the real possibilities of existing objects. Since it is a non-contradictory concept, this non-sensible cause is logically possible and so we cannot declare it to be impossible (Bxxvi).

Kant goes on to confirm this interpretation of the non-sensible cause of our representations by saying:

> Meanwhile we can call the merely intelligible cause of appearances in general the transcendental object, merely so that we may have something corresponding to sensibility as a receptivity. To this transcendental object we can ascribe the whole extent and connection of our possible perceptions and say that it is given in itself prior to all experience. But appearances are, in accordance with it, given not in themselves but only in this experience, because they are mere representations, which signify a real object only as perceptions, namely when this perception connects up with all the others in accordance with the rules of the unity of experience. (A494-5/B522-3)

Kant's first point here is that the non-sensible cause of our representations is a merely intelligible cause because we cannot have any intuition of it. A merely intelligible cause can only be thought and not cognized as an object by us. So the intelligible cause is a mere thought-entity.

Kant says the intelligible cause is called the transcendental "object" "merely so that we may have something corresponding to our sensibility as a receptivity". We think an intelligible cause to avoid contradiction in the concept of our receptive sensibility. As receptive, our sensibility requires that something affect it for it to have representations since it does not spontaneously produce them. However, since we cannot cognize this "something" because it is

beyond our intuition, we only think it. Kant's preferred way of thinking this "something" is as a thing in itself even though it could be anything, e.g., ourselves, another mind[50], or God[51].

By forming a representation merely in thought of a cause of appearances in general, we do not posit the existence of such an object. Thought happens only in the subject and cognition is required to go beyond this. Yet, cognition of existence is an *a posteriori* synthetic judgment and we can never have an empirical intuition of a thing in itself to enable such a judgment. Therefore, we can never cognize the existence of a thing in itself, and so we can never justifiably claim that it exists. I will now argue for this point.

We know existence claims are synthetic because Kant says "every existential proposition is synthetic" (A598/B626). Kant also claims "for with the actuality the object is not merely included in my concept analytically, but adds synthetically to my concept" (A599/B627). Thus all claims of the existence or actuality of anything are synthetic. The question now is whether existence claims are possible *a priori* or only *a posteriori*.

A claim that an object exists can only be *a posteriori* for Kant. Proof of this is when Kant says:

> Now if I think of a being as the highest reality (without defect) the question still remains whether it exists or not. For although nothing at all is missing in my concept of a possible thing in general, something is still missing in the relation to my entire state of thinking, namely that the cognition of this object should also be possible *a posteriori*. (A600/B629)

[50] Emundts agrees: "the claim that things in themselves exist implies more than we can know, because sensation could, after all, be the effect of a self-affection or (as Berkely positively asserts) of another mind" (2008:136). (Also see A358, A360)

[51] Stang agrees: "Since Kant's official doctrine in the *Critique* seems to require agnosticism about the ultimate nature of the things in themselves that causally affect us in experience, it is compatible with what he says that the noumenal cause of experience is God himself." (2018). This is agnosticism about the exact cause of sensible representations in us, but not agnosticism about the existence of any things in themselves, which I put forward.

After I have formed the concept of a possible thing in general, even if it is of the highest being without defect, this is not enough to posit its existence. What still remains is for me to cognize this object *a posteriori*.

Kant then explains why and gives confirmation that positing the existence of an object requires *a posteriori* cognition:

> Thus whatever and however much our concept of an object may contain, we have to go out beyond it in order to provide it with existence. With objects of sense this happens through the connection with some perception of mine in accordance with empirical laws; but for objects of pure thinking there is no means whatever for cognizing their existence, because it would have to be cognized entirely *a priori*, but our consciousness of all existence (whether immediately through perception or through inferences connecting something with perception) belongs entirely and without exception to the unity of experience, and although an existence outside this field cannot be declared absolutely impossible, it is a presupposition that we cannot justify through anything. (A601/B629)

We must go beyond our concept of an object to posit its existence and so it requires a synthetic cognition. The way to do this for objects of sense is familiar as the standard of empirical actuality and cognition of existence established in the Postulates (A225-6/B272-3). This is "wherever perception and whatever is appended to it in accordance with empirical laws reaches, there too reaches our cognition of the existence of things" (A226/B273). We can cognize the existence of objects of sense through immediate perception, which is *a posteriori* cognition. We can also cognize the existence of unperceived objects of sense by connecting them to our immediate perception, i.e., comparatively though not entirely *a priori* cognition.

However, we have no means to cognize the existence of objects of pure thinking. This is because we would have to cognize their existence synthetically and *entirely a priori*, but our consciousness of all existence is limited to the unity of experience. Thus, Kant denies we can have *a priori* cognition of the existence of things in themselves because all our cognition of existence is limited to the field of our experience (our immediate perceptions or possible

perceptions appended to them according to empirical laws). Since we do not have perception of, and our empirical laws do not apply to, things in themselves, we cannot justify the existence of any object outside the field of our experience, i.e., a noumenon or thing in itself. Although, we can also not deny their existence.

Importantly, Kant denies we can have consciousness of the existence of any object outside the field of our experience through any inferences connecting it with perception. Such inferences are limited to what is within experience. This precludes the inference from perceiving an appearance to positing the existence of the thing in itself as its cause. Although we must think a thing in itself as the cause of an appearance, we are not justified in inferring the existence of this thing in itself. This highlights the difference between logical possibility and real possibility. To avoid the logical absurdity of an appearance without something it is the appearance of, we must form the concept of a thing in itself as the cause of the appearance (logical possibility). However, due to our cognitive limitations, we can never be given what we need to cognize the existence of the thing in itself (the object of the concept we form) and so justifiably posit its existence (real possibility).

Moreover, Kant denies we can infer with any certainty from a given effect to a determinate cause (as explained in depth in chapter 2). This further supports interpreting Kant as denying the inference from the existence of an appearance to the existence of a thing in itself as its cause.[52] Specifically, Kant thinks we cannot infer from our sensible representation of an object to the existence of this object as the non-sensible cause of our representation because the

[52] Graham Bird also recognizes that this is Kant's position and cities similar passages. He says "Kant insists on the impossibility of inferring from appearances to noumenal objects, identified as the non-sensible or transcendental cause of appearances" (Bird 1962:24). However, unlike me, Bird takes Kant's view to be that there is only one thing or object, namely appearances, and the two concepts do not name two different objects (1962:29). I take Kant's view to be that the concept of a thing in itself and the concept of an appearance are concepts of two metaphysically different objects, and while we can say the appearance exists we cannot affirm or deny the existence of a thing in itself (which Bird comes close to at 1962: 26, 2006b: 553).

non-sensible cause of our representations could lie in us, i.e., we could affect our own sensibility at the transcendental level (A372, B276). In forming this representation of a transcendental object we do not posit its existence outside our experience, but only think the concept of non-sensible cause of our representation and ascribe to it *merely in thought* the whole extent and connection of our possible perceptions.

Returning to the passage at A494-5/B522-3, we see appearances are not given as things in themselves but only in experience since they are mere representations. Thus, they are transcendentally ideal. The further question is whether appearances represent objects in themselves outside our possible experience. In chapter 2, 6, and 7, I argued Kant does not think they do. Here we find further support for this point. Kant thinks appearances can signify a real object only as perceptions and so not as things in themselves. Thus, appearances are only empirically real.

Signifying an object "only" as perceptions means that what is an appearance, i.e., object of perception, takes on the significance of a real object when this perception of an object connects up with all the other perceptions of objects in accordance with rules of the unity of experience. This is the empirical standard of reality, as elaborated in chapter 2 and 7. Notably here, the object of perception or appearance does not signify a real object by matching up with a transcendental object in itself, as the transcendental realist would hold. This is the transcendental standard of reality.

This supports my interpretation that, for Kant, the thing in itself or transcendental object does not and cannot perform the function of grounding the reality of an object as appearance. For Kant, the transcendental object is merely a representation in thought without any intuition of it, and so without any direct cognition of its existence, being possible for us. Moreover, we cannot

infer with certainty from the object of appearance to the existence of the thing in itself as its cause. Since we cannot claim the existence of a thing in itself, it cannot ground the existence of an appearance. Likewise, with his standard of empirical reality, Kant has no need for the thing in itself to ground the reality of the appearance.

One might object that Kant's claim appearances (objects of experience) are not "given" in themselves does not mean objects as appearance do not exist outside our experience at all. Instead, this means only that the object does not exist outside our experience *in the way it appears to us* within our experience. However, Kant makes clear by "given" he means existence and not simply appearance by saying a few paragraphs before this that "objects of experience are never given in themselves, but only in experience, and they do not exist at all outside it" (A494/B521). Objects of our experience, i.e., appearances, do not exist at all outside our experience and so a thing in itself and an object of experience/appearance do not share the same existence. This precludes inferring based on identical existence from the existence of an object as appearance to the existence of the object in itself.

3. B Preface Support

Further support for my interpretation that Kant thinks we cannot claim things in themselves exist is given in the B Preface. There Kant also says that since we can gain no intuition of things in themselves we cannot cognize any object as a thing in itself, but we can only have cognition of objects of experience. Kant claims:

> Yet the reservation must also be well noted, that even if we cannot **cognize** these same objects as things in themselves, we at least must be able to **think** them as things in themselves.* For otherwise there would follow the absurd proposition that there is an appearance without anything that appears.[53] (Bxxvi)

[53] Chignell takes this passage as proof that "In general: when something appears to us, we can infer that it (a substance) exists, and that it is in various dependence and grounding relations, including the relation of grounding precisely those perceptions in us." (346: 2022). However, he neglects to quote the first sentence in this passage and its footnote. From these we learn that we can only think and not cognize things in themselves. In thinking them we

Here we get another clear statement that we cannot cognize objects as things in themselves. One difference is that the relation between a thing in itself and object of experience is deemed to be one of "sameness" of some sort instead of causation.

We are told in this passage that we must be able to think objects as things in themselves outside of our possible experience even though we cannot cognize them. For Kant, we must be able to think objects as things in themselves to avoid absurdity. The absurdity is of "an appearance without anything that appears", i.e., an appearance without something of which it is the appearance. So we must be able to think appearances as in some sense the same as things in themselves to understand objects of our experience as appearances with logical consistency. In short, the concept of an appearance requires thinking the concept of a thing in itself of which it is the appearance to avoid the contradictory thought (absurdity) of an appearance without anything it is the appearance of. [54]

In the footnote to this passage at Bxxvi, Kant makes clear that thinking of an object as a thing in itself does not entitle us to claim it exists or does not exist as a thing in itself. Kant says:

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only entertain the non-contradictory thought of a thing in itself, but from this we cannot assert its existence or anything about it. To claim its existence and grounding relations we need cognition of a thing in itself, which we cannot have. Also, for Kant, we can never infer from a determinate effect (perception) to a determinate cause (a thing in itself). Adams thinks this passage may support a reading like Chignell's, but Adams himself disagrees with the inference from an appearance to the existence of something more real that they are the appearance of (Adams 1997: 803 footnote 4). While Kant was clearly not inferring the existence of a thing-in-itself from this passage but only the thought of its logical possibility, I disagree with even the logical inference from an appearance to something of which it is the appearance of. By requiring the thought of a thing-in-itself for an appearance Kant remains a bit stuck in a transcendental realist thinking he is trying to overcome.

[54] As a general principle this does not hold. To be an appearance something only needs to appear to me, whether it is the appearance *of* something transcendentally outside me or not. Kant is still thinking here in terms of the dogmatic metaphysics he is trying to think beyond. So, the more important question is "why must we consider objects of our experience to be appearances *of* something transcendentally outside us?" The answer is given in the quote from the Antinomy above at A494/B522: our sensibility is a receptivity for being affected with representations. We have only a sensible, receptive intuition and not an intellectual, spontaneous intuition as God does. This means we cannot create objects or produce their existence from nothing by merely thinking of them. Instead, our sensibility must be affected by something outside us to produce representations of objects. Thus, all objects we experience must be an appearance of something that affects our sensibility, but we can never say whether this is the appearance of an object in itself, our own mind, other minds, or God etc.

> To **cognize** an object, it is required that I be able to prove its possibility (whether by the testimony of experience from its actuality or *a priori* through reason). But I can **think** whatever I like, as long as I do not contradict myself, i.e., as long as my concept is a possible thought, even if I cannot give any assurance whether or not there is a corresponding object somewhere within the sum total of all possibilities. But in order to ascribe objective validity to such a concept (real possibility, for the first sort of possibility was merely logical) something more is required. This "more," however, need not be sought in the theoretical sources of cognition; it may also lie in practical ones. (Bxxvi)

In this passage Kant specifies the meaning of his claims that we can cognize objects of experience, but we can only think and not cognize things in themselves. He specifies that to cognize an object we must prove its real possibility by means of direct experience of its actuality (since something must be possible that is actual) or else *a priori* through reason. However, we can think anything, including a thing in itself, as long as our concept does not contradict itself, i.e., is logically possible.[55]

Thus, the claim that we cannot cognize but must be able to think a thing in itself means we can give no assurance whether or not there is an object corresponding to this concept of a thing in itself within the sum total of all possibilities. To do this, we need something more that allows us to claim there is an object within the sum total of possibilities that corresponds to our concept of a thing in itself. In denying our cognition of things in themselves, Kant is claiming here that we do not have this "more" regarding them (whether from theoretical or practical sources). So, Kant thinks we cannot prove the real possibility of a thing in itself, and so cannot ascribe objective validity to our concept. As a result, we can only form a non-contradictory concept of a thing in itself as a logically possible object.

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[55] Here we get the answer to the famous passage from F.H. Jacobi: "without the presupposition of the [thing in itself] I cannot enter the [critical] system, and with that presupposition I cannot remain in it. (Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. II, p. 304). Jacobi intends this to indicate a fundamental contradiction in Kant's theoretical philosophy and thus to show its absurdity. Jacobi fails to appreciate the distinction between thinking and cognizing an object (B146). We must, and can only, think a thing in itself in Kant's theoretical philosophy, but we cannot cognize it. Thus, it is perfectly coherent that without the thought of a thing in itself we cannot enter into Kant's system, but we cannot remain in it with the cognition of a thing in itself.

Among the theoretical sources of cognition, this "something more" is an intuition corresponding to our concept of this object, which we can never have of a thing in itself (A238-9/B298). As a result, Kant says criticism teaches us "of our unavoidable ignorance in respect of the things themselves and limited everything that we can cognize theoretically to mere appearances" (Bxxix). However, this "something more" can also lie in the practical sources of our cognition and give us practical cognition. However, practical cognition does not give us cognition of what exists, which is only given by theoretical cognition. Instead, practical cognition is only of what ought to exist to make sense of our practical experience and reason (A633/B661). So we can perhaps gain practical cognition of things in themselves, but this would not be an assurance that they exist.[56] This is only the cognition that their existence makes the principles of our practical reason intelligible, as their presupposition. In any case, Kant does not claim here that we have this "more" from practical sources.

4. Kant's Argument "On the Ground of the Distinction of All Objects In General Into Phenomena and Noumena"

Kant also explains why we must think things in themselves even though we cannot cognize them when he says:

[56] Adams (1997) discusses this issue. Ameriks provides arguments against relying on practical reason as the foundation for the claim that things exist metaphysically external to us. (2003: 25-26). While a full treatment of this issue is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I am highly skeptical of the approach of appealing to Kant's practical philosophy to justify supersensible/noumenal existence claims. Why would Kant write the *Critique of Pure Reason* that examines our faculties of cognition and finds all our theoretical cognition (cognition of what exists) is limited to our possible experience, and then allow us to have cognition of what exists beyond possible experience? Kant says " I had to deny **knowledge** in order to make room for **faith**" (Bxxx) and not "I had to deny knowledge to make room for knowledge". The denial of knowledge is that in the *Critique* Kant "taught us of our unavoidable ignorance in respect of the things in themselves and limited everything that we can **cognize** theoretically to mere appearances" (Bxxix). The room made is that we still can and must *think* things in themselves and an intelligible world in which God, freedom, and the immortality of the soul (traditional elements of Christian faith) are logically possible, which makes morality possible. Kant says "for morality I need nothing more than that that freedom [as well as God and immortality] should not contradict itself, that it should at least be thinkable" (Bxxix). Thus, Kant leaves only the logical possibility of the existence of freedom, God, and immorality open to allow for a faith in them that is rational, i.e., does not contradict our theoretical reason.

> The cause on account of which, not yet satisfied through the substratum of sensibility, one must add *noumena* that only the pure understanding can think to the *phaenomena*, rests solely on this. Sensibility and its field, namely that of appearances, are themselves limited by the understanding, in that they do not pertain to things in themselves, but only to the way in which, on account of our subjective constitution, things appear to us. This was the result of the entire Transcendental Aesthetic, and it also follows naturally from the concept of an appearance in general that something must correspond to it which is not in itself appearance, for appearance can be nothing for itself and outside of our kind of representation; thus, if there is not to be a constant circle, the word "appearance" must already indicate a relation to something the immediate representation of which, is to be sure, sensible, but which in itself, without this constitution of our sensibility (on which the form of our intuition is grounded), must be something, i.e., an object independent of sensibility. (A251-2)[57]

First, we learn *noumena* are meant to be objects independent of our sensibility and its field. Kant determined in the Transcendental Aesthetic that our sensibility and its field of appearances do not pertain to things in themselves but only to the way things appear to us based on our subjective constitution. So things in themselves are beyond our sensible intuition and so are not cognizable but only thinkable by the pure understanding.

Kant then explains that the reason we have to think *noumena* and add them to *phenomena* is that it follows from the concept of an appearance in general that something must correspond to this appearance. This something cannot be another appearance. The reason for this is that an appearance is nothing for itself outside of our kind of representation. This also confirms that

[57] Tobias Rosefeldt quotes the last half of this passage from "it follows naturally", and takes it as confirming his interpretation that Kant asserts the existence of mind-transcendent things in themselves (2022: 23). Rosefeldt ignores the surrounding sentences, which in fact show that Kant denies we can ever assert the existence of a mind-transcendent thing in itself. The key mistake Rosefeldt makes is not appreciating Kant's distinction between thinking and cognition (B146). Kant states in the full passage I quote that we add noumena that the understanding only thinks and which follow from the "concept of an appearance in general". This is analytic reasoning in thought and so we only think the concept of a noumena or an object independent of sensibility and do not cognize its existence. The next sentence says "Now from this arises the concept of a noumenon, which is not at all positive and does not signify a determinate cognition of any sort of thing, but rather only the thinking of something in general, in which I abstract from all form of sensible intuition." (A253). As I go on to show, Kant's next question is whether we can assume another intuition other than our sensible one that could supply an intuition and thus enable us to claim the noumenon was not an empty concept but a true object. As we see, Kant concludes we are not justified in doing so and so it remains the mere form of a concept, i..e, a thought-entity. Kant also says contra Rosefeldt "that this affection of sensibility is in me does not constitute any relation of such representation to any object at all" (A253)

objects of experience, which are objects as appearances, do not exist outside of our sensibility or kind of representation.

Finally, Kant reasons that since the concept of an appearance leads logically to something it is the appearance of, which cannot be a further appearance, to avoid a constant circle the concept "appearance" must indicate a relation to something independent of our sensibility. Kant thinks of this something independent of our sensibility as an object independent of our sensibility that we sensibly represent as the appearance. Kant reasons merely analytically from the concept or "word" of an appearance to avoid the logical fallacy of a constant circle.

Yet, it is not clear what the "constant circle" is. Rather, Kant seems to avoid an infinite regress of appearances corresponding to further appearances all the way down without ever leading to a thing in itself. Moreover, although Kant indicates a relation to an "object independent of our sensibility" as a *noumenon*, this is not a cognition but only a thought that conceptual and logical analytic reasoning leads us to think. Therefore, we do not have synthetic *a posteriori* cognition of an object independent of our sensibility. This implies we do not cognize its existence or claim it exists but only have a concept of a *noumenon* that we think. So the *noumenon* is a mere concept of an object independent of our sensibility without us positing the existence of this object in a sphere outside our sensibility. The next paragraphs in the text support this reading.

Kant continues:

> Now from this arises the concept of a noumenon, which is not at all positive and does not signify a determinate cognition of any sort of thing, but rather only the thinking of something in general, in which I abstract from all form of sensible intuition. But in order for a noumenon to signify a true object, to be distinguished from all *phenomena*, it is not enough that I **liberate** my thoughts from all conditions of sensible intuition, but I must in addition have ground to **assume** another kind of intuition than this sensible one, under which such an object could be given; for otherwise my thought is empty even though free of contradiction. To be sure, above we were able to prove not that sensible intuition is the

> only possible intuition, but rather that it is the only one possible **for us**; but we also could not prove that yet another kind of intuition is possible, and, although our thinking can abstract from that sensibility, the question still remains whether it is not then a mere form of a concept and whether any object at all is left over after this separation. (A253)

So from the concept of an appearance, which requires us to add a noumenon, arises only the *concept* of a noumenon. The concept of a noumenon is "not at all positive and does not signify a determinate cognition of any sort of thing". Thus, from our concept of a noumenon we do not cognize an object existing outside of our sensibility, but it is "only the thinking of something in general". The concept of a noumenon is a negative concept arrived at by abstracting our sensibility from the objects of our senses. This fits with the B Preface: we cannot cognize but only think an empty concept of a thing independent of our sensibility.

For this concept of a noumenon to signify a true object distinguished from a phenomenon, i.e., to relate to an object that exists outside of our field of sensibility, "it is not enough that I **liberate** my thoughts from all conditions of sensible intuition". To have a cognition and not just the thought of a noumenon, I need a "ground to assume another kind of intuition than this sensible one, under which such an object could be given". To have a determinate cognition of anything I need, in addition to the concept, an intuition. A noumenon is by definition an object independent of sensible intuition. Therefore, we have to assume another type of intuition that is non-sensible if an intuition, and so cognition, of a noumenon is to be possible.

Without a non-sensible intuition "my thought [of a concept of a noumenon] is empty even though free of contradiction", which is the definition of Kant's first type of nothing. This is nothing as a thought-entity, i.e., an empty concept of an object to which no intuition can be supplied (A290/B347). At this point, Kant leaves it open as to whether this is all a noumenon could be. We have only proven that sensible intuition is the only possible intuition for us, but not that it is the only one possible at all. The question still remains whether our concept of a

noumenon "is not then a mere form of a concept and whether any object at all is left over after this separation" of our thought of an object in general from our sensibility.

Kant claims a few paragraphs later that there is no object left over for us after this separation because:

> Hence to this extent the categories extend further than sensible intuition, since they think objects in general without seeing to the particular manner (of sensibility) in which they might be given. But they do not thereby determine a greater sphere of objects, since one cannot assume that such objects can be given without presupposing that another kind of intuition than the sensible kind is possible, which, however, we are by no means justified in doing. (A254/B309)[58]

The categories allow us to think the concept of an object that is beyond the field of our sensibility because they think objects in general without limitation to a particular manner of intuition. However, the categories, and so our concept of a noumenon, does not allow us to determine a greater sphere of objects beyond our sensibility. This is because for these objects to

[58] This passage, paired with A253, refutes Stang's interpretation of how we are able to think of noumena or non-sensible objects. Stang claims "we have the concept of 'non-sensible intuition' and we can entertain thoughts about objects we cannot intuit by thinking of them as objects of such intuition… we have the concept of the kind of intellect that could do this, one that possess non-sensible or 'intellectual' intuition. This is how we entertain thoughts about non-sensible objects." (Stang 2022: 310-311). However, here we see that we think non-sensible objects (noumena) by abstracting our sensible intuition from objects of our sensibility. Afterwards, we are left with the thought of an object in general using only the categories of the pure understanding. This is a mere empty form of a concept that does not contradict itself and so is a thought-entity. Here we are told that we cannot assume a non-sensible intuition is possible (real), which still allows that we could think its content positively. Yet, elsewhere Kant says about non-sensible objects that "such an object would have to be represented neither in space nor in time (as mere conditions of our sensible representation) without which conditions we cannot think any intuition" (A494/B522). So, for Kant, a non-sensible intuition is not even thinkable by us, at least with any positive content. We can only represent an object of non-sensible intuition negatively "through all of the predicates that already lie in the presupposition that **nothing belonging to sensible intuition** pertains to it…I merely indicate what the intuition of the object **is not,** without being able to say what is then contained in it" (B149).

Stang does not think the mere thought of an object of the understanding allows us to think of non-sensible objects because he thinks what we are looking for when thinking a non-sensible object are "values of the variable x of judgment", which requires objects of singular representation (intuition). He says "if we possessed only the capacity of understanding, we would only represent concepts, not the values of x in judgments and cognitions. Logically, the object of the understanding by itself cannot fill in for the variable x of judgment." (Stang 2022: 310). However, his suggestion is just another concept: the concept of "non-sensible intuition" or intellectual intuition. Further, as shown above, Kant only allows this to be a negative concept of what the intuition of the object is not that would not provide possible values of the variable x in judgments. Finally, the concept of an object in general is instead more like his variable x of judgment before it is given values through intuition. This is a singular yet general problematic concept of an object.

be possibly given there has to be another kind of intuition other than sensible that could supply the intuition of them, which we are not justified in assuming.

Thus, Kant answers definitively that our concept of a noumenon is merely an empty concept without an intuition of it possible of being given, as far as we are justified in claiming. Kant clearly takes a noumenon to be example of his first type of nothing as "a concept without an object, like the *noumena*, which cannot be counted among the possibilities although they must not on that ground be asserted to be impossible (*ens rationis*)" (A290/B347). Thus, a noumenon is, for us, a mere thought-entity as a non-contradictory concept with no possible intuition. There is no object left over after the separation, liberation, or abstraction from our sensibility to arrive at the concept of the noumenon. Instead, it is the mere empty form of a concept.

In conclusion, by forming the concept of a noumenon Kant is not positing an object that exists outside of our field of experience, sensibility, or appearance. Instead, Kant is only forming the empty concept of an object that is merely thinkable without contradiction. We must think the concept of a noumenon to avoid the logical contradiction of an appearance without something it is the appearance of and the related logical fallacy of having an infinite regress of appearances.

5. Further Support that Noumena Are Mere Thought-Entities in the B Edition

A noumenon is only an empty concept free of logical contradiction for which an intuition cannot be given as far as we are justified in claiming. This means we cannot cognize, and so cannot claim, the existence of a noumenon. Further support for this interpretation is given in the B Edition when Kant says:

> I call a concept problematic that contains no contradiction but that is also, as a boundary for given concepts, connected with other cognitions, the objective reality of which can in no way be cognized. The concept of a **noumenon**, i.e., of a thing that is not to be thought of as an object of the senses but rather as a thing in itself (solely through a pure understanding) is not at all contradictory; for one cannot assert of sensibility that it is the only possible kind of intuition. Further, this concept is necessary in order not to extend

> sensible intuition to things in themselves, and thus to limit the objective validity of sensible cognition (for the other things, to which sensibility does not reach, are called noumena just in order to indicate that those cognitions cannot extend their domain to everything that the understanding thinks). (A254/B310)

So, a problematic concept contains no contradiction and demarcates the boundaries of other cognitions; however, we cannot cognize its objective reality. Not being able to cognize its objective reality means that we cannot know whether an existing object corresponds to this problematic concept or not. Something is "problematic" for Kant if we must ask after it but can never get the answer, and thus it always remains a problem for our reason.

Kant's example of a problematic concept is the concept of a noumenon. As we have seen, this is the concept of a thing that is not an object of the senses but a thing in itself. By "thing in itself" Kant is referring to an object existing independently of our sensibility and sensible cognition. Thus, Kant identifies a noumenon with a thing in itself (see also A259/B315, A256/B312), and specifically with a transcendental thing in itself, i.e., a thing in itself existing independently of our sensibility.

By not being contradictory, the concept of a noumenon fulfills the first criteria of a problematic concept. Even though a noumenon is not an object of the senses we cannot claim that sensibility is the only kind of intuition. Thus, it is logically possible for there to be a non-sensible intuition that provides an object for this concept to give it objective reality. However, we are not justified in claiming a non-sensible intuition exists, and so we can neither affirm nor deny the real possibility of a thing in itself. We can only form an empty concept of it.

The concept of a noumenon also fulfills the second criteria of a problematic concept: acting as a boundary concept to limit the objective validity of our cognitions. The concept of a noumenon limits the extent and domain of our sensible cognition of objects. It prevents us from extending what pertains to sensible intuition alone to all objects the understanding can think, e.g.,

things in themselves. The concept of a noumenon is of a logically possible object beyond the field of our sensibility that we can only think and not cognize. By allowing us to conceive of a limit between what we can think and sense we can also limit the objective validity and reality of our sensible cognitions to objects of the senses.

By drawing a boundary to the objective validity of our sensible cognitions we also demarcate the field of our sensibility. Kant confirms this point by saying "our understanding acquires a negative expansion, i.e., it is not limited by sensibility, but rather limits it by calling things in themselves (not considered as appearances) noumena. But it also immediately sets boundaries for itself, not cognizing these things through categories, hence merely thinking them under the name of an unknown something" (A256/B312).

Might there be another way for us to cognize the objective reality of a noumenon and so posit noumena as existing outside the domain of our sensibility? Kant denies this possibility:

> In the end, however, we have no insight into the possibility of such *noumena*, and the domain outside of the sphere of appearances is empty (for us), i.e., we have an understanding that extends farther than sensibility **problematically**, but no intuition, indeed not even the concept of a possible intuition, through which objects outside the field of sensibility could be given, and about which the understanding could be employed **assertorically.** The concept of a noumenon is therefore merely a **boundary concept**, in order to limit the pretension of sensibility, and therefore only of negative use. But it is nevertheless not invented arbitrarily, but is rather connected with the limitation of sensibility, yet without being able to posit anything outside of the domain of the latter. (A255/B310-B311)

Kant is clear that we have no insight into the possibility of *noumena*. By 'possibility' Kant must mean real possibility. This is because Kant already ascribes logical possibility to *noumena*. Logical possibility is the mere thinkability of a concept without contradiction. Real possibility is whether there is an object in the sum total of all possibility that corresponds to the concept. Thus, we do not know whether there is an object outside of our sensibility that corresponds to this concept of a noumenon.

Stronger still, Kant claims the domain outside the sphere of appearances, i.e., the domain of things in themselves and noumena, is empty for us. This is a claim about what exists for us, which depends on what we can and cannot cognize exists. Since our cognition does not reach outside the domain of our sensibility, we cannot make justified claims of existence about what is outside this domain. Thus, for us, the domain outside our sensibility and appearance is empty.

The reason our cognition is limited to the sensible is that our understanding extends farther than sensibility only problematically. This means that, while we can form a non-contradictory concept of a noumenon as a boundary concept for our sensibility, we can have no sensible intuition of a noumenon. Thus, we cannot be given objects in themselves that exist outside the field of our sensibility, i.e., *noumena*, but only form an empty concept of them, i.e., Kant's first type of nothing as a mere thought-entity. In fact, we cannot even form the concept of a possible non-sensible intuition through which objects outside the field of sensibility could be given.

Conversely, intuition corresponding to our concept is needed to employ our understanding assertorically. 'Problematic' and 'assertoric' refer to two types of judgment enabled by two logical functions of the understanding that are also used in two moments of modality. 'Problematic' means that an assertion or denial, or in this case a concept, is merely possible. 'Assertoric' means that the judgment or concept is actual or true (A74/B100). These judgments map onto the concepts of the understanding in the table of categories by sharing the same function. The problematic maps onto possibility-impossibility and the assertoric onto existence-non-existence (A80/B106). So Kant is claiming that our understanding can only think objects outside of our sensibility as a logical possibility, but it cannot claim the actuality or existence-non-existence of such objects.

Thus, the concept of a noumenon is merely a "boundary concept" by being of merely negative use in limiting our sensibility. This concept allows us to conceive of the boundary of our sensible intuition and so limit our cognition of the objective reality of objects to objects of the senses. Moreover, the concept of a noumenon helps us not to think that what we intuit applies to things outside of our sensibility.

However, we cannot cognize the objective reality of a noumenon and cannot claim that it exists or is actual. Kant expresses this by saying we cannot "posit anything outside the domain of the latter" ('latter' refers to the domain of our sensibility). Since existence, for Kant, is the positing of an object, Kant is saying that we cannot claim or cognize that a thing in itself outside the field of our sensibility exists. We can only posit objects within the domain of our sensibility because we can only have sensible intuition, and so cognition of the existence, of objects in this domain.

A counter argument, to my interpretation that for Kant we cannot cognize or assert the existence of a noumenon or thing in itself, is that we have sensation. Thus, our sensibility must be affected by something to produce that sensation. This means we must posit an object that exists outside the field of our sensibility as the cause of this affection. Kant does not think this follows and says "that this affection of sensibility is in me does not constitute any relation of such representation to any object at all" (A254). Moreover, as already elaborated above and in chapter 2, Kant states in the A edition First Paralogism and Refutation of Idealism that we cannot infer from a given effect to a determinate cause. Thus, we cannot reason from an affection of our sensibility to the determinate cause of an object existing outside us. The cause could lie in us (B276).

6. Kant's Agnosticism about the Existence of Things in Themselves

a. We Cannot Claim the Positive Existence of Things In Themselves

We now have the background to interpret Kant's explicitly stated position in the Amphiboly as to whether we can cognize and claim the existence of things in themselves. Kant's position is agnosticism. I will now examine Kant's argument for and statement of this position in that chapter. Kant begins by saying:

> If by merely intelligible objects we understand those things that are thought through pure categories, without any schema of sensibility, then things of this sort are impossible. For the condition of the objective use of all our concepts of understanding is merely the manner of our sensible intuition, through which objects are given to us, and, if we abstract from the later, then the former have no relation at all to any sort of object. Indeed, even if one would assume another sort of intuition than this our sensible one, our functions for thinking would still be without any significance in regard to it. (A286/B342)

Kant is investigating whether and in what sense there could be non-sensible cognition of merely intelligible objects. The first option Kant considers is whether there could be merely intelligible objects that are thought through our pure categories alone. Kant claims this sort of object is impossible. Our pure categories alone cannot relate to any object and so they have no objective use on their own. For our pure concepts of the understandings to relate to objects they must be used under the conditions of our sensible intuition. Yet, by abstracting from our manner of sensible intuition we can no longer be given any object, and so our pure concepts cannot relate to any object using our intuition. Thus, there cannot be purely intelligible objects that we relate to through our pure categories by pure thinking or our intuition.

Perhaps a different intuition could combine with our pure categories to pick out an object. Kant denies this possibility. Kant makes clear that our functions for thinking, which underly all of our concepts of the understanding, cannot be applied to an intuition other than our own. So, the nature of our pure categories as 1) requiring intuition to relate to an object, and 2) applying only to our sensible intuition, means that when abstracted from our sensible intuition these pure

categories cannot relate to any object. Thus, a merely intelligible object that our pure categories relate to only in thought without sensible intuition is impossible.

Kant then considers a second kind of merely intelligible object. This is an intelligible object defined by being an object of a non-sensible intuition, which, as we have already said, our categories cannot relate to. Kant says of this kind of intelligible object that:

> If we understand thereby only objects of a non-sensible intuition, of which our categories are certainly not valid, and of which we can therefore never have any cognition at all (neither intuition nor concept) then *noumena* in this merely negative sense must of course be allowed: for they would then not say anything but that our manner of intuition does not pertain to all things, but only to objects of our senses, consequently that their objective validity is bounded, and room thus remains for some other sort of intuition and therefore also for things as its objects. (A286/B343)

We cannot cognize an object of a non-sensible intuition because both our sensible intuition and our pure concepts of the understanding cannot, even in principle, relate to it. We cannot even form a logically possible positive concept of this object. This defines a negative noumenon for Kant.

Kant thinks we can allow the logical possibility of such an object because our sensible intuition cannot be said to pertain to all things. Moreover, this object of a non-sensible intuition reminds us that our sensible intuition only pertains to objects of our senses and so the objective validity, and so reality, of objects of our senses is limited to our field of sensibility. Once one leaves the field of our sensibility by abstracting from its conditions (considers them in a transcendental sense) the objective validity of objects of our senses ceases and they no longer exist, i.e., are ideal.

Bounding our sensibility and its objective validity leaves room outside it for other kinds of intuition. Therefore, merely intelligible objects of a non-sensible intuition are logically

possible. Yet, this does not mean we can claim this object exists, i.e., is a "real" possibility. Kant says:

> But in that case the concept of a *noumenon* is problematic, i.e., the representation of a thing of which we can say neither that it is possible nor that it is impossible, since we are acquainted with no sort of intuition other than our own sensible one and no other sort of concepts than the categories, neither of which, however, is suited to an extrasensible object. (A286-7/B343)[59]

In this passage, Kant reiterates what we have already seen: the concept of a negative noumenon is problematic. By 'problematic' Kant means that it is a "representation of a thing of which we can neither say that it is possible nor impossible". A noumenon is a non-contradictory concept and so logically possible. So, the possibility invoked here is real possibility. We can neither say that it is or is not really possible. This means we "cannot give any assurance whether or not there is a corresponding object somewhere within the sum total of possibilities" (Bxxvi).

Neither our categories of the understanding nor our sensible intuition are suited to a noumenon. This means we cannot make a positive concept of a noumenon by representing what belongs to this extrasensible object. We can only form a negative concept of noumenon through abstraction of our sensibility from objects of our senses. The negative concept of a noumenon only represents what the thing in itself is not by thinking "**nothing belonging to sensible intuition pertains to it**" (B149)

The reason we cannot say whether a noumenon is possible or impossible is that we are acquainted with no other sort of intuition than our own sensible one and no other sort of concepts than our categories. Since our sensible intuition and pure concepts are not suited to relating to extrasensible objects, we cannot affirm that such objects have real possibility or exist. However,

[59] This counters Adams' interpretation that "the basic categories of the understanding… are "pure" enough to apply to things in themselves" (1997: 806-7).

we also cannot say they are a real impossibility because we cannot rule out another sort of intuition. Thus, we must be agnostic as to the existence of an object of non-sensible intuition.

Kant then denies that being able to think objects of a non-sensible intuition as negative *noumena* means we can posit them as positive *noumena*. Kant says:

> Hence we cannot thereby positively expand the field of the objects of our thinking beyond the conditions of our sensibility, and assume beyond appearances objects of pure thinking, i.e., *noumena*, since those do not have any positive significance that can be given. For one must concede that the categories alone are not sufficient for the cognition of things in themselves, and without the *data* of sensibility they would be merely subjective forms of the unity of the understanding, but without any object. (A286-7/B286)

We cannot give a positive significance to *noumena* by assuming objects of pure thinking exist beyond appearance, i.e., positive noumena, and so cannot expand the field of objects of our thinking beyond our sensibility. The reason we cannot do this is that our pure concepts cannot relate to an object beyond the conditions of our sensibility. Thus, one has to concede the categories alone are not sufficient for the cognition of any things in themselves, i.e., extrasensible objects beyond appearances. Categories abstracted from sensibility only give us a subjective form that unifies our thinking without any object they relate to.

Kant further clarifies that:

> Thinking in itself, to be sure, is not a product of the senses, and to this extent is also not limited by them, but it is not on that account immediately of an independent and pure use, without assistance from sensibility, for it is in that case without an object. And one cannot call the noumenon such an object, for this signifies precisely the problematic concept of an object for an entirely different intuition and an entirely different understanding than our own, which is thus a problem itself. (A287/B343)

Thinking is not a product of the senses and so is not limited by them from performing its pure thinking activity. However, our thinking does not have an independent and pure objective use because it requires assistance from sensibility to relate to an object. A *noumenon* is no exception. A noumenon is the problematic concept of an object for an entirely different intuition and

understanding than our own. Since we cannot say whether such an entirely different intuition or understanding are real possibilities or impossibilities they are themselves a problem. So not only do we not have access through thinking or intuition to a noumenon, we cannot even claim the existence of the faculties it would take to cognize it.

b. Definitive Statement On Whether Objects Exist Outside Our Sensibility

Kant goes on to give his most definitive statement on whether objects exist outside the field of our sensibility:

> The concept of a noumenon is therefore not the concept of an object, but rather the problem, unavoidably connected with the limitation of our sensibility, of whether there may not be objects entirely exempt from the intuition of our sensibility, a question that can only be given the indeterminate answer that since sensible intuition does not pertain to all things without distinction room remains for more and other objects; they cannot therefore be absolutely denied, but in the absence of a determinate concept (for which no category is serviceable) they also cannot be asserted as objects for our understanding. (A287-8/B344)

We first learn that our concept of a noumenon is not the concept of an object. Kant must be referring to the concept of a negative noumenon as an object of non-sensible intuition. This is a possible thought for us, unlike a purely intelligible object of our understanding which is impossible. Instead of being the concept of an object, the concept of a negative noumenon is the concept of a problem that is necessarily connected with the limitation of our sensibility. The problem is that because our sensibility is limited there could be objects that exist entirely independently of the conditions of our sensibility.

The only answer we can give to this problem is an indeterminate one. We can only say that because sensible intuition does not pertain to all objects without distinction there is room remaining, i.e., it is logically possible, for more and other objects to exist. A non-sensible intuition and a different understanding from ours is also a problem and so logically possible. Thus, we cannot absolutely deny the existence of objects that exist outside our field of sensibility

(transcendental things in themselves), but we also cannot claim they exist. This is because the only cognitive capacity we have for accessing objects that exist beyond our sensibility is our understanding. Yet, our understanding cannot give us determinate concepts of these objects because our understanding cannot relate to objects beyond our field of sensibility.

As a result, we cannot make a positive or negative claim about the existence of objects beyond our sensibility. Thus, Kant is agnostic about the existence of these objects. Kant also calls this agnosticism "problematic idealism" (B274). Both positions are characterized by claiming the existence of an object is doubtful and indemonstrable. So Kant is a problematic idealist about the existence of objects outside the field of our sensibility and experience (transcendental things in themselves). In this sense, Kant is a problematic transcendental idealist.

We find confirmation of this interpretation in the next paragraph when Kant says:

> The understanding accordingly bounds sensibility without thereby expanding its own field, and in warning sensibility not to presume to reach for things in themselves but solely for appearances it thinks of an object in itself, but only as a transcendental object, which is the cause of appearance (thus not itself appearance), and that cannot be thought of either as magnitude or as reality or as substance, etc. (since these concepts always require sensible forms in which they determine an object); it therefore remains completely unknown whether such an object is to be encountered within or without us, whether it would be cancelled out along with sensibility or whether it would remain even if we took sensibility away. (A288/B344)

The understanding bounds sensibility by limiting its cognition, and so its objective validity, to objects within the realm of sensibility. The understanding draws this boundary by conceiving of things beyond sensibility's field that it does not reach. In doing so, the understanding does not expand its field through cognition of things in themselves. The understanding only thinks the logical possibility of objects of an intuition and understanding that are not ours. Such an object in itself is only thought negatively by denying of the object what pertains to our sensibility. This is

a possible thought because our sensible intuition is not the only logically possible one. In short, our sensibility and understanding cannot reach, cognize, or posit things in themselves in their respective fields but only appearances.

To warn sensibility and bound it solely to appearances, our understanding only thinks an object in itself as a logical possibility and does not cognize it. The object in itself is thought of as a transcendental object that is the cause of appearances but is not itself an appearance. This is to avoid the logical absurdity of an infinite regress of appearances. The thought of an object in itself is indeterminate because our concepts require sensible forms to determine an object.

As a result, this indeterminate, merely logically possible thought of an object in itself leaves it completely unknown whether there is such an object to be encountered within or without us. We can never know whether a thing in itself exists or is only a mere empty concept in our heads. This is because, even though we must think of a transcendental cause of appearances, we cannot know whether this cause is in us (the transcendental subject) or outside us (a transcendental thing in itself). We cannot infer from the existence of appearances as effects to their determinate cause as an existing object in itself because this cause could lie in us as transcendental self-affection.

Kant also claims we can never know whether this object in itself would be cancelled out or would remain if we took sensibility away. This is a puzzling claim because in our very concept of an object in itself (negative noumenon) it is outside and so exempt from our sensibility. So how could a negative noumenon ever disappear if we removed our sensibility? Perhaps Kant is emphasizing that we can only arrive at the concept of an object in itself by abstracting our sensibility from objects of sense. Thus, Kant is claiming we do not know whether there is an object in itself outside our sensibility that corresponds to this concept or whether the

object in itself is only our negative concept. In the latter case, our negative concept (and so the object in itself) would disappear if we removed our sensibility because the object of sense would disappear, which is necessary for us to form our negative concept of a thing in itself.

Kant finishes this long but important passage in the Amphiboly by saying:

> If we want to call this object [the thing in itself] a noumenon because the representation of it is nothing sensible, we are free to do so. But since we cannot apply any of our concepts of the understanding to it, this representation still remains empty for us, and serves for nothing but to designate the boundaries of our sensible cognition and leave open a space that we can fill up neither through possible experience nor through the pure understanding. (A288-9/B345)

Kant confirms that the object in itself can also be called a noumenon because its representation is nothing sensible. However, the representation of an object in itself (noumenon) beyond our sensibility is empty for us and only serves to designate the boundaries of our sensible cognition negatively. The thought of an object in itself does this by being the thought of something logically possible that could exist outside our sensibility, which thus shows our sensibility the limits of its application and objective validity.

In defining the limit of our sensible cognition, the thought of a thing in itself also opens a "space". Kant is not referring to physical space, but merely to the logically possible field of intelligible objects. We cannot fill up this empty field through possible experience or the pure understanding. This is because possible experience and our pure understanding are limited in their objective validity to objects within our field of sensibility. Thus, we can never make claims of the existence of an intelligible field or whether any objects exist within it. This passage comes right before Kant's explanation of our mistake of positing a way things exist in themselves as noumena. This is the topic of the next section.

7. The Mistake Responsible for Claims That Things in Themselves Exist

Kant is aware that some want to claim the existence of things in themselves. Kant considers such claims to be unjustified. He diagnoses the mistake that leads to this unjustified claim by saying:

> The critique of this pure understanding thus does not allow us to create a new field of objects beyond those that can come before it as appearances, and to indulge in intelligible worlds, or even in the concept of them. The mistake that most obviously leads to this, and can certainly be excused though not justified, lies in this: that the use of the understanding, contrary to its vocation, is made transcendental, and the objects, i.e., possible intuitions, are made to conform themselves to concepts, but concepts are not made to conform themselves to possible intuitions (on which alone rests their objective validity). (A289/B345)

One result of the critique of our pure understanding is that we are prevented from creating a new field of objects in themselves that exist beyond appearances. At this point in the *Critique*, we know that appearances are not things in themselves but are objects that exist only under the conditions of our sensibility. So Kant is saying that we cannot create a new field of objects that exist beyond our sensibility or indulge in theorizing about intelligible worlds.

Kant then states the mistake that leads to the unjustified indulgence in an intelligible world of objects beyond appearances. The mistake is the transcendental use of our pure understanding to try to cognize what is beyond our possible experience and sensibility, i.e., beyond its empirical use. This misuse of our understanding is possible because concepts are not made to conform themselves to possible intuitions; even though, it is possible intuition alone on which the objective validity of concepts of the understanding rests. Objective validity means that the concept corresponds to an existing object, i.e., real possibility.

Kant explains why it is the case that our concepts are not made to conform themselves to possible intuitions when he says:

> The cause of this, however, is in turn that apperception and, with it, thinking precede all possible determination of the arrangement of representations. We therefore think something in general, and on the one side determine it sensibly, only we also distinguish the object represented in general and in abstraction from this way of intuiting it; thus there remains to us a way of determining it merely through thinking that is, to be sure, a

> merely logical form without content, but that nevertheless seems to us to be a way in which the object exists in itself (noumenon) without regard to the intuition to which our sensibility is limited. (A289/B346)

Apperception and thinking precede all possible determination of the arrangement of representations. So we first think something in general and then determine it sensibly with intuition. In so doing, we distinguish between the object represented in general and in abstraction from our way of intuiting it. In short, we have a way in which we can determine an object merely through thinking it.

This determination merely through thinking is "a merely logical form without content". This is Kant's first type of nothing as a mere thought-entity or non-contradictory concept without intuitive content. However, our mistake is taking this empty, logical thought of an object in general as a way in which the object exists in itself without the limitation of our sensible intuition. This is the mistake that leads us to posit the existence of objects in themselves or noumenon using our pure understanding.

Interestingly, Kant talks here about the object in itself as a *way of existence* of the object. So the distinction between the object as appearance and as thing in itself is understood as a distinction between two different ways of existence of one object. The way of existence of a thing in itself is existence apart from and without limitation to our sensible intuition. The use of our pure understanding to think such an object and way of existence abstracted from our sensibility is the transcendental use of the understanding.

Our mistake is taking our thought to be getting at a way in which the object exists in itself. Then on this basis we mistakenly claim the object in itself exists. This mistake arises from our ability to think of an object in general through our pure concepts of the understanding because such thought need not conform to our possible sensible intuitions. Being able to think an

object in general, which is abstracted from our way of intuiting, tricks us into thinking there is a way the object exists in itself independently of the limitation of our sensibility. In fact, our thought of an object in general is a mere logical form without any intuitive content or objective validity. In thinking an object as existing in itself outside our sensibility, we also make the mistake of positing an intelligible world in which these objects in themselves exist apart from our sensibility.[60]

Cleary, Kant thinks it is an error to claim that a noumenon, thing in itself, or intelligible world exists. As far as we are concerned, these are mere thoughts on the basis of which we can make no justified claims of their existence. These thoughts are mere empty concepts, or thought entities, that mark the logical possibility of another way of existence apart from our sensibility. As a logical possibility, this means we cannot positively claim with any justification that noumenon, things in themselves, or an intelligible world exist or do not exist.[61] This leads to

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[60] Kant also describes this mistake at B306-7. The mistake is of taking our mere concept of an object in itself "as something in general outside of our sensibility" for an existing object we can cognize through our understanding.

[61] While this chapter is limited to a discussion of things in themselves, this point applies to the subject in itself too. Kant says "the representation **I am**, which expresses the consciousness that can accompany all thinking, is that which immediately includes the existence of a subject in itself, but not yet any **cognition** of it, thus not empirical cognition, i.e., experience; for to that there belongs, besides the thought of something existing, intuition" (B277). Thus, while the representation I am contains the representation of an existing subject in itself, we have no cognition of its existence (see also B158) and so it is just the thought of something existing without an intuition of it. Thus, we only have an empty representation (thought-entity) of the subject in itself as an existing thing. Kant confirms this by saying the "wholly empty representation I, of which one cannot even say that it is a concept, but a mere consciousness that accompanies every concept" (A346/B404), and as such is a mere logical possibility. Kant claims only that we exist as an intelligence (the I think exists as a spontaneous act) and says" I cannot determine my existence as that of a self-active being, rather I merely represent the spontaneity of my thought, i.e., of the determining" (B157-8).

To claim existence of the subject in itself as thing/being is to commit the error of the first paralogism. This error is to conflate the logical (what can only be represented as subject and never as predicate of any other thing A349, A242/B300) with the ontological (what endures or persists, does not change, arise, or perish, and is the substratum of everything real that belongs to the existence of things A349, A181/B225)) meanings of substance and "passes off the constant logical subject of thinking as the cognition of a real subject of inherence (A350), when in fact "apart from this logical significance of the I, we have no acquaintance with the subject in itself that grounds this I as substratum" (A350). In the B edition Kant places the equivocation on "thinking", but it amounts to the same point (Kant replaces "substance" with "subject", but still locates the problem as taking the logical concept of subject to imply existence of the self as an ontological substance (B419)). In the B edition, Kant also characterizes the illusion of the psychological paralogism is that "I confuse the possible **abstraction** from my empirically determined existence with the supposed consciousness of a **separate** possible existence of my thinking Self, and believe I cognize what is substantial in me as a transcendental subject" (B427).

Kant's agnosticism (problematic transcendental idealism) about the existence of things in themselves and an intelligible world or field in which they exist.

Chapter 9: The Main Interpretive Problem: Empirical Reality

1. The Problem of Establishing Empirical Reality

I have explained Kant's direct and indirect proofs of transcendental idealism. Those proofs showed transcendental idealism is the doctrine that space, time, and appearances (objects of experience) are nothing outside of us, i.e., our experience and sensibility. This seemingly makes them into mere illusions that have no reality. However, Kant claims they are not merely ideal but are also real in an empirical sense. This chapter will explain how this is possible.

Empirical reality is a sense of reality and objectivity that is limited to what is within our experience and sensibility. As such, empirical reality is limited to what is within the subject and under subjective conditions of our intuition. So, empirical reality seems to further undermine the objective reality of space, time, and appearances, and reinforce their subjectivity.

Kanterian describes the problem well by saying:

> Why are appearances not mere illusions? Why could our entire stream of 'immanent experience' not be a mere dream, within which we, Kantians, call all episodes 'subjective$_t$' and divide them into 'inner', subjective$_e$ and 'outer', objective$_e$ episodes? Does transcendental idealism amount to empirical idealism, only renaming empirical idealism's ideas 'appearances' or empirical 'objects', a sub-domain of which, 'external' appearances, is called 'empirical reality', with 'matter' 'in' it, while the other sub-domain is called immediate self-consciousness, 'the idea of myself, as the thinking subject (A371). (Kanterian 278)

Kanterian wonders why we should agree with Kant instead of considering appearances to be mere illusions. Based on what Kant has said, it seems that all our experience could be a mere dream. Everything we experience is subjective in a transcendental sense or "subjective$_t$", which means when viewed from outside our sensibility all our experience exists only in us as our mere representations. Kanterian reasons from this transcendental ideality to empirical idealism. He wonders whether Kant is only renaming external appearances "empirical objects" and simply

calling them empirically real, although they are actually empirically ideal along with our immediate self-consciousness. It seems Kant is not an empirical realist after all.

2. Two Common Mistakes

Kanterian's first mistake, which is perhaps the biggest and most common mistake in Kantian interpretation, is to think that empirical reality depends on transcendental reality. Based on this, the mistaken interpretation reasons that since appearances are transcendentally ideal we must consider them to be empirically ideal without a further grounding in transcendental reality. Ironically, Kant charges the transcendental realist with making the same mistake that leads them to empirical idealism and embarrassment (A371). The interpreters' mistake arises from not attempting Kant's new way of thinking. Instead, they continue to think like transcendental realists by taking existence outside of our sensibility/possible experience as the only self-sufficient sense of reality.

Then, in perhaps the second biggest mistake in Kantian interpretation, interpreters have tried to resolve this problem by positing the existence of things in themselves and having them backstop the empirical reality of appearances, space, and time. This back-stopping by things in themselves is a type of metaphysical "grounding". Kanterian gives a version of this solution:

> The answer must be: transcendental idealism falls short of empirical (enthusiastic) idealism, because it is committed to things-in-themselves, unknowable, but necessary both for tracing the limitation designated by 'transcendental' and ensuring that the 'realism' of 'empirical realism' is not a mere *façon de parler*. As Vaihinger writes: 'Things-in-themselves stand firmly like a wall of palisades behind appearances, prevent their dissolution into illusion and forbid the association of Kant with Berkeley' (Vaihinger 1922b: 505). (Kanterian 278)

As has been shown through a careful analysis of Kant's direct and indirect proofs of transcendental idealism, this cannot possibly be Kant's answer. In the case of the transcendental ideality of space and time, this is especially clear. Space and time are nothing and do not exist at

all outside of our sensibility to the point they disappear when we abstract from our sensibility. Thus, there is nothing to transcendentally backstop their empirical reality, and so they must be mere illusions if this is the only way they can be empirically real.

I have also shown that objects as appearances are ideal in the same sense as space and time, i.e., appearances do not exist (are nothing) outside of our experience and sensibility. Likewise, there is nothing in appearances that pertains to things in themselves and things in themselves do not exist in our experience at all. So when transcendentally considered, appearances are only our subjective representations that are nothing in themselves. Insofar as the object is an appearance it only exists in the subject.

If there is no other criteria for their reality, then all objects of our experience (appearances) are illusions as simply the way objects in themselves subjectively appear to us. This is the case even if appearances are "grounded" by things in themselves causally or through identity. The transcendental reality of things in themselves, as their cause or as in some sense "identical" with them, does nothing to make *appearances* real and any less transcendentally ideal.

An appearance is not made into an object by being caused by an existing thing in itself. Instead, this only leads to the appearance being a mere representation of the object in itself that caused the appearance. We have seen that the appearance has nothing in it that pertains to the thing in itself and so the appearance is not real in virtue of representing a real thing in itself. Thus, an appearance and its properties that do not exist outside of our experience and our minds are not made real by being caused by non-spatial, non-temporal things that share none of the same properties and are not representations. In such a case, the appearance is still only

transcendentally ideal as merely the subjective way a thing in itself seems to us under our peculiar conditions of sensibility that do not pertain to the thing in itself.

Likewise, if an appearance were the exact same thing as the thing in itself, this does nothing to make it empirically real. Non-metaphysical identity does nothing to metaphysically ground the reality of an appearance. The metaphysical identity of a thing in itself and an appearance would only lead to the transcendental reality of the appearance. Yet, Kant not only denies the transcendental reality of appearances but he proves their transcendental ideality. Moreover, strict identity between things in themselves and appearances collapses Kant's transcendental distinction by making an appearance into a thing in itself. This is no longer to interpret Kant but to disagree with him. Kant is clear appearances are different than things in themselves in existence, reality, properties, and objective validity, and making them the same in any other way will not enable them to be transcendentally real.

Kant says of the transcendental ideality of appearances and their distinction from things in themselves:

> For that it [an appearance] should exist in itself without relation to our senses and possible experience, could of course be said if what we were talking about were a thing in itself. But what we are talking about is merely an appearance in space and time, neither of which is a determination of things in themselves, but only of our sensibility; hence what is in them (appearances) are not something in itself, but mere representations, which if they are not given in us (in perception) are encountered nowhere at all. (A493-4/B522)

An appearance, unlike a thing in itself, does not exist outside of us. To make them strictly identical or identical metaphysically in their reality and existence is to disagree with Kant. Kant takes appearances to be mere representations that if they are not given in us in perception are encountered nowhere at all. Conversely, things in themselves exist in themselves without relation to our senses and possible experience.

Therefore, it is clear that objects insofar as they appear to us do not exist outside us and things in themselves do not exist within our experience and sensibility. This means objects as appearances are mere representations when considered transcendentally. Thus, the appearance as "aspect" or "effect" of the object in itself is transcendentally ideal and not real.

So, even if transcendentally real things in themselves cause appearances or are the same as them, this would not give appearances empirical reality and make them more than mere illusions. The example of a mirage illustrates this point. In a mirage, the light being refracted, the different densities of air through which it is refracted, and our eyes seeing the image of an oasis in a dessert are all real. Furthermore, the mirage is the same as these real things and caused by them. However, this does not mean the mirage of an oasis is a real oasis at which I can quench my thirst and so more than a mere illusion. The reality of the cause or of something that is the "same" as an illusion does not make the illusion real.

As argued in the last chapter, I dispute that Kant allows any claim that things in themselves exist and any claim to an metaphysical relation of causality or identity. As mere thought-entities, things in themselves cannot metaphysically ground and so establish the reality of anything. This point aside, we are still left to interpret appearances as either mere illusions or as transcendentally real unless we admit a sense of empirical reality that is independent from transcendental reality.

3. My answer to Kanterian's Problem

Kanterian's problem concerned how to establish the empirical reality of what is transcendentally ideal. My answer, which I take to be Kant's answer, to Kanterian's problem is that we need to accept empirical reality as a sense of reality for what exists merely in us. This applies to the world of sense, space, time, and all the objects within them. We should accept their reality

because they exist in our experience. This is a sense of reality, with its accompanying standard of reality, that is completely independent of transcendental reality. This depends on accepting our experience as a touchstone of reality even though it is only made possible by structures that come from our mind (our faculty of sensibility and understanding), and even though there is nothing in it of anything in themselves.

Kant's understanding of time clearly illustrates my point. Kant says "our assertions accordingly teach the empirical reality of time, i.e., objective validity in regard to all objects that may ever be given to our senses" (A35/B52) and "the transcendental ideality of time, according to which it is nothing at all if one abstracts from the subjective conditions of sensible intuition, and cannot be counted as either subsisting or inhering in the objects in themselves (without their relation to our intuition)" (A36/B53). Kant thinks time has objective validity and reality in regard to objects of our senses. We see in this passage that to consider things transcendentally is to take objects as they may be in themselves by abstracting from the sensibility of our intuition. Kant thinks time loses objectivity and reality when considered transcendentally. This captures the difference between the empirical reality and transcendental ideality of space, time, and appearances. Appearances, space, and time have reality and objective validity in our field of sensibility, i.e., in an empirical sense, while they are ideal and lose this objectivity when considered as applying to things in themselves abstracted from the subjective conditions of our sensibility, i.e., in a transcendental sense.

Thus, for Kant, there is a type of reality and objectivity that applies only to what is within our sensibility, and this is different from the reality and objectivity which applies to things in themselves independently of our sensibility. If this were not the case, then time and space would not be real or objectively valid of any object because they are not valid of things in themselves.

Objects of sense are still objective yet not in the same way as things in themselves. This is an objectivity that only applies within the subject, i.e., under our conditions of sensibility/experience and for our representations alone (empirically).

4. Dreams and the Standard of Empirical Reality

Kanterian provides another important interpretive question. He wonders why our immanent experience is not a mere dream. Kanterian's answer is that things in themselves ground the reality of appearances and our experience thereby preventing them from being mere dreams. The problem with Kanterian's answer is that Kant does not provide it.[62]

Instead, Kant gives a very different answer as to what makes appearances and our experience real and true as opposed to dreams: "In space and time, however, the empirical truth of appearances is satisfactorily secured, and sufficiently distinguished from its kinship with dreams, if both are correctly and thoroughly connected up according to empirical laws in one experience" (A492/B520-1) (also A451/B479). Kant's answer is that there is an independent standard of empirical reality for appearances that is immanent to experience. The standard is that if appearances or perceptions are thoroughly connected in one experience according to empirical laws then they are empirically real and not dreams.

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[62] In fact, Kant does not provide this answer where you would most expect it: in his response to the *Göttingen Review.* In the *Göttingen Review*, Kant is associated with idealists such as Berkeley (Sassen 2000: 53-58). Kant responds to this review in the appendix to the *Prolegomena* not by saying that he is ultimately not an idealist but a realist about space, time, and appearances because they are grounded in things in themselves that are ultimately real. Instead, Kant says "space and time, together with everything contained in them, are not things (or properties of things) in themselves, but belong instead merely to the appearances of such things; thus far I am of one creed with the previous idealists" (AA 4:374). Kant goes on to distinguish himself from Berkeley by first saying "there is truth only in experience" and then "since truth rests upon universal and necessary laws as its criteria, for *Berkeley* experience could have no criteria of truth, because its appearances (according to him) had nothing underlying them *a priori*; from which it followed that experience is nothing but sheer illusion, whereas for us space and time (in conjunction with the pure concepts of the understanding) prescribe *a priori* their law to all possible experience, which law at the same time provides the sure criterion for distinguishing truth from illusion in experience" (AA 4:375). Thus, Kant says what my interpretation would expect: experience is what is real and true. The criteria of distinguishing this truth and reality in experience from illusion is universal and necessary laws in experience. We get these laws from the forms of our intuition (space and time) and pure concepts of our understanding that our sensibility and understanding prescribe *a priori* (prior to perception) that make experience possible.

This answer does not appeal to the reality of things in themselves. Instead, this answer depends on taking empirical reality seriously as an independent type of reality in its own right that does not depend on transcendental reality. It also depends on taking empirical objects seriously as an independent type of object that does not require existing things in themselves to ground them.

Truth for Kant is correspondence of a representation (specifically the species of representation of cognition) to an object: "the agreement of cognition with its object" (A58/B82). Empirical truth is the agreement of an empirical representation with an empirical object. This agreement is established by the thorough connection of our perceptions according to empirical laws in one experience. This establishes the agreement because it is the condition for having appearances as perceptions (a type of representation) become objects of experience (a new type of object that exists only in us).

Agreement of our representations with the empirical object, and so truth, is assured in this way because the representation becomes the object. We find support for this point when Kant says "the sensible faculty of intuition is really only a receptivity for being affected in a certain way with representations, whose relation to one another is a pure intuition of space and time (pure forms of our sensibility), which, insofar as they are connected and determinable in these relations (in space and time) according to laws of the unity of experience, are called **objects**" (A494/B522). Here Kant makes clear that empirical objects are representations that are considered to be objects because they are connected and determinable in space and time according to the laws of the unity of experience. Again we see objective validity in experience, i.e., empirical reality, does not depend on a connection to things in themselves. Instead, it

depends on connection and determination in space and time according to empirical laws, which is a standard immanent to our experience.

Further proof of this is when Kant says:

> We can call the merely intelligible cause of appearances in general the transcendental object, merely so that we may have something corresponding to sensibility as a receptivity…but appearances are, in accordance with it, given not in themselves but only in this experience, because they are mere representations, which signify a real object only as perceptions, namely when this perception connects up with all others in accordance with the rules of the unity of experience. (A494-5/B522-3)

Appearances are not given in themselves but only in experience because they are mere representations (determinations of our mind). The only way appearances as mere representations can signify a real object is as a perception that connects up with all others in accordance with the rules of the unity of experience. Thus, objects as appearances do not exist in themselves but only in experience. Again we see the objectivity, reality, and existence of appearances has nothing to do with their relation (whether causal or identity) to things in themselves.[63] Instead, it has to do with a type of reality and objectivity that only appearances can have as representations, which is decided by a standard immanent to our experience. An intelligible cause of appearances is thought only to make sense of our sensibility as a receptivity, but is not said by Kant to give appearances reality.

As receptive and not spontaneous, something must affect our sensibility transcendentally to produce representations in it, but "the non-sensible cause of these representations is entirely unknown to us, and therefore we cannot intuit it as an object; for such an object would have to be represented neither in space nor in time (as mere conditions of our sensible representations), without which conditions we cannot think any intuition" (A494/B522). So, we cannot say this

[63] Emundts agrees: "To introduce the thing in itself as a limiting concept is possible for Kant because he also entertains a concept of an object of outer sense which does not need any reference to things in themselves." (2008: 141).

non-sensible cause (transcendental object) exists because we cannot even think, never mind have, any intuition of it. Thus, as far as we are concerned this non-sensible cause is a thought-entity type of nothing, i.e., an empty concept without any intuition of it being possible (A290/B347). So the merely intelligible cause of appearances, called a transcendental object, is a mere thought to make sense of our receptive sensibility.

5. Empirical Reality Is Independent of Transcendental Reality

Thus, for appearances to be real, empirical reality must be an independent and equally valid form of reality from transcendental reality. In the last section, we saw this is because the reality, existence, and objectivity of appearances is established immanently to experience and does not depend on a metaphysical grounding in things in themselves. This is also because of how the difference between things in themselves and appearances has been articulated in the direct and indirect proofs, i.e., the "transcendental distinction". The transcendental distinction is a complete difference in existence, reality, objective validity, and properties between appearances and things in themselves. This is also because appearances are transcendentally ideal, which, as has been argued, means they are nothing outside of our sensibility/possible experience. Appearances are nothing in the sense that outside of us they do not exist as objects but only as mere representations. Finally, we cannot claim the existence of things in themselves, even as the non-sensible causes of appearances. Without being able to claim their existence, we cannot claim that the transcendental reality of things in themselves grounds the empirical reality of appearances.

Kant is clear about the transcendental distinction in existence, objectivity, and reality by saying "objects of experience are never given in themselves, but only in experience, and they do not exist at all outside it…Thus they are real when they stand in an empirical connection with my real consciousness, although they are not therefore real in themselves, i.e., outside this progress

of experience" (A492-3/B521). Appearances/objects of experience have no reality, objectivity, or existence outside our mind or experience. They only exist and are real in our experience and when standing in an empirical connection with my real consciousness as the immanent standard for their reality. This is a division in types of reality between existing within our experience, i.e., empirical reality, or being "in themselves" as existing outside our experience, i.e., transcendental reality.

Kant is clear space, time, and the appearances in them do not exist at all outside our mind by saying "space itself, however, together with time, and with both, all appearances are **not things**, but rather nothing but representations, and they cannot exist at all outside our mind"(A492/B520). Transcendentally considered, as abstracted from our sensibility and experience, space and time are formal representations our mind contributes and do not exist at all outside it. Further, this means objects as appearances are, transcendentally considered, mere representations and so only the way that objects in themselves are represented or seem to us. Conversely, things in themselves by definition, if they exist at all, exist outside our mind, experience, and sensibility and are not mere representations.

So despite their empirical reality, objects of our experience are still only mere representations outside our mind and experience. This seems to be the very definition of something that is not an object but a mere representation or determination of the mind and so an illusion. An illusion is the way the object merely seems to us even though the object really has none of these properties, reality, or way of existence. So appearances are transcendentally ideal and so are merely illusions if taken solely transcendentally.

The only way appearances, space, and time are not mere illusions or representations, but also real, is to acknowledge empirical reality as a legitimate type of reality in its own right that

does not depend on the reality of things in themselves. To not do so is to turn space, time, and objects of our experience into mere illusions. Thus, the empirical reality of appearances, space, and time must be something different and independent from transcendental reality.

6. The Copernican Revolution

I have just refuted two metaphysical readings of transcendental idealism. They involve positing a metaphysical casual or identity relation between things in themselves and appearances that establish the reality of appearances. There is also an epistemological reading of transcendental idealism.[64] This reading considers Kant's claims of a transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves and the transcendental ideality of appearances to be a mere epistemological claim: we can cognize the same object as appearances but not things in themselves.

The epistemological reading is flawed because it makes a distinction between metaphysics and epistemology that Kant is trying to subvert with his Copernican Revolution. Kant questions the assumption that "all our cognition must conform to the objects" and instead proposes the hypothesis that "the objects must conform to our cognition" (Bxvi). Kant explains his Copernican Revolution more precisely by saying "we assume that our representation of things as they are given to us does not conform to these things as they are in themselves but rather that these objects as appearances conform to our way of representing" (Bxx). Kant is assuming the objects of our experience conform to our faculties of cognition.

Kant's revolutionary hypothesis is that our faculties of cognition contribute to, and are necessary conditions for the existence of, objects of our experience as empirically real objects. Kant thinks this is the only way to explain our synthetic *a priori* cognition of objects of our

[64] Most famously held by Allison (1976, 1983/2004), Bird (1962, 2006b), and Prauss (1974).

experience. *A priori* cognition is cognition prior to perception of the object (*a priori*), which can only be the case synthetically if our cognitive faculties make the object possible, i.e., the object conforms to our representations. This also means the objects of our cognition cannot be objects in themselves, which by definition cannot conform to our cognition. So there must be another type of object, an object as appearance, whose existence and properties are made possible by contributions from our faculties of cognition. This is an metaphysical claim, which is made to explain the possibility of an epistemological claim: synthetic *a priori* cognition. This is a revolution in metaphysics first that makes possible a revolution in epistemology.

Space and time are included in this metaphysical revolution as pure intuitions (a type of representation) that come from our sensibility. In short, the space and time of our representations and experience, which are all Kant is concerned with, come from our faculty of intuition as pure *a priori* representations (intuitions). This means our space and time could only have objective validity for objects of experience as objects that conform themselves to our way of representing, and never for things in themselves that by definition cannot conform to our cognition. Thus, space and time are objectively valid of nothing outside of our experience and so they are transcendentally ideal.

The standard objection to this reading is that the Copernican Revolution is only an epistemological revolution and not metaphysical. As the epistemological interpretation would have it, the Copernican Revolution is the realization that we can gain synthetic *a priori* knowledge of objects only as the object appears to us. Accordingly, Kant's Copernican insight does not have to do with the being of the object, but only with our cognition of the object and the way the object appears to us. This is to completely misunderstand Kant's theoretical philosophy. It's error is simple: it does not take itself seriously enough.

Let's think through this position. According to it, what are we cognizing in experience? This position answers that we cognize an appearance, which is the object in itself as it appears to us. However, cognition is, for Kant, a determinate relation of our mind to the object in which our representation of the object conforms to the object. Our synthetic *a priori* cognition is universal and necessary knowledge of the object prior to our perception of it (A42/B60),(B41). We have such knowledge of the object as in space, time, and under all the categories.

The object in itself is not in space and time and cannot be cognized as under the categories (only thought as such). We also cannot know anything about a thing in itself before we perceive it or with strict universality and necessity. So according to this position, we have synthetic *a priori* cognition of properties that the object in itself does not have or cannot be known to have in a way that is not possible. Thus, we do not have any synthetic *a priori* cognition of the object in itself. Then what object do we cognize? The epistemological interpretation cannot answer this question.[65]

Furthermore, we have synthetic *a priori* cognition only of the properties our faculties of intuition and understanding have supplied as necessary conditions for the appearances to appear to us. We are only cognizing (having our mind conform to) our subjective "way of representing" the object in itself, which is not how the object is in itself. This is not cognition of an object in itself, but is only cognition of the representations we make of the thing in itself: our own illusion. So, according to the epistemological interpretation, we have no cognition of any object. Yet, Kant claims all cognition is of an object and we have experience as empirical cognition. Thus, the epistemological interpretation is incoherent.

[65] In particular, I have in mind here Allison's (meta)epistemological interpretation (1983/2004).

If we are to have synthetic *a priori* cognition of an object it must be the case that we cognize a type of object that is metaphysically different from the thing in itself. This is an object with its own objective validity, existence, properties, and reality. This object is called the object of our experience, object as appearance, or object of sense. This object exists independently of an object in itself (although it cannot be thought independently of an object in itself). Such an object is made possible by our faculties of cognition, which supply necessary conditions for its existence, properties, reality, and objective validity. As Kant says, this "would agree better with the requested possibility of an *a priori* cognition of them, which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us" (Bxvi), which cannot be done for things in themselves. This is because we cannot know anything about things in themselves before they are given to us.

Even once we are given the appearance of a thing in itself we still know nothing about the object in itself, but only how it appear to us. This is not even to know things in themselves as distorted or under a heap of marks but not at all. In short, to know the object as appearance is to know nothing of the object in itself, and there is no conformity of our mind to the object in itself. This then means we have no objective cognition, and so no experience, if the only way of existing, reality, and objectivity is the object in itself. Yet, Kant claims we have cognition of objects, these objects exist in space, time, and under the categories, and we know things about these objects before they are given to us.

We can solve this puzzle only if objects as appearances and of experience exist as real objects independently from things in themselves. Then we can know something about them because the very objects (not just their appearances) conform to our cognition. As such objects only in appearance, we can also know something about them before they are given to us. That this is Kant's position is clear when he says "we can cognize of things *a priori* only what we

ourselves have put into them" (Bxvii). We can have *a priori* knowledge only of the features of an object we have contributed to the object. However, we cannot put anything into objects in themselves. Thus, the objects we do cognize *a priori* must have existence, reality, and objectively valid in a way that is different from a thing in itself. Therefore, objects of appearance and objects of experience are not just appearances of things in themselves, but are objects in their own right.

This argument and its conclusion cannot be avoided by the one object interpretation. A one object interpreter may try to refute my argument, and so avoid my conclusion, by claiming that there is no need to claim that we make the object metaphysically. Instead, they suggest, Kant is only claiming that we cognize one aspect or side (the appearance) of an object that exists in itself. The appearance is only one aspect of the same object in itself.

This response does not work. As we just saw, we can only cognize *a priori* what we put into the object through our faculty of intuition and understanding (Bxviii). Moreover, insofar as we cognize the object as appearance we do not cognize anything of the object in itself. So, insofar as we are said to cognize an object synthetically *a priori*, the side we cognize cannot be an object in itself, but must be metaphysically constructed by our mind. This means we would not cognize an object at all, and so have no cognition at all, if the appearance were not considered an independently existing object in its own right apart from the thing in itself. Without allowing the object as appearance to be metaphysically distinct from the thing in itself, we would only know the way the object in itself seems to us and nothing of any object, whether in itself or of appearance.

7. Appearance vs. Illusion

We have established the object as appearance/of experience is metaphysically distinct from the object as a thing in itself. Objects as appearance/experience have empirical reality and empirical objective validity though no transcendental reality or transcendental objective validity. Yet, this means they are nothing outside of the subjective conditions of our sensibility (transcendentally). As a result, it seems Kant still has some explaining to do as to why space, time, and appearances are not mere illusions.

On this issue Kant says: "If I say: in space and time intuition represents both outer objects as well as the self-intuition of the mind as each affects our senses, i.e., as it **appears**, that is not to say that these objects would be a mere **illusion**." (B69). Outer objects in space and time and the self-intuition of our mind in time are mere representations by our sensibility given only insofar as it is affected. Moreover, the space and time of these representations have been proven to be only subjective contributions of our intuition. We also know empirical intuition and sensation do not impart anything that pertains to the object in itself (A44/B61),(A45/B62). As a result, it seems what appears to us is mere illusion and we have no knowledge of any object. However, Kant draws the very opposite conclusion. He distinguishes this appearance from illusion, claims we cognize appearances, and says that these outer appearances and the self-intuition of our mind are both objects and not illusion.

Bolstering this point we see that:

> Thus I do not say that bodies merely seem to exist outside me or that my soul only seems to be given if I assert that the quality of space and time – in accordance with which, as condition of their existence, I posited both of these – lies in my kind of intuition and not in these objects in themselves. It would be my own fault if I made that which I should count as appearance into mere illusion. (B69-70).

Kant argues that bodies outside us and our appearance to ourselves (inner intuition of ourselves) are not mere illusion but really exist. Yet, how can space and time be the necessary conditions of

appearances existing as objects, while only lying in my kind of intuition alone and not in these objects in themselves? This suggests that these bodies in space and time and this inner appearance of myself in time only seem to exist and are mere illusions. This is because the condition of their "existence" is something that lies only in my mind and not in the objects in themselves. This is the definition of a mere seeming or illusion: what merely appears to the perceiving subject but does not exist in the object. Far from proving that appearances exist as objects and not illusions, by making their existence dependent on space and time, Kant seems to make appearances into mere illusions.

Yet, Kant explicitly denies that he makes appearances into mere illusion. To resolve this problem, Kant must explain how he conceives of the difference between appearance and illusion. In particular, he must clarify how appearances can be considered to be real objects and not illusions even though their existence depends upon qualities (space and time) that come from our mind (our intuition). This requires explaining a theory of existence, reality, properties, and objectivity that Kant has in mind but never clearly articulates. This is the idea of an empirical existence, reality and objectivity that is distinct from transcendental existence, reality, and objectivity. This means an object can exist in the empirical world under the conditions of space and time even though it does not exist outside of our sensibility. The distinction hangs on whether the object is considered as it would be in itself outside of our experience and field of sensibility, i.e., transcendentally, or within our experience and field of sensibility, i.e., empirically.

Kant does not clearly articulate these two senses of reality and does not regularly disambiguate them in the *Critique*, which leads to a lot of confusion. This distinction is of chief importance in this passage since viewed transcendentally our intuition contributes the qualities of

space and time as pure forms of intuition. Yet, within our experience the world is already universally and necessarily constituted according to space and time. In the world of our experience, space and time are not ideal but empirically real structures. This is the case even though space and time originally came from our minds as pure forms of our intuition. At the transcendental level the pure forms of space and time structure our representations prior to and as necessary conditions for the empirical world to exist out of our representations.

For many ontologies this would mean the empirical world is an illusion. However, Kant has a standard of reality and existence that this emergent empirical world achieves and which gives it its own empirical reality. The standard of empirical reality is conformity to a universal and necessary structure of empirical laws, space, and time so that it is unified in one experience. This universal and necessary unity is what separates experience from dreams and illusion.

For Kant, illusion is not what merely appears to the subject but is another thing entirely. Illusion is to attribute to a thing in itself what only belongs to it as an appearance, e.g., to consider a thing in itself as spatial or temporal (B70),[66] or to attribute to an appearance what only

[66] Ontological two-aspect interpretations make this mistake. They make what should be an appearance into illusion. They do this by attributing to the object in itself what only belongs to it as an appearance. They cite as support Kant's claim that "the predicates of appearance can be attributed to the object in itself, in relation to our sense, e.g. the red color or fragrance to the rose" (B69). The key phrase is "in relation to our sense", which means "only as appearance". So, Kant is not saying we can attribute properties of appearances to the object in itself, but instead he is broadening what the object is, e.g., the rose, to include the way the rose is in itself and the way it appears. Kant expands the being of the object to include how it is in itself and its appearance, whereas the ontological two-aspect theories reduce the properties of the appearance to properties of the thing in itself.

Kant makes this clear later in this passage by saying "what is not to be encountered in the object in itself at all, but is always to be encountered in its relation to the subject and is inseparable from the representation of the object, is appearance" (B70). So any property of appearance is not to be encountered in the thing in itself at all. Instead, properties of appearances are only found in the *relation* of the object to the subject, specifically in the subject/effect side of the relation, i.e., the representation of the object by the subject. Only "if I attribute the redness to the rose **in itself**, the handles to Saturn or extension to all outer objects **in themselves**, without looking to a determinate relation of these objects to the subject and limiting my judgment to this, then illusion first arises" (B70). Empirically (within our experience), the rose (empirical object) appears red, but it is not red in itself (independently of a relation to the subject). Transcendentally (outside our experience), the outer object appears in space, but the object in itself is not in space. The rose is only red and the object is only in space as it appears to the subject, but this is not an illusion but another legitimate relational way of being of the object in general. Illusion only arises if I do not limit my judgment to the relation of the object to the subject and instead attribute the property of the appearance to the object as it is in itself. Ontological two-aspect interpretations attribute to the object in itself what only belongs

belongs to a thing in itself, e.g., infinity or finitude of existence as a complete whole (A504/B532, A506/B534). These are ways of understanding objects that seem to be the case but engender contradictions and absurdities in our reason that mean they cannot be real.

Kant presents this definition of illusion by saying:

> But this does not happen according to our principle of the ideality of all of our sensible intuitions; rather, if one ascribes **objective reality** to those forms of representation then one cannot avoid thereby transforming everything into mere **illusion**. For if one regards space and time as properties that, as far as their possibility is concerned, must be encountered in things in themselves, and reflects on the absurdities in which one then becomes entangled… then one cannot well blame the good Berkeley if he demotes bodies to mere illusion; indeed even our own existence…would be transformed along with this into mere illusion; an absurdity of which no one has yet allowed himself to be guilty. (B70-1)

This passage reveals what Kant means by "illusion" as opposed to appearance. Firstly, it is striking that the principle of the ideality of all sensible intuitions (empirical and pure) saves them from being mere illusion. Ordinarily, one would consider the ideality of something, i.e., being contributed by the mind, to mean that it is illusory, i.e., merely how it seems to the subject. Conversely, and no less counterintuitively, Kant says mere illusion occurs if we ascribe objective reality to the forms of representations: space and time. This adds even more confusion and seems to get things completely backwards. How can Kant save himself from utter incoherence?

The next sentence makes clear that the "objective reality" mistakenly ascribed to the forms of our representation of space and time is transcendental objective reality. This type of objective reality involves regarding something (in this case the properties of space and time) as being encountered in things in themselves. So to consider space and time that are only

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to it in appearance to us. They are not making the object in itself vs. appearance distinction properly as a metaphysical distinction within the same object between two ways of being (existence, reality, objectivity, and properties) of an object in general. They take the real existing object to only be the object in itself, when, for Kant, being an object in itself is only one way of being of an object, with its being as an appearance just as valid although ideal. The transcendentally ideal appearance becomes real (exists independently of the subject) only within our experience, i.e., empirically.

objectively valid of objects as appearances (empirical objective reality) as valid of things in themselves (transcendental objective reality) leads to contradictions in our understanding of them and so must be considered an illusion (a mere seeming).[67]

Kant claims that considering all our sensible intuitions to be transcendentally ideal saves them from being illusions because it allows us to understand objects of sense, their properties (including space and time), and our synthetic *a priori* cognition of them without absurdity. Yet, as transcendentally ideal, appearances and their properties do not exist outside of our sensibility and perception. This does not sound much better than illusion.

However, we also know that appearances, space, and time that are transcendentally ideal can still be empirically real. This means that within the world of our possible experience they are universal, necessary, and objectively valid of all objects as appearance, even though they are mere representations outside of our experience. This is more real than a mere illusion, but it still sounds akin to a very coherent dream or illusion. The last step and most important point in understanding Kant's metaphysical thinking on appearance, illusion, and things in themselves, is Kant's empiricism. Kant thinks the immediate perception of something in accordance with universal laws, the empirical reality of our experience, is just as valid a type of reality as transcendental reality.

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[67] Rosefeldt takes spatiotemporal appearance properties to be response-dependent properties we encounter in thing in themselves. As seen here, Rosefeldt's interpretation transforms appearance into illusion by attributing to the thing in itself what only belongs to appearance. For Kant, the spatiotemporal appearance properties are properties in the subject caused by something acting on the subject and do not describe any properties encountered in the object in itself at all.

Aside from being a mistaken interpretation of Kant, Rosefeldt conflates properties that are effects that occur in the subject with response-dependent properties in the object that cause effects in the subject. Rosefeldt's analogy with opium and fly agarics (magic mushrooms) illustrates this point. He claims "response-dependent properties such as being poisonous have exactly the features that Kant ascribes to spatiotemporal appearance properties" (Rosefeldt 2022: 28). In fact, being poisonous is not analogous with spatiotemporal appearance properties in the subject. The correct analogy is of the property in the subject of being poisoned with spatiotemporal appearance properties in the subject. Yet, being poisoned is not a response-dependent property. If it were then fly agarics would be *poisoned* not poisonous, and we would say opium *falls asleep* instead of having a sleep inducing property.

Moreover, Kant is aware that his philosophy is done from the human standpoint and so is limited to this standpoint. The human standpoint imposes limitations on one's cognitive capacity. As a result, it limits one's experience (empirical cognition) and the reality one is exposed to and so can make claims about. Kant thinks that what is most real for us is what we have access to and acquaintance with. For humans, this is what we can immediately perceive or is tied to this perception in accordance with universal laws. Conversely, what is beyond our possible experience in another world that we cannot intuit or cognize is something we can only think as a logical possibility and not access. For us, such a thing can only ever be a mere-thought entity in our heads that may or may not exist.

With this in mind, we can understand how Kant can think of space, time, and objects in space and time (that are mere representations from a transcendental perspective) as ultimately not mere illusion. Instead, Kant thinks of them as real and really given as objects and objectively valid properties of objects, but only in the world of our experience (empirically). This is because we immediately perceive them and experience them in the empirical world, which is the world we live in and the only world we can cognize and have access to.

Admittedly, most readers may not be convinced that our empirical world, as Kant conceives it, is real instead of a coherent illusion or dream. However, my point is that this is the most accurate reading of Kant. Accepting this reading requires realizing that, for Kant, the hallmarks of human reality consist in what we can immediately perceive (and so can be given to us) and has universal and necessary coherence. This coherence comes from the empirical world being governed by universal and necessary empirical laws and structured by the universal and necessary dimensions of space and time. For Kant, a merely intelligible world we cannot intuit

(and so cannot be given to us) but which we can only think about as a logical possibility, and which may not have universal and necessary laws[68], is not real for us.

Thus, the main claim that defines my interpretation is that appearances must have their own empirical reality, way of existence, properties, and objective validity independently of things in themselves. If we do not accept this we run into many problems of interpretation including phenomenalism: the interpretation that appearances are mere illusions and just the way the thing in itself seems to us. According to phenomenalism, we cognize our subjective conditions and distortions of the object but not the real object in itself. As shown above, this interpretation is untenable. The second claim that defines my interpretation is that we cannot assert or deny the existence of things in themselves.

8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that, if we do not posit appearances as objects valid independently of things in themselves, we do not know any object at all and have no cognition. Instead, we would only know a mere illusion or distorted way the object in itself appears to us (which is not cognition of an object, but misapprehension and seeming). This is because everything we know about the object would be how it merely appears or seems to us instead of anything about the object.

One cannot skirt this consequence by identifying the appearance with the thing in itself, and thereby claiming cognition of an object as the thing in itself through cognition of the appearance. This is to give into the transcendental illusion of taking an appearance as a thing in itself (A504-5/B532-3). Kant also says "appearances do not exist in themselves" (B164), so

[68] Even if the intelligible world was structured according to the categories, humans could never have knowledge of this. This is the case even if we had intuition of things in themselves (unless we had intellectual intuition), since this is synthetic a *priori* knowledge which is not possible for our receptive intuition of things in themselves.

whatever we are cognizing in appearance does not exist, *qua* appearance and so *qua* object of our cognition, as a thing in itself. So, on the identity reading, we would only know our own faculties and their distortions and not the object in itself at all *a priori*.

So, even if there is one object, we make the entire side/aspect of the object that we know *a priori* that is in space and time and has those properties. As made by us, having nothing that pertains to the thing in itself, and not existing outside of us, it must also be the case that we give this "aspect/side/sense/meaning" of the object as appearance its own existence, properties, empirical reality, and objective validity. This is the only way the object as appearance we cognize is not a mere illusion. Thus, the distinction between object as appearance and as thing in itself must be regarded as a metaphysical distinction between two ways of being, i.e., existence, reality, properties, and objectivity.

Otherwise, we would only know a subjective distortion of the object, which is not to know the object at all. In such a case of only knowing our subjective distortion of a thing in itself, the object as appearance is only transcendentally ideal but has no reality. The appearance being caused by a transcendentally real thing in itself does nothing to change this. This is because, as has been shown in this chapter, an appearance is not a representation of the object in itself that has transcendental reality, and this is the only way it can have reality on this reading. These interpreters cannot explain how objects of appearance and experience can be empirically real or how we can cognize an appearance as an object not just as a mere illusion. The solution is that an appearance is a type of object that conforms to our cognition and is independent from a thing in itself. This allows for our cognition to put things into the object as appearance without turning it into an illusion. Thus, for Kant, empirical reality must be an independent type of reality and existence of the object that comes out of our mind and representations.

Chapter 10: The Relation of Appearances and Things in Themselves

1. Introduction: The Transcendental Realist Bias

Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism is about space, time, and appearances (objects of experience). It says that when they are considered as they would be outside of our possible experience and field of sensibility they are nothing but mere representations and do not exist. That should be the end of the discussion concerning Kant's transcendental idealism. However, traditionally this has not been the case, which is revelatory of a great error in interpreting Kant's transcendental idealism. Instead of ending, the discussion has focused on things in themselves and their relation to appearances.[69]

Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism has, strictly speaking, nothing to do with things in themselves. The fact that the history of the interpretation of this doctrine has brought things in themselves into the discussion reveals the source of their misinterpretation: a transcendental realist bias. This bias is that transcendental reality, i.e., the reality of something outside our experience, is the ultimate source of reality.[70] Without this reality or a grounding in

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[69] Stang's Stanford Encyclopedia Article "Kant's Transcendental Idealism" propagates this error. He says "one of the main questions that must be answered in any interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism is, what are things in themselves?" (Stang 2018). On the other hand, Stang fails to define "transcendental" or "idealism" in this article. To be fair to Stang, as an encyclopedia entry, this article is largely concerned with a summary of the secondary literature and succeeds at this task. However, it serves as a good indication of the prevalence of the error and its cause in the secondary literature. Stang also commits this error in his own interpretation of Kant's idealism (Stang 2022: 300). For other examples of this error see Bader (2022: 279), Ameriks (1982), Allais (2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2015), and Oberst (2015).

Conversely, I define "transcendental" as what is outside the field of our sensibility and so outside our possible experience. I define "ideal" as what does not exist independently of our mind. Thus, transcendental idealism is the doctrine that appearances, space, and time, when considered as they are outside our sensibility and possible experience, do not exist independently of our mind.

[70] We see this clearly in Chignell's One-World Phenomenalism in which, although he acknowledges an intersubjective/empirical sense of reality, he takes the features things transcendentally have to be those they "really have"(339-340: 2022). Stang says all metaphysical readings share that "the noumenal world of things in themselves is more fundamental than the world of empirical objects" (2014:108). Bader says "Phenomena are derivative entities that owe their existence as well as their determinations to noumena. This is what allows phenomena to inherit their objectivity from noumena and thereby underwrites Kant's empirical realism." (2022: 279). Allais says Kant "is committed to the claim that there exists an aspect of reality that we cannot cognize, that is more metaphysically fundamental than the spatio-temporal aspect that we experience, and that somehow grounds what we experience" (Allais 2015: 76).

it[71], nothing else can be real. Unfortunately for them, Kant's chief metaphysical innovation involves breaking with this transcendental realist bias. Thus, bringing this bias to the interpretation of Kant's metaphysical doctrine of transcendental idealism has led to a long history of misunderstanding. I hope I have already corrected this misinterpretation.

This chapter aims to finish my dissertation by giving the people what they want: the correctly understood relation of appearances and things in themselves. Up to this point I have already finished what I have set out to do: correctly interpret Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism. This chapter is for the long history of misinterpretation that is concerned with the thing in itself.

All interpretations of transcendental idealism, up to this point, proceed along these lines: they admit we have cognition of appearances/objects of experience and not things in themselves. However, in taking appearances to be merely the way objects in themselves appear to us, they struggle to explain their reality. So transcendental idealism leads to phenomenalism, which is to claim appearances are only representations and so illusions.[72] The problem with this is that it contradicts Kant's empirical realism as well as making Kant seem like a Berkeleyan, which Kant vehemently denies he is. To combat this interpretation, many interpreters have tried to explain the reality and non-Berkeleyan ideality of appearances by claiming they are somehow "grounded" in the transcendental reality of things in themselves.[73] This metaphysical grounding is proposed as taking place either through a causal or identity relation. This has led to the

[71] Among those who are committed to such grounding are Schaefer (2022: 269), Bader (2022: 279), Jauernig (2021: 3, 16), and Allais (2015: 76).
[72] Some recent interpreters of Kant considered to be phenomenalist are Westphal (1968), Aquila (1979, 1983), Guyer (1987), Van Cleve (1999), Adickes (1924), Oberst (2015), Stang (2015, 2018, 2022), Jauernig (2021), and Berkeleyen phenomenalist Turbayne (1955/1969).
[73] Instead, of taking this route, epistemic (methodological) interpreters give up on a transcendental idealism as a metaphysical theory and take it as solely epistemological. Unfortunately for this approach, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, transcendental idealism is a metaphysical theory about the properties, objectivity, reality, and existence of objects of our experience.

question of whether appearances and things in themselves are one or two objects[74] in one or two worlds. This is why interpreters have been so concerned with the relation of appearances and things in themselves.[75]

The causality interpretation claims that an appearance needs to have a cause and so this cause must exist as a thing in itself that causes the appearance. As has been argued, the problem with this is Kant denies the inference from the effect (existence of the appearance) to a determinate cause (existence and reality of the thing in itself). Kant also denies that we can claim whether things in themselves exist or not. Instead, he says things in themselves are a type of nothing, a mere thought-entity, as far as we are concerned.

Finally, the transcendental reality of the cause would not make the effect a real object or anything more than the subjective way the thing in itself appears to us. Kant denies that the appearance represents anything that pertains to the thing in itself. He also denies the appearance has objective validity, reality, or existence outside of us. Causation by a transcendentally real thing in itself would only establish that something real exists that causes the appearance, but the appearance would still be a mere representation and nothing outside of the subject. Contrary to its intention, this interpretation cements the appearance as a mere illusion with no reality.

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[74] The standard classification of interpretations of transcendental idealism is given in Ameriks (1982) (Ameriks 1992 summarizes the Guyer vs. Allison debate while trying to mediate it). Further overviews of the debate are given in Beiser (2002), Schulting (2011), Allais (2015), Guyer (2017), and Stang (2018). The One object/identity interpretation is often attributed as an epistemic (methodological) interpretation to Allison (1976, 1983/2004) although he denies isomorphism (1987: 168, 2004: 459 note19), Bird (1962, 2006b), and Prauss (1974), and as a metaphysical (ontological) interpretation to Langton (1998), Allais (2004, 2006, 2007, 2015), Rosefeldt (2007, 2013, 2022), Westphal (1968), Collins (1999), Dryer (1966), and arguably Adickes (1924).

[75] This relation has been characterized through a series of dichotomies (one vs. two objects, one vs. two worlds, causal vs. identity, identity vs. non-identity, phenomenalist vs. anti-phenomenalist) that have inhibited rather than clarified this relation. These dichotomies are often false dichotomies. As I will show, Kant holds there is one object conceptually. Yet, he also thinks a metaphysical distinction between two different ways of being an object (object of experience/appearance and thing in itself) and thinks a metaphysical distinction between two worlds (sense and intelligible). Although, due to our limited cognitive faculties, we can never claim whether the thing in itself or the intelligible world exist or not. There is both a causal and an identity relation between appearances and things in themselves. Lastly, Kant is a phenomenalist in the transcendental sense, while an anti-phenomenalist in the empirical sense.

The identity interpretation fairs no better at establishing the empirical reality of appearances. It claims that the appearance is one side of the same object as it is in itself. As a result, since the appearance exists, the object in itself must exist because the appearance and thing in itself are the same object. Moreover, by definition the only way for the thing in itself to exist is outside of us and as transcendentally real. Therefore, since the thing in itself is the same object as the appearance, and the thing in itself exists outside of us as transcendentally real, then the appearance must be real. This interpretation is mistaken in many ways.

Kant is clear that the appearance *qua* appearance is not the thing in itself and does not exist as a thing in itself. The appearance when considered as it would be in itself outside our sensibility is a mere representation and nothing. Furthermore, the reality the appearance would gain through this identity with an existing thing in itself is transcendental reality that Kant claims appearances do not have. Instead, Kant says objects as appearances are transcendentally ideal. Kant is also clear that we cannot say whether things in themselves exist or not. For us they represent nothing as an empty concept without an intuition capable of being given for them, i.e., problematically transcendentally ideal. Things in themselves are empty concepts and so cannot ground the reality of appearances through identity.

The last chapter established that the object as appearance is another type of object with its own reality, objectivity, properties, and existence. This is the only way to make sense of Kant's claims that appearances are empirically real. We are left wondering how appearances can exist merely in us, our experience and sensibility, and be empirically real and objectively valid without appealing to things in themselves. I will provide my interpretation of how Kant answers this question.

2. Summary of My Position and Kant's Priority of Empirical Reality

My interpretation is that the object as appearance is independent metaphysically from the object in itself even though they are in a sense the same object. They fall under the same concept of an object in general and so are the same only in thought. However, they are metaphysically distinct. They have different ways of existence, reality, objectivity, and properties. Finally, we must think the thing in itself for an appearance not to ground the appearance metaphysically, but only as a logical necessity to make sense of the concept of an appearance. Likewise, we think the thing in itself as causing the object as appearance to make sense of our receptive sensibility, even though we can never claim whether the thing in itself exists or not.

I interpret empirical reality as an independent type of reality. Further, I interpret empirical reality as more real for us (because we can know it through immediate perception) than transcendental reality (that we can only think). I take empirical objects to be a way of being an object that is more legitimate for us humans than transcendental existence as an object in itself.

Empirical reality and empirical objects (appearances) are metaphysically independent from the thing in itself to the extent that they do not require any grounding in a thing in itself. Empirical reality is an independent reality and way of existence for Kant, with its own conditions of existence separate from transcendental reality. Kant's position is difficult to grasp because he is reversing the metaphysical priority of the thing in itself over the appearance that has held in philosophy since Plato.

Kant reasons to this new metaphysical position from out of the dogmatic metaphysics he is subverting. Thus, Kant thinks through and articulates his position from out of the language and concepts of those who prioritize the transcendental reality of things in themselves over the empirical reality of appearances. Dogmatic metaphysics prioritizes the way things are outside of human experience as the true reality. Conversely, for dogmatic metaphysics, the way things

appear to us is an illusion or lesser reality that only gains its reality through a relation to things outside of human experience. This relation is conceived as a "participating" or "grounding" of what appears to us in the Ideas (the most real things that exist outside of human experience).

Kant is flipping this priority around in claiming things that appear to us in our experience are what are most real to us. Moreover, since we cannot escape our cognitive capacities but must philosophize within them, this is what is most real as far as philosophy is concerned. We are not justified, based on the limitations of our cognitive capacities, in cognizing and claiming anything positive about things independent of our experience (including their existence and reality).

3. Immanent Objectivity and Reality that is Made by Us and Arises out of our Representations

I will now argue for my interpretation of the appearance as an object that is empirically real apart from anything in itself. Everything we cognize synthetically *a priori* about objects are properties that the thing in itself does not have (space and time) or could never be known to have by us (the categories). So, insofar as we cognize an object and its properties synthetically *a priori* we do not cognize the thing in itself.

Similarly, everything we cognize synthetically *a priori* we must put into the object. We see this when Kant says "we can cognize of things *a priori* only what we ourselves have put into them" (Bxviii). When talking about the pure concept of causality Kant also says "the case is the same here as with other pure *a priori* representations (e.g. space and time) that we can extract as clear concepts from experience only because we have put them into experience, and experience is hence first brought about through them" (A196/B241).

Specifically with regard to our intuition, we cognize intuitive properties but they do not occur in the object in itself. This is especially clear with space and time, which are things contributed by us and seated in the our faculty of intuition. Proof of this is given when Kant says:

> Even if we could bring this intuition of ours to the highest degree of distinctness we would not thereby come any closer to the constitution of objects in themselves. For in any case we would still completely cognize only our own way of intuition, i.e., our sensibility, and this always only under the conditions originally depending on the subject, space and time; what the objects may be in themselves would still never be known through the most enlightened cognition of their appearance, which alone is given to us. (A43/B60)

There is nothing in intuition that belongs to the objects in themselves even brought to its highest degree of clarity. Instead, intuition and our cognition through intuition is only cognition of our own way of intuition under the conditions of space and time that originate in the subject. So, we cannot know anything about things in themselves but only cognize appearance (Bxxvi). Since experience is empirical cognition this also means we do not experience things in themselves but only experience objects as appearances. Thus, the only objects that exist in our experience are appearances.

Kant confirms these points by saying "what may be the case with objects in themselves and abstracted from all this receptivity of sensibility remains entirely unknown to us. We are acquainted with nothing except our way of perceiving them, which is peculiar to us." (A42/B59). We do not know anything about things in themselves and are not even acquainted with them at all. Instead, we are only acquainted with our own way of perceiving objects in themselves, which is their appearance. Thus, in cognizing appearances we know something that is entirely the result of our way of perceiving/representing, and we cannot know anything of things in themselves through our cognition of appearances.

Under Kant's new theory of our cognition (Copernican Revolution) "we assume that our representation of things as they are given to us does not conform to these things as they are in themselves but rather that these objects as appearances conform to our way of representing" (Bxx). We only cognize objects as appearances and not things in themselves, and further, appearances do not conform to or represent things in themselves. Instead, objects as appearances conform to our way of representing and are made possible by it, which, by definition, a thing in itself could never do. So, appearances have a different way of being an object from a thing in itself. Appearances are objects that exist merely in us: in our field of sensibility and possible experience. Thus, the Copernican Revolution in epistemology (we only cognize appearances and not things in themselves and we can cognize appearances synthetically *a priori*) is also a revolution in metaphysics because it requires positing a new way of being an object.

We can now see how different the thing in itself and appearance are: they differ in all properties (especially space and time), in existence (appearances exist only in us, and things in themselves only exist outside us), in reality (appearances are transcendentally ideal but empirically real), and appearances conform our way of representing/perceiving. Thus, to claim cognition of an object as only appearance, the appearance must be an object in its own right with its own existence and objective validity (reality) separate from the thing in itself. If this were not the case we would not have cognition of any object in appearance but only represent our own distortions of the thing in itself, which Kant denies is the case (A43/B60). This is because nothing we cognize about appearances, including their existence, can be found in the thing in itself or pertains to it.

In particular, with regard to intuitions we see "if intuition has to conform to the constitution of the object, then I do not see how we can know anything of them *a priori*; but if

the object (as an object of the senses) conforms to the constitution of our faculty of intuition, then I can very well represent this possibility to myself" (Bxvii). The object of sense/appearance conforms *as an object* and not just as a representation to the constitution of our faculty of intuition. Kant argues this must be the case because the object's conformity to our faculty of intuition alone explains our synthetic *a priori* knowledge of it. This is because only in this way can we have knowledge of the object of sense that is universal, necessary, and prior to perception. Thus, the unique metaphysics of the object of sense/appearance allows us to have synthetic *a priori* knowledge of it.

Synthetic *a priori* knowledge of the object is possible only because the object we cognize is an object of sense that conforms *qua* object to our instruments of knowing. This would not be possible if the object of our knowledge were a thing in itself. The being of a thing in itself is already set and is not determined at all by our faculties of cognition. The only way to know the object in itself is to conform our faculty of intuition to the object's constitution, i.e., *a posteriori* synthetic cognition. By *a posteriori* knowledge we cannot intuit something about the object universally, necessarily, or prior to acquaintance with it. Yet, Kant claims have this synthetic *a priori* knowledge. Therefore, the object of our cognition cannot be a thing in itself, but instead must be a different metaphysical type of object as appearance.

Furthermore, Kant is specifically alleging that our intuitive representations of space and time, as that in which objects are represented, are supplied by our faculty of intuition. These intuitive representations make up our empirical reality and experience (empirical cognition). So these are not "ideas", concepts, or representations supplied only for us to *know* objects. Instead, they also make these objects possible as objects at all, i.e., as objectively valid and empirically real, while also being transcendentally ideal outside our experience. Therefore, our forms of

intuition of space and time are not just mental determinations but are also metaphysical determinations of objects in experience.

This explains how we have not only the concepts but also cognition *a priori* of space, time, and objects in space and time. Synthetic *a priori* cognition of space, time, and objects in space and time is possible only if these representations of space and time are about objects that conform to our faculties of cognition and so are generated from our representations. This *a priori* knowledge is not possible about things in themselves of which we can only have synthetic *a posteriori* cognition.

Kant says:

> That under which alone objects can be intuited, in fact does lie in the mind *a priori* as the ground of the form of objects. All appearances therefore necessarily agree with this formal condition of sensibility, because only through it can they appear, i.e., be empirically intuited and given. The question now is whether *a priori* concepts do not also precede, as conditions under which alone something can be, if not intuited, nevertheless thought as object in general, for then all empirical cognition of objects is necessarily in accord with such concepts, since without their presupposition nothing is possible as **object of experience.** (A93/B125-6)[76]

Kant confirms that the ground of the form of objects lies *a priori* in the mind. Specifically, he claims objects of our intuition have to necessarily agree with our formal condition of sensibility because they can only be intuited under these conditions. Obviously, something that lies in our mind (our sensibility) cannot be the ground of a thing in itself, so if it is to be the ground of the form of an object this must be an appearance. Thus, the objects referred to here must be objects as appearance that have a different objectivity than things in themselves. So appearances are objects (objects of experience) in a different way than things in themselves. In the transcendental

[76] We also see this at A48/B65 in the direct proof of the transcendental ideality of appearances. There *a priori* space and time make the object as appearance possible that is nothing in itself outside of us.

deduction, Kant wants to prove this is similarly the case with thought in regard to our pure concepts *a priori*.

Kant wants to prove that without the presupposition of *a priori* concepts seated in our mind, specifically our faculty of understanding, nothing is possible as an object of experience. Kant wants to show not just our knowledge but the very possibility of the object of experience depends on the pure *a priori* concepts in our mind. This would show why all empirical cognition of objects is necessarily in accord with such concepts, just like how all empirical intuition and appearances necessarily agree with our forms of sensibility. The objects of experience conform to our mind necessarily, our pure intuition and pure concepts, because these features of our mind make the object possible as an object at all.

So our mind makes the objectivity, being, and way of existence of the object as appearance/experience possible at all. This is not simply our way of representing the thing in itself in a distorted way under a heap of marks. This is not simply the way the object in itself seems to be to us given our way of intuiting and thinking through pure intuition and concepts, i.e., an illusion. To have synthetic *a priori* cognition of an object instead of merely the subjective way a thing in itself seems to us, we need the object as appearance to conform to our way of representing. This is possible only if the object as appearance has a unique way of being and existence that we make possible.

Kant spells out this reasoning clearly when he says:

> If the objects with which our cognition has to do were things in themselves, then we would not be able to have any *a priori* concepts of them at all. For whence should we obtain them? If we take them from the object (without even investigating here how the latter could become known to us), then our concepts would be merely empirical and not *a priori* concepts. If we take them from ourselves, then that which is merely in us cannot determine the constitution of an object distinct from our representations, i.e., be a ground why there should be a thing that corresponds to something we have in our thoughts, and that all this representation should not instead be empty. (A128-9)

This is a very important passage that presents Kant's thinking on why the objects of our cognition are not things in themselves. The main reason given here is that we have synthetic *a priori* cognition of objects through *a priori* concepts of them. This would not be possible if the type of objects we cognize were things in themselves. Things in themselves have their own nature, being, and existence completely independent from us the subject. To have this *a priori* knowledge through concepts we have two possibilities: we can either take the concepts from the object or take them from ourselves. Neither will work given the definition, and so analytic truth, of what it is to be a thing in itself. If we take the concepts from the object then they are only empirical and so cannot be *a priori*.

If we take them from ourselves then we have no ground to claim they correspond to the object in itself. If what we cognize are things in themselves, there is no reason why what we think would correspond to the object and not be empty. Kant does not consider it to be cognition if our thoughts happen by coincidence to correspond to the object in itself. Instead, cognition requires that our representations not only match up with but also conform to the object. So, the correspondence of representation to object must be grounded in a relation that establishes this conformity in order to call it cognition. Yet, what is in us cannot determine the constitution of a thing in itself that is distinct from our representations and so establish this conformity.

Thus, another type of object is needed that is not a thing in itself. This type of object must be able to conform metaphysically to our way of representing. At the same time, this type of object must be objectively valid apart from things in themselves or else our cognition would not have to do with objects, but only with how objects seem to us. In the very next line, Kant describes such an object as the only type of object we have to do with and that we cognize. Kant says:

> But if, on the contrary, we have to do everywhere only with appearances, then it is not only possible but also necessary that certain *a priori* concepts precede the empirical cognition of objects. For as appearances, they constitute an object that is merely in us, since a mere modification of our sensibility is not to be encountered outside us at all. Now even this representation – that all these appearances and thus all objects with which we can occupy ourselves are all in me, i.e., determinations of my identical self – expresses a thoroughgoing unity of them in one and the same apperception as necessary. (A129)[77]

Thus, Kant posits appearances as constituting an object that is merely in us. This is because appearances are a mere modification of our sensibility and cannot be encountered outside us at all. As such, an object as appearance has a different existence, objectivity, and reality, and so is completely separate metaphysically from the object as a thing in itself.

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[77] One may doubt this passage because it appears only in the A edition in the so-called "subjective deduction". However, the B-edition has an equivalent section that explains how our concepts as subjective principles of thinking can objectively structure nature. This section makes things seem *much more subjective* than the A Deduction. There Kant says "categories are concepts that prescribe laws *a priori* to appearances, thus to nature as the sum total of all appearances…the question now arises how it is to be conceived that nature must follow them…Here is the solution to that riddle" (B163). Kant's answer to the riddle of why nature must follow the laws of our thinking is "for laws exist just as little in the appearances, but rather exist only relative to the subject in which the appearances inhere, insofar as it has understanding, as appearances do not exist in themselves, but only relative to the same being, insofar as it has senses. The lawfulness of things in themselves would necessarily pertain to them even without an understanding that cognizes them. But appearances are only representations of things that exist without cognition of what they might be in themselves. As mere representations, however, they stand under no law of connection at all except that which the connecting faculty prescribes" (B164). Thus, Kant's answer is to clarify what it is to be an appearance, of which nature is just the sum total. Kant emphasizes that appearances do not exist in themselves but only relative to our senses, and so they are mere representations in our minds. Thus, the only law of connection that mere representations can be subject to is that which the faculty of our mind that represents them prescribes for them. Thus, the answer is that nature falls under the laws of our thinking in the understanding because nature is only made of representations that are mere mental determinations. In short, nature is governed by mental laws because nature is merely mental. This is unmitigated idealism of nature, in which appearances are mere representations and do not even form the objects that are in me, as in the A Deduction.

So has Kant become a pure idealist in the B edition? No, he has not. However, in this passage he is emphasizing how appearances, and so nature, look from a transcendental standpoint, thus emphasizing the transcendental ideality of appearances. He does this to better explain to the reader how mental laws can govern nature. This perspective is captured when Kant talks about a house as an object as appearance being considered as it exists transcendentally: "as soon as I raise my concept to transcendental significance, the house is not a thing in itself at all but only an appearance, i.e., a representation, the transcendental object of which is unknown (A190-1/B236). Considered transcendentally, as they would be outside of our possible experience, appearances are mere representations, but within our experience they are objects. Appearances are both transcendentally ideal and empirically real. Thus, in the B Deduction passage above, Kant opts to completely neglect the empirical consideration of appearances (while he considers them empirically and transcendentally in the A Deduction). Yet, only in the empirical sense are appearances objects of our experience. So, nature is objectively valid, as the sum total of objects as appearances, only from an empirical standpoint (standpoint of how things are in the world of our experience). Thus, in this B Deduction passage Kant looks even more like a strict idealist than in the A Deduction, although it is only the result of emphasizing the transcendental perspective and neglecting the empirical.

Positing an appearance as a type of object that is merely in us explains how we can have synthetic *a priori* cognition (cognition prior to perception) of an object. It also explains how we can have *a priori* concepts that precede and are necessary for the empirical cognition of an object. This is because these *a priori* concepts in our mind make the object of experience possible at all by making possible a thoroughgoing unity of appearances in one and the same apperception as necessary. This unity is only needed because objects as appearance are objects that are merely in us as determinations of my identical self and so are made possible through a unity of my possible consciousness. This is why what I must think to unify my possible consciousness and apperception is necessary for cognition of the object and gives us an *a priori* cognition that precedes empirical cognition of the object.

This answers the guiding question and difficulty of the deduction "how **subjective conditions of thinking** should have **objective validity**, i.e., yield conditions of the possibility of objects" (A89-90/B122). The object of our cognition arises out of our representations (our inner determinations) and only exists in us.[78] As such it requires a unity of representation, thus an inner

[78] Seeming to counter this claim Kant says "But if it is the second, [the representation alone makes the object possible] then since representation in itself…does not produce its object as far as its **existence** is concerned, the representation is still determinant of the object *a prio*ri if it is possible through its alone to cognize something as an object" (A92/B125). This is usually read as the claim that our representations alone cannot produce an existing object, and so something must exist beyond them to produce this existence. An object in itself is then posited as existing as either the cause or as identical with the object as appearance to makes it existence possible.

However, when read in context, it becomes clear this is not what Kant is claiming. The passage is concerned with how synthetic *a priori* cognition is possible. To answer this, Kant starts by defining synthetic cognition: "synthetic representation and its object can come together, necessarily relate to each other, and, as it were, meet each other". According to Kant, synthetic cognition is possible in either of two ways: "the object alone makes the representation possible" or "the representation alone makes the object possible". The first way only allows for empirical, i.e., synthetic *a posteriori*, cognition. Only the second way allows for synthetic *a priori* cognition.

Thus, in talking about the "second" way, i.e., the representation alone makes the object possible, Kant is saying that our synthetic *a priori* representations alone cannot produce the object's existence. This is because objects as appearance also require for their existence the synthetic *a posteriori* representation of sensation. So, Kant is claiming we do not have intellectual, but only receptive, intuition, and so we cannot produce the existence of objects through representations merely generated by our minds (*a priori* representations). Yet, Kant says representations generated by our mind alone can produce determinations of the objects as appearances, and so we can have synthetic *a priori* cognition of some of their determinations. Thus, this passage does not preclude my claim that a combination of our synthetic *a posteriori* representations and synthetic *a priori* representations can alone produce the existence of objects as appearances.

unity of consciousness, for these representations to gain objective validity and significance. Thus, the conditions of the unity of my consciousness and identical self are conditions for the unity of the object we cognize and so conditions of its possibility as an object at all.

4. How The Object of Appearance Arises Out of Our Representations

Kant claims an object as appearance gains its objectivity and objective validity from out of our mere representations due to the categories (in both the A and B editions). To fully understand this, we must first consider a couple of passages. Kant says:

> For we have to do only with our representations; how things in themselves may be (without regard to representations through which they affect us) is entirely beyond our cognitive sphere…the appearances are not things in themselves, and nevertheless are the only thing that can be given to us for cognition. (A190/B235)

This passage makes clear that all we have to do with directly are our representations. This should be the final nail in the coffin of the interpretation that we have non-representational access to things in themselves. Our only way to access things in themselves is via representations (modifications of our sensibility) through which they affect us.

As is clear by now, nothing in our representations from our sensibility, i.e., our intuitions (empirical and pure), can give us any knowledge of things in themselves. So things in themselves are entirely beyond our cognitive sphere. So, we cannot know that things in themselves affect us or exist. However, we have a receptive sensibility and so must be affected by something to receive representations. Things in themselves are simply Kant's preferred way of thinking about whatever it is that affects us. Kant admits the possibility that our transcendental self could

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In addition, even if this passage entails that something more than representations alone is required to produce the existence of objects as appearance, this does not prove the existence of a thing in itself. As has been repeatedly stressed in this dissertation, in the case of things in itself posited as a cause of appearances, Kant is skeptical of an existential inference from a determinate effect to a determinate cause. In the case of identity, this would lead to the appearance existing as a thing in itself, which defies Kant's claims that the object of experience (appearance) is not a thing in itself and does not exist outside our mind (sensibility and possible experience).

spontaneously be affecting our sensibility instead of a thing in itself, but we can never know which is the case since they are all beyond our cognitive sphere.

Moreover, Kant states in this passage that appearances are not things in themselves. I take this to mean, as I have shown, that they have two completely separate ways of being (reality, existence, objectivity, and properties) of what is logically/conceptually the same object. This means that we have no cognition of how things in themselves are in themselves. We only have cognition of appearances that are not things in themselves. So, although appearances are the appearance of things in themselves to us, these appearances do not give us anything of the way the thing in itself may be. We do not cognize things in themselves at all, but only cognize appearances that are our peculiar representations.

If we only cognize appearances and nothing of things in themselves then how can we know any object or property of an object?

Kant recognizes this problem and says:

> Now one can, to be sure, call everything, and even every representation, insofar as one is conscious of it, an object, only what this word is to mean in the case of appearances, not insofar as they are (as representations) objects, but rather only insofar as they designate an object, requires a deeper investigation. (A189/B234-5)

Kant acknowledges there is a nominal way out of this problem, which is to claim that every representation insofar as we are conscious of it is an object of consciousness. However, Kant does not accept this as enough for cognition of an object through representations. Instead, he wonders what more is required in the case of appearances to say one cognizes them as an object. What is required is that they designate an object. We need a deeper investigation to explain how this is possible since it cannot be designating the object as a thing in itself, which is entirely beyond our cognitive sphere and not the object as appearance.

Kant then starts his answer to this question by saying:

> We have representations in us, of which we can also become conscious. But let this consciousness reach as far and be as exact and precise as one wants still there always remains only representations, i.e., inner determinations of our mind in this or that temporal relation. Now how do we come to posit an object for these representations, or ascribe to their subjective reality, as modifications, some sort of objective reality? (A197/B242)

Kant states here we can become conscious of our representations, which are all we have to do with. Yet, as far as this consciousness reaches and with as much precision as is possible, we are still left with simply representations, i.e., inner determinations of our mind. So then how is it the case that we come to posit an object for these representations? Kant is asking how we can ascribe to these modifications of our sensibility that have subjective reality, i.e., exist as objects of consciousness that are determinations in our mind, an objective reality, i.e., an existence separate from our mind.

Kant denies representations can gain objectivity by referring one representation to another representation:

> Objective significance cannot consist in the relation to another representation (of that which one would call the object), for that would simply raise anew the question: How does this representation in turn go beyond itself and acquire objective significance in addition to the subjective significance that is proper to it as a determination of the state of mind? (A197/B242)

We see that this problem cannot be solved by relation to another representation. Instead, the representation has to go beyond itself to acquire objective significance in addition to its subjective significance as a determination of our state of mind.

Now, with this foregrounding, we can appreciate Kant's ultimate answer:

> If we investigate what new characteristic is given to our representations by the **relation to an object**, and what is the dignity that we thereby receive, we find that it does nothing beyond making the combination of representations necessary in a certain way, and subjecting them to a rule, and conversely that objective significance is conferred on our representations only insofar as a certain order in their temporal relation is necessary. (A197/B242-3)

So representations are given relation to an object and conferred objective significance by nothing beyond being given a necessary combination. This necessary combination is achieved by being subjected to a rule and making the representations' temporal relation necessary. This cannot be achieved by a thing in itself, which for Kant is not in time and so has no temporal order. Instead, this order in their temporal relation is made necessary specifically through the *a priori* pure concept of cause and effect.

Kant says:

> It is only because we subject the sequence of the appearances, and thus all alteration to the law of causality that experience itself, i.e., empirical cognition of them is possible; consequently they themselves, as objects of experience, are possible in accordance with this law. (B234).

Kant does not claim a relation to things in themselves establishes a necessary ordering and provides the rule for the objective significance of appearances. Instead, it is pure concepts that come from our mind, specifically here causality, that make appearances possible as experience and objects of experience (not simply cognition of them).

In general, Kant says about the concept of the relation of cause and effect "the case is the same here as with other pure *a priori* representations (e.g. space and time) that we can extract as clear concepts from experience only because we have put them into experience, and experience is hence first brought about through them." (A196/B241). So this is how our representations can become experience. Our *a priori* representations as forms of intuition and the categories provide a structing of our representations such that they are combined in a necessary way thus conferring objective significance on them.

Therefore, is it not only possible but necessary that objects of our cognition conform to our cognition. It is necessary so that we structure our representations into objects that we can cognize. The objects of our cognition are objects of experience that are made possible through a

necessary ordering and combination of our representations. The necessary ordering and combination of our representations is made possible by necessary conformity to our way of representing (the *a priori* formal structures in our sensibility and understanding). Thus, the object of our cognition cannot be a thing in itself because this object cannot conform to our ways of representation since it exists completely independently of the subject.

I have now explained how we can have cognition of an object that conforms to our cognition and way of representing. In the long tradition of Kantian interpretation, the answer to this problem has been to conflate the thing in itself and its appearance. This approach ultimately takes our cognition of the appearance to be somehow the cognition of the thing in itself, whose objectivity is beyond reproach since by definition it exists apart from the subject. However, a close examination of Kant's theory reveals this will not work. We do not cognize anything of the thing in itself, and we only have to do with representations that impart nothing of the thing in itself to us.

Moreover, the thing in itself cannot be cognized to have any *a priori* properties, e.g., space, time and the categories. Thus, insofar as we cognize these *a priori* properties of an object this object cannot be the thing in itself. Moreover, we cannot cognize the thing in itself's existence, but only think it as a logical possibility, making it a mere thought-entity as far as we are concerned. Thus, we must look elsewhere to find the object we cognize as existing with all of these *a priori* properties.

The only answer, and the one Kant gives, is that we confer objectivity on our representations through putting them in a necessary combination. This necessary combination enables our representations to designate an object. The object designated is not the thing in itself but only the object as appearance. This new type of object of experience/appearance is made

possible through necessary conformity to our way of representing: our *a priori* forms of pure intuition and pure concepts. This new type of object as appearance that only exists in our experience allows us to cognize objects that conform to our way of representing, and so can be partly known *a priori,* and yet are not mere illusions. This is the only type of object, as a distinct way of being an object, that our entire experience and cognition is concerned with.

5. The Relation of Appearances and Things in Themselves

Objects of appearance/experience are a type of object that arises out of our representations, and insofar as they are appearances they are not things in themselves. Where does this leave us for the relation of appearances to things in themselves? I will now give my answer.

Despite the metaphysical differences (existence, reality, objectivity, and properties) there is a sense in which appearances and things in themselves are the same object. Most famously Kant says in the B preface "the distinction between things as objects of experience and the very same things as things in themselves, which our critique has made necessary" (Bxxvii). So we see that Kant casts the difference between a thing in itself and appearance/object of experience as a distinction within the very same object. The question is what this distinction amounts to, which Kant describes in various ambiguous ways. Kant says "But if the critique has not erred in teaching that the object should be taken in **a twofold meaning**, namely as appearance or as thing in itself"(Bxxvii). The distinction is also cast as taking the object in a different sense or as "taken in another relation"(Bxxix) or as "two ways of representing (sensible and intellectual)" (Bxxviii).

As I have argued, this different meaning, sense, relation, or way of representing of the same object amounts to a different way of being. Kant describes this relation:

> For in the appearance the objects, indeed even properties that we attribute to them, are always regarded as something really given, only insofar as this property depends only on

> the kind of intuition of the subject in their relation of the given object to it then this object as appearance is to be distinguished from itself as object in itself. (B69)[79]

First we learn that objects in the appearance and their properties are real and really given. Kant then articulates the distinction between the object as appearance and the object as in itself. He importantly casts this as a distinction within the same object: "this object as appearance is to be distinguished from itself as object in itself". If a property depends only on the kind of intuition of the subject in their relation to the given object then this distinguishes the object as appearance from itself as object in itself.

So Kant conceives of this distinction as between the object as it is apart from us and the object as it is in its appearance to us through representation in our sensibility. I have argued that representation in our sensibility gives the object a completely different existence,[80] reality, objectivity, and properties from how it is in itself. The thing in itself and its appearance are best conceived as different ways of being of **the same object**.

Thus, this distinction captures a very deep division in the "same" object. The appearance is "worlds apart" from the thing in itself since there is nothing in the object as appearance that pertains to the object in itself (A44/B61). The distinction is so radical that if Kant did not consider them to be the same object then they would be best understood as different objects. This is because they are completely metaphysically different. They have completely different

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[79] This passage rules out Stang's "reading of Kant's idealism: appearances and things in themselves are non-identical objects but the same things." (Stang 2022: 300). Clearly, Kant thinks there is a sense in which appearances and things in themselves are the same *object* and not merely the same thing. This passage causes problems for Stang in particular, but it, along with many other passages that claim a relation of sameness, preclude any reading that does not allow for a sense in which appearances and things in themselves are the same object.

[80] Aquila also conceives of the distinction between appearances and things in themselves as a distinction between different kinds of existence (1979: 297). However, he thinks these are two different kinds of existence of two different objects and that the thing in itself is the thing as it really is, while the appearance is merely an intentional object (1979: 298, 302). In contrast, I think these are two ways of being, which includes existence and objectivity, of the same conceptual object, and neither is more real than the other (although as far as human experience/life is concerned appearances are more real).

properties, existence, objectivity, and reality. The complete metaphysical separation is the reason the literature on this distinction has so much support for the "two-object interpretation".

Nevertheless, the textual evidence is clear that Kant considers them to be the same object, and so this is a metaphysical distinction within the same object. Therefore, the best reading is a combination of the "one-object" and "two-object" interpretations. There is one object conceptually or epistemically and two completely different objects metaphysically. The object as appearance has an independent existence, reality, properties, and objectivity from itself as a thing in itself, i.e., neither depends on the existence, reality, properties or objectivity of the other. Yet, they both share the concept of one object in general that is then determined in two different ways of being.

Despite clear textual evidence that this is Kant's position, how is one to make sense of one object having two completely different ways of being? Kant can accommodate this radical distinction of two completely different ways of being within the same object because of what Kant takes to be the highest concept of his philosophy. Kant says:

> The highest concept with which one is accustomed to begin a transcendental philosophy is usually the division between the possible and impossible. But since every division presupposes a concept that is to be divided, a still higher one must be given and this is the concept of an object in general (taken problematically, leaving undecided whether it is something or nothing). (A290/B346)

Thus, the highest concept in Kant's philosophy is that of an object in general.[81] Kant leaves it undecided whether this object is something or nothing (real or ideal). Thus, thought precedes

[81] Stang thinks by "concept of an object in general" Kant means "the concept 'object of representation' is the most general concept of transcendental philosophy" (Stang 2022: 310). In fact, Kant's "concept of an object in general" is not an object of representation as the content of a representation. Instead, it is our concept of a putative or problematic singular object thought in its most general sense using the categories of the pure understanding. This concept is problematic because it leaves undecided whether its putative object is something or nothing, which means whether an object within the sum total of all possibilities can be given in intuition that corresponds with this concept.

Even a negative nothing (*nihil negativum*) or contradictory concept of an object falls under the concept of an object in general. This is because a negative nothing is first the concept of an object in general, and so of a

being in Kant's philosophy. The identity of the object has to do with its concept and not with it having the same existence. For Kant, the same object in general can have two completely different ways of being something, and it can be something in one sense while being nothing in another. Thus, the appearance and thing in itself have a conceptual identity relation in which they are only thought of as in some sense the same object.

Moreover, there are obviously two worlds, at least in thought, for Kant. Kant makes constant reference to the world of sense, and claims that appearances and things in themselves are "worlds apart". Kant distinguishes between a phenomenal world, and an intelligible world, or an empirical world/world of experience and a world of things in themselves (A433/B461).

Thus, Kant holds a one object view (conceptual identity), with two ways of being an object (metaphysically two objects), and a two-world view (it is logically possible for this one object to exist in two different worlds). Appearances and things in themselves are two different objects metaphysically in that they are two ways the same higher concept of an object in general is determined as existing. Insofar as the object in general exists under the conditions of existence of an appearance, it does not exist as a thing in itself, and insofar as the same object exists in the

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putative object, and then it is determined by being brought under further concepts that happen to make it contradictory and so an impossible nothing. We see this in Kant's example of "a rectilinear figure with two sides" (A291/B348) that is an object in general brought under the contradictory concepts of "rectilinear figure" and "two sides". (Schafer also uses the terminology of a logically impossible "putative object" (2022: 257))

Stang argues "Kant's definition of the *nihil negativum*, 'the object of a concept that contradicts itself' (A291/B348). That even a self-contradictory concept has an object means that the highest concept of an object, <object of representation>, is a very weak notion of object indeed. It is little more than a reified way of talking about the "content" (in our contemporary sense, not Kant's technical notion of *Inhalt*) of a representation" (2022: 301). However, Kant is not saying that the negative nothing "has an object" as Stang suggests and which leads Stang to interpret "concept of an object in general" as the concept of object of representation. Instead, the complete quote is "the object of a concept that contradicts itself is nothing"(A291/B348), and so Kant is actually claiming that the *nihil negativum* is a concept that does not have an object. Its object is nothing because its very concept cancels itself out and so is impossible! Kant concludes the negative nothing is a non-entity and an empty concept (concept without an object) (A292/B348).

Further, we can see Stang's interpretation of a concept of an object in general does not work with Kant's description of the *ens rationis*, which Kant calls an "empty concept without object" (A292/B348). Clearly, in this case it is possible for a concept of an object to have no object. Thus, the concept of an object in general does not have to have an object since the *ens rationis* must fall under the concept of an object in general.

unconditioned existence of a thing in itself it does not exist as an appearance. Thus, Kant can say "appearances are not things in themselves" as two different and mutually exclusive ways of being of the same object in general.

Kant also conceives of things in themselves and appearances as in a causal relation. Kant says:

> The sensible faculty of intuition is really only a receptivity for being affected in a certain way with representations…The non-sensible cause of these representations is entirely unknown to us, and therefore we cannot intuit it as an object, for such an object would have to be represented neither in space nor in time (as mere conditions of our sensible representation), without which conditions we cannot think any intuition. Meanwhile we can call the merely intelligible cause of appearances in general the transcendental object, merely so that we may have something corresponding to sensibility as a receptivity. (A494/B522)

Kant thinks of our faculty of sensibility as only receptive and not spontaneous. This means something must affect our faculty of sensibility to produce sensations that we work up into representations of objects. Kant thinks things in themselves act causally on our faculty of sensibility, and he thinks of our sensations and empirical intuitions as the effects of this. However, Kant thinks these sensations relate nothing about the thing in itself, but only our own way of intuiting, perceiving, and representing the thing in itself, i.e., its appearance.

Behind this receptivity of our sensibility the objects in themselves are entirely unknown to us and we cannot have or even think an intuition of them. However, this lack of any possible cognition of things in themselves, including of their existence, means we cannot claim the existence or non-existence of things in themselves, but only think of them as existing. Even this causal relation does not guarantee that things in themselves exist as causes since Kant thinks we (or another being) could have causally affected our sensibility. A thing in itself is simply Kant's preferred way of thinking of the non-sensible cause of our sensible representations.

6. Not Mutually Exclusive: Identity and Causality

One may think that one has to pick a side in interpreting the relation of an appearance and a thing in itself. On the one side, they are identical and so they would seem to share a metaphysical existence. As a result, if the appearance exists the thing in itself must also exist since they are identical. On the other side, one might think they are causally related and so there are two different objects: the thing in itself as the cause and the appearance as the effect. Under this interpretation, the thing in itself must be a completely different object from the appearance since something cannot cause itself.

Yet, far from being mutually exclusive relations, Kant thinks appearances and things in themselves are in some sense the same object and also casually related. In fact, the causal relation establishes them as the same object conceptually, although not metaphysically. We identify the appearance with the thing in itself because we think of the appearance as caused by the thing in itself. Thus, the thing in itself is both the same as and the cause of the appearance. Far from being mutually exclusive, this is a case of a causal relation that is not only compatible with, but necessary for, an identity relation. This is not necessarily the case with all causal and identity relations, but this is the way Kant conceives of this one.

An example I call "The Ugly Sweater" helps to illustrate this point. Imagine you are on a Zoom call with your work colleagues. During the Zoom meeting, one of your colleagues calls the sweater you are wearing ugly. The next day you encounter this colleague in the hallway of your office and confront them. You ask them why they said such a hurtful thing about your sweater. Your colleague then replies that they did no such thing. They claim it was only the appearance of them on the Zoom call that did this. You then ask them whether they said these insulting words about your sweater into the camera and microphone of their computer, which

caused their digital appearance on Zoom to insult you. They admit they did. Does the defense your colleague offered seem to be convincing?

I think we would say NO this is not a convincing defense. Why would we say no? The reason we attribute the hurtful action to our work colleague is that they caused their audio and video appearance on the Zoom call to insult your sweater. The causal relation between them and their digital appearance is why we identify their appearance with them. Yet, this attribution of identity does not mean that we consider their appearing on our computer to be us encountering them in person, and when we see them in person in the office we do not consider them to be appearing to us on our computer. Appearing and in-person are two ways of being of what we think of as the same person.[82]

This is how Kant is thinking about the appearance vs. thing in itself relation. This is a causal relation. The thing in itself is thought of as affecting our receptive faculty of sensibility and thereby producing the appearance in our sensibility and experience. However, Kant also thinks the thing in itself and the appearance are in a sense the same object. They are considered to be the same because the thing in itself casually produces the appearance. As a result of this causal relation, we attribute the appearance to the thing in itself as another way of being of the thing in itself.

[82] This example works just as well for an object as opposed to a person. A good example is the ball drop in Times Square on New Year's Eve. When one asks someone else in North America "What did you do for New Year's Eve?" a common response is "I watched the ball drop". If you then asked the follow-up question "How was Times Square on New Year's Eve?", you would be considered to be joking or devoid of common sense. What is usually meant when one says "I watched the ball drop" is that one watched live television footage of the ball dropping in Times Square. We consider ourselves to have watched the ball drop even though we watched a representation of it dropping on our individual TV set. Yet, we do not consider the image on our TV set to be the live witnessing in Times Square of the dropping of the ball. This example gives further evidence that we consider an object and its appearance to be the same object, but we also simultaneously do not identify but instead distinguish the object as appearance from the object in itself. Thus, the object is broader than either its appearance or as it is in itself, but encompasses both ways of being.

None of this requires positing the existence of the thing in itself. This is because both the relation of identity and causality are only thought and never cognized. This means they are merely ways we must think about the relation between a thing in itself and an appearance although we can never positively claim the real possibility that the thing in itself exists. Kant's agnosticism about the existence of things in themselves and his problematic idealism regarding was established in chapter 8.

A further example I call the "Zoom Stranger" may make this relation clearer. Imagine you are on a Zoom call with a person you have never met, and will never meet other than on Zoom. You attribute the sound and video image on your screen to them and hold them responsible for what their digital appearance says and does. Your computer in this example represents your mind in Kant's philosophy. The person's appearance on your screen is like the object as appearance/object of experience. Your thought of a person that you have never met contacting you on Zoom and causing their digital appearance is similar to the thought of a thing in itself causing the object as appearance in our sensibility.

You identify the digital image of a person with an existing person because you take the person to be causing this image on your screen. However, you can never say for sure whether they exist because you never meet them other than on Zoom. So it is possible that their digital appearance is caused by something else such as a very sophisticated AI computer program, even one installed on your own computer. Thus, their digital image and audio could be produced by your own computer, and so they may not exist as a person. This is similar to how an object as an appearance may simply be the result of your own transcendental mind affecting you prior to your experience instead of a thing in itself.

I think this analogy clarifies the relation between an appearance and a thing in itself and the problematic existence of a thing in itself. However, one may say this example also makes it clear that the reality of an appearance depends on the reality of a thing in itself. If there is no person in this example, but only a digital image produced by an AI computer program, then we would say this person is not real. Analogically, we would say the appearance is not real if it is not caused by or identical with a thing in itself.

This is where this analogy breaks down and highlights a crucial difference between the Zoom Stranger example and Kant's philosophy. The crucial difference is the universality and necessity of appearances over our entire unified experience. This difference makes all the difference in establishing why Kant considers what appears to us to be empirically real. Appearances are not like digital images on a computer screen that form a limited part of our perceptual field and experience. Appearances are all of our immediate perceptions of the world unified through our entire lives according to the universal and necessary structures of space, time, and empirical laws.

Kant thinks we should not consider appearances to be unreal even though we can give no assurance that they are caused by or identical with any existing things in themselves. We should also not consider appearances to be unreal even though we cannot deny they could be result of our own mind (or some other being). For Kant, the reality of appearances only depends on their necessity, universality, and coherence in one unified experience. Only insofar as an appearance breaks from this unified coherence should we consider it to be a hallucination or dream.

Kant does not think we can prove God's existence theoretically. So Kant cannot use Descartes' strategy of establishing the reality of objects of our experience. In the *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes first proves God's existence and then has God guarantee that our

perceptions correspond to something outside our mind (Descartes 1988: 73-123). Kant's criteria of the reality of objects of our experience is entirely immanent. This criteria is whether the thing is immediately perceived or appended to this perception in accordance with empirical laws in one unified experience. For Kant, our cognitive capacities will not allow us to establish the existence of anything outside our possible experience, e.g., God, things in themselves, or our soul. So, he has to establish another type and standard of reality that are immanent to our possible experience to which we are cognitively limited.

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Curriculum Vitae

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Areas of Specialization	Kant (esp. theoretical and practical); German Idealism;
Areas of Competence	Ethics; History of Social and Political Philosophy; Phenomenology and Existentialism
Additional Teaching Interests	History of German Thought; Ancient Greek Philosophy

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Philosophy (Minor in History of Germanic Thought), Indiana University, Bloomington, 2016-2024

Direct Exchange, Freie Universität Berlin, 2019-20

German Intensive Courses, Carl Duisberg Training Center, 2018, 2019-20

J.D., University of Victoria, 2010-14

M.A. in Philosophy, University of Alberta, 2007-11

B.A. in Philosophy (Honors), University of Alberta, 2003-07

DISSERTATION

Title: *Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Idealism*

Committee: Allen Wood (chair), Andrew Chignell, Dina Emundts, Gary Ebbs, Michel Chaouli, David Sussman

Summary: I argue for an interpretation of Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism as presented in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. According to my interpretation, transcendental idealism is the doctrine that the objects of our experience when taken transcendentally (as they would be outside of the field of our possible experience) do not exist apart from the transcendental subject and are mere representations (are ideal). To avoid a phenomenalist interpretation I emphasize Kant's empirical realism. I take Kant's empirical realism to claim that objects of our experience when taken empirically (as they would be within the field of our possible experience) exist apart from the empirical subject as empirical things in themselves (are real). I argue for this interpretation by considering arguments in the *Critique* that argue directly for or are significantly related to Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism.

RESEARCH

Peer-Reviewed Publications

01. Under review (title has not been provided to maintain anonymity). A paper on Kant's Refutation of Idealism.
02. Under review (title has not been provided to maintain anonymity). A paper on Kant's Indirect Proof of Transcendental Idealism.

Contributions to Conference Proceedings

01. (2021) "A Defense of the Conceptual Approach to Transcendental Idealism Against Paul Guyer". In *Proceedings of the 13th International Kant Congress 'The Court of Reason' (Oslo, 6-9 August 2019)*. Ed. Camilla Serck-Hanssen and Beatrix Himmelmann. Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter.

Refereed Presentations

01. "A Defense of Kant's Indirect Proof Against Charges of Circularity"
    2021, May. 31 Canadian Philosophical Association Annual Congress, University of Alberta
02. "A Defense of the Conceptual Approach to Transcendental Idealism Against Paul Guyer"
    2019, Aug. 7 13th International Kant Congress, University of Oslo
03. "A Defense of the Conceptual Approach to Transcendental Idealism Against Paul Guyer"
    2018, Nov. 17 Indiana Phil. Assoc. Fall Meeting, Indiana University, Bloomington

Other Presentations

01. "Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Idealism"
    2022, Apr. 8 IUB Philosophy Dept. 2022 Nelson Fellowship Lecture
02. "What is Transcendental Idealism?"
    2021, Apr. 6 Association of Philosophy Students, University of Toronto, Scarborough
03. "Kant's Indirect Proof of the Transcendental Ideality of Appearances"
    2020, July 7 Freie Universität Berlin *Kolloquium Geschichte der Philosophie*
04. "Kant's Indirect Proof of Transcendental Idealism"
    2020, May 7 Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin *Forschungskolloquium für Klassische Deutsche Philosophie*
05. "A Defense of the Conceptual Approach to Transcendental Idealism Against Paul Guyer"
    2018, Oct. 25 IUB Philosophy Dept. Graduate Student Colloquium
06. "An Ontological Comparison of Heidegger and Carnap"
    2007, Jan.20 6th Annual Prairie Provinces Undergrad Phil. Assoc. Conference, University of Saskatchewan

Professional Commentaries

01. On Samuel Kahn, "Positive Duties, Kant's Universalizability Tests, and Contradictions"
    2021, Apr. 9 Beyond Boundaries: Indiana Academies Symposium – Indiana Phil. Assoc., Virtual Event

HONORS AND AWARDS

2022 Eighteenth-Century Studies Dissertation-Year Fellowship [*declined*]
2021 James B. Nelson Dissertation Year Fellowship, IUB Department of Philosophy
2021 Bo and Lynn Clark Memorial Essay Award, IUB Department of Philosophy

2019-21 SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship
2019 Irving and Shirley Brand Graduate Fellowship, IUB Graduate School
2019 Graduate Direct Exchange Fellowship, IUB – Freie Universität Berlin
2019 Graduate Student Travel Award, IUB College of Arts and Sciences
2018 Award for Graduate Academic Excellence, IUB Dept. of Philosophy
2009 SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship [*declined*]
2008 Walter H Johns Graduate Fellowship
2008 Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Master's Scholarship
2008 Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship - Master's Level [*declined*]
2007 Dr. John Macdonald Scholarship in Philosophy
2006 Karen Pilkington Memorial Scholarship in the History of Philosophy
2006, 2005 Marilyn R Love Scholarship in Philosophy

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Lead Instructor, Indiana University

Liberty and Justice: Fall 2022

Guest Lecturer, Indiana University (lead instructor in parentheses)

"Plato's Three Waves in the Republic". Ancient Greek Philosophy: Spring 2018 (David Charles McCarty)

"Hume's Skepticism about Induction". Introduction to Philosophy: Spring 2017 (Pieter Hasper)

Teaching Assistant, Indiana University (lead instructor in parentheses)

Kant's Ethics: Spring 2021 (*grader*) (Allen Wood)
Classics in Social and Political Philosophy: Fall 2020 (*grader*) (Allen Wood)
Introduction to Ethics: Spring 2019 (Krasmira Filcheva)
Introduction to Philosophy: Fall 2018 (Frederick F. Schmitt)
Ancient Greek Philosophy: Spring 2018 (*grader*) (David Charles McCarty)
Introduction to Existentialism: Fall 2017 (Allen Wood)
Introduction to Philosophy: Spring 2017 (Pieter Hasper)
Introduction to Ethics: Fall 2016 (Janelle DeWitt)

Teaching Assistant, University of Alberta (lead instructor in parentheses)

Ethics: Spring 2008 (Wesley Cooper)
Introduction to Society and Values: Fall 2007 (Robert A. Wilson)

PHILOSOPHY COURSES I AM PREPARED TO TEACH

Introductory Undergrad./Grad.	**Intermediate Undergrad.**	**Advanced**
* Introduction to Philosophy	* Ancient Greek Philosophy	* Kant's First Critique
* Introduction to Ethics	* Early Modern Philosophy	* Kant's Ethics
* Liberty and Justice	* 19th Century Philosophy	* Being and Time
* Intro. to Existentialism	* Social and Political Philosophy	* Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit
* Critical Thinking	* Nietzsche	* Karl Marx
* Symbolic Logic		

COURSES I COULD TEACH WITH ADVANCE NOTICE

Introductory Undergrad./Grad.	**Intermediate Undergrad.**	**Advanced**
* Business and Morality	* Phenomenology	* Fichte's Ethical Thought
* Biomedical Ethics	* Legal Philosophy	* Hegel's Ethical Thought

TEACHING DEVELOPMENT

2017 AAPT Workshop on Inclusive Pedagogy in Philosophy (Bloomington, IN)

GRADUATE COURSEWORK

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

Ancient and Medieval

∗ Aristotle's *De Anima* (Phil Corkum)
∗ Aristotle on Physical Explanation (Pieter Hasper)
∗ Medieval Philosophy (Rega Wood)

Kant

∗ Kant's First Critique (Allen Wood)
∗ Kant's Ethics (Allen Wood)
∗ Kant's Criticism of Aesthetic Judgment (Alexander Rueger)
∗ Kant's Moral Ontology (Robert Burch) †

Modern Philosophy

∗ Nineteenth Century Philosophy (Allen Wood)
∗ Karl Marx (mini-course at Stanford University; Allen Wood, Jamie Edwards, and Suzanne Love) †
∗ Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit (Robert Burch)
∗ Classics in Social and Political Philosophy (Allen Wood)

20th Century Philosophy

∗ The Late Heidegger (David Charles McCarty)
∗ Heidegger's *Being and Time* (Marie-Eve Morin)
∗ Heidegger's *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Marie-Eve Morin) †

Early Analytic

Proseminar: History of Phil. of Language (Kirk Ludwig)

CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

Metaphysics, Epistemology, and Phil. of Science

∗ Ontology and Metaontology (Gary Ebbs)
∗ Philosophy of Space and Time (Alexander Rueger)

Logic

∗ Logical Theory I (Gary Ebbs)

Value Theory

∗ Legal Philosophy (Marcia Baron) †
∗ Nature, Aesthetics and Environmentalism (Allen Carlson)

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

∗ Philosophical Discourses of Modernity: 20th Century (William Rasch)
∗ Walter Benjamin in Paris: German Marxian Aesthetic Theory in the 1930s (William Rasch)†

(*audited courses indicated by* †)

SUMMER SCHOOL

2019 Third International Kant Summer School in Mainz, Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz. *Topic*: Antinomy of Pure Reason. *Instructors*: Eric Watkins, Clinton Tolley and Lucy Allais

LANGUAGES

* German (B2 level)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

2018 (Fall) Graduate Student Climate Liaison, Climate Survey, IU Dept. of Philosophy
2017-18 Representative to the Graduate Curriculum Committee, IU Dept. of Philosophy

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

* American Philosophical Association
* Canadian Philosophical Association
* American Assoc. of Philosophy Teachers
* North American Kant Society
* Indiana Philosophical Association

OUTREACH

2020 Volunteer Instructor, St. Albert Public Library
Introduction to Critical Thinking