

The Content of Kant's Pure Category of Substance and Its Use on Phenomena and Noumena

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I. Introduction

In the Schematism chapter of the first *Critique*, in which Kant is concerned to provide some sensible significance to the categories, he defines the category of substance in temporal terms as “the persistence of the real in time” (A144/B183; A181/B225).¹ This temporal definition is the schema, which provides the content for the schematized category of substance (A146/B186; A277/B333). In the Schematism chapter and then again in later chapters, Kant distinguishes the schematized category of substance, which applies specifically to phenomenal substance, from the unschematized, or pure category,² of substance (A146/B186; A277/B333). The paradigm of a phenomenal substance is matter, whose quantity as we learn in the *Metaphysical Foundations* is necessarily conserved (MF 4:541–2). One reason the pure category of substance, which might initially seem to be of minor importance in Kant's system, is worth careful investigation is that Kant thinks we have to rely on it to the extent that we can think of anything other than a phenomenon (or appearance) as a substance. In particular, thoughts about *noumenal substance*³ rely crucially on the pure category of substance. It is hard to

1. References to the first *Critique* are to the A and B editions. References to other Kantian works are to the *Akademie Ausgabe*, cited as follows: abbreviated title, volume no.: pg. no.; in the case of the *Reflexionen* in volumes 17 and 18, I also include R and the reflection number following a '/' and then in brackets the likely date(s) it was written, according to Adickes. In the case of the *Reflexionen* and some portions of transcripts of metaphysics that are not included in the Cambridge editions, I have provided my own translations. In other cases, I have relied on translations in the Cambridge editions (cited at the end of the paper), with some occasional modifications. I use the following abbreviations:
L1: *Metaphysik L1* (mid-1770s); MM: *Metaphysik Mrongovius* (1782–3); K2: *Metaphysik K2* (early 1790s); MH: *Metaphysik Herder* (1762–3); P: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (1783); OD: *On a Discovery Whereby Any New Critique of Pure Reason Is to Be Made Superfluous by An Older One* (1790); MF: *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (1786); Pr: *What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made in Germany since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?* (1793/1804); NE: *New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition* (1755); CPPr: *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788); GW: *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals* (1783); and Pöl: *Pölit Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion* (mid-1780s).
2. Below, I use “pure category” and “unschematized category” interchangeably.
3. I discuss at length below the relationship between the concept of a positive noumenon and the concept of a thing-in-itself; as we will see, it is important

deny that Kant holds that we are able to think such thoughts. He says explicitly that thinking and its categories can extend beyond the domain of possible experience (Bxxvi; A254/B309). Moreover, there are passages in a variety of texts, including the first *Critique*, in which Kant speaks of noumena as being substances (A206/B251–2; cf. A274/B330; A383; 18:420–1/R6001 [1780s]). Kant apparently thinks such beings would qualify as substances in the sense of the pure category:

[Y]et it does not seem to be compatible with the concept of a substance — which is really supposed to be the subject of all composition, and has to remain in its elements even if its connection in space, by which it constitutes a body, were removed — that if all composition of matter were removed in thought, then nothing at all would remain. Yet with that which is called substance in appearance things are not as they would be with a thing in itself which one thought through pure concepts of the understanding. (A525/B553)

Indeed, in this passage, as well as others, Kant seems to say that *the only* substances that satisfy the pure category are noumenal substances (L1 28:209; K2 28:759; 18:145/R5294 [1776–8]).⁴

to distinguish these concepts. However, I initially follow the practice of other commentators (such as Van Cleve (1999: 134)) who use the terms “noumena” and “things-in-themselves” interchangeably.

4. According to what has been called by some a “metaphysical reading” (e.g., Kohl (2015) and Marshall (2018)), Kant holds that there is a world of non-spatio-temporal things-in-themselves — a world that is (somehow) metaphysically distinct from appearances — and this world is (truly and justifiably) characterizable in terms of the categories. (For example, noumena affect us, where affection is an instance of the category of causality.) Some recent proponents of various versions of this general view (which allows for plenty of disagreement about the exact metaphysical difference between things-in-themselves and appearances) are Adams (1997); Langton (1998); Van Cleve (1999); Ameriks (2003); Watkins (2005); Hogan (2009); Chignell (2014); Allais (2015); Stang (2016); Heide (2020); and Schafer (forthcoming). While I accept this reading and offer some general reasons in support of it (in the paragraph to which this note is appended as well as in section 2A), as well as

Passages of this sort have helped fuel what might be called the Substitution Reading, according to which (1) the content of the schematized category of substance is a *substitute* (or “surrogate”) for the content of the pure category, and (2) only noumena are true substances *sensu* the pure category; phenomenal substances, including matter, are not. However, other passages and considerations have encouraged a rival view, which might be called the Inclusion Reading. It maintains that the content of the schematized category of substance includes the content of the pure category and that phenomenal substances, including matter, are (or, *are also*) substances *sensu* the pure category.⁵ Still other commentators have held that Kant holds no consistent position about these matters⁶ or that he holds different positions at different times.⁷

This question about the relation between the pure category of substance and the schematized category concerns its application to phenomena. Call this the Relation Question. It is one of several questions having to do with the pure category of substance that have not been satisfactorily addressed. Another question concerns what, in the way of either justified belief or cognition, we can gain when we use the pure category of substance beyond the bounds of experience, applying it to noumena. Does Kant think we are theoretically warranted, for

some replies to Kohl's (2015) recent attack on it, the Dual Content Reading that I offer here does not itself require the metaphysical reading.

5. Proponents of the Substitution Reading (which might also be called the Replacement or Surrogate Reading) include Ameriks (1992: 271–2; see also 2000: 67, 269, 299n79); Langton (1998: especially chaps. 2 and 3); and Wuerth (2014: 95ff.). Engstrom (2018: 256n41) also displays tendencies in this direction. Proponents of the Inclusion Reading (which might also be called the Supplementation or Addition Reading) include Paton (1936: 69–70); Van Cleve (1999: 106, 120–1, 137–8); Watkins (2002: 202–6; see also 2005: 350–4); Allison (2004: 223, 245); and Friedman (2013: 144–8). For a recent overview of the debate, see Oberst (2017).
6. E.g., Hahmann (2009).
7. Oberst (2017) thinks that until the 1786 *Metaphysical Foundations*, Kant rejected the substantiality of matter (its being an instance of the pure category of substance) because of its infinite divisibility but that in the *Metaphysical Foundations* and for some time after Kant affirmed its substantiality.

example, in believing not only that there exist things-in-themselves that are substances but also that these are substances with an inner, non-relational nature, as commentators have maintained?⁸ Call this the Epistemology Question. A more general question concerns the content of Kant's pure category of substance: What features are conceptually necessary of (that is, analytically true of) a substance *sensu* the pure category?⁹ Call this the Content Question.

It's reasonable to believe that answering the Content Question will help in answering the other two questions. I follow that strategy here, defending an answer to the Content Question and then using it to help answer the Relation and Epistemology Questions. In answering the Content Question, I challenge what I take to be a prevailing assumption in the literature: that Kant takes — and needs to take, if he is to be consistent — the content of the pure category of substance to be univocal. By contrast, I show that Kant thinks that the pure category of substance has both a general content that is in play whenever we think of any entity as a substance as well as a more specific (yet purely intellectual) content that arises in conjunction with the thought of what Kant calls a positive noumenon. I call the general content the Subsistence-Power Conception; I call the more specific content, which I argue is partly constitutive of the thought of a positive noumenon, the Inner-Simple Conception. Because I take there to be, as it were, a general and specific version of the pure category of substance, one of which has more ontological content than the other, I call mine the Dual Content Reading. Drawing on this reading, I argue in regard to the Relation Question that, while phenomenal substance does not qualify as a substance according to one content of the pure category — namely,

8. E.g., Van Cleve (1988 and 1999: 149–50); Adams (1997); Langton (1998: chap. 3); and Allais (2015: chap. 10) appear to agree on this general point, despite substantial differences in the details.

9. Another important question that I do not directly take up here concerns the origin of the content of the pure category of substance. For two recent and very distinct answers to that question (which, however, appear to share the assumption that the category of substance has a univocal content), see Engstrom (2018) and McLear (2020a).

the Inner-Simple Conception — it does qualify as a substance according to the other — namely, the Subsistence-Power Conception. The Dual Content Reading accommodates the considerations that have seemed to support both the Inclusion and Substitution Readings without rendering Kant inconsistent. It allows one to say that the Inclusion Reading is right with respect to the relation between the general version of the pure category and the schematized category (the former's content is included in the latter), while the Substitution Reading is right with respect to the specific version of the pure category and the schematized category (not all of the former's content is included in the latter). In my treatment of the Epistemology Question, I further draw out the implications of my Dual Content Reading. I argue that while Kant's account rules out theoretical cognition of the substantiality of positive noumena and negative noumena (as one might expect), it allows for theoretically justified beliefs about them. In the case of the substantiality of positive noumena, it allows for justified conditional beliefs involving the Inner-Simple Conception, while in the case of the substantiality of negative noumena, it also allows for justified existential beliefs involving the Subsistence-Power Conception.

In §2, I tackle the Content Question, arguing that the pure category of substance has metaphysical content and that Kant has two distinct answers to the question of what that content is. In §3, I explain how the more specific content, the Inner-Simple Conception, arises in conjunction with the thought of positive noumena and how this conception relates to the Subsistence-Power Conception and to the schematized category of substance. In §4, I draw on my Dual Content Reading to provide what I take to be a satisfying answer to the Relation Question, one that, as it were, splits the difference between the Inclusion and Substitution Readings. In §5, I draw on my analysis to provide a partial answer to the Epistemology Question.

II. The Content Question

A. *The Pure Category of Substance Has Metaphysical Content*

In contrast to the schematized category, the pure category of substance does not contain the “sensible determination of persistence” or any other specifically temporal or sensible content (A147/B186). Now, some of Kant’s statements about what remains once this temporal content is removed can give the impression that he thinks that there is nothing at all left when we deploy the unschematized category of substance in our thinking:

[B]ut since beyond the field of sensibility there is no intuition at all, these pure concepts lack completely all significance [*Bedeutung*], in that there are no means through which they can be exhibited in concreto. (P 4:316; cf. P 4:332)

Without schemata, therefore, the categories are functions of the understanding for concepts, but do not represent any object. (A147/B187)

But there are good reasons to resist the idea that Kant thinks the pure categories, including <substance>¹⁰, are literally empty thoughts. Such a view is precluded, *inter alia*, by Kant’s doctrine that thinking extends beyond the limits of sensibility and that such thinking relies on the unschematized categories. Assuming judgments about the substantiality of noumena of the sort that Kant makes (e.g., at A206/B251–2) are taken by him to have a truth-value, there must be some content associated with the unschematized categories. Indeed, it is generally recognized that Kant deploys the pure category of causality to non-sensible things-in-themselves when he says that they “affect” us and “ground” appearances (A190/B235; A387; A494/B522; A614/B642; OD 8:215; P 4:289 and 318) and that he takes the judgments so formed to be true. Kant also applies the unschematized category of causality to noumena when he claims that we are free at the noumenal level

10. I use angle brackets to denote concepts.

(CPrR 5:54). Thus, Kant’s apparent denials that unschematized categories have content or significance can and should be read instead as a denial that they have a particular kind of content. Judgments involving unschematized categories involve states of affairs whose objective reality — that is, whose *real* as opposed to *merely logical* possibility — we are not in a position to establish, at least by theoretical means (B148–9; A241–4/B300–2; Bxxvi). They thus lack what we might call cognition-permitting content (where this is content that puts us in a position to establish objective reality and is typically sensible) but not thinkable content simpliciter.¹¹ This means that there can be things that are analytically true of concepts that lack cognition-permitting content, including the unschematized category of substance.

Indeed, Kant clearly thinks that there is some sort of remainder to the concept of substance when the sensible content involved in the schema is removed:

If I leave out persistence (which is existence at all times), then nothing is left in my concept of substance except the logical representation of the subject, which I try to realize by representing to myself something that can occur solely as subject (without being a predicate of anything). (A242/B300)

Kant speaks here of the unschematized category of substance as a “logical representation” and elsewhere says that the unschematized categories have only “logical significance” [*logische Bedeutung*] (A147/B186). I think it would be a mistake to conclude from such passages that the unschematized categories are not also fundamental concepts of an object in general and so, in that sense, *ontological* concepts.¹² They

11. This is also noted, e.g., by Adams (1997: 807–8); Watkins (2002: 203); Ameriks (2003: 28); and Stang (2016: 160). As Tolley (2014) shows, Kant tends to reserve the word “content” [*Inhalt*] for the more narrow notion of content (where it is closely tied to cognition), but as McLear (2020b: 81) emphasizes, this is compatible with Kant’s possessing the broader notion of content. Unless otherwise noted, I use “content” here in this broad sense.

12. As also noted by Watkins (2005: 266) and Wuerth (2014: 120).

must be insofar as we can use them to think of noumena. When Kant calls attention to the “logical significance” of the unschematized categories, I take it he does so to underscore their epistemic limits, along with their close connection to the corresponding logical functions of judgment, but not to repudiate their ontological content. They are fundamental concepts of (perhaps merely *logically possible*) entities and aspects of entities. While they correspond to logical functions, they are not identical with them.

This is especially clear in the case of the pure category of substance — or of inherence and subsistence [*der Inhärenz und Subsistenz (substantia et accidens)*], as it is called in the table of the categories (B106).¹³ A substance, so conceived, possesses accidents but is itself “something that could exist as a subject but never as a mere predicate” (B149). Such an entity occupies a privileged position in the order of being, not simply in the order of judgment (as the logical subject of a categorical judgment). As Kant says in the *Metaphysical Foundations*, “The concept of a substance means the ultimate subject of existence [*letzte Subject der Existenz*], that is, that which does not itself belong in turn to the existence of another merely as a predicate” (MF 4:503; cf. 18:298/R5650 [1785–8]). Kant takes such existence, which “lies in the concept” <substance>, to be analytically true of it (MM 29:784 [1782–3]).¹⁴ It

13. In the *Prolegomena*, the category is simply referred to as substance [*Substanz*] (P 4:303).

14. The unschematized category of substance is related to the logical function of categorical judgment insofar as the relationship between a substance and its accidents has its logical analogue in the relationship between a subject and its predicates. Moreover, anything conceived as a substance, an ultimate ontological subject, is thereby “determined” to also occupy a privileged place in a categorical judgment as the proper logical subject (B300–1; B128–9). Such a concept of substance, where it is the sort of thing that *must* occupy the place of logical subject in a judgment, must be distinguished from the much weaker concept of substance as something that *can* occupy the place of logical subject in a judgment (A349). (See Bennett (1966: 183) for this usage.) The former concept of substance must also be distinguished from the metaphysical conception of substance, despite these conceptions being closely related. See McLear (2020a) in this regard. The difference here corresponds to that between a real and a logical subject (see, e.g., 17:536–7/R4412 [1771] for this distinction).

belongs to a (partial) nominal definition of substance, as is evident in the Phenomena-Noumena chapter (A241–2/B300–1).¹⁵

B. The Subsistence-Power Conception of Substance

We have seen that the pure category of substance has some metaphysical content. What else can we say about this content? While Kant is relatively reticent on the topic in the first *Critique*, in various other texts (including lecture transcripts¹⁶) and *Reflexionen*, he has more to say about the nature of subsistence — the sort of existence possessed by a thing that exists in its own right, without being an accident of another, and inherence, the sort of existence possessed by an accident.¹⁷ As we learn, a substance subsists and substands (that is, it supports accidents).¹⁸

Kant carefully distinguishes inherence from mere ontological dependence: something can owe its existence to something else, as Kant thinks all created noumenal substances do to God, and so in that sense ontologically depend on it, yet still subsist insofar as it does not inhere in anything else. Indeed, Kant thinks appreciating this point is crucial for evading Spinozism, since if we equate inherence with ontological dependence on another thing, as occurs when one thing is created by another, then it follows that all created things are accidents of God (Pöl 28:1041 and 1105; L2 28:563–4). We learn further that to be a thing in which accidents inhere (that is, to substand), a thing must have power [*Kraft*].¹⁹ Consider in this regard passages such as the following:

15. For further discussion of this point, and discussion of the difference between nominal and real definitions, see Nunez (2014) and Stang (2016: chaps. 8 and 9).
16. As Ameriks (1992: 257) notes, a case could be made that the lectures contain the “system” (involving full analysis of the categories and predicables) that Kant promises in the first *Critique* to deliver elsewhere (A13/B27).
17. For examples of the terminology of subsistence and inherence, see L2 28:562–4 and MM 29:770–1.
18. See McLear (2020a) for this helpful formulation.
19. The relationship between power, activity, and substance is emphasized by, inter alia, Heimsoeth (1924: 125); Langton (1998: 51ff.); Watkins (2005); Thorpe

In a substance we have two relations: with respect to its accidents, it has power [*Kraft*], insofar as it is the ground of the inherence of these, and with respect to the first subject without any accidents, it is the substantial [*das substantiale*]. Power is therefore not a new accident, but rather the accidents are effects brought about through the power I do not say that substance is a power, but rather that it has power [*Kraft*], power is the relation of the substance to the accidents, insofar as it grounds their actuality. (MM 29:770–1)

The proposition: “the thing (the substance) *is* a power,” [*Kraft*] instead of the perfectly natural “substance *has* a power,” is in conflict with all ontological concepts and, in its consequences, very prejudicial to metaphysics. For the concept of substance, that is, of inherence in a subject, is thereby basically entirely lost. (OD 8:224n)

Substance acts [*handelt*], insofar as it contains not merely the ground of the accidents, but rather also determines [*determinirt*] the existence of the accidents; or substance, insofar as its accidents inhere, is in action (action), and it acts [*handelt*] insofar as it is the ground of the actuality of the accidents. (MM 29:822–3)

(2011); Wuerth (2014: 38–9, 74, 81n1, and 90); Warren (2015); Stang (2019); and McLearn (2020a and 2020b). In Langton’s case, however, she takes power/activity to be part of the content of only the *schematized* category of substance. Pace Langton, while some of the texts in which Kant reinforces this connection concern the schematized category in particular (namely quotations from the Analogies), this does not show that the content doesn’t also belong to the pure category (as should be clear by the end of this paper); moreover, in all the texts (apart from the passages from the Analogies) in which Kant discusses power in conjunction with substantiality, there is no indication that he is focusing on only the schematized category. Finally, (as we will see in §5) Kant explicitly infers from the fact of noumenal affection that the noumenal entities that affect us are substances. This is clearly an application of the unschematized category of substantiality.

Each subject in which an accident inheres must itself contain a ground of its inherence. For if, e.g., God could produce a thought in a soul merely by himself: then God, but not a soul, would have the thought: because there would be no connection between them. Thus for the inherence of an accident in A its own power [*eigne Kraft*] is required, and a merely external, not even a divine power, does not suffice. Otherwise I could also produce thoughts in a mere wooden post, if it were possible by a mere external power. (MH 28:52)

“Every substance has a power” [*Kraft*] is an identical proposition. For the substance is properly the subject, which contains the ground of the accidents and the effects; consequently the concept of a substance arises from the necessity of the power of a subject. (17:400/R4056 [1769?])

In the first instance, Kant thinks every substance must have a passive power, in virtue of which its accidents are its own and in virtue of which the substance can alter or possess new accidents when acted upon. But he also takes it that in every substance this power is accompanied by another kind of power: power to act on another substance (e.g., by bringing about a change in its accidents) — an outer-directed/active power.²⁰ With respect to passive power, Kant notes that not even God could implant an accident in a finite substance without there being a basis for it in the powers of the substance; power is what anchors the accident in the substance (MH 28:52). This has been called the “Restraint Argument.”²¹ While Kant thinks that changes in the accidents of a finite substance depend on outer (causal) grounds, that is, the active powers of *another* substance, he continues to insist that

20. See, e.g., Stang (2019: 92) for this distinction. I take it that Kant and Leibniz agree that a substance is essentially something with power that acts but they disagree in how to understand the power and acts of which a substance is capable.

21. See Ameriks (1992: 263–4 and 2012: 128) and Watkins (2005: 154) for discussion.

there must be inner grounds for the substance to have the accidents in question, where these grounds are its own powers.²² As for acts or actions, they are lawful exercises of power in accordance with the circumstances and nature of the substance.²³ I take it that Kant regards the notion of action, like the notion of power, as two-fold: exercises of both passive and active, outer-directed power count as actions. Just as the notion of substance *sensu* the pure category contains within it the notion of power — it is an analytic truth that substance has power (as Kant makes explicit in 17:400/R4056 [1769?]) — so the notion of action contains within it the notions of power and substance:

Acting and effecting [*Handeln und Wirken*] can be assigned only to substances. (L2 28:564)

Where there is action [*Handlung*], consequently activity and power [*Thätigkeit und Kraft*], there is also substance. (A204/B250)

This causality leads to the concept of action [*Handlung*], this to the concept of power [*Kraft*], and thereby to the concept of substance. (A204/B249)

In further elaborating this conception of substance, Kant insists that substance, insofar as it is the *ultimate* subject of its accidents, must have *fundamental* powers and be the *ultimate* subject of its actions:

22. Kant sometimes seems to use “causality” and “cause” in a narrow sense to describe the action of a substance on *another* substance. (See, e.g., L2 28:564–5: “Causality is the determination of *another* whereby it is posited according to general laws.”) Other times, however, he uses these terms in a broader sense to encompass the former cases as well as substance’s grounding of its own accidents (which occurs in inherence). Watkins (2005: 261) has suggested that the narrower use corresponds to the pure category of causality. This is an attractive suggestion insofar as it helps us to understand how the pure category of causality and the category of substance are distinct relational categories (without either being fully explicable through the other).

23. For helpful recent treatments of Kant’s notion of action, see Watkins (2005); Stang (2019); and McLearn (2020b).

All that we are acquainted with of substance is power [*Kraft*], fundamental power [*vis primitiva*]. (17:739/R4824 [1775–6])

[S]ubstance is the ultimate subject [*letzte subject*] of its actions [*Handlungen*] and not itself the manner of acting of another [*die Handlungsweise eines anderen*]. (18:311/R5653 [1794–8])²⁴

Now since all effect consists in that which happens, consequently in the changeable, which indicates succession in time, the ultimate subject of the changeable is therefore *that which persists*, as the substratum of everything that changes, i.e. the substance. For according to the principle of causality actions are always the primary ground of all change of appearances, and therefore cannot lie in a subject that itself changes, since otherwise further actions and another subject, which determines this change, would be required. (A205/B250; Kant’s emphasis)

As I understand this, to say that a genuine substance must be the ultimate subject of its actions is to say that its actions and accidents must have their ultimate basis in some powers of *it* rather than those actions and accidents being (solely) determined by the powers of an outside substance, as would be the case, for example, if its actions and accidents were exclusively due to, say, God. For those powers to be fundamental means that they (rather than some other powers, whether of the substance or of another one) are the ultimate basis of its actions and accidents. Being an ultimate subject of actions and having fundamental powers are thus closely related and indeed inter-definable notions.

24. Relatedly, Kant describes substance as the first subject of causality [*erste Subject der Causalität*] (A206/B251).

For shorthand, I call this conception of substance the Subsistence-Power Conception.²⁵ A noteworthy term that Kant often deploys in conjunction with the Subsistence-Power Conception is “the substantial” [*das substantiale*]. This denotes what would be left over if we were to remove from a substance (conceived in terms of the Subsistence-Power Conception) the accidents and power(s) by means of which the accidents inhere in the substance:

In a substance we have two relations: with respect to its accidents, it has power, insofar as it is the ground of the inherence of these, and with respect to the first subject without any accidents, it is the substantial [*das substantiale*]. If we leave out all accidents, then the substance remains, that is the pure subject, in which everything inheres, or the substantial [*das substantiale*], e.g. I. Here all powers [*Kräfte*] are put to the side. (MM 29:770–1)²⁶

The notion of the substantial is not an alternative explication of the content of the pure category of substance. Rather, it is obtained when we begin with the latter and abstract everything having to do with the way substance supports accidents. It is, as it were, a notion of a “thin” substance within the “thick” substance described by the Subsistence-Power Conception.²⁷

25. For discussion of how this conception of substance fits with the Leibnizian-Wolffian tradition, see Watkins (2005).

26. For other prominent usages of “the substantial,” see P 4:333; A414/B441; and L2 28:563.

27. My reading is similar here to Oberst (2017: 5), from whom I take the thick and thin language and who says that the category of substance contains the concept of the substantial in itself. (I have also benefited from the discussion in Warren (2015).) However, I think Oberst is misleading when he claims that the substantial is the causal ground of inherence, given what Kant says about leaving the notion of power aside in the concept of the substantial.

C. *The Inner-Simple Conception of Substance*

It seems, then, that we have succeeded in clarifying the content of the unschematized category of substance: it is the Subsistence-Power Conception, from which the notion of the substantial can be abstracted out. However, there are a number of texts in which Kant appears to offer a distinct account of the metaphysical content of the pure category of substance, a distinct conception of substance *sensu* the pure category. Consider the following passages from the Amphiboly chapter:

As object of the pure understanding ... every substance must have inner determinations and powers [*Kräfte*] that pertain to its inner reality. (A265/B321)

Substances in general must have something *inner*, which is therefore free of all outer relations, consequently also of composition. The simple is therefore the foundation of the inner in things-in-themselves. (A274/B330; Kant's emphasis; cf. A283/B339)

Not only must a substance have powers (per the Subsistence-Power Conception); a substance must have an “inner reality.”²⁸ To count as a substance, an entity must have a simple, non-relational aspect, some kind of being that would remain even in the absence of relations to other substances, including composition. As Kant writes in the Antinomy chapter:

[I]t does not seem to be compatible with the concept of a substance — which is really supposed to be the subject of all composition, and has to remain in its elements even if its connection in space, by which it constitutes a body, were removed — that if all composition of matter were removed in thought, then nothing at all would remain. *Yet*

28. Langton (1998: 48ff.) emphasizes this conception of substance (sans the power component), equating it in effect with the unschematized category of substance. Wuerth's (2014) view is similar, except he takes there to be a univocal unschematized category of substance that involves both power and simplicity.

with that which is called substance in appearance things are not as they would be with a thing in itself which one thought through pure concepts of the understanding. The former is not an absolute subject, but only a persisting image of sensibility. (A525/B553; my emphasis)

According to this new conception of substance, a substance is either a simple being (a monad broadly construed²⁹) or a composite of such things. Just as with the Subsistence-Power Conception, we distinguished between substance as it is together with its accidents (the thick substance) and the substance sans its accidents and powers (the substantial, or thin substance), so with this new conception of substance we can distinguish between a composite of substances (formed from relations between simples, resulting in a thick substance) and the simple monads out of which it is composed (the thin substance). We see Kant deploying this notion of substance (with both its thick and thin aspects) in various other passages, beyond those already mentioned:

By mere concepts, all substances in the world are either simple or composed of simples — if they are considered merely through the understanding. (Pr 20:284)

But are substances nonetheless simple? Of course. (L1 28:204)

Substantiality and its opposite [*oppositum*]: mere relation. (17:572/R4493 [early 1770s?])

This conception of substance, which I call the Inner-Simple Conception, also appears in a number of perplexing passages in which Kant appears to be saying that with regard to things-in-themselves, or

29. By “broadly construed,” I mean that monads need not necessarily be entities with only psychological states (as Leibniz holds). One of Kant’s complaints about Leibniz is that he is overly hasty in assuming that simple substances must be this way. (It should be kept in mind that the pre-Critical Kant developed a monadology in which at least some monads lack mental states.)

“objects of the pure understanding,” we are entitled to conclude that wherever there are composites there must be simples (A441/B469; P 4:286; MF 4:507; OD 8:209; MM 29:849–50). (I will return to such passages in §3C.)

The Inner-Simple Conception has clear parallels in Leibniz’s thinking about substance as well as in the pre-Critical Kant’s.³⁰ While the Subsistence-Power Conception of substance emphasizes the manner in which a substance relates to its accidents by grounding them through its powers, the Inner-Simple Conception emphasizes the separateness of one substance from other substances — the necessity that something in them would remain even if relations to other things were removed. While Kant thinks that anything that satisfies the Inner-Simple Conception must satisfy the Subsistence-Power Conception (recall his claim that the simples will have inner powers (A265/B321)), the converse does not hold.³¹

III. The Inner-Simple Conception and the Concept of Positive Noumena

Which of these two conceptions captures the Critical Kant’s considered view of pure substantiality — that is, substantiality *sensu* the pure category? On my reading, the answer is both.³² Kant is not being inconsistent; he is consciously working with both conceptions.³³ He does not take the pure category of substance to have the same content in all of its uses, nor does any aspect of his system require him to do

30. Consider, e.g., Kant’s characterization of substance in the *New Elucidation* (when he was committed to the existence of monads): “Individual substances, of which none is the cause of the existence of another, have a separate existence, that is to say, an existence which can be completely understood independently of all other substances” (NE 1:413).

31. As we will see in §4, Kant thinks that phenomenal substances satisfy the Subsistence-Power Conception without satisfying the Inner-Simple Conception.

32. Watkins (2005: 351) also suggests that Kant might consistently work with different notions of substance but doesn’t elaborate further.

33. Pace, e.g., Hahmann (2009), who complains of contradictions in Kant’s concept of substance, as well as Ameriks (1992: 271–2), who sees vacillations on Kant’s part.

so. Instead, he thinks that the pure category is sometimes used with a general content (Subsistence-Power Conception) and at other times it is used with a richer yet purely intellectual content (Inner-Simple Conception).³⁴ In particular, Kant thinks that the Subsistence-Power Conception is in play whenever we think of any entity as a substance, whether it be a phenomenal thing or a noumenon. But when we try to conceive of the nature of positive noumena, we use the richer Inner-Simple Conception. The latter is a conception of substantiality that arises in conjunction with the attempt to think positive noumena, relying only on the conditions of intelligibility imposed by our discursive understanding (operating in tandem with reason). Kant thinks that the pure category of substance receives an enrichment in intellectual content in conjunction with its use on positive noumena, just as he thinks that the pure category of substance undergoes, through a schematism, an enrichment in sensible content in conjunction with the understanding's use of the category (via its schema) on phenomena.

The remainder of this paper is devoted to developing this Dual Content Reading and then drawing on it to answer the Relation and Epistemology Questions. In this section, I first consider (under A) Kant's distinction between the concepts of negative and positive noumena and their relation to the concept of a thing-in-itself. Then (under B) I provide evidence that Kant thinks that the category of substance becomes intellectually enriched through its use on positive noumena. Finally, (under C) I explain why Kant thinks that this enrichment in content must take the form of the Inner-Simple Conception and what this implies about his agreements and disagreements with Leibniz in the Amphiboly chapter and elsewhere.

34. It might be objected here that we have two distinct concepts rather than one concept with distinct contents. However, I think what we have is a specific concept (corresponding to the Inner-Simple Conception) that includes within it a more general one (corresponding to the Subsistence-Power Conception). The relationship between these, as I argue below, is analogous to that which, on the Inclusion Reading, obtains between the schematized category of substance and the unschematized category (where again a more specific concept contains a more general one).

A. *The Concepts of Negative and Positive Noumena*

Kant distinguishes these concepts as follows:

If by a noumenon we understand a thing *insofar as it is not an object of our sensible intuition*, because we abstract from our intuition of it, then this is a noumenon in the *negative* sense. But if we understand by that an *object of a non-sensible intuition*, then we assume a special kind of intuition, namely intellectual intuition, which, however, is not our own, and the possibility of which we cannot understand, and this would be the noumenon in a *positive* sense. Now the doctrine of sensibility is at the same time the doctrine of the noumenon in the negative sense, i.e., of things that the understanding must think without this relation to our kind of intuition, thus not merely as appearances but as things-in-themselves. (B307; Kant's emphasis)

The concept of a negative noumenon is the concept of something that is not an object of our sensible intuition. Kant appears to be saying here that "the doctrine of sensibility" (which I take to mean his own position on sensibility as explained in the Transcendental Aesthetic and elsewhere) both commits us to the existence of things-in-themselves and requires us to think of these through the concept <negative noumena>. The reason Kant's doctrine of sensibility commits us to the existence of things-in-themselves is that it takes appearances (that is, objects of empirical intuition (A20/B34)) to be appearances of things-in-themselves; for there to be an appearance implies there is a corresponding thing-in-itself (A251; Bxxvi; P 4:314–5). Things-in-themselves are entities whose existence and properties do not depend on our sensibility and its a priori conditions.³⁵ Since according to the Transcendental Aesthetic, space and time are a priori forms of our

35. Whereas Kant takes the existence of an appearance to imply the existence of a thing-in-itself, on my reading the converse does not hold — which leaves open the possibility that there are things-in-themselves (like God) to which no appearances correspond.

intuition and not features of things-in-themselves, it follows that we cannot intuit things-in-themselves (or at least, we cannot intuit such things *as* they are in-themselves); the way objects of our empirical intuition appear to us, namely, spatially and temporally, is not the way things-in-themselves are. Things-in-themselves are thus not objects of our sensible intuition. In recognizing this, we correctly think of them as negative noumena:

Now in this way 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. (A256/B312)³⁶

By contrast, the concept <positive noumenon> is the concept of a thing-in-itself that is given to a non-sensible (intellectual) intuition and that has a *purely intelligible* nature. This means that, while it cannot be positively characterized in sensible terms (like space and time), it can be positively characterized — and indeed, fully described and comprehended — by some sort of intellect in an a priori fashion.³⁷ But what sort of intellect? We can form the idea of a non-sensible object that is fully intelligible to an *intuitive* intellect. But we can also form the idea of a non-sensible object that is fully intelligible to a discursive in-

36. On the so-called metaphysical reading of Kant (see n. 4), he thinks considerations about sensibility justify us in using this concept and in taking the class of things-in-themselves to be co-extensive with the class of negative noumena. Moreover, on this reading, thinking things-in-themselves in this way does not preclude our making (and being justified in making) very general usage of the categories (such as <causality>). While I think this reading is correct, and in §5 I explain how our justified application of causality to negative noumena entitles us to use the category of substance on them as well, the solution I provide here to the Relation Question does not presuppose the metaphysical reading.

37. All things-in-themselves are, according to the doctrine of sensibility, negative noumena. A positive noumenon (if there be such a thing) would also be a thing-in-itself and a negative noumenon. The doctrine of sensibility on its own doesn't imply the converse. But it could be the case that all things-in-themselves are positive noumena: namely, if God intuits them all and they fully conform to the intelligibility constraints described above. See Kohl (2015) for a similar idea.

tellec like ours — of a “special *intelligible object for our understanding* [*ein besonderer intelligibeler Gegenstand für unseren Verstand*]” (A256/B311; my emphasis). I take this to be the concept of a positive noumenon.³⁸ It is the concept of an object that is, as it were, perfectly fitted to our discursive intellects (along with our categories), of just the right character and structure to be fully comprehended by us.

38. There *may* be another concept of a positive noumenon operating in Kant's philosophy — namely, the one described in the previous sentence: that of a being that is intelligible to an intuitive intellect. Such a concept of a positive noumenon would by its very nature not invite fleshing out by means of our concepts. However, this does not preclude our having the concept of a positive noumenon as a special intelligible object for our understanding, and I think the textual evidence shows that Kant is operating with such a concept in a number of places (including the Amphiboly chapter). While the hypothetical being Kant has in mind as having a non-sensible intuition of these noumenal objects is a divine, intuitive understanding that itself does not make use of the categories in its representation and does not represent wholes in terms of their parts as we do, it still seems at least coherent to think that these noumenal objects have been made by the divine understanding such that they are well fitted to the workings of our discursive understanding and satisfy its conditions of intelligibility (meaning that they are correctly characterizable in terms of our categories, including the Inner-Simple Conception of substance). In fact, I think all the rationalists were committed to versions of the view that reality in itself is fathomable to intellects like ours, even while allowing, like Kant, for sharp differences between God's mode of representing it and our own. (They also tended to distinguish sharply between intuitive and discursive cognition while maintaining the adequacy of both forms of cognition, as in the case of Spinoza, as Marshall (2018) points out.) One way that noumenal objects made and known by a God who doesn't use the categories could nevertheless have categorial properties is if (some sort of) non-categorial correlates of these properties exist in God's non-discursive representation. For different ways of developing this idea (in the face of Kohl's (2015) reading, which takes facts about God's representation of noumena to preclude their falling under the categories), see Stang (2016) and Marshall (2018). As Hogan (forthcoming) notes, Kant's moral philosophy requires the substantiality and causality of our noumenal selves as well as an intelligible world in which there are simples. So, Kant must have thought there was a way of reconciling the truth of this discursive, categorial picture with the fact that God's way of representing the same reality is very different from ours.

B. The Enrichment of the Pure Category of Substance

While Kant denies that we are in a position to theoretically establish the real possibility of the concept <positive noumena> (in this sense it is a “problematic concept”³⁹), he does not doubt that we can and inevitably will think of positive noumena and that when we do so, we will use the pure categories, including the category of substance (A254/B310; A286–7/B343; P 4:316). As he writes in the *Prolegomena*:

Now hyperbolic objects [*hyperbolische Objecte*] of this kind are what are called noumena or beings of the understanding [*Verstandeswesen*] (better: beings of thought [*Gedankenwesen*]) — such as, e.g., *substance, but which is thought without persistence in time*. (P 4:333; my emphasis)

Kant thinks that when we use the unschematized category of substance to conceive of positive noumena (that is, beings of the understanding), the category takes on a richer content, though the content in question is not *cognition permitting*:

Since the understanding, when it calls an object in a relation mere phenomenon, simultaneously makes for itself, beyond this relation, another representation of an *object in itself* and hence also represents itself as being able to make *concepts* of such an object, and since the understanding offers nothing other than the categories through which the objects in this latter sense must at least be able to be thought, it is thereby misled into taking the entirely *undetermined* concept of a being of understanding, as a something in general outside of our sensibility, for a *determinate* concept of a being that we could cognize through the understanding in some way. (B306–7; Kant's emphasis)

39. See the gloss in Adams (1997: 820).

I take it that when the understanding forms for itself a “determinate” concept of a positive noumenon,⁴⁰ and uses pure categories such as <substance> to think of such an entity, it simultaneously forms for itself a richer concept of *noumenal substantiality*. This enriched concept is, as Kant puts it elsewhere, an “intellectual concept” possessing a complete “purity that can never be met with in experience” (18:145/R5294 [1776–8]). It, and the concept of positive noumena more generally, have an important place in both Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy, as we will see.

While Kant regards positive noumena as beings of the understanding [*Verstand*] and as associated with the categories, he also thinks that reason [*Vernunft*] aids and abets the understanding when it “builds onto the house of experience a much roomier wing, which it crowds with mere beings of thought, without once noticing that it has taken its otherwise legitimate concepts far beyond the boundaries of their use” (P 4:315–6; cf. P 4:332). As Kant writes:

There is, however, no danger that the understanding will of itself wantonly stray beyond its boundaries in the field of mere beings of thought, without being urged by alien laws. But if reason, which can never be fully satisfied with any rules of the understanding in experience because such use is always conditioned, requires completion of this chain of conditions, then the understanding is driven out of its circle ... to look for noumena entirely outside said experience to which reason can attach the chain. (P 4:332–3)⁴¹

40. When Kant says that the understanding is misled into taking its undetermined concept to be determinate, I take it what he means is that the understanding makes a mistake in thinking that its more determinate (that is, enriched) purely intellectual concept of positive noumena has a *cognition-permitting* content. The understanding is not misled in thinking that the content is more determinate in the sense of content we have been working with (see n. 11).

41. Kant is not entirely clear on the relation between the categories in their transcendent use on positive noumena and the Transcendental Ideas (which fall under the classes of psychological [the soul], cosmological [the world], and

What this suggests is that the concept of a positive noumenon is the concept of an object that is supposed to be *fully intelligible* to a *discursive* yet *reasoning* intellect, where such an intellect not only seeks for an unconditioned condition (an ultimate reason) at the end of any chain of conditions but also has certain “interests,” including a speculative interest in comprehensibility that excludes unending chains. I take it that these are the objects inevitably dreamt up by (to fulfill the innermost wishes of) what Kant calls in the Antinomies chapter “the dogmatism of pure reason.”⁴² For an object to count as a positive noumenon in this sense it must have certain properties. These include, as we will presently see, the properties specified by the Inner-Simple Conception.

C. Kant, Leibniz, and the Inner-Simple Conception of Positive Noumena

A plausible reason for why the Amphiboly chapter follows the Phenomena/Noumena chapter is that Kant takes Leibniz’s philosophy to be representative of an attempt to work out a conception of positive

theological [God]). Sometimes Kant suggests that the Ideas just are categories used transcendentally (e.g., A409/B435). In any case, there is an obvious overlap between the pure category of substance according to the Inner-Simple Conception and the Idea of the soul as simple (which is treated in the Second Paralogism) as well as the Idea of the world as containing complete division into simples (which is treated in the Thesis of the Second Antinomy). This suggests a picture in which one and the same (enriched) category could be a component of multiple Ideas. For a recent account of how Ideas are generated, see Willaschek (2018: chaps. 6 and 7).

42. It is clear from the Antinomies that Kant thinks reason working on its own (independent of any “practical and speculative interests” (A475/B503)) is equally torn between a finite series of conditions (the Thesis arguments) and an infinite series of conditions (the Antithesis arguments). However, only the sort of view laid out in the Thesis arguments (which represent the side of “dogmatism”) satisfies our speculative interest in “grasp[ing] the whole chain of conditions fully a priori and comprehend[ing] the derivation of the conditioned, starting with the unconditioned” (A466–7/B494–5). The Antithesis positions (which include an unending division into parts with no simples) are “too big” for every concept of the understanding (A486/B514). Note that Kant thinks that our speculative and practical interests align, converging, for example, on the need for simples.

noumena. Leibniz’s monadology is, after all, a world of intelligibilia, beings of pure understanding.

There has been debate about whether and to what degree Kant sees Leibniz as getting anything right about the features of things-in-themselves and/or noumena, including the conditions of noumenal substantiality. On my view, Kant agrees with Leibniz that *if* there are positive noumena (things-in-themselves that are positive noumena), then they must conform to the Inner-Simple Conception.⁴³ As we have seen, positive noumena for Kant are beings conceived in a certain way — as fully conforming to the intelligibility constraints of the understanding operating in tandem with principles (such as the Principle of Sufficient Reason) *and interests* of reason, including its interest in completeness.⁴⁴ The Inner-Simple Conception of substance is such a constraint because our discursive understanding can only fully grasp

43. Readings of the Amphiboly chapter divide *inter alia* according to whether (1) Kant is describing Leibniz’s position on things-in-themselves, positive noumena, or both and (2) on which points, if at all, Kant agrees with Leibniz. Langton (1998) and Van Cleve (1999), for example, take Kant to be describing Leibniz’s position on *things-in-themselves* in the Amphiboly and agreeing with him about the principles governing them. By contrast, Allais (2015: chap. 10) takes Kant to be describing Leibniz’s position on both things-in-themselves and positive noumena and agreeing with him only about the principles governing the former. In particular, she thinks that Kant agrees with Leibniz that there is an analytic entailment from appearances to the existence of things with an inner nature, which is how she understands things-in-themselves. However, she takes Kant to disagree with Leibniz’s equation of things-in-themselves with positive noumena, understood as beings with only inner, mental properties (monads). Still other commentators, such as Hogan (forthcoming), take Kant to be characterizing Leibniz’s position on positive noumena and agreeing with Leibniz that a noumenal world subject to purely intelligible conceptual constraints would be as Leibniz describes while also holding that such a concept of noumena involves a “wholesale falsification of the moral and metaphysical structure of reality.” By contrast, on my reading, Kant thinks that Leibniz is partly right about how positive noumena must be (most crucially in the Inner-Simple Conception — except for Leibniz’s overly restricted notion of power and action) but wrong in other respects.

44. Willaschek (2018: 158) is on the right track in taking subjecthood to “principles of reason” to be part of the very concept of a positive noumenon, but he does not link this to the Inner-Simple Conception of substance — nor does he mention interests of reason or considerations about the specifically discursive nature of the understanding.

real composition when it terminates in simple substances; this is the kind of unconditioned condition at the end of a series of conditions it longs for, at least in its “dogmatic” mode (A434/B462; A466–7/B494–5).⁴⁵ Kant thinks that this notion of substance (Inner-Simple Conception) is partly constitutive of the notion of a positive noumenon: to think of something as a positive noumenon is ipso facto to think of it as either a simple or composed out of simples. Thus, Leibniz is right that positive noumena/beings of the understanding, if there are such things, abide by the Inner-Simple Conception. This is why Kant says in the *Metaphysical Foundations* that Leibniz’s monadology is an “intrinsically correct platonic concept of the world ... insofar as it is considered, not at all as object of the senses, but as thing in itself, and is merely an object of the understanding” (MF 4:507). This is also why we find Kant saying that a substance as a “thing in itself thought through pure concepts of the understanding” (A525/B553) must obey the Inner-Simple Conception. Finally, this is why we find Kant making seemingly dogmatic claims about the mereological structure of things-in-themselves not just in the Amphiboly chapter but also in other texts:⁴⁶

Our inference from the composite to the simple is valid only for things subsisting by themselves. (A440/B468)⁴⁷

45. McLear and Pereboom (forthcoming) also emphasize this aspect of the discursive intellect in their discussion of the *Prolegomena* passage quoted above. However, they seem to wish to deny that this fact about how we must conceive of such objects tells us anything about them. As they write, “Kant isn’t making any claim about how things in fact are in themselves, but rather how the understanding must *represent* any complex, as a whole determined by its parts.” While I agree with them that it doesn’t follow from this fact about the way we represent things that there are any positive noumena or that this aspect of the way that we think positive noumena must apply to things-in-themselves, what I think they are missing is that positive noumena are conceived of as entities that fully meet the interests and conditions of a discursive intellect. Thus, it follows that if there be any such entities, they will, *by definition*, have these mereological properties. As for the worry that facts about God’s way of representing things would rule out the possibility of such things, see n. 38.

46. Watkins (2005: 315) also calls attention to such passages.

47. Van Cleve (1988: 236–7) points to the fact that in passages such as this one and

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[T]he part is possible only through the whole, which never occurs with things-in-themselves as objects of the understanding alone, but well occurs with mere appearances. (P 4:286)

The composite of things-in-themselves must certainly consist of the simple. (MF 4:507)

The *Critique* ... shows that in the corporeal world, as the totality of all objects of outer sense, there are, indeed, everywhere composite things, but that the simple is not to be found in it at all. At the same time, however, it demonstrates that if reason thinks a composite of substances as thing-in-itself (without relating it to the special character of our senses), it must absolutely conceive of it as composed of simple substances. (OD 8:209)

With the second cosmological idea as well, if I assume the sensible world as consisting of simple parts I can indeed say that of the noumenal world, because, if I remove the composition here, the composed substances remain for me which, if they are no longer composite, must necessarily be simple. *Little is presented of the intelligible world since we can cognize little more of it through the understanding than what follows from the definition.* (MM 29:849–50; my emphasis)

the third one, Kant applies these mereological principles directly to things-in-themselves (not things-in-themselves conceived of as positive noumena). However, I think it is highly plausible to take Kant’s formulation in such passages as elliptical in light of the large number of passages in which he uses qualifiers when making such mereological claims (e.g., “as objects of pure understanding,” “thing in itself thought through mere concepts,” “as intelligibilia,” “by mere concepts,” “if reason thinks ...” (see Pr. 20:284; A264/B320; A279/B335; A525/B553)). A plausible reason why Kant sometimes leaves out such qualifiers is that he thinks that to make any positive claim about the mereological structure of things-in-themselves necessarily involves conceiving of them as positive noumena.

The key to understanding these claims is that they assert that things-in-themselves must be this way *insofar as they are thought of as positive noumena*. But we are not theoretically entitled to assume that any things-in-themselves are positive noumena (though we may gain practical entitlement based on considerations of morality for thinking we are simples belonging to a world of positive noumena⁴⁸).

On my reading, the notion of a being that is either simple or composed of simples is analytic⁴⁹ of the enriched pure category of substance (whose content is that of the Inner-Simple Conception),⁵⁰ and it is analytic of the concept of positive noumena that it include those things (see again Kant's talk of what follows from the intelligible world "by definition" (MM 29:849–50)). Note that even though the Inner-Simple Conception arises in conjunction with the thought of pure noumena, it is possible to also use it on phenomena, e.g., when one thinks (correctly, as we will see in §4) that phenomena are *not* substances in this sense.

Kant's agreement with Leibniz that the Inner-Simple Conception is necessarily true of positive noumena is consistent with his criticizing him for a variety of other mistakes in the Amphiboly chapter, including (1) Leibniz's not recognizing our inability to establish the existence or real possibility of such entities on theoretical grounds; (2) Leibniz's ascribing more positive properties to positive noumena than are strictly speaking justified, including his identification of noumenal substance with *mind-like* beings and his belief that pre-established

48. See n. 63.

49. It might perhaps be objected that if a category is enriched, then the new content would only be synthetically true of it. Consider, however, that Kant thinks that permanence (which involves an enrichment of the category of substance via the schema) is analytically true of the schematized category of substance (A184/B226).

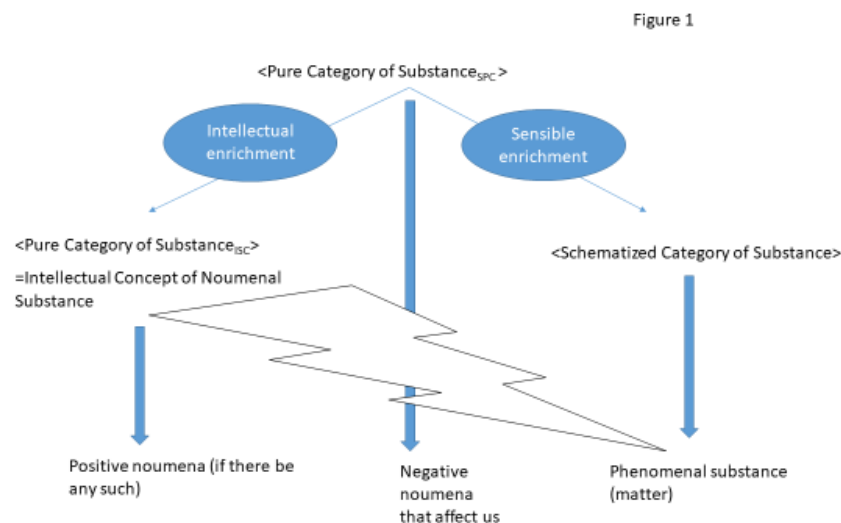
50. Heide (2020: 57ff.) makes a similar analyticity claim but about the pure category of substance in general, though he unlike me takes it to have a univocal content. Given this construal of the pure category of substance, together with the fact that appearances are merely relational and do not consist of simple parts, I see no way Heide can avoid either a Substitution Reading or an Inconsistency Reading. (A remark on 73n51 suggests he favors the former.)

harmony must be true of them;⁵¹ and, of course, (3) Leibniz's mischaracterizing the relationship between noumenal substance so conceived and appearances.

To sum up my reading, the pure category of substance has two different contents: a general, relatively indeterminate one (the Subsistence-Power Conception) and an enriched intellectual content (the Inner-Simple Conception) that includes the Subsistence-Power Conception plus more besides; its extra content is intellectual. As for the schematized category of substance, as I will explain further in §4, it has an enriched content that includes, but also goes beyond, the Subsistence-Power Conception with the difference being that its extra content is sensible rather than intellectual.⁵² These points are captured in figure 1.

51. Recall that Kant has a particular understanding of the power (and action) involved in the Subsistence-Power Conception (of which the Inner-Simple Conception is a specification): there is a passive as well as an active/outer-directed power (and a two-fold kind of action corresponding to each). Pre-established harmony does not make room for the latter kind of power and action. This is a key respect in which Leibniz's monadology falls short from Kant's standpoint. While Leibniz rightly stresses the connection between substance and power, he misunderstands what the latter involves. Hogan (forthcoming) takes Kant to hold that Leibniz's missteps stem from an overly narrow version of the PSR, one that is at work in Leibniz's containment theory of truth. I am sympathetic to that idea. I would emphasize, though, that this doesn't mean Kant thinks that Leibniz is completely wrong about the noumenal world (as Hogan's formulations suggest; see n. 43). And indeed, Hogan himself calls attention to passages in which Kant says that his own philosophy leads to that of Leibniz and Wolff by a roundabout path (11:186; Pr. 20:310).

52. Kohl (2015: 102–9) somewhat similarly proposes that the category of causality undergoes a kind of content-enrichment in conjunction with its use on positive noumena, but there are some significant differences between my proposal about <substance> and the one he makes about <causality>. Kohl's proposal arises in the context of an attempt to reconcile his denial that the categories hold of positive noumena (based on considerations about the non-categorical, non-discursive nature of divine knowledge) with the fact that Kant's moral philosophy involves ascribing freedom, an instance of <causality>, to noumena. For Kohl, when applied in this practical context, the category of causality receives some extra *non-discursive, purely practical content*, which transforms it into a "category of freedom" as opposed to a "category of nature." I disagree with Kohl that Kant's views on divine knowledge definitely



[Figure 1. Thin arrows indicate concept containment, where lower concepts (indicated by brackets) contain within them the higher ones; thick straight arrows indicate subsumption, where the items below the arrows are objects that fall under the concept (along with whatever higher concepts they contain). Lightning bolt indicates that the “struck” object is definitely excluded from the sphere of the “striking” concept, as we will see in §4.]

rule out the categories applying to noumena (see n. 38). I also disagree that the content the categories acquire in conjunction with the thought of positive noumena is “non-discursive.” Furthermore, rather than saying that they acquire extra practical content when used in the context of considerations about morality, I would say that we thereby get confirmation of the objective reality of the intellectual content that has already arisen in a theoretical context. Finally, if Kohl’s radical reading is to solve the (I think *pseudo*) problem it is intended to solve, he must hold that the enriched category of causality is a *substitute* for the general category rather than a further specification of it. But the latter is what I am claiming of the intellectually enriched version of the category of substance. Though I do not do so here, I think a similar analysis can be extended to the other categories.

IV. The Relation Question

What is the relationship between substance in the sense of the pure category and substance in the sense of the schematized category, i.e., phenomenal substance? If I am right, then there are two distinct contents associated with the pure category of substance — thus, I call my reading the Dual Content Reading. The answer to the Relation Question will depend on which content of the pure category we are considering. Before explaining my view in detail, I will explore the considerations that have favored the Inclusion and Substitution Readings (whose proponents have taken for granted that the pure category of substance is univocal). As we will see, my reading, based on my answer to the Content Question, is able to accommodate the sorts of considerations that have given rise to both views.

Recall that the Substitution Reading says that (1) the content of the schematized category of substance is a substitute for the content of the pure category, and (2) only noumena are true substances *sensu* the pure category; phenomenal substances, including matter, are not. By contrast, the Inclusion Reading says that the content of the schematized category includes the content of the pure category, so that whatever falls under the schematized category also falls under the pure category. Proponents of this view hold that the schema enriches the category of substance without replacing it. Since phenomenal substances are instances of the schematized category, phenomenal substances are true substances *sensu* the pure category.⁵³

There are passages from a variety of sources⁵⁴ that seem to provide strong support for the Substitution Reading. These include the passage from the Antinomies (A525/B553), quoted in this paper’s introduction, as well as remarks such as the following:

Matter is also no substance, but rather only a phenomenon of substance. That which endures in appearance,

53. See n. 5 for references.

54. Lists of such passages are given by, among others, Langton (1998: 53ff.) and Ameriks (2000: 299).

which underlies the manifold in body, we call substance. Now because we find in bodies substances that we call substances only by analogy, we cannot infer that matter consists of simple parts. (L1 28:209)

A substantiated phenomenon is an appearance made into a substance that in itself is no substance. (K2 28:759)

Nevertheless, there are also considerations that seem to strongly support the Inclusion Reading. First, in the Schematism chapter, Kant indicates that the need to schematize the categories arises from the fact that we are not in a position to recognize which of the items in our spatio-temporal experience satisfies the unschematized categories, given how abstract their content is. The way to remedy the problem is to provide a real definition of each unschematized category in (spatio-)temporal terms, a schema. What this implies is that the job of the schema is to mediate the application of the unschematized category to experience, which means that whatever items in experience count as substances according to the schema/schematized category ipso facto also count as substances according to the pure category. The job of the schema/schematized category of substance is not to serve in lieu of the unschematized category of substance — if it did, then it wouldn't be a real definition of it. Indeed, Kant speaks at times of the schema as “realizing” the pure category, which is very hard to make sense of on the Substitution Reading (e.g., A147/B186).⁵⁵ Second, there are passages in which Kant seems to make clear as day that matter falls under

55. On the basis of such considerations, Oberst (2017: 16) says that Kant “commits himself” to the Inclusion Reading in the first *Critique*. But Oberst also thinks that this isn't consistent with what Kant says in A525/B553. Indeed, he thinks that it is not until the 1786 *Metaphysical Foundations* that Kant fully realizes his commitment and explicitly avows that matter is an instance of the pure category of substance. One serious problem for Oberst's developmental reading is that (as Oberst acknowledges) Kant does not revise A525/B553 in the second edition of the *Critique* (1787). An even more serious problem is that Kant continues to work with the Inner-Simple Conception of substance and to deny matter satisfies it well after 1787, in various other texts (e.g., in K2 and Pr).

the pure category of substance: “The concept of a substance means the ultimate subject of existence, that is, that which does not itself belong in turn to the existence of another merely as a predicate. ... Thus matter, as the movable in space, is the substance therein” (MF 4:503).⁵⁶

While some have despaired of finding a consistent view on Kant's part, the reading presented in the previous sections provides us with a satisfying way of reconciling these seemingly contradictory strands in Kant's thinking. The key is that there are different contents associated with different uses of the pure category of substance. I take Kant to hold that phenomenal substance, specifically matter, *does not* satisfy the richer content associated with the use of the unschematized category of substance on positive noumena: the Inner-Simple Conception. (It is excluded from the sphere of that concept, as illustrated in figure 1 above.) But I also take Kant to hold that matter *does* satisfy the content associated with the general use of the pure category: the Subsistence-Power Conception. Otherwise put, Kant holds that the schema of substance adds to, rather than replaces, the content associated with this use of the pure category.⁵⁷

Let me consider these points in turn. As I explained above, the content associated with the use of the unschematized category of substance on positive noumena is the Inner-Simple Conception. Now, matter cannot satisfy the conditions of substantiality set out in the Inner-Simple Conception since it is in space and time and is therefore irreducibly relational (A277/B333; A265/B321; B67). Furthermore, as Kant makes clear in the Antinomies as well as the *Metaphysical Foundations*, matter does not admit of division into smallest parts — because it is in space, which is itself infinitely divisible — and so is not constituted by simples. For these reasons, matter definitely does not satisfy the conditions of the Inner-Simple Conception. This is clearly the reason for denying matter is a substance Kant has in mind in the Antinomy passage when he says, “with that which is called substance

56. See Watkins (2002: 201–6) for a statement of further points in favor of both views.

57. See Watkins (2002: 201–2) for such formulations.

in appearance things are not as they would be with a thing in itself which one thought through pure concepts of the understanding. The former is not an absolute subject" (A525/B553). I believe that what have been taken to be the most compelling pieces of textual evidence for the Substitution Reading should be understood in the same way. Kant is saying that matter doesn't fall under the pure category of substance *when it has the richer content associated with its use on positive noumena*. Neither matter nor anything else in experience could live up to the "intellectual concept" of noumenal substance in its "entire purity" (18:145/R5294 [1776–8]).⁵⁸

None of this stops matter/phenomenal substance from satisfying the conditions associated with the Subsistence-Power Conception — the content associated with the general use of the pure category. Kant is quite clear that matter possesses fundamental powers; in the case of matter, the key powers are attractive and repulsive force (MF 4:508 and 511). So, matter does fall under the pure category of substance in its general use (where it has the content of the Subsistence-Power Conception). I take this to mean in turn that the content of the schematized category of substance adds to, rather than replaces, the content associated with this other use of the pure category. In particular, the schematized category of substance adds "permanently existing thing" (the schema) to the Subsistence-Power Conception. Such a reading is supported, *inter alia*, by the fact that Kant says that when we take persistence away from the schematized category of substance, we still have the notion of an ultimate subject left over (A242/B301). It is for this reason that anything that satisfies the content of the schematized category — any phenomenal substance — *ipso facto* counts as a substance according to this other use of the pure category of substance.⁵⁹ The answer I have offered to the Relation Question

58. That said, we can still look among the appearances for a (mere) approximation of something inner, something "comparatively inner." This idea is explored by Warren (2015).

59. It might be objected that matter is not fundamental for Kant insofar as it depends ontologically on things-in-themselves; one might think that this non-fundamentality means that matter could not, after all, satisfy the

(drawing on my answer to the Content Question) accommodates the considerations that have seemed to support both the Inclusion and Substitution Readings without rendering Kant inconsistent. I take this to confirm my central idea (which I initially argued for on independent textual grounds) that Kant is self-consciously working with different conceptions of substance, corresponding to a general and more specific content of the pure category of substance.

V. The Epistemology Question

I conclude with a partial⁶⁰ consideration of the third question I mentioned above: What epistemic gains, if any, can be made when we use the pure category of substance beyond the boundaries of experience on noumena? If what I said in §3 is correct, then there are two cases where we do this: when we apply the pure category to positive noumena (where it has the content of the Inner-Simple Conception) and when we apply the pure category to negative noumena (where it has the content of the Subsistence-Power Conception).⁶¹ In considering these cases, we will be able to both clarify and apply the reading offered in the previous sections.

Let's start with what we can achieve by way of cognition of the

Subsistence-Power Conception. (Langton (1998) and Van Cleve (1999: 120) suggest such a position.) However, this objection ignores the fact that Kant does not regard inherence as the same as ontological dependence. As I noted above, Kant holds that finite substances depend ontologically on a creator, but he does not think we can conclude from this that they are not substances but rather accidents of God. (Oberst (2017: 6n14, 12n28) makes this point nicely.) Even apart from this, it is clear that Kant cannot accept as a general point that matter's ontological dependence on something else renders it an accident of that something else: Kant thinks that matter ontologically depends in some sense on space, but he does not conclude that matter is therefore an accident of space.

60. This is partial because I am concentrating on theoretical cognition and theoretical justification (though see n. 63) and because I do not try to offer a full account of how theoretical cognition and theoretical knowledge, in Kant's sense, differ.

61. See n. 37 for discussion of the overlap in the extensions of <positive noumena>, <negative noumena>, and <things-in-themselves>.

substantiality of positive noumena. My answer shouldn't be surprising: Kant holds that there can be no such theoretical cognition. While there is disagreement about what exactly theoretical cognition [*Erkenntnis*] requires for Kant, it is widely acknowledged that it involves applying a concept to an object and being able to establish the real possibility (or, as Kant also calls it, the "objective reality") of the concepts involved in the thought (Bxxvi; B148–9; A219–23/B266–70; A241–4/B300–2).⁶² Kant is quite clear that we cannot establish the real possibility of <positive noumena>, nor of the categories when they are applied to such things (B148–9; A255–6/B310–1; A290/B349). This is because the general means we have at our disposal to establish real possibility — sensible intuition and/or a transcendental proof showing that concepts must be able to be instantiated in order for experience of the corresponding object to be possible — do not work in the case of positive noumena. We cannot theoretically prove that a noumenal substance (sensu the enriched pure category, that is, the Inner-Simple Conception) is really possible, since such things are not items of our experience.⁶³ Nor can we represent to ourselves in concreto (something that for creatures like us requires space and time)

62. See, e.g., Chignell (2014); Stang (2016); Watkins and Willaschek (2017); McLear (2020b); and Schafer (forthcoming).

63. However, Kant evidently thinks that our soul's status as a positive noumenon (including its substantiality sensu the Inner-Simple Conception) does admit of *practical cognition*. More generally, considerations about the moral law provide objective reality to the concept of a purely noumenal world to which we belong and to the pure categories (including causality and substance) in relation to it:

In the *Verstandeswelt* the substratum [is] intelligence, the action and cause [is] freedom [...] the form is morality, the nexus is a nexus of ends. The *Verstandeswelt* is *already now the ground of the sensible world and is the truly substantial world*. (18:83/R5086 [1776–8]; my emphasis)

Three intellectual (intelligible) [things] (noumenon) contain the unconditioned, and one can have cognition [*Erkenntnis*] of freedom and its laws and thereby prove the objective reality of humanity as noumenon in the midst of its mechanism as phenomenon. God as unconditioned necessary substance. Freedom as unconditioned causation, and immortality as personality (soul) independent from (as condition) commercio with the body. The categories applied to the intelligible can indeed ground practical-dogmatic

what it would even be like for such non-spatio-temporal entities to exist, much less what it would be like for them to exist as numerically distinct components of a single orderly intelligible world.⁶⁴

That said, I think that Kant nevertheless is committed to our being able to form (theoretically) justified beliefs about the substantiality of positive noumena. In particular, he holds that we can form true, justified, conditional beliefs involving the substantiality of positive noumena provided they do not commit us to their existence or real possibility. The prime example is the following: if there are positive noumena, they must be substances in the sense of the Inner-Simple Conception. (So, they must either be monads or composed out of monads.) That Kant thinks such beliefs are justified is evident from the seemingly dogmatic remarks about the noumenal world quoted in §3C. As noted above, claims involving the Inner-Simple Conception are, for Kant, analytically true of positive noumena.

There are various indications that Kant thinks we can achieve more when we apply the pure category of substance to things-in-themselves conceived of as negative noumena. Assuming that the (admittedly controversial) metaphysical reading of Kant is correct, Kant not only

cognitions [*Erkenntnisse*], namely when they are directed towards freedom and determine the subject only in relation to this. (18:219/R5552 [1778–9])

The three tasks of metaphysics: God, freedom and immortality correspond to the three last antinomies (in reverse order), where *simplicity*, absolute causality, necessity can all be applied to the intelligible. (18:497/R6212 [1780–9]; my emphasis)

See also B431–2; GW 4:453 and 457; A546–7/B574–5; CPR 5:161–2 (all quoted in Hogan [forthcoming]). Note that Kant thinks that the transcendental freedom presupposed by the moral law (and thus possessed by myself as noumenon) requires substantiality (18:311/R5653 [1785–9]) and also links the immortality of the soul (a practical postulate) to simplicity (18:219/R5552 [1794–8] and A466/B494). The exact manner in which the Inner-Simple Conception gets objective reality from moral considerations and how exactly to understand the relation of practical cognition and knowledge to their theoretical counterparts is something I leave open.

64. Kant thinks that to achieve "insight" into the real possibility of a category (or of a thing under a category), we must exhibit it not only in time but also in space (B291–3; cf. MF 4:478).

thinks that we are theoretically justified in conditional beliefs involving the substantiality of such entities — e.g., if there are substances that are negative noumena, then they satisfy the Subsistence-Power Conception — he also thinks that we are theoretically justified in believing that negative noumena exist and some (or at least one) of them are substances. As we saw above in the Phenomena/Noumena chapter, Kant thinks that the postulation of negative noumena is required by the doctrine of sensibility (B307): there must be some object = x that grounds appearances but that doesn't appear — isn't given in sensibility — as it is in itself. Moreover, he apparently takes us to be justified in applying the unschematized category of causality to negative noumena, since as proponents of the metaphysical reading point out, he confidently affirms such grounding. Given Kant's assumption that power and activity imply substantiality (see §2B), I think it follows that we would also be justified in applying the unschematized category of substance to such negative noumena: whatever grounds appearances and affects us must exist and count as a substance according to the Subsistence-Power Conception. In fact, we see Kant explicitly drawing the inference from affection to substantiality in a *Reflexion* from the 1770s: "An object of the senses is only that which affects my senses [*auf meine Sinne wirkt*], thus acts [*handelt*] and is thus substance. Therefore the category of substance is primary" (17:662/R4679 [1773–5]). Notice, though, that this would only get us that the things-in-themselves (conceived of as negative noumena) that affect us are substances in the sense of the Subsistence-Power Conception. We would not be justified in claiming that all things-in-themselves, negative noumena,⁶⁵ are substances — or even in inferring that they are all either substances or accidents. Kant explicitly denies that we can do that (A259/B315). And, of course, we are not theoretically justified in assuming they conform to the Inner-Simple Conception.⁶⁶

65. Recall that, on my view, being a thing-in-itself does not entail appearing to us (or affecting us).

66. Pace some of the commentators discussed in n. 43.

Assuming Kant thinks that we are theoretically justified in believing that there are negative noumena and that those that affect us count as substances, can we be said to have cognition of this fact? On the one hand, it seems that if we have grounds for believing they do count as substances (sensu the Subsistence-Power Conception), then there is a sense in which we are indeed in a position to establish that such substances are really possible — since actuality entails possibility. On the other hand, there is a sense in which we still don't have any kind of "insight" at all into how they are really possible or what such real possibility looks like — it cannot be exhibited "in concreto," since negative noumena are by definition not objects of sensible intuition. This, together with the fact that our thought of things-in-themselves as negative noumena does not characterize them in a determinate way (at least not in comparison with the thought of them as positive noumena), which has been taken by some to be a further condition on cognition,⁶⁷ provides reason for thinking that our thoughts of the substantiality of negative noumena, while justified, do not meet the bar for cognition in Kant's technical sense.

Despite this, I think that the conditional beliefs about the substantiality of positive noumena and the existential beliefs about negative noumena arise to the level of knowledge in *our* sense. As for whether they rise to the level of knowledge (*Wissen*) in Kant's specific technical sense, which involves holding a proposition to be true on the basis of sufficient grounds, this is not fully clear, in part because of unclarity in Kant's use of the term.⁶⁸ However, if it is indeed true, as a number of commentators have recently claimed, that Kant takes us to know (in his sense) various things about things-in-themselves, including that they exist, that they are non-spatio-temporal, and that they affect us, as well as various analytic and logical truths (e.g., the Principle

67. See Schafer (forthcoming), who holds that there is a determinate content requirement on cognition involving an awareness of the numerical and specific identity of an object.

68. See Stang (2016: 172) for some reservations about speaking of knowledge of things-in-themselves.

of Non-Contradiction) about them,⁶⁹ then it should be allowed that Kant takes us to know (in his sense) these additional things about noumena.⁷⁰

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69. E.g., Adams (1997); Smit (2009); Chignell (2014); Allais (2015); Willaschek and Watkins (2017); Heide (2020); and Schafer (forthcoming), all of whom discuss the relation between knowledge and cognition in Kant.

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