

Transcendental Idealism Noumenal Metaphysical Monism and Epistemological Phenomenalism

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SETTING THE STAGE

In its broad or global sense, idealism is the metaphysical doctrine that the ultimate nature of the universe is mental rather than material, or alternatively, that concrete truths about the universe are grounded in mental rather than physical facts. In this broad sense, idealism is in clear opposition to materialism, namely the doctrine that the underlying nature of the universe is physical rather than mental, or that concrete truths about the universe are grounded in physical rather than mental facts.

Although it is common to define idealism as a global metaphysical doctrine in opposition to materialism, in the 17th and 18th centuries idealism was often understood more narrowly as a version of Berkeley's "esse est percipi" thesis, namely the claim that the way things are is nothing but the way things appear to us. Regarding this, the crucial opposition is not between idealism and materialism, but rather between idealism and realism, namely the claim that the way that things really are is irreducible to the way things appear to us. In light of such idealism, what we call "external reality" is illusory or at best subjective: the outside world is grounded in the experiences of an outside reality had by observers.

Narrow anti-realist and broad anti-materialist idealisms have quite different motivations. Narrow anti-realist idealism is most commonly driven by epistemological questions regarding external-world skepticism and is typically associated with the sort of empiricism that resists postulating hypotheses about the existence of outer things that go beyond appearances. Even though Berkeley has never mentioned Descartes, he is quite clear about this: if what we can only immediately know are ideas, their putative objects can only be known inferentially (a tenet shared by almost all empiricists of the 17th and 18th centuries), and it is assumed that “esse est percipi” is the best way to close the doors on external-world skepticism. In other words, narrow anti-realist idealism is often proposed as the antidote to external-world skepticism.

In contrast, broad anti-materialist idealism is often driven by metaphysical questions about the ultimate nature of the mind and about the ultimate nature of reality and tends to go with the sort of rationalism that allows metaphysical hypotheses that go well beyond appearances if they help us to make sense of the universe as a whole. The traditional taxonomy of idealist views distinguishes between subjective idealism, objective idealism, and absolute idealism. As these varieties of idealism do not have clear standard definitions, they are often characterized as much as appealing to paradigmatic proponents (Berkeley, Schelling, and Hegel, respectively) as to specific doctrines.

Yet, Kant was not quite clear about the meaning of “idealism.” In his Refutation Kant asserts and reiterates that his target is the so-called “problematic idealism” that he rightly or wrongly attributes to Descartes. The first problem is to figure out whether the “problematic idealist” is the Cartesian skeptic of the first *Meditation*, the idealist skeptic of the third *Meditation*, or some nonskeptical idealist. To make things even worse, in a later reflection Kant announces at least five different targets: skepticism, idealism, Spinozism, as well as materialism and predeterminism (AA, 18: 627-628). I assume here that Kant’s target is best understood by his own definition of idealism, namely, as the metaphysical claim that “there are none other than thinking beings; the other things that we believe we perceive in intuition are only representations in thinking beings, to which in fact no object existing outside these corresponds” (PROL, AA 4: 289). In this metaphysical sense, idealism is a kind of monism. According to idealists, the fundamental features of our world (or at least its fundamental contingent features) are all of one kind—the conscious kind. In this sense, idealism is a doctrine that quite different philosophers such as Leibniz, Berkeley, Descartes, and even Spinoza have endorsed. In Kant’s Germany the greatest

exponent was Mendelssohn. Kant opposes to metaphysical idealism what Kant calls his “dualism.” Kant’s dualism is phenomenal rather than metaphysical as Descartes’s. Kant’s main claim against idealism is that the ultimate nature of reality is noumenal rather than mental.

The embarrassing question is how Kantian transcendental idealism (TI henceforth) fits into the overall taxonomy, considering Kantian criticism as a fusion of both empiricist and rationalist traditions. As Allais recently remarked, “there is no agreement in interpretations of Kant’s transcendental idealism, not even a tendency to convergence” (2010b: 9). This disagreement could be ignored if TI was only a marginal doctrine in his first *Critique*, instead of lying at the very heart of the work.

What we find in the literature is the existence of two main camps and several positions in between. At one extreme, there are those who read TI as a sophisticated version of subjective idealism by interpreting the transcendental divide between appearances and things in themselves as the metaphysical opposition between two numerically distinct entities or realities: phenomenal and noumenal underlying reality. In accordance with the literature, let us call this the *two-world view*. The idea traces back to Kant’s distinction between the *mundus sensibilis* and the *mundus intelligibilis* in his *Dissertatio*. The *mundus sensibilis* is the cognizable phenomenal world inside our minds. The *mundus intelligibilis* is the non-cognizable noumenal world outside our minds.

At the other extreme, there are those who read Kant’s transcendental divide as the mere epistemological opposition between two perspectives of the same world, one considered from the human viewpoint and the other from God’s perspective, *sub specie aeternitates*, so to speak. In this sense, Kant’s idealism is not a metaphysical doctrine or even a doctrine with metaphysical commitments. The underlying assumption here is that the Kantian transcendental divide between things in themselves and appearances is epistemological and methodological rather than metaphysical. In accordance with the literature, let us call this the *two-aspect view*.

Allais seeks to tread a middle ground between the two extremes. On one hand, against Allison’s metaphysical deflationism, she defends a metaphysical moderate interpretation which sees Kant holding that things of which we have knowledge have a way they are in themselves that is not cognizable by us. On the other hand, against ontological phenomenalism, she defends the view that the appearances of those things in themselves are genuinely mind-dependent, but exist not merely in our minds.

In this paper, I present a new reading of transcendental idealism. For a start, I endorse Allison's rejection of the traditional so-called two-world view and hence of Guyer and Van Cleve's ontological phenomenalism. But following Allais, I also reject Allison's metaphysical deflationism: transcendental idealism is metaphysically committed to the existence of things in themselves, noumena in the negative sense. Nevertheless, in opposition to Allais, I take Kant's claim that appearances are "mere representations" inside our mind seriously (epistemic phenomenalism). She overlooks Kant's main difference between the transcendental and the empirical sense that things are "inside us" and "outside us." On the empirical sense, appearances are outside us as the undetermined object of our sensible intuition. Yet, on the transcendental sense, appearances are inside us, namely as the mind-dependent way that noumena manifest inside our minds and, hence, our mind-dependent way of knowing the mind-independent reality in itself (epistemological phenomenalism).¹

The defense of my reading is first based on abundant textual evidence and on a criticism of the two main rival readings. First, I argue that my reading is the view that best fits Kant's Fourth Paralogism without imputing to Kant a Berkeley-like ontological phenomenalism or some naïve realism (Stroud, Hanna). Second, I also argue that my reading is the one that best fits the recent reading of Kant's Refutation as proof of the existence of things in themselves, viz. noumena (as I will show to be manifest in several passages). Finally, assuming that Kant did not change his mind in between the first and the second editions (that is, taking his own words at face value), I also argue that my view is the reading of TI that best harmonizes the Fourth Paralogism with the Refutation of Idealism as two complementary arguments.

1 My reading has nothing to do to what Allais calls noumenalism: "Kant thinks that objects which could be known by an intellect alone would be non-spatio-temporal and non-sensible things, such as Cartesian souls and Leibnizian monads, a fundamentally different kind of thing than the spatio-temporal objects of our knowledge. The extreme metaphysical reading of transcendental idealism takes Kant to be committed to the existence of noumena in this sense (a position I call *noumenalism*), as well as to the claim that we cannot know such objects, and also sees him as a phenomenalistic idealist with respect to the objects of experience—things as they appear to us. At the other extreme are proponents of deflationary views which deny that Kant's transcendental distinction is an ontological one, seeing it instead as an epistemological or methodological distinction between two ways of considering the same things." (2015:7)

All the same, I must admit that none of these arguments is conclusive: one may contest that a desirable reading of the Fourth Paralogism must avoid ontological phenomenalism (like Guyer and Van Cleve). For one thing, the textual evidence does not cut much ice with one or the other reading. Likewise, one may dispute that TI must be in agreement with the Refutation of idealism and dispute that the Refutation is proof of the existence of noumena (rather than of persistent phenomena in space). Finally, pace Kant, one may claim that the Fourth Paralogism and the Refutation of idealism are actually incompatible, by suggesting that in the second edition Kant changed his mind and gave up the view he defended in the Fourth Paralogism. The moral to be drawn here is that such disagreement between readings of TI cannot be solved on the basis of primary literature alone. All rival readings of TI find support in the primary literature. How shall I proceed? The defense of my reading of TI is a classic case of inference to the best explanation. I will confront all the rival opposing readings and show that my own is by far the most coherent and the one that best accommodates and reconciles the Fourth Paralogism and the Refutation of idealism.

Given this, the paper is structured as follows: In the next section, I present the historical background to the controversy over the reading of Kant's idealism. Then, I present Paton's and Prauss's two-aspect view, and in particular Allison's deflationary version of the two-aspect view. The following section is devoted to presenting and criticizing Allais's anti-phenomenalist claim that appearances are not mere representations inside the mind. Following that is a brief presentation of my reading. The final sections are devoted to showing that my view is the one that best harmonizes the Fourth Paralogism and the Refutation of Idealism.

1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As Oberst (2015: 54) reminds us, the contemporary debate over the transcendental divide between appearances and things in themselves has its origin in Prauss's *Kant und das Problem der Dinge an sich* (1974). Still, the crucial disagreement about the nature of Kant's transcendental idealism in Kantian scholarship is anything but new. The controversy dates back to the famous Feder-Garve review² that appeared between the first and the second editions of

² The C. Garve (1742–98) and J. G. Feder (1740–1821) review was published on January 19th, 1782 (Feder and Garve 1989).

the first *Critique*. The reviewers portray Kant's idealism as a metaphysical doctrine similar to that of Berkeley.

To be sure, in his Fourth Paralogism, Kant endorses Berkeley's general claim that the easiest way of avoiding external world skepticism is to assume that what we call "material things" are nothing but representations in us. However, while Berkeley has never identified the Cartesian provenance of external-world skepticism, Kant clearly identifies the problematic idealist as a Cartesian. According to Kant's accusation, the Cartesian mistakes the empirical sense of "things outside us" for the transcendental sense of "outside us" as noumena. Given this, the transcendental divide *seems to be* a metaphysical opposition between objects that only exists inside our minds and noumena. Appearances and things in themselves are metaphysically distinct objects. In this way the putative Kantian two-world dualism was born. Kantian two-world dualism plus reductionism finds textual supports in passages like this:

The transcendental idealist, on the contrary, can be an empirical realist, hence, as he is called, a dualist, i.e., *he can concede the existence of matter without going beyond mere self-consciousness and assuming something more than the certainty of representations in me*, hence the *cogito, ergo sum*. For because 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 representations (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. (KrV, A370, emphasis added)

The two-world view was the one that prevailed until the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. At the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, traditional scholars of Kant³ still held a two-world view of idealism even when they rejected the Berkeleian ontological phenomenalist reading. According to Smith, for example:

Since the time of Kant, and largely through his influence, the uncompromising Berkeleian thesis, that 'material' Nature is mind-dependent, has, indeed, been displaced by what, initially at least, is the more modest, though also usually much less definite, claim that Mind and Nature stand in relations of mutual implication. (1925:8)

3 See Vaihinger (1883, 1884); Smith (1923); Adickes (1924).

Now, if the Fourth Paralogism tries to avoid skepticism by assuming à la Berkeley that material things are nothing but ontological constructions out of mental states, whereas the Refutation aims to prove the existence of mind-independent things outside us that are not representations in us, there is a blatant contradiction between the two philosophical projects. According to Kemp Smith (1923:301), for example, the Refutation “proves the opposite of what is stated in the first edition,” and is a “striking contradiction between Kant’s various Refutations of Idealism.” Similarly, Vaihinger (1884:131–2) notes that it is impossible to find an interpretation that can reconcile this “stark contrast,” because the two “relate to each other as yes and no, as affirmation and negation, as A and not-A. They were, are, and remain irreconcilable.” Finally, according to Guyer (one influential living Kantian scholar), “Kant’s new Refutation of Idealism was meant to break with his reductionism of 1781” (1987:288).

On closer inspection, however, something crucial has been overlooked in the literature. Even though there is no reasonable doubt that Kant attempted to avoid the Cartesian external-world skepticism in a Berkeleian way, Feder-Garve’s review accused him of being an anti-materialist idealist (a “spiritualist” in Kantian words) rather than an anti-realist idealist (*esse est percipi*). Let us take a look:

An idealism that encompasses spirit and matter in the same way, that transforms the world and ourselves into representations, that has all objects arising from appearances as a result of the understanding connecting the appearances into one sequence of experience, and of reason necessarily, though vainly, trying to expand and unify them into one whole and complete world system. (Feder and Garve 1989:193. Emphasis added)

That reading is reinforced by the Kantian reply to them. As Erdmann (1878/1973) showed, the plan of the *Prolegomena* was largely modified to afford an opportunity to reply to this “inexcusable and almost deliberate misinterpretation, as if my system transformed all the things of the sensible world into sheer illusion” (PROL, § 13, Note III, AA 4: 290). The same idea is stated in the famous letter to Beck:

Messrs. Eberhard and Garve’s opinion that Berkeley’s idealism is the same as that of the critical philosophy (which T could better call *the principle of the ideality of space and time) does not deserve the slightest attention. For I speak of ideality about *the form of representa-*

tions, but they interpret this to mean ideality on the *matter*, that is, the ideality of the *object*. (BR, AA 11: 395)

Additional evidence that the controversy does not turn on the question of whether there are outer things beyond appearances (realism) or whether outer things should be reduced to mere appearances (anti-realism) comes from the fact that in 1781 Kantian idealism is discussed in the Paralogism, a chapter of *Critique* dedicated to the metaphysics of the soul. Indeed, in the Fourth Paralogism, Kant's seems to go hand-in-hand with anti-materialist idealism or spiritualism. In A383, he states:

Why do we have need of a doctrine of the soul grounded merely on pure rational principles? Without doubt, chiefly with the intent of securing our thinking Self from the danger of materialism. But this is achieved through the rational concept of our thinking Self that we have given. For according to it, so little fear remains that if one took matter away then all thinking and even the existence of thinking beings would be abolished, that it rather shows clearly that if I were to take away the thinking subject, the whole corporeal world would have to disappear, as this is nothing but the appearance in the sensibility of our subject and one mode of its representations. (KrV, A383, emphasis added)

What drives the debate is *not primarily* the epistemological problem of Cartesian external-world skepticism, but *crucially* the metaphysical question about the ultimate nature of reality and of the soul. What Kant vehemently rejects is Feder-Garve's accusation that he is a spiritualist. Regardless of whether Kant was in 1781 an anti-materialist idealist or not, Guyer (and all his predecessors quoted above) must be wrong when he claims that "Kant's new Refutation of Idealism was meant to break with his reductionism of 1781" (1987:288). An anti-materialist idealist (spiritualist) does not need to assume that *esse est percipi*.

2 THE TWO-ASPECT VIEW

In the twentieth century, the debate over the nature of Kantian idealism was much more focused on the transcendental divide between things in themselves and appearances. According to Allison's (2004: XV) two-aspect view, which can be traced back to Paton (1970) and

Prauss (1974), the transcendental divide is not a metaphysical one that opposes two realms of reality, the phenomenal and the noumenal. Instead, the divide opposes different perspectives on the same reality. According to the two-aspect view, *mundus sensibilis* and *mundus intelligibilis* are the only two ways of considering the existing world, that of the human and that of the absolute, God's, perspective, *sub specie aeternitatis*, so to speak. From the human perspective, the world takes the form of appearances (*Erscheinungen*) as the objects of our sensible representation, while from the God's-eye-view perspective, the same world takes the form of things in themselves.

Allison's two-aspect view has at least two great predecessors. Prauss (1974), for example, has argued that Kant's transcendental distinction is not between appearances and things in themselves, considered as different kinds of things, but rather between two ways of considering the same thing, that is, in itself and as it appears to us. However, to my knowledge, the *founding father* of the two-aspect view is Paton:

What is the relation between things-in-themselves and appearances? Kant never questions the reality of things-in-themselves, and never doubts that appearances are appearances of things-in-themselves. The appearance is the thing as it appears to us, or as it is in relation to us, though, it is not the thing as it is in itself. *That is to say, things as they are in themselves are the same things that appear to us*, although they appear to us, and because of our powers of knowing must appear to us, as different from what they are in themselves. *Strictly speaking, there are not two things, but one thing considered in two different ways: the thing as it is in itself and as it appears to us.* (1970: 61, emphasis added)

The two-aspect view seems to be supported by compelling textual evidence. In the Preface to the second edition, Kant states explicitly:

that the same objects can be considered from *two different sides, on the one side as objects of the senses and the understanding for experience, and on the other side as objects that are merely thought* at most for isolated reason striving beyond the bounds of experience. If we now find that there is agreement with the principle of pure reason when things are considered from this *twofold standpoint*, but that an unavoidable conflict of reason with itself arises with a single standpoint, then the experiment decides for the correctness of that distinction. (Bx-viii–xix n. emphasis added.)

In the Transcendental Aesthetic, we also find abundant evidence that seems to favor of the two-aspect view:

We can accordingly speak of space, extended beings, and so on, *only from the human standpoint*. 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. *This predicate is attributed to things only insofar as they appear to us, i.e., are objects of sensibility*. (A27/B43, emphasis added)

But they did not consider that both (space and time), without their reality as representations being disputed, nevertheless belong *only to appearance, which always has two sides*, one where the object is considered in itself (without regard to the way in which it is to be intuited, the constitution of which however must for that very reason always remain problematic), the other where the form of the intuition of this object is considered, which must not be sought in the object in itself but in the subject to which it appears, but which nevertheless really necessarily pertains to the representation of this object. (A38/B55, emphasis added)

Regardless of whether this textual evidence supports the two-aspect view, it certainly jeopardizes the traditional two-world view. Kant's distinction between formal and material idealism inspired Allison to take a step further and assume his deflationary reading of Kantian idealism. Not only is the transcendental divide epistemological or methodological. Allison also claims that Kantian idealism does not make any metaphysical commitment whatsoever. In his words:

This idealism is "formal" in the sense that it is a theory about the nature and the scope of the conditions under which objects can be cognized by the human mind. It is "critical" because it is grounded in a reflection on the conditions and limits of discursive cognition. (2004: 35–6)

However, here I follow Allais when she claims against Allison's deflationary reading that Kantian idealism is metaphysically loaded. She summarizes her criticism thus:

However, from the fact that Kant ... is not a Berkeleian idealist, it does not follow that he is not committed to there being a way things are in themselves, which we cannot cognize, or that he is not committed to appearances being genuinely dependent on our minds in some

(non-Berkeleyian) sense. And while the claim that we cannot know things in themselves is, of course, an epistemic claim, this does not mean that it involves no metaphysical commitment--such as a commitment to *the existence of an aspect of reality* which we cannot cognize. (2010a: 1, emphasis added)

It does not follow that transcendental idealism does not make metaphysical claims since a distinction between two ways of considering things is compatible with making metaphysical claims about the aspects of things so considered. (2010a: 3)

3 EPISTEMOLOGICAL PHENOMENALISM

I do not find a single piece of textual evidence that appearances are not representations for Kant. In A129, for example, he says that appearances “only exist in us.” In B164, he states that appearances “are only representation of things.” Likewise, he reiterates in A250 that appearances “are nothing but representation.” In A386, we can read the very same statement: “appearances are merely representations in us.” In A387, he phrases this slightly different as follows: Appearances are not “in the same quality as they are in us as things external to us.” The same idea is to be found in several *Reflections* from the period after the publication of the second edition of the first *Critique*:

Appearances are representations insofar as we are affected. The representation of our own free self-activity is one in which we are not affected, consequently it is not appearance, but apperception. (Refl. AA, 17:688, R4723, emphasis added)

A thing in itself does not depend on our representations, and can thus be much greater than our representations reach. *But appearances are themselves only representations...* (Refl. AA, 18: 379, R5902, emphasis added)

Now since in inner sense everything is successive, hence nothing can be taken backwards, the ground of the possibility of the latter must lie in the relation of *representations* to something outside us, and *indeed to something that is not itself in turn mere inner representation, i.e., form of appearance*, hence which is something in itself. (Refl. AA, 18: 612, R6312, emphasis added)

For what contains *representations* combined in relations of space and time is *mere appearance*.
 (Refl. AA, 18: 673, R6342, emphasis added)

The merely subjective element in intuition as the representation of an object is **appearance**.
 (Refl. AA, 18: 687, original emphasis)

However, the passage that I consider to be decisive is the one where he defines his own transcendental idealism:

We have sufficiently in the Transcendental Aesthetic everything intuited in space or in time, hence 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*. This doctrine I call transcendental idealism. (A490/B518, emphasis added)

Yet, what we find in the literature are only numerous attempts by interpreters to explain this identification away. What is in question is whether there is a way of denying that Kant is thereby assuming some Berkeleian ontological phenomenalism. For a question of space, I focus on three attempts: Longuenesse (2008) and Collins (1999) and Hanna (2006). Collins limits himself to the statement that with the identification of appearances with mere representations in us, “Kant never meant to erode the outerness of objects of outer sense” (1999:72). However, Collins is mistaking the transcendental for the empirical sense of “outside us”. To be sure, in the empirical sense, Kant never denied the externality of things of outer sense. For example, the computer I am using now is certainly *outside me in this empirical sense*. Still, in the transcendental sense, they are all inside us as mere representations (even the computer that appears to me in space outside me in the empirical sense is nothing but a mere representation in me in the transcendental sense).

According to Longuenesse, “in us does not mean here ‘within our mind’”, but “within the scope of the thought I think” (2008:27). However, Longuenesse is mistaking the transcendental opposition between things inside (appearances) and outside (things in themselves) for the opposition between nonconceptual and conceptual mental states. Things outside the scope of our thought are objects of sensible intuitions that are not conceptualized (inside us in the

relevant transcendental sense) rather than things outside us. Longuenesse's reading cannot account for any passages quoted above. Furthermore, in the famous passage of § 16 of the B-deduction Kant explicitly assumes that something could be represented *in me* without being able to be accompanied by the I think.⁴ What happens, in that case, is that the representation *in me* would mean nothing to me, that is, would be blind or would not contribute to cognition (*Erkenntnis*). Moreover, when we take a look at all the passages quoted above, none of them supports Longuenesse's reading that Kant was opposing things outside and within the scope of thought.

However, our crucial issue is whether there is another sense of "appearance" as the object of our representations. To be sure, in the opening paragraph of the Transcendental Aesthetic Kant states that "the undetermined object of an empirical intuition is called appearance" (A20/B35). In the same vein, Kant states:

[T]he understanding can never accomplish a priori anything more than to anticipate the form of a possible experience in general, and, since that which is not appearance cannot be an object of experience, it can never overstep the limits of sensibility, within which alone objects are given to us. Its principles are merely principles of the exposition of appearances, and the proud name of an ontology, which presumes to offer synthetic a priori cognition of things in general in a systematic doctrine (e.g., the principle of causality), must give way to the modest one of a mere analytic of the pure understanding. (A247/B303)

Still, the problem is: if we assume the two-aspect view, we cannot metaphysically distinguish between appearances and noumena. According to Allais though:

Kant's idealism should be understood as saying that our cognition *is limited to essentially manifest features of reality*, that he thinks such features are empirically real (not merely in our minds or constructions out of what is merely in our minds), and that he thinks they are grounded in a way things are independent of us, which we are unable to cognize. (2015:259)

This passage clearly betrays Allais's tacit endorsement of the traditional two-world view.

4 "The I think must be able to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something could be represented in me that could not be thought at all, which is as much as to say that the representation would be impossible or else at least would be nothing for me." (B131-2)

If “our cognition is limited to essentially *manifest* features of reality” (2015:259), or we are committed to “the existence of an aspect of reality which we cannot cognize” (2010a: 1), it is because she assumes that there are some underlying non-manifest features or aspects of some hidden unknowable reality. The point is that there is no middle way between the two-aspect reading and the two-world reading. Allais merely replaces the old two-world dualism for a new metaphysical two-aspect dualism. The easiest way of solving the problem is to disentangle metaphysical from epistemological claims. Metaphysically speaking, appearances and noumena are one and the same thing. But epistemologically speaking, appearances are the mind-dependent way that mind-independent noumena manifest inside our minds. Allais mistakes Kantian epistemological for Berkeleian ontological phenomenalism.

4 NOUMENAL METAPHYSICAL MONISM

Now, assuming that “appearances” are the mental way that noumena appear inside our minds as mere representations, we can also allow that we cognize or get acquainted with (*kennen*) them (appearances) by means of our senses. This is what Kant states in several passages:

“Noumenon” correctly always means *the same thing*, namely the transcendental object of *sensible intuition* (This is, however, no real object or given thing, but a concept, in relation to which appearances have unity), for this must still correspond to something, even though we are *acquainted with nothing other than its appearance*. (AA 18: 231, R5554, emphasis added)⁵

In slightly different words, “appearances” are how the mind-independent world appears to us mind-dependently as something inside our minds with which we can get acquainted (*kennen*). Yet, it must be clear from the outset that I am not endorsing Berkeleian ontological phenomenalism. In my view, Kant is not claiming that what we call the external world is nothing but a construction made out of mind-dependent sense-impressions. What he is saying is that we can

⁵ This view is not entirely new. Kemp Smith in his famous Commentary of A104-10 claims that a “careful examination of the text shows that by it he means the *thing in itself*, conceived as being the object of our representations” (1923/2003: 204). However, in opposition to what I will argue here for Smith, such a view is a vestige of his pre-critical period (2003: 204).

cognize or get acquainted with the way things in themselves mentally appear to us as human beings. The question now is how I can combine this phenomenalism with noumenalism.

The answer is quite easy: they represent the epistemological and the metaphysical sides of Kantian idealism. My view rules out the traditional dualism between (outside) worlds and aspects of worlds: the underlying nature of the outside world in the relevant transcendental sense is made up of mind-independent things in themselves. And my view embraces phenomenalism because, from an epistemological viewpoint, we can only cognize this existing mind-independent outside noumenal world as it mentally appears inside our minds as mere representations.

5 THE REFUTATION OF IDEALISM

In the previous section, I claimed to have already shown that my reading of Kantian idealism is the one that best fits Kant's various assertions that appearance is nothing but mere representation. In this brief section, I show that my noumenal realism is the one that best fits the dominant view today of Kant's Refutation of idealism.

To begin with, it is worth noting that the standard two-world view does not fit Kant's Refutation of Idealism at all. According to the two-world view, things in themselves and appearances are metaphysically distinct entities, and phenomena are nothing but constructions arising out of mental states. Now, if metaphysical idealism is the doctrine that the underlying nature of reality is made up of mental states, how could idealism be refuted by some proof that the underlying nature of reality is mental?

Still, someone might believe that the two-aspect view better fits Kant's Refutation of Idealism. According to Allison, for example, as the proof of real things is mind-independent appearances in space, the Refutation of Idealism is not just compatible with the two-aspect view, but it also presupposes it:

Moreover, the Refutation of Idealism is not merely compatible with transcendental idealism, properly construed; it presupposes it. In order to appreciate this, we must keep in mind that its goal is to demonstrate the objective reality of outer intuition, that is, the existence of objects in space (Bxxxix) [...] but this goal cannot be accomplished on the transcendental

realistic assumption that our outer intuition or experience must be of things as they are in themselves. (Allison 2004:300)

On closer inspection though, Kant contradicts Allison when he says that the Refutation proves the existence of something that is not an appearance:

If the world were an epitome [ein Inbegriff] of *the things in themselves*, so would it be impossible to prove the existence of a thing outside the world; [...] But if we take the world *as appearance*, it proves just to the existence of something that is *not* appearance. (Refl, AA, 18:305, R5356)⁶

Allison complains that if we take outside objects as appearances, the Refutation becomes impossible indeed. However, under his deflationary two-aspect view, we cannot understand either Kant's motivation for the Refutation of Idealism or the proof itself. For one thing, the problematic Cartesian idealist proves to be a transcendental realist in the first place (see A369). Thus, for him, genuine knowledge is only knowledge of outer things in the transcendental sense of things in themselves. So then, by assuming from the outset that the Kantian opponent in the Refutation of Idealism cannot be a transcendental realist, Allison is begging the question against the Cartesian skeptic or idealist at issue.

That is why many scholars have gradually come to the opposite conclusion: If successful, the Refutation proves the existence of things in themselves. To my knowledge, Pritchard (1909) was the first contemporary Kantian scholar (early-twentieth century) to hold that the Refutation proves the existence of our outside objects *as they are in themselves*. According to him, the argument of the Refutation of Idealism can only be accepted if we consider permanent substances as things in themselves. At the same time, Pritchard was an isolated voice and received much criticism from Paton (1970), among others.

⁶ "Wäre die Welt ein Inbegriff der *Dinge an sich selbst*, so würde es unmöglich seyn, das Daseyn eines Dinges ausser der Welt zu beweisen; [...]. [...]Nehmen wir aber die Welt als *Erscheinung*, so beweiset sie gerade zu das Daseyn von Etwas, das *nicht* Erscheinung ist."

However, since Guyer's work (1987), numerous scholars have endorsed this conclusion. According to Bader (2012), for example, if the Refutation is successful, then it establishes the existence of phenomena, which would license us to infer the existence of *noumena as the ultimate foundation of phenomena*. Chignell (2010) endorses the causal inference of the phenomenon of the *thing in itself* on the basis of Guyer's (1987, 2006) interpretations. Almeida (2013) moves beyond mere causal inference and reminds us of the intentional status of our own representations. Shared by all of these authors is the belief that only by reference to the noumenal world can one make sense of Kant's statement that "the perception of this persistent thing is possible only through a thing outside me and not through the mere representation of a thing outside me" (B275).

Indeed, against Allison's position, there is reasonably good textual evidence supporting the assumption that the goal of the Refutation of Idealism is to prove the existence of noumena. For questions of space, I limit myself to a few quotes. In the year 1790, the period just after the publication of the Refutation, Kant states clearly in one of his many reflections:

We remain in the world of the senses [~~crossed out~~: however], and would be led by nothing except the principles of the [~~crossed out~~: law] understanding that we use in experience, but we make our possible progression into an object in itself, by regarding the possibility of experience as something real in the objects of experience. (Refl, AA, 18:278, R5639)

We must determine something in space in order to determine our own existence in time. That thing outside of us is also represented prior to this determination as noumenon. (Refl, AA 18:416, R5984)

Now since in inner sense everything is successive, hence nothing can be taken backwards, the ground of the possibility of the latter must lie in the relation of representations to something outside us, and indeed to something that is not itself in turn mere inner representation, i.e., form of appearance, hence which is something in itself. The possibility of this cannot be explained. – Further, the representation of that which persists must pertain to that which contains the ground of time-determination, but not with regard to succession, for in that there is no persistence; consequently, that which is persistent must lie only in that which is simultaneous, or in the intelligible, which contains the ground of appearances. (Refl, AA, 18:612, R6312)

Perhaps the most significant textual evidence is found in the *Critique*:

As to the appearances of inner sense in time, it finds no difficulty in them as real things; indeed, it even asserts that this inner experience alone gives sufficient proof of the real existence of their object (in itself) along with all this time-determination.

Our transcendental idealism, on the contrary, allows that the objects of outer intuition are real too, just as they are intuited in space, along with all alterations in time, just as inner sense represents them. For since space is already a form of intuition that we call outer, and without objects in it there would be no representation at all, we can and must assume extended beings in space as real; and it is precisely the same with time. (B519–20; emphasis added)⁷

Thus, regardless of whether Kant's Refutation is successful or not, there is a reasonable case to be made that the aim was to prove the existence of outer sense objects in the transcendental sense of things in themselves.

Thus, while neither the traditional two-world view nor the traditional two-aspect view can make sense of the Refutation as proof of the existence of things in themselves—"noumena in this merely negative sense" (A286/B342)—my view fits a certain widely shared interpretation of the goal of the Refutation, also endorsed by me, quite well. We do not know things *as they* are in themselves, but only *as they* appear to us as mere representations of our outer senses as bodies and of our inner sense as mental states or events. However, we do know *the existence* of this world in itself, which appears to our outer senses as permanent bodies in space, as the transcendental ground of the alteration or time-determination of our mental states and events in time, which is what Kant calls knowledge of the existence of "noumena in this merely negative sense" (A286/B342). Thus, according to this interpretation, the Refutation of Idealism is the proof of this existence of persistent things in themselves.

⁷ Transcendental idealism *allows* for the reality of bodies in space, just as it *allows* for the reality of the object of inner intuition along with alterations in time. However, what accounts for or proves the alterations of my mental states in time is the existence of noumena outside me insofar as they appear to me as permanent objects of the outer senses.

6 THE FOURTH PARALOGISM

Now, I intend to show that my noumenal realism is the one that best fits the Fourth Paralogism without imputing to Kant either a Berkeleian idealism or a naïve realism.⁸ For the sake of argument, let us assume the two-aspect view in the Fourth Paralogism. According to this view, Kant's answer to the external world skeptic is to "restore" our common-sense belief that by using our cognitive apparatus we are acquainted with *mind-independent appearances* in the empirical sense, that is, as appearances in space. Stroud (1984:131) seems to understand Kant's idealism along these lines:

For skepticism to be avoided, then, all accounts of our knowledge of the world as inferential or indirect must be rejected. The external things we know about must have "a reality which does not permit of being inferred, but is immediately perceived". [...] In both cases "*the immediate perception (consciousness) of [things of those kinds] is at the same time a sufficient proof of their reality*" (A371). We are in a position in everyday life in which "outer perception [...] immediately proves of something real in space" (A375; emphasis added).

Stroud (1984:131) draws the natural conclusion that Kant's "sufficient proof" is very much like Moore's (1959/1963) proof of the external world. To avoid external world skepticism, all the Kantian must do is persuade the skeptic to look straight ahead at his hands:

We can now see that Kant insists on our possession of just the kind of knowledge G. E. Moore thought he was exhibiting in his proof of an external world. Moore thought that by holding up his hands before him as he did he had proved the existence of two external things. (Stroud 1984:132)

Again, since the Cartesian skeptic idealist is a transcendental realist in the first place (see A369), the skeptic is challenging us to prove the existence outside us, in the transcendental sense, of things in themselves, rather than in the empirical sense, of representations in the outer sense. The best illustration of this is Stroud's position (1984). He characterizes external world

8 See Stroud 1984. Hanna has also defended a similar view (2000). But my focus here is Stroud's reading of the Fourth Paralogism.

skepticism by contrasting the ordinary standards for knowledge of everyday life with his higher philosophical skeptical standards (Stroud 1984:40). We can directly prove the existence of outer senses just by waving our hands. However, we cannot prove the existence of noumena in the same way. The question that the defender of the two-aspect view faces is the following: How could Kant possibly have thought that he was refuting the Cartesian sceptic just by waving his hands in this way à la Moore? Put differently, how could Kant have believed that by providing knowledge of the external world *in the empirical* rather than *in the transcendental sense*, he was meeting the Cartesian external world skeptical challenge? In light of this view, Kant's answer to the external world sceptic of Cartesian provenance in the Fourth Paralogism makes little sense.

Now, someone could believe that the two-world view fares better under this account. Kant is accusing the Cartesian sceptic of a Paralogism, that is, of mistaking the empirical for the transcendental sense of 'things outside us'. In other words, the Cartesian sceptic is *mistaking* the representation of bodies in space (empirical sense) for the mind-independent world outside his consciousness (transcendental sense).

In that sense, Kant's answer to the external world sceptic is indeed much like Berkeley's: The only way of avoiding external-world skepticism is to assume that material things are nothing but mental representations in us. For one thing, if material things are representations in us, we now have immediate access to them rather than mediated inference. That is what Kant is saying by controversially claiming that matter is nothing more than "a species of representations" (A370), and that "if I were to take away the thinking subject, the whole corporeal world would have to disappear" (A383).

Now, regardless of whether this is a convincing answer to the Cartesian skeptical challenge (certainly it is not), by saying that matter is just a representation in us, Kant is not endorsing Berkeley's metaphysical claim that the outside world in the relevant transcendental sense is made up of mental states. Kant's controversial statements of A370 and A383 must be understood epistemologically rather than metaphysically, at least if we take his complaints against Feder-Garve's accusation as sincere. By claiming that matter is just a representation in us, Kant is claiming that matter is the mind-dependent way that unknown mind-independent things in themselves appear inside us. Therefore, my one-object phenomenalism is the reading of Kantian idealism that best fits the argument of the Fourth Paralogism.

7 CONCLUSION

In this concluding section, I argue that this view is the one that best harmonizes the Fourth Paralogism with the widely-shared reading of the Refutation of Idealism that I outlined and defended above. The bottom line of my view is a clear distinction between the metaphysical and epistemological sides of Kantian idealism. Again, according to my reading, the *mundus sensibilis* and *mundus intelligibilis* are epistemologically distinct ways of considering the metaphysically identical outside world. Appearances are nothing but the way the things in themselves appear or exist inside our sensible minds as mere representations. In this sense, I reject the two-world view, the two-aspect view, and Allais's deflationary anti-phenomenalist reading.

Thus, in the Fourth Paralogism, Kant tries to persuade the Cartesian external-world sceptic that we do possess direct epistemic access to material things *because material things are nothing but the immediate way that the mind-independent existing world of things in themselves mind-dependently appear to us as the objects of the outer sense*. Finally, to refute the Feder-Garve accusation of being a metaphysical idealist à la Berkeley, in the Refutation of Idealism, Kant tries to prove *the very existence of mind-independent things-in-themselves*—noumena in the negative sense (A386/B342)—as the metaphysical ground of our mental appearances by arguing that such an assumption is the only explanation for the time determination or alteration of our mental states.

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(*KrV*) is quoted from Paul Guyer and Allen Wood's translation: *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1998), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Kant's *Reflections* (Refl) are quoted from Paul Guyer, Curtis Bowman, and Frederick Rausher's translation: *Notes and Fragments* (2005), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. The *Prolegomena* (PROL) is quoted from Gary Hatfield, Michael Friedman, Henry Allison, and Peter Heath's translation: *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781* (2004), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. The *New Elucidation* (PND) is quoted from David Walford and Ralf Meerbote's translation: *Theoretical Philosophy, 1775-1770* (1992), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I present a new reading of transcendental idealism. For a start, I endorse Allison's rejection of the traditional so-called two-world view and hence of Guyer and Van Cleve's ontological phenomenalism. But following Allais, I also reject Allison's metaphysical deflationism: transcendental idealism is metaphysically committed to the existence of things in themselves, noumena in the negative sense. Nevertheless, in opposition to Allais, I take Kant's claim that appearances are "mere representations" inside our mind seriously. On the empirical sense, appearances are the undetermined object of our sensible intuition. Yet, on the transcendental sense, appearances are nothing but the mind-dependent way that noumena manifest inside our minds and, hence, our mind-dependent way of knowing the mind-independent reality in itself (epistemological phenomenalism).

Keywords Transcendental Idealism; Metaphysical Idealism; Epistemological Idealism; Epistemological Phenomenalism; Ontological Phenomenalism.

RESUMO

Neste artigo, apresento uma nova interpretação do idealismo transcendental. Segundo tal leitura, endosso a rejeição de Allison da leitura tradicional conhecida como visão dos dois mundos e, portanto, o fenomenismo ontológico defendido recentemente por Guyer e Van Cleve. Mas seguindo Allais, eu também rejeito o deflacionismo metafísico de Allison: o idealismo transcendental está metafisicamente comprometido com a existência das coisas em si, noumena no sentido negativo. No entanto, em oposição a Allais, tomo seriamente a afirmação de Kant de que as aparências são "meras representações" em nossa mente seriamente. Com efeito, no sentido empírico, as "aparências" são o objeto indeterminado de nossa intuição sensível. No entanto, no sentido transcendental, as aparências nada mais são que o modo dependente da mente segundo o qual os noumena se manifestam dentro das nossas mentes e, portanto, nossa maneira mental de conhecer a realidade independente da mente em si (fenomenismo epistemológico).

Palavras chave Idealismo Transcendental; Idealismo Metafísico; Idealismo Epistemológico; Fenomenismo Epistemológico; Fenomenismo Ontológico.