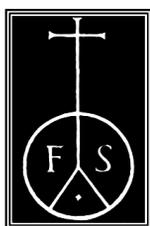


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KANT'S IDEALISM AND PHENOMENALISM.
CRITICAL NOTICE OF LUCY ALLAIS'S
MANIFEST REALITY.

KANT'S IDEALISM & HIS REALISM*

DENNIS SCHULTING

THE articles with which Lucy Allais made her name as Kant expert in the mid- to late nineties have now been updated and partially rewritten for her first monograph, which deals with all the aspects of Kant's controversial doctrine of idealism, including her much-discussed reading of Kant as a nonconceptualist about intuition¹ – one perhaps wonders why a book on Kant's idealism also discusses the topic of non-conceptualism, but on re-reading her arguments in the integrated context of the book, it occurred to me that Allais's nonconceptualist interpretation of Kant is very much tied in with her take on Kant's idealism.

As was to be expected, the book is a first-rate example of Kant scholarship. It makes for an exciting reading and offers many insights and openings for new avenues of approach to various aspects of Kant's philosophy. It is also probably one of the very few books on Kant which will be referenced and consulted many years hence; in that sense it is comparable to Henry Allison's classic *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*.² Unlike Allison's *magnum opus* though, Allais's book is much more philosophically reconstructive and much less a close reading of the text. Of course, Allais pays due attention to the textual evidence for and against her interpretation, but she also offers many an insight from contemporary philosophical perspectives that have *prima facie* nothing to do with Kant. This is both an advantage and a problem, as I shall point out further below.

In general, it seems to me that the main and unquestioned assumption behind Allais's interpretation of Kantian idealism is ultimately a Kant-foreign one. This has to do with the persistent suspicion among Anglophone readers of Kant, even among those aiming to defend some form of Kantian idealism, of anything that even resembles traditional idealism, namely the belief that objects are not real things but just mental states or constructions out of mental states. Allais is well aware of the issues and of the fact that somehow the idealism in Kant's transcendental idealism

* L. ALLAIS, *Manifest Reality: Kant's Idealism & His Realism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015 (henceforth: MR), pp. 329. I thank Bob Hanna, Chris Onof and Scott Stapleford for their extremely helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

¹ See especially L. ALLAIS, *Kant's One World: Interpreting Transcendental Idealism*, «British Journal for the History of Philosophy», XII, 4, 2004, pp. 655-684; EADEM, *Intrinsic Natures: A Critique of Langton on Kant*, «Philosophy and Phenomenological Research», LXXIII, 1, 2006, pp. 143-169; EADEM, *Kant's Idealism and the Secondary Quality Analogy*, «Journal of the History of Philosophy», XLV, 3, 2007, pp. 459-484; and EADEM, *Kant, Non-Conceptual Content and the Representation of Space*, «Journal of the History of Philosophy» XLVII, 3, 2009, pp. 383-413.

² H. ALLISON, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1983; second expanded edition, 2004.

must be accommodated, and cannot be explained away. With her book she wanted to offer a reading that avoids oscillating between the extremes of phenomenalist/noumenalist and deflationary non-metaphysical readings of Kant's idealism, and which does justice to Kant's emphatic empirical realism *as well as* his commitment to the existence of things in themselves.¹ Insofar as her reading is able to accommodate both Kant's empirical realism *and* his commitment to the existence of things in themselves, she thus avoids 'merely realist' readings such as those by Graham Bird and Robert Hanna.²

I think she indeed succeeds in finding a middle way between the extremes, but at the cost of a fundamental aspect of Kantian idealism, namely subjective agency as an unmistakable constitutive factor in Kant's idealist position – this aspect is all but neglected in Allais's reconstruction, notwithstanding her talk of the 'mind-dependence' of appearances. And it is here that Allais reveals her own realist bias, if I may put it this way, underpinned by her indefatigable endeavour to «reject all readings which mentalise Kantian appearances».³

This is not an easy criticism on my part, for I find myself essentially in agreement with her basic sentiment, based on her correct reading of Kant's clear utterances in this direction, that Kant takes the existence of things *themselves* 'understood neutrally', as she puts it,⁴ as existing independently of our minds, to be the basis *from* which we start our analysis of the possibility of knowledge of objects.⁵ Of course, as Allais points out, this does not at all mean that we have access to, much less cognisance of, the things *as they are in themselves*; or even that we positively judge that things in themselves exist. But the fact that we do not have cognisance of things in themselves does not imply that things in themselves do not exist (often thought by commentators). There is a basic starting assumption in the analysis of knowledge of appearances (as objects), which reveals a commitment, as Kant often says, to there being grounds for the appearances that we experience and have knowledge of, these grounds being the things that appear and which have a way of being in themselves, of which we do not have cognisance. But the rightful emphasis on the mind-independent existence of things themselves notwithstanding, and despite her careful avoidance of making problematic claims about the numerical identity of appearances and things in themselves,⁶ Allais's effort to de-mentalise Kantian appearances is in my view precisely the wrong move.

While she sees appearances as populating the realm of possible experience (of which she gives a very insightful account in Chapter 6), and as necessarily dependent on the mind, on possibly being perceived, or as 'essentially perceptible',⁷ Allais is committed to the anti-phenomenalist view that possible experience is not in any way *constituted* by a subjective agent, *e.g.* by way of its construction out of mental states, but *is something there to be* possibly experienced by an apprehending subject. The problem here is the assumption that the *object* (not: the thing itself, the *Sache* or, more precisely, *Sachen*, as Kant often says) is already given in intuition, and that the judging subject need only apply its conceptual apparatus in order to have *thoughts* about the object –

¹ MR, p. 11.

⁴ MR, p. 35.

⁶ Cf. MR, pp. 72-73.

² MR, pp. 23, 26, 65ff.

⁵ MR, pp. 34-35, 69-70, 89.

⁷ MR, p. 13.

³ MR, p. 38.

and this assumption is clearly confirmed by Allais's nonconceptualist reading of Kant on intuition. But Kant never means to say that the *object qua object* is already given in intuition. The central constitutive role of the subject in Kant's Copernican turn in metaphysics seems to have been eliminated in Allais's account of his idealism. It is as if Allais believes that Kant's innovation in metaphysics pivots around the idea that the appearances themselves, *i.e.* the objects we experience, have an innate disposition to being experienced by us, and that appearances as objects have no need for subjective agency for *being* the perceptual particulars that they are. But before I elaborate on this critical point, let me first give a quick overview of the book, so as to give a rough idea of its admirable comprehensiveness.

The book consists of three parts. The first part deals chiefly with issues of interpretation and differentiating Allais's own interpretation from the existing literature. In Chapter 1, she provides a compendium of her 'moderate metaphysical' reading of idealism.¹ Chapter 2 is dedicated to an ardent refutation of phenomenalism, whether in its dogmatic, traditional, Berkeleian variety, or 'sophisticated phenomenalism'.² The critique of phenomenalist interpretations of Kantian idealism is crucial to Allais's reading. Chapter 3 critically addresses noumenalist, bare empirically realist, and deflationary readings, most importantly that of Allison.

Part Two presents Allais's own interpretation. Chapter 5 is meant to make the idea of 'essential manifestness', central to her interpretation of Kant's idealism, philosophically coherent. Allais must make it clear that, in contrast to the phenomenalist interpretation, there can be mind-dependence which «does not involve existence in the mind».³ The existence of 'essentially manifest' properties is «not independent of the possibility of their being presented to us in a conscious experience».⁴ To make this philosophical view fit Kant's idealism, Allais resorts to Kant's secondary quality analogy in the *Prolegomena*, where Kant seems to deny both that appearances have an existence outside our representations and that they are mere representations in thinking beings.⁵ Without assessing here the validity of Allais's reading of Kant's analogy, it is clear why Allais sees it as providing textual evidence for her reading of Kantian appearances in terms of the 'essentially manifest' view, for it suggests an empirical realism about mind-independent objects that are also necessarily perceptible, and thus in a sense ideal. Chapter 7 looks in detail at Kant's notion of intuition. This is important for Allais's 'essentially manifest' view of appearances, since intuitions are by Kant's definition singular, immediately referential, and dependent on the given object. On Allais's account, intuitions provide us direct acquaintance with perceptual particulars (appearances) independently of any conceptual (categorical) activity on the subject's part. This is a key element of her reading of Kantian idealism. Chapter 8 considers Kant's main argument for transcendental idealism in the «Transcendental Aesthetic» of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

In Part Three of the book, Allais investigates in more detail the complex combination of realism and idealism in Kant: Chapter 9 deals with the essentially *relational* nature of the world of appearances. The sections on (British) anti-realism and experience-transcendence and on (American) anti-realism and the 'manifest image'

¹ MR, p. 8.

² MR, p. 38.

³ MR, p. 101.

⁴ MR, p. 101; cf. p. 210.

⁵ MR, p. 128.

vs. 'scientific image' are excellent and cast an illuminating light upon the aspect of 'essential manifestness' that Allais wishes to emphasise. Chapter 10 is probably the most speculative in the book, but also the most philosophically satisfying: it deals specifically with the role that things in themselves play in Kant's idealism, in particular the fact that things «have intrinsic, non-relational, categorical natures which ground their relational appearances».¹ Allais deals astutely with a range of complex substantive issues in Kant's account of the intrinsic nature of things in themselves, partly in response to Rae Langton's highly heterodox reading² of twenty years ago. There are problems though, and some of them are peculiar to Kant, but I hope to address these in more detail in future. Chapter 11 addresses one central argument from the «Transcendental Deduction», namely the argument that concerns the necessary application of the categories so that our thought has 'relation to an object'. Allais's reading of this is consistent with her account of intuition as delivering perceptual particulars and of the 'essential manifestness' of appearances. I discuss her take on Kant's notion of 'relation to an object' in some detail in my own recent book, so won't deal with it here.³ In a short final chapter, Allais wraps up the various lines of her investigation into Kantian idealism and links them to the very idea of the possibility of metaphysics.

Not to diminish the many positive qualities of Allais's book, given the limited space in this notice it seems worthwhile to register a few of the main problems that I noted down whilst reading. All of them relate centrally to Kant's notorious, oft-repeated and undeniable claim that appearances are *mere* representations, and thus do not exist outside the mind. This has often been read as confirming phenomenalist readings of Kant's idealism, which roughly hold that objects do not exist outside of mental states. Clearly, it is difficult to explain away this claim, and any reading that does not subscribe to phenomenism in any form must still be able to accommodate the clear assertion made by Kant with respect to appearances being mere representations.

Allais is fully aware of this requirement, and so, as part of her explanation, she devotes quite some space to refuting phenomenism, both the traditional, Berkeleyan kind and the 'sophisticated' variant, which holds that objects are, not just mental states, but rather constructions out of mental states or in virtue of mental activity. Allais contends that «it is extremely difficult to make sense of Kant's position as a phenomenalist idealism»,⁴ which is inconsistent with «many of Kant's core philosophical concerns»,⁵ but it seems to me that despite differentiating dogmatic phenomenalist readings from 'sophisticated' phenomenism, Allais persistently takes the most traditional, radical form of phenomenism, in particular, Strawson's reading,⁶ as a foil for her own reading. In her *réquisitoire* against phenomenism Allais provides no less than seven reasons which in her view show that phenomenalist interpretations of Kantian idealism cannot be right.⁷ None of them are damning, I believe.

¹ MR, p. 231.

² R. LANGTON, *Kant's Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998.

³ See D. SCHULTING, *Kant's Radical Subjectivism: Perspectives on the Transcendental Deduction*, London-New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, ch. 4.

⁴ MR, p. 12.

⁶ MR, p. 37.

⁵ MR, p. 20.

⁷ MR, pp. 43ff.

Let me briefly run through each of them before elaborating on some of the problems I have with Allais's reading:

(1) Phenomenalist, virtual, or Berkeleian objects «simply do not entail the existence of things of which they are appearances», says Allais.¹ This is not necessarily true; a 'sophisticated' phenomenalist can perfectly argue that an appearance is not an *object* outside the mind, or more accurately, outside the domain that is constituted by a construction out of mental states or in virtue of mental activity, without these states as such being parts of the object, all the while being committed to a realm of mind-independently existing things in themselves being the ground of the *object* (whatever the isomorphic or non-isomorphic relations between thing in itself and object may be). There is no need to posit, and no clear textual evidence for positing, an identity between the object and thing in itself as being the *same* thing, something that Allais seems committed to (even though she does not argue for strict numerical identity).

Reason (2) was not entirely clear to me, but by saying that «Kant could not hold that objects exist as mental items but do not have the properties they have in sensation»,² Allais seems to think that, on a phenomenalist interpretation, there is an insurmountable problem with the *objective validity* or veridicality of objects as mental entities. But this objection, if I understand her correctly, rests on the assumption of a very dogmatic form of phenomenism; Kantian phenomenism can be read in such a way that the object that is defined by the synthetic unity among representations, or mental states, is not defined by the representations united, and whereby the intensional magnitude of the representations, *i.e.* sensations, is taken to point to the affecting thing in itself, not to the subject's state. Phenomenism is by no means condemned to psychologism. Indeed, as Allais herself notes, «sophisticated phenomenism [...] need not attribute to objects-as-constructions-out-of-mental-items all the properties which are had by the mental items».³

(3) The third reason Allais gives is that phenomenism cannot really accommodate Kant's view that the spatial objects we experience are publicly accessible objects.⁴ It is of course true that «[s]ince space and time constitute the framework that enables us to have empirical intuitions, they cannot be a construction out of what is given in intuition».⁵ But still, as Allais notes herself, Kant is quite clear as to the fact that space and time, and all that exists in them, and so the very publicness of spatiotemporal objects, is 'in me' (*KrV*, A 375); a good Kantian phenomenist will note that of course this is a *transcendental* 'in me', not an empirical one; however, this does not at all imply that the public object can exist only in the way that Allais thinks possible, namely as a property of the thing itself 'understood neutrally', and not as a construction out of mental states or in virtue of mental activity (the unity of apperception). It could in fact be argued that the manner in which Allais considers the 'essential manifestness' of appearances, namely in terms of possible experience,⁶ is *mutatis mutandis* not so far apart from the possible experience that is constituted by the objectivity that, according to 'sophisticated' Kantian phenomenism, is defined by the synthetic construction out of mental states or in virtue of mental activity, *i.e.* transcendental apperception (albeit that the crucial difference between Allais's objectivist take on

¹ *MR*, p. 44.

² *MR*, pp. 44-45.

³ *MR*, p. 45.

⁴ *MR*, p. 46.

⁵ *MR*, p. 47.

⁶ *MR*, p. 137.

possible experience in contrast to the subjectivism of the phenomenalist view remains; see further below).

(4) «Very small things, very distant things, and entities posited by science», which are part of empirical reality for Kant, though cannot actually be perceived, cannot be accommodated by Berkeleian phenomenalism.¹ But as Allais herself says, ‘sophisticated’ phenomenologists can deal with these. So this reason is irrelevant, if we consider the latter rather than the former form of phenomenalism. Moreover, Berkeley himself does in fact address the problem of very small things and distant things as well as entities posited by science.²

(5) A potentially far more damning reason against phenomenalism of any stripe is Kant’s argument in the «Analogies», as Allais believes.³ For empirically real objects exist at all times, unperceived, and stand in causal relations.⁴ Constructivist phenomenologists might accommodate the arguments of the «Analogies», but Allais says that «the fact that, rightly or wrongly, phenomenologists think their view can accommodate the central claims Kant makes about external objects cannot be taken to show that Kant is a phenomenologist».⁵ But this would appear to be question-begging. The fact that Kant’s argument in the «Analogies» appears to confirm Allais’s realist reading of empirical objects does not *show her* reading to be the right one, and not the phenomenologist reading. For her reading of the «Analogies» might be mistaken. In fact, it stands to reason to give preference to a ‘sophisticated’ phenomenologist reading of the «Analogies» when one takes into account the fact that it is the transcendental unity of apperception that is the necessary ground of the principles of all three analogies (*KrV*, A 177 B 220), in line with Kant’s general argument in the «Deduction» as well as the «Principles of Experience» that determinate space, nature, etc. are all nothing but functions of the transcendental unity of apperception, given sensory input. Seen in this light, a phenomenal substance is not something given, but in a sense a construction out of representations or in virtue of transcendental apperception which gives our perceptions objective validity pertaining to empirically real objects and events in space and time.

Allais writes that the phenomenologist reading is something that can only be «read into the text, not something Kant himself ever says».⁶ But this is an uncharitable way of weighing interpretations against each other; of course, phenomenalism is an *interpretation*, but so is Allais’s reading. If we could rely solely on what Kant actually says, there would be no need for interpretation at all, and everything would be simple. Allais points to the fact that phenomenologist interpreters such as James Van Cleve and Paul Guyer find Kant to be inconsistent in the «Analogies», that is, their phenomenologist reading of Kant overall is found to be incompatible with the apparently realist thrust of the «Analogies». She argues that this inconsistency «provides very strong evidence that Kant is not a phenomenologist».⁷ But of course, Van Cleve and Guyer might be completely wrong about the incompatibility of the «Analogies» and the phenomenologist reading, just because they could be wrong about the realist thrust of the «Analogies» (as a matter of fact, I do believe they are wrong about this, but that

¹ *MR*, p. 47.

² Thanks to Scott Stapleford for pointing this out.

³ *MR*, pp. 48–50.

⁴ *MR*, p. 48.

⁵ *MR*, p. 49.

⁶ *MR*, p. 50.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

is a topic for another occasion). So the «Analogies» do not at all *eo ipso* provide a basis for dismissing phenomenalism.

(6) Allais's sixth reason against phenomenalist readings of Kant's idealism is that we «do not cognize mental states as they are in themselves».¹ But this seems irrelevant for the constructivist or 'sophisticated' phenomenalist, despite Allais's claim that on their reading, constructions out of mental states «would have to be either constructions out of empirical mental states or constructions out of noumenal mental states», where the «former is straightforwardly false», because «empirical objects are not dependent on empirical states», and the «latter is problematic because we do not know anything about subjects as they are in themselves or mental states as they are in themselves».² But clearly, according to the constructivist Kantian phenomenalist, objects do not depend on the empirical mental states, let alone noumenal mental states, but are first produced and purely a function of the activity of the apperceiving subject, *given sensory input from outside (i.e. from the things in themselves that affect us)*. So it is not the empirical content of the mental states as such, but the transcendental functions of generating a synthetic unity *among* one's representations, which constitutes the constructed object. Questions about the noumenal status of our mental states or ourselves as subjects are further completely irrelevant.

(7) The last reason Allais gives that counts against phenomenalism is the very fact that Kant refuted Berkeley's idealism, which according to her «gives us extremely strong grounds to reject *any* mentalised reading of appearances».³ She suggests that Kant never accuses Berkeley of leaving out the things in themselves.⁴ But he in fact does, and it is to all appearances Kant's main complaint; he writes in the *Prolegomena*: «The existence of the thing that appears is thereby not destroyed, *as in genuine idealism*, but it is only shown that we cannot possibly know it by the senses as it is in itself» (*Prol*, AA IV 289).⁵ Towards the end of Remark III appended to the First Part of the *Prolegomena*, Kant writes, while mentioning Berkeley as well as Descartes just prior: «My idealism concerns not the existence of things (*the doubting of which, however, constitutes idealism in the ordinary sense*), since it never came into my head to doubt it; but it concerns the sensuous representation of things, to which space and time especially belong. Regarding space and time and consequently, regarding all appearances in general, I have only shown that they are neither things (but are mere modes of representation [*Vorstellungsarten*]) nor are they determinations belonging to things in themselves [*den Sachen an sich selbst angehörige Bestimmungen*]» (*Prol*, AA IV 293).⁶

Kant's problem with Berkeley is with his denial of the mind-independent existence of things in themselves, not with the mental status of appearances. Moreover, in the *Prolegomena* parallel of the refutation of Cartesian idealism, Kant in fact affirms his phenomenalist view of the «actuality of bodies as external appearances in space» (*Prol*, AA IV 336),⁷ which, as Allais rightly says, in Kant's view we are directly aware of.

¹ *Ibidem*.

³ *MR*, p. 52, emphasis added.

⁵ I quote from *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. and ed. by P. Carus, rev. by J. Ellington, Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing, 1977, p. 33, emphasis added.

⁶ *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, p. 37, emphasis added.

⁷ *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, p. 77.

² *MR*, p. 51.

⁴ *MR*, p. 54.

That is, «the *concept* ‘outside us’ only signifies existence in space» (*Prol*, AA IV 337),¹ the application of which «admits of a satisfactory proof» of something empirical outside us (*Prol*, AA IV 336),² whence Kant can consistently say that «the question of whether bodies (as appearances of outer sense) exist *outside my thoughts* [*außer meinen Gedanken*] as bodies in nature can without hesitation be answered negatively» (*Prol*, AA IV 337).³ It is hard to see how Allais can make sense of this last passage. When Kant says in a similar context that «appearances are *not things*, but rather nothing but representations, and [that] they cannot exist at all outside our mind» (*KrV*, A 492 B 520),⁴ Allais skews this towards her own interpretation as saying that Kant «clearly and explicitly states that appearances are mind-dependent».⁵ This has the appearance of making the text fit one’s interpretation, rather than taking the text at face value. There is quite a difference between saying that appearances «cannot exist at all outside our mind» and saying that they are mind-dependent.

Let me elaborate on this last point a bit. It is a hallmark of Allais’s interpretation to think of appearances as the mind-dependent «*aspects* of things which also have a way they are in themselves».⁶ First, appearances are, for Kant, never ‘aspects’ of things.⁷ There is of course something intuitively appealing about Allais’s interpretation, for it recognises the undoubted mind-independence of the things that we experience, which thus have relation to us *and* have a way in which they are independent of us, are related inwardly (which is what *an sich* means, as Hegel was quick to take up and expand upon). But my problem with Allais’s reading is that she is intent on de-mentalising appearances, and making them somehow determinations, properties, or aspects of the things themselves, albeit not of the things *qua* having a way of being *in themselves* (*an sich*).

One way of preserving Allais’s valuable view that the things we experience are both mind-dependent in the way that they necessarily relate to us and mind-independent in the way that they have an existence *in themselves*, is to say that appearances are indeed the appearances *of things themselves*, so of things that also have a way of being *in themselves*, but rather than saying that they are *aspects* of the things themselves, they must be *identified with* the representations that we have of the things; that is, appearances *are nothing but* these representations – this accounts for Kant’s claim that appearances are mere representations and do not exist outside the representing mind. Appearances are not aspects of things, but they are the representations we have of things, inasmuch as the representations we have of things *are* the appearances. (Note that strictly speaking we do not represent the appearances, which on a straightforward reading of Kant’s claim that appearances are mere representations, would in fact be tautological: we would then be representing representations. Rather, the appearances *are* our representations of things.)⁸

¹ *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, p. 78, emphasis added.

² *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, p. 77.

³ I here quote the translation of the *Prolegomena* in I. KANT, *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, ed. and trans. by H. Allison et alii, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 128.

⁴ I quote from *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. by P. Guyer and A. Wood, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 511.

⁵ MR, p. 57.

⁶ MR, p. 75, emphasis added.

⁷ Cf. *Prolegomena*, AA IV 293: «Erscheinungen [sind] nicht Sachen (sondern bloße Vorstellungsarten), auch nicht den Sachen an sich selbst angehörige Bestimmungen [...]» (emphasis added).

⁸ See further D. SCHULTING, *In Defence of Reinhold’s Kantian Representationalism: Aspects of Idealism in ‘Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens’*, «Kant Yearbook», VIII, 2016, pp. 87-116.

This can be made clear by a passage that Allais also quotes, but needless to say interprets differently; the passage is in the second Remark of the First Part of the *Prolegomena*. Kant writes: «There are things given to us as objects of our senses existing outside us, yet we know nothing of them as they may be in themselves, but are acquainted only with their appearances, *i.e.*, with the representations that they produce in us because they affect our senses. Accordingly, I by all means avow that there are bodies outside us, *i.e.*, things [*Dinge*] which, though completely unknown to us as to what they may be in themselves, we know through the representations which their influence on our sensibility provides for us, and to which we give the name of a body [*denen wir die Benennung eines Körpers geben* – which word therefore [*also*] merely signifies the appearance of this object [*Gegenstandes*] that is unknown to us but is nonetheless real» (*Prol*, AA IV 289).¹

Grammatically, the relative pronoun *denen* in the second sentence in the above-quoted passage can refer to the distant antecedent ‘things’ in the first-degree relative clause of that sentence as well as to ‘representations’ in the embedded relative clause, but dialectically, given what Kant says in the parenthetical last clause, in particular his use of the adverb *also*, I think it should be taken to refer to ‘representations’. Kant thus should be taken to say that «there are bodies outside us, *i.e.*, things which [we do not know as they are in themselves, but] [...] we know through the representations [...] to which we give the name of a body». This statement usefully *explains* to us how the notion of an external body should be understood idealistically. If, by contrast, *denen* were taken to refer to *Dinge*, Kant would be saying that «there are bodies outside us, *i.e.*, things [...] which we give the name of a body», which from a hermeneutical perspective is either trivial, circular or does not make sense, hence there is good reason to reject it as a possible reading. Kant is not trying to say that we call things bodies because they *are* bodies, but he is trying to explain the easily misunderstood complication of his idealism: there are bodies out there, which are things we do not know as to how they are in themselves, but we know them as they appear, namely in the form of *and only in the form of* the representations we have of them, as appearances, and it is these appearances, *i.e.* representations, we call bodies. Hence he says in the parenthetical clause that the term ‘body’ really refers to appearance.²

Allais of course believes that appearances as spatiotemporal bodies *are* aspects of things, albeit not *qua* their having a way of being in themselves, but I think that this possibility is not available to Allais on the basis of the above-quoted passage from the *Prolegomena*, if read in the way I propose. Appearances *are* mere representations, which we call bodies. Hence, bodies are mere representations.³ What we represent of the things themselves, which have a way of being *in* themselves (*an sich*), are their appearances. But – and here I fundamentally diverge from Allais – their appearances *are what and only what* we represent of the things, and nothing beyond the represen-

¹ I. KANT, *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, p. 84.

² In the «Fourth Paralogism» in the A-edition of the *Critique*, Kant is even clearer as to the fact that «external objects (bodies) are merely appearances, hence also nothing other than a species of my representations, whose objects are something only through these representations, but are nothing separated from them» (*KrV*, A 370, quoted from *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 427).

³ See also my critique of Tobias Rosefeldt on this point in D. SCHULTING, *In Defence of Reinhold's Kantian Representationalism*, p. 89 n. 3.

tations. There is a strict reciprocity between ‘what we represent of the things themselves *are* their appearances’ and ‘their appearances *are* what we represent of the things themselves’. This is a straightforward reading of Kant’s elephant in the room, *i.e.* the identificatory claim that appearances are mere representations. A straightforward reading trumps any roundabout reading of this claim, such as Allais’s reading that in saying that appearances as aspects of things only exist if it is possible to experience or perceive them, appearances are mere representations. Moreover, the straightforward, ‘sophisticated’ phenomenalist reading can perfectly accommodate reading Kant as a direct realist of sorts about external objects in space, because any appearance as represented in space in virtue of outer sense exists in space and is experienced by us as such (cf. *KrV*, A 370). Kant on a phenomenalist reading is perfectly capable of enabling a relationalist theory of perception within the framework of transcendental idealism, in virtue of the differentiation between inner and outer sense, without needing to resort to hermeneutic accessories such as the secondary quality analogy or theories about ‘essential manifestness’.

An additional benefit of the straightforward reading is that there is no problem in clarifying the explanatory gap between the mind-independence of the appearing thing and the mind-dependence of the appearance of the same thing. This is one of the problematic aspects of Allais’s reading: there is an unexplained discrepancy between the mind-independence and mind-dependence of the very same thing, which is only partially explained by Allais’s otherwise helpful account of intrinsicity and relationality in Chapters 10 and 11. Further, the very label of ‘mind-dependence’ would seem to underdetermine the involvement of subjective agency in the constitution of appearances as necessarily objects of possible experience, which defines the mind-dependence, and is therefore rather stipulative. The straightforward ‘sophisticated’ phenomenalist reading is not affected by this problem because the mind-dependence of the appearance is directly in virtue of its being *identified with* the subject’s representations or combinatorial representational activity, *i.e.* outer sense as the necessary subjective form of any intuition of an object, *i.e.* an appearance, and the unity of apperception as the necessary subjective form of any object *qua* object, *i.e.* a determinate appearance.

At a certain point Allais muses about the proper translation for the very term ‘representation’ (*Vorstellung*), suggesting ‘presentation’ as an alternative, and says that «the term ‘representation’ could be used simply to emphasise the fact that perception involves things appearing a certain way *for* subjects: it presents things to subjects». ¹ The mind-dependent properties an object has (*qua* appearance) «will depend on minds if minds (conscious perceptual subjects) are essential to the relation in which the presented property exists». ² Allais wants to stress the necessary dependence on experience by subjects for the existence of appearance properties in order to keep the idealism on board. But the above quotes sound as if, on her account, the subject were just another necessary *objective* entity or part in the constellation of properties and ways of their necessarily and only being presented in possible experience. The *active* constitutive role of the subject in the formation of objectively valid representations or veridical perception of particulars is thereby wholly excised.

¹ *MR*, p. 115.

² *Ibidem*.

Similarly, a relational account, according to Allais, «can say that perceptual experience represents objects to us»¹ and that external objects «are present in conscious mental states when we perceive them», «which is not a matter of being merely a modification of a subject's internal state».² But how is this supposed to avoid mentalising appearances, for is perceptual experience not *always* something had by experiencing subjects only, if there is perceptual experience?

In characterising the mind-dependent way of presenting something mind-independent as the duality of perceptual experience and the 'presentation' of objects 'to us', Allais creates another level of confusion. How should we explain the relation expressed in the preposition 'to' in «represents [...] to us»? Apparently, there is not just a relation between (a) the thing as it is in itself (*an sich*) and the way it appears to us, but also between (b) the way the thing appears to us in a perceptual experience and the way in which the appearance that appears to us in a perceptual experience is apprehended by us as the perceptual agents of experience. The relation in a is difficult if not impossible to assess, since Kant forbids us cognisance of this relation (see Chapter 10 of the book). The relation in b is supposed to be one of identity or presumably it is unproblematic (in the sense of the Act Theory that says that any experience necessarily entails an agent of experience), and on the phenomenalist reading this is indeed unproblematic for the appearances literally are *eo ipso* representations had by a subject. But for Allais there is an additional explanatory gap, namely the gap that arises as a result of the question of how the perceptual experience presenting objects to us relates to the appearances being *represented by us, in our minds*. The gapless identity reading of relation b is not available to Allais, for she crucially denies the mentalising of appearances: the possible perceptual experience as the field of appearances is uncoupled from the subjective agent of experience that formulates thoughts about what she experiences. Fearing a phenomenalist/mentalist reduction of appearances as independent objects but intent on honouring Kant's emphatic idealism, in one way or another, Allais's solution to the question of the status of appearances as «the mind-dependent way something mind-independent is presented to us»³ is a halfway house that belies Kant's transcendental turn, which pivots around the question of how we are able to have *a priori* cognition of objects, a question that can be answered in two mutually exclusionary ways only: «either [...] the object alone makes the representation possible or [...] the representation alone makes the object possible» (*KrV*, A 92 B 124-125). It seems Allais has just moved around the original explanatory problem without choosing either alternative.

Allais's 'essential manifestness' reading of appearances either is problematic because it places the object (appearance) outside the subject's perspective, if we focus on the anti-mentalising thesis, or it is not as novel as she claims it to be, if we take her claim seriously that what she means by 'essential manifestness' is that objects are present *in* conscious mental states or that the possibility of appearances is necessarily dependent on their possibly being perceived by subjects, for this latter way of putting it is perfectly accommodated by a 'sophisticated' phenomenalist reading that sees appearances as spatial objects of outer sense, but without the hedging around

¹ MR, p. 133.

² MR, p. 134.

³ MR, p. 133.

the appearances = representations identification. When Allais repeats her point that «the fact that phenomenologists, rightly or wrongly, think that they can capture everything that Kant says about external objects in terms of claims about possible sensations does not show that Kant is a phenomenologist»,¹ this comes across as somewhat silly, for on this reasoning no interpretation can lay claim to being a better fit than any other, including Allais's own reading. It seems that to her phenomenologists must be wrong, even if they were found to be right.

ABSTRACT

In this critical notice of Lucy Allais's recent monograph on Kantian idealism I focus on her refutation of phenomenology, which is important for her metaphysical-realist reading of appearances. She provides 7 reasons for rejecting phenomenologist readings of Kant's idealism about appearances. I argue that none of these reasons are compelling. Notwithstanding the many valuable features of Allais's interpretation of Kant's idealism overall, her effort to demystify Kantian appearances is in my view precisely the wrong move.

¹ *MR*, p. 139.

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