

The Sensible and Intelligible Worlds

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Thing and Object

Towards an Ecumenical Reading of Kant's Idealism

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1. Introduction

The meaning of Kant's transcendental idealism, and of the distinction between appearances and things in themselves, has been controversial ever since the publication of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781. It is even controversial how the different interpretations should be characterized. Some parties to the debate abjure the labels given to them by others (the accusation that one has a "Berkeleyan" reading is considered especially inflammatory¹), and some have argued that the standard ways of dividing up the interpretative terrain are misguided.²

In this chapter I will argue that, on one standard way of characterizing the debate, both "sides" are correct, but are about different parts or aspects of Kant's idealism. To invoke a familiar metaphor, they are climbing the same mountain, but from different sides.

One reading takes the distinction between appearances and things in themselves to be a distinction between two domains of objects: those that exist in being experienced (or experienceable) by us, and those that exist *an sich*, independently of such experience. The other reading takes it to be a distinction between two kinds of properties possessed by one and the same domain of objects: the properties that can appear to us in experience, and the properties they have *an sich*. Representatives of the second reading differ over what this distinction is—for instance, whether it is the distinction between relational and intrinsic properties (e.g. Langton, 1998), or between response-dependent and response-independent properties (Rosefeldt, 2013), or between essentially manifestable and non-essentially manifestable properties (Allais, 2015), etc.³

¹ Though some have embraced it, e.g., Turbayne (1969). In Stang (2021b) I argue that the "phenomenalist" reading of Kant should be thought of as Leibnizian rather than Berkeleyan. Ameriks (2006) attempts to account for the persistence of the Berkeleyan reading, without endorsing it.

² The standard account of the debate remains Karl Ameriks's classic (1982) (cf. Ameriks, 1992), while Beiser (2002) puts this debate in its historical context. Key documents in the contemporary debate include Adams (1997), Allais (2004, 2015), Allison (1983, 2004), Aquila (1979), Bird (1962, 2006), Langton (1998), Marshall (2013), Prauss (1971), Rosefeldt (2013), and Wood et al. (2007). Historically influential accounts that have, unfortunately, attracted less attention recently are Adickes (1924, 1929) and Vaihinger (1881–92). Allais (2015), Schulting (2010), and Stang (2018) contain overviews of the *status controversiae*.

³ It has become standard to include among Identity readings the "epistemic" reading articulated by Henry Allison, Graham Bird, and Gerold Prauss. However, I am skeptical whether that is the right way of

These differences among representatives of the second reading will be somewhat immaterial, however, for I am more interested in a more basic difference between the two readings. The first reading denies that the domain of appearances and things in themselves overlap, so it denies that the relation of *identity* can hold between appearances and things in themselves. The second reading holds that the very same objects that have appearance properties also have *an sich* properties. Thus, the second reading holds that appearances (objects with appearance properties) are the very same objects as things in themselves (objects with *an sich* properties): anything with appearance properties must also have *an sich* properties. There may be objects with *an sich* properties that do not appear to us (and thus have no appearance properties),⁴ so this reading is not committed to the complete overlap of the two domains of objects, but it is committed to the domain of objects with appearance properties being a subset of the domain of objects with *an sich* properties and, thus, to every appearance (i.e., every object with appearance properties) being *identical* to a thing in itself (i.e., an object with *an sich* properties), namely, itself.^{5,6} So the two interpretative claims I want to consider are the following:

Identity. Every appearance is numerically identical to a thing in itself (a thing with *an sich* properties).⁷

Non-Identity. No appearance is numerically identical to a thing in itself (a thing with *an sich* properties).⁸

Upholders of the Non-Identity readings have offered a range of arguments against Identity:⁹

grouping things; see Stang (2018) for some reasons to think the standard categories of interpretation are misguided. Secondly, there is considerable disagreement among “epistemic” readers about Identity. Allison rejects it (1987, p. 168), while Prauss embraces it (1971, p. 22). Bird has a more complex view: Kant is committed only to the conceivability, not to the existence, of things in themselves, so the question of their identity with appearances (to whose existence he is committed) does not arise (Bird 2006, pp. 553–86; cf. Bird, 1962, pp. 18–35).

⁴ As Kant admits at B308: “Although beings of understanding certainly correspond to the beings of sense [...] there may even be beings of understanding to which our sensible faculty of intuition has no relation at all” (B308–309), taking “beings of sense” to refer to appearances (objects qua appearing) and “beings of understanding” to refer to things in themselves (objects as they are in themselves).

⁵ So formulated, an intermediate position is possible: the appearance and *an sich* domains intersect, but neither is a subset of the other. While this is a position in logical space, it has, to my knowledge, no adherents, and I will temporarily ignore it. (Later, I will argue that it does not significantly alter the dialectic.)

⁶ Because there is no totality of objects in space and time (I take this to be the lesson of the mathematical Antinomies), claims about the “domain” of spatiotemporal objects need to be understood as claims involving a universal quantifier: every appearance is identical to some thing in itself.

⁷ The Identity claim is explicitly made by Adickes (1924, pp. 20, 27), Allais (2004, p. 657), Langton (1998, p. 13), Prauss (1971, p. 22), and Westphal (1968, p. 120). While Allais (2015) offers a more nuanced approach (see esp. p. 72) she also repeatedly writes as though appearances and things in themselves are the very same objects (e.g. pp. 72–73, 128, 130). See Stang (2016a, pp. 284–86), for a critical discussion of Allais on this issue.

⁸ Recent defenders of Non-Identity include Aquila (1979), Marshall (2013), Stang (2014), and Van Cleve (1999). Langton (1998) can also be read as a Non-Identity theorist (as I argue in Stang, 2018, section 5.2).

⁹ Informal statements of these arguments can be found in Marshall (2013) and Robinson (1994); a more formal presentation is given in Stang (2014).

Counting. If every appearance is also a thing in itself, then the number of things in themselves must be at least as great as the number of appearances. Thus, in counting appearances we come to know a numerical lower bound on things in themselves, which violates Kant's doctrine of noumenal ignorance.

Modes of existence. Appearances exist in being experienced (or being experience-able), while things in themselves do not. Since no object can enjoy multiple modes of existence, no thing in itself is identical to an appearance.

Modality. Appearances and things in themselves have different *de re* modal properties. Appearances are *de re* necessarily spatial, and would not exist if we did not (or could not) experience them. Things in themselves are not spatial, and hence not *de re* necessarily spatial, and would exist if we could not experience them. Since no object can have distinct *de re* modal properties, appearances and things in themselves are numerically distinct.

Division. Kant resolves the Second Antinomy (between infinite division, on the one hand, and finite division into simple parts, on the other) by claiming that appearances are infinitely divisible (though their complete division is not "given"), but, were they things in themselves, the Antinomy would remain an irresolvable contradiction for reason.¹⁰ Thus, the mereological structure of appearances and things in themselves must be different: appearances are infinitely divisible, while things in themselves are finitely divisible into simples. Since no object can be both infinitely and finitely divisible, appearances and things in themselves are numerically distinct.^{11,12}

All of these arguments presuppose, implicitly or explicitly, (i) that appearances and things in themselves are objects of quantification (values of bound variables), (ii) that the relevant relation of "sameness and difference" is numerical identity of objects of quantification, and (iii) that Leibniz's Law governs this relation. I do not have the space here to show this in detail of each such argument, so I will show it in one case; the generalization to other cases (esp. that of Counting) is straightforward. Stang (2014) contains the following version of the modal discernibility argument (reformulated slightly for ease of exposition):

[Where *a* is any appearance in space and *t* is any thing in itself:]

- (1) It is possible that: *t* exists and there are no cognitive subjects with a spatial form of intuition.
- (2) It is not possible that: *a* exists and there are no cognitive subjects with a spatial form of intuition. (A42/B59, A383)
- (3) ∴ *a* ≠ *t*.

¹⁰ See A525/B553, *Prol*, 4:507.

¹¹ This argument would need to be spelled out more carefully. In Stang (2014) I argue that, given the infinite divisibility of matter, the Identity thesis entails that there are infinitely many things in themselves (violating our ignorance of them). However, I do not argue directly that the difference mereological in properties entails Non-Identity. See Robinson (1994) and Marshall (2013) for more. In an unpublished paper Tobias Rosefeldt defends the Identity view against this objection.

¹² I am not committing myself to the assumption that one and the same object cannot have distinct modes of existence, *de re* modal properties, or different ways of being divisible; I am expressing this as a premise in an argument against the Identity view. In Stang (2014) I explain how a Non-Identity reading could allow that the mode of existence of an object depends upon whether it is considered as an appearance or as a thing in itself. Ditto for *de re* modal properties.

(4) ∴ No appearance is identical to any thing in itself.

A suppressed premise in this argument is Leibniz's Law:

(LL) For any $P, (x)(y)(x=y \supset Px \leftrightarrow Py)$ ¹³

But even with this additional premise, the original argument is valid only if t and a can be values of (first-order) variables. Otherwise, LL cannot be instantiated and used to show that (1) and (2) are inconsistent with the negation of (3); and if t and a are not values for bound variables, the universal generalization that licenses (4) would be invalid. But this means that the argument all along assumed that both appearances and things in themselves are objects in the contemporary quantificational sense, familiar to us from Frege and Quine, that is, values of bound first-order variables. A consequence of this presupposition is that identity/sameness of things in themselves and appearances is assumed to be numerical identity, a relation between quantificational objects (namely, the relation every object bears to itself and no other). One could, of course, reject this modal indiscernibility argument by simply rejecting Leibniz's Law altogether; I will not discuss that at the outset, although the solution I will explore involves something equivalent to restricting Leibniz's Law.¹⁴

In this chapter I attempt to bridge this interpretative divide by exploring Kant's concepts of objects and things. In section 2 I argue that the most general concept of "object" in Kant's philosophy is the concept of the object of the capacity for representation in general. Whenever we talk about objects in Kant, we must first ask ourselves, "objects of what capacity?" In section 3 I make a *prima facie* textual case for distinguishing Kant's concepts of "object" and of "thing" and I explore the use of "*Ding*" as a technical term by Kant and his rationalist predecessors. I argue that when Kant talks of *Dinge an sich selbst* he means *Ding* as a translation of the Latin *res*, a being possessed with *realitas*, that is, intensively gradable causal force. This reinforces the case for distinguishing these concepts: the semantic-cognitive concept of the object of a representational capacity is, intuitively, distinct from the metaphysical concept of a locus of force.¹⁵ In section 4 I return to the Indiscernibility arguments with which we began and argue that the modern quantificational notion of "object" in those arguments (i.e., the value of a bound variable) has an analogue in Kant's philosophy (what can be assigned as the value of the variable x in judgment). We must then ask "object of what capacity?" and I argue that the answer is intuition: for Kant, the "quantificational" concept of an object is the concept of an object of intuition.

With all of these materials in hand I then proceed to answer the original question about Identity. In section 5 I examine what identity and distinctness of (quantificational) objects amounts to, in the sensible case (where both are phenomena), in the non-sensible case (where both are noumena), and in the problematic mixed case

¹³ Another implicit premise is that *de re* modal contexts are referentially transparent. A large part of Stang (2014) explores the options for a "one object" reading of transcendental idealism that rejects that premise. Consequently, I do not discuss it further here.

¹⁴ See the Conclusion (section 10).

¹⁵ The same two claims are made in Stone (n.d.), although the arguments for them are somewhat different. Although I developed these ideas independently of Stone, I have learned a great deal from his fascinating paper.

(phenomenal, noumenal). I argue that because there is no intellect that intuits both sensible and non-sensible objects, we can make no sense of the idea that sensible and non-sensible objects are identical (no object can be the object of *both* sensible and non-sensible intuition). Claims of numerical identity *and* of numerical distinctness between sensible and non-sensible objects are incoherent. I express this by saying they are “non-identical” rather than merely not being identical.

In the rest of this chapter I propose a reading of Kant’s idealism: appearances and things in themselves are non-identical *objects* but the same *things*. They are loci of force and activity, which are given to us in sensible intuition as objects in space and time, and would be given to an intuitive intellect as objects non-identical to the first. After presenting, in section 6, *prima facie* textual evidence that this is Kant’s view, in section 7 I turn to the hard work of explaining what the sameness of things might amount to. I distinguish two readings of the claim that appearances and things in themselves are the same things: (i) a collective reading, on which it says that the thinghood of appearances is the same as the thinghood of things in themselves, and (ii) a distributive reading, on which it asserts a singular relation of sameness between individual appearances and individual things in themselves. I argue that the collective reading is generally correct, because thinghood is reality (intensively gradable causal force) and noumenal reality constitutes the common matter from which both things in appearance and things in themselves are constituted. In section 8 I go on to argue that the distributive reading is *also* correct, but only in the case of a finite rational will. I am a locus of causal power (a thing) that is an object to itself (represents itself) in two fundamentally different ways: self-actively in consciousness of my own freedom, and passively in experience of my actions in space and time (section 9). My empirical will and my noumenal will are the same thing but distinct objects. The brief Conclusion in section 10 answers some objections, and, in particular, concerns about whether this interpretation is even consistent.

I want to make absolutely clear going forward that I am not claiming that Kant consistently makes this distinction between “objects” and “things” explicit. I am arguing that his theory involves two distinct conceptual roles, and many of our confusions are dispelled once we carefully distinguish them. It would have been helpful if Kant had marked this distinction lexically, but he often does not. In fact, in several key passages he uses *Ding* and *Sache* to express what I call the object role and *Gegenstand* and *Objekt* to express the thing role. However, because I do not think that Kant himself uses the terms *Gegenstand* or *Objekt* or *Ding* in a particularly consistent fashion, I think we are free to use them to mark, lexically, conceptual distinctions that, I will argue, Kant needs to articulate his transcendental idealism.¹⁶

¹⁶ I am not the first to argue that Kant’s idealism involves a distinction between things and objects; Marshall (2013) argues that appearances and things in themselves are numerically distinct objects because they are distinct “*qua* objects” that take the same things as “bases.” Stone (n.d.), from which I have learned a great deal, examines the scholastic background to Kant’s notions of object and thing. However, due to limits of space, a detailed *Auseinandersetzung* with Marshall and Stone will have to await another occasion.

2. Objects

In the course of the Critical system Kant deploys many different conceptions of an object, but he also makes clear that these are specifications of a highest, most general concept of an object:

The highest concept with which one is accustomed to begin a transcendental philosophy is usually the division between the possible and the impossible. But since every division presupposes a concept that is to be divided, a still higher one must be given, and this is the concept of an object (*Gegenstand*) in general (taken problematically, leaving undecided whether it is something or nothing). (A290/B346)

The highest concept of transcendental philosophy is <*object of representation*>, which is confirmed in the metaphysics lectures: “The highest concept under which all other elementary concepts can be ordered is the concept of an object in general, which lies at the ground of representation (*der bey der Vorstellung zum Grunde liegt*)” (*V-Met-K₃E/Arnoldt*, 29:960).¹⁷ <*Object*> cannot be defined by giving a more general concept and then defining <*object*> as a species of it through the provision of a differentia, because there is no more general concept; it is the most general concept of transcendental philosophy whatsoever. The most we can do is give informal indications or explications of how this concept is to be used.¹⁸ I take the most general concept of object to be the concept of what a representation is of, or about. Of any representation of anything we can ask “What is it the representation of?,” that is, we can ask about its object.¹⁹ This is made especially clear by Kant’s definition of the *nihil negativum*, “the object of a concept that contradicts itself” (A291/B348). That even a self-contradictory concept has an object means that the highest concept of an object, <*object of representation*>, is a very weak notion of object indeed. It is little more than a reified way of talking about the “content” (in our contemporary sense, not Kant’s technical notion of *Inhalt*) of a representation.²⁰ “Object” in this perfectly general sense should not be confused with the contemporary “quantificational” notion of an object; indeed, it should not be taken to be “ontologically committal” at all. In contemporary terms, Kant is not ontologically committed to the *nihil negativum* just by describing its concept as an “object.”

¹⁷ Cf. *V-Met/Volckmann* (28:410–11), *V-Met/Schön* (28:477–79), *V-Met-L₂/Pölitz* (28:542), and *V-Met/Mron* (29:811).

¹⁸ Though we can give more informative definitions of more specific concepts of an object, i.e., “object of experience.”

¹⁹ “No object without representation” does not entail “no representation without an object,” for Kant appears to allow a class of representations, sensation (or “subjective” sensations in the terminology of the *KU*, 5:206), that have no object. See A320/B376.

²⁰ A concept is said to have *Inhalt* when it is related to an object that can be given in intuition; this is why concepts of noumena lack *Inhalt*. But our contemporary notion of “content” is much broader; to say that concepts of noumena lack content would be to say that they, and judgments involving them, are meaningless. This confusion between Kant’s technical notion of *Inhalt* (as well as *Sinn* and *Gebrauch*) with their contemporary analogues (sense, use) is the source of many of the more “deflationist” (and, I would argue, confused) interpretations of Kant’s claims about noumena and things in themselves. See Tolley (2013) for more.

Since the highest concept of transcendental philosophy is <object of representation> any more specific concept of objects in that science must be a more specific concept of objects of representation. In particular these will include concepts of objects of specific kinds of representation (e.g. objects of concepts, objects of intuitions), or of specific representational capacities (e.g. objects of understanding, objects of sensibility).

Our mind has certain capacities for representing objects and these capacities operate in distinctive ways, that is, there are multiple distinct ways in which our mind can have objects (in which there can be objects for us). For our purposes, the most important distinction is between our spontaneous capacity for representation, understanding, by which we actively think conceptual representations of objects, and our receptive capacity of representation, sensibility, by which we passively receive intuitive representations of objects. Because “object” is always implicitly “object of representation” and because we have multiple distinct capacities for representation, which operate according to distinct principles, when we talk about objects we must always (at least implicitly) specify which representational capacity they are objects for: objects of intuition, objects of concepts, objects of theoretical cognition (which are both intuited and conceptualized), objects of reason (some of which are not objects of cognition), objects of desire, objects of our representational capacity in general, etc. Objects as such are always objects of some capacity for representation (some capacity for having objects).²¹

This explains a notable syntactic feature of Kant’s writings, his frequent use of the genitive expressions *Gegenstand der/einer Anschauung* and *Gegenstand des/eines Begriffs*. This is Kant’s way of making explicit the fact that objects are always objects of representational capacities. It also explains his otherwise very puzzling talk about “the object” of a concept (*der Gegenstand eines Begriffs*), or, referring to a concept, about “its object” (*ihr Gegenstand*).²² This is puzzling because concepts, being general representations, do not in general have only one object in their extension; Kant is willing to talk about “the” object of a concept even where the concept has more than one instance, and even where it necessarily has no instances (e.g., from above, the *nihil negativum* or “the object of a concept that contradicts itself” A291/B348). The explanation for this is that “the” object of a concept does not refer to its instances, or to what we would now call its “extension” (the set of its instances), but merely refers to the “content” of that concept. Talk about “the” object of a concept is merely a disguised way of talking about what a concept represents, what it is “about.”²³

²¹ This is brought out especially well in Stone (n.d.).

²² E.g. in the *KrV* alone, see A220/B267, A234/B287, A291/B348, B298, A327/B384, A489/B517, A596/B624n.

²³ This means that Kant uses *Gegenstand/Objekt* as the equivalent of *materia circa quam*, that which a representational act is about. Cf. Baumgarten, *Metaphysica* §344: “If [a being] is conceived of as in the very act of determination, then it is called the MATTER CONCERNING WHICH (an object, a subject of occupation),” to which is added the German gloss “der Gegenstand.” Cf. *Ontologia* §949. Kant takes notice of this usage in *V-Met-L./Pölitz*, 28:575. Thanks to Abe Stone for calling my attention to these passages in Baumgarten and Wolff, and to the notion of *materia circa quam*.

3. Things

There are various passages in the *KrV* that suggest a difference between the conceptual roles of <object> and <thing>:²⁴

This predicate [space – NS] is attributed to things only insofar as they appear to us, i.e., are objects of sensibility. (A27/B43)

Through [space] alone is it possible for things to be outer objects for us. (A29)

If, therefore, space (and time as well) were not a mere form of your intuition that contains *a priori* conditions under which alone things could be outer objects for you [...] (A48/B66)

[Time] is only of objective validity in regard to appearances, because these are already things that we take as objects of our senses [...] (A34/B51)

In accordance with a natural illusion, we regard as a principle that must hold of all things in general that which properly holds only of those that are given as objects of our senses. (B610)

At the most rudimentary level, <thing> and <object> are distinct concepts because <object> is a relative concept and <thing> is not. <Object> is the concept of the object of representation. In each of these passages, “object” means “object of sensibility for us”—hence the frequent use of the genitive expressions *Gegenstand der/einer Anschauung*²⁵ and *Gegenstand des/eines Begriffs* that I noted earlier.²⁶ The parallel expression, “the thing of,” followed by the genitive, is not found in Kant’s corpus, because it is (arguably) meaningless. Things are “for” us only in the sense that they are objects for us, that is, objects of our representations.

Understanding Kant’s concept of a thing, and how it differs from his concept of an object, requires understanding the pre-Kantian history of the term *Ding* in philosophical contexts, and its relation to two Latin terms, *ens* and *res*.

Wolff begins the “ontology” section of the so-called German metaphysics with the principle of contradiction (§10), defines the possible as that which contains no contradiction (§12), and then defines *Ding* as that which is possible, that is, that which contains no internal contradictions: “Anything that can be, it may be actual or not, we call a thing (*Ding*)” (*DM* §16). In the later Latin *Ontologia* he defines *ens* in the same way he had earlier defined *Ding*: “That which is capable of existing, and to which existence is therefore not repugnant, is called a thing [*ens*]” (*Ontologia* §134). Baumgarten follows suit, beginning the “Ontology” section of *Metaphysica* with this definition: “Ontology (*metaphysica, metaphysica universalis, philosophia prima*) is the science of the most general predicates of a thing [*ens*]” (*Metaphysica* §4). He goes

²⁴ Unless otherwise noted, “thing(s)” translates *Ding(e)*. When it translates *Sache* I make that explicit. Readers without German should note that “something” sometimes translates *etwas*, which lacks any obvious etymological connection to *Ding* or *Sache*.

²⁵ E.g. B70, B457, B471.

²⁶ E.g. B347, B742, *KU*, 5:220.

on to make clear that by *ens* he means any possible being, that is, one that does not contain a contradiction among its determinations (*Metaphysica* §8).²⁷

Another Latin term that is sometimes translated as *Ding* in German is *res*. In the *Ontologia* Wolff defines it as follows: “Whatever is, or can be conceived to be, is called thing (*res*), insofar as it is something (*aliquid*); so that it therefore can be defined by this, that it is something. And so to the scholastics, *realitas* and *quidditas* are synonyms” (*Ontologia* §243). Wolff is here referring to a standard scholastic identification of *res* as a locus of *realitas*. For reasons of space I cannot here trace the story of how this scholastic notion of *realitas* makes its way to Wolff and Baumgarten via Leibniz, so I will just cut to the conclusion: Wolff and Baumgarten both think that the essence of an *ens* must include reality, where reality is real determination (e.g. knowledge, light), as opposed to its mere absence (e.g. ignorance, darkness). Reality (*realitas*) comes in degrees (one thing can be more real than another) and the possession of a degree of reality is not grounded in the reality of one’s parts (even a simple thing can have a degree of reality).²⁸ Reality is, to use Baumgarten’s term, an “intensive quantity.”²⁹ An *ens* with *realitas* is a *res*, and *realitas* constitutes the *res*-ness of *res*, the thinghood of things (*res*).³⁰

We have to be careful about the relation of these two “thing” concepts, however. The question of whether *ens* and *res* are “convertible,” or whether *ens* is a broader concept, was highly contentious in scholastic philosophy.³¹ Whereas Wolff gives a different definition of *res* (locus of *realitas*) than of *ens* (containing no contradictions), both he and Baumgarten explicitly claim at points that every *ens* has (infinite or finite) reality, and thus is a *res*.³² However, in other contexts, they are willing to acknowledge a wider sense of *ens* in which not every *ens* is a *res*.³³ This wider sense includes beings like the *ens fictum*, *ens rationis*, or *ens imaginarium*, which, because they exist merely in our representation of them, are not *res* properly speaking.³⁴ (They are *entia* because they can be thought without contradiction.) But even if *ens* and *res* are necessarily co-extensive, this does not mean they are the same concept: it is a substantive metaphysical thesis, not a mere conceptual identity, that every possible being is a locus of reality. More importantly, I will argue that these concepts are not “convertible” for Kant, because he accepts *entia* that are not *res*.

Kant is of course aware of this Wolffian usage of *Ding* to refer to any possible being whatsoever, for he himself uses it at various points. In the Mrongovius metaphysics lectures, he says “we now begin the science of the properties of all things (*Dinge*) in general, which is called ontology” (29:784) and in the announcement for his lectures for the winter semester 1765–66 he writes: “I shall then proceed to ontology, namely, the science which is concerned with the most general properties of all things (*Dinge*)” (*NEV*, 2:309). But this Wolffian use of *Ding*, on which it is a German equivalent of the

²⁷ I translate *ens* here as “thing” because Wolff himself identifies *ens* with *Ding*. However, I think it would be more accurate in general to render *ens* as “being” or “entity”; see Stang (2016b, p. 14 n. 8).

²⁸ *Metaphysica* §§135–36, 141, 248; *DM* §§106, 125, 154.

²⁹ *Metaphysica* §§165, 248.

³⁰ For a more complete history see Glezer (2018, chs. 1–3). For some of the scholastic background see Stone (n.d.).

³¹ See Courtine (2007a).

³² *Ontologia* §243, *Metaphysica* §§136, 248.

³³ As many scholastic thinkers did. See Courtine (2007a).

³⁴ *Ontologia* §141, *Metaphysica* §62.

Latin *ens*, persists into the *KrV* as well, for instance, in Kant's referring to the transcendental idea of God, the idea of a ground of all possibility, as the idea of the ground of "all things *überhaupt*" (B391).³⁵ God does not merely ground things with *realitas*; he grounds all (real) possibilities whatsoever. Kant's Critical distinction between logical and real possibility means we also need to distinguish between mere logical *Dinge* (objects of logically consistent concepts) and real *Dinge* (objects of really possible concepts), a point to which I will return momentarily.

But in some passages, Kant uses *Ding* in the narrower Wolff/Baumgarten sense of "res," locus of *realitas/Realität*. This is clearest in the cases where Kant identifies thinghood with reality itself:

Realitas cannot be translated properly into German. It really means *Dingheit, Sachheit*.³⁶
(*V-Met/Volckmann*, 28:1146)

Each thing is reality (*ein jedes Ding ist Realität*). Thinghood, so to speak, consists solely of reality (*beruht bloß auf Realität*). The perfection of a thing in general is nothing other than the magnitude of reality. (*V-Met-L./Pölitz*, 28:560)

Metaphysical perfection consists in reality. Reality, or thinghood, is, that [*sic*] that something is perfect as a thing (*ist, daß etwas als ein Ding vollkommen sey*).
(*V-Met/L./Pölitz*, 28:211)

Kant agrees with Wolff that *realitas* is what makes a thing (*res*) a thing; *realitas* is thinghood. But Kant transforms the Leibnizian conception of *realitas*, that is, intensive degree of reality, and identifies it specifically with intensive magnitude of causal force.³⁷ Whereas Leibniz, Baumgarten, and in some moments Wolff as well, deny that real substances can causally interact, Kant was a proponent of real influx from his earliest publications onwards.³⁸ The forces in substances, their realities, are not merely forces of perception and appetite (as they are for Leibniz); they are real forces of interaction that bind substances into a world. If reality is thinghood, as Kant claims in these passages, then a thing is something that, as such, has an intensive degree of causal force.

There are numerous passages in which Kant clearly means *Ding* in this more concrete, active sense to refer to beings with an intensive degree of force:

The proposition "the thing (the substance) is a force," instead of the entirely natural one "the substance has a force," contradicts all ontological concepts and has very detrimental consequences for metaphysics. (*ÜE*, 8:225 n.)

³⁵ Cf. *V-Th/Pölitz*, 28:999.

³⁶ Cf. *V-Met/Dohna*, 28:635, 664.

³⁷ Admittedly, in the Anticipations of Perception "reality" is originally predicated of the sensory matter of perception (A167/B208). But Kant goes on to attribute *realitas phaenomenon* to the object of sensation, i.e., the forces in objects that cause sensations (cf. A143/B182, A174/B216, A207/B253, A265/B320–21). Kant remarks at one point that not every reality has a degree; I take this to be a reference to God, the *ens realissimum*, whose reality, being infinite, has no degree because it has no limitation (*HN*, 23:29).

³⁸ See Watkins (2005).

The unity of a thing alone must have a fundamental force [*Grundkraft*], of which everything can be derived; e.g. because the soul is a simple entity [*Wesen*], it must have an original fundamental force, from which all others derives, even though we cannot derive all of them from the fundamental force. (*V-Met/K*, 28:1523)³⁹

In all of these passages, *Ding* refers to a being that has a force, that is, an intensively determinable degree of causal power. In this usage Kant is treating *Ding* as the German equivalent of *res*. Recall the passage from earlier: “*Realitas* cannot be translated properly into German. It really means *Dingheit, Sachheit*” (*V-Th/Volckmann*, 28:1146). If *realitas* (*Realität*) is thinghood, then to be a thing, something with thinghood, is to be a *res*. Kant is here drawing on the same connection between *realitas* (*res*-ness, effectively) and *res* (that which has *realitas*) as Wolff did.⁴⁰

What relationship does Kant see between thing-as-*ens* (possible being) and thing-as-*res* (locus of force)? It is clear that they are neither extensionally nor intensionally equivalent for Kant. In the Table of Nothings, Kant gives noumena as an example of *ens rationis* and space and time as examples of *ens imaginarium*, the former because they “cannot be counted under the possibilities, though they should not for that reason be taken to be impossible” (A291/B347) and the latter because they are not substances and thus lack causal forces, that is, reality, thinghood. Since noumena are logically, but not really possible, while space and time are not only logically but really possible as well, this means that *ens* here means the more general notion, that which does not contain a contradiction (what is not *nihil negativum*). So for Kant there are *entia*, both logical and real possibilities, that are not *res*, loci of causal force. The more important interpretative point is that Kant will sometimes use *Ding* to mean the more general notion of *ens* (whatever is possible, logically or real) and sometimes in the more demanding sense of *res* (locus of intensive degree of causal force, *realitas/Realität*).

This prompts the question, in the famous phrase *Dinge an sich selbst*, what sense of *Ding* does Kant intend? Insofar as the concept <things in themselves> is a logically consistent concept, this is a concept of things in at least the minimal Wolff/Baumgarten sense of that which lacks internally contradictory predicates. But I think it is also clear that Kant means *Ding* in such contexts in a more ontologically robust sense. He means that this is a concept of a kind of real beings, of things endowed with intensive degrees of causal force that appear to us by causally affecting our sensibility.⁴¹ Consider, for instance, that Kant seems to use the expressions “*Sache(n) an sich selbst*” and “*Ding(e) an sich selbst*” interchangeably, for example: “because in both propositions [that the soul is determined and that it is free – NS] I would have taken the soul in just the same meaning, namely as a thing in general (as a thing in itself [*Sache an sich selbst*]), and without prior critique, [...]” (Bxxvii).⁴² Recall further Kant’s equation of *Sachheit* with *Dingheit* and *realitas* (28:1146, above); by

³⁹ Cf. *V-Met/Herder*, 28:39; *V-Met/Schön*, 514; *V-Met/Mron*, 29:770, 772, 796.

⁴⁰ Again, see Courtine (2007b).

⁴¹ See A190/B235, A387, A494/B522; *Prolog*, 4:289, 4:314, 4:318; *GMS*, 4:451; and, especially, *ÜE*, 8:215. The definitive case for attributing “noumenal affection” to Kant remains the classic study Adickes (1924, ch. 3).

⁴² Cf. Bxx, Bxxxvii, B42–43, A241, B289, B423 n., A479/B507, A491/B519.

referring to things in themselves as *Sache an sich selbst* Kant is underlining the fact that they are concrete beings with an intensive degree of reality.

That “things in themselves” refers to things as *res* is directly confirmed in Kant’s remarks on Jakob’s *Examination of Mendelssohn’s Morgenstunden*. Responding to the criticism that he has not specified what more there is to things “as they are in themselves” than the sensible properties we cognize, Kant writes:

But now one will demand that I indicate such properties and effective forces, so that one could distinguish them and through them the things in themselves from mere appearances. My answer is: this has already been done and been done by yourself. Consider only how you bring about the concept of God as highest intelligence. You think in it nothing but true reality, i.e., something that is not only opposed to negations (as one ordinarily believes) but also and primarily to realities in the appearance (*realitas phaenomenon*), such as all realities that have to be given to us through senses and are therefore called *realitas apparens* (although not with an entirely suitable expression). Now diminish all these realities (understanding, will, blessedness, might, etc.) in terms of degree, they will still remain the same in terms of kind (quality), and you will have properties of the things in themselves that you can apply to other things outside of God. (8:154)⁴³

To readers who want to know what unknowable properties *Dinge an sich selbst* have, Kant replies that one merely has to think of God, the thing with the maximum reality, and think of limited degrees of his reality. Whereas, for instance, we think of God as having infinite power to act or infinite intellect, we think of things in themselves as having finite limitations of that power and that intellect. Where God has infinite reality, things in themselves have finite realities. There is also intensive degree of reality in appearance, but Kant here describes that as a “property of a thing as object of the senses.” In order to make sense of that locution, though, we will need to understand what it is for a thing to be an object of our senses. But first we must get clear on the notion of an object that plays the key role in the Indiscernibility arguments from the Introduction.

4. Objects, Variables, Intuition

Up to this point, I have argued that the Kantian concepts *<object>* and *<thing>* should be carefully distinguished. *<Object>* is a semantic-cognitive concept, the concept of what a representation is “of.” *<Thing>* is a metaphysical concept, the concept of a locus of a force that possesses an intensive degree of reality. But this will seem to many readers far afield of my original quarry, the debate between Identity and Non-Identity readings of Kant’s transcendental idealism.

To bring this back to the original topic, in this section I examine the concept of object that played the key role in the various Indiscernibility arguments for the

⁴³ Thanks to Andy Stephenson for pressing me to clarify my reading of this passage.

Non-Identity reading, the so-called “quantificational” concept of an object as the value of a bound variable. In this section, I will argue that there is such a concept in Kant, and it is tightly tied to the concept of the object of an intuition.⁴⁴

Recall Kant’s formulations of the logical form of judgment from the *Jäsche* logic:

To everything x , to which the concept of body ($a+b$) belongs, belongs also extension (b), is an example of an analytic proposition. To everything x , to which the concept of body ($a+b$) belongs, belongs also attraction (c), is an example of a synthetic proposition. (*Log*, 9:111)⁴⁵

Replacing Kant’s style of concept variables (a, b) with our own (F, G), we can say that the form common to both of Kant’s examples of judgment is: to everything x , to which the concept F belongs, belongs also the concept G . In terms of Kant’s table of logical functions of judgment, both of these judgments are universal in quantity (they are about all x to which the concept F belongs), affirmative in quality (they affirm a predicate G rather than deny it), and categorical in relation (they express a relation between two concepts rather than between two or more judgments). The modality of the judgment concerns whether we merely entertain it (problematic), assert it (assertoric), or judge it as the consequence of a rule (apodictic), and will not concern us further here. The logical form of such (universal, affirmative, categorical) judgments cannot be $\forall x(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$ for they are categorical judgments, and Kant tells us that categorical judgments do not involve the relation of antecedent to consequent.⁴⁶ The most natural alternative is to take the logical form of these judgments in general to be $\forall x_{Fx} Gx$, where $\forall x_{Fx}$ abbreviates the restricted quantifier expression “every x such that Fx ” that ranges only over objects that fall under the concept F .

This is the logical form of universal affirmative categorical judgments, including judgments about objects we cannot cognize. It expresses a relation between concepts, but one that makes irreducible reference to objects: all of the objects that fall under the subject concept F fall under the predicate concept G .⁴⁷ But we can also cognize a given object under a concept. For instance, we cognize an object under the subject concept F and thereby, given our judgment that $\forall x_{Fx} Gx$, cognize that object under G as well.⁴⁸ In Kant’s terminology, the former is the “subsumption” of an object under a concept, while the judgment is a “subsumption” of one concept under another.

⁴⁴ The section draws on Stang (2021a). Readers interested in the full argument are referred to that paper; here I suppress some of the details for the sake of brevity. In that paper, and elsewhere (esp. Stang, 2016b) I identify the “quantificational” notion of an object of with the notion of an object that can be posited in what Kant calls “absolute positing.” In this chapter I focus on the “quantificational” notion of an object that can be the value of the variable of judgment. I think these notions are ultimately identical for Kant, but I will not argue that here.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Refl.* 3127 (16:671), which is presumably the *Reflexion Jäsche* drew on when composing this passage from *Logik*. Likewise, see 9:108 in the *Jäsche Logik* and *Refl.* 3096 (16:657–58), a possible source. See also *Refl.* 3062 (16:629) and 4634 (17:616).

⁴⁶ *Log*, 9:105. This constitutes a correction of the interpretation offered in some of my earlier work.

⁴⁷ Béatrice Longuenesse gives this aspect of Kant’s definition of judgment a central place in her interpretation; see esp. Longuenesse (1997, pp. 87, 107).

⁴⁸ Cf. Kant’s claim that judgment is “mediate” cognition of objects (A68/B93), i.e., cognition of them under the predicate “by means of” subsuming them under the subject.

For the sake of brevity, I will refer to the former as “subsumptions” simpliciter. Subsumptions (in my sense) and judgments are distinct mental acts. Judgment is a relation between concepts, while subsumption relates an object to a concept. We have seen the logical form of judgment, at least in the case of universal affirmative categorical judgment. The logical form of object subsumption is Fa ; it involves thinking of a single object a that it falls under the concept F . The object is represented here by the name a rather than a variable because we do not subsume objects in general, but individual objects.⁴⁹ If we cognize, not just that a falls under F but that *all* objects fall under F , then we are judging, that is, judging that $\forall xFx$. If we cognize that *this* F falls under some further predicate, say G , we are making a singular judgment.⁵⁰ But in order for that singular judgment about a to be possible, we must have subsumed a under F , that is, we must have thought that Fa . The role of sensibility is to “give” us the object a ; the role of the understanding is to allow us to think of a that it is F . Without concepts we would be given objects but not be able to think them; without intuition, we would be able to think about relations between concepts but not subsume any objects under them.

This means that intuition is the means by which the variable x in the logical form of judgment is assigned an object. To go from a general judgment of the form $\forall x_{Fx}Gx$ to the thought Ga one subsumes a under F and thereby under G —but in order to do this one must first intuit a itself. This is not an epistemic point about the conditions under which one could know Ga ; it is a semantic point about the relations between the variable of judgment, intuition, and objects. The variable of judgment x can be assigned objects as values by intuition, and only by intuition. To judge that $\forall x_{Fx}Gx$ is to judge that any object that falls under F also falls under G , or, equivalently, that any F -object that is assigned to the variable x by an intuition also falls under G .

Some readers will object that my talk of intuitions “assigning” objects to the variable of judgment is anachronistic; it imports, they will say, too much of the Fregean function-argument conception of judgment and the Quinean conception of objects as values of bound variables. But Frege did not invent the concept of variables (they were already known to Diophantus of Alexandria), and Kant himself builds an object variable into the very form of judgment.⁵¹ Internal to the idea of an object variable is

⁴⁹ Of course we do so in universal judgments, i.e., universal concept subsumptions, but by “subsumption,” recall, I mean exclusively object subsumptions, subsumptions of an object under a concept.

⁵⁰ The difference between “ Ga ” and “This F is G ” (where *this* $F = a$) is that the former subsumes an object directly under a concept, while the latter subsumes a single instance of a subject concept under a predicate. Only the latter is a singular judgment, because only it involves two concepts, a subject and a predicate. This is obscured somewhat by the fact that Kant uses the same sentence (“Cajus is mortal”) to illustrate singular judgment (*Log*, 9:102), and the subsumption of an object under a concept (*V-Lo/Dohna*, 24:703). But they cannot be the same, because singular judgments, being judgments, involve two concepts. The subsumption of an object under a concept, by definition, involves one object and one concept. So the logical form of the object subsumption “Cajus is mortal” is Fa , while the logical form of the singular judgment is “This F (=this Cajus) is mortal.” In the former, “Cajus” is a name; in the latter, “Cajus” is a general concept ($\langle \text{Cajus} \rangle$) used singularly.

⁵¹ Unlike Frege, for whom the basic form of judgment is function argument, Fa . So it would be more accurate to say that, on my interpretation, Kant’s theory of *object subsumption* anticipates the Fregean theory of judgment. But a great difference, and thus a great deal of work for Frege to do, remains: first the recognition that the atomic form of judgment is Fa as well as the generalized theory of relational

the idea of instantiating that variable with a particular object, that is, letting that object be the “value” of that variable (and *mutatis mutandis* for variables for numbers.) So the only thing I have attributed to Kant over and above what is contained in the very concept of an object variable is the idea that intuition is the representational capacity by which we are able to instantiate the concepts contained in judgments and assign objects as the value of the variable x , that is, to go from $\forall x_{Fx} Gx$ to the cognition that a (an object we intuit) is F , and thence to the cognition that a is G . Likewise, it is because objects of intuition are values of the variable of judgment that we can go from the cognition that the object of intuition a is F and the universal judgment $\forall x_{Fx} Gx$ to the singular judgment that *this* F (namely, a) is G . Although I have used some modern terminology (“assigning”) and have emphasized the object variable in judgment more than some commentators do, there is nothing problematically anachronistic here.

We can judge not just about objects we can intuit and cognize, but about all objects in general. Given the logical form of judgments, this means the variable of judgment x can take as values objects we cannot intuit. Otherwise we would be unable to even entertain (problematic) judgments about all objects whatsoever. But this means, further, that, built into the very form of judgment itself is the notion of “object” that is relevant to the Indiscernibility arguments from section 1: what can be the value of the variable x in judgment (in contemporary terms, what can be the value of a bound variable). Thus, the notion involved in those arguments and the debate about whether appearances and things in themselves are “the same objects” is a notion of object present in Kant’s philosophy. We have also seen that it is not the only such notion (e.g. the notion of an “object of representation in general” from section 2).

But recall that, for Kant, objects are always objects *for some representational capacity*. The concept “object of representation” is the most general concept of transcendental philosophy. So when we say we can judge about objects we cannot intuit, values of the variable x of judgment, we must ask: of which capacity are they objects? By definition they cannot be objects of our intuitions, objects of our sensible capacity. But nor can they solely be objects of our intellectual capacity, understanding. If we possessed only the capacity of understanding, we would only represent concepts, *not* the values of x in judgments and cognitions. Logically, the object of the understanding by itself cannot fill in for the variable x of judgment. If we try to substitute a concept G for the variable x in the judgment $\forall x Fx$, we get nonsense: $G(F)$. The only objects that can substitute for the variable x of judgment are singular instances of concepts (concept instantiators, let us say), rather than concepts themselves. But I have said that objects we intuit, by definition, cannot so substitute in judgments about non-sensible objects. So what substitutes for the variable x of judgment are objects of singular representation, but not objects of our sensible singular representation (intuition): objects of non-sensible singular representation, non-sensible intuition. We cannot intuit such objects; we cannot think *de re* of any one of them that *it* falls under a concept. But we have the concept “non-sensible intuition” and we can entertain thoughts about objects we cannot intuit by thinking of them as objects of

predicates and quantifiers binding their variables. My interpretation does not collapse Kant and Frege to any problematic degree.

such intuition. Because we cannot intuit such objects, we cannot turn these judgments into cognitions. We cannot, so to speak, instantiate them by assigning an object to the variable x .⁵² We cannot subsume such objects under our concepts of them (though we can subsume our concepts of them under other concepts). But we have the concept of the kind of intellect that could do this, one that possesses non-sensible or “intellectual” intuition. This is how we entertain thoughts about non-sensible objects. This is how we think of objects we cannot intuit as possible values of the variable x in our judgments.⁵³

We can formulate to ourselves at least two kinds of judgments that are universal in quantity: judgments about *all* sensible objects and judgments about *all* non-sensible objects. Given the logical form of judgment in general, this means we have at least two restricted quantifier expressions: “for all sensible objects” ($\forall x_s$) and “for all non-sensible objects” ($\forall x_{NS}$). Judgments prefaced by the first quantifier are judgments about objects we can cognize *de re* by specifying the variable with respect to an object given in intuition. Judgments prefaced by the second quantifier are judgments of objects we cannot intuit or cognize. But we can think of them as being about *objects* (singular instances of concepts) by thinking of the variable x as being able to be instantiated by an object for a non-sensible intellect. A non-sensible intellect could cognize a singular instance of the concepts involved in such judgments. In section 2 I noted that “object” is a very broad notion for Kant. In what follows, unless stated otherwise explicitly, “object” will mean exclusively: what can be the value of x in the variable of judgment, that is, a singular instance of a concept.

5. The Identity and Distinctness of Objects

5.1 The Sensible Case

The identity relation that figured in the Indiscernibility arguments in Marshall (2013) and Stang (2014) was numerical identity, a relation between objects. Before we consider whether that relation can obtain between sensible objects (phenomena) and non-sensible objects (noumena), we should first consider how we cognize numerical identity and distinctness in the case of sensible objects.

Kant’s most complete discussion of the identity and distinctness of sensible objects occurs in the “Amphiboly” section of the *KrV*. His point there is that, although the principle of the identity of indiscernibles (PII) applies to objects of purely conceptual representation, it does not apply to objects in space and time: there can be objects in space and time that fall under all and only the same general concepts, but which are nonetheless numerically distinct. We cognize the numerical distinctness

⁵² We may be able to do this in the course of a demonstration (“Let x be a noumenon...”), as long as we later discharge the universal instantiation by another universal generalization (“Therefore, all noumena are such that” etc.), i.e., as long as the conclusion of the demonstration is not an object subsumption or a singular judgment. See Hintikka (1968) for discussion.

⁵³ Some readers will worry that this threatens to collapse the negative and positive concepts of noumena (respectively, the concepts of what is not the object of sensible intuition, and what is the object of a non-sensible intuition.) I respond to this concern in Stang (2021a).

of spatiotemporal objects by intuiting them in different locations simultaneously: “Thus, in the case of two drops of water one can completely abstract from all inner difference (of quality and quantity), and it is enough that they be intuited in different places at the same time in order for them to be held to be numerically different” (A263–64/B319–20). I want to make three remarks about this.

First, space and time, as forms of intuition, are the necessary conditions for cognizing numerically distinct but qualitatively identical objects. If our representations of space and time were conceptual, Kant thinks, then we would represent the spatiotemporal locations of objects by conceptually representing their intrinsic properties, and this would leave us unable to represent intrinsic duplicates as being in different locations simultaneously. It is because the representations of space and time are irreducible to conceptual representation of objects and their intrinsic states that we can cognize intrinsic duplicates that are simultaneously in distinct locations. And this in turn, as the passage quoted above shows, makes it possible for us to cognize numerically distinct intrinsic duplicates in space and time.⁵⁴

Second, it follows that the numerically distinct intrinsic duplicates we cognize are objects of intuition. Kant’s point in the Amphiboly is that we can cognize objects that violate the PII because intuition is irreducible to conceptualization. If we had only a conceptual capacity for representation, all objects of our cognition would be objects of concepts alone, and objects of concepts alone obey the PII. If two objects have all of the same intrinsic properties then they fall under all and only the same concepts; they are one and the same conceptual object, that is, one and the same object of conceptual representation, and so cannot be represented as distinct using concepts alone.⁵⁵ This means that the objects we cognize as violating the PII are objects that can take the value of the variable *x* in judgment *and* be intuited by us.

Third, while these PII-violating objects are objects of intuition they are not objects of intuition *alone*. To cognize them as violating the PII we must apply concepts to them; they are objects of intuitions *and* concepts, that is, objects of cognition, and this means that the categories are involved in cognizing their numerical identity and distinctness. The very cognitive situation Kant describes in the Amphiboly—cognizing the numerical distinctness of two water drops by intuiting them in distinct locations “at the same time” (A263–64/B319–20)—requires the capacity to cognize the difference between successive perceptions of simultaneous objects in different locations (which are therefore numerically distinct) and successive perceptions of a succession in one and the same object, that is, its moving (perhaps very quickly) from one location to another. If we could not cognize this difference then we could not cognize two objects as being in distinct locations simultaneously. But this difference (between successive perceptions of simultaneous objects and successive perceptions of successive states in the same object, or, more generally, between subjective and objective succession) is the very difference around which the argument of the Analogies of Experience turns. To bring this back to the Amphiboly, this means that

⁵⁴ A264/B320, A272/B328.

⁵⁵ This raises the question of why we cannot represent intrinsic duplicates through purely conceptually representable external relations (relations that do not supervene on their intrinsic properties), but that would take us too far afield. See Langton (1998) for more on this issue.

in order to represent spatial objects as simultaneously in different locations, even though our perceptions of them are successive, we must cognize them using the dynamical categories: <substance-accident>, <cause-effect>, and <reciprocal action>.⁵⁶

More generally, the discursive and spatiotemporal nature of our intellects determines the cognitive conditions under which we cognize the identity and distinctness of objects: we passively receive objects of intuition, but in order to cognize them (in particular, to cognize them in respect of identity and difference) we must, through a spontaneous exercise of the faculty of understanding, apply a priori concepts to the passive deliverances of sensibility.

5.2 The Non-Sensible Case

This is how discursive spatiotemporal intellects like ours cognize objects in respect of (numerical) identity and difference. For a non-discursive or “intuitive” intellect, matters are quite different. An intellect with non-sensible or “intellectual” intuition does not passively receive its objects by being affected by them; rather it is active in intuition.⁵⁷ Non-sensible intuition generates or creates its own object.⁵⁸ Kant says virtually nothing about how an intuitive intellect cognizes sameness and difference among its objects, so my remarks about this will necessarily be somewhat speculative. One possible model would be this: if x and y are objects of non-sensible intuition (positive noumena), an intuitive intellect cognizes them as identical insofar as it cognizes the act that generates x as the very same act that generates y , and as distinct when it cognizes them as distinct acts (even if one is a proper part of the other, or both are proper parts of a single holistic creative act).⁵⁹ This, of course, pushes the question of how a non-discursive intellect cognizes the identity and difference of the objects of its cognition back onto the question of how such an intellect cognizes the identity and difference of those very acts of cognition. My aim here is not to defend this model of

⁵⁶ It might be objected that in the Amphiboly Kant seems to have the following situation in mind: simultaneously intuiting two objects in different locations in one and the same intuitive manifold. But if our ability to represent simultaneous intrinsic duplicates as distinct were dependent on our happening to intuit them simultaneously, then by the argument of the third Analogy, we would not be experiencing these objects, but only perceiving them, i.e., we would not be cognizing an objectively valid distinction between the (contingent) subjective simultaneity of our intuitions of them and their (necessary) objective simultaneity. Much more could be said here, but in the interests of brevity I will leave it aside.

⁵⁷ A note about terminology: “intellectual intuition” refers to a kind of intuition, i.e., non-sensible intuition. “Intuitive intellect” refers to a kind of intellect. Förster (2011) argues that, not only should these concepts be kept distinct, it is in principle possible for them to be extensionally distinct (i.e., intuitive intellect without intellectual intuition). Leech (2014) argues, on the contrary, that any being with one has the other. While I sided with Leech in Stang (2016b), I am now more sympathetic to Förster’s view. For the purposes of this chapter, though, I am going to stipulate that they are co-extensive by considering only beings that have both intuitive intellect *and* intellectual intuition.

⁵⁸ The term *intellektuelle Anschauung* occurs quite frequently in Kant’s writings; the main discussion is in the “Phenomena and noumena” section (A252–56, B307–13; cf. Kant’s handwritten marginal notes at A248, 23:36). The term *anschauliche Verstand* occurs less frequently; in the *KrV*, see B135, B138–39, B145, B149, and B159. For a more complete set of references, see Stang (2016b, p. 300 n. 6).

⁵⁹ In *KU* §76 Kant seems to claim that an intuitive intellect would cognize the parts in virtue of cognizing the whole. If, therefore, the intuitive intellect’s cognition generates or grounds its object, it would follow that it must cognize its acts of cognition as themselves standing in holistic mereological relations (i.e., relations in which the whole is prior to the parts).

non-sensible cognition of identity and difference, but merely to point out that this is a topic about which we can entertain logically consistent thoughts and examine their logical relations, even though none of our thoughts rise to the level of cognition, much less of knowledge. These are logically possible thoughts, even if we cannot know, through theoretical means, whether they correspond to real possibilities, much less what the ground of that real possibility is.

What is more, while these thoughts are “speculative” in Kant’s sense (they concern objects beyond the limits of experience) they are not idle speculation, for they are intimately bound up with his conception of God as the ground of the (real) possibility of the highest good. The highest good is the state of affairs in which agents enjoy happiness in proportion to *and because of* the moral goodness of their noumenal wills. Kant explicitly points out that, in order to ground the real possibility of this state, God must be able to cognize the moral goodness of noumenal wills.⁶⁰ Although Kant does not state this explicitly, God must also be able to cognize identity and difference *among* noumenal wills. Otherwise, he would not be able to cognize me as worthy of happiness in proportion to the goodness of the noumenal character of *my* will, as opposed to the noumenal character of another’s. If God is unable to “distinguish” (i.e., cognize identity and difference among) noumenal wills, then he is unable to make it the case that agents are happy in proportion to *and because of* their moral goodness, as opposed to the moral goodness of others. Even if the model suggested above is wrong (cognition of the identity/distinctness of objects by means of cognition of the identity/distinctness of the acts of creating them), the key point is that the thought $x = y$ can have cognitive content for a non-discursive, that is, intuitive, intellect, when x and y are positive noumena (and must have such content for God).⁶¹

5.3 The Mixed Case

Kant gives an intricate account of how our discursive spatiotemporal intellect cognizes the numerical identity and distinctness of phenomena; the divine intuitive intellect must cognize numerical identity and distinctness of (positive) noumena, but we can do no more than speculate as to how. However, we lack even the representational resources to speculate, across the sensible-intelligible divide, about numerical identity or distinctness between phenomena and noumena. Where x is a sensible object and y is a non-sensible object we lack the representational resources to think of a kind of intellect that could entertain the content $x = y$.⁶² This is because in saying that x is a sensible object and y is a non-sensible object we are implicitly thinking of these variables as bound by quantifiers: the variable x is bound by a quantifier for sensible objects and y is bound by a quantifier for non-sensible objects.⁶³ To think of

⁶⁰ *KpV*, 5:123.

⁶¹ This point is made very well in Schafer (forthcoming).

⁶² Consequently we lack the representational resources to entertain the thought that $x = y$ when both variables are bound by unrestricted quantifiers, i.e., to entertain this thought we must implicitly restrict both quantifiers either to sensible objects or to non-sensible objects.

⁶³ As, for instance, in both the Identity and Non-Identity readings, where \exists_s and \forall_s are quantifiers that range over sensible objects, and \exists_N and \forall_N are quantifiers that range over non-sensible objects:

a variable as bound by a quantifier is to think of it as assignable an object as a value.⁶⁴ And we saw in section 6 that it is the role of intuition to assign objects as values to variables. This is why the universal quantifier for all objects $\forall x$ can be glossed as “for all objects of intuition in general”; likewise, the universal quantifier for sensible objects $\forall x_s$ can be glossed “for all objects of sensible intuition,” and the universal quantifier for non-sensible $\forall x_N$ objects can be glossed “for all objects of non-sensible intuition.”⁶⁵ We think of objects as being possible values for the variable x of judgment by thinking of them as possible objects of intuition: intuition in general, or specifically sensible or non-sensible intuition.

But this means that in the identity statement $x = y$, if x is bound by a quantifier for non-sensible objects (or assigned a non-sensible object as a value) and y is bound by a quantifier for sensible objects (or assigned a sensible object as a value), we lack the concept of a kind of intellect that could entertain such a content.⁶⁶ This is because we lack the concept of a kind of intellect that could intuit objects assignable as values to both variables. We have the concept of a discursive intellect (i.e., an intellect with sensible intuition), and the concept of a non-discursive, that is, intuitive, intellect (i.e., an intellect with non-sensible intuition). We have no concept of a third kind of intellect that intuits both kinds of objects. The reason for this is simple: a discursive intellect must be receptive (capable of being affected by an object), but an intuitive intellect cannot be receptive. So no one intellect can intuit both sensible and non-sensible objects. Therefore, no one intellect can cognize of a sensible object x and a non-sensible object y either that $x = y$ or $x \neq y$. Where the variables are taken as above, neither $x = y$ nor $x \neq y$ is a content that any intellect can represent or entertain because there is no intellect that can intuit an object or objects that would be values of both variables.⁶⁷

But if we lack the concept of a kind of intellect that can represent this content, then we lack the concept of such content altogether, for talk of “content” is meaningful only if we have at least the concept of a kind of intellect that would represent that content. “Content” after all, is, conceptually, a relative term: a content is a content *of something*, a representation. It makes as little sense to talk of contents, in the complete absence of even a concept of what those contents would be the contents *of*, as it

(Identity) $\forall_s x [\exists_N y (x = y)]$

(Non-Identity) $\forall_s x [\forall_N y (x \neq y)]$

⁶⁴ The point holds even if we do not think of the variables implicitly as bound. For an unbound variable is a variable that can be bound, i.e., can be assigned an object as a value. The conceptual connection between variables and q-objects remains if the variable is not bound.

⁶⁵ This raises the worry that there is no room, conceptually, for “merely negative noumena,” i.e., objects that are negative noumena but not positive noumena. See Stang (2021a) for discussion.

⁶⁶ But haven’t we been entertaining such contents all along, implicitly in the original Non-Identity arguments and explicitly in note 56 above? I think I am committed to saying that in doing so we wrote down apparently well-formed formulas to which no content can be attached. Thanks to Andy Stephenson for pressing me on this.

⁶⁷ This entails that God cannot cognize spatiotemporal objects, which might appear to conflict with Kant’s doctrine of divine omniscience (cf. *V-Phil-Th/Pöhlitz*, 28:1012). To anticipate slightly, I will argue that the divine intellect cognizes all things but not all objects, and since objects are metaphysically downstream of things (they are objects for things that have intellects, minds), in doing so he cognizes everything fundamental. See Marshall (2018) for a similar defense of divine omniscience in Kant.

does to speak of matter without even a concept of a form that might en-form that matter. This has no psychologistic implications, however, for it does not require that there *be* such an intellect, much less that it be *our* intellect (much less that contents be private, subjective states of intellects). So it does not entail that all contents are contents of some actual intellect, much less contents of our intellects. It requires merely that coherent talk of content of a certain kind be conceptually dependent upon a coherent concept of a kind of intellect that could represent that content.

Since the thought of a content is conceptually dependent upon the concept of the kind of intellect that could represent such content (i.e., whose representations it could be the content of) we lack the conceptual resources to think of a content without thinking of a kind of intellect that would represent such content. Since we lack the concept of a kind of intellect (a kind of intellect that would intuit both sensible and non-sensible objects), we lack the conceptual resources to think of a kind of content that would be represented by such an intellect, that is, a kind of content that cannot be represented by discursive or non-discursive intellect.⁶⁸ Since the thought of identity or distinctness between sensible and non-sensible objects is such a content, we lack the conceptual resources to think of this content.

In the previous two paragraphs I have sketched an argument for a kind of “conceptual” idealism about content: the concept of a content is the concept of the content of some kind of intellect, so to even think about content of some kind we need a concept of the kind of intellect that would entertain such content.⁶⁹ But, regardless of what one thinks of this as a piece of philosophy, is there any evidence that Kant would agree? A complete defense of this interpretation of Kant would require more space than I have here, so I will limit myself to arguing, on the basis of very general features of Kant’s philosophy, that this is the natural way to read him.

Recall that the highest concept of transcendental philosophy is *<object of representation>*. This means that, of anything in transcendental philosophy, the questions “Of what representation is it the object? And whose representation?” must have answers. I have argued that identity relations between sensible and non-sensible objects cannot be the objects (contents) of any of our representations, nor can they be the objects (contents) of a non-sensible intellect. This means that there is no such object, no such relation. It is not that there are inscrutable relations of identity and distinctness between phenomena and noumena. There are simply no such relations.⁷⁰

Some readers will remain unsatisfied. Why cannot there be unrepresentable facts or propositions? First, somewhat pedantically, a “proposition” (*Satz*) for Kant is an assertoric judgment, and a judgment is an act of conceptual combination by a discursive intellect. So an unrepresentable proposition makes as little sense as an

⁶⁸ For now the inconceivability of a third kind of intellect constitutes a kind of simplifying assumption. Below in section 8, I will lift this assumption by arguing, in effect, that our own intellects constitute a kind of “third” intellect.

⁶⁹ This argument is given in greater detail in Stang (2017).

⁷⁰ I want to emphasize that I am not denying that we can quantify over all objects whatsoever—we do so via the concept of intuition in general, either abstracting from the difference between sensible and intellectual intuition, or disjoining the two concepts.

unjudgeable judgment, for Kant.⁷¹ Likewise, an unknowable fact is a *contradictio in adjecto*, for Kant defines a “fact” as what can be proved, either through experience or pure reason.⁷² This leads me to my second point. For Kant to admit unrepresentable facts, relations, etc. would be for him to accept a kind of Platonism about broadly “semantic” entities that goes against the spirit of everything he says about broadly semantic phenomena (concepts, sense, meaning, etc.). Kant’s consistent approach to the “semantic,” from at least the Critical period onwards, is resolutely representationalist and anti-Platonist: his consistent approach is always to see the “semantic” as anchored in the representational acts of intellects, most importantly, in our intellects. Kant’s writings give scant encouragement to the reader who would find in them support for entities of a broadly “semantic” or “logical” nature (i.e., propositions, facts, properties, etc.) that are not contents of the representations of some possible intellect.⁷³ Thus, from a Kantian point of view, the fact that identity relations between sensible and non-sensible objects cannot be represented by either of the kinds of intellects of which we can form concepts (i.e., sensible, non-sensible) is excellent reason to think that no such identity relation is possible.

There is a long tradition in philosophy of distinguishing between, for instance, an object having a color other than red (e.g., a green apple), and an object being of the wrong logical type to have a color at all (e.g., the number 2).⁷⁴ In this spirit, I will say that sensible and non-sensible objects are not merely not identical; they are *non-identical*. It is literally *unthinkable* that they are identical.⁷⁵ There is no content to the thought that they are identical. In other words, the Non-Identity view is correct about the numerical identity relation between sensible and non-sensible *objects*.⁷⁶ It remains to be seen whether the Identity view might be correct, if interpreted as a claim about the relation of being the same *things*.

6. Distinct Objects, Same Things?

But before we turn to that issue, we need to understand why appearances are things in the first place. Given the conceptual separation between objects and things, it is by no means obvious that objects of experience are things (substantial loci of intensively

⁷¹ *Log*, 9:109. This does generate a potential problem: how can we meaningfully talk about noumena instantiating concepts, or some judgments about them being true, if the intuitive intellect that cognizes them cognizes them using neither concepts nor judgments? But I am inclined to think this is a problem for Kant, not for my interpretation. See McLear (forthcoming) for discussion.

⁷² *KU*, 5:468. See the entry “Tatsache” in Willaschek et al. (2015).

⁷³ See the entry “Eigenschaft” in Willaschek et al. (2015).

⁷⁴ For instance, *Prior Analytics* I.46.51b10 (quoted in Horn & Wansing, 2020).

⁷⁵ Readers will notice, however, that I am using the terms in the opposite of the way they are normally used. Typically, *not being F* refers to lacking the property of being F, while *being not-F* refers to having the negative property not-F. However, I have reversed them (so that *being non-identical* refers to failing to stand in the relation of identity) because the “not-identity” view does not exactly roll off the tongue. Thanks to Banafsheh Beizaei for pointing this out to me, and for pointing me to the sources cited in the previous note.

⁷⁶ At one point, Allais seems to endorse exactly this conclusion (2015, p. 72), but elsewhere she claims that the very same objects that have essentially manifestable properties also have *an sich* properties (pp. 72–73, 128, 130); see Stang (2016a) for critical discussion.

gradable causal force, *realitas*).⁷⁷ In fact, it will take some quite substantial argument in the Analogies for Kant to prove that objects of experience necessarily must be subsistent (1st Analogy) loci of force (2nd Analogy).⁷⁸ Combined with the Anticipations, this also constitutes an argument that objects of experience necessarily possess an intensive magnitude of causal force, *realitas*.⁷⁹ In my terminology, this amounts to an argument that objects of experience are necessarily *things*. Accordingly, Kant repeatedly predicates thinghood of objects of experience in the Analogies, for example: “However, the substratum of everything real, i.e., everything that belongs to the existence of *things*, is substance, of which everything that belongs to existence can be thought only as a determination” (B225, my emphasis).⁸⁰ The substances we experience in space, that persist through all time while their accidental determinations change, are *things*.⁸¹

We are now in a position to understand Kant’s controversial distinction between things in themselves and appearances:

We have sufficiently proved in the Transcendental Aesthetic that 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 (*Lehrbegriff*) I call transcendental idealism. The realist, in the transcendental sense, makes these modifications of our sensibility into things subsisting in themselves, and hence makes mere representations into things in themselves. (A490–91/B518–19; cf. A369)

Things, subsistent loci of force, do not, as such, depend upon being objects for us; they have an existence “grounded in itself,” which means that their existence does not depend upon how, or whether, they become objects for us (or whether this is even

⁷⁷ Consider two Kantian locutions: “things that appear” (to us) (e.g. A268/B324, A277/B333) or “things as they appear” (to us) (e.g. *MSI* §4; *V-Met/Dohna*, 28:653). Prima facie those locutions can be read in two different ways. “Things that appear” can be taken to refer to the things, namely, things in themselves, that appear to us as objects in space and time. Likewise, “things insofar as they appear” can refer to those same thing in themselves insofar as they stand in that relation to us. But we can also read these locutions as referring to appearances *as things*: things that we experience (things that appear) and those very things insofar as we experience them (things as they appear to us). See Oberst (2015).

⁷⁸ Cf. B341, A171/B213, *V-Met/L*, 28:316.

⁷⁹ Consider the statement of the Anticipations in the first edition: “In all appearances the sensation, and the real, which corresponds to it in the object (*realitas phaenomenon*), has an intensive magnitude, i.e., a degree” (A165). Cf. A168/B209, A264–65/B320–21. On my reading, the Anticipations prove that sensation has reality (intensive magnitude) and, together with the proofs of the Analogies, this shows that things have reality to the extent that they have the power to cause sensory reality. See, however, Glezer (2018) for a much more detailed account.

⁸⁰ A186/B229, B233.

⁸¹ This allows us to understand not only Kant’s (implicit or explicit) predication of thinghood of appearances but another Kantian locution as well, *Dinge in der Erscheinung*; see B229, B567, B609, and A400. *Dinge in der Erscheinung* can naturally be read as referring either to things in the “content” of appearance (i.e., objects experienced as things) or things “among” appearances (i.e., objects that are things). But these are equivalent. There are things in the “content” of appearance (i.e., the content of experience) if and only if there are appearances that are things, because, given transcendental idealism, the possibility of the latter (the possibility of objects being things) just is the possibility of the former (the possibility of our experiencing objects as things). See Oberst (2017) for discussion.

possible). Hence, these are “things in themselves.” These things can become objects for us in two distinct ways. We can represent them using pure concepts of the understanding (categories) alone, without relating those categories to sensible intuition. (That is what I was doing in the previous three sentences and what Kant is doing at 8:154, quoted above.) In the pure understanding we do not conceive of such things as depending for their existence upon our concepts of them; we conceive of them as existing “in themselves,” as independent of their being objects for us.

But these things (in themselves) can also become objects for us by sensibly affecting our sense organs, producing intuitions that we discursively combine to form experience (to simplify Kant’s complex story). Kant’s radical claim is that the objects of this experience exist only in virtue of being experienced, as he here writes: they “have outside our thoughts no existence grounded in itself.” The possibility of such objects is grounded in the possibility of our experiencing them. As we have seen, we necessarily experience objects as things, and hence objects of experience necessarily are things.⁸² But the existence of these things, and their very thinghood, depends upon their being objects of experience in a way that the existence and thinghood of things in themselves does not. The reason for this difference derives from the more fundamental difference in thinghood, in the conditions under which these things are possible as things: things in themselves are not essentially objects for us, while appearances of those things are.⁸³

Recall the passage from the Introduction that made the Identity reading seem mandatory:

[...] 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. (Bxviii–Bxix, note)

But this passage immediately continues:

If we now find that there is agreement with the principle of pure reason when things (*die Dinge*) 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. (Bxviii–Bxix, note; my emphasis)

This raises the possibility that appearances and things in themselves are distinct *objects* but the same *things*. Elsewhere in the B Preface (a *locus classicus* for Identity readings) he expresses the very same point again in terms of things:

⁸² It is impossible not to experience them as things, hence impossible for them not to be things.

⁸³ I thus depart from the interpretation of Abe Stone, from whom I have otherwise learned a great deal. Whereas Stone thinks that the appearance/thing in itself distinction is a distinction between two kinds of objects, I think it is a distinction between two kinds of thing (things that are essentially objects for us, and things that are only contingently so) in virtue of the source of their thinghood (things that are things in virtue of being experienced, things that are things “in themselves”). It is a distinction between two modes of existing, not a distinction between two modes of being an object for a representational capacity. By contrast, phenomena/noumena is a distinction between two kinds of objects: sensible objects and objects that cannot be sensibly intuited. For the appearance/thing in itself distinction see A491/B519; for the phenomena/noumena distinction see B306.

[...] if we are to assume that the distinction between things (*Dinge*) as objects of experience and the very same things as things in themselves (*von eben denselben, als Dingen an sich selbst*), which our critique has made necessary, were not made at all, then the principle of causality, and hence the mechanism of nature in determining causality, would be valid of all things in general as efficient causes.

(Bxxvii, my emphasis)

In the Fourth Paralogism Kant discusses the possibility that objects of outer and inner sense, which are as such distinct objects, may be the same things:

In such a way the very same thing that is called a body in one relation would at the same time be a thinking being in another, whose thoughts, of course, we could not intuit, but only their signs in appearance. (A359)

I, represented through inner sense in time, and objects in space outside me, are indeed specifically wholly distinct appearances, but they are not thereby thought of as different things. (A379)

But it is hard to know what to do with this intriguing suggestion unless we understand what it would mean for non-identical objects to be the same *things*. I begin to try to make sense of that notion in the next section.

7. On Being Collectively the Same Things

The claim that appearances and things in themselves are the same things can be read in two different ways, either “distributively” or “collectively,” to borrow a Kantian distinction.⁸⁴ It can be read *distributively* as saying that every individual appearance is the same thing as some thing in itself. Alternately, it can be read *collectively* as saying that appearances “as a whole” or “taken together” are the same things as things in themselves (or the subset of things in themselves that appear to us). The difference between these two readings could be brought out, somewhat informally, by two different regimentations:

(*Distributive*) $\forall_s x (\text{Thing}(x) \rightarrow \exists_N y (x \text{ is the same thing as } y))$

(*Collective*) (Appearances) are the same things as (things in themselves)

It might appear that my argument so far has shown that the Distributive reading is incoherent, for my argument against identity relations between sensible and non-sensible objects generalizes to any singular relation of the form xRy , where x is bound by the sensible quantifier and y is bound by the non-sensible quantifier, and the Distributive reading involves just such a relation (y is the same thing as x).⁸⁵ In this

⁸⁴ A582/B660.

⁸⁵ Thanks to Catharine Diehl and Bernhard Thöle for pressing me on this point.

section I am going to temporarily set aside the distributive reading and argue that, on the collective reading, things in themselves and appearances are the same things. In the next section I will argue that, consistent with my larger argument, there is in fact a way to make sense of the distributive reading.

Prima facie the collective reading faces a significant hurdle: it has no recognizable logical form. It cannot assert a relation between two objects, for example, the totality of appearances and the totality of things in themselves, for the central point of Kant's resolution of the Antinomies is that there is no totality of appearances.⁸⁶ Here, however, is a way of making sense of it:

(*Collective**) The thinghood of appearances is the same as the thinghood of things in themselves.

Since we know that thinghood (*Dingheit, Sachheit*) is reality, for Kant, this is equivalent to saying:

(*Collective***) The reality of appearances is the same as the reality of things in themselves.⁸⁷

But recall that reality, thinghood, for Kant (as well as for Wolff and Baumgarten) is an intensive magnitude: a quality that has a quantity. This means that it functions something like a mass term like "water" or, to use Kant's example, "silver."⁸⁸ We can coherently say that the silver that previously was in the mountains is the same silver as the silver that is now in the goblets, without saying that any goblet is identical to any object that existed in the mountains. Likewise, we can say that the reality of appearances is the same as the reality of things in themselves, without making any claim of numerical identity or any singular same-thing relation (as the distributive reading requires). We can say this because the goblets are made up of, or constituted by, the same quantity of silver that was in the mountains. Likewise, we can say that appearances and things in themselves are the same things, are metaphysically "constituted" by the same reality. And in saying this we are not committed to saying that any single appearance is the same thing as any thing in itself. Just as we can say that the goblets are the same thing as the coins, if the goblets were made from the same silver

⁸⁶ This raises the question of whether there is a total intensive degree of reality (causal force) in phenomenal substance. I think there is, and that we can determine asymptotically by measuring the total gravitational mass in the universe. The opposite view is defended in Glezer (2018, chs. 8–11), but further discussion would take us too far afield. In *V-Met/Dohna* (28:644) Kant seems to admit that noumenal reality has a degree, but that we cannot cognize it. Thanks to Colin McLear for pressing me on this point.

⁸⁷ This does not mean that the degree of reality in phenomena is the same as the degree of reality in noumena, but that it is one and the same reality (thinghood) that in the former can be determinately measured, and in the latter cannot be measured, at least by us. Cf. *V-Met-Dohna*, 28:644. Thanks again to Colin McLear for pressing me to clarify this point.

⁸⁸ A170/B211. Although I think Kant's point in that passage agrees quite well with my argument, I won't attempt to interpret that (rather convoluted) text here.

as the coins, so, I will argue, are phenomenal and noumenal things “the same things,” for they are constituted by the same thinghood, the same reality.^{89,90}

While this may seem excessively “metaphysical” to some readers, it is very much in line with the letter of Kant’s text. After schematizing the categories of quality, that is, specifying the temporal determinations that enable our application of these categories to objects (e.g. that reality corresponds to “filled” time and negation to “empty” time), Kant writes:

Since time is only the form of intuition, thus of objects as appearances, that which corresponds to the sensation in these is the transcendental matter of all objects, as things in themselves (thinghood [*Sachheit*], reality). (A143/B182)

I take this to mean that the schemata given so far allow us to represent sensory states as realities (and as absences of reality, negations), but that the real that “corresponds” to these sensations is the “transcendental matter of all objects,” the thinghood of things in themselves. Thinghood (*Sachheit*, sometimes *Dingheit*), as we have seen and as Kant here makes explicit, is reality, intensively gradable causal force. The term “correspondence” here is notable, for it occurs repeatedly in the Anticipations of Perception, where it describes the relation of sensory reality to the phenomenal reality (phenomenal things) that causes it,⁹¹ despite the fact that Kant says explicitly, “I am not yet dealing with causality” (A169/B2111). I interpret this as follows: we must think of our sensations as having “corresponding” things that cause them, but prior to schematizing the categories of cause and effect we think of things in themselves as the “corresponding” cause.⁹² This is why the Schematism gives the “transcendental matter of all objects” as what corresponds to sensation. Only after schematizing the category <cause-effect> do we have the means to represent spatiotemporal objects as the causes of our sensations, as their “corresponding” objects. In the Anticipations we have not yet proved that it is necessary, or even possible, for spatiotemporal things to cause sensations, but, because these concepts are schematized by this point, we can

⁸⁹ A more precise formulation is possible in Kant’s technical terminology. We know that, in general, for Kant matter is the determinable, while the form renders the determinable determinate (see A266/B322; cf. Kant’s discussion of *materia ex qua* at *V-Met-L./Pölitz*, 28:575). He makes clear, both in published and unpublished texts, that the matter of noumenal things is reality, while their form is limitations of this reality (A266–67/B322, A575/B603; *HN*, 23:37, 473; *Refl* 4113, 17:422; *Refl* 6318, 18:632–33; *V-Met/Mron*, 28:850; *V-Met/Dohna*, 28:634, 644, 663); the matter of phenomenal things is reality, while their form is space and time (A413/B440, A581/B609; *V-Met-L./Volckmann*, 28:411, 421; *L./Pölitz*, 28: 57; *V-Met/Mron*, 29:829; *V-Met-K./Arnoldt*, 29:983, 998; *V-Th/Pölitz*, 28:1021, 1034; *V-Th/Volckmann*, 28:1169; *V-Th/Baumbach*, 28:1252; *Refl* 5875, 18:374). In the main text I argue that noumenal and phenomenal things have the same matter, but have different forms.

⁹⁰ Some readers will object that I am illegitimately drawing on Kant’s conception of the *ens realissimum* as the “storehouse” of all reality, whereas Kant’s point is precisely to diagnose this idea as the product of dialectical illusion. But I have only talked about the reality of noumenal things, not their ground, God. And I am not attributing to Kant any claim to cognize or know the existence of such reality. I am merely claiming that this is how we must *think* about noumenal reality in its relation to phenomenal reality. I defend at length the claim that the Critical Kant retains some commitment to the postulation of God as the ground of all real predicates in Stang (2016b).

⁹¹ In the statement of the Principle itself (A165), and further at B208, A168/B209, A175/B217.

⁹² Cf. Kant’s descriptions of things in themselves as “correlates” of sensibility (A30/B45, A250, A403) and “corresponding” to our sensibility (A109, A494/B522).

now at least represent spatiotemporal objects as causing our sensations. Phenomenal reality plays the role here that transcendental reality played in the Schematism: the corresponding “object.” Then, in the Analogies we prove that phenomenal things are causes, including causes of our sensations.⁹³ We prove, in other words, that they correspond to our sensations.

But we should not let the cognizable, knowable thinghood (reality) of spatiotemporal things distract us from the merely thinkable thinghood (reality) of things in themselves, for that noumenal thinghood is conceptually prior, as the passage from the Schematism shows: we must think of noumenal thinghood as the “corresponding” object of sensation before we cognize phenomenal things in this role. It is that noumenal reality (the “transcendental material of all objects”), that intensively gradable causal force, that affects us, producing sensory reality, a reality whose corresponding object we first *think* as noumenal and then *cognize* as the thinghood of spatiotemporal substances. But this means that it is one and the same reality that we first think as the reality of noumenal things and then cognize as the reality of phenomenal things. We first think it purely intellectually and then cognize it spatiotemporally. Although the objects we merely think as the loci of this noumenal reality are non-identical to the objects we cognize (as per my earlier argument), it is the same thinghood, the same intensively gradable causal force, that we merely think in things in themselves and cognize in spatiotemporal things. Phenomenal and noumenal things are distinct object but have the same thinghood, the same reality. To use a contemporary metaphor, we “carve up” this reality into spatiotemporal objects, differently than a non-sensible intellect would—different objects, but same thinghood. They are collectively, not distributively, the same things.⁹⁴

8. On Being Distributively the Same Things

In this section I will try to make sense of the idea that (some) appearances are “distributively” the same things as things in themselves; that is, for some appearance x , there is a thing in itself y such that x and y are the same thing. To make sense of this, we need to understand more about Kant’s ontology of things, forces, and capacities.

⁹³ The claim that “empirical affection” is proved (or provable) within the Analogies is, I realize unorthodox, but I do not have the space to argue it here.

⁹⁴ Kant emphasizes throughout his writings an important difference between noumenal reality and phenomenal reality: the latter can stand in “real conflict” (where one reality “cancels” the other), while the latter cannot. See A264/B320–21. His explanation for this is that our form of intuition allows us to represent different directions in space (A273/B279). However, I do not think this poses an insuperable barrier to my interpretation (on which phenomenal reality is noumenal reality, only represented spatiotemporally), for two reasons. Insofar as Kant’s considered view is that there can be no conflicts among noumenal reality, I would read this as meaning that noumenal reality can only conflict in appearance, not as it is “in itself.” But I have my doubts as to whether Kant’s considered view is that real opposition is impossible in noumena, rather than noumena *when represented through the understanding alone* (rather than conceived through some other faculty, e.g. practical reason) lack real conflict. In both pre-Critical and Critical texts Kant states explicitly that God grounds all (noumenal) realities, but does not instantiate them. My interpretation of this is: he recognizes that there is conflict among (noumenal) realities, and thus God cannot possess all of them. See A579/B607; *BDG*, 2:86; *V-Met/Herder*, 28:132–33, 917; *V-Met-K₂/Heinze*, 28:781–82; and, for critical discussion, Stang (2016b).

Things are substances, loci of force and activity. A thing, as such, possesses a capacity, a ground of real possibility. When this capacity is activated it grounds an accident, either in that very thing (immanent causation) or in another thing (transeunt causation). In doing so, it actualizes a passive capacity in the other thing (or itself, in the case of immanent causation), a capacity to be modified, while simultaneously actualizing its own active capacity. This accident is possible in virtue of the active thing's capacity to act (and the passive thing's capacity to be acted upon); this accident becomes actual when that capacity is activated. A thing that is the ground of actual accidents, a substance whose capacity is activated, is said to exercise a *force*. Things are not identical to their forces; a thing is more properly said to *have* or exercise force, that is, when it acts to causally ground accidents. For *x* and *y* to be *the same thing*, then, they must have the same force.⁹⁵ But things are particulars, not universals. So it is not enough that *x* and *y* have the same force *type* (e.g. gravitational force); they must be the same force *token*, the same individual locus of that force.

To make sense of the idea that sensible and non-sensible objects are the same things we need to make sense of the idea that one and the same locus of force can be presented to a discursive and to an intuitive intellect. Discursive intellects represent forces passively, by being affected by them, and combining their passively received representations according to rules. For instance, my sensible faculty is affected by a thing's force and, given the nature of my intuitive forms, this means I have temporally extended intuitive representations of spatially extended objects. In order to cognize a force in a thing I combine these temporally extended representations according to conceptual rules, namely, those specified by the categories of relation.⁹⁶

Kant has much less to say about how an intuitive intellect cognizes force.⁹⁷ In various remarks, though, he claims that an intuitive intellect would not cognize its objects passively, by being affected by them, but would cognize them actively: its cognition of its objects would generate or ground those very objects themselves. His most extended remarks on how an intuitive intellect would cognize its objects occur in his discussions of how God (who possesses an intuitive intellect) cognizes his objects in the Pölitz lectures on rational theology.⁹⁸ In lecturing on Baumgarten's discussion of divine cognition in *Metaphysica* §§874–75, he makes this remark about God's cognition of actuality:⁹⁹

We think of *scientia libera* as God's cognition of the actual, insofar as he is simultaneously conscious of his free choice of things; for either all things are actual *by the necessity of God's nature* – which would be the principle of *emanation*; or else they exist

⁹⁵ In his metaphysics lectures Kant is adamant that substances have forces, but are not to be identified with those forces. See *V-Met/Herder*, 28:25–26, 129; *V-Met-L/Pölitz*, 28:261; *V-Met/Volckmann*, 28:431; *V-Met/Schön*, 28:511; *V-Met/Mron*, 29:770, 833.

⁹⁶ See section 3.

⁹⁷ This is unsurprising of course, since, not possessing intuitive intellect, we cannot know that intuitive intellect is really possible. No claims about intuitive intellect could constitute cognition, much less knowledge; they are at most analytic truths about the concept of intuitive intellect, a concept introduced to further articulate, by means of contrast, our concept of our own intellects as discursive.

⁹⁸ Though see also *V-Th/Volckmann*, 28:1158 and *V-Th/Baumbach*, 28:1266.

⁹⁹ Kant's ultimate aim, of course, is to argue that there is no distinction between actuality and possibility in God's cognition (*V-Phil-Th/Pölitz*, 28:1054). Cf. *KU* §76, 5:402.

through his will – which would be the system of *creation*. We think of a *scientia libera* in God to the extent that in his cognition of everything possible, God is at the same time conscious in his free will of those possible things which he has made actual; hence this representation is grounded on the system of creation, according to which God is the author of all things through his will. But so too according to the principle of emanation. For since everything that exists is actual through the necessity of the divine nature, God must be conscious of all things – not, however, as he is conscious of his choice of things, but rather as he is conscious of them insofar as he is conscious of his own nature as a cause of all things. (*V-Th/Pölitz*, 28:1052–53)¹⁰⁰

We must think of God as the ground of all real possibilities. But God is omniscient, so he must also cognize all real possibilities. Consequently, his cognition of all real possibilities is cognition of himself. This cognition cannot be empirical: empirical knowledge requires passivity, and God is pure activity. So God's cognition of real possibility is purely a priori knowledge of himself as the ground thereof.¹⁰¹

The passage continues:

All God's cognition is grounded on his being an *ens entium*, an independent original being. For if God were not the cause of things, then either he would not cognize them at all, because there would be nothing in his nature which could supply him with knowledge of things external to him, or else things would have to have some influence on him in order to give him a mark of their existence. But then God would have to have sensible cognition of things, consequently he would have to be *passibilis* [capable of being passive], which contradicts his independence as an *ens originarium*. If, therefore, God is able to cognize things apart from sensibility, he cannot cognize them except by being conscious of himself as the cause of everything. And consequently the divine cognition of all things is nothing but the cognition God has of himself as an effective power. (*V-Th/Pölitz*, 28:1052–53)¹⁰²

God does not generate objects and then, in a higher-order act of divine self-reflection, cognize himself as so generating them. Instead, divine cognition grounds the actual existence of the object and is at the very same time self-conscious cognition of itself as so doing. God is passive *neither* in cognition of created beings *nor* in self-cognition: his creation is pure act, and this act of creation is at the same time a cognition of the created object and of itself as so creating the object. Divine intuitive intellectual cognition of objects (which must be non-sensible, i.e., noumena) thus appears to be a case of what is now known as “maker's knowledge”: a non-passive or non-sensible cognition of an object as being created by that very cognition itself.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ As we know from *KU* §76, Kant's ultimate view will be that there is no difference between actuality and possibility for the intuitive intellect, so the distinction he makes in the course of his theology lectures will ultimately fall away.

¹⁰¹ Earlier in the same passage: “God cognizes all things by cognizing himself as the ground of all possibility” (28:1052). Cf. *V-Met-L/Pölitz*, 28:328–29; *V-Met-L/Pölitz*, 28:606.

¹⁰² Cf. *V-Met-L/Pölitz*, 28:330–31; *V-Met-K/Heinze*, 28:803; *V-Met/Mron*, 28:833.

¹⁰³ The notion of essentially self-conscious capacities has been the topic of some interesting recent discussions; see Kern (2006) and Boyle (2009).

This gives us a model for thinking of how one and the same thing can be the object of a discursive intellect (i.e., an object of sensible intuition) and the object of an intuitive intellect (i.e., an object of intellectual intuition): the intuitive intellect (i.e., God) self-consciously cognizes a thing with causal force as generated in that very act of cognition, and the discursive intellect is passively affected by that thing, requiring it to combine spatiotemporally dispersed representations into a unified representation of a locus of causal force. In this case, one and the same thing is two distinct objects; equivalently, two distinct objects are one and the same thing. This is highly abstract, and may seem utterly divorced from Kant's actual writings. In the next section I will try to substantiate this model of how distinct objects can be the same thing.

9. Practical and Empirical Cognition of the Will

I am trying to make sense of the idea that appearances and things in themselves are distinct objects but (distributively) the same things, where this means, specifically, that they are the same loci of force. I suggested that the intuitive intellect's self-active cognition of things, and our passive cognition of those things' effects on us, might provide a model for thinking about this. But if we bend the intuitive gaze back towards ourselves, we arrive at, I think, the best Kantian case for one and the same locus of force being given as two distinct objects to two different modes of cognition: our "noumenal causality," represented practically and self-actively in the consciousness of our freedom, on the one hand, and that very same causality cognized theoretically and passively in experience, on the other.¹⁰⁴

It is well known that Kant rescues our freedom from the threat of determinism by arguing that, considered as a thing in itself, I am free while, considered as an appearance, my actions are bound by deterministic causal laws. At a textual level, it is worth noting that Kant tends to put this point in terms of one and the same *thing* being considered in two different ways or under two different aspects. First, there is this passage from the *GMS*:

For, that a thing in appearance (belonging to the world of sense) is subject to certain laws from which as a thing or a being in itself it is independent contains not the least contradiction; that he must represent and think of himself in this twofold way, however, rests, as regards the first, on consciousness of himself as an object affected through the senses and as regards the second on consciousness of himself as an intelligence, that is, as independent of sensible impressions in the use of reason (hence as belonging to the world of understanding). (*GMS*, 4:458, my emphasis)

Second, there is the passage from the B Preface I quoted earlier:

[...] if we are to assume that the distinction between things (*Dinge*) as objects of experience and the very same things as things in themselves (*von eben denselben*,

¹⁰⁴ My discussion throughout this section is indebted to Karl Schafer; see Schafer, "Kant's Conception of Cognition and Our Knowledge of Things in Themselves" (Chapter 10 in this volume) and Schafer (forthcoming).

als Dingen an sich selbst), which our critique has made necessary, were not made at all, then the principle of causality, and hence the mechanism of nature in determining causality, would be valid of all things in general as efficient causes.

(Bxxvii, my emphasis)

However, I do not want to rest too much on passages like this, for two reasons. First, I do not think Kant is consistent enough in his usage of *Ding* and *Gegenstand* for me to base my interpretation on these passages alone. At best, they constitute additional support. Secondly, by themselves, they do not give us any account of what “being the same thing” is. That is what I hope to supply in this section.

What could it mean that I, as a phenomenon governed by deterministic causal laws (object of experience), and I, as a free noumenon (object of practical, i.e., non-sensible, cognition), am one and the same thing? Freedom is a kind of causality, specifically, the capacity to be a self-determining cause, to act autonomously (out of respect for the moral law), rather than heteronomously (from a sensibly given motive). Since it is things (substances) that have capacities to act, it is as a thing (substance) that I have this capacity, that I am free. I am (or must represent myself as) a non-spatiotemporal substance, possessed of the capacity of freedom, that can be an object for itself in two fundamentally different ways: I am conscious of myself as free through pure practical reason, and I cognize myself as a deterministically governed and spatiotemporal thing in (outer and inner) experience. I will explain, first, my practical consciousness of my own freedom and then the more familiar theoretical cognition of myself as a phenomenon. I will argue that, being two fundamentally different modes of representation, they cannot have a common object, though their objects (free noumenon, deterministically governed phenomenon) are one and the same thing.

In the second *Kritik* Kant says that the “fact of reason” (i.e., the consciousness that I am bound by an unconditioned moral law) is the *ratio cognoscendi* of my freedom (the epistemic ground of my cognition of my freedom), while freedom is the *ratio essendi* of the moral law (the ground of the possibility that I am bound by it).¹⁰⁵ This can make it seem that my consciousness of my freedom involves an inference from one claim (i.e., that I am bound by the moral law) to a distinct claim (i.e., that I am free), mediated by a principle to the effect that “ought” implies “can” (if I ought to act autonomously then I am capable of acting autonomously, i.e., I am free).¹⁰⁶ But there are also indications that Kant sees a far more intimate connection between our consciousness of ourselves as bound by the moral law and our consciousness of our own freedom. Consider, for instance, these two passages:

Thus freedom and unconditional practical law imply one another. Now I do not ask here whether they are in fact different or whether it is not much rather the case that an unconditional law is merely the self-consciousness of a pure practical reason, this [reason] being identical with the positive concept of freedom [...] (*KpV*, 5:29)

¹⁰⁵ *KpV*, 5:4 n.

¹⁰⁶ E.g. *RGV*, 6:49–50.

[This Analytic] shows at the same time, that this fact [of reason] is inseparably bound up with consciousness of freedom, indeed, is identical with it. (*KpV*, 5:42)

In the first passage Kant suggests, without directly stating, that consciousness of the moral law as binding on me is identical to consciousness of myself as free. Later, in the second passage, he comes out and directly states it: the fact of reason, my consciousness of myself as bound by an unconditional moral law, is identical to my consciousness of myself as free.

But if my consciousness of myself as bound by the moral law (consciousness of the fact of reason) is identical, as Kant says, to my consciousness of myself as free, then what becomes of the idea that the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom? How can one thing be a *ratio cognoscendi* of another, if my consciousness of one is identical to my consciousness of the other? The answer, I think, is that my consciousness of myself as bound by the moral law contains within itself, implicitly, consciousness of myself as free. Kant's transcendental investigations in the *KpV* allow me to render explicit what is always already contained in my consciousness of myself as bound by an unconditional moral law: I *can* act autonomously, that is, out of respect for the law. On this model, I do not infer from the fact of reason to my freedom; my consciousness of myself as free is contained, albeit implicitly, in my consciousness of myself as bound by the moral law.¹⁰⁷

But if we hold on to Kant's claim that freedom is the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, then this means that our consciousness of ourselves as bound by the moral law contains consciousness of the *ratio essendi* of that law. To fill in the gaps in the passage quoted above: "[my consciousness of myself as bound by] an unconditional law is merely the self-consciousness of [...] the positive concept of freedom," the *ratio essendi* of the fact that this law is binding on me. So, my consciousness of the moral law is consciousness of something about myself (freedom) that grounds that law (or grounds its applicability to me). Thus, I do not merely cognize *that* I am bound by the moral law. I cognize *why* I am bound by the moral law, that is, I cognize it from its ground (its *ratio essendi*). What is more, my consciousness of the moral law is, or contains, the ground of the moral law's binding force on me. My consciousness of the moral law is (according to the passages above) identical to my consciousness of my freedom, and my freedom grounds the moral law (grounds its applicability to me). So my consciousness of the moral law is, or contains, consciousness of the grounds of its object: that I am bound by the moral law (i.e., that the moral law takes the form of an "ought" in relation to me).

We attain an even more "active" conception of my practical self-consciousness when we focus on Kant's reference above to the "self-consciousness of a pure practical reason, this [reason] being identical with the positive concept of freedom" (*KpV*, 5:29). The implicit distinction between a merely "negative" and a "positive" concept of freedom is clarified a few pages later when Kant writes:

¹⁰⁷ This is brought out especially well in Schafer (forthcoming).

Autonomy of the will is the sole principle of all moral laws and of duties pursuant to them: heteronomy of choice, on the other hand, not only does not ground any obligation at all but is instead opposed to the principle of obligation and to the morality of the will. That is to say, the sole principle of morality consists in independence from all matter of the law (namely, from a desired object) and at the same time in the determination of choice through the mere universal law-giving form that a maxim must be capable of. That independence, however, is freedom in the negative sense, whereas this lawgiving of its own (*diese eigne Gesetzgebung*) by pure, and, as such, practical reason is freedom in the positive sense. (*KpV*, 5:33)

The negative conception of freedom is a conception of freedom as the capacity to act independently of the matter of the will (i.e., a particular desired object), which Kant here distinguishes from the positive conception. Kant calls freedom positively conceived “the self-consciousness of pure practical reason” (5:29) and, here, practical reason’s own lawgiving. So it is not a mere blind lawgiving, without consciousness of the law; nor it a consciousness of a law given by some other capacity (or some other agent). It is a lawgiving that is essentially conscious of itself as lawgiving. It is lawgiving insofar as it is the ground of the moral law’s binding force on it; it is self-conscious insofar as it is consciousness of itself as so doing. But these are two descriptions of one and the same capacity (positive freedom is both law-giving and self-conscious): a capacity that is the ground of something (its boundedness by the moral law) and is self-conscious of itself as so grounding that. Positive freedom is an essentially self-conscious capacity.

But if freedom is an essentially self-conscious capacity then we do not have two distinct capacities: the capacity for freedom, and then a higher-order capacity, the capacity to become conscious of the former capacity (perhaps through inner introspection or inference). There is one unified capacity, (positive, practical) freedom, which is essentially conscious of itself as such. But if this is correct then my consciousness of my freedom is my (positive) freedom itself. Since freedom is the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, it follows that my consciousness of my freedom is the ground of the moral law binding me.

This means that there is a structural similarity between my consciousness of freedom and divine intellectual intuition. Recall that God’s cognition of what is actual is self-cognition: God’s creative act self-consciously cognizes itself as the ground of its object. But I am not self-consciously aware of the actual exercise of my freedom; merely through practical self-consciousness I am not aware whether I act autonomously (by subordinating my self-love to the moral law), or whether I act heteronomously (by subordinating the law to my self-love). I am only aware of the capacity for autonomous action. Freedom is a capacity, not an act. This means that my practical self-consciousness is structurally similar, not to intellectual intuition of the actual, but of the possible. As Kant writes in the Pölitz lectures on rational theology: “We represent to ourselves that in cognizing his own essence (*simplex intelligentia*) God must also cognize everything possible, since he is the ground of all possibilities. Thus we derive the cognition of all possibilities from his nature and call it *cognitio simplicis intelligentiae*” (*V-Th/Pölitz* 28:1054). But God cannot be passive in self-cognition, any more than he can be passive in cognition of objects other than himself. God’s

cognition of himself as the ground of all possibilities must be contained in his grounding of all possibilities: his grounding of all possibilities must be essentially self-conscious (self-cognizing). In God, there are not two capacities: the capacity that grounds everything possible, and then a higher-order capacity to cognize the first. There is one single, essentially self-conscious capacity: to be conscious of oneself as the ground all possibility.

My aim is not to raise us up to God's level, much less to bring God down to our earthly one. It is to point out that my consciousness of myself as a noumenal thing possessed of freedom is self-active or non-passive in a way structurally similar to the intuitive intellect: it does not involve a moment of passivity, a moment of inner "intuiting" or "noticing," because what it is consciousness of (freedom) and the consciousness that it itself is, are one and the same.

By contrast, my theoretical cognition of myself, in inner and outer experience, as a relatively subsistent phenomenon, is partly passive. I affect myself in inner sense, and only thereby do I cognize my inner states in temporal order. I am affected in outer sense, and only thereby do I cognize my body in space. My temporally extended inner states, together with my spatially extended body, constitute a relatively subsistent thing in space and time. It does not persist absolutely (alas), so it is not a substance in the strictest sense. Nonetheless, it is not a mere accidental modification. It is something like an empirical "substantiated phenomenon," a relatively stable modification of underlying empirical substance (matter).¹⁰⁸ It constitutes a relatively unified locus of spatiotemporal force. Kant attributes to me as a phenomenon (an object of experience) an "empirical character," which I take to be a law or law-like generalization about the causal powers and forces of this relatively subsistent spatiotemporal thing.¹⁰⁹

As a noumenal thing with noumenal freedom, I am not a possible object of sensible intuition. As a phenomenal thing, subject to deterministic causality and devoid of freedom, I am not a possible object of practical self-cognition. These are two distinct objects. Despite this, the noumenal thing with the self-conscious power of freedom and the phenomenal thing in space and time are *one and the same thing*: one and the same locus of force and activity presented to itself (to me) in two fundamentally different ways, self-actively in its consciousness of its own freedom and passively in experience of itself as a phenomenon.¹¹⁰

One complication should be noted. I originally characterized things as loci of force (grounds of actuality), but forces are always activations of capacities (grounds of possibility). In practical self-consciousness of my own freedom, I am conscious of myself as possessing a *capacity* for self-determination, that is, I am conscious that it is *possible* for me to will autonomously. I am not immediately conscious of the *actual*

¹⁰⁸ My body might be something akin to what Baumgarten calls a *phaenomena substantiata* (substantiated phenomena), a property we treat as a substance by predicating further properties of it. See Baumgarten, *Metaphysica* §193 and Langton (1998, p. 53) for discussion.

¹⁰⁹ A549/B577.

¹¹⁰ This analysis could be deepened, for I am passively given to myself as a particular kind of object, an organized body. And this carries with it, according to the third *Kritik*, the thought not only of myself as a natural end (*Naturzweck*) but of my species (humanity) in its relation to the final end of nature, the realization of reason. But this would take us too far afield.

content of my will at all (i.e., whether I have subordinated the moral law to self-love, or vice versa). Nonetheless, the capacity of which I am conscious in my consciousness of my own freedom is a capacity to act, indeed, a capacity that is actualized (in what specific way I do not know). Capacities are individuated by the things of which they are the capacities; in practical self-consciousness I am aware of my own capacity to act freely, not yours. So I am aware of myself as a thing, a thing that acts (that has force), but I am aware only of the capacities of that thing.^{111,112} But it is one and the same thing (locus of force and capacity) that is represented in practical self-consciousness and experience, because my actual will (i.e., the intelligible character of my will, whether I have subordinated the moral law to self-love or vice versa), the actualization of my capacity for freedom, appears to me as the “empirical character” of the spatiotemporal phenomenon I experience. The empirical character of my (actual) will is a “sensible schema,” Kant claims, of the intelligible character of my (actual) will (A553/B581); the empirical character is said to be an “appearance” of the intelligible character (A541/B569). So the capacity (freedom) of which I am in practical self-consciousness is the very same capacity whose actual exercise appears to me as an object of inner and outer experience with a particular empirical character. I am one and the same thing, one and the same locus of capacity and act, but I am an object for myself in two fundamentally different ways. This means that my claim above, in section 5.3 that all conceivable intellects are either sensible or non-sensible (which, in fairness, I flagged as a simplifying assumption), needs to be modified slightly: we both sensibly (passively) intuit outer and inner objects *and* have a non-sensible, purely self-active awareness of our own capacity for freedom. *We* are the third kind of intellect we have been looking for.¹¹³

10. Conclusion

This chapter has covered a lot of ground, and in conclusion I would like to wrap up a few loose ends.

Leibniz’s Law. At the beginning I pointed out that the various discernibility arguments in the literature could be circumvented by simply denying Leibniz’s Law:

¹¹¹ This raises a problem: if the actualization of my noumenal will (my noumenal character) is the activation of an essentially self-conscious capacity, why is it not, like God’s essentially self-conscious capacity for cognizing the actual, essentially self-conscious, i.e., why does it not contain consciousness of itself as grounding the noumenal character it does (either the subordination of the moral law to sensible inclination or vice versa)? I do not have the space to explore that issue here.

¹¹² Kant, of course, contrasts person and thing (e.g. *KpV*, 5:60), but in such contexts I take him to have a narrower, moral sense of “thing” in mind, i.e., a being that lacks reason. In other contexts, he claims that my substantiality (my thinghood) is evident in self-consciousness (*V-Phil-Th/Pölitz*, 28:1042). Thanks to Colin McLear for pressing me on this point.

¹¹³ I have been working on this paper for a very long time and owe a debt of gratitude to various audiences and readers whose comments I have benefited from over the years. Particular thanks are due to Philip Blum, Catharine Diehl, Tim Button, and Bernhard Thöle, as well as audiences at Cambridge University, the Humboldt colloquium for classical German philosophy, and the Ligerz Workshop on Metaphysics. Extensive and insightful comments by my co-editor Karl Schafer, and by Andrew Stephenson and Colin McLear, on the penultimate draft helped improve this paper immeasurably.

(LL_o) For any P, (x)(y)(x = y ⊃ Px ↔ Py)

But my proposal has the same effect, for it retains Leibniz's Law as a principle about numerical identity among objects, but denies the corresponding principle about the relation of *being the same thing* (here symbolized as $x =_t y$):

(LL_t) For any P, (x)(y)(x is the same thing as y ⊃ Px ↔ Py)

Leibniz's Law must be denied for the "same-thing-as" relation because the noumenal self and the phenomenal self are same thing but these are distinct objects with distinct predicates: the former is causally determined while the latter possesses noumenal freedom. In general, properties do not transfer across the relation of being the same thing. One and the same thing can have different properties, depending on what kind of representational capacity that thing is being considered the object of. As an object of experience, the thing I am has certain properties; as an object of practical consciousness of freedom, the thing I am has different ones. I am one and the same thing, but two different objects with two different sets of properties.¹¹⁴

Inconsistent? Earlier I argued that where x is a thing in itself and y is an appearance, no intellect can represent the content $x = y$ (where $=$ is the relation of numerical identity between objects) because no intellect has intuitions of both sensible and non-sensible objects. But thinking of a sensible and a non-sensible object that they are the same *thing* also requires intuitions of both objects: one must think of x and of y that they are the same thing, and on my reading this requires an intuition of both x and y . Thus, by parity of reasoning the content " x and y are the same thing" should be unrepresentable by any intellect, and my objection to the Identity view would seem to entail that my own interpretation is literally unthinkable. This is the objection I raised earlier to the coherence of the distributive reading of the claim that appearances and things in themselves are the same things.

It is worth explaining why this same problem does not arise for the collective reading, on which appearances and things in themselves share the same thinghood (reality). Thinghood, reality, is a quantity (the quantity of a quantity, an intensive magnitude) and thus not a single object, that is, not the referent of an intuition and thus not a value for a bound singular variable (I have argued.) Consequently, the way we would represent the collective "same thing" relation (same thinghood) is not through a relation flanked by singular terms bound by (singular) variables. That no singular relation can obtain between sensible and non-sensible objects is no barrier to conceptually representing a generic relation of same thinghood (same reality) among them. So if we want a coherent version of Leibniz's Law, which is nonetheless violated on the collective reading, because appearances and things in themselves share the same thinghood but have different properties, it would be this:

¹¹⁴ Why not short-circuit the Indiscernibility arguments by simply rejecting Leibniz's Law from the start? Rejecting Leibniz's Law is not enough; one must give a principled explanation of how *one and the same object* can have different properties. My account, however, delivers an elegant account of this difference in predications: it is objects that have properties, and things can be objects in two fundamentally different ways.

(LL_c) For any P, (F)(G)(the Fs are the same things as (i.e., share the same thinghood as) the Gs \supset the Fs are P \leftrightarrow the Gs are P)

In contemporary terms, this involves “mass” or “stuff” quantifiers, but exploring that would take us too far afield.¹¹⁵

However, there is precisely one case where we can do more than represent things in themselves in their relation to appearances generically: our practical consciousness of ourselves as free. In that case I represent myself as appearing and myself as I am in myself as *one and the same thing*. Recall that the reason for denying that singular relations (whether of identity or of sameness of thing) between sensible and non-sensible objects were well-formed contents: we lack the concept of an intellect that could so much as entertain these contents, because no intellect is both sensible and non-sensible. But in our case, we have a partial exception to this rule. Our practical consciousness of ourselves as free plays a role very similar to that of intuition: it allows us to represent ourselves, practically at least, *de re* as the very thing we are. My practical consciousness is singular consciousness of myself as free, not consciousness of the freedom of a general class of objects (rational beings, say). This means that in this case, where x is a sensible object (me as object of experience) and y is a non-sensible object (me as noumenon), the content $x = y$ is not unrepresentable or meaningless. We have the concept of an intellect that could represent such a content: ourselves. This means there isn't merely an epistemic difference between the theoretical and the practical case when it comes to identifying and differentiating things in themselves and appearances, but a semantic one. There is a difference in content. Outside of the practical case, there is no further fact of the matter as to which appearances are appearances of the same things in themselves, because there is no conceivable intellect that would represent these facts of the matter. But in the practical case there is a fact of the matter, the very fact of the matter we are conscious of when we are conscious of our freedom as a power of the very thing we passively experience as an object in space and time.

Thus, what appeared initially to be a straightforward inconsistency in my interpretation is revealed, upon further reflection, to constitute evidence in its favor, for it delivers an account of a textual detail that has long been noticed, but never fully explained: almost all of the passages that support the Identity reading are passages about the “identity” (on my reading, sameness of thing) of the empirical self and the noumenal self. Kant's writings are replete with claims to the effect that appearances in general can also be considered as things in themselves, or that objects of experience also have inner properties unknown to us. But all of these claims can be captured on the collective reading of “same things.” The self is the one case where Kant repeatedly emphasizes *de re* of a single thing that *it* can be considered both as an object of experience and as a thing in itself. On my interpretation this tracks not merely an epistemic but a semantic difference: in general we lack so much as the concept of an intellect that would think of a sensible object and of a thing in itself

¹¹⁵ Some of the formal details can be found in Higginbotham (1994).

that they are the same thing. The only case in which we possess such a concept is *ourselves*, the intellects that we, ourselves, are.¹¹⁶

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¹¹⁶ Robert Merrihew Adams's classic paper (1997) gives an epistemic diagnosis of why Kant is only interested in identity in one case (the self): Kant's philosophy "gives more reasons to believe minds are identical with something noumenal and ultimately real, than to suppose that bodies are. It also gives more reason for believing that some sort of thought characterizes some things as they are in themselves than for believing that material" (p. 824). I have argued, in effect, that the relevant relation is not identity of objects, but sameness of things, and the defect is not epistemic, but semantic.

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