



Kant's two worlds

Anja Jauernig: The world according to Kant: appearances and things-in-themselves in Critical Idealism. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021, 384 pp, \$105 HB

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In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant argues that objects are not mind-independent things but appearances that owe their spatiotemporal form and categorical structure to the nature of the human mind. We cannot have any cognition of things as they are in themselves; we can only have cognition of their appearances. But how should we understand this distinction? Is it between two “worlds,” one occupied by merely mental appearances and another by mind-independent things? Or between two sets of properties or aspects of things, e.g., intrinsic vs relational properties (Langton 1998) or mind-independent vs mind-dependent properties (Rosefeldt 2007; Allais 2015)? Or is it a merely methodological distinction between two ways of considering the same things, namely, as they appear to us and as they are in themselves (Allison 2004)?

Against the prevailing trend in recent Kant interpretation, which has favored the latter approaches to Kant's idealism, Anja Jauernig defends a classic two-worlds interpretation of Kant's critical idealism in this important but demanding book. This kind of interpretation, according to which empirical objects, typically identified with mental states or constructions out of mental states, are numerically distinct from things-in-themselves, has mostly fallen out favor; it is often accused of reducing Kant's view to a version of Berkeleian phenomenalism. But Jauernig takes pains throughout to emphasize that Kant's idealism is not Berkeley's. Central to her interpretation is the claim that empirical objects are fully mind-dependent appearances that exist as the intentional *contents* of representations. Appearances owe all their determinations, and thus their existence, to the mind. There is thus no ontological overlap between appearances and mind-independent things and thus no sense in which they are the same. Appearances are nevertheless genuine existents and empirical objects really are spatiotemporal.

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One of the main challenges for the two-world view is to explain how empirical objects can be fully real if they are fully mind-dependent. In Chapter Two, Jauernig begins to address this challenge by arguing that empirical objects are the intentional objects of experience, where “experience” is understood as the series of accounts, i.e., sets of judgments, of the empirical world that become ever more refined and comprehensive “as science and exploration progresses” (95). Unlike the intentional objects of perception, which, according to Jauernig, are private, the intentional objects of experience are public and shareable, although they are also closely related to the contents of perception. By identifying appearances with the shareable *contents* of mental states, she hopes to avoid the pitfalls of a crude phenomenalism.

In Chapter Three, Jauernig argues that unlike the intentional objects of dreams, hallucinations, and illusions, appearances exist because they “conform to the formal conditions of proper objecthood” and are “directly grounded in things-in-themselves” (116). This claim is made from the perspective of fundamental ontology, “a meta-point of view from which we can investigate the nature and structure of reality in general” (115). From this perspective, we can distinguish between at least two different levels of reality: the transcendental level and the empirical level. If we occupy the transcendental perspective, empirical objects are not things-in-themselves but are fully mind-dependent appearances and space and time are transcendently ideal. But if we occupy the empirical perspective, empirical objects are mind-independent, because experience represents them as being in pure space, where it is “a primitive feature of this representation that it presents its object as ‘outside us’” (133). Thus, although space and time are ideal from the transcendental perspective—they are nothing but forms of sensibility—empirical space and empirical time, the totality of spatial and temporal determinations of objects, respectively, are represented in experience as mind-independent.

In Chapter Four, Jauernig reconstructs Kant’s arguments for Transcendental Idealism and Empirical Realism. She takes Kant’s argument for the transcendental ideality of empirical objects to turn on two theses which she calls “spacetime-containment” and “spacetime-immersion.” Roughly, the argument is that pure space and time are fully mind-dependent, and because empirical objects are in space and time, and determinate spaces and times are contained in and fully immersed in pure space and time, “all of the determinations and ontological ingredients of empirical objects are mind-dependent” (184). Chapter Five examines further ontological views that belong to Kant’s critical idealism, namely, that sensibility is passive and thus requires affection from things-in-themselves; things-in-themselves must therefore exist; and although there is no 1–1 mapping between mind-independent things and outer appearances, the former ground appearances. It is also in this chapter that Jauernig presents a “multiple-parts view” of the self, according to which empirical and transcendental selves, while numerically distinct, are ontological parts of a single human being. Finally, in Chapter Six, Jauernig defends her reading of Kant’s realism about things-in-themselves from the Leibnizian-Wolffian and fictionalist readings.

Although I am sympathetic to the interpretation of empirical objects as intentional contents of representation, I have some worries about the details of Jauernig’s proposal. As noted above, she takes experience to ontologically specify appearances. This is understandable, because not all determinations of objects are presented in

perception. But she also claims that perception only *indirectly* represents appearances and offers a “visual resemblance” theory of perceptual reference. On this view, an empirical object’s “look” is completely captured in intuition, including unconscious intuitions, so that what we directly represent in perception is the “intuitive counterpart” of the empirical object (80). I find this claim perplexing, especially given Kant’s insistence that it is sensibility that gives us objects and that judgments only refer to objects by relating to the intuitions through which they are given (Kant 1998, A19/ B33).

I also have concerns about the extent to which Jauernig insists on the full mind-dependence of empirical objects. Even if all the determinations of empirical objects are mind-dependent, I worry that her further claim that the existence of empirical objects is mind-dependent is too strong. As Nicholas Stang (2021) emphasizes in his defense of a qualified phenomenalist interpretation of Kant—a view I wish Jauernig had addressed—Kant denies that his idealism extends to the *existence* of objects. For example, in a 1792 letter to J.S. Beck, Kant insists that his idealism is merely formal and does not extend to the matter of representation, that is, it is *not* an “ideality of the object and its existence” (Kant 1999, Ak 11:395). Why then does Jauernig insist on the full mind-dependence of the *existence* of empirical objects, especially since she also wants to appeal to the grounding of appearances in things-in-themselves to explain why they count as genuine existents from the perspective of fundamental ontology? Her answer is anachronistic. She claims that because things cannot exist without their essential properties, and because some of the appearance properties of empirical objects are essential to them, the existence of these objects is mind dependent. But I find no evidence for attributing this kind of view of essential properties to Kant. This view strikes me as more Kripkean than Kantian.

Furthermore, her reconstruction of Kant’s argument for the ideality of empirical objects rests on claims about pure space and its relation to empirical space that are suspect. A main premise in her reconstruction of Kant’s argument for the ideality of empirical objects is that these objects are “as much in pure space and pure time as they are in empirical space and time” (182). Jauernig seems to be running together the original a priori intuition of space, which is the ground of all spatial representations, pure and empirical, and the representation of “pure” space that we acquire by abstracting from sensations, which is the object of study of geometry. Pure space, by definition, is empty of empirical content and hence empirical objects (Kant 1998, A20/ B34). So, I am not sure what it means to say that empirical space and time and empirical objects are “contained in” pure space. It is true that Kant thinks that the results of geometry apply to empirical objects, but not because the latter are contained in pure space, but because the acts of synthesis through which we construct geometrical objects in pure space are the same as those used to delimit empirical objects in empirical space, as Kant argues in the Axioms of Intuition.

Jauernig claims in the Introduction that her view improves upon its predecessors by providing “a precise and detailed account of the mind-dependence, ontological status, and nature of appearance, as well as their grounding in things-in-themselves” (17). Indeed, the extent to which she has worked out the details of her interpretation, and in doing so, revived the two-worlds interpretation, is impressive, even if it at times makes for dense reading. While this is not a book I would recommend to those

who are new to Kant's philosophy, it is a must-read for anyone who works on Kant's idealism, and I expect it to shape the debate for years to come.

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