

## ONE-OBJECT-PLUS-PHENOMENALISM

### Ein-objekt-plus-phänomenalismus

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to present a novel reading of Kantian idealism. In want of a better name, I call my interpretation “one-object-plus-epistemic phenomenalism”. I partially endorse Allison’s celebrated position, namely his rejection of metaphysical world-dualism. Yet, I reject Allison’s deflationary two-aspect view. I argue that Kantian idealism is also metaphysically committed to an ontological noumenalism (one-object), namely the claim that the ultimate nature of reality is made up of unknown things in themselves (*substantia noumena*). Natural sciences can only reveal the relational/structural properties of things as they appear rather than the intrinsic properties of *substantia noumena* in the negative sense. My anti-deflationary reading is similar to Allais’s and my agnostic monism to Hanna’s. However, against both, I hold that appearances are not the accusative objects of our sensible representations, but rather as Kant repeatedly states: “mere representations”. The accusative objects of our senses are *substantia noumena* in the negative sense. Moreover, my view is also similar to Langton’s. Again, against Langton I hold that appearances are not merely relational properties of *substantia noumena*, but the way that such *substantia noumena* exist inside our mind as “mere representations”. In this regard, I also partially endorse Guyer’s and Van Cleve’s phenomenalist reading because these *substantia noumena* in the negative sense can only be cognized mind-dependently, namely as appearances. However, against Guyer and Van Cleve I hold that the phenomenalist side of Kantian idealism is purely epistemological rather than ontological: what Kant calls the necessary unity of representations according to categories is not a logical construction of objects out of representations, that is, an ontological reduction of noumena to appearances, but rather the way we sense-independently cognize mind-independent noumena.

**Keywords:** Transcendental Idealism; The one-world view; The two-World View; Phenomenalism.

**Zusammenfassung:** Das Ziel dieses Beitrags ist es, eine neue Interpretation des kantischen Idealismus zu präsentieren. Ich unterstütze teilweise Allison’s Ablehnung des metaphysischen zwei-Welt-Dualismus, lehne ich aber seine deflationäre Metaphysische Sicht ab. Der kantische Idealismus ist auch metaphysisch der These verpflichtet, dass die letztendliche Natur der Realität aus unbekanntem Dingen an sich selbst besteht. Ich bin jedoch der Meinung, dass die Erscheinungen nur im empirischen Sinne die Akkusativobjekte der empirischen Anschauung sind. Im transzendentalen Sinne sind sie nichts anderes als "bloße Vorstellungen". Das nenne ich die Ein-Welt-Sicht in Verbindung mit epistemischem Phänomenalismus.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Transzendentaler Idealismus; Die Ein-Welt-Ansicht; Die Zwei-Welt-Ansicht; Phänomenalismus.

### 1. Prolegomena

In its broad or global sense, idealism is the metaphysical doctrine that the ultimate nature of the universe is mental rather than material, or alternatively, that

concrete truths about the universe are grounded in mental rather than physical facts. So, in this broad sense idealism is in clear opposition to materialism, which is the doctrine that the underlying nature of the universe is physical rather than mental, or that concrete truths about the universe are grounded in physical rather than mental facts.

Although it is common to define idealism as a global metaphysical doctrine in opposition to materialism, in the 17th and 18th centuries idealism was often understood more narrowly as a version of Berkeley's "esse est percipi" thesis, holding that appearance constitutes reality. The crucial opposition here is not between idealism and materialism, but rather between idealism and realism. With such a view, what we call "external reality" is illusory or at best subjective: the outside world is grounded in the experiences of an outside reality had by observers.

Narrow anti-realist and broad anti-materialist idealisms have quite different motivations. Narrow anti-realist idealism is most commonly driven by epistemological questions regarding external-world skepticism, and is typically associated with the sort of empiricism that resists postulating hypotheses about the existence of outer things that go beyond appearances. Berkeley is quite clear about this: if what we can only immediately know are ideas, their putative objects can only be known inferentially (a tenet shared by almost all empiricists of the 17th and 18th centuries), and it is assumed that "esse est percipi" is the best way to close the doors to external-world skepticism. In other words, narrow anti-realist idealism is often proposed as a solution to external-world skepticism.

In contrast, broad anti-materialist idealism is often driven by metaphysical questions about the ultimate nature of the mind and about the ultimate nature of reality, and tends to go with the sort of rationalism that allows metaphysical hypotheses that go well beyond appearances if they help us to make sense of the universe as a whole.

The traditional taxonomy of idealist views distinguishes subjective idealism, objective idealism, and absolute idealism. As these varieties of idealism do not have clear standard definitions, they are often characterized as much as appealing to paradigmatic proponents (Berkeley, Schelling, and Hegel respectively) as to specific doctrines. The embarrassing question is how Kantian transcendental idealism (TI henceforth) fits into the overall taxonomy, considering Kantian criticism as a fusion of both empiricist and rationalist traditions. As Allais recently remarked, "there is no

agreement in interpretations of Kant's transcendental idealism, not even a tendency to convergence" (2010b: 9). This disagreement could be ignored if TI was the only marginal doctrine in his first *Critique*, instead of lying at the very heart of the work.

What we find in the literature is the existence of two main camps and several positions in between. At one extreme, there are those who read TI as a sophisticated version of subjective idealism by interpreting the transcendental divide between appearances and things in themselves as the metaphysical opposition between two numerically distinct entities: phenomena (or appearances) and noumena. In accordance with the literature, let us call this the *two-world view*: the *mundus sensibilis* and the *mundus intelligibilis*. The *mundus sensibilis* is the cognizable phenomenal world that only exists inside our minds. The *mundus intelligibilis* is the non-cognizable noumenal world outside our minds.

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

In this paper, I aim to present and argue for a novel reading of Kantian idealism. I partially endorse Allison's rejection of metaphysical world-dualism, but reject his deflationary view. Kantian idealism is also metaphysically committed to the claim that the ultimate nature of reality is made up of unknown things in themselves. However, I hold that conceptually undermined appearances are the accusative objects only in the empirical sense. In the transcendental sense they are nothing but "mere representations". That is what I call the one-world view combined with epistemic phenomenalism.

The defence of my reading is first based on some textual evidence and on a criticism of the two main opposing readings. First, I argue that my reading is the one that best fits Kant's Fourth Paralogism without imputing to Kant a Berkeley-like ontological phenomenalism or some naïve realism. Second, I also argue that my reading is the one that best fits the recent reading of Kant's Refutation of Idealism as proof of

the existence of things in themselves (as I will show to be manifest in several passages). Finally, assuming that Kant did not change his mind in between the first and the second editions (that is, taking his own words at face value), I also argue that my view is the one that best harmonizes the Fourth Paralogism with the Refutation of Idealism.

All the same, I must admit that none of these arguments is conclusive: one may contest that a desirable reading of the Fourth Paralogism must avoid ontological phenomenalism (like Guyer and Van Cleve). Likewise, one may dispute that TI must be in agreement with the Refutation of idealism and dispute that the Refutation is proof of the existence of noumena (rather than of persistent phenomena in space). Finally, pace Kant, one may claim that the Fourth Paralogism and the Refutation are actually incompatible, by suggesting that in the second edition Kant changed his mind and gave up the view he defended in the Fourth Paralogism. Thus, I have no choice but to assume that the defense of my reading is a classic case of inference to the best explanation.

This paper is structured as follows: In the next section, I present the historical background of the controversy over the reading of Kant's transcendental idealism. Next, I present Paton's and Prauss's two-aspect view, and in particular Allison's deflationary version. The following section is devoted to presenting and criticizing Oberst's and Schulting's views. Following that is a brief presentation of my one-world-plus-epistemic-phenomenalist view. The final sections are devoted to showing that my view is the one that best accounts for the Fourth Paralogism and the Refutation of Idealism, and that best harmonizes them.

## **2. Historical background**

As Oberst (2015: 54) reminds us, the contemporary debate over the transcendental divide between appearances and things in themselves has its origin in Prauss's *Kant und das Problem der Dinge an sich* (1974). Still, the crucial disagreement about the nature of Kantian idealism in Kantian scholarship is anything but new. The controversy dates back to the famous Feder-Garve review<sup>1</sup> that appeared in between the first and the second editions of the first *Critique*. The reviewers portray Kant's idealism as a metaphysical doctrine similar to that of Berkeley.

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<sup>1</sup> The C. Garve (1742–98) and J. G. Feder (1740–1821) review was published on January 19th, 1782 (Feder and Garve 1989).

To be sure, in his Fourth Paralogism, Kant endorses Berkeley's claim that the easiest way of avoiding Cartesian external world scepticism is to assume that what we call "material things" are nothing but representations in us. He accuses the Cartesian problematic idealist of mistaking the empirical sense of "things outside us" for the transcendental sense of "outside us" as mind-independent things in themselves. Thus, the transcendental divide *seems to be* a metaphysical opposition between objects that only exists inside our minds and noumena. Appearances and things in themselves are metaphysically distinct objects. In this way was born the putative Kantian two-world dualism. Kantian two-world dualism plus reductionism finds textual supports in passages like this:

The transcendental idealist, on contrary, can be an empirical realist, hence, as he is called, a dualist, i.e., *he can concede the existence of matter without going beyond mere self-consciousness and assuming something more than the certainty of representations in me*, hence the *cogito, ergo sum*. For because he allows this matter and even its inner possibility to be valid only for appearance – which, separated from our sensibility, is nothing – *matter for him is only a species of representations (intuition), which are called external*, not as if they related to objects that are external in themselves but because they relate perceptions to space, where all things are external to one another, but that space itself is in us (KrV, A370, emphasis added).

The two-world view was the one that prevailed until the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. At the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, traditional scholars of Kant<sup>2</sup> still held a two-world view of idealism even when they rejected the Berkeleian ontological phenomenalist reading. According to Smith, for example:

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

Now, if the Fourth Paralogism tries to avoid scepticism by assuming à la Berkeley that material things are nothing but ontological constructions out of mental states, whereas the Refutation aims to prove the existence of mind-independent things

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<sup>2</sup> See Vaihinger (1883, 1884); Smith (2003); Adickes (1924).

outside us that are not representations in us, there is a blatant contradiction between the two philosophical projects. According to Kemp Smith (2003:312-314), for example, the Refutation “proves the opposite of what is stated in the first edition,” and is a “striking contradiction between various Kant's Refutations of Idealism”. Similarly, Vaihinger (1884:131–2) notes that it is impossible to find an interpretation that can reconcile this “stark contrast,” because the two “relate to each other as yes and no, as affirmation and negation, as A and not-A. They were, are, and remain irreconcilable.” Finally, according to Guyer (one influential living Kantian scholars), “Kant’s new Refutation of Idealism was meant to break with his reductionism of 1781” (1987:288).

On a closer inspection, however, something crucial has been overlooked in the literature. Even though there is not reasonable doubt that Kant has attempted to avoid the Cartesian external-world skepticism in a Berkeleian way, Feder-Garve review has accused him of being an anti-materialist idealist (a “spiritualist” in Kantian words) rather than an anti-realist idealist (*esse est percipi*). Let us take a look:

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

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

Messrs. Eberhard and Garve's opinion that Berkeley's idealism is the same as that of the critical philosophy (which T could better call \*the principle of the ideality of space and time) does not deserve the slightest attention. For I speak of ideality about *the form of representations*, but they interpret this to mean ideality on the *matter*, that is, the ideality of the *object* (BR, AA 11: 395).

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

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

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

### 3. The two-aspect view

In the twentieth century, the debate over the nature of Kantian idealism is much more focused on the transcendental divide between things in themselves and appearances. According to Allison's (2004:xv) two-aspect view, which can be traced back to Paton (1970) and Prauss (1974), the transcendental divide is not a metaphysical one that opposes two realms of reality, the phenomenal and the noumenal. Instead, the divide opposes different perspectives on the same reality. According to the two-aspect view, *mundus sensibilis* and *mundus intelligibilis* are the only two ways of considering the existing world, that of the human and that of the absolute, God's, perspective, *sub*

*specie aeternitatis*, so to speak. From the human perspective, the world takes the form of appearances (*Erscheinungen*) as the objects of our sensible representation, while from the God's-eye-view perspective, the same world takes the form of things in themselves.

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

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

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

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

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

We can accordingly speak of space, extended beings, and so on, *only from the human standpoint*. If we depart from the subjective condition under which alone we can acquire outer intuition, namely that through which we may be affected by objects, then the representation of space signifies nothing at all. *This predicate is attributed to things only*



*insofar as they appear to us, i.e., are objects of sensibility* (A27/B43, emphasis added).

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

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

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

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

However, from the fact that Kant ... is not a Berkeleian idealist, it does not follow that he is not committed to there being a way things are in themselves, which we cannot cognize, or that he is not committed to appearances being genuinely dependent on our minds in some (non-Berkeleian) sense. And while the claim that we cannot know things in themselves is of course an epistemic claim, this does not mean that it involves no metaphysical commitment--such as a commitment to the existence of an aspect of reality which we cannot cognize (2010a: 1).

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

Now, the reader may wonder in what aspects my one-object-epistemic-phenomenalism differs from Allison's two-aspect view. According to Allison, Kant is not committed to the existence of the thing in itself as a *substantia noumenon*, but only to the idea of noumenon, which we cannot avoid. Kant's transcendental divide between appearances and things in themselves should be understood in terms of the opposition between things considered from 'our epistemic conditions' and 'the idea' of things considered 'apart from such conditions.' Thus, according to Allison's deflationary two-aspect view, TI is not a metaphysical position in any possible sense, but rather a methodological and epistemological standpoint. In contrast, according to my one-object-plus-phenomenalism view, the noumenon in the negative sense is the ultimate nature of reality. In other words, I endorse the reading of TI according to which the thing in itself exists as *substantia noumenon* that affects our sensibility and appears inside our minds as phenomenon. Therefore, a phenomenon is not the object of any representation, but rather the way that the noumenon appears inside our minds as a 'mere representation.' Thus, I am also committed to the monist claim that the noumena in the negative is the same thing (phenomena) as appear inside our minds. Thus, I reject both the deflationary view and the representational model.

#### **4. The two world view, again**

The two-world view emerges from the old assumption that Kant's idealism is Berkeley-like ontological phenomenalism according to which the material outside world is nothing but a logical construction out of mere representation in us. Now, on closer look, I not find a single piece of evidence that appearances are not representations for Kant. In A129, for example, he says that appearances "only exist in us." In B164, he states that appearances "are only representation of things." Likewise, he reiterates in A250 that appearances "are nothing but representation." In A386, we can read the very same statement: "appearances are merely representations in us." In A387, he phrases this slightly differently: Appearances are not "in the same quality as they are in us as things external to us."

The same idea is to be found in several *Reflections* from the period after the publication of the second edition of the first *Critique*:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We have sufficiently in the Transcendental Aesthetic everything intuited in space or in time, hence all objects of an experience possible for us, are nothing *but appearances, i.e., mere representations*, which, as they are represented, as extended beings or series of alterations, have outside our thoughts *no existence grounded in itself*. This doctrine I call transcendental idealism (A490/B518, emphasis added).

Yet, we find in the literature are only numerous attempts by interpreters to explain this identification away. What is in question is whether there is a way of denying that Kant is thereby assuming some Berkeleian ontological phenomenalism. For a question of space, I focus on three attempts: Longuenesse (2008) and Collins (1999) and Hanna (2006). Collins limits himself to statement that Kant with the identification of appearances with mere representations in us, “Kant never meant to erode the outerness of objects of outer sense” (1999:72). However, Collins is mistaking the transcendental for the empirical sense of "outside us". To be sure, in the empirical sense, Kant has never denied the externality of things of outer sense. For example, the

computer I am using now is certainly *outside me in this empirical sense*. Still, in the transcendental sense, they are all inside us as mere representations (even the computer that appears to me in space outside me in empirical sense is nothing but a mere representation in me in the transcendental sense).

According to Longuenesse, “in us does not mean here ‘is within our mind’”, but “within the scope of the thought I think” (2008:27). However, Longuenesse is mistaking the transcendental opposition between things inside (appearances) and outside (things in themselves) for the opposition between nonconceptual and conceptual mental states. Things outside the scope of our thought are objects of sensible intuitions that are not conceptualized (inside us in the relevant transcendental sense) rather than things outside us. Longuenesse’s reading cannot account for any passages quoted above. Furthermore, in the famous passage of § 16 of the B-deduction Kant explicitly assumes that something could be represented *in me* without be able to be accompanied by the I think<sup>3</sup>. What happens, in that case, is that the representation *in me* would mean nothing for me, that is, would be blind or would not contribute to cognition (*Erkenntnis*). Moreover, when we take a look at all passages quoted above, none of them supports Longuenesse's reading as if Kant was opposing things outside and within the scope of thought.

The further question is whether Kant’s undeniable identification of appearances with mere representations brings us back to the traditional two-world view of Kantian transcendental idealism according to which appearances and things in themselves are metaphysically different entities. In a recent paper, Oberst (2015) answers this question affirmatively. However, instead of discarding the two-aspect view, Oberst holds that both readings are not only compatible, but also entail each other. I disagree. They are certainly contradictory views: if appearances are, metaphysically speaking, things in themselves (two-aspect view), they cannot be different (two-world view). Oberst mistakes the epistemological side of Kantian idealism (Kant’s phenomenalism: we cognize only the way things in themselves mind-dependently appear to us as mere representations) for its metaphysical side. To assume the epistemological view that we can only cognize the existing mind-independent world as it mind-dependently appears

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<sup>3</sup> “The I think must be able to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something could be represented in me that could not be thought at all, which is as much as to say that the representation would be impossible or else at least would be nothing for me” (B131-2).

to inside us does not entail the two-world metaphysical view that the world outside us comprehends two kinds of thing: appearances and things in themselves.

To circumvent such blatant contradiction, Oberst introduces the artificial distinction between “appearing objects” and “appearances.” “Appearing objects” are things in themselves, yet “appearances” are not. They are the mind-dependent content of our intuitions resulting from the affection of things in themselves and, hence, differ from them:

However, appearances are not representations in the sense of mental items (or acts), but rather the *content* of these items... Thus we should say that representations themselves belong to the noumenal world, whereas their content makes up the phenomenal world. The moral is clear: If appearances are only the content of representations, they cannot be numerically identical to things in themselves (2015: 56, emphasis added).

In the footnote, he adds:

Admittedly, Kant does not make it explicit that appearances are the content and not the mental items (or acts) of representing. But it is quite obvious that this is how he understands appearances. ‘Content’, *I take it, is not to be understood in terms of a relation to outer objects external to our mind or to propositions*, nor does it require the existence of entities such as ‘intentional objects’ (unless understood merely as mental content), which (on a Brentanian account) ‘intentionally inexist’, or ‘sense-data’. It is just a constituent of the item of representation (at least this seems to be Kant’s view) (2015: 71).

Thus, appearances qua “appearing objects” are in fact things in themselves, but qua “contents,” they are not. Instead, they are intentional or “inexistent” objects of our sensible intuitions, that is, the mind-dependent ways in which we represent things in themselves. The final question is how the two extreme views entail each other. According to Oberst:

However, due to the fact that we cannot create appearances out of nothing but need to be affected by objects external to our mind, there must be objects appearing to us. So there would be no appearances without things that appear. Conversely, the relation of appearing presupposes that there really are appearances. For if we did not synthesize sensations into an organized whole in space and time to

which we give the name of an ‘appearance’, there would admittedly be the relation of affection. But affection would not yield more than the raw material of perception, so we could not truly say that things appear to us. Hence appearing requires appearances. As a result, a two-world account presupposes a two-aspect one and vice versa (2015: 60-1).

In my reading appearances are also mind-dependent *from an epistemological viewpoint* as mere representation inside the mind. That is why the view is also “phenomenalist”. However, I reject Oberst’s further assumption that, being mind-dependent, appearances are different from things in themselves. I assume that what is behind Oberst’s view is the assumption that mind-independent things in themselves and mind-dependent appearances cannot be numerically identical things. However, the seeming contradiction emerges from mistaking metaphysics for epistemology. From a metaphysical viewpoint, they are one and the same thing. But what are appearances? Nothing more than the mind-dependently way we know the mind-independently existing things in themselves in so far as they mentally appear inside our mind as mere representation in us. The difference is purely epistemological.

Oberst supports his claim that there is a metaphysical difference by attributing to Kant the so-called content view of perceptual experience in opposition to the so-called relational view:

Thus only those scholars who ascribe a relationist account of perception to Kant, and thus deny a distinct notion of ‘content’, are forced to reject the two-world distinction (2015: 60).

The central tenet of representationalism (also known as the *content view*) is the claim that intuitions have a content *that can be veridical or falsidical in a similar way that propositional attitudes have a content that is true or false*. In contrast, according to the relationist, intuition is *just a matter of putting us in direct contact with the world*. Intuition does not possess any content of its own. Intuition is understood here etymologically as a factive verb: There is no intuition (see, hear, touch, intuit etc.) when there is no object being seen, being touched. That then leads relationism to forcefully embrace disjunctivism. Even though hallucinations and intuitions may be phenomenologically identical, hallucinations are not intuitions.

Now, there is reasonably good textual evidence that Kant rejects the so-called

content view of experience in favour of the so-called relational view. Both in the *Critique* and in the *Anthropology*, and in his *Lectures on Metaphysics* (VM), Kant states clearly that sensible representations do not possess a representational content of their own that could be veridical and falsidical, independent of judgments, which propositional attitudes possess. First, in clear opposition to what Oberst says, according to Kant, sensible intuitions do require the existence of their object: “our mode of intuition is dependent on the existence of the object” (B72).

As contemporary relationalist, in B72 Kant seems to take the verbs expressing experience as *factive*: There cannot be an intuiting, unless the seen object exists; there cannot be a perceiving, unless the perceived object exists (likewise with all verbs of perception too). Now, in such terms, Kant cannot be a representationalist (content view) about perceptual experience, but rather a relationalist and a disjunctivist (relational view).

The second piece of textual evidence in favour of the relationalist reading of Kantian sensible intuition is even more compelling. Both in the First *Critique* and in the *Anthropology*, Kant emphatically asserts that sensibility *per se* never errs. In the First *Critique*, Kant puts this as follows:

Truth and illusion are not in the object, insofar as it is intuited, but in the judgment about it insofar as it is thought. Thus it is correctly said that the senses do not err; yet not because they always judge correctly, but because they do not judge at all. Hence truth, as much as error, and thus also illusion as leading to the latter, are to be found only in judgments, i.e., only in the relations of the object to our understanding (A294/B50).

Exactly the same line of reasoning is found in the *Anthropology*:

The senses do not deceive. This proposition is the rejection of the most important but also, on careful consideration, the emptiest reproach made against the senses; not because they always judge correctly, but rather because they do not judge at all. Error is thus a burden only to the understanding. Still, sensory appearances (species, *apparentia*) serve to excuse, if not exactly to justify, understanding. Thus the human being often mistakes what is subjective in his way of representation for objective (the distant tower, on which he sees no corners, seems to be round; the sea, whose distant part strikes his eyes through higher light rays, seems to be higher than the shore (*altum mare*); the full moon, which he sees ascending near the horizon

through a hazy air, seems to be further away, and also larger, than when it is high in the heavens, although he catches sight of it from the same visual angle). And so one takes appearance for experience, thereby falling into error, but it is an error of the understanding, not of the senses (*Anthr.*, § 11, AA., 7: 146; 258).

The same idea is to be found in the *VM*:

Illusion (illusion) is still no deception (Fraus) of the senses, it is a hasty judgment which the following one immediately contests. We love such illusions considerably, e.g., we are not deceived by an optical box, for we know that it is not so; but we are moved to a judgment which is immediately refuted by the understanding. Delusions (Blendwerk) are to be distinguished from the deceptions of the senses; with a delusion I discover the deception. Because the objects of the senses induce us to judge, the errors are assigned to the senses falsely, since they are properly attributable to the reflection on the senses. We note accordingly the proposition: the senses do not deceive (*sensus non fallunt*). This happens not because they judge correctly, but rather because they do not judge at all, but in the senses lies the seeming (Schein) (*VM.*, AA, 28: 234: 52).

In other words, the error only occurs when the understanding, under the unnoticed influence of the faculty of sensible intuition, mistakes what subjectively appears to our senses to be the way that things really are. Thus, there is no place for illusions in Kant's view of intuition. Therefore, it is not our senses that deceive us (*betrügen*), but rather our ability to judge (*Urteilkraft*), by taking what appears to the senses to be real when this is not the case. Now, if that is right, then representationalism has never come across Kant's mind: *Sensible intuitions do not possess a content of their own that could be veridical or falsidical independently of judgement.*

Therefore, appearances cannot be the *contents* of sensible representations, even if we let contents to be modelled as Russellian propositions, that is, structured sequences of objects, properties and relations: again, per se sensible intuitions are neither veridical nor falsidical, but rather object-dependent. We are acquainted with (*kennen*) the objects (in the Russellian sense of having immediate nonrepresentational contact with) rather than representing them. Thus, Oberst's claims (2015: 60) that, as a relationalist, Kant could never embrace the traditional two-word view according to which appearances and things in themselves are metaphysically different entities.



## 5. The one-object-plus-phenomenalist view

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

“Noumenon” correctly always means *the same thing*, namely the transcendental object of *sensible intuition* (This is, however, no real object or given thing, but a concept, in relation to which appearances have unity), for this must still correspond to something, even though we are *acquainted with nothing other than its appearance* (AA 18: 231, R5554, emphasis added)<sup>4</sup>.

In slightly different words, “appearances” are how the mind-independent world appears to us mind-dependently as something inside our minds with which we can get acquainted (*kennen*). That is what I am calling here “epistemic phenomenalism”. We know only what is inside our minds. Yet, it must be clear from the outset that “phenomenalism” does not mean Berkeleian ontological phenomenalism. In my view, Kant is not claiming that what we call the external world is nothing but a construction made out of mind-dependent sense-impressions. What he is saying is that we can cognize or get acquainted with the way things in themselves mentally appear to us as human beings. The question now is how can I combine this phenomenalism with the one-word view.

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

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<sup>4</sup> This view is not entirely new. Kemp Smith in his famous Commentary of A104-10 claims that: a “careful examination of the text shows that by it he means the *thing in itself*, conceived as being the object of our representations” (2003: 204). However, in opposition to what I will argue here for Smith, such a view is a vestige of his pre-critical period (2003: 204).

## 6. The refutation of idealism

In the previous section I claimed to have already shown that my one-object-plus-phenomenalist view of Kantian idealism is the one that best fits Kant's overwhelming number of assertions that appearance is nothing but mere representation. In this brief section, I show that my one-world-plus-epistemic-phenomenalism is the one that best fits the dominant view today of Kant's Refutation.

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

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

Moreover, the Refutation of Idealism is not merely compatible with transcendental idealism, properly construed; it presupposes it. In order to appreciate this we must keep in mind that its goal is to demonstrate the objective reality of outer intuition, that is, the existence of objects in space (Bxxxix) ... but this goal cannot be accomplished on the transcendental realistic assumption that our outer intuition or experience must be of things as they are in themselves... (2004: 300).

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

If the world were an epitome [ein Inbegriff] of *the things in themselves*, so would it be impossible to prove the existence of a thing outside the world; [...] [...] But if we take the world *as appearance*, it proves just to the existence of something that is *not* appearance (Refl. AA, 18: 305, R5356; original emphasis)<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> "Wäre die Welt ein Inbegriff der *Dinge an sich selbst*, so würde es unmöglich seyn, das Daseyn eines Dinges ausser der Welt zu beweisen; [...]. [...] Nehmen wir aber die Welt als *Erscheinung*, so beweiset sie gerade zu das Daseyn von Etwas, das *nicht* Erscheinung ist".

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

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

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

Indeed, against Allison's position, there is reasonably good textual evidence supporting the assumption that the goal of the Refutation of Idealism is to prove the existence of noumena. Regarding the question of space, I limit myself to a few quotes. In the year 1790, the period just after the publication of the Refutation, Kant states

clearly in one of his many reflections:

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

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

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

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

As to the appearances of inner sense in time, it finds no difficulty in them as real things; indeed it even asserts that this inner experience it alone gives sufficient proof of the real existence of their object (**in itself**) along with all this time-determination (B519; emphasis mine).

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

Thus, while neither the traditional two-worlds view nor the traditional two-aspect view can make sense of the Refutation as a proof of the existence of things in themselves (noumena in the negative sense), my one-world-plus-epistemic-phenomenalism approach fits a certain widely-shared interpretation of the goal of the Refutation, also endorsed by me, quite well. We do not know how things are in themselves, but only as they appear to us as mere representations inside our minds. But we do know *the existence* of this world in itself, as the transcendental ground of

appearance inside our minds (that is what Kant calls knowledge of the existence of noumena in the negative sense). Thus, according to this interpretation, the Refutation of Idealism is the proof of this existence of persistent things in themselves.

## 7. The fourth paralogism

Now, I intend to show that my one-object-epistemic-phenomenalism is the one that best fits the Fourth Paralogism without imputing to Kant either a Berkeleian idealism (Guyer) or a naïve realism.<sup>6</sup> For the sake of argument, let us assume the two-aspect view in the Fourth Paralogism. According to this view, Kant's answer to the external world sceptic is to "restore" our common-sense belief that by using our cognitive apparatus we are acquainted with *mind-independent appearances* in the empirical sense, that is, as appearances in space. Stroud (1984:131) seems to understand Kant's idealism along these lines:

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

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

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

Again, since the Cartesian sceptic idealist is a transcendental realist in the first place (see A369), the sceptic is challenging us to prove the existence outside us, in the

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<sup>6</sup> See Stroud 1984. Hanna has also defended a similar view (2000). But my focus here is Stroud's reading of the Fourth Paralogism.

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

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

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

Now, regardless of whether this is a convincing answer to the Cartesian sceptical challenge (certainly it is not), by saying that matter is just a representation in us, Kant is not endorsing Berkeley's metaphysical claim that the outside world in the relevant transcendental sense is made up of mental states. Kant's controversial statements of A370 and A383 must be understood epistemologically rather than metaphysically, at least if we take his complaints against Feder-Garve's accusation as sincere. By claiming that matter is just a representation in us, Kant is claiming that matter is the mind-

dependent way that the unknown mind-independent things in themselves appear inside us. Therefore, my one-object phenomenalism is the reading of Kantian idealism that best fits the argument of the Fourth Paralogism.

## 8. Conclusion: the fourth paralogism and the refutation of idealism

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

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

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