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APPEARING AND APPEARANCES IN KANT

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## APPEARING AND APPEARANCES IN KANT

In recent writing on the theory of knowledge a distinction has been drawn between 'the language of appearing' and 'the sense-datum language' (or 'the language of appearances', as we may more loosely call it). The aim of this paper is to suggest that consideration of that distinction and of what Kant's attitude toward it would have been can shed light on two otherwise-puzzling aspects of his doctrine in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: his adamant conviction that there are things-in-themselves, and his confidence that the Antinomies are resolved once we admit the transcendental ideality of space and time.

### I

In describing perceptual situations, a group of verbs are used including 'perceive', 'sense', 'intuit', 'see', 'hear', and many others. If there are different and conflicting ways in which this family of verbs are used in philosophical writing or in normal talk, that fact could be of philosophical significance, and consideration of it might well help to clarify some philosophical discussions, especially in cases in the history of philosophy where little explicit attention has been paid to such distinctions. Now, some recent philosophers, especially Ayer<sup>1</sup> and Chisholm,<sup>2</sup> have urged that there is a philosophically noteworthy distinction to be drawn between two different and conflicting ways in which this group of verbs are used. One way of speaking has been called the language of appearing (or, less felicitously, the terminology of appearing), and the other may be called the language of appearances (or of sense data). Let us review this distinction, not in order to evaluate its validity or

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<sup>1</sup> A. J. Ayer, *The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge* (London, 1940), Chap. I, sec. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Roderick M. Chisholm, "The Theory of Appearing," *Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Max Black (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1950).

significance for contemporary philosophy, but only with a view to seeing whether it can illuminate Kant's way of thinking. For this purpose, it is not necessary to express the distinction with perfect clarity, even if that be possible; it will suffice to explain it in a way that would have seemed plausible to philosophers of the past.

According to the first of these two ways of speaking about perceptual situations, that someone perceives or sees a thing entails that the thing exists and is not merely in his mind. It would be self-contradictory, if we are using perceptual verbs in this first way, to speak of perceiving or seeing what does not exist outside the mind. For example, saying in this sense that a man perceives or sees a green oasis would involve claiming that there exists a non-mental oasis that he is aware of. A man who encounters what is merely a mirage may perhaps think that he is perceiving a green oasis, but he will be mistaken if he thinks so; since what he thinks he is perceiving does not exist, he does not perceive an oasis, according to this way of speaking. Instead, his situation can be described by saying that what he perceives (perhaps it is part of the sky) *appears* to him to be an oasis. If we want to give a description of what a man in such a situation is entitled to feel sure of, it would not be that he is perceiving an oasis, but rather that what he perceives appears to him to be an oasis. Because the notion of appearing plays this central role in it, this whole way of speaking may conveniently be called the language of appearing.

According to this language of appearing, when perceptual situations are being truly described, perceptual verbs that have grammatical direct objects always must have as direct objects words referring to things that exist outside the mind. Thus the terminology of appearing is apt for expressing the view that in perception we are "directly acquainted" with things outside our minds; that is, that such things are what we perceive, sense, see, hear, and feel; and that they are what is given to us and what appear to us.

If we wish to extend further our characterization of the language of appearing, we may also take account of descriptions of perceptual situations where perceptual verbs are followed by 'that'-clauses, as when we say a man perceives or sees that an oasis is green. According to the language of appearing, the man can perceive or see that the oasis is green only if it is green. And in general someone can perceive, sense, see, etc., that *S* is *P* only if *S* is *P*.

But the oasis can appear to someone to be green even when it is not; and even if there is no oasis, something can appear to someone to be an oasis and to be green. So again the notion of appearing can be used if we wish to express what it is that someone in such a perceptual situation is entitled to be sure of.

In contrast with this language of appearing, there is another way of using perceptual verbs. According to this second usage, to say that someone perceives a certain kind of thing is not to say that outside his mind there exists such a thing. Instead, it is only to say something about what goes on inside the mind. According to this way of speaking, someone perceives or sees an oasis whenever he has perceptual experience which to him is as of an oasis. Encountering a mirage which looks like an oasis can involve such an experience, so a person who encounters what is merely a mirage may, in this second sense, perceive or see an oasis. To establish that there was no oasis then is not to refute the claim that an oasis was perceived, when the claim is understood in this sense. Moreover, someone might in this second sense perceive or see that an oasis was green even though there was no oasis that was green; one can perceive that *S* is *P* even when it is not the case that there is an *S* that is *P*. The statement about what he perceived or saw thus merely describes his experience from the inside, as it were.

According to this second way of speaking, when perceptual situations are being truly described, perceptual verbs that have direct objects may have for their objects words referring to mental entities such as perceptions, sensations, ideas, impressions, sense data, appearances, or representations. If we ask what was seen by the man who encountered a mere mirage, it may seem awkward to answer "Nothing," for we do want to say that he was seeing, in this second sense—and where there is seeing one feels a tendency to expect that something must be seen. The answer to the question, if there is an answer, will be that he saw something mental in his own mind: a green-oasis appearance, or a green-oasis sense datum. Thus, this way of speaking is apt for expressing the view that we are not 'directly acquainted' with nonmental things, and that it is appearances or sense data with which we are directly acquainted: that these are what we perceive and what are given to us.

To what extent are these two languages equivalent? It is clear that over a wide range of ordinary perceptual situations, most of

the descriptions that we might want to give using one of these ways of speaking could equally well be expressed in terms of the other way of speaking. When a man encounters a mirage, we can describe his perceptual situation either by saying in the language of appearing that he perceives something (say, part of the sky) which appears to him to be an oasis, though it is not; or by saying in the language of appearances that though what he perceives is an oasis-appearance, it is merely an appearance in his mind and corresponds to no oasis outside his mind. Either description will do, and for many ordinary cases there seems to be nothing to choose between the two ways of speaking. And because it thus seems easy in many ordinary cases to translate back and forth between the two ways of speaking, one may well be tempted to conclude that there is essentially nothing to choose between them. If this is so, then there is no reason why one should not feel free to speak whichever way one pleases, and even to speak sometimes in one way and sometimes in the other.

This idea of the equal legitimacy of the two languages and of their complete intertranslatability is an attractive idea. Its attractiveness is attested to by the fact that Ayer embraced the idea. He professed to find that the terminology of appearing and the terminology of sense data (as he called them) are on an equal footing, simply two alternative languages, and that it is not meaningful to ask which is more correct.<sup>3</sup> He himself elected to use the sense-datum terminology, holding that in some respects it is more convenient. But he maintained that this was merely an arbitrary verbal decision on his part.<sup>4</sup>

However, in philosophical discussions of perception it becomes more dubious that there is this intertranslatability of the two ways of speaking. Perhaps one can imagine a philosopher using these two languages in a carefully coordinated way, so that whenever he said anything about perception using the language of appearing he made clear how it was equivalent for him to something that could be said in the language of appearances, and whenever he said anything about perception using the language of ap-

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<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> This claim, along with much else in Ayer's account, has been subjected to trenchant criticism by J. L. Austin in his *Sense and Sensibilia* (Oxford, 1962).

pearances he made clear how it was equivalent for him to something that could be said using the language of appearing. Presumably Ayer thought that he was doing this in his *Foundations of Empirical Knowledge*, though after his first chapter he makes little or no effort to indicate how such translations could proceed. But in any case it certainly is no foregone conclusion that everything philosophers have said about perception using one of these languages can readily and clearly be translated into the other language. Indeed, most philosophers seem to have felt that one of these ways of speaking was more correct than the other.

Some philosophers have believed that what we strictly speaking perceive, see, sense, etc., are always things independent of the mind, rather than appearances of such things or sense data they engender in us. They would hold that the language of appearing is therefore the fundamentally correct way of speaking about perceptual situations. The language of appearances, from their point of view, if permissible at all is so only insofar as it is translatable into the language of appearing. This philosophical viewpoint may be called the theory of appearing. To use the language of appearing is not necessarily to commit oneself to the theory of appearing; but to embrace the theory of appearing is to commit oneself to the language of appearing.

Some other philosophers have believed that what we strictly speaking perceive, see, sense, etc., are never things independent of the mind but always are appearances of them in our minds or sense data in our minds engendered by them. These philosophers would hold that the language of appearances (or of sense data, or of ideas, etc.) is the fundamentally correct way of speaking about perceptual situations. From their point of view, the language of appearing, if permissible at all, is so only insofar as it is translatable into the terminology of appearances. This philosophical viewpoint may be called the theory of appearances. To use the language of appearances is not necessarily to commit oneself to the theory of appearances; but to embrace the theory of appearances is to commit oneself to the language of appearances.

Philosophers who embrace the theory of appearing are not likely to feel that solipsism presents any serious challenge to their position. We are not cognitively confined to a private mental

world, from which escape is next to impossible, and solipsism is no threat, according to the theory of appearing. For according to it, what we are directly aware of are mind-independent things. To have perceptual experience is to be in cognitive contact with an external world. Doubtless things do not always appear to us as they really are, but at any rate there can be no room for doubt that things do appear to us. Thus solipsism can immediately be refuted, according to this viewpoint.

The theory of appearances embodies a sharp contrast, a bifurcation, between the mental appearances, with which alone one is supposed to be directly acquainted, and the things outside one's mind, with which one is supposed never to be directly acquainted. The theory is that the latter things are not perceived, sensed, seen, etc., and this of course makes it difficult to explain how anything definite can be known about them, even that they exist. Philosophers holding to this theory must maintain that if one knows anything definite about the nature or existence of things outside the mind, this knowledge must be inferential. Some sort of argument by analogy is required, reasoning from premises about the observed character of what is within the mind to a conjectural conclusion about what is outside it. However, any such inference is logically questionable, so the theory is haunted by the specter of solipsism.

Someone who wanted to hold, as Ayer did, that the language of appearing and the language of appearances are perfectly intertranslatable, would have to maintain that there is no real conflict between the theory of appearing and the theory of appearances. But now, what is such a person to say of the question whether solipsism is easy or difficult to refute? Should he say that the theory of appearances confronts itself with a mere pseudo-problem, on the ground that we have only to translate our remarks into the language of appearing in order easily to refute solipsism? Or should he say that the theory of appearing carelessly overlooks a real problem, for we have only to translate our remarks into the language of appearances in order to see that solipsism is difficult to refute? Neither way of looking at the matter is plausible. The claim that the two languages are fully intertranslatable is not compatible with there being a problem stateable in one language but not in the other. The claim that the two languages are fully

intertranslatable is based on consideration of many ordinary descriptions that are given of perceptual situations, and one can feel the attractiveness of this claim. But if we take into consideration the kind of things that philosophers have been especially interested in saying about perceptual situations, then the claim of intertranslatability breaks down.

## II

Let us turn now to the philosophy of Kant and consider where he stood on this matter. Did Kant embrace the theory of appearing or the theory of appearances? If Kant held the theory of appearing, then we should expect to find him saying that we sense things-in-themselves; that they are what we intuit, perceive, experience, etc.; that they are given to us. We should expect to find him saying that although we are aware of and know about things-in-themselves only as they appear to us and not as they are in themselves, nevertheless it is things-in-themselves that we are aware of and know about. On the other hand, if Kant held to the theory of appearances, then we should expect to find him saying that we sense appearances or representations, not things-in-themselves. We should expect to find him saying that appearances are what we intuit, perceive, and experience; that they are given to us.

Kant does often speak in the language of appearances. He says that appearances are given to us,<sup>5</sup> that they are given to us in intuition,<sup>6</sup> that what is first given to us is appearance,<sup>7</sup> and that "What the objects may be in themselves would never become known to us even through the most enlightened knowledge of that which is alone given to us, namely their appearance."<sup>8</sup> Also, he speaks of appearances as objects of perception.<sup>9</sup> All these remarks embody the language of appearances.

Yet also Kant often speaks in ways that do not jibe with the language of appearances. He says that our sense representation

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<sup>5</sup> *Prolegomena*, Academy edition, Vol. IV, p. 290.

<sup>6</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 90.

<sup>7</sup> A 120.

<sup>8</sup> A 43.

<sup>9</sup> B 207.

is the way things-in-themselves appear to us.<sup>10</sup> He says that “the things which we intuit are not in themselves what we intuit them as being . . . we know nothing but our mode of perceiving them.”<sup>11</sup> He says that intuition takes place only insofar as the object—here surely the thing-in-itself—is given and the mind affected by it.<sup>12</sup> And he says that in inner sense the mind intuits itself—meaning surely that what is intuited is a thing-in-itself.<sup>13</sup> These remarks embody the language of appearing.

The wealth of quotations that can be cited to illustrate Kant’s use of each of these two languages shows that Kant speaks both these languages and does not distinguish between them. Indeed, sometimes we find both ways of speaking side by side in a single one of his sentences. Thus he says that things as objects of our senses existing outside us are given, but we know only their appearances, that is, the representations which they cause in us.<sup>14</sup> And he says that space can be ascribed to things only insofar as they appear to us, that is, only to objects of sensibility.<sup>15</sup> In both these sentences of Kant’s the language of appearing and the language of appearance are used side by side, clearly indicating that Kant did not recognize any need to distinguish them. As Prichard put it, Kant makes “a transition from ‘things as appearing’ to ‘appearances’ . . . it is clear that Kant is not aware of the transition, but considers the expressions equivalent, or, in other words, fails to distinguish them.”<sup>16</sup>

Kant’s alternating so freely between these two ways of speaking strongly suggests that he did not embrace either the theory of appearing or the theory of appearances; at least, that he did not embrace either to the exclusion of the other, and they are by definition mutually exclusive. Consciously or unconsciously, he would seem to have agreed with Ayer’s professed view that there is essentially nothing to choose between the two languages, and with its

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<sup>10</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 287.

<sup>11</sup> A 42.

<sup>12</sup> A 19.

<sup>13</sup> B 37.

<sup>14</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 289.

<sup>15</sup> A 27.

<sup>16</sup> H. A. Prichard, *Kant’s Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford, 1909), p. 74.

implied corollary that both the theory of appearing and the theory of appearances are misguided in opposing one another.

Yet even if both these ways of speaking are present in Kant's writing, could it perhaps be held that one of them is more deeply and truly his? A philosopher might embrace the theory of appearing and yet still use both the language of appearing and the language of appearances, since use of the language of appearances does not need to commit him to the theory of appearances. Might it be the best interpretation of Kant to suppose that he did this? Some commentators have thought so. H. J. Paton, for example, regards Kant's doctrine as being definitely that "Things as they are in themselves are the very same things that appear to us, although they appear to us . . . as different from what they are in themselves."<sup>17</sup> Also he says that "the thing-in-itself is the reality which appears."<sup>18</sup> Paton concedes that Kant's way of speaking sometimes falls away from this and misleadingly suggests the other view; but Paton's position is that the theory of appearing is Kant's real position, and that Kant's use of the language of appearances is to be explained away.

Now, to hold that the theory of appearing is Kant's view is to claim that in principle whatever Kant says using the language of appearances—apart from slips that are to be neglected—can be translated into something expressible in the language of appearing. If the theory of appearing is Kant's view, then all the essential doctrines of his philosophy must in principle be stateable without using the language of appearances. Paton does not even try to show that this can be done. Indeed, even in his own commentary he freely uses locutions of his own that are not clearly translatable into the language of appearing, as when he says that appearances are ideas.<sup>19</sup>

There is much in Kant's teaching that cannot be expressed in the language of appearing, or that would suffer grave change of meaning if it were so expressed. Kant regularly speaks of appearances as due to the influence of things-in-themselves, and he speaks of things-in-themselves as affecting us, or affecting our sensibility and so pro-

<sup>17</sup> H. J. Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience* (London, 1936), Vol. I, p. 61.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 62 note.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 442.

ducing in us appearances.<sup>20</sup> These theses cannot be dismissed as accidental or unimportant slips on Kant's part. They bulk large in his philosophy. The very formulation of his transcendental idealism employs the language of appearances, as when he says "By *transcendental idealism* I mean the doctrine that appearances are to be regarded as being, one and all, representations only, not things in themselves."<sup>21</sup> To this he adds that "The transcendental idealist . . . may admit . . . matter without going outside his mere self-consciousness . . . Matter is with him, therefore, only a species of representations."<sup>22</sup> This thesis, often reiterated by Kant, certainly is a rather essential part of his philosophy, and cannot be dismissed as inessential or as a mere lapse. It is highly doubtful that this thesis could be translated into the language of appearing, without suffering considerable change of meaning.

It seems proper to conclude that Kant decisively embraced neither the theory of appearing nor the theory of appearances, but oscillated between them without recognizing any need for making a choice. And the likeliest explanation of why he did so is that he regarded the language of appearing and the language of appearances as fully intertranslatable. Like Ayer, he must have noticed that in many ordinary cases, perceptual situations can be described legitimately according to either way of speaking, and this would have encouraged him to think, as Ayer thought, that there is nothing to choose between the two languages. The presence of both these ways of speaking and the resultant tension between them should then be regarded as fundamental to Kant's philosophy. If we tried to improve Kant's teaching by insisting that for the sake of consistency either the theory of appearing or the theory of appearances must be employed throughout, then the result would be an over-all philosophy of knowledge essentially unlike Kant's.

### III

Kant's refusal to choose between the theory of appearing and the theory of appearances can help to shed light on various aspects

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<sup>20</sup> Paton grants this, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 62.

<sup>21</sup> A 369.

<sup>22</sup> A 370.

of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, two of which will now be briefly examined. The first of these has to do with whether there are things-in-themselves. Now, Kant declares again and again that all our theoretical knowledge is of appearances only and that we can have no theoretical knowledge of things-in-themselves, not even of the self as a thing-in-itself. It is a cardinal tenet of his philosophy that no theoretical metaphysics can be legitimate which pretends to offer information about matters that transcend appearances. Yet at the same time Kant himself continually speaks of things-in-themselves as underlying appearances. He never shows any willingness to countenance the slightest doubt that there are things-in-themselves distinct from appearances. This is puzzling. Since he insists that we can know nothing about things-in-themselves, how is it that he thinks we can know that there are such things? Would it not have been more consistent with his rejection of transcendent metaphysics for him to have said instead that we cannot even tell whether there are things-in-themselves? What is puzzling here is that it is difficult to see what could have led Kant to feel so sure that there are things-in-themselves.

It might be suggested in reply that this is not really puzzling and that the explanation is that Kant simply failed to recognize the conflict between his rejection of transcendent metaphysics and his retention of the thing-in-itself, because he failed to see that one could doubt the latter. According to this suggestion, he inherited from the dogmatic metaphysics of his predecessors the uncriticized preconception that there could not be a world consisting only of appearances, that such a world would lack the power to be by itself. In line with this suggested explanation, Royce, for example, called the doctrine that there are things-in-themselves a "personal presupposition" of Kant's.<sup>23</sup> This is to suggest that it was not because of any argument that Kant held the doctrine. This suggested explanation is not a very satisfying one, however. It amounts to saying that Kant had no to-him-compelling reason except mental inertia for his strong belief that there are things-in-themselves, and this is difficult to credit. It would be surprising if such a prominent feature of his philosophy were

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<sup>23</sup> Josiah Royce, *Lectures on Modern Idealism* (New Haven, 1919), p. 40. Royce does not regard this as the whole story, however.

nothing but an unquestioningly inherited dogma. Surely it would be more plausible to suppose that he had some line of thought of his own that impelled him to this as a conclusion.

Another suggestion for removing the puzzle would be to say that Kant did have a to-him-compelling reason for affirming that there are things-in-themselves, but that this reason is supplied only by his ethical philosophy. In his ethical philosophy Kant holds that one's inexpugnable consciousness of the demands of morality requires one to believe that one possesses free will. And he holds freedom to be impossible in the sphere of appearances, where nothing can occur except according to deterministic laws. Thus the demands of morality, he thinks, require one to believe that one's self in its true nature is not just appearance but is something in itself. This line of thought does afford a practical (though not a theoretical) basis for affirming that there is a thing-in-itself (and also that there are other things-in-themselves, insofar as morality requires one to impute moral responsibility to others). However, important though this is to Kant, it is a line of thought that does not satisfactorily answer the puzzle about why Kant was so confident that there are things-in-themselves. Kant's affirmations that there are things-in-themselves occur from the beginning of the first *Critique*, whereas his practical postulate of freedom is enunciated only much later. Such being the case, it is implausible to suppose that he himself regarded his moral philosophy as providing the main basis for saying that there are things-in-themselves. Moreover, Kant never says that our knowledge that there are things-in-themselves is practical rather than theoretical knowledge, and one would have expected him to say this if he had believed it, for elsewhere he meticulously emphasizes the contrast between the theoretical and the practical. Kant's affirmations that there are things-in-themselves are unqualified and firm in tone; they convey none of that suggestion of unverifiable conjecture that is present in his discussion of the practical postulate of freedom. Thus we cannot suppose him to have thought that our right to say there are things-in-themselves is based mainly on the practical postulate of freedom.

This leaves us then with a puzzle. How are we to explain why Kant felt so confident that there are things-in-themselves

distinct from appearances? Surely it is likely that he was moved by some kind of argument on this point that seemed compelling to him. It probably must have been a quite simple one which seemed too obvious to need emphasis. What might that argument have been?

An answer may be found in the language of appearing, as he used it. His statements in this language seem immediately to entail that there are things-in-themselves. In one well-known passage he himself comes close to saying this, for he speaks of "the absurd conclusion that there can be appearance without anything that appears."<sup>24</sup> Possibly one could read this sentence as expressing just the uncriticized dogma that a world constructed merely of ideas could not by itself possess the power to be. However, a more plausible interpretation of the sentence is obtained if we read it as expressing the theory of appearing. In the language of appearing, one cannot speak of appearings without implying that there is something which is independently real and which appears to us. This whole way of speaking seems by its very grammar to afford an immediate proof that there are things in themselves. If we may suppose that Kant oscillated between the theory of appearing and the theory of appearances, then we may suppose that this argument depending on the theory of appearing would have seemed compelling to him.

#### IV

A second puzzle concerns one line of Kant's thought in his resolution of the Antinomies of Pure Reason. Suppose we express the first two Antinomies in abbreviated form:

1st. The world is either finite or infinite in size and age.

Thesis: It cannot be infinite, so it is finite.

Antithesis: It cannot be finite, so it must be infinite.

2nd. The world either consists of atoms or its every part is divisible.

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<sup>24</sup> B xxvi-B xxvii.

Thesis: The parts cannot all be divisible, so the world consists of atoms.

Antithesis: Atoms are impossible, so each part is divisible.

Kant's view is that in each Antinomy the proof of the thesis and the proof of the antithesis would be rigorously sound, provided the initial disjunctive premise could be assumed true.

We may compare these antinomies with a more modern one, Russell's antinomy in set theory. Russell showed that a contradiction ensues if we suppose that the set of all sets not members of themselves must either be a member of itself or not a member of itself. For if it is, then it cannot be, and if it is not, then it must be. One way of escaping this antinomy is by rejecting the assumption that the set of all sets not members of themselves must either be a member of itself or not be a member of itself. How could this assumption fail to be true? The most straightforward way of rejecting the assumption is by denying that there is any such set as the one supposedly mentioned. That is, one can reject the idea that the singular term 'the set of all sets not members of themselves' names a set. If there is no such set, then it neither is true that it belongs to itself nor true that it does not.

One line of thought in Kant's resolution of his Antinomies is exactly parallel to this. In his Antinomies the singular term 'the world', meaning the spatio-temporal world of our experience, is used in the Theses and Antitheses as though it really referred to something. If it does, then what it refers to must possess one or the other out of every possible pair of contradictorily opposed predicates (this follows from the Transcendental Principle of Complete Determination).<sup>25</sup> In particular, being spatio-temporal, it must be either finite or infinite in size and age, composed of atoms or having each part always further divisible, etc. But this would yield what Kant regards as insoluble contradictions. The only way out, he feels, is in effect to deny that there is any such thing as the spatio-temporal world: "So long as we obstinately persist in assuming that there is an actual object corresponding to the idea, the problem, thus viewed,

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<sup>25</sup> A 572.

allows of no solution.”<sup>26</sup> If the term ‘the world’ does not refer to anything, then we can reject the proposition that it consists of atoms *and* reject the proposition that its parts are always further divisible; and so on for all four Antinomies. The Antinomies can be resolved only in this way, Kant thinks, and this seems to him to constitute a striking indirect argument in favor of Transcendental Idealism.<sup>27</sup> To suppose that things really are spatio-temporal leads to unavoidable contradiction, so we must conclude that nothing is spatio-temporal, and that space and time are no more than “forms of our sensibility,” ways things appear to us.

To be sure, Kant’s discussion of the resolution of the Antinomies certainly does contain other lines of thought besides this one. But this is a central line of thought that is present in his discussion, and it is a puzzling one. The puzzling feature of this is that Kant is holding that nothing can be spatio-temporal, yet also is holding that appearances are spatio-temporal—for he affirms that the empirical world of our experience with all that it contains is so. If there are appearances, and if these are spatio-temporal, how can they escape the contradictions of the Antinomies? By saying that there are spatio-temporal appearances, Kant seems to be abandoning the ground upon which his resolution of the Antinomies supposedly rests. This criticism has most forcefully been urged by G. E. Moore.<sup>28</sup>

Some readers of Kant would object that this criticism is crude and unfair, for it leaves out Kant’s notion of the world-whole as existing only in potentiality; his notion of the spatio-temporal world as a construction project, never completed, which always may be carried further by the work of thought.<sup>29</sup> Of course this notion of the merely potential existence of the spatio-temporal world as a whole is present in Kant’s discussion of the resolution of the Antinomies, and his attempt to use this notion to help resolve the Antinomies is an important line

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<sup>26</sup> A 482.

<sup>27</sup> A 506.

<sup>28</sup> G. E. Moore, *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* (London, 1953), chap. 9.

<sup>29</sup> Such a response is offered by T. D. Weldon in *Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (Oxford, 1958), 2nd ed., p. 207.

of thought there in addition to the line of thought already mentioned. However, the above criticism is not to be dismissed as unfair merely because it omits consideration of this notion, for this notion of potential existence wholly fails to yield a consistent Kantian answer to the criticism. This is seen as follows. To say that the world actually exists as a whole must be to say that each phenomenon that is part of it actually exists. What does it mean for Kant to say of a particular phenomenon that it actually exists in the world? He tells us that this means it can be found in the "empirical advance of experience," i.e., that if certain experiences were to occur then certain others would occur. To say this is to define the actual existence of phenomena in terms of the potential existence of experiences. But in terms of this definition of the actual existence of phenomena, certainly the spatio-temporal world as a whole does actually exist, since each phenomenon in it can be encountered in the "empirical advance." So Kant's notion of the merely potential existence of the world-whole, suggestive and valuable though it may be, does not protect him against the above criticism.<sup>30</sup>

Our puzzle, then, is to see what could have led Kant to suppose both that he could resolve the Antinomies through denying that anything is spatio-temporal and yet continue to affirm that appearances or phenomena are so. The answer again would seem to lie in Kant's nonchalant attitude toward the theories of appearing and of appearances. In his resolution of the Antinomies, Kant employs the theory of appearing, and says that though things appear to be spatio-temporal, nothing is so. But because he feels, as Ayer did, that there is nothing to choose between the language of appearing and the language of appearances, Kant allows himself to continue speaking in the language of appearances, and he says that appearances are spatio-temporal. Recognizing no transition between the one way of speaking and the other, he cannot feel the force of the contradiction into which his views have drifted.

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<sup>30</sup> This point is briefly made by Prichard, *op. cit.*, p. 102. He attributes it to J. Cook Wilson.