

## Chapter Four

# KANT'S TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM: APPEARANCES AND THINGS IN THEMSELVES

Transcendental idealism is an attempt to state the limits of human knowledge. Kant said:

By *transcendental idealism* I mean the doctrine that appearances are to be regarded as being, one and all, representations only, not things in themselves, and that time and space are therefore only sensible forms of our intuition, not determinations given as existing by themselves, nor conditions of objects, viewed as things in themselves.

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We can know things only in so far as we can intuit them. But intuition is subject to conditions. We can intuit things only in terms of their spatial and temporal determination. Hence we can know things

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<sup>143</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 369, p. 345. In *The Dialogues and the Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, Berkeley presents similar arguments for idealism and contends that he is content to let his entire case for idealism rest on the impossibility of unperceived objects. See George Berkeley, *Principle*, Section 22 and *The Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous I*. Kant's ultimate argument for refuting idealism rests on the premise that self-knowledge implies knowledge of the world because the world provides the only possible justification for self-knowledge claims or the only criterion for their validity. Thus the more persuasive argument in the "Refutation" is directed against the problematic form of idealism that is supposedly held by Descartes or other representationalists. This type of idealism holds that the existence of objects in space outside us is doubtful and indemonstrable. In refuting this argument Kant begins with what he takes to be the fundamental position of the idealists and attempts to show that this position of the idealists makes necessary his own position. The premise he chooses is that we have inner experience. The task he sets himself is that by showing that "inner experience which for Descartes is indubitable, is possible only on the assumption of outer experience." (B 275).

only as bodies which occupy space and last through time. In recent times, Karl Popper epitomizing Kant's sentiments said:

*The thing in itself* is unknowable: we can only know its appearances which are to be understood (as pointed out by Kant) as resulting from the thing in itself and from our own perceiving apparatus. Thus appearances result from a kind of interaction between the things in themselves and ourselves. Thus the one thing may appear to us in different forms, according to our different ways of perceiving it, of observing it, and of interacting with it. We try to catch as it were, the thing in itself, but we never succeed: we can only find appearances in our traps.<sup>144</sup>

Kant's whole thesis is centered on two modes of reflection: upon things as phenomena and upon the very same things in themselves. As he puts it in the Preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: "Our Critique [teaches] that the object is to be taken in a two-fold sense, namely as appearance and as thing in itself."<sup>145</sup> And in the body of the text he says: "Appearance, which always has two sides, the one by which the object is contemplated in and by itself (without regard to the mode of intuiting it) . . . the other by which the form of the intuition of this object is taken into account."<sup>146</sup> In the Antimony of Pure Reason Kant defines transcendental idealism as the doctrine that:

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<sup>144</sup>Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1959), p. 453. See K. Lorenz, *Die Rueckseite des Spiegels: Versuch einer Naturgeschichte menschlichen Erkennens* [Munich-Zurich, 1973 (English translation: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, London, 1977)] for a discussion of what is characterized as hypothetical realism - - an offshoot of Kant's empirical realism. Hypothetical realism stresses the hypothetical nature of all knowledge, and whereas critical realism takes the existence of the world as evident, unquestionable, and intuitively warranted, hypothetical realism distinguishes psychological certainty and epistemological uncertainty and takes even the existence of the world as a conjecture and tries to find arguments supporting that hypothesis.

<sup>145</sup>*Critique of Pure Reason*, B xxvii, p. 28.

<sup>146</sup>*Ibid.*, A 38/B 55 p. 80.

Objects of any experience possible to us are nothing but appearances that is, mere representations, which, in the manner in which they are represented, as extended beings, or as series of alterations, have no independent existence outside our thoughts.<sup>147</sup>

The above passages would seem to indicate that the defining characteristic of transcendental idealism is its confusion of mere appearance with things in themselves. For instance an analysis of the knowledge we claim reveals that mind puts something of itself into what it knows both at the level of seeing and thought. In the Kantian sense, we possess both *a priori* intuitions and *a priori* concepts and on the basis of these we can, to a certain extent, anticipate experience. Thus trans-cendental idealism can be said to be designed to avoid two extremes: on the one hand, complete idealism, whereby everything, except perhaps our minds themselves, is claimed to be somehow ideal; and, on the other hand, the realism of common sense which holds that many familiar things around us exist quite independently of our minds or cognitive capacities.

Transcendental idealism seems to take a middle path by distinguishing between the world of appearances and the world of things in themselves. The world of appearances is not wholly ideal nor wholly a creation of our minds and, though different from the world of things in themselves, is yet not separable from it. However, this interpretation is untenable even if Kant contributed to its wide appeal within certain philosophical circles, by being ambiguous at times in his formulations of things in themselves and appearances.

For instance, what does Kant mean by "in itself"? It seems quite clear what he means by viewing things as "appearances" - - namely, viewing them as objects of our sensory intuition as interpreted by the concepts of the understanding. But when things are considered "in themselves" they are being considered "without regard to the constitution of our sensibility."<sup>148</sup> That is, to contemplate things "in themselves" means not to regard them as appearances.<sup>149</sup> However, it would seem that to view the same thing as both appearance and non-appearance involves a contradiction.

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<sup>147</sup>Ibid., A 491/B 519, p. 439.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., A 256/B 312 p. 273.

If this reading of Kant is correct, then he would certainly be guilty of Hegel's repeated charge of "subjectivism" and his claim that, for Kant, knowledge fails to include the things of the world. For Hegel, the real is not "behind" or "beyond" but actually present in what we apprehend. What we know are the things themselves, their properties, unities and relations.

However, this apparent contradiction can be resolved if we consider Kant's formulations of things as appearance and also in themselves from the point of view of transcendental reflection. Kant himself puts it this way: "Appearances, insofar as they are thought as objects according to the unity of the categories are called phenomena."<sup>150</sup> Here Kant seems to mean by "appearance" the empirical appearances in sense perception. By "phenomena" he seems to mean the transcendental-philosophical characterization of the very things which empirical cognition has as its object (physical or mental objects). In other words: although empirical cognition can, and does, regard its objects, as things in themselves, these very same objects, along with all appearances, are but phenomena for transcendental reflection.<sup>151</sup>

Thus, there are two levels of viewing the same objects. From the empirical point of view, the objects constitute an empirical reality with which our sciences are concerned. These objects exist independently of any particular subject viewing them. All empirical things considered in themselves remain legitimate objects of the empirical sciences. As Kant himself indicates: "The natural appearances are objects which are given to us independently of our concepts, and the key to them lies not in us

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<sup>150</sup>Ibid., A 249 ff; p. 265 ff. A phenomenon is not only an object of experience, it is also a possible object of experience. It is the latter as well as the former because the form of all phenomena is *a priori*, and since the same *a priori* structure of the mind forms all experience into objects of 'experience' one feature of experience can be known even before any particular experiences are formed by the same *a priori* structure of the mind. This is what Kant means by saying that an interpretation of phenomena as object is object under the unity of the categories.

<sup>151</sup>Gerald Prauss, in his *Kant und das Problem der Dinge an Sich*, was the first interpreter of Kant to develop this insight of distinguishing between a thing in itself and an appearance in terms of the more basic distinctions between a transcendental and an empirical sense of viewing the same thing.

and our pure thinking, but outside us."<sup>152</sup> From the transcendental point of view, however, these very same things are "phenomena" which, as conceptually determined appearances, depend, on the one hand, on our sensibility, and, on the other hand, on the interpretative function of the understanding.

Empirical objects are of two types, the external or physical, and the internal or mental. For example, there are sciences like chemistry and biology which deal with a world of things that is empirically objective. But there are also sciences like psychology which deal with subject matter that is empirically subjective but would still conform to Kant's understanding of appearances. Whatever is empirically real (the empirically subjective along with the empirically objective) must be seen "as appearances."

However, there is one significant difference between the two: the empirically objective always is an actualization of what the subject projects as other than itself; the empirically subjective, on the other hand, is the actualization of the subject itself as an empirical subject. It is self-actualization, and the experience is essentially an introspection for which, only something like an empirically mental phenomenon can be an object.

The experiencing self, however, as experiencing can never become an object. It is and remains the empirical manifestation of the non-empirical subject. This means that the non-empirical subject which one recognizes in the empirical subject when one views the empirical subject "in itself" is precisely the same subject which one sees when one views it "as appearance". In other words, whether one views it "as appearance" or as in itself, one always encounters the non-empirical subject within the empirical.

By distinguishing between a transcendental and an empirical use of a thing in itself we are allowed to speak of empirical things in themselves. This move enables us to talk about objects of experience that can appear to us in different ways, but cannot be presented to us without any form of intuitions at all. Regarded empirically, objects of experience are independent in that they are logically distinguished from the forms of intuitions under which we perceive them.

The distinction is not between a thing considered as an appearance and the same thing considered as a thing in itself. It is rather between a

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<sup>152</sup>*Critique of Pure Reason*, A 48/B 508, p. 433.

consideration of a thing as it appears and a consideration of the same thing as it is in itself. The concept of the appearance of a thing and the ground for this concept cannot be the same in principle, for they belong to different levels of cognition. The concept of the appearance of things is a matter of empirical fact; the ground for this concept is disclosed in transcendental reflection as a non-empirical insight into the structure of our cognition of empirical things.<sup>153</sup>

Nothing in this view implies that considering something as an appearance entails considering it as a thing that both exists "in itself" and also appears to us in certain ways. Regarding something as an appearance is simply regarding it with respect to the necessary conditions required for obtaining knowledge of a thing of that sort. The notion of a thing "in itself" accordingly is simply that of the possibility of regarding things in abstraction from those conditions.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup>For some philosophers, the cognitive realms by which we present reality to ourselves must be defined in terms of particular mental objects. These, for example, would be the ideas of Berkeley and Hume. According to Hume reason is responsible for identifying relations between ideas, but the ideas have been acquired through the senses. In contrast, a traditional rationalist insists that the paradigm of knowledge is knowledge through the understanding. In so far as the sense yields knowledge at all, it is only a very dim, muddy confused approximation to the real thing, knowledge through reason or understanding, such as knowledge of logical and mathematical truths. When Descartes talks through the aid of his translators of clearly and distinctly perceiving this or that, he is not referring to perfect vision or hearing but to the knowledge characteristic of the understanding as reason. These philosophers believe that cognitive dealings with reality are effected via cognitive involvement with reality (ideas) internal to the process of cognition itself. For other philosophers the possibility of cognitive contact with extra-mental reality is not something calling for explanation at all, and it stands in no need of mediation by means of something more primordial. In either case Kant's predecessors tended to take one thing as fundamental; the presentation of objects to the faculty by which they are then to be recognized.

The Kantian insight is that cognitive relations must in every case rest upon the foundation of cognitive states (the functions of the mind). It must rest upon states of the knower whose internal constitution is such that it is in the first place *possible* for those states to present it with objects of possible cognition.

<sup>154</sup>When we consider things in themselves and their appearances there is no duplication of entities involved at all. We do not have a special class of transcendent entities impinging on the phenomenal world, but what we have is a special way of obtaining information about perfectly ordinary objects.

The distinction, then, is between things considered with respect to, and in abstraction from, a certain set of considerations. In other words, the distinction is between things as objects of experience and those same objects as things in themselves, or as Kant says "viewing objects from two different points of view."<sup>155</sup>

As indicated already, there are statements in the *Critique of Pure Reason* which seem to contradict this interpretation. For example, Kant says "while much can be said *a priori* as regards the form of appearances, nothing whatsoever can be asserted of the thing in itself, which may underlie these appearances."<sup>156</sup> And:

If our subjective constitution be removed, the represented object, with the qualities which sensible intuition bestows upon it is nowhere to be found, and cannot possibly be found. For it is this subjective constitution which determines its form as appearances.<sup>157</sup>

When we reflect on passages like these in the *Critique*, we find that the thing in itself as an unknowable entity is the projection of a reason that strives to transcend all limits of possible experience.<sup>158</sup> Although we cannot think of an object any other way but through the categories "we cannot *know* an object so thought save through intuitions corresponding to these concepts."<sup>159</sup>

For us to see what is being intimated at, we need to be reminded that Kant draws a sharp distinction between *transcendental realists* who "interpret outer appearances (their reality being taken as granted) as thing-in-themselves, which exist independent of us and of our sensibility"<sup>160</sup> and his position, which he identifies as *transcendental*

<sup>155</sup>B xix, p. 23.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid., A 49 / B 66, p.87.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid., A 44/B 62, p. 84.

<sup>158</sup>A 131/B 171 ff, p. 177.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid., B 165, p. 173.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid., A 369, p. 346.

*idealism*<sup>161</sup> according to which "external things exist as well as I myself" but are, nevertheless "mere appearances and are therefore nothing but a species of my representations."<sup>162</sup> "The understanding can never transcend those limits of sensibility within which alone objects can be given to us."<sup>163</sup> To speak of "*things-in-themselves*" which, presumably, transcends these limits "is impossible."<sup>164</sup> "What the things-in-themselves may be I do not know, nor do I need to know, since a thing can never come before me except in appearance."<sup>165</sup>

In the amphiboly, Leibniz is attacked for teaching that appearances are confused representations of things in themselves and Locke for maintaining that there is a direct causal link between our ideas and unknown objects which cause them. Kant's position must be different. What Kant is saying is that appearances in the transcendental sense do not represent things in themselves for the very reason that there is no "other" to be represented. They do not point beyond themselves to something otherwise unknown in Lockean manner. The distinction is never that between nominal and real essence. There is only one object which may be viewed both as the object of scientific investigation and

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<sup>161</sup>Transcendental idealism is defined here as the doctrine that appearances are to be regarded as being one and all representations only, not things in themselves and that time and space are therefore only sensible forms of our intuition, not conditions of objects viewed as things in themselves. The basis of this distinction lies in the Kantian contention that the distinction between appearances and things in themselves is transcendental and not empirical. It is not the result of a direct reflection upon the objects of our experience, but a second order analysis of the necessary condition of their cognition. Thus, a transcendental idealism is compatible with an empirical realism, namely the belief that objects as they are presented to consciousness in experience really are in space and time. In the aesthetic this is argued in terms of the thesis that space and time as *a priori* forms of sensibility are empirically real and transcendently ideal.

<sup>162</sup>*Critique of Pure Reason*, A 370, p. 346.

<sup>163</sup>*Ibid.*, B 303, p. 264.

<sup>164</sup>*Ibid.*, A 276 / B 332, p. 286.

<sup>165</sup>*Ibid.*, A 277/B 333 p. 286.

as phenomena for philosophical reflection, not a pseudo-object which points beyond itself to the real object.

Kant also said:

through observation and analysis of appearances we penetrate to nature's inner recesses, and no one can say how far this knowledge may in time extend. But with all this knowledge, and even if the whole of nature were revealed to us, we should still never be able to answer those transcendental questions which go beyond nature.<sup>166</sup>

Although our science deals directly with empirical things, Kant's transcendental philosophical analysis of cognition makes it clear that "no objects can be represented through pure *concepts of understanding* apart from the conditions of sensibility."<sup>167</sup> But by applying its pure concepts i.e., its categories, *a priori* to objects of intuition in general, the understanding forms that inner "non-empirical object" or "object in general,"<sup>168</sup> the "transcendental object = x."<sup>169</sup> However, this conception of a transcendental object can serve only as a conception of unity. For, "by means of this the understanding combines the manifold into the concept of an object."<sup>170</sup> In other words, the transcendental object is not itself an existing object and certainly not a thing in itself. It is "only the representation of appearance under the concept of an object in general - - a concept which is determinable through the manifold of these appearances."<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>166</sup>Ibid., A 278 / B 334, p. 287.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid., A 567/B 595, p 485, cf A 288-89/ B 344-45, pp. 293-4.

<sup>168</sup>Ibid., A 108, p. 137.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid., A 109, p. 137.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid., A 250, p. 268.

<sup>171</sup>Ibid., A 251, p. 268. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant made it clear, that reference to an object is solely the work of the understanding, and the reference to an object consists in the unity of the concept. When we try to separate out the real content of the object to which we refer our representations, we find that we have only a correlate of the transcendental unity of apperception, something which cannot be separated from the sensible

However, it has been argued by many modern critics of transcendental philosophy that all it proves is that a certain conceptual framework is necessitated by the way the world is structured for us. It is further argued that since this is only a conceptual necessity, to demonstrate its reality something more is required, namely, some sort of verification procedure.<sup>172</sup> According to this theory, Kant's transcendental idealism is a metaphysical theory that affirms the unknowability of the real (things in themselves) and relegates knowledge to the pure subjective realm of representations and appearance. It thus combines a phenomenalist account of what is

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representation of appearances under the concept of an object in general. The thought of the transcendental object is essentially the undetermined, which if a manifold of intuition is given can be determined by the categories working on this given manifold. By themselves the categories determined no particular object, but rather make possible the determination of various empirical objects, all of which are merely, in that sense determination of the one transcendental object.

<sup>172</sup>See Barry Stroud: "Transcendental Arguments," *Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1968): 241-256 and P. Hacker: "Are Transcendental Arguments a Version of Verificationism?" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 19 (1972): 78-85. Stroud remains dubious of the success of Kant's transcendental arguments. He confronts those who propose such argument with a dilemma. Either these arguments are little more than an elaborate and superfluous screen behind which we can discern a simple reliance on a simple form of verification principle, or the most that such arguments can establish is that, in order for the intelligible formulations of skeptical doubt to be possible, or generally in order for self-conscious thoughts and experience to be possible, one must take it, or believe, that one has knowledge of say, external physical objects or other minds. For related criticism the following works can be considered a good sample: M.S. Gram, "Must Transcendental Arguments be Spurious?" *Kant Studien* (1974): 304-317; S. Koerner, "The Impossibility of Transcendental Deduction," *Kant Studies Today*, ed. L.W. Beck La Salle (1969), pp. 230-44; Richard Rorty, "Verificationism and Transcendental Arguments," *Nous* (1971): 3-14; E. Schaper, "Arguing Transcendentally," *Kant Studien* (1972): 101-16; M.G. Kalin, "Kant's Transcendental Arguments as *Gedanken Experimente*," *Kant Studien* (1972): 315-328; J. Hintikka, "Transcendental Arguments. Genuine and Spurious," *Nous* (1972): 274-81; H.L. Ruf, "Transcendental Logic: An Essay on Critical Metaphysics," *Man and World* (1969): 38-64. F. Dreske, "Epistemic Operators," *Journal of Philosophy* Vol 67 (1970). Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981, p. 689).

actually experienced by the mind and therefore knowable with the postulation of an additional set of entities which in terms of the very theory, are unknowable. Indeed, this kind of interpretation can be traced back to Kant's contemporaries.<sup>173</sup>

This type of criticism is widely accepted in the Anglo-American philosophical circles. This view received its most novel interpretation in P.F. Strawson<sup>174</sup> who defined transcendental idealism as the doctrine that reality is supersensible and that we can have no knowledge of it.<sup>175</sup> Starting with this understanding of Kant's idealism Strawson thus proceeds to separate what he terms the analytic argument of the *Critique* from the transcendental idealism which he believes Kant unfortunately and unnecessarily entangled it.<sup>176</sup>

Thus, for Strawson there are two strands in Kant's thought in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.<sup>177</sup> On the one hand, there is an analytic strand

<sup>173</sup>For an account of many of these early interpretations see Hans Vaihinger, *Kommentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart/Berlin/Leipzig: W. Spemann, 1881-92), pp. 494-505. Vaihinger believed that a thing in itself is a limiting concept and concluded that it is in the end of an infinite series of appearances. See Hans Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of "As If"*, trans. C. L. Ogden (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966), Chapter XVII and Kuno Fisher, *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, 2nd ed. (Heidelberg: F. Bassermann, 1869), Vol. III, pp. 219-21; John Hoaglund has provided an account of English speaking criticism in "The Thing itself in English Interpretations of Kant," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 10 (January 1973): 1-14.

<sup>174</sup>P.F. Strawson, *The Bound of Sense* (London: Methuen, 1966).

<sup>175</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>176</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>177</sup>D.P. Dryer holds views quite dissimilar from that of Strawson. He claims that the idea of a thing in itself is a distinction between two ways in which the same thing is regarded - - between considering it in a certain relation, namely as presented to the senses, and considering it apart from that relation. This might be considered as the two descriptions theory. Typical statements of the theory in Kant are Bxxvi-Bxxvii; A 38/B 55; B 69; A 538. If this theory is right, the object that appears to us (that is in the spatio-temporal mode) might appear without them to other modes of intuitions. This is precisely what makes the object appearing to us unknowable as a thing in itself. So, the crucial

in which Kant is concerned with the set of ideas which forms the limiting framework of all our thoughts about the world and experience of the world. On the other hand, there is the doctrine of transcendental idealism. Strawson maintains that these two strands are not merely distinguishable, they are independent of each other.<sup>178</sup> The analytic strand contains much that is worth preserving. The doctrine of transcendental idealism, however, is incoherent and based on misleading analogy.<sup>179</sup> There is no case for preserving any part of it. It can be abandoned without any real damage to Kant's analytic achievement.

It appears that Strawson sees transcendental idealism as a two-layer doctrine. He often refers to an element of the relatively familiar kind of phenomenalistic idealism in Kant's thought and comments that "Kant as

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assumption of this is that one and the same object can satisfy two different descriptions. (D.P. Dryer, *Kant's Solution for Verification in Metaphysics* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1966), p. 514. For similar views see Erich Adikes, *Kant und das Dinge an Sich* (Berlin: Pan Verlag Rolf Heise, 1924), pp. 20ff; H.F. Paton, *Kant's Metaphysics of Experience*, Vol. I, pp. 59ff; Walter Broecker, "Kants Lehre von der acusseren Affektion", *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 20 (1944): 151-154.

<sup>178</sup>Michel Meyer, though arriving at a different conclusion from that of Strawson, also discusses two similar trends in Kant's Transcendental Idealism. M. Meyer, "The Transcendental Deduction of the Categories: Its Impact on German Idealism and Neo-Positivism" in *Dialectica*, Vol. 35, Nos. 1-2, 1981, pp. 7-20.

<sup>179</sup>Strawson not only rejects transcendental idealism as incoherent, he also provides an account of what led Kant to this disastrous doctrine. As he sees it, transcendental idealism is the direct result of Kant's perversion of the scientifically minded philosophers' contrast between a realm of physical objects composed of primary qualities and a mental realm consisting of the sensible appearances of these objects. This mental realm, like its Kantian counterpart, he thought, is produced by means of our affection of the mind, in this case by physical objects. Kant allegedly perverts this model by assigning the whole spatio-temporal framework to the subjective constitutions of the human mind. The resulting doctrine is judged to be incoherent because, among other reasons, it is with reference only to a spatio-temporal framework that one can talk intelligently about affection. See *The Bound of Sense*, pp. 38-42.

transcendental idealist is closer to Berkeley than he acknowledges."<sup>180</sup> On the other hand, Strawson seems to think of phenomenalism as only an element in transcendental idealism. He holds transcendental idealism proper as the doctrine that the real world is a supersensible world of non- spatio-temporal things in themselves which stand to each other in a mysterious quasi-causal relation which he calls the "A. relation." The result of this relation is the representations in the human mind which are the object of our knowledge.

If Strawson is right, Kant, in effect, believed that there were two worlds, two domains containing two types of entities.<sup>181</sup> One world contains representations or appearances which like Berkeley's "ideas" have a purely mental existence. The ordering of these representations, in accordance with the forms of intuition and the categories, produces the world of empirical reality. But what we normally call real objects are in fact mere appearance, which exist only in us. The real world is

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<sup>180</sup>Ibid., p. 22. Turbayne has also argued quite persuasively that to a considerable degree the empirical realism Kant seeks to establish throughout all of the various refutations of idealism is the same as the realism which Berkeley ultimately held. Colin Turbayne, "Kant's Relation to Berkeley" in L. W. Beck, *Kant Studies Today*, Open Court, 1969, pp. 88-116.

<sup>181</sup>There are also others like Moltke Gram who state positively that Kant postulates two separate entities, things in themselves and appearances. According to Gram, Kant requires such entities because of the doctrine of space and time as forms of intuition. If we were affected by ultimately real spatio-temporal features rather than transcendental things in themselves, it could not be held that space and time are mere forms. For Gram, the basis of the distinction between things in themselves and appearance is the existence of what Kant calls the relation of affection (B68-69). The basis of that relation in turn is the distinction between two relations, one of which is something we perceive, while the other brings about the content of that perception by affecting us. Gram interprets Kant as suggesting that without the affection conditions there can be no distinction between things as we perceive them to be and things as they are. And without the cognitive conditions what we perceive will inevitably be things as they are. Moltke Gram, "The Myth of Double Affection," in *Reflections on Kant's Philosophy*, ed. W. H. Werkmeister (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1975), pp. 30 ff. See also Moltke Gram, "Transcendental Arguments," *Nous* 5 No. 1 (1971), pp. 15ff; Moltke Gram, "Things in Themselves: What They Must Be," *Ratio*, Vol 18, No.1, 1976, pp. 16 ff.

supersensible; it contains things in themselves which are not in space and time and which are not knowable in the ordinary way, although their existence needs to be postulated for various reasons.

It is quite possible for Kant to be interpreted this way. But how close is Kant to Berkeley? Kant himself believed that he was very far apart. In the second edition, *Refutation of Idealism*, he claims to have undermined in the Transcendental Aesthetic the very ground on which Berkeley's idealism rests. The reference is to the conclusion drawn in the Aesthetic that space and the things in space were empirically real, whereas Berkeley regarded the things in space as merely imaginary entities because he thought of space itself as a "non-entity."<sup>182</sup> Thus Kant accepted the fact that objects in space were real and denied they were a mere illusion.<sup>183</sup> That Kant's empirical world is not subjective in the personal sense is shown, above all, in his insistence on its objective character.

It has been suggested that Kant's Transcendental Idealism is the doctrine that mind makes nature, that the world as we know it is somehow the product of our thought processes. However, this understanding is not entirely correct. Kant did not believe that natural objects and states of affairs exist only insofar as they are perceived or thought about by individual percipients. Indeed, against this stands the doctrine of Empirical Realism which maintains that space and time and their contents as scientifically described are things whose reality must be acknowledged by every human observer and whose existence is accordingly independent of any particular mind. There is a sense in which the Kantian Transcendental Idealist is also an Empirical Realist, and this would imply that such a person cannot believe, as some other idealists do, that the existence of objects depends on their being perceived.

Henry Allison<sup>184</sup> dissents strongly from those interpreters who believe that Kant postulated two separate entities - - things in themselves and appearances. Indeed, the main object of his work is to

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<sup>182</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 274, p. 244.

<sup>183</sup>*Ibid.*, B 70, p. 89.

<sup>184</sup>Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

argue against this interpretation in detail. To understand Kant's philosophy, he claims, one first needs to acknowledge the sharp distinctions Kant made between what holds from the point of view of ordinary consciousness and what holds at the philosophical or transcendental level.

As an ordinary person Kant did not believe that material things are nothing but ideas in the mind; indeed, Kant went out of his way to repudiate that view. But his opposition to empirical realism did not carry with it a commitment to realism when philosophical considerations came into reckoning. To say that transcendental idealism is true is to say that experience is conditioned by a series of "epistemic" factors, some having to do with sensibility, others with the human intellect.

Allison rigorously opposes any attempt at suggesting Kant did indeed argue for two separate entities. Therefore he says:

The claim that certain philosophers erroneously treat mere appearance as if they were things in themselves no more entails that there are things in themselves than the claim that a certain person acts as if he were God entails the existence of a deity. Moreover, in those places in the *Critique* where Kant is most concerned with the concept of the thing in itself and the related concepts of the Noumenon and the Transcendental object . . ., his primary intent seems to be either to articulate his critique of Leibnizian nominalism or to correct some of the excesses of his own position in the Inaugural Dissertation.<sup>185</sup>

Allison repeatedly refers to the Kantian notion of experience, but pays less attention to the Kantian claim that it is from experience and its possibility that philosophy must take its stand. Once it is allowed that this is so and argued that experience is not only given but has, as it were, to be achieved, then the question arises as to what characteristics must be present for experience to obtain. It is only because objects of experience must conform to the constitution of our minds that we can have the sort of *a priori* knowledge of the nature of experience which is demonstrated in the *Critique*.

However, Allison seems to be correct in pointing out that Kant was reacting against transcendental metaphysics of the Leibnizian type, which relies on our making sense of a "God's-eye-view" of reality. For

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<sup>185</sup>Ibid., pp. 237-238.

Leibniz, the "real" world was timeless and our experience of things as temporal was a result of our confused awareness of reality. The point of the Copernican Revolution is to remind philosophers that they cannot have a view of reality *sub specie aeternitatis*. Only in the human way can human beings know about things, using the human conceptual framework.

One of the reasons for insisting that our experience is of "appearance" and that we cannot know anything of things in themselves is at least in part to remind us that the things we can say, and hence the things we can know, are determined by the nature of our human experience and that we cannot step outside the limitations of our human experience.

After much discussion Allison decided on a double-aspect interpretation of the thing in itself. He contends that the distinction between thing in itself and appearance is not between a thing considered as an appearance and the same thing considered as a thing in itself, but rather between a consideration of a thing as it appears and a consideration of the same thing as it is in itself.<sup>186</sup> He points to Gerald Prauss<sup>187</sup> as the chief originator of this idea but fails to discuss Prauss' overall view.

Prauss' main argument is that within the framework of Kant's philosophy the expression "thing in itself" can be understood in two distinctly different senses: in a transcendental sense, which Kant himself inherited; and in an untenable transcendental metaphysical sense which always comes into the discussion even in Kant's own formulations. The problem arises from the ambiguity of the phrase "thing in itself." After an examination of Kant's three *Critiques*, the *Prolegomena*, and *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Prauss finds that Kant uses the brief form *Ding an Sich* (Thing itself) only 37 times but the longer form *Ding an Sich Selbst* (thing in itself) 258 times. Such statistics, Prauss contends, can hardly be considered mere chance. But what is more important is the fact that both the expressions "thing itself" and "thing in itself" and their equivalents are abbreviated forms of the expression "things viewed or contemplated in

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<sup>186</sup>Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>187</sup>Gerold Prauss, *Kant und das Problem der Dinge an Sich* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1974).

themselves."<sup>188</sup> A typical example of such usage is found in the beginning of the first *Critique*: ". . . in respect of things then they are considered in themselves through reason, that is, without regard to the constitution of our sensibility."<sup>189</sup> Only after this statement does Kant speak of things in themselves. He never uses the form thing-in-themselves hyphenated, and nowhere does he hypostatize such things.

Prauss insists that in distinction from empirical cognition (such as we find in the sciences) transcendental philosophy is a non-empirical cognition of the empirical.<sup>190</sup> It differs from metaphysics, which, transcending the empirical, hypostatizes non-empirical entities. Kant's transcendental philosophy is directed neither against empirical cognition nor against non-empirical cognition as such, but against the non-differentiation of the two - - of which metaphysics is guilty. To view empirical objects solely as subjective appearances means to overlook what is decisive as the result of transcendental reflection, namely, that empirical objects exist over against the subject as concretisations of the transcendental object in general and the objective interpretation of the particular or sensory intuition.

It is possible to view empirical objects as appearances because Prauss approaches the Kantian problem of "appearance" and things in themselves by an analysis of the conception of truth in Kant. Within transcendental logic the question *What is truth?* comes to mean the same as the question about the nature of cognition. It involves asking *What defines cognition as such?* Truth, as opposed to falsehood, has no relevance in this context. Prauss can argue, therefore, that since false as well as true empirical judgments are meaningful, the meaning of judgment in general cannot coincide with either its truth or its falsity; nor does it depend on the presence or absence of our empirical object.

What this comes to is that the object to which a judgment - - be it true or false - - must relate in order to be meaningful, must in principle be other than an empirical object. Kant calls it the transcendental object = X which in all our cognition is always the one and the same = X and is that which alone can at all confer upon our empirical concepts a

<sup>188</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>189</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 28/B 44, p. 72.

<sup>190</sup>Prauss, pp. 178f.

relation to an object - - that is objective reality.<sup>191</sup> "This transcendental object . . . is not itself an object of cognition" but only the concept of an object in general which is determined (as an empirical object) through the manifold of appearance. It can, therefore, also give meaning to false judgment, that is, to judgments which find no determination in and through appearances. Under no circumstances however is the concept of an object in general, to be taken for an independent object. The unity which it "makes necessary can be nothing other than the formal unity of consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of representations."<sup>192</sup>

Prauss readily acknowledges that Kant did not always set forth clearly the transcendently two-level meaning of the concept of appearances<sup>193</sup> and that he often confused the second level of transcendental reflection with the first level of empirical cognition. However, the fact that subjective appearances are always involved in our cognition of empirical objects, does not in itself imply that these objects are nothing but appearances. The situation is definitely the other way around. Known to us as the result of our interpretation of subjective appearances, the objects are always something other than appearances, and are precisely the non-subjective objects of science as distinguished from the merely subjective elements of experience.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>191</sup>*Critique of Pure Reason*, A 109, p. 137.

<sup>192</sup>*Ibid.*, A 105, p. 135.

<sup>193</sup>The inconsistency in Kant's formulations of appearance and the thing in itself and his equivocation of the use of the concept of the transcendental object seems to have led John Findlay to suggest that the thing in itself performs a cognitive explanatory function and, therefore, that Kant intended it to do so. J. N. Findlay, *Kant and the Transcendental Object* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1981). He begins (p.1) by saying that a thing in itself and an appearance are not different objects but rather the same object conceived in respect of certain intrinsically unapparent features. He goes on to say that we must also conceive of what is thus non-apparent as so affecting us that it can appear before us, or be variously given in experience (p.2). Professor Findlay does not explain whether these non-apparent features are possessed by objects in our world or in some other, possible, world.

<sup>194</sup>Prauss, p. 185.

Ultimately this kind of exposition points to the fact that Kant's transcendental philosophy is explicitly presented as the discipline which takes over the task of exploring the categories<sup>195</sup> since we cannot think without categories. Indeed categories form the main body of transcendental philosophy. For an explanation of how the categories function in transcendental philosophy, we must turn to the transcendental deduction.

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<sup>195</sup>A *Category* (in the Kantian sense) is a pure form of objectivity, a highly general universal under which every object or objective state of affairs must fall, if it is to be an object of experience. To describe an object at all, it must be possible to describe it in terms of a concept included in the category or categories in question. Thus the categories are conditions for all knowledge and experience of the material given to us through the senses. Categories are conditions for all empirical knowledge. Their function is to organize, conceive and understand (to categorize) the sense given stuff.