

Appearances and things in themselves

In the 1960s, Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism was only an embarrassment to those who were returning to the critical philosophy for refreshment as the springs of ordinary language and Wittgensteinian philosophy seemed to run dry. "Descriptive metaphysics"¹ might be rehabilitated, but it hardly needed to be burdened by the "picture of the receiving and ordering apparatus of the mind producing Nature as we know it out of the unknowable reality of things as they are in themselves."² But philosophy is no less subject to the whims of fashion than other human activities, and since the late 1970s transcendental idealism has come to seem to some not merely a harmless but indeed a salubrious recommendation of epistemological modesty. In characteristic words, for instance, Graham Bird has written that "to assert the existence of . . . objects beyond our capacities is to underline the modesty with which we should view our own frameworks of belief"; transcendental idealism, he asserts, "indicates a kind of subjectivity which is not . . . that of an individual's private sensory experience but is rather that of a certain relativism associated with a system of belief."³ However, Kant's transcendental idealism is not an heir to ancient skepticism's healthy reminder, against all forms of dogmatism, that our views and theories may be only one way of looking at reality. That form of epistemological modesty always requires that a theory or conceptual framework subjected to skeptical doubt be no more demonstrably *false* than demonstrably *true*, but what Kant sets out to demonstrate under the name of transcendental idealism is that a spatial and temporal view of things as they really are in themselves, independent of our perceptions of them, would be *demonstrably false*. Transcendental idealism is not a skeptical reminder that we *cannot be sure* that things as they are in themselves *are* also as we represent them to be; it is a harshly dogmatic insistence that we *can be quite sure* that things as they are in themselves *cannot be* as we represent them to be. Space and time are the indispensable elements in all of our intuitions and judgments, yet transcendental idealism is nothing other than the thesis that things in themselves, whatever else they may be, *are not* spatial and temporal. Kant does not use the qualified language of a true skeptic when he writes that "space represents no property whatever of any things in themselves, nor does it represent them in their relation to one another, that is, any determination which attaches to the objects themselves and which would remain, even if one abstracted from all subjective conditions of intuition" (A 26 / B 42), or that "time is

nothing which would subsist by itself or attach to things as objective determinations, thus remain if one were to abstract from all subjective conditions of intuition" (A 32 / B 49), or that "this space together with this time, and together with both all appearances, are not in themselves any *things*, rather they are nothing but representations, and cannot exist outside of our minds" (A 492 / B 520).

On traditional interpretations of these remarks, Kant has been taken to assert the existence of two realms of objects, to postulate a mysterious realm of things in themselves numerically distinct from ordinary empirical objects such as tables, chairs, and (nowadays) keyboards, which objects somehow – though of course not spatially – lie behind the more ordinary ones. As evidence against such an interpretation, perhaps most colorfully expressed by Schopenhauer's image of appearance as the "veil of Maya" drawn before the impenetrable will in itself, some recent commentators have emphasized Kant's remark that the *Critique* "teaches [us] to name the object in a *twofold significance*, namely as appearance or as thing in itself" (B xxvii). According to this, it is argued, Kant does not advocate an *ontological* duplication of realms of objects but a *conceptual* or *semantical division*: not two sets of objects, but two ways of thinking of or describing one and the same set of objects. Thus, it is supposed, one and the same object – an ordinary desk or chair – may be described and conceived in terms of the features in which we experience it or it appears to us, among which, of course, its spatial and temporal characteristics will be foremost; in that case, it will be "considered" as "appearance." Alternatively, we may for some reason need to describe or consider such a thing in abstraction from those features in virtue of which we actually experience it, in which case it is "considered" as "thing in itself." But in neither case, it is argued, is any mysterious object being imagined to lie behind the ordinary realm of tables and chairs; rather, those ordinary objects are being described or considered in two different ways or from two different points of view.⁴

However, denying that Kant means to postulate a second set of objects in addition to the ordinary furniture of the universe, or asserting that he merely means to distinguish between conceptions of that single realm of objects which include their spatial and temporal features and conceptions which do not, is of little avail in the face of Kant's firm announcements that things in themselves *are not* spatial and temporal. He does not just say that there is a *conception* of ordinary things which does not include their spatiality and temporality. He says that there are *things* which are actually not in space and time or possessed of spatial and temporal form. Of course, that the *concepts* of such things will not include spatial and temporal predicates *follows* from the fact that the things themselves lack spatial and temporal properties, but it is clearly Kant's view that the concept of a thing in itself lacks such predicates precisely because a *thing in itself* must lack any such properties. And it is no help to claim that Kant does not postulate a second set of ghostlike nonspatial and nontemporal objects in addition to the ordinary referents of empirical judgments. Indeed he does not, except

in the special cases of God and the soul, which clearly are intended to be objects numerically distinct from any encountered in ordinary experience. But he does something just as unpleasant – namely, *degrade* ordinary objects to mere representations of themselves, or *identify* objects possessing spatial and temporal properties with mere mental entities. Kant does not need to postulate a second set of objects beyond the ones we ordinarily refer to in order to strip space and time from things as they are in themselves, and not just from our concepts of them, because the ontology from which he begins *already* includes two classes of objects, namely things like tables and chairs and our *representations* of them. Kant does not have to add a *third* set of objects to these; to deny that the things we ordinarily assume are spatial and temporal really are so, all he has to do is *transfer* spatiality and temporality from objects to our *representations* of them or *confine* assertions of spatiality and temporality to the latter. Evidence that he does not create an *additional* set of objects – what Hegel called an "inverted world" – thus simply fails to count against clear evidence that he affirms that spatiality and temporality *are not* genuine properties of things as they are in themselves. And what I will maintain in this part of the book is that Kant is led, not to skeptical doubt, but to the dogmatic assertion that things in themselves *are not* spatial and temporal by a rich budget of arguments that in spite of the necessity of space and time for any empirical knowledge of self or objects – indeed, ultimately *because* of that very necessity – space and time cannot really be properties of the things to which we ultimately intend to refer.

Yet even those who do not deny the evidence of Kant's dogmatic assertions that things as they are in themselves are not really spatial and temporal have always been quick to spy a paradox here. The concept of a thing in itself, they argue, is nothing other than a concept of a thing of which nothing can be known; yet even a negative assertion – that a thing is *not* really spatial or temporal – is a definite claim to knowledge. So doesn't Kant maintain both that nothing can be known about things in themselves yet that something is known, namely that we *do* know that things in themselves are not spatial and temporal even if we know nothing else about them? Aren't we then involved in a paradox, as F. H. Jacobi said even before Kant could get out the second edition of the *Critique*, since *without* the presupposition of the thing in itself I "cannot enter into the system, yet *with* this presupposition I cannot remain in it"?⁵

In the final analysis, this objection need not worry us, for Jacobi's first assumption is false. One can enter the critical philosophy, or at least the transcendental theory of experience, without the presupposition of the thing in itself, because none of Kant's arguments for the nonspatiality and nontemporality of things in themselves, certainly none of his arguments from legitimate claims of the transcendental theory of experience, succeeds. Thus one can accept the transcendental theory of experience finally expounded in the analogies of experience and the refutation of idealism without any commitment to dogmatic transcendental idealism.

(So in the last analysis we are also delivered from worry about the reconciliation of transcendental idealism and the refutation of idealism, even though Kant shows us how to effect such a marriage.) Nevertheless, it is worth pausing over this objection just because it depends on confusion about what the overall structure of Kant's argument for transcendental idealism is. Kant does not begin by introducing the concept of a thing in itself as that of a thing about which nothing whatever can be known and then violate such a conception by going on to claim that he does know that things in themselves are not spatial and temporal even if he does not know anything else about them. Instead, what he does is offer a number of arguments that things – not initially designated by any special concept – cannot really be spatial and temporal and *only then* introduce a specific concept, that of a thing in itself, meaning thereby a thing about which nothing can be known by intuitions of space and time and by the application of pure and empirical concepts of the understanding to such intuitions. Since such a concept is introduced only as a *result* of the prior proof that things in themselves are not really spatial and temporal, it can hardly be intended to undermine that previous result. Our (alleged) knowledge that things in themselves are not spatial and temporal is philosophical knowledge by means of argument, not first-order synthetic *a priori* knowledge by means of intuitions and concepts, and thus not *prima facie* incompatible with Kant's position that synthetic *a priori* knowledge always requires intuitions of space and time.⁶ Of course, we will see that Kant's arguments for transcendental idealism often founder exactly where they run afoul of well-founded elements of his synthetic *a priori* theory of experience, but that is, as it were, a problem of practice rather than principle.

Since my interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism will seem harsh even while my rejection of the charge of paradox seems generous, it may be useful to contrast the interpretation which I shall offer to one which averts the charge of paradox by interpreting transcendental idealism as an anodyne recommendation of epistemological modesty employing a non-spatiotemporal *conception* of things but no denial of the spatiality and temporality of *things* themselves. This is the interpretation that has recently been offered by Henry Allison.⁷ Allison also rejects the ancient criticism that Kant is inconsistent in positively asserting both that things in themselves *are not* spatial or temporal but also that we can *know nothing at all* about things in themselves. Rather, Allison claims, the very *concept* of things in themselves is a concept of things which are not spatial and temporal, so although Kant would be inconsistent in asserting any *synthetic* proposition about things in themselves, for him to assert only that they are not spatial and temporal is just for him to assert an innocuous *analytic* proposition, essentially to reiterate their definition.⁸ I have already accepted the claim that Kant makes the general statement that things in themselves are unknowable because of his prior acceptance of the premise that they are not spatial and temporal. But Allison's explanation of how

Kant arrives at the premise that things in themselves are not spatial and temporal is erroneous and obscures the substantive grounds for Kant's adoption of transcendental idealism – which are serious (though unper-
suasive) arguments rather than harmless definitions.

Actually, Allison attributes two different arguments to Kant and does not carefully distinguish between them. Each argument turns on the concept of an "epistemic condition" (which is defined as a condition "that is necessary for the representation of an object or an objective state of affairs"⁹) but makes a different use of this concept. In both his original article and in the initial presentation of his view in his book, Allison truly tries to make the nonspatiality of things in themselves a matter of definition. (As in most discussions, Allison limits himself to the case of space.) Basically, he argues:

- (1) By showing that external objects can be represented only by means of the representation of space, the "Transcendental Aesthetic" shows space to be an epistemic condition, a necessary condition for the representation of objects.
- (2) The concept of a thing in itself is, however, precisely a *conception* of a thing which excludes any epistemic conditions necessary for the representation of objects.
- (3) Therefore, things in themselves are conceived without reference to space.
- (4) Things in themselves cannot be spatial.

In the words of his book, Allison puts the argument thus:

Kant affirms the transcendental ideality of space and time on the grounds that they function as *a priori* conditions of human sensibility, that is, as subjective conditions in terms of which alone the human mind is capable of receiving the data for thought or experience. He terms these conditions "forms of sensibility." Things in space and time (empirical objects) are ideal in the same sense because they cannot be experienced or described independently of these sensible conditions. Correlatively, something is real in the transcendental sense if and only if it can be characterized and referred to independently of any appeal to these same sensible conditions. In the transcendental sense, then, mind independence or being external to the mind (*ausser uns*) means independence of sensibility and its conditions. A transcendently real object is thus, by definition, a nonsensible object or noumenon. . . . Correlatively, to speak of things in themselves transcendently is to speak of things insofar as they are independent of these conditions. (p. 7)

So bluntly stated, such an argument simply confuses claims about a *concept* with claims about *things*. That is, the key inference (the step from 3 to 4) is just an inference from the absence of the *predicate* "spatiality" in a certain *concept* of things to the absence of the *property* of spatiality from those things themselves. If the conclusion of the argument is really supposed to be 4, that there are *things* which are nonspatial, and not just 3, that we have a way of *conceiving* of things which abstracts from their spatiality, then the

inference is no more valid than, say, an inference from the description of someone in an equal employment opportunity compliance document as a "person" to the conclusion that the person is sexless, neither male nor female. Allison seems to interpret the concept of the transcendently ideal as merely an expression of the fact that our knowledge is subject to epistemic conditions, that it is possible for us to experience objects only under certain conditions. "Thus the doctrine that we can know things only as they appear, not as they are in themselves, can be regarded as equivalent to the claim that human knowledge is governed by such conditions" (p. 9). But surely the epistemologically interesting but metaphysically neutral fact that we can know objects only if they conform to certain conditions does not imply that those objects or any other objects do *not* in themselves conform to those conditions, even if for some reason the fact of their conformity can or even should be omitted from certain *conceptions* of those objects. In any case, it is very puzzling simply to suppose that the existence of epistemic conditions should be expressed by the formation of a concept of things which omits precisely *those* conditions in the first place.

To put this point clearly: To choose to *abstract* from a certain property of a thing in some particular conception of it is just to choose to *ignore* that property. To be sure, we sometimes have good reasons to ignore even incontrovertible facts. Thus, in the example concerning equal employment opportunity, moral, political, and/or legal goals may lead us to introduce a characterization of candidates for a position which omits their sex (in the hope that this will get us to ignore sex when the hiring decision is made). Or, in another case, we may have to ignore the general fact of determinism in going through the process of making a decision, both because our going through that process is part of what determines the outcome and because, in any case, we lack adequately detailed knowledge of the influences on our choices to make decisions in any other way. Thus, we may have good reason to introduce a conception of voluntary action which simply ignores the fact of determinism. But these abstractions do not change any facts about the world, and we also have good reasons for introducing them. How could abstracting from the conditions under which we can represent objects imply any absence of properties from those objects, and, even more puzzling, why would we acknowledge the fact that there *are* such conditions by introducing a conception of objects which *lacks* them? That is the opposite of our usual procedure in abstraction, where we abstract from those conditions we wish to ignore, not those we wish to acknowledge.

The argument of Allison's original paper, and indeed all attempts to interpret Kant's transcendental idealism as an anodyne conceptual analysis, thus seem open to a simple but fatal objection. However, the more extended argument which Allison's book goes on to offer seems intended to escape this objection, for it employs what is clearly intended to be seen as a more substantive consideration to ground the inference from the premise that space and time are epistemic conditions to the conclusion that they cannot be properties of things as they are in themselves. Since similar

assumptions could be shown to underlie many traditional accounts of Kant's transcendental idealism, it will be worth pausing to examine Allison's account.

According to this interpretation, Kant begins his argument in the "Transcendental Aesthetic" by showing first that space is a necessary condition for the representation of objects because we cannot represent objects as distinct from ourselves or from each other except by representing them as separated from ourselves or each other in space; space can therefore be regarded as an epistemic condition. Allison, however, sees Kant as proceeding not merely from the *definition* of a special concept of things in themselves but rather from a *substantive premise* that an epistemic condition necessarily represents the structure of the epistemic subject *instead* of the structure of the object of knowledge:

... Behind Kant's formal idealism ... lies a principle that is implicit in the *Critique* as a whole, but is nowhere made fully explicit: that whatever is necessary for the representation or experience of something as an object, that is, whatever is required for the recognition or picking out of what is "objective" in our experience, must reflect the cognitive structure of the mind (its manner of representing) rather than the nature of the object as it is in itself. To claim otherwise is to assume that the mind can somehow have access to an object (through sensible or intellectual intuition) independently of the very elements that have been stipulated to be the conditions of the possibility of doing this in the first place. This involves an obvious contradiction.¹⁰ (p. 27)

With this substantive premise, it follows from the two suppositions that there are objects of knowledge and that spatiality is the ineliminable condition of our representations of these objects that space must be a feature of our representations rather than of these objects.

There are still insuperable difficulties, however, with such an argument. Most generally, any such argument obviously begs the question of transcendental idealism by assuming from the outset that any necessary condition of knowledge is subjective rather than objective, even if this subjective status will be dignified by the title "transcendently ideal" to signify that it is an indispensable rather than an arbitrary aspect of subjectivity. More specifically, Allison's description of the contradiction that allegedly arises from the denial of this principle is itself incoherent. He says in the passage quoted that *rejecting* the principle that epistemic conditions reflect the structure of the mind rather than of the object leads to the incoherent supposition that the mind can somehow have access to objects which do not conform to the necessary condition of the mind's access to objects. In fact, it is only the *acceptance* of this principle, not its rejection, which leads to the idea that there *are* objects which lack the structures which are the necessary conditions of our access to objects. The contradiction lies in using the principle to deny spatiality to objects but continuing to assume that we have access to such objects even when spatiality is a necessary condition of our knowledge.

Allison's initial presentation of the principle on which Kant's argument

is supposed to turn makes it sound as though there will be a more extensive demonstration of the principle later on. But Allison makes only one further defense of the principle, and this seems just as confused as the initial allegation of a contradiction. The problem with the supposition that "our idea of space is derived from the experience of ... 'real things' and represents a property and condition of them," Allison claims, is that

... by assuming that the representation of space is somehow derived from our experience of things as they are in themselves, this formulation denies the possibility that space can function as a condition of the possibility of the experience of things. As was already suggested, there is a contradiction involved in the assumption that the representation of something that is supposed to function as a condition of the possibility of the experience of objects can have its source in the experience of these objects. This is contradictory because it entails that experience be possible apart from something that is stipulated to be a condition of its possibility.

(p. 110)

But the rejection of Kant's alleged principle entails no such thing. The contrary of the principle that Allison is imputing to Kant is that something which is a necessary condition of knowledge may reflect the structure of *both* the epistemic subject and the object of knowledge, rather than of the former *instead* of the latter. But then to suppose that knowledge takes place, thus that *this* principle is satisfied, hardly supposes that experience is "possible apart from something that is stipulated to be a condition of its possibility," for it does not suppose that the alleged condition of possibility is absent *anywhere*. Quite the contrary: On the rejection of Kant's supposed principle, knowledge takes place precisely when what is determined to be a necessary condition of experience, presumably by some form of reflection on the nature of the subject, is *also* satisfied by the object. The contrary to Kant's supposed principle does not suppose that either subject or object lacks the condition of the possibility of experience; thus it hardly "stipulates" that experience ever takes place in the *absence* of the condition of its own possibility. Again, it seems to be the alleged principle which stipulates that, not the rejection of the principle.

Finally, it must be emphasized that the principle which Allison imputes to Kant is "nowhere made fully explicit" in the *Critique* for the very simple reason that Kant does not use it in any of his primary arguments for transcendental idealism in his chef d'oeuvre.¹¹ Invoking such a principle does nothing but obscure the fact that the claim that space and time *merely* reflect the structure of the mind rather than that of real objects of knowledge is not the *premise* of Kant's chief arguments for transcendental idealism either in the "Transcendental Aesthetic" or elsewhere in the *Critique* but is, rather, the *conclusion* of these arguments.

To be sure, Kant does accept a principle like that which Allison assigns him. Even in the *Critique* he sometimes quickly draws a connection between something's being a *form* of appearance and its having a subjective origin: "That in which alone the sensations can be posited and ordered in a certain

form cannot itself be sensation, and therefore, although the matter of all appearances is given to us *a posteriori* only, its form must lie ready for the sensations *a priori* in the mind" (A 20 / B 34). And earlier he had even offered an explicit argument for such a general principle. Thus, in the inaugural dissertation of 1770 he had written:

In this way whatever in cognition is sensitive is dependent upon the special character of the subject to the extent that the subject is capable of this or that modification by the presence of objects, and these modifications can differ in different cases according to variations in the subjects. But whatever cognition is exempt from such subjective conditions has regard only to the object. Consequently it is clear that things which are thought sensitively are representations of things *as they appear*, but things which are intellectual are representations of things *as they are*. ... The *form* of the ... representation is undoubtedly evidence of a certain respect or relation in the *sensa*. But properly speaking it is not some adumbration or schema of the object but only a certain law implanted in the mind by which it coordinates for itself the *sensa* which arise from the presence of the object.

(ID, §4, 2:392-3)

Like most of us, Kant was loath to surrender any argument he had once made. But it should be evident that the argument here offered is neither identical to the argument adduced by Allison nor, more important, one which Kant could have used in the *Critique of Pure Reason* with any consistency. The argument makes no mention of any contradiction of the kind described by Allison. Much more important, its crucial inference is from the *variability* of a feature of a representation to its subjectivity – yet this is a ground for transcendental idealism which Kant explicitly *rejects* in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant expressly abjures any comparison between the subjectivity of secondary qualities, the variation of which had traditionally led to the rejection of any claim of objective validity in their behalf, and the ideality of space and time themselves:

With the sole exception of space, there is no subjective representation ... which could be entitled [both] objective [and] *a priori*. This subjective condition of all outer appearances cannot, therefore, be compared with any other. The taste of a wine does not belong to the objective determinations of the wine, not even if by the wine as an object we mean the wine as appearance, but to the special constitution of sense in the subject that tastes it. Colors are not properties of the bodies to the intuition of which they are attached but only modifications of the sense of sight, which is affected in a certain manner by light. Space, on the other hand, as condition of outer objects, necessarily belongs to their appearances or intuition. Tastes and colors are not necessary conditions under which alone objects can be for us objects of the senses. They are connected with the appearances only as effects accidentally added by the particular constitution of the sense organs. Accordingly, they are not *a priori* representations ... whereas, since space concerns only the pure form of intuition and therefore involves no sensation whatever, and nothing empirical, all kinds and determinations of space can and must be represented *a priori*.

(A 28-9)

The key to Kant's most fundamental, direct arguments for the transcen-

dental ideality of space and time is not the "variations in the subjects" mentioned in the argument of the inaugural dissertation but the fact that space and time are supposed to be *necessary invariants* in all human experience. Any interpretation of transcendental idealism which failed to emphasize this would obviously be false, and although Allison would surely agree with this, it is far from obvious that the subjectivity of necessary features of representation is self-evident or even that Kant thinks that it is. Instead, a principle that necessary features of knowledge can be only subjective is completely counterintuitive, and Kant clearly expects us to accept it only as the conclusion of his arguments for transcendental idealism, not as their premise.

In the end, an interpretation such as Allison's actually obscures the character of Kant's own most fundamental arguments for transcendental idealism, which derive the nonspatiality and nontemporality of things in themselves from several premises, but most prominently from the absolute *necessity* of both intuitions of and certain judgments about space and time in our experience. Allison represents Kant as arguing, either from the definition of the concept of a thing in itself or from the alleged principle about epistemic conditions which we have been examining, that space and time cannot be properties of things in themselves *because* they are subjective forms of representation. But what Kant argues is exactly the opposite of this: namely, that space and time can *only* be mere forms of representation because they *cannot* be properties of things as they are in themselves.¹² And in so arguing, Kant is far from simply assuming that anything which is shown to be a necessary condition for representations is thereby automatically shown to reflect the structure of the mind rather than of the object represented. Instead, his primary concern is to *argue* that what is a necessary form of representation, and which for that reason may have to be *at least* a structure or subjective condition of the mind, is *at most* such a condition or is a *merely* subjective condition of representation.

Further, we shall see that Kant's arguments that what is necessary must also be subjective turn on a very strong assumption about the kind of necessity which can be claimed for the *a priori* features of both our intuitions and our judgments about space and time. Neither Allison nor other commentators have cared to examine the exact nature of Kant's link between apriority, necessity, and subjectivity; perhaps they have even thought that they could be spared such a detailed investigation by the kinds of argument we have just considered. But, as we shall see, Kant's transcendental idealism is nothing other than the heir to the "imposition" view of the rules of thought which he had originally rejected in behalf of the "restriction" view of the conditions of thought but was subsequently seduced into preferring by several very bad arguments. So, although Kant naturally believes that there are sound arguments for this position, we shall see that there is not a single sound argument in his mature philosophy which can prove that the forms of intuition and judgment which we know *a priori* are *imposed* on otherwise formless objects of experience, rather than being

forms which those objects do possess on their own and in virtue of which *they* thereby satisfy the necessary conditions for our own experience.

The following discussion of Kant's arguments in behalf of transcendental idealism, understood as the restriction of spatial and temporal features to our representations of objects rather than to those objects as they are in themselves, will be divided into three main sections, for there are three arenas in which Kant intends to offer separate defenses of his doctrine. Kant's new preface for the second edition of the *Critique* makes this threefold division of the argument for transcendental idealism clear. In a footnote on the famous Copernican analogy, Kant says that transcendental idealism "will be proved, apodictically not hypothetically, from the nature of our representations of space and time and from the elementary concepts of the understanding" (B xxii); this implies the existence of two separate direct arguments for transcendental idealism, one from the forms of intuition and one from the theory of judgment. Kant also says that only the distinction between appearances and things in themselves can avoid metaphysical contradictions (e.g., B xx); this is intended to yield an indirect proof for transcendental idealism. As we shall see, then, Kant's overall argument for transcendental idealism takes the following form.

First – and chronologically earliest as well, since this part of Kant's argument is already present in the dissertation of 1770 – the ideality of space and time is supposed to be a consequence of the fact that they are the forms of intuition, or the necessary conditions for our even being given any data for experience of objects or self. In this part of his case, Kant draws on metaphysical and even theological considerations,¹³ but what is clearly most prominent is an epistemological argument that we have *a priori* knowledge of space and time, but that *a priori* knowledge of the properties of objects as they are in themselves is impossible, therefore that space and time cannot be properties of objects in themselves. It has long been obvious that Kant's metaphysical or theological considerations can have little interest outside of their immediate historical context. It is far from obvious, on the other hand, that the epistemological portion of his argument turns on an interpretation of the necessity of what is known *a priori* about space and time which is equally dubious.

The second main part of Kant's case is connected with his theory of the conditions for conceptualizing and judging what is given to us by means of the forms of intuition, and so it is offered in (or at least in connection with) the "Transcendental Analytic" rather than the "Transcendental Aesthetic." That is, this part of Kant's case for transcendental idealism is offered in connection with the transcendental theory of experience which has been expounded here. In part, of course, the "Transcendental Analytic" merely incorporates results of the "Transcendental Aesthetic" or parallels the epistemological argument offered there by arguing that because we have *a priori* knowledge of the objective validity of the categories or even of the necessary unity of apperception itself, the categories must be imposed on the objects we ultimately experience rather than being derived from them.

But Kant also offers a new argument, which is very peculiar indeed. This new argument, unique to the theory of judgment, tries to show that a contradiction would arise if the self that makes temporal judgments were itself in time, so that the real self (and *a fortiori* real objects?) cannot be temporal.

Finally, Kant's last stand for transcendental idealism is what he describes as the indirect argument for it offered as the solution to the "Antinomy of Pure Reason" in the *Critique's* "Transcendental Dialectic." This is the argument that when the claims of reason are added to the claims of sense and understanding, contradictions arise which can be resolved only by the supposition that sense and understanding characterize the appearances of things but not those things as they are in themselves.

I will argue that none of these arguments succeeds. Kant's epistemological arguments for transcendental idealism from our *a priori* knowledge of the forms of sense and judgment presuppose a conception of the necessary truth of what is known *a priori* which Kant never succeeds in establishing, indeed barely even attempts to establish, and the indirect argument in the "Antinomy" works only by violating one of the cardinal rules of Kant's own mature methodology. Kant generates its conflict between the claims of sense and understanding, on the one hand, and the claims of reason, on the other, only by tacitly interpreting the latter in the very way which he abjured when he rejected what he called a positive conception of the noumenon as an actual object of knowledge by means of reason alone in behalf of a purely monitory or limiting conception of the noumenon. By means of the latter conception, Kant did indeed recommend a salubrious dose of epistemological modesty, but when he argued for transcendental idealism, what he swallowed was not the antidote but the poison. Thus, the transcendental theory of experience which we have gleaned from Kant's writings (both published and unpublished) can be accepted without automatic commitment to the doctrine that space and time do not represent genuine features of reality, because that dogma follows neither from the conclusions of the transcendental theory of experience nor even from any premise successfully employed within it.

Transcendental idealism and the forms of intuition

Kant presents the "Transcendental Aesthetic" as a theory equally about space and time. But it is clear that in this part of his work his views about space were fundamental and that the argument for the transcendental ideality of time proceeds only by parallels (often strained) to the example of space. This is not to say that Kant was any less committed to the transcendental ideality of time than to that of space. His fierce defense of his theory about time in the face of the criticisms of Lambert, Sulzer, and Mendelssohn¹ shows how committed to the transcendental ideality of time Kant was, and in the arguments derived from the theory of judgment rather than intuition we shall see that it is time rather than space which is foremost in Kant's thought. But the derivative nature of the theory of time in the "Transcendental Aesthetic" does mean that I can focus my exposition of Kant's arguments there on the case of space, as indeed most commentators do.

The amount of commentary generated by Kant's views on space may be a better reflection of the interest of philosophers in this subject than of the intrinsic merits of Kant's own theories. In any case, it is not my intention to add to the already enormous literature yet another general discussion of the "Transcendental Aesthetic" but only to consider the specific means by which Kant proposes to argue from the conclusion that space and time are indispensable forms of intuition to the further result that they are therefore only features of representations rather than features of things as they are in themselves. For this purpose, a brief account of Kant's notorious arguments for the first conclusion – that space and time are the indispensable forms of intuition – will suffice. These arguments comprise what in the second edition of the *Critique* Kant named the "Metaphysical Exposition of the Concept of Space" and of time.²

The indispensability of space and time

In the first edition of the *Critique*, Kant simply advances five claims about space and about time which are listed without any further classification (A 22–5, 30–2) and which are collectively supposed to ground the further conclusions in which the transcendental ideality of space and time are asserted (A 26–30 / B 42–5, A 32–6 / B 49–53). The first two arguments in each of these sets are supposed to establish that space and time are the pure, and therefore *a priori*, forms of intuition, that all data for judgment are given