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TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM AND THE ORGANISM

Essays on Kant

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ABSTRACT

The notion of the organism has a somewhat ambiguous status in Kant's philosophy. On the one hand it belongs to natural science, on the other hand it is based on an analogy with the structure of reason. Biology therefore has a peculiar place among the sciences according to Kant: it is constituted by the use of a regulative maxim.

The present study places Kant's views on biological teleology in the larger context of transcendental idealism. It consists of five essays. The first one treats the notions of things in themselves and appearances, arguing for an interpretation in terms of two aspects or perspectives rather than two worlds. The importance of the discursivity of our cognitive capacity is stressed, as well as the need to separate Kant's various reflective perspectives. In the second essay this interpretation is applied to the third section of the *Groundwork*, arguing that this text does not belong to theoretical metaphysics, but rather to the articulation of a specifically practical perspective. The third essay discusses similarities and differences between Kant's a priori conditions for cognition and conceptions of innate ideas in the rationalist tradition. Kant's comparison of the system of categories with the biological theory of epigenesis is considered in connection to eighteenth century theories of generation. The comparison is viewed as an analogy rather than as a naturalistic theory of the a priori. In the fourth essay Kant's account of functional attribution in biology is explicated in the context of the present day debate of the issue. It is claimed that Kant's neo-Aristotelian approach avoids some of the difficulties in the dominant naturalistic accounts of today. Kant's view differs from the Aristotelian in that it involves a distinction of levels, making it possible to take functional attributions on the one hand as objective from the standpoint of biology but on the other hand as having a merely regulative status from a philosophical point of view. In the fifth essay an interpretation of the antinomy of teleological judgment in the *Critique of Judgment* is offered. The antinomy is taken to consist in the dialectical tendency to treat the regulative maxims of teleology and mechanism as constitutive principles. The difference between the discursivity of the human understanding and the idea of a non-discursive understanding, an important theme in Kant's solution of the antinomy, puts the question of biological teleology in relation to central tenets of transcendental idealism.

Key words: Kant, things in themselves, transcendental idealism, perspective, intelligible world, epigenesis, *acquisitio originaria*, biological functions, teleology, organism, antinomy, regulative maxim, discursivity.

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The Thing in Itself: Methodological Perspective or Metaphysical Entity?

There is no shortage of commentaries on Kant’s concept of the thing in itself. Some would say there are too many. That I nevertheless venture to broach the subject is because I think the strength of the so called two-aspect interpretation is somewhat underestimated. Not so long ago this way of understanding the issues that surround the notion of things in themselves changed many philosophers’ perception of Kant’s philosophy. In my view, the picture that emerged was that of a more interesting thinker, less stuck in implausible speculations about the metaphysical properties of the thing in itself, and more relevant to developments in contemporary philosophy, analytic as well as continental.

However, in the last ten years or so the trend among Kant specialists (though other philosophers may not yet be aware of it) is to revert to a more metaphysical approach. Since the new interpretations are often very sophisticated in terms of exegetical scholarship, it is not easy to adjudicate between this trend and the two-aspect approach. Both can find textual support. Moreover, these metaphysically oriented readings often construe Kant’s distinction between thing in itself and appearance in terms of two aspects, so that the contrast to the standard two-aspect view must be redrawn. To distinguish the two kinds of two-aspect approach, they are labelled the “metaphysical” and the “methodological” view, respectively, and the perspectival nature of the latter is stressed.

What is suggested in this essay is that the resources of the methodological two-aspect view are currently underrated, and that the motivations for a robustly metaphysical reading of the notion of the thing in itself, to the extent that they rest on legitimate desiderata, can be met also on this interpretation.

The structure is as follows. In the first section, the two-world and the two-aspect approaches are presented, with a brief outline of transcendental idealism offered as a background to the latter view. Section 2 deepens the discussion by introducing the recent framing of the debate in terms of a distinction between two kinds of two-aspect view, the metaphysical and the methodological interpretation, of which the first is seen as a more sophisticated descendant of the two-world interpretation. In the third section, two versions of the methodological view are presented which rely on the notion of perspective as a crucial tool for the interpretation of Kant. Section 4 deals critically with some recent examples of metaphysical interpretations. The last section rounds off the discussion with a quick glance at the use of the concept of the thing in itself in Kant's practical philosophy.

1. Transcendental Idealism and the Thing in Itself: Two worlds or two aspects?

Discussions of Kant's philosophy tend to be less fruitful if the question of the thing in itself and its paradoxical status (as unknowable and still, somehow, known to exist) is taken as a matter that can be discussed apart from Kant's larger claims about transcendental idealism. The ideal approach would probably be to consider the various statements about things in themselves as conclusions rather than premises, and to show in detail how they are reached in their argumentative contexts. I will not be able to accomplish such a demanding task, but at least some of these contexts will be presented. First, something should be said about the doctrine of transcendental idealism.

The nature of Kant's idealism has always been a contested issue, and interpretations differ greatly. What does he mean by qualifying his idealism as "transcendental"? The term "transcendental" is defined as what concerns not objects directly, but rather our way of cognizing objects *a priori* (A12/B25). Transcendental idealism would then be an idealism with regard to our *a priori* mode of cognition. This mode of cognition has to do largely with the interplay between space, time, and the categories, these being factors which Kant traces back to the cognitive constitution we have as beings endowed with a passive (receptive) sensibility and an active thinking. So what Kant says is that the ideality of his idealism pertains to these cognitive conditions, and not to objects per se. In the *Prolegomena* (1783), written partly in response to a review of the first edition of *Critique of Pure Reason* (CPR)[1] which had presented transcendental idealism as rather similar to Berkeley's philosophy, Kant explained that his idealism is formal and not material.[2] This was carried over to a note in the B-edition of CPR, in which he contrasts his own idealism with the "common" material idealism that "doubts or denies the existence of external things" (B519).

The notion of formality employed by Kant to characterize his idealism is closely connected to that of *a priori* conditions of experience. Time and space are forms of intuition, the categories are forms of thought. The forms of intuition and the forms of thought together are conditions for objective experience. Formal or transcendental idealism is thus an idealism concerning the conditions for objective experience or cognition.

Henry Allison has stressed the importance of the distinction between transcendental idealism and transcendental realism for the understanding of Kant's philosophy.[3] Though Kant refers to transcendental realism only on a few occasions (A369–72; A491/B519; A543/B571), he does so in terms indicating that this position makes it impossible to maintain an empirical realism (a disastrous consequence according to Kant), and so leads to a material idealism (which is either skepticism about or denial of the existence of outer things) (B274; B519n). Transcendental realism and transcendental idealism are "mutually exclusive and exhaustive meta-

[1] References to CPR are according to the standard convention: "A" before the page numbers of the first edition (1781), "B" before those of the second edition (1787). The translation is that of Guyer and Wood (Kant 1997a). References to other works by Kant are given to the volume and page number of the *Akademie* edition (Ak.).

[2] Ak. 4:337; 375.

[3] Allison 1983, 14–30.

philosophical alternatives."[4] They are exhaustive alternatives because there are just two possibilities regarding the distinction between things as appearances and considered in themselves: transcendental realism does not make this distinction, whereas transcendental idealism does.

Before spelling out the nature of this distinction, something needs to be said as to how so many different philosophies could possibly be classified as belonging in a common group. Transcendental realists, according to Kant, do not make the relevant distinction between things as appearances and things in themselves; when they make a distinction in these terms, they refer merely to the difference between illusory and veridical perception. Specifically, their mistake is that they (implicitly) hold that time and space pertain to things in themselves; Newton's view of time and space as separately existing, and Leibniz's, according to whom they are relations between things, are important examples of transcendental realism. Even if Kant refers only to the forms of intuition in this context, it is natural to extend the notion of transcendental realism to include also a view according to which the categories are predicates applicable to things in themselves.[5] Since appearances for Kant are objects in so far as they conform to our conditions for cognition, the transcendental realists, taking these conditions as belonging to objects apart from any cognition (an affirmation of the independent reality of that which for Kant is merely transcendental, that is, relative to the cognitive capacity), are in that sense conceiving of appearances as things in themselves (compare A369). The crucial point is that transcendental realism has no room for a transcendental level. According to such a view, there are no specifically transcendental or epistemic conditions[6] for our cognition of objects. Very roughly, empiricists take the representations of the senses to be things in themselves without any necessary reference to conditions for cognition, whereas rationalists, viewing the objects of the senses with some suspicion, regard

[4] Allison 1983, 14

[5] See Allison 1983, 28.

[6] The notion of an epistemic condition is from Allison 1983, 10–13. It is contrasted to logical, ontological and psychological conditions, and corresponds more or less to what Kant calls conditions of the possibility of experience. I will use the term as equivalent to "transcendental condition."

knowledge of things as possible *a priori*, apart from any epistemic conditions. Positions very different in other respects can thus share this assumption concerning the status of the objects of cognition. Now it can also be seen why transcendental realism is supposed to engender skepticism (A491/B519). If things in themselves are taken to be available only indirectly, as hidden causes behind the representations of our senses, then it is hard to explain how we could ever get to know that they really exist. One option for those unsatisfied by this opportunity for skepticism is to abolish the thought of independent causes external to representations and allow only representations, now considered as actual things. These things would then be conceived not as epistemically conditioned, but as things in themselves. In this way even a radical empiricist can be taken to be a transcendental realist, and thus Kant is able to say that Hume took the objects of experience for things in themselves.[7]

As some use has already been made of the phrase "thing in itself," its signification must now be discussed. It is customary to distinguish two main lines of interpretation: the two-world and the two-aspect approach. The two-world approach, sometimes called the textbook view, construes Kant's distinction between things in themselves and appearances as a metaphysical theory according to which the real world (the thing in itself) is forever hidden beyond the reach of human knowledge, but gives rise to another world, the world of appearance, as a result of the affection of the things in themselves upon a subject. When the subject is affected by things in themselves, a process is initiated in which the forms of intuition and the categories are imposed on the material received, whereby appearances are constructed. This world of appearances consists of "mere representations" (a locution often used by Kant). It is not the real world, inasmuch as reality is taken to pertain to the things in themselves, but it is the only one we have access to, and what we call empirical knowledge relates to it.

Crucial for this type of interpretation is that thing in itself and appearance are two separate entities. Much of Kant's thinking is seen as a difficult (not to say hopeless) attempt to deduce from the features of experience how the things in themselves are constituted. Because of the skeptical connotations inherent in the designation of the thing

[7] See *Critique of Practical Reason*, Ak. 5:53.

in itself as unknowable reality and experience as mere appearance, there is a tendency in two-world interpretations to reduce the world of experience to nothing more than a kind of illusion. In this picture, the world consisting of appearance "only appears to exist, is really nothing apart from perceptions."[8] When pushed in this direction, the two-world interpretation only recognizes one world, the world of things in themselves, and apart from that a distorted quasi-world consisting of our perceptions, from which no information whatsoever can be gained concerning the real world in itself, despite Kant's frequent attempts to obtain such impossible metaphysical knowledge. That the two worlds tend to collapse into one when the view is developed in a consistent way is confirmed by James Van Cleve's summary of his own interpretation: "I ascribe to Kant a two-worlds view. Of course, since appearances are only virtual objects, there is a sense in which they do not really exist and so do not form a second world. But they do at least form a second domain of discourse, not simply a second way of talking about things in the first domain."[9]

The main merit of this reading is that Kant makes quite a few statements that seem to imply a two-world view. To take just one passage, consider the following: "[the understanding] thinks of an object in itself, but only as a transcendental object, which is the cause of appearance (thus not itself appearance)" (A288/B344). Here, it seems, we have a thing in itself that causes appearance without itself being appearance, just as the two-world model requires.

There are both textual and philosophical inconveniences with this view, however. There are many passages where Kant speaks of the same things as appearances and considered in themselves, so that we seem to have one world regarded from different perspectives. For instance at Bxxvii he describes his "distinction between things as objects of experience and the very same things as things in themselves" as an important tenet of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the same place he also states that the *Critique* takes the object "in a twofold meaning," namely, as appearance and as thing in itself. The fact that Kant often expresses the distinction in similar ways, as concerned with one and the same world, seems to go clearly against the two-world model. It is also difficult to understand how Kant could

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[8] Strawson 1966, 238.

[9] Van Cleve 2003, 194–195. Compare Van Cleve 1999, 150.

attempt to describe causal processes going on behind the appearances, as the two-world view takes him to do, since causality is one of the epistemic conditions identified in Kant's theory, and as such is valid only inside the sphere of experience. He might of course *believe* that such processes take place, but it could not be part of his critical doctrine. Furthermore, it is not easy to see how the notion of unknowable things affecting us and thereby producing a world of appearance differs in any decisive way from the skeptical idealism that Kant attributes to transcendental realism, which holds that external things cause us to have representations, though we have no way to know whether our representations adequately represent these things.[10] The two-world approach with its skeptical implications also goes very much against Kant's confidence in the adequacy of natural science as cognition of the world, and his defence of empirical realism. It might be objected that the difference between this version of transcendental realism and Kant's transcendental idealism is only a shift of emphasis. Whereas the former takes the unknowability of things in themselves to imply that we have no genuine knowledge at all, Kant's point would then be that we should instead adopt the attitude that assertions about what is given as representations should be treated as real knowledge, perhaps in the form of a phenomenalistic theory. This, I think, is how the two-world interpretation must deal with Kant's distinction between transcendental realism and transcendental idealism. But it is not very plausible to construe Kant's defence of empirical realism as only superficially different from skepticism, whether the difference is taken as verbal or psychological.

Problems such as these have prompted commentators to look for other ways of understanding the notion of the thing in itself.[11] Aiming at a philosophically more defensible interpretation of Kant, the two-aspect approach takes such passages seriously which speak of two

[10] A similar point is made in Bird 1962, 23.

[11] "Es wird wohl für immer eine der Merkwürdigkeiten der Kant-Forschung bleiben, dass jemals ein solches Konglomerat aus schlechter Metaphysik für das letzte Wort der Kantischen Philosophie gelten konnte und offenbar immer noch gilt", says Gerold Prauss (1977, 194) about one version of the two-world interpretation.

perspectives on the same thing.[12] According to Prauss, the phrase "thing in itself" is an abbreviation of "thing considered in itself" (*Ding an sich selbst betrachtet*), which corresponds to such Latin expressions as "*res in se spectata*" and "*res per se considerata*" used in the rationalist tradition.[13] The words "in itself" are not modifying "thing" (as if singling out a certain class of things); they are used to refer to a kind of consideration, a perspective on things as isolated from our cognitive conditions or more generally from any relations. On this view, the consideration in question is a process of abstraction, in which the *a priori* forms of sensibility (and in some contexts the *a priori* conditions of thought as well) are removed from the thought of the objects.

Support for an interpretation along these lines can be found in passages such as this: "If we abstract from *our* way of internally intuiting ourselves […] and thus take objects as they may be in themselves, then time is nothing" (A34/B51). The objects "as they may be in themselves" accordingly are these same objects considered in abstraction from a certain epistemic condition, our way of intuiting. Admittedly, there is a certain difficulty in saying that we conceive of the same object in two ways, since the consideration of things in themselves by abstracting from the forms of intuition removes the condition for individuation of objects, which on Kant's view is bound up with space and time. Given the suspension of a basis for the differentiation of objects, it is not possible to claim to know that the things in themselves constitute a plurality corresponding to the empirical objects, though it may sometimes be useful to describe the situation in that way. In his moral philosophy Kant thinks of the human being as retaining its individuality when considered in itself (as noumenon), and though this thought is problematical from a theoretical point of view, Kant finds it motivated from an internally practical perspective. But even when individuation is taken as inapplicable to the thing in itself, so that it is

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[12] Influential works representative of this approach are Prauss 1977 and Allison 1983. But it has been proposed many times before: see for instance Heidegger 1991 [1929], 31–34, Bird 1962, Matthews 1969 and Phalén 1976, 87–89.

[13] Prauss 1977, 20.

considered just as the world in abstraction from epistemic conditions, there is no need to posit this world as an ontologically separate entity.

According to the two-aspect approach, the distinction between appearance and thing in itself is not ontological but epistemological or perspectival. To be sure, Kant sometimes uses the term "thing in itself" ontologically, to refer to hypothetical objects entirely outside of our cognitive reach (such as God), but the epistemological use is the primary one.[14] Some of the traditional problems of interpretation can be dissolved in adopting this view, for instance the question of how things in themselves can influence us "before" experience and thereby cause us to construct a world of appearances. There simply is no separate world of things in themselves that affect us in this way; there are things that appear to us, and there is a specifically philosophical consideration of these things in abstraction from the conditions of cognition. Even so, affection can be described in two ways: as an empirical process (perception), or, in abstraction from the epistemic conditions, as a noumenal fact. To represent the abstract, noumenal description of affection as a hidden process causally connected to and numerically different from what goes on in the empirical process of perception is a mistake that results from an ontological interpretation of a perspectival distinction.[15]

Likewise, the classic objection that Kant has no ground for claiming to have knowledge of the existence of things in themselves, considering that they are also said to be unknowable, loses much of its force on this interpretation. The two-aspect view does not introduce a new set of objects, the existence of which could be challenged. The Kantian approach is to accept that things exist, and to assume that they don't cease to exist just because they are considered in themselves. When Kant dissociates his view from material idealism, he typically emphasizes the existence of *things*, not of things in themselves. The existence of the latter would need to be

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[14] Meerbote 1974.

[15] In the context of a more sophisticated ontologically oriented account, Piché (forthcoming) helpfully construes affection in terms of two aspects of the same event. Compare Weldon 1958, 254: "Indeed 'affection' of the non-empirical self by the non-empirical object and the 'affection' of my empirical sense by the phenomenal object are actually the same event viewed from different standpoints."

argued only if the *an sich* constituted a separate realm of being. Thus, in *Prolegomena* we find affirmations of the realism of Kant's transcendental idealism: "the existence of the thing that appears is not thereby nullified, as with real idealism."[16] This is not to deny that Kant sometimes expresses himself as if he were ascribing existence to separate entities called things in themselves: "the understanding, just by the fact that it accepts appearances, also admits to the existence [*Dasein*] of things in themselves."[17] Judged by strict two-aspect standards, this verges on the nonsensical. The phrase "things in themselves" is used as if it were the name of a kind of object. But it is not difficult to take the sentence to mean that the understanding, by accepting the existence of things as appearances, thereby is committed also to the existence of these very things considered in themselves, apart from our cognitive conditions (though this implies no claim that we are able to give any positive description of them in this respect). This might now seem to be a trivial point, perhaps too trivial to assume it to be the one Kant wants to make. But consideration of the argumentative background gives some explanation as to his motivation. In the *Prolegomena* Kant tries to counterweigh the subjective idealism ascribed to him in Garve's and Feder's review of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. He takes every opportunity to stress the realistic strand in his philosophy, already firmly stated in the doctrine of empirical realism. One way for him to do this is by denying any commitment to the non-existence of things in themselves.

No definite unanimity can be expected as to how to judge the relative importance of two-world sounding passages as against the ones that suggest a two-aspect frame.[18] Kant's basic commitment to realism (which is an expression of his empirical realism) and the two-aspect view are compatible on the above reading of the passage from *Prolegomena*, which at least suggests that what may look like an appeal to a two-world ontology need not always be that.[19]

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[16] Ak. 4:289; compare 4:293, and also B519n.
[17] Ak. 4:315.
[18] See Van Cleve (1999, 144–146) for an assessment differing from the present one.
[19] Incidentally, just before the sentence discussed, Kant employs the locution of one thing viewed in two different respects: "we are not acquainted with

Hoke Robinson has objected to Allison's two-aspect view on the ground that two ways of considering something "must ultimately deal with the *aspects* to which the considerations are directed."[20] A thing can be considered in different ways, but not in just any way; and the different aspects have to be consistently referrable to the same object. According to Robinson, Allison is not able to account for the sameness of the object that has the two aspects. Allison has replied that Robinson's critique is based on the assumption that the different aspects have to correspond to different pre-given aspects in the underlying thing.[21] But this, Allison argues, is to miss the point: the two-aspect view is committed to the possibility of two distinct epistemic relationships in which things can be considered, in conjunction with the thesis that spatio-temporal properties pertain to things only in relation to one of these considerations. This is convincing as a rebuttal of an overly ontological interpretation of Kant, but Allison's solution to the question of sameness is less satisfying. The problem is "that these two conflicting ways of considering do not seem to leave room for the conception of some single underlying thing that is being considered."[22] As the two aspects are two points of view, neither of them can serve as the neutral basis for the characterization of that which is considered in the two ways. To solve the problem, Allison assigns this function to what Kant calls "the transcendental object=x."[23] Though it is true that "the transcendental object" in CPR refers to the indeterminate concept of a something in general, and as such is somewhat more neutral than a positive conception of a thing in itself as thought by the pure categories, it is not clear that there is a problem here that needs to be solved. The sameness of the thing under different considerations is guaranteed by the internal consistency of the reflection in which the different considerations take place. As long as the considerations do not ascribe contradictory predicates to the same thing – and Allison

this thing as it may be constituted in itself, but only with its appearance" (Ak. 4:314–315).

[20] Robinson 1994, 421f.

[21] See Allison 1996, 12–17.

[22] Allison 1996, 16.

[23] Allison 1996, 16.

explicitly claims that they do not[24] – there is no need for a neutral description of the single underlying thing. The considerations are from the very start defined as being of the same object,[25] and if we must say *what* this object is, we might say it is the object of appearance, since that is the one we ordinarily cognize. If we wish to describe this on a transcendental level, in abstraction from cognitive conditions, we could say that the object in question is a transcendental object, but we are not forced to find a way of referring to the object independently of the reflection or consideration from which we started. In the context of the philosophy of action, Anscombe has argued that it is a mistake to think that we have to use a non-descriptive designation in order to be able to assign different descriptions to the same act.[26] Analogously, the two-aspect theorist should reject the demand for a neutral designation of the thing reflected upon.

Let us now take a closer look at a passage that was quoted above, where Kant talks of a thing in itself as causing appearances, on the face of it suggesting an ontological distinction. The understanding "thinks of an object in itself, but only as a transcendental object, which is the cause of appearance (thus not itself appearance)" (A288/B344). To understand this, we need to be more precise concerning what it is that is removed when a thing is considered in itself, and for this purpose I shall first briefly summarize Kant's theory of sensibility and understanding. The two-aspect view was

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[24] Allison 1996, 16.

[25] To some extent this can be compared to Kripke's view that when we speak about a thing in a counterfactual situation, the identity of the thing spoken about is simply "*given* in the very description" or stipulated (Kripke 2001, 229). The analogy should not be pressed too far though, since Kripke's discussion concerns very different issues.

[26] Compare Anscombe 1979, 220: "I have on occasion stared dumbly when asked: 'If one action can have many descriptions, what is *the* action, which has all these descriptions?' The question seemed to be supposed to mean something, but I could not get hold of it. It ought to have struck me at once that here we were in 'bare particular' country […]. The proper answer […] is to give one of the descriptions. Any one, it does not matter which; or perhaps it would be best to offer a choice, saying 'Take whichever you prefer.'"

introduced above as saying that a thing in itself is a thing considered in abstraction from transcendental conditions. These conditions, however, are of two separate kinds: the sensible forms of intuition (space and time) and the intellectual forms of thought (categories). Objective experience is achieved in judgments. The understanding judges by applying concepts (general representations) to particulars. In empirical cognition, these particulars are given in intuition, and the judgment is therefore a unification of the contents of intuition by means of concepts. In this interplay, sensibility is the passive recipient of the material that the understanding actively coordinates (A50/B74). Our understanding is discursive, which means that it cannot provide the objects or intuitions (singular representation) that are needed to give content to its general concepts (see A68–69/B93–94). So, as a consequence of our cognitive constitution (not by logical necessity), we need the material of the senses as a condition for cognition. But a further condition is that this material is received in accordance with the forms of intuition. No explanation can be given for the fact that we have space and time as our forms of intuition, rather than some other medium of receptivity; this might be called a "transcendental fact" (compare B146). By this expression is meant that it is neither an empirical fact (since it is a condition for the possibility of the empirical as such) nor a logical necessity (since it is not incoherent to think that other beings could have other forms of intuition). The peculiar character of this transcendental level, distinct from logic as well as from the empirical level, is expressed in another context in the doctrine of synthetic judgments *a priori*, which are synthetic like empirical judgments, and *a priori* like logical principles, but distinct from both. We can frame the thought of beings with other forms of intuition, though we cannot imagine what such forms of intuition would be like. As for the forms of the understanding, on the other hand, Kant's position appears to be that no other logical forms (forms of judgment) can be conceived than the ones that we have, not even as a mere abstract possibility, if the understanding is to be discursive.[27] On the other hand, we can con-

[27] At the end of § 21 in the B-Deduction (B145–146) there is some ambiguity in this regard: that we have precisely the "functions for judgment" that we have is said to be impossible to give a further ground for, as it likewise is impossible to explain why space and time are our only forms of intuition.

ceive of an intuitive (non-discursive) understanding, radically different from ours, whose thinking would also be an intuiting.

Consequently, if there were beings endowed with other forms of sensible intuition than ours, they would have to use the same logical forms as we do to attain cognition (B148). The reason for this incongruity between forms of intuition and logical forms is perhaps that the latter amount to what Kant takes as a complete set of combinatory possibilities, namely in regard to judgments of subject-predicate form.

We are now in a position to explain a more specific sense of "thing in itself" often used by Kant. The thing in itself need not be the thing considered apart from *all* epistemic conditions; it can also be the thing considered apart from the sensible conditions only. Things in themselves are then thought by the understanding, but as devoid of sensible content. When Kant criticizes Leibniz for intellectualizing appearances (A271/B327), he points out that things for Leibniz are things in themselves in this sense. This criticism is to some extent applicable also to Kant's own *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770, where he defines intellectual cognition as referring to things as they are, whereas sensible cognition is about things as they appear.[28] The rationalistic ideal of a purely intellectual knowledge is one important example of what Kant later called transcendental realism, and the objects of this knowledge were supposed to be things in themselves, things in abstraction from all sensible conditions.[29] In the B-edition of CPR, Kant introduces the term "noumenon in negative sense" for the thought of an object in abstraction from our mode of intuition, which he describes as an entirely indeterminate something outside of our sensibility, in distinction to a positively conceived noumenal object as

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This might suggest the possibility of alternative kinds of discursive understanding, but should presumably only be taken to counter the demand for an ultimate explanation of the conditions for cognition.

[28] Ak. 2:392. In the *Dissertation*, however, an independent status for cognition by the senses is accorded.

[29] Patt (1987, 20) even sees this as the original sense of "*Ding an sich*" in the A-edition: "'Ding an sich' ist der Ausdruck, mit welchem die kritische Philosophie die Leibnizsche Ding-Auffassung kennzeichnet." Allison, modifying his earlier view, now sees the consideration of things through the mere understanding, in abstraction from sensible conditions, as the more precise notion of the thing in itself. See Allison 1996, 7–8.

object for an intellectual intuition (B307). In some contexts, the noumenon in negative respect replaces the A-edition's notion of the transcendental object. One can surmise that the reason for this terminological adjustment was to simplify matters, as well as to avoid confusing two rather different uses of "transcendental object," namely the one just discussed, and another one in the *A-Deduction* according to which "the transcendental object" designates the concept of the unity of representations, correlated to the transcendental unity of apperception, so that the term in this context seems to function somewhat like the concept of substance.[30]

To return now to the passage quoted above, which says that the understanding "thinks of an object in itself, but only as a transcendental object, which is the cause of appearance (thus not itself appearance)" (A288/B344), it can be noted that it is the understanding that thinks this "object in itself," and as it merely thinks it, but has no corresponding intuition of it, it is only a "transcendental object", which suggests that this term is here equivalent to the "noumenon in negative sense". This is conceived as the cause of appearance and therefore not itself appearance. I contend that no hypothesis about an ontologically separate thing in itself causing appearances is proposed here by Kant.[31] He is rather describing how the understanding, in abstracting from sensible conditions, uses its pure logical forms to conceive of a something in general, and how it conceives of this something as the ground of appearances merely because something remains after the abstraction, namely the pure thought of an indeterminate object. Conceiving this as the ground of the object amounts to thinking that the object is not annihilated when the sensible conditions are cancelled. The passage occurs in the context of a discussion of the limitation of sensible cognition, and this limitation is marked precisely by the thought that something remains even if space and time are thought away. In this reading, "ground" is used instead of "cause" (in accordance with Kant's explanation in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: "the word cause, when used of the supersensible, signifies only the

[30] See the discussion in Klemme 1996, 245–277, as well as Allison 1983, 244, Buchdahl 1989, 224, and Robinson 2001.
[31] Whereas Van Cleve (1999, 162) takes the passage as support for the view that things in themselves affect us.

ground"[32]) in order to stress the purely logical character of this use of the understanding. Ground, as the logical form corresponding to the category cause, is the more appropriate term for a thought which abstracts from the sensible condition required for the employment of a category (cause) in empirical cognition. Though Kant sometimes uses the word "cause" in a somewhat careless way, reading it as signifying "ground" suggests that he does not bring in a causal relation between two things, one noumenal and one phenomenal, but rather expresses the point that no ontological consequences can be drawn from the methodological abstraction involved in transcendental philosophy.

Whatever one thinks of the proposed interpretation, it should at least show that a reading in terms of two worlds is not the only possibility. But if the two-aspect interpretation is a plausible reading of the text, a different question poses itself. What possible interest could such a view have? It appears to be threatened by triviality. It is not very controversial to say that things as considered in abstraction from the conditions for knowledge cannot be known. What prevents the Kantian view from collapsing into such emptiness is its theory of transcendental conditions.[33] The thesis of the unknowability of things in themselves gets its significance from the concomitant theses that space, time and the categories are *a priori* forms of cognition, and that these conditions determine the formal aspects of experience. The distinction between appearance and thing in itself serves to articulate transcendental idealism as a theory of the cognitive faculties and their role in contributing *a priori* forms essentially related to the kind of subject possessing these faculties.

Rae Langton challenges Allison's interpretation of things in themselves on the ground that it collapses into mere emptiness.[34] According to her, it amounts to the following anodyne thesis:

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[32] Ak. 5:195.

[33] Compare Strawson 1994, 170–171. Here a significant step is taken beyond the position of *The Bounds of Sense* (Strawson 1966). Whereas he then saw the issue of things in themselves and transcendental idealism in terms of a two-world model, Strawson now accepts the two-aspect interpretation as a possible alternative, though he finds the two-world model more in conformity with Kant's text.

[34] Langton 1998, 9.

> Things considered in abstraction from their relation to our sensibility are things considered in abstraction from their relation to our sensibility.

This tautology is obtained from Kant's claim that we can have no knowledge of things in themselves (presumably by substituting for "knowledge" what according to Kant is a necessary condition for knowledge, namely "relation to our sensibility," and for "in themselves" the two-aspect reading of that locution, "considered in abstraction from their relation to our sensibility").[35] Now, as Langton remarks, Kant thinks he has made a philosophical discovery.[36] How could that be the case if the unknowability of things in themselves is just a tautology?

The situation can profitably be compared to Frege's well-known astronomical example in his discussion of sense and reference. Ancient astronomers believed that the Morning Star and the Evening Star are different heavenly bodies. Let this belief correspond to the pre-Kantian philosopher's belief that we have knowledge of things by means of the intellect, unaided by sensibility. Then, in the astronomical story, someone discovers that the Morning Star and the Evening Star are one and the same planet. In our story, Kant claims that he has discovered that we have no knowledge of things by means of the pure intellect, apart from the conditions of sensibility. Both discoveries are, in their respective contexts of discourse, informative and perhaps controversial. However, in both cases, from the new point of view attained, the discovery can be construed as a mere tautology. In Frege's story, the astronomer's assertion that the Morning Star is the Evening Star can, by substitution, be transformed to the claim that the Morning Star is the Morning Star. In Kant's case, his claim that we can have no knowledge of things in themselves can be transformed to Langton's tautology. Frege discharges the paradox with the help of his distinction between sense and reference. Likewise, it is possible to view our problem in a somewhat Fregean

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[35] The derivation of the tautology is motivated thus: "Since knowledge arises only with the concrete application of the forms and categories, Kant's thesis […] about our ignorance of things in themselves becomes nothing more than this [tautology]" (Langton 1998, 9).
[36] Langton 1998, 10.

spirit (irrespective of what the ultimate value of the sense-reference distinction may be in semantics). In an intellectual community dominated by the belief (shared by Kant in his *Dissertation* of 1770) that we have knowledge by means of the intellect of things as they are independently of their relation to our sensibility, the denial of this belief is a substantial thesis, even if this denial, supplemented with the new theory that empirical knowledge is conditioned by the forms of intuition, may yield a tautology. I say "may", since it is not clear to me that there is a tautology. Langton obtains one by substituting for "knowledge" the Kantian transcendental conditions (forms of sensibility and categories) in "We can have no knowledge of things in themselves". Supposing that Kant's argumentation for the requirement of these conditions is correct, perhaps they can be said to be analytically linked to the concept of human knowledge. But the question Kant faced in developing his critical philosophy was precisely whether there are such conditions for human knowledge, or whether it is based on intellectual intuition, a condition-free immediate cognition. To answer that question was not a matter of analyzing the existing concept of "knowledge," but rather of forging a new conception of human knowledge.

Another way to make this point is to ask who are included in the "we" of the thesis "We can have no knowledge of things in themselves." If it is all knowers in general, the thesis is no tautology according to Kant (for perhaps God has such knowledge). If only beings are included which have a twofold cognitive structure, in which the application of concepts (the understanding) is dependent on reception of data (sensibility), then the thesis may be tautological, but the question whether human cognition is of this dual kind is a substantial one, which Kant, contrary to empiricists and rationalists (assuming the correctness of his interpretation of these positions), answered affirmatively.

Moreover, it seems possible to construe just about any interpretation of the unknowability of things in themselves as tautological in the way indicated by Langton. For instance, in her own interpretation of Kant, according to which "in itself" designates the intrinsic (non-relational) properties of things, the unknowability thesis becomes "We have no knowledge of the intrinsic properties of things."[37] Kant's view is then that our knowledge, being the result of things affecting us, is necessarily relational, since "the causal powers of things do not supervene on their intrinsic properties," so that "it is not through those intrinsic properties that we are affected."[38] But then we can replace "knowledge of" with "relation to" (in parallel to how Langton, in her construal of Allison's interpretation, replaced "knowledge" with the relation to sensibility that for Kant is the transcendental condition for knowledge), thereby obtaining "We have no relation to the non-relational properties of things" (since intrinsicality is non-relationality). This certainly looks like a tautology.

The proper way to deal with such a charge of emptiness is to stress that the claim that our knowledge is necessarily relational is a substantial one, and that consequently Langton's reading of Kant is in no way trivial. Similarly, the claim that our knowledge is based on transcendental conditions is not trivial, and it is therefore pointless to construe the two-aspect reading as a tautology.

2. METAPHYSICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL VIEWS

Having said this in defence of the two-aspect view, it must be admitted that the issue goes somewhat deeper than it has been depicted so far. First, there is the linguistic point that the word "world" does not necessarily mean an ontologically separate realm but sometimes just indicates a general aspect of things, so that things considered apart from epistemic conditions could well be referred to as a world. To find that an interpretation explains Kant's distinction in terms of "worlds" is therefore not sufficient to determine that it is an instance of the two-world view. Secondly, and more importantly, recent accounts sympathetic to the two-world approach tend to be more sophisticated than earlier versions. Rather than the question of one or two worlds, the recent debate concerns whether a "metaphysical" or a "methodological" interpretation of the thing in itself is

[37] Langton 1998, 13.

[38] Langton 1998, 139. I will have more to say about Langton's interesting proposal below.

the most adequate one.[39] Whereas a methodological view considers Kant's contrasting conceptions of the noumenal and the phenomenal in terms of different reflective perspectives or epistemic points of view prompted by the methodology of transcendental philosophy,[40] the metaphysical interpretation distinguishes two sets of properties belonging to objects, noumenal and phenomenal properties.[41] The noumenal properties are the intrinsic properties of the object, whereas the phenomenal ones are properties that the object possesses in its relation to the knowing subject with its forms of intuition. In construing the distinction of thing in itself and appearance as based on different sets of properties of the same object, the metaphysical view takes the form of a two-aspect theory. There is a deeper resemblance to the two-world view in that the existence of unknowable properties belonging to the thing in itself is taken to be established by means of general metaphysical reasoning, largely independently of the specifics of Kant's transcendental methodology. It is true that at least formally, the metaphysical view amounts to a one-world view. It postulates only one world, one set of objects that have properties belonging to these objects as things in themselves as well as properties that are phenomenal. Nonetheless, this approach can justly be associated with the two-world theory, since both views take Kant's distinction between appearance and thing in itself to be primarily ontological rather than epistemological. The metaphysical view takes the *an sich* to consist in special properties, whereas the two-world view takes it to be a realm of separate things. What both views have in common is that Kant's distinction is considered to involve the assumption of a realm of entities of different ontological status than objects on the empirical level have. A metaphysical view assumes what might be called a *transcendent* point of view, even when it accepts Kantian strictures on our ability to attain cognition

[39] See Westphal 1997, 232–233 and Grier 2001, 86 and 89 for characterizations of the two positions.
[40] Versions of the methodological approach in the more recent literature are found in Buchdahl 1992, Palmquist 1993, Rescher 2000 and Grier 2001. Kroon 2001 offers a hybrid view.
[41] The metaphysical interpretation is defended in different versions by Westphal 1997, Langton 1998, Van Cleve 1999 and Langsam 2000. Adams 1997 can also be counted to this group, though in some respects his view resembles that of the methodological interpretation.

transcending experience, and it considers it legitimate to some extent to pursue metaphysical investigations regarding the nature of the thing in itself. In so far as it is granted that "thing in itself" and "appearance" refer to two aspects of the same thing, the *real* being of this thing is taken to be the thing in itself, while appearance is taken to be some particular, derivative property of the thing in itself. The metaphysical view takes a top-down approach in that it assumes it possible to determine the ontological status of things in themselves and appearance.

It can already be seen from this sketchy presentation that Robinson's objection to Allison, referred to above, is framed from a metaphysical view of things in themselves, and that Robinson presupposes that Allison's two aspect-view must ultimately be metaphysical in this sense. What Robinson demands is a metaphysical characterization of an entity underlying cognition. Though Allison's response is somewhat vacillating, I take it that he attempts to defend a methodological view of things in themselves that, as it were, proceeds from inside of experience. In such an immanent view,[42] metaphysical theorizing is taken as valid only when conducted in a *transcendental* frame, that is, in so far as it springs from an explication of *a priori* structures of experience. In so far as *transcendent* metaphysical speculation is allowed also in this approach, it must be in a bottom-up direction, so to speak as an afterthought, rather than as the primary move. In addition, metaphysical themes have a special role in moral philosophy, where they are considered by Kant to serve more than merely heuristic functions, but yet only from a practical point of view.

Proponents of the metaphysical view often allege that the methodological view is unable to accommodate metaphysical possibilities of obvious importance for Kant's account of moral philosophy, such as the freedom of will. Some of the resistance to the methodological reading may be caused by a feeling that it is too narrowly concerned with empirical cognition. But it is not clear that the methodological interpretation must lack all resources for openmindedness in metaphysical questions. A methodological inter-

[42] See A295–296/B352–353 on immanent principles (though my use of "transcendent" and "transcendental" here differs from Kant's use in that passage).

pretation of the thing in itself at least admits metaphysical *possibilities* that may legitimately be reflected on from a practical perspective, if not in theoretical cognition.

Moreover, on this interpretation the thing in itself introduced in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* can unproblematically be claimed to exist, because it is the same thing as the empirical object conceived of in abstraction from conditions of sensibility, as was discussed above. Hence the thing in itself, for all its unknowability, "inherits" its existence from the empirical realism accepted for ordinary empirical things, from which the process of abstraction started. This is sometimes overlooked when the absence of an ontological stance in the methodological approach is deplored.

3. THINGS IN THEMSELVES IN PERSPECTIVE

The two-aspect view introduces different reflective perspectives on the same object. It also brings in perspectival considerations about Kant's potentially misleading use of the term "thing in itself" in empirical contexts. Sometimes, in describing ordinary perceptual situations, Kant calls an object a thing in itself, and contrasts it with the diverse subjective perceptions that can be had of this same object. The perceptual seemings are called appearances, the same term that is used in the transcendental distinction.[43] Though Kant makes it clear that this empirical use of the distinction contrasts with its transcendental use, the fact that he uses the same terms on different levels of reflection might lead a reader astray. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that the relation between the terms differs on the two levels, at least on one construal of perception. In the empirical situation, my perceptual "appearance" is of the "thing in itself", but it is distinct from it. An empirical thing in itself, for instance a rose (A29–30/B45), is not a perception considered in abstraction. Moving to a transcendental context, the thing, which was a thing in itself in the empirical respect (such as the rose), is an appearance in transcendental respect, and is contrasted with the thing in itself (in

[43] See A29–30/B45; A45–46/B62–63, and discussions in Meerbote 1974 and Prauss 1977, 47–51.

transcendental respect). But now the thing in itself is this thing (the appearance) considered in itself, in abstraction from epistemic conditions. Since the relation we find on the empirical level between two different entities, the perceptual appearance and the actual thing, is not reproduced on the transcendental level, the dissimilarity between the two cases is as great as the analogy. On another view of perception, we find a closer similarity between the empirical and the transcendental cases. If appearance is taken to be the perception of a thing from a certain perspective (as defined by the relevant physiological and sensorial factors), then my perception of the rose, though an appearance, is the rose itself perspectivally given. In parallel to this, appearance in transcendental respect is the thing as given from the perspective defined by the conditions of space, time, and the categories, whereas the thing in itself is the thing conceived of in abstraction from these conditions.

Kant distinguishes different levels of reflection, such as the empirical and the transcendental. Sometimes the same terms are used at different levels, so that we need to know at what place in the system we are in order to determine what they point to. And in certain contexts, even the terms indicating the levels can be rather flexibly used. For instance, in the introduction to the *Transcendental Dialectic*, it is said that the "transcendental use" of the principles of the understanding is their illegitimate use outside of experience (A296/B352–353), which is somewhat surprising; one should rather have expected this illegitimate use to be called "transcendent."[44] Furthermore, Kant's philosophical system consists of autonomous domains governed by different interests of reason (the practical and the theoretical) and we can expect that the interpretation of terms will vary relative to this. It might be said that a term such as "thing in itself" has a perspective-dependent meaning, but perhaps it is better to view it as a question of it being used to point out different aspects of things or ways of considering things relative to different reflective contexts, much like how the words "to the left" can point to rather different things from different vantage points, without having a different meaning each time.

[44] But Kant here reserves "transcendent" for principles that recognize no boundaries of experience.

Any interpretation of Kant is to some extent perspectival. But some are so more than others, and perhaps most of all those of Gerd Buchdahl (1989, 1992) and Stephen Palmquist (1993). I shall present some of their views on the interpretation of "thing in itself" and related topics (Buchdahl's more in detail, Palmquist's but briefly), putting them in the context of a methodological two-aspect approach.

Buchdahl presents what he calls a "flow chart of Kant's transcendental dynamics", a diagram in which the concept of an object is pictured as passing through various stations as a result of certain operations of "reduction" and "realization."[45] In this highly reconstructive interpretation of Kant, shown in *Figure 1* below, the starting point is the object (or the world) in its "phenomenological" aspect, that is, as it is experienced before any philosophical investigation is conducted.[46] Buchdahl calls this T_w (object in the sensory world), and compares it to the Husserlian notion of the lifeworld; in a rather loose way, Buchdahl's procedures are inspired by Husserl's phenomenology. The first step in providing an "ontological" account of what is thus phenomenologically given is to *reduce* it in a process of abstraction (somewhat resembling Husserl's phenomenological reduction), reaching T_g, corresponding to Kant's *Ding überhaupt* (thing in general). By further abstraction we move to the stage T_o (what Kant calls the "transcendental object"). The precise relation between T_g and T_o is not entirely clear, but the difference is in terms of how far the abstraction from phenomenological qualities of experience proceeds. At stage T_o the object is considered as emptied of meaning or devoid of "ontological value." Here reduction comes to an end, and a process of realization can take place. While reduction can be seen in terms of abstraction, realization is a constructive step, giving content or determining (a term often used by Kant) the reduced concept of the object. Such realization can be done in many ways, all not equally valid. According to this view, when Kant argues that space and time have the status of *a priori* forms of intuition, and that the categories are necessary conditions for experience, he tries to establish one kind of realization as legitimate. This is the realization of T_a, the object as appearance. Other realizations discussed by Kant

[45] Buchdahl 1989, 218.

[46] The following exposition is based on Buchdahl 1989. See also Leppäkoski 1993, ch. 5.

aim to reach noumenal stages. These realizations are characterized by their problematic status. Buchdahl construes Kant's distinction between the negative and the positive sense of the noumenon as two successive realizational steps. The noumenon in the negative sense (T_n-) "denotes a stage which represents T_o, as it were, already 'on the way to' […] a potential realization, whether successful or not."[47] To reach something positive (a noumenon in the positive sense), there are two options, a theoretical or a practical realization. To make a theoretical realization of the noumenon (T_n+), we would need a capacity for intellectual intuition. Since we don't have that capacity, T_n+ at most has analogical or fictional sense for us. In the practical domain, T_n+ is realized, for there we consider ourselves in a noumenal perspective,[48] but this realization has no validity in the theoretical or speculative domain.

These are the stages in Kant's reduction-realization approach to the concept of an object in Buchdahl's reconstruction. But in his diagram there is also an alternative line of reduction-realization, going from T_g via reduction to a purely logical notion of an object (T_l) to T_m, a metaphysical conception of the object achieved by a realization presupposing a capacity to cognize things in themselves. This line represents transcendental realism, a position which on Kant's view is common for pre-critical approaches to philosophy, in both the rationalistic and the empiricist forms. Transcendental realism regards cognition as realizable without transcendental conditions (such as space, time and the categories), which for Kant amounts to a conflation of appearance and thing in itself. The difference between T_g and T_l is rather unclear, but Buchdahl's inclusion of the latter in the diagram apparently aims to capture Kant's complaint that metaphysicians try to obtain knowledge of things merely by means of logical analysis of concepts. Buchdahl indicates that T_m in many ways resembles T_n+ (theoretical), and can be taken as a pre-critical version of it.

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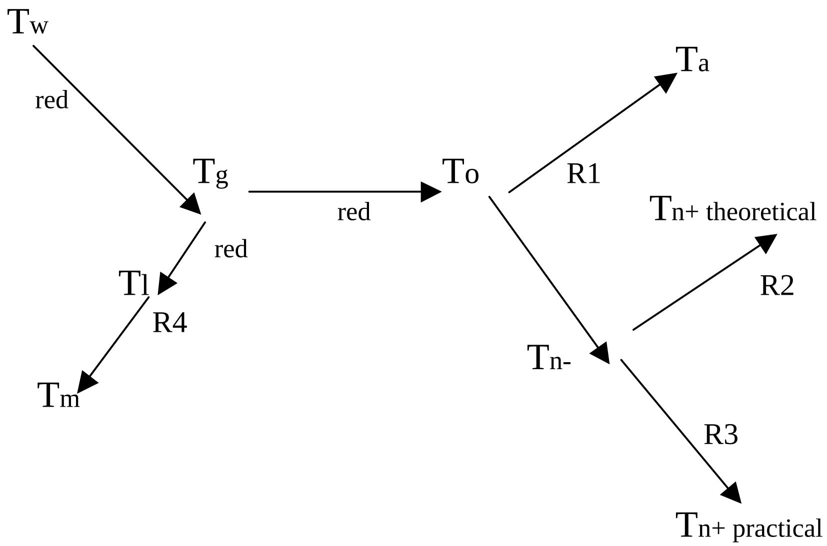
[47] Buchdahl 1989, 224.

[48] See for instance *Critique of Practical Reason*, Ak. 5:6.



R1 – Realization via sensibility and understanding (the human case).
R2 – Realization via intellectual intuition (counterfactual).
R3 – Practical realization.
R4 – Metaphysical realization of the object, as assumed in precritical philosophy.

Figure 1 Concepts of objects resulting from operations of reduction and realization. (Simplified version of the diagram in Buchdahl 1989, 218.)

Two terminologically interesting points can readily be spotted in Buchdahl's model. First, there is no unique place in the scheme for the *thing in itself*. This locution is seen to be used by Kant for several different functions, corresponding to different stages in the scheme. In polemical use, when pre-critical views are criticized, it refers to T_m. Sometimes it denotes T_o, at other times the noumenon in one of its three modes: T_n-, T_n+ (theoretical), or T_n+ (practical). Many of the problems in interpreting Kant's view on "the" thing in itself are generated by insufficiently differentiating these various stages.[49] Second, though the term "appearance" is connected to T_a, it seems

[49] Buchdahl 1989, 226.

that the phenomenological starting-point T_w might also be called appearance, since in both cases we have to do with the empirical realm. And indeed, according to Buchdahl, Kant often uses the same term for these different concepts.

This prompts the question what "the point of all this R-R [reduction-realization] rigmarole" is.[50] Why would Kant perform a reduction of given experience only to realize it again? Buchdahl's answer is perhaps not wholly clear, but its gist is that the constructive account in terms of realization is a way to explicate how space, time, and the categories can be *a priori*, by showing how these conditions function to make experience and cognition possible. The same situation is not uncommon in phenomenological (as well as other forms of) epistemology: cognition or experience is reduced or decomposed, and subsequently rebuilt again according to some methodological principle. Even though what is finally reached is the very thing from which one began, it is assumed that the process has provided a philosophical understanding not otherwise attainable.

Several objections to Buchdahl's scheme are offered by Kenneth Westphal.[51] The main thrust of the objections is that Buchdahl's tendency to construe Kant's philosophy as a matter of choice is at odds with Kant's general philosophical attitude. The following variations on this theme can be mentioned. (1) To make a choice, such as adopting a reduction-realization approach, we must be self-conscious; but, according to Kant's argument in the Refutation of Idealism (B274–279), self-consciousness requires spatio-temporal identification of objects and events. Therefore, adopting a particular realization scheme in regard to objects cannot be a matter of choice.[52] (2) The R-R process amounts to a framework the adoption of which cannot be argued for independently. The view that justification can be given only within a framework is one that Buchdahl shares with Carnap. It is a problematic view, because it doesn't allow us to ask for reasons to elect a particular framework rather than another one, though such a question ought to be legitimate.[53] (3) Kant's strong

[50] Buchdahl 1989, 223.
[51] See Westphal 1998, and also Westphal 1997. For a defence of Buchdahl, see Jardine 2003.
[52] Westphal 1998, 342.
[53] Westphal 1998, 344.

modal claims for his doctrines are weakened in Buchdahl's account. Where Kant thinks his result is the unique solution of a problem, in Buchdahl's scheme it is merely a possibility.[54]

As concerns (1), apart from the general question of the appropriateness of construing Kant's doctrines on the conditions for experience as somehow being a matter of choice, the objection also focuses on the problematic assumption that a pre-given experience is available as a starting-point for reflection. This is problematic since Kant wants to establish conditions for the very possibility of experience. It would thus seem that either the R-R model is irrelevant to Kant's attempts to offer a philosophical explication of the structure of experience, or it must be supposed to represent conditions valid independently of (or processes having taken place in advance of) a particular person's choice to perform the abstractive and realizational operations described in the model.

The second alternative is preferable. It is incompatible with Buchdahl's aims only if his description of the procedure as entirely creative and constructive is taken at face value. Buchdahl tends to describe it in such voluntaristic terms, as a creation of a framework for the articulation of a certain philosophical position.[55] It seems to me that it is more in line with Kant's general attitude, and consistent with Buchdahl's interpretive scheme (if not with what might be called his ideological interpretation of this scheme) to consider the process of realization as guided by proofs and arguments, rather than as a free creation. It should thus be admissible to give a somewhat more traditionalistic interpretation of Buchdahl's scheme (whatever his own intentions might have been). The process of reflection depicted in the R-R model is then conceived of as a process of discovery, in which necessary conditions for experience corresponding to the realizational steps are isolated. Considered in that way, Buchdahl's perspectival model of Kant is to a large extent in agreement with Allison's two-aspect view.[56] It provides a pictorial view of the many facets of the concept of the thing in Kant.

[54] Westphal 1998, 346.
[55] See Buchdahl 1989, 224.
[56] They disagree on the role of transcendental object, which in Buchdahl's view must be sharply separated from the noumenon in negative sense.

Westphal's objections (2) and (3) can be treated in the same manner. Buchdahl tends to over-emphasize the constructive character of transcendental reflection, but it is more consistent with Kant's view to consider the goal of the reflective process to be the discovery of necessary conditions present prior to reflection. Bearing that in mind, Buchdahl's model remains useful as a graphic representation of the two-aspect interpretation.

A different and more detailed account of Kantian perspectives has been developed by Stephen Palmquist (1993). Palmquist outlines a framework of basic perspectives in Kant's system, supplemented with a set of reflective perspectives operative in each of the basic perspectives. He calls the first (basic) perspectives "standpoints." They are the theoretical, the practical, and the judicial standpoint. To each of these basic standpoints belongs a *Critique* (*Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical Reason,* and *Critique of the Power of Judgment*). In each standpoint investigations can be conducted from different reflective perspectives, namely the empirical, the transcendental, the hypothetical, and the logical. Aiming at a general survey of Kant's entire architectonic, Palmquist describes how these perspectives are expressed in the basic standpoints. What is important with regard to the case of thing-terms discussed here is not the complex detail of his account, but just the simple idea that keeping track of the perspective adopted in a context furthers the chances for adequately interpreting Kant's terms in that surrounding.

Palmquist also reconstructs the Kantian system in terms of the distinctions between the various faculties. The standpoints then correspond to the interests of these faculties: theory for the understanding, morality for reason, and empirical judgment for the power of judgment. The four reflective perspectives are defined as ways in which faculties relate to each other.[57] As it especially is

However, this separation seems to be dictated by the scheme rather than by independent argument. See Westphal 1998, 338n.

[57] In this formulation Palmquist's mapping of Kant's system comes close to the one given in Deleuze 1984 [1963] in terms of relations between faculties. One difference is that Deleuze sees the imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) as the basic faculty in the third *Critique* (CJ), whereas Palmquist takes the power of judgment (*Urteilskraft*) to have that role. Though the imagination is of utmost importance in the aesthetic part of CJ, it has a less prominent role in the second, teleological part, which might speak in favour of Palmquist's

Palmquist's stress of the autonomy of the practical standpoint that is of value for present purposes, I will not go into the complex relations of his four reflective perspectives, though it should be noted that his distinction between empirical and transcendental perspectives roughly corresponds to the contrast between empirical and transcendental that has been applied above.

4. Critique of metaphysical interpretations

In this section some recent examples of metaphysical interpretations of the thing in itself in Kant are examined, with the aim of showing that some of the results achieved are less plausible than they might at first appear. The examples chosen are Langton 1998, which is discussed in some detail, Langsam 2000 (with regard to Kant's theory of truth), and Van Cleve 1999 (on principles applicable to things in themselves).

Langton proposes an interpretation according to which things in themselves and appearances are two aspects of the same thing. The crucial difference between her approach and a methodological two-aspect view is that on her account, the distinction is straightforwardly metaphysical, distinguishing two sets of properties of things, the intrinsic and the relational ones. Far from having anything to do with different epistemic perspectives, the distinction is based on the nature of things. "Things in themselves are substances qua bearers of intrinsic properties."[58] Phenomena are the relational properties of these substances. So there is no reference in the definition of "phenomena" to subjects of cognition or forms of sensibility. Whereas most commentators on Kant see a close connection between the doctrine of the dependence of our cognition on the transcendentally ideal forms of our sensibility and that of the unknowability of things in themselves, Langton views the nature of our forms of intuition as only indirectly related to the issue of unknowability. More important than the ideality of time and space is the limitation of knowledge due

construal. On the relation between the imagination and the power of judgment, see also Centi 2001.

[58] Langton 1998, 20.

to receptivity as such. As receptive, our sensibility is dependent on our being causally affected by objects. Kant's views on the ideality of the forms of intuition are therefore not essential for deriving the thesis of our ignorance of things in themselves; the fact of receptivity is enough. This feature of Langton's reconstruction of the grounds for Kant's epistemic humility makes it an example of what Karl Ameriks has called a "short argument" for transcendental idealism. Short arguments "attempt to establish transcendental idealism […] without going through the actual long and complex steps that Kant lays out in the […] *Critique of Pure Reason*."[59] Instead of detailed examinations of the forms of intuition and the structure of judgment, they focus on some very general trait of human cognition, such as, in Langton's case, receptivity. On her account, the mere fact that empirical knowledge, by its dependence on our receiving something, involves the relation of being affected, leads to the consequence that we do not know the intrinsic properties of things but only phenomena (defined as the relational properties of things). In Ameriks view, it is implausible that Kant's case for transcendental idealism should rest on such a "global" argument, considering that Kant's detailed arguments for the ideality of time and space would then lack all bearing on the question of transcendental idealism and things in themselves, whereas Kant on the contrary seems to reach the conclusion that we have no knowledge of things in themselves on the basis of the results of the *Transcendental Aesthetic*.[60]

But there are also more direct reasons for doubting that Langton's interpretation is adequate. One can certainly point to passages in Kant's pre-critical works that express something resembling Langton's explication of the concept of things in themselves. To take an example not mentioned by Langton, in the *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* (1766) Kant discusses the notions of immaterial and material substance. Of an immaterial substance he says that it could be thought to occupy a space without filling it, and should not be called extended, "for only that which occupies a space when it is separated from everything and exists *for itself* on its own *is extended*." Material substances (the elements of matter) occupy a space "in virtue of the external effect they produce on other substances," but "when these

[59] Ameriks 2001, 168.
[60] See Ameriks 2001.

substances exist separately for themselves, and when no other things are thought of as existing in connection with them, and when there are not even to be found in them things which exist externally to each other, these substances contain no space."[61] Here "substance" is taken to be that which "exists for itself on its own" or "separately," which comes close to Langton's characterization of things in themselves as substances considered exclusively with regard to their intrinsic properties.

But as Kant's position develops, what he says on things in themselves begins to fit less well with Langton's description. In the *Inaugural Dissertation* (1770), where the intellect is ascribed the capacity to know things "as they are,"[62] it is clear that such things can stand in relations to each other, and that these relations belong to what is known in knowledge of things in themselves.[63] When Kant in *Section 4* of the *Dissertation* discusses the "principle of the form of the intelligible world," the question concerns how substances are related, and it "can only be solved by the intellect."[64] Since the intellect knows things as they are, knowledge of the relations of substances to each other (regardless of whether these relations amount to real physical influence, as Kant tentatively suggests, or are better explained by pre-established harmony or by occasionalism) form part of the content of metaphysical knowledge. The various metaphysical alternatives concerning the relations of substances are theories about things in themselves, and there is no restriction on such theories to the effect that they should treat only the non-relational properties of substances. What is at stake is not the distinction between intrinsic and relational properties, but rather whether things (including their relations) are considered by the intellect, or from the point of view of sensitive cognition, via time and space.[65] It is also

[61] Ak. 2:323–324.

[62] Ak. 2:392.

[63] This point is also made in Ameriks 2001, 181.

[64] Ak. 2:407. Since Kant at this stage does not distinguish the understanding from reason, but uses the one term *intellectus*, the choice in Beck 1988 of "intellect" rather than "understanding" seems better. See also Falkenstein 1995, 367n 3.

[65] Kant's distinction in the *Dissertation* between the sensitive and the intellectual worlds thus amounts to what is here called a metaphysical two-aspect theory, rather than the two-world theory the title leads one to expect.

telling that in his discussions of time and space, Kant says that these are not "objective and real, neither substance nor accident nor relation."[66] This indicates that something could pertain to things in themselves (which is what "objective" and "real" mean here) and *also* be relational. The ideality of time and space does not just consist in their being relational, for there may well be relations among things in themselves, knowledge of which would belong to our knowledge of things in themselves and not to our knowledge of phenomena. That space and time are designated as ideal is because they are our subjective conditions for coordinating data of sense,[67] rather than because of their relationality.

Langton's construal of the distinction between thing in itself and appearance is thus not adequate to Kant's view in the work that bridges the pre-critical and the critical stages of his philosophical development. But perhaps Kant changed his view while composing the *Critique of Pure Reason*, so that the distinction became equivalent to that between intrinsic and relational properties? It seems plausible to assume that he did not. His way of stating that space does not belong to things in themselves shows that its ideality does not simply consist in its relationality.

> Space represents no property at all of any things in themselves nor any relation of them to each other, i.e., no determination of them that attaches to objects themselves and that would remain even if one were to abstract from all subjective conditions of intuition. For neither absolute nor relative determinations can be intuited prior to the existence of the things to which they pertain, thus be intuited *a priori*. (A26/B42)

Indeed, Kant's development from the *Dissertation* to the critical philosophy of CPR might be seen as the transition from a metaphysical to a methodological two-aspect view.

[66] Ak. 2:404; see also 2:400 (translation from Beck 1988).

[67] Klemme (1996, 57–59) points out that Kant conceives of this coordination in different ways in the *Dissertation* and in CPR. In the *Dissertation* it is viewed as an act of connecting due to sensibility, whereas in CPR it is merely a receptivity. See also Kemp Smith 2003 [1923], 92, and Falkenstein 1995, 93 and 96.

What restricts our cognition to appearances is thus not its relationality but its *a priori* connection to our forms of intuition. If we could "abstract from all subjective conditions of intuition" and yet have knowledge, this would be not only about "absolute" determinations, but also about the "relative" determinations of things that on Langton's account must count as phenomenal. This is confirmed in A42/B59: "the things that we intuit are not in themselves what we intuit them to be, nor are their relations so constituted in themselves as they appear to us." A relation can thus both appear to us and yet be thought of as having a constitution *in itself*. This is not consistent with Langton's construal of "in itself," according to which the term denotes the intrinsic, non-relational properties of things, excluding the very notion of a "relation in itself."[68]

Langton, however, finds several passages in CPR in which Kant seems to identify that which is in itself with the intrinsic properties of things, suggesting a return to his early thought.[69] One such passage is in the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, where Kant says that what is "internal to the object in itself" cannot be represented through outer sense, since nothing is given to us through outer sense except representations of relations, and "through mere relations no thing in itself is cognized" (B67). Langton also adduces passages from the *Amphiboly of the Concepts of Reflection* which discuss the notion of "the inner in things" (A277/B333). For instance, Kant says that "[s]ubstances in general must have something *inner*, which is therefore free of all outer relations" (A274/B330), and that we "have no insight whatsoever into the intrinsic nature of things" (A277/B333). But, as has been pointed out by several of Langton's reviewers,[70] Kant is here summarizing Leibniz' position in order to attack it, so what Kant has to say on the internal properties of things in themselves does not necessarily reflect his own views.[71] According

[68] This point is also made in Setiya 2004, 82.
[69] Langton sees a continuity rather than a return, since she doesn't notice that Kant in the *Dissertation* abstains from identifying the *an sich* with the non-relational.
[70] O'Shea 1999, 257, Rosefeldt 2001, 267–268, Walker 2002, 141.
[71] The statement, quoted by Langton, that says that we have no insight into the intrinsic nature of things, is in Kant's text presented as a complaint with a somewhat unclear sense, and not as Kant's own opinion. See A277/B333 and Rosefeldt 2001, 268.

to Kant, Leibniz one-sidedly attempted to cognize things in a purely intellectual fashion, leaving out the role of sensibility (compare A271/B327: "Leibniz *intellectualized* the appearances"). This putative cognition of the inner of things is here taken to be possible through the intellect's being "immediately related to things in themselves" (A271/B327). The mistake Kant diagnoses in Leibniz can, in terms of Buchdahl's model, be identified as an attempt to "realize" the object directly in a metaphysical fashion (T_m) without recourse to the contributions of the forms of sensibility. Sensibility is for Leibniz just a distorting factor in the cognitive process, and his preferred conception of cognition is therefore an entirely conceptual affair, a view that for Kant leads to mistaking analytical judgments for synthetical ones. Far from endorsing the Leibnizian demand for cognition of the inner of things thus conceived, Kant takes this very conception of the inner, which finds it expression in the theory of the monad, to be part of the problem. In experience there is no impossibility in gradually getting deeper into the inner of nature, though this is now conceived as only "comparatively internal," lacking the absolute character attached to the inner as thing in itself, which is "a mere fancy" (A277–278/B333–334). This "fancy" is in Kant's view generated by the "transcendental amphiboly" that consists in "a confusion of the pure object of the understanding with the appearance" (A270/B326). The result is that purely conceptual, analytical connections pertaining to general logic are taken to yield metaphysical cognition, whereas for Kant any contentful, synthetical claims require a transcendental logic which brings with it a consideration of the conditions for experience, thereby assigning the status of appearance to the object under investigation.

The text of B67 is more difficult to interpret. One possibility is that the argument is directed against adherents of the Leibnizian view of space, according to which space is ideal in virtue of its being a system of relations holding between objects. If space is merely such a system of relations, how can we find the non-relational objects on which the relations are thought to depend, given that all we know about objects is presented through these relations? The conclusion would then be that space is ideal (as Kant and the Leibnizian agree) because it is a form of intuition, not (as the Leibnizian thinks) because its relations have objects as relata. Since objects are given as spatial, they are on the same footing as space and should be accorded the same status, namely ideality. If the objects that are supposed to uphold the relations are nonsensible monads rather than empirical objects, Kant's point would be that we have no empirical knowledge of such things, but merely cognize ordinary objects in space. In short, "through mere relations no thing in itself is cognized" (B67).

Historically it seems plausible to connect B66–69, which was added to the *Transcendental Aesthetic* in the B-edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, to the objections raised against some of Kant's views by Hermann Andreas Pistorius. Specifically, Pistorius was the first critic to formulate the "neglected alternative" objection, according to which space and time may be *a priori* conditions of sensibility, and yet *also* be properties of things in themselves, a possibility not considered in the A-edition of CPR. In addition, he had pointed to difficulties in Kant's theory of inner sense with regard to its relation to apperception.[72]

In a review from 1786, Pistorius states that space and time are:

> relational concepts that are not merely grounded in the nature of our sensibility, and that do not merely constitute its subjective forms, as Mr. K. argues, but that would also have to be considered as grounded in the nature of the *things in themselves* that appear in space and time. In this way a roughly Leibnizian concept of space and time would emerge.[73]

As the words "not merely" and "also" show, Pistorius doesn't deny that space and time are forms of intuition, his claims is only that this is consistent with their being grounded in things in themselves. Pistorius also argues that we obtain information about things in themselves via space and time, because they are the "pathway along which the communication between the two worlds travels,"[74] and that

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[72] On the general importance of Pistorius' critique, see Erdmann 1878, 105–107, Beiser 1987, 188–192 and 357, and Sassen 2000, 14–16.

[73] Pistorius 2000 [1786], 94. This review was published in the first issue for 1786 of the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*. According to Erdmann (1878, 4), Kant started working on the emendations for the B-edition of CPR in April 1786.

[74] Pistorius 2000 [1786], 101. This nicely shows that the neglected alternative argument presupposes the two-world model.

this view offers a more satisfying account of ourselves as thinking subjects than the Kantian theory of apperception and inner sense.[75]

B66–69 fits very well within this context, as the passage begins with an investigation of the relationality of space as form of intuition (a premiss accepted by Pistorius), aiming to show that this does not allow the connection to things in themselves that Pistorius had proposed, and then turns into a discussion of inner sense and its relation to apperception. If the passage constitutes Kant's answer to Pistorius, then his argument is built on the presupposition that space and time are *a priori* forms of intuition.

But irrespective of the exact point of Kant's claim that we have knowledge through outer sense only of relations and therefore not of what is internal to the object in itself, it seems reasonable to assume that this comment should be taken as consonant with the general conclusion of the *Transcendental Aesthetic* that space and time are ideal, rather than as a fundamental and independent argument for our ignorance of things in themselves.

It is certainly true that the inner of things is sometimes designated by Kant as thing in itself; this does not imply that everything said about things in themselves is about the inner of things. "The inner of things" is an example of a noumenal conception, the thought of the object as metaphysically realized, closely connected to the concept of "the simple."[76] For Kant the term "in itself" signals that abstraction is made from the conditions of sensibility in conceiving the thing.[77]

Langton helpfully locates the origin of Kant's distinction between thing in itself and appearance in the rationalist distinction between thing and phenomenon, where the phenomena are the relational properties of things. But the traditional equation of things considered in themselves with the non-relational properties of substances is certainly not all there is to Kant's distinction. Kant's alteration of the conception amounts to specifying that the relations abstracted from when we consider things as they are in themselves are those

[75] Pistorius 2000 [1786], 100.
[76] See A283/B339 and Ak. 8:201.
[77] Compare Ak. 8:209: "if reason thinks a composite of substances as thing in itself (without relating it to the special character of our senses)." The parenthesized phrase indicates what one abstracts from in thinking something as thing in itself.

pertaining to our *a priori* forms of intuition. Relations among things in themselves are thus left in the realm of noumena, contrary to what we should expect if he had stuck to the traditional way of drawing the distinction. Moreover, the concept of substance is relocated to the empirical domain, and the thing in itself is left ontologically undetermined.

In an interesting exposition of Kant's account of causality, Harold Langsam finds use for the distinction between correspondence and coherence theories of truth. His discussion moves in the horizon of a metaphysical view on the thing in itself.[78] This interpretation guides his attempt to construe Kant's theory of truth, leading him to the claim that Kant thinks that genuine truth consists in a transcendent relation of correspondence between statements about appearances and things in themselves (albeit these are unknowable), while ordinary claims for the truth of statements about appearances, on the empirical level, are based on truth as coherence.

The idea here seems to be that a truly true statement would correspond to things as they are in themselves, but as this realm is taken by Kant to be unknowable, the need arises for an *Ersatz* truth, which will take the form of coherence. An empirical statement can then be considered true if it coheres with other empirical statements. Even though this does not satisfy the ideal requirement for truth in terms of correspondence, it is the best we can have.

Behind this interpretation we find the metaphysical view according to which things in themselves (which Langsam equates with the intrinsic properties of things) constitute the ontologically real domain, whilst appearances lack full-fledged reality in virtue of being mind-dependent properties. Expressed in perspectival terms, what Langsam does is to construe Kant as setting the realization of the noumenon in positive respect as the standard for truth, and then, seeing that we have no way to accomplish this realization, making do with a second-best option to explain the possibility of empirical truth.

According to Langsam, when the methodological two-aspect view claims that an object (for instance a drop of water) can be considered to be both a thing in itself in the empirical respect (and thus not

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[78] Langsam (2000, 186) aligns himself with the metaphysical two-aspect view.

appearance, as the rainbow might be said to be), *and* appearance in the transcendental respect (hence not a thing in itself), it illegitimately assumes that the meanings of the terms “thing in itself” and “appearance” differ on the respective levels.[79] Now, this is not entirely clear, as one might rather say that it is a question not of different meanings, but of differing contextual applications of terms with univocal meanings (as exemplified with the word “left” in section 3 above). A clarification of the issue would presumably require a more differentiated account of meaning. At any rate, Langsam’s proposal is that Kant’s claim is that it always is false, on any level, that the drop of water is a thing in itself. It is merely appearance.[80] Nonetheless, Kant deems it appropriate to recognize a notion of empirical truth, since we are constrained by the nature of our cognitive faculty to take appearances as real things.[81] As this constraint ensures that an empirical statement purports to refer to appearance as if it were a thing in itself, the statement is false as measured with the standard of correspondence truth, but with respect to the other notion, that of empirical truth, it is true. Empirical truth is not a correspondence notion but a coherentistic notion relating appearances to each other.

Several questions are prompted by this account. In the first place, if it is illegitimate to let terms such as “thing in itself” and “appearance” have different meanings with respect to empirical and transcendental points of view, as Langsam argues, why would it be any less problematic to assign different meanings to the term “truth” on the respective levels? If univocity is important, it should be so also in this case. Secondly, what is the relation of this account to that offered by the methodological two-aspect theorist? The latter, call her the methodologist, might put it like this:

> **Empirical perspective:** It is true that the drop of water is a thing in itself and not an appearance.[82]

[79] Langsam 2000, 174.
[80] Langsam 2000, 174. The rainbow example is in A45–46/B62–63.
[81] Langsam 2000, 177–178 (based on A191/B236).
[82] Note that this is the use of “thing in itself” in empirical respect discussed in the beginning of section 3.

Transcendental perspective: It is true that the drop of water is an appearance and not a thing in itself.

Langsam's construal of Kant's position can be put as follows:[83]

Empirically true: The drop of water is a thing in itself and not an appearance.

Transcendentally true: The drop of water is an appearance and not a thing in itself.

It might now seem as if the difference is merely notational. What the methodologist accomplishes by means of a perspectival distinction, Langsam gets by detaching "true" from the statement and putting it where the methodologist has "perspective." However, in view of Langsam's coherentistic construal of empirical truth, the accounts differ after all. For the methodologist has a choice: she is free to construe truth in the empirical perspective as correspondence.

Thirdly, one can question the interpretation of Kant's example in A45–46/B62–63 on which much of Langsam's account is based. Kant says that if we rest content with establishing that on the empirical level the raindrops are things in themselves and the rainbow is an appearance, we will think that the raindrops are things in themselves also in the transcendental respect. His point is that without the transcendental distinction there is no reason not to take an empirical thing to be a thing in itself also on the level of philosophical reflection, and then there will be no way to escape all the problems and antinomies that transcendental realism gets entangled in; whereas if we take the transcendental step, we get the advantages of transcendental idealism. But we do not have to take Kant to say that the transcendental status of the raindrop, its being an appearance, amounts to the truth also when the situation is viewed from the strictly empirical perspective. In fact, Langsam's attribution of this claim to Kant blurs two distinct levels, so that the transcendental meta level perspective is applied also in empirical contexts. The skeptical consequence of this is softened by the adoption of the empirical notion of truth in terms of coherence, but Langsam is clear on its second-rate status compared to the transcendent correspondence truth.

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[83] Compare Langsam 2000, 179.

What does Kant actually say about truth?[84] He points out that the nominal definition of truth is “the agreement of cognition with its object” (A58/B82; A237/B296; A820/B848). It is this agreement or correspondence that defines truth for an empirical judgment. The primary locus of truth as correspondence is not in relation to things in themselves; on the contrary it is the correspondence of empirical statements to objects of experience that is relevant. But in order to explain the possibility of true judgments with respect to appearance, the whole transcendental theory of empirical cognition has to be brought in. The transcendental conditions for experience are necessary conditions for the possibility of empirical judgments (true or false). In this way, Kant attempts to provide a meta theory on how truth as correspondence is possible. It is in this light that one should read passages that put truth in the vicinity of coherence.[85] They point out that nature, to which true judgments correspond, is itself a coherent system of experience under rules. Rather than being the definition of truth, coherence characterizes the ensemble of true empirical statements, since these refer to experience which is a coherent system.[86] Coherence is important for epistemic justification, serving as indicator of veridical cognition.[87] Yet truth as such is by definition correspondence, and in the case of empirical cognition what judgments correspond to are objects of experience as based on intuition.

Whether or not there is an element of coherence entwined in Kant’s correspondence view of truth, there is no basis for a partitioning that places correspondence in relation to noumena and

[84] The following sketch owes much to the fine exposition in Nenon 1986.
[85] For instance, in A451/B479 nature as “the connection of appearances necessarily determining one another in accordance with universal laws” is aligned to “the mark of empirical truth”, and in *Prolegomena* (Ak. 4:291) the connecting of intuitions “according to rules for the combination [*Regeln des Zusammenhanges*] of all cognition in one experience” is specified as what makes truth (but also illusion) possible.
[86] See for instance Ak. 4:455: “experience – that is, coherent knowledge of sensible objects in accordance with universal laws” (translation from Paton 1991).
[87] See also A820/B848 on intersubjective agreement as a consequence of truth, and Nenon (1986, 241–243) on this passage; cf. Nenon (1986, 230–231) on the role of coherence.

coherence in the phenomenal realm. Langsam's construal of Kant's theory locates correspondence on the wrong level, because it is conditioned by a metaphysical view of things in themselves which assumes the priority of an unreachable realm, rather than, as in the methodological view, considering this realm as a thought object problematically and abstractly conceived.

A third example of how a metaphysical approach (this time of the two-world type) can lead one astray is provided by Van Cleve's discussion of a question connected to Kant's critique of Leibniz. In the *Amphiboly* chapter, Kant seems to grant that some Leibnizian principles, not applicable to appearances, nevertheless are valid for things in themselves. Among these are the principles that complexes are composed of simples, that relations must have something inner as ground, and that indiscernible objects are identical (A270–289/B326–346). Van Cleve's point is that the two-world theorist can explain this simply by saying that such a principle holds for one kind of object (things in themselves) but not for the other kind (appearances). A two-aspect theorist, on the other hand, must say that the principle is valid for things considered in abstraction from sensibility though not valid for these things as they appear.[88] But this means that objects would consist of simples when considered in one way, but strangely enough have another mereological structure when considered in another way, or that two objects are identical if considered in themselves, but not identical if considered in relation to our sensibility.[89]

Van Cleve's reading is based on the attribution of definite ontological properties to things in themselves, which are taken to be accessible to the metaphysician's inspection, so that it can be known that they have a certain structure, such as simplicity. In its context, however, Kant's claim is that these are principles which Leibniz must hold because he attempts to attain knowledge about things "*through mere concepts*" (A284/B340). It is not his own ontological doctrines on things in themselves that are presented here, it is presuppositions of the Leibnizian attempt to reach noumenal cognition solely by the intellect.

[88] Van Cleve 1999, 149.
[89] Van Cleve 1999, 149–150.

Still, there is something here in need of explanation. Why does Kant say that the simple is the "foundation of the inner of things in themselves" (A274/B330)? How can he claim that for things in themselves, the parts are never conditioned by the whole (whereas the reverse holds with respect to space, which therefore is appearance)?[90] As Kant rather frequently states how we must think that noumena are constituted,[91] it is understandable that commentators have concluded that a certain amount of knowledge, or at least of essentially correct thinking, about abstract properties of things in themselves is after all allowed in the critical philosophy.[92] Kemp Smith points out how close this seems to be to the position of the *Dissertation* that allows pure thought to determine the nature of things as they are.[93]

The key to resolving this difficulty is to take seriously Kant's claim that these structural properties of things in themselves represent the way we have to think when we abstract from the conditions of sensibility. We "distinguish the object represented in general and *in abstracto* from [our] way of intuiting it; thus there remains to us a way of determining it merely through thinking that is, to be sure, a merely logical form without content, but that nevertheless seems to us to be a way in which the object exists in itself (*noumenon*), without regard to the intuition to which our sensibility is limited" (A289/B346).

When we try to attain knowledge of things by mere concepts, what we obtain is, one might say, the mirror image of the structure of our discursivity. Concepts without intuitions are empty. As no object is introduced by mere concepts, some kind of intuition would be required in order to reach cognition. For this to be different from ordinary cognition of appearances, the intuition would have to be intellectual. If we possessed such intuition, we would cognize the noumenon in positive respect. But the attempt to cognize the object purely conceptually, without any intuition at all, which basically is what Kant in the *Amphiboly* ascribes to Leibniz, is doomed merely to reproduce the structural features of concepts.

[90] *Prolegomena*, Ak. 4:286.
[91] For another example, see Ak. 4:507.
[92] Compare Adams 1997, 810–811.
[93] Kemp Smith 2003 [1923], 419.

The particular form that such intuitionless thinking takes must reflect the nature of concepts. We can get some information about Kant's views on this by looking into his theory of concepts as it is expounded in the context of the distinction between synthetic and analytic judgments (B10–13). The distinction is based on a theory of conceptual containment. If the conceptual content of the predicate is contained in the concept of the subject, the judgment is analytic. For instance, the proposition "Gold is a yellow metal" is analytic, because the concepts "yellow" and "metal" are contained in the concept "gold."[94] A concept is usually complex, and to analyze it amounts to finding its content, the concepts by which it is composed. The constituents can in their turn be further analyzed. But, as the *Prize Essay* (1764) explains, though the analysis can continue, it has to reach an end sooner or later: there must be elementary concepts, whether we succeed in pushing the analysis that far or not.[95] For a human being to be able to think it, the concept has to consist of a finite number of subconcepts.

Kant's theory of concepts, which (except for innovations such as the analytic-synthetic distinction) is to a large extent in line with what most German thinkers from Leibniz on accepted,[96] offers a possibility of explaining the particular claims about how we have to think of things in themselves, claims that otherwise seem entirely arbitrary. That things in themselves must be thought of as absolutely simple reflects the simple, elementary concepts with which conceptual analysis terminates. That we have to think of things in themselves on the model of wholes composed of parts, the parts of which are not conditioned by the whole (contrary to how it is with space), also finds its explanation in the theory of concepts. Concepts depend on their subconcepts, but the subconcepts contained in a concept are not dependent on the concept. From "gold" we can infer the subconcept "metal", though from "metal" we can't infer "gold".[97] Thus "metal"

[94] See *Prolegomena*, Ak. 4:267.
[95] See Ak. 2:280: "it is obvious from the start that the analysis will inevitably lead to concepts which are unanalysable."
[96] See De Jong (1995, 620–627) on this tradition, and Parkinson (1995, 201) on Leibniz.
[97] Compare Ak. 2:202: "the consequence is really identical to part of the concept [*einem Teilbegriffe*] of the ground".

does not contain "gold" (although "gold" as regards extension *falls under* "metal"), and in that sense the subconcept is not dependent on the composite concept.

According to Kant's diagnosis of Leibniz' intellectualistic mistake, it is such conceptual relations that are falsely conceived of as pertaining to objects in themselves, so that the structure of conceptual containment is misrepresented as a corresponding substantial property of the noumenon. The same goes for the principle of the identity of indiscernibles. Two concepts which are indiscernible are the same, and this is projected on the metaphysical plane as a substantial principle. But for the cognition we in fact have, which is not solely conceptual but also requires sensibility, the principle loses its force: two objects that are indiscernible as to their conceptual determinations can yet be non-identical, since they can have different spatio-temporal locations.[98]

The kind of projection of conceptual relations on objects of thought delineated here is not the sole type of noumenal thinking that Kant examines. A most important attempt to get from concept to object in itself is by way of the transcendental ideas, which Kant treats in the *Dialectic*. In this case too, it is a question of conceptual relations being hypostasized. The three forms of inference of reason, represented in the categorical, the hypothetical and the disjunctive syllogism (which three forms Kant considers to exhaust the logical theory of inference), generate a dialectical illusion which gives us the thought of noumenal objects attainable by pure reason.[99] These are the ideas of the soul, the world and God, as conceived of in "special metaphysics." I shall not broach the difficult issue of the derivation of ideas from the logical operations of reason, and neither shall I examine the *Paralogism*, *Antinomy* and *Ideal* connected to the three ideas. The ideas point to objects that are illusory from the theoretical standpoint, but Kant nonetheless finds it significant to conceive of such noumena from the practical standpoint. This involves a shift of perspective of the kind thematized by Palmquist. In the concluding section this will be briefly looked into.

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[98] Kant's view depends on his claim that spatial orientation is not possible to express in a purely conceptual way, an issue that can't be pursued here.
[99] See Grier 2001 for a book-length treatment of the theme of transcendental illusion.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS: ETHICAL DIMENSIONS

Is the two-aspect approach adequate for understanding Kant's practical philosophy? In the preface to the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant claims that freedom is the only one of the ideas of reason "the possibility of which we *know* [*wissen*] *a priori*," and we know it because we know that we are bound by the moral law.[100] It might appear as if this involves an addition to our theoretical cognition, in that freedom, the actuality of which could not be established theoretically, is now known via the moral law. But rather than an addition to theoretical cognition, it is an addition of a new perspective beside that of theoretical cognition. In the theoretical perspective, no question of morality arises; only how things are is under consideration. To enter the domain of morality, that is, to switch from the theoretical to the practical perspective, involves a transition from *is* to *ought*.[101] Kant claims that the moral law is present for each person as a consciousness of obligation. This is not to be found in the scientific investigation of nature which is the business of the theoretical perspective.

In order to make it possible to assign the knowing of freedom to the practical perspective, there has to be a way of construing *Wissen* in this domain that keeps it distinct from theoretically attained cognition. For this purpose it is useful to begin with a look at the characterization of *Wissen* in CPR. In A822/B850, Kant distinguishes three "stages" in taking something to be true (*Fürwahrhalten*): having an opinion, believing, and knowing (*Wissen*). In knowing, there is both subjective and objective sufficiency in the reasons for taking something to be true. Objective sufficiency is also called certainty (*Gewissheit*). In regard to pure reason, where no empirical confirmation is possible, there is no point in having an opinion. In such matters of reason as pure mathematics and the principles of morality, "one must know, or else refrain from all judgment" (A823/B851). This shows that there is conceptual room for a practical knowing. Moral principles are counted to what can be known, though they pertain to what ought to be and not to what is. A little later, Kant

[100] Ak. 5:4.
[101] Compare for instance A802/B831.

introduces a distinction between logical and moral certainty, corresponding to the theoretical and the practical perspective respectively (A829/B857). Moral certainty is here said to be "interwoven with my moral disposition" (*Gesinnung*).

Now, as knowing implies certainty, the knowing of moral principles that Kant has made room for must be an instance of moral certainty. There is thus a place in the conceptual landscape of the first *Critique* for a practical knowing, based on the complex moral concept of *Gesinnung*.[102] It is this kind of knowing of the moral law that is the topic of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. This knowing brings with it a knowing of freedom, since freedom is the condition of the possibility of the moral law. As the knowing of freedom is derived from the knowing of moral obligation,[103] it too is a practical certainty, interwoven with moral *Gesinnung*. Kant's use of *Wissen* in his practical philosophy can thus be accommodated in a perspectival interpretation.[104] For instance, it fits with Palmquist's conception of a separate practical standpoint. Likewise, it goes well with Buchdahl's model. In Buchdahl's terms, the attainment of knowledge in moral philosophy is a practical realization of the object as positive noumenon, which is distinct from a metaphysically conceived positive noumenon, in that it is not based on theoretical speculation but on phenomena of a different order, such as moral appraisals and the consciousness of duty.[105]

Keeping the theoretical and the practical perspectives or standpoints apart also helps explaining the seemingly incongruous use of *Wissen* and *Glauben* in the Preface to the second edition of CPR, where Kant famously says that he "had to deny *knowledge* in order to make room for *faith*" (Bxxx). As freedom is clearly included in that of which knowledge is denied (it is mentioned immediately above as a necessary assumption for the practical use of reason), this seems to be a direct contradiction of the claim in the second *Critique* that we know that we are free. As the two texts belong to about the

[102] For an account of *Gesinnung*, see Allison 1990, 136–145.
[103] Though freedom is the "*ratio essendi* of the moral law, the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom" (Ak. 5:4).
[104] Compare Steigleder 2002, 100: "Dieses Wissen […] verbleibt ganz auf der Ebene des Praktischen".
[105] See Buchdahl 1992, 323–325.

same period of composition, the occurrence of such a contradiction is hard to believe. On the present interpretation, the contrast between knowledge and belief in Bxxx is drawn from the point of view of the theoretical domain. What is not theoretical knowledge is considered as belief or faith. From the practical perspective, on the other hand, the consciousness of moral obligation offers a criterion for practical knowledge, which is thereby distinguished from belief. What is known in this perspective does not count as knowledge in the theoretical domain. Knowing that we are free is certainly an addition to our knowledge, generally speaking, but then in terms of existential rather than theoretical knowledge.[106] Kant speaks in the *Critique of Practical Reason* of the "objective reality of a pure concept of the understanding in the field of the supersensible" which is "of only practical applicability and has not the least influence on theoretical cognition."[107] Thus, in the practical perspective the will's causality is represented as a noumenon, the concept of which is the merely formal "thought of an object in general" when viewed theoretically, but which obtains practical signification through the moral law.[108]

In Kant's view, the possibility of admitting two distinct perspectives of the theoretical and the practical, without reducing the latter to a merely fictional "as if"-sphere, presupposes that there is a solution to the antinomy between freedom and causal determination. This opens large questions which will not be entered here. But it should be noted that Kant's solution (according to which the human being in one respect, considered as a natural object, is causally determined and in another respect, considered as noumenon, may be free), explicitly relies on a two-aspect model. It is crucial for Kant's solution that it is the same human being that in one respect is a part of nature and in another respect adopts the standpoint of freedom.[109]

It should also be noted that the perspectival approach does not preclude the metaphysical possibility that there may be more to reality than what is attainable in theoretical cognition. Kant stresses

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[106] Accordingly, Kant suggests that the proper expression is not "*it is* morally certain" but "*I am* morally certain" (A829/B857). (I assume that this can be applied not only in the theological context in which it occurs.)
[107] Ak. 5:56.
[108] Ak. 5:50.
[109] See for instance A540–541/B568–569.

that it must at least be logically possible that the freedom manifested in the practical perspective co-exists with the theoretically known causal determination of nature. If the idea of freedom were to lead to a logical contradiction, there would be no possibility to reasonably entertain it, not even in the guise of an "as if"-freedom.[110] But even though transcendent metaphysical possibilities should not be dogmatically ruled out, they can hardly serve as the starting point for interpreting Kant, as in the two-world interpretation and the metaphysical version of the two-aspect view.

It is sometimes said that in his personal beliefs Kant retained the metaphysical ideas characteristic of the Leibniz-Wolffian tradition.[111] As indicative of this, Westphal (1997, 241) points to the fact that in his critical period Kant continued to teach traditional school metaphysics, using Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* even when a textbook accurately presenting the critical philosophy was available. Now, one has to ask why, if he thought that Baumgarten's metaphysics was correct, Kant didn't say so in his own philosophical works? And if that is just what he did, though in a somewhat ineffective way (which perhaps is what some of the metaphysically oriented interpretations try to show), then why could he not teach his own philosophy, as it then would have harmonized with his personal beliefs?

As for his use of Baumgarten's book in teaching, Kant did not refrain from pointing out faults in it, and he also lectured on quite a few of the tenets of transcendental philosophy, as is readily seen for instance in the *Metaphysik Mrongovius* (1782–1783).[112] The reason why Kant continued to use Baumgarten's book might well be that he thought it difficult for students to understand transcendental philosophy without a knowledge of school philosophy. There is, however, another possible explanation for Kant's conservative teaching policy (disregarding indications in student lecture notes

[110] Compare Ak. 4:456: "if even the thought of freedom contradicts itself or contradicts nature […], it would have to be given up altogether."

[111] Baertschi (2004, 192 and 207–208) shows what prominent role appeals to such alleged personal beliefs played for the German metaphysical school of Kant interpretation associated with M. Wundt and H. Heimsoeth among others.

[112] Ak. 29:747–940; Kant 1997b.

speaking against conservativeness). In his essay *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* (1784), Kant famously distinguishes public and private uses of reason.[113] What is at first bewildering for the modern reader is that Kant here uses the terms "public" and "private" contrary to their current meanings. The use made of reason in a particular civil post or office is private. A clergyman, for example, must express the views of the church which he represents. If, as a scholar, he expresses an opinion divergent from that of his church, nothing can be said against it, as long as he does this in respect of being a scholar who addresses the entire reading public in a free debate. This latter is the public use of reason. As a representative of an organization a person's reasoning remains private, not in the modern sense of expressing individual opinion, but in the sense of being restricted.[114] The official representative is deprived of his free, public use of reason, which can only take place outside of the organization to which he is bound. One might surmise that the same goes for university teachers, which would cast some light on the circumstances described by Westphal. As a university professor, Kant may have considered himself bound to his official – private – role, which consisted in teaching doctrines conformable to the university's. As there were competing approaches to philosophy, it is not easy to say what the official line would have been: Wolffianism, Lockean empiricism, or perhaps even pietism; at any rate, it was definitely not transcendental idealism. As a free writer and scholar, on the other hand, Kant could disseminate his critical philosophy, a philosophy which from the very beginning was conceived of as a defence of reason in its public function.[115]

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[113] See Ak. 8:37–38.

[114] O'Neill (1992, 298) connects "private" to *privatus* in the sense of "deprived."

[115] See O'Neill 1992 on this theme.