

## KANT AND THE VIEW FROM WITHIN

It's been twenty years now since I gave my first paper at a Southwestern Philosophical Society meeting, at one held in Austin. I drove over from here in Houston, where I was a Mellon Fellow at Rice. I mention this only because a successor of mine in that position, Ken Rogerson, became a predecessor of mine in this one as Society president -- meaning, I suppose, that he's been moving a lot faster than I have. We've been moving along the same Kantian path, however, and this provides me with an unusual advantage for this talk: the ability to build it on to an earlier presidential address. In that talk and in a later paper,<sup>1</sup> Ken addressed the ongoing (some would say, interminable) issue of the relation in Kant between appearances and things in themselves, and in doing so laid out many of the positions on this relation that have been and are being taken. Tonight I want to talk, not so much about the relation itself, as about the point or points of view required for proposing a given relation.

Let me give a homey illustration of what I mean by "points of view." My son Ernie, like most ten-year-old boys these days, is fascinated by space - space travel, spacecraft, and anything to do with the Star Wars movie series, provided it is exorbitantly expensive. Spending time in his company has meant getting involved in the adventures of Luke, Han, and Leia, and the evil machinations of Darth Vader -- long before the arrival of what Ernie calls "Ep One." But I've got a question about these movies that never fails to get his goat. Not one of the straight science ones -- "How can they hear the Death Star explode if there's no air in space?" or, "What happens if you emerge from hyperspace where an asteroid or something already is?" It's, "Who's holding the camera?" And I know I've hit home when Ernie doesn't even offer an explanation in Lucas-speak, but just goes: "Dad!"

The reason he doesn't bother to answer is because he knows I know the answer: this is fiction (I hope), and in fiction you don't have to account for the observer's position - not if you take what used to be called the Omniscient Author attitude. The author just knows, that's all - knows the wrath of Achilles, knows it was the best and worst of times, knows Yosarian fell in love with the chaplain. Even in history or religion, we can take this attitude: the author just knows that Gaul is divided into three parts, that God said, "Let there be light." We don't need to account for the author, or the camera; in fact, it's a kind of betrayal of a tacit understanding even to ask. (Hence the "Dad!")

But it's reasonable to ask philosophy to account for itself, and in fact this is one of Kant's major complaints against Leibniz and the "dogmatists."<sup>2</sup> Leibniz claims to know things about the world as an omniscient author would know them, in fact as a (capitalized) Omniscient Author would know them -- and not as a human being like himself could know them, which human knowledge Leibniz characterizes as "confused."<sup>3</sup> It is not, I think, too far-fetched to see in this concern a major factor motivating Kant's distinction between appearances and things in themselves, a distinction he views as a necessary presupposition for making the Transcendental Turn.<sup>4</sup>

I'd like to refer to the omniscient author point of view as the "view from without" (a kind of God's Eye view), and the contrasting position which takes the point of view of the person involved (the human point of view, akin to a first-person narrative) as the "view from within". In these terms, Kant's Copernican Turn consists in abandoning the attempt to view the world and

our knowledge of it from without, and concentrating on what we can know of it from within. Kant's criticism of the dogmatists, then, is that they try un-Critically to know the world from without. This makes it all the worse when Kant himself appears to take the position from without, despite his systematic objections to this viewpoint.

The very first sentences of the Critique of Pure Reason's main text present the problem: "In whatever way and through whatever means a cognition may relate to objects, that through which it relates to them immediately, and which all thinking has as its goal, is intuition. Intuition only occurs, however, insofar as the object is given to us; and<sup>5</sup> this in turn is only possible insofar as the object affects the mind in a certain way. The ability (receptivity) to receive representations through the way we are affected by objects is called sensibility."<sup>6</sup>

The issue here is well known to Kant scholars, and appears to be a Critical version of the mind-body problem plaguing Modern philosophers from Descartes on. In the Kantian literature it known as the Problem of Affection, and the dilemma it presents is difficult enough even without bringing in the question of viewpoint. An object affects the mind; the faculty of intuition takes the resultant sensible manifold, and structures it into spatio-temporal form; this is a singular representation (intuition) which, if it meets certain conditions, is called an object.<sup>7</sup> But how, it is asked, can an object produce a sensible manifold for the intuition to work on, if the object only arises as the result of the intuition working on this manifold? It would seem that the object would have to cause itself, or put another way, would have to exist before it comes into existence.

The Problem of Affection thus seems to turn on a more specific difficulty, one which we may refer to as that of affectional priority. This has led a number of commentators to split the object in question into two objects, the affecting object and the constituted object. The affecting object, on their view, is to be construed as a thing in itself, and the constituted object as an appearance. This interpretation seems to solve the affectional priority difficulty: first the mind-independent object, as a thing in itself, affects the subject, producing the sensible manifold out of which the mind's faculties then constitute the mind-dependent object, the appearance. This latter may be the appearance of the affecting thing in itself, but is nevertheless distinct from it. One problem with this approach, however, is that it seems to say that we know something about things in themselves (i.e. that they affect the mind), contrary to Kant's noumenal-ignorance thesis, that we can know nothing about things in themselves.<sup>8</sup> The best-known quote on this difficulty was penned even before the second edition of the Critique had appeared. "Without this assumption [of affection by the thing in itself]," wrote Jacobi in 1787, "I could not come into the [Kantian] system, and with it I could not remain there."<sup>9</sup> A considerable literature arose concerned with the question of whether the affecting object was to be construed as appearance or as thing in itself;<sup>10</sup> perhaps the most convoluted example of this was Adickes' doctrine of "double affection", which proposed both an in-itself and an as-appearance version of the object, each affecting an in-itself and an as-appearance version of the subject.<sup>11</sup> A more recent interpretation of the relation of appearance to thing in itself holds these to be, not two difference object, but two aspects of the same object. But whatever merits this two-aspect interpretation may have for other areas, it seems unable to resolve the affectional priority difficulty: the time of each aspect would seem to depend on the time of the entity of which they are aspects, so that the in-itself aspect could not precede, and hence not cause, the as-appearance aspect.

I'm afraid I must plead guilty to having contributed to this literature myself on a previous occasion.<sup>12</sup> But I'd like to claim in mitigation that my primary focus was not on the appearance - thing in itself question per se, but only on the affectional priority question. The Problem of Affection, as traditionally stated, is a problem only because the affecting object, if construed as appearance, seems to exist before it exists. My line of interpretation was to try to remove that objection by suggesting that the time-position of an object need not be dependent on the time-position of the mental act of constituting or representing it, and that it is perfectly possible, indeed sometimes inevitable, to locate an object at a time prior to the constitution of its representation by human knowers; dinosaurs are a good example. But whatever the merits of this line of approach, it did not directly deal with the viewpoint aspect of the traditional treatment of the problem. Prima facie at least, the affection of the mind by an object, certainly as thing in itself and arguably also as appearance, must be viewed from without, whereas the constitution of an object can, and perhaps must, be viewed from within.

It's not my intent here to adjudicate among these competing attempts to solve the Problem of Affection, nor to provide a new one. What I want to note is what all the solutions proposed have in common: they begin with the assumption that the viewpoint question must be settled before anything else can be done. We must first decide, that is, whether the affecting object can be viewed from without. If it can be, then a solution to the noumenal ignorance issue is required; if it cannot be, a solution to the self-creation of the appearance is required. Virtually all of the Kantian literature on the problem of affection begins with this question.

Before proposing my own approach, I would like to note a second possibility: a re-interpretation of the term "affection" itself. The affection problem seems to be a variation on the perennial mind-body problem, at least on one side of it: how can a physical body cause a change (impression) in a non-physical mind or soul? Stated this way, the problem could perhaps be avoided by claiming that "affection" is not "causation" in the sense intended. Someone taking this approach could make these points. First, causation as defined by Kant in the Second Analogy is a relation between two states of a single substance.<sup>13</sup> Since the affecting object and the mind are not a single substance, affection cannot be a case of causation in this sense. If affection is taken to be the kind of "causation" which in the Third Analogy is called reciprocity, we would have to ask: what is the reciprocal effect of the mind on the affecting object? For if there is none, affection cannot be causation in the sense of reciprocity either. Second, there are a number of passages where Kant uses the term "affection" in ways that are scarcely compatible with causation in either sense, e.g. B67f., where the mind, or "Gemüth," affects itself (i.e., neither the affecting nor the affected entity is a spatio-temporal entity). And third, even in the passages in which "the object affects the mind," the mind is certainly not an appearance in the usual sense, and on many, perhaps most interpretations, neither is the affecting object; but causation in either the Second or the Third Analogy sense can only apply to appearances.<sup>14</sup>

But whatever can be made of these points, I would like to explore a third approach which I'll call the pedagogic approach, for reasons which I hope will shortly become apparent.

If we ask what lies behind the Problem of Affection, the answer is deceptively simple: passages like the one quoted above from the Transcendental Aesthetic speak of an object

affecting the mind; but the full epistemological theory presented in the first Critique make it very difficult to understand not only how an object can affect the mind, but how we could know it had done so, even if such affection is possible. It certainly seems to require a view from without; but the full theory seems to allow us only a view from within.

A brief sketch of the full theory may help make clear why this is so. If we ask in what human knowledge consists, we find it to consist of a system of statements, statements which ultimately refer to individual objects. The process through which these objects become available for this reference is a complex one. A sensible manifold appears in the mind, and becomes the matter for the process of intuition; the product of this process is a set of objects each determined (or in principle determinable) in spatio-temporal form. These objects are then combined with each other in a specifiable number of ways associated with the Categories to form as far as possible a unity, ultimately the Unity of Apperception. Since no object not so constituted can become available for human knowledge, we can know a priori that all objects of knowledge, and hence all objects of experience (construed as possible knowledge), must conform to space, time, and the Categories. Since it is the faculty of intuition which constitutes spatio-temporal objects from the sensible manifold, and the faculty of understanding (including the categories and the imagination) which unifies them, the resultant objects are dependent on these two mental faculties. Mind-independent objects, by contrast -- things "in themselves" - cannot be elements within this epistemological system.<sup>15</sup> Thus, so one story goes, they cannot be viewed from within, but only from without.

An indication of the path I propose to take can be found in an occasionally acknowledged, but seldom explicated, characteristic of Kantian references to the thing in itself. That is that they seldom refer to things in themselves generically, but rather to one or the other of two species of them. The first is the mind-independent objects which our appearances are of, or to which they refer. The locus classicus is a passage which the idealistically-inclined among Kant scholars (among whom I number myself) find most embarrassing, especially because it is in the preface to the presumably-more-mature second (B) edition of the Critique. Though the Critical philosophy restricts possible speculative cognition to objects of experience, i.e. to appearances, says Kant, "I must be able at least to think the very same objects as things in themselves, even if I cannot cognize them. For otherwise the absurd statement would follow that there is appearance without anything which appears."<sup>16</sup> One class of things in themselves, then, is comprised of those which do, or can, have appearances. Every object which we experience, and presumably every object which we can experience, will have a correlate in this class of things in themselves.

Not much comes of this class of things in themselves, however, since however much we can think of them, we can cognize "nothing at all" of such things. But there is another class of things in themselves which are of much greater import for the Critical philosophy in general. It is the construal of the soul as thing in itself that allows Kant to solve, as he thinks, the dilemma of freedom and determinism; and the construal of God in this way that allows him to attribute purpose to nature. But these two things in themselves are quite different from those of the first class, for to them no appearance corresponds; and furthermore, they are important as the foundation of ethics on the one hand, of the teleology of nature on the other.<sup>17</sup>

I don't want to deny the points of similarity between these two classes of things in themselves; with respect to the Problem of Affection, however, the question is whether they can affect the mind, and give rise to objects as appearances. Since the latter class of things in themselves do not have appearances which (directly) correspond to them, we may concentrate on the former class, that of the things in themselves which appearances allegedly are of.

Both classes of things in themselves have in common, as Kant notes in the passage just cited, that while we cannot cognize them, we can think them. Thinking them is surely a function of the view from within; in the case of the soul and God, we think them for internal reasons, namely to ground freedom and teleology. What exactly our internal reasons are for thinking the first class of things in themselves is somewhat more obscure; is it enough to say we think them only in order that appearances be appearances of something? One might hold that it is enough to say that appearances are synthesized into the Unity of Apperception, and that this is what it means to say that they are of something, i.e. of the world. But I want to suggest that rather than try to find some rationale for viewing this class of things in themselves from within, there is a way of justifying viewing them from without which does not require us, like Jacobi, to quit the Kantian system entirely. And I want to suggest that this same rationale can be applied to at least one other well-known problem of Kantian exegesis.

The passages giving rise to the Problem of Affection, such as the one quoted at the outset of this treatment, read remarkably like a careful variant on the standard Empiricist description of the knowing process. "Our senses," says Locke, "conversant about particular sensible objects, do convey into the mind several distinct perceptions of things, according to those various ways wherein those objects do affect them."<sup>18</sup> Locke, of course, later gives an explanation of how we use the perceptions, the simple ideas of sense, to form ideas of external individual objects, or substances, though acknowledging that this knowledge can be probable only.<sup>19</sup> But he sees no need then to go back and revise his initial statement about the "objects" that affect the senses, and call them "probable" or "putative" objects. And for a very good reason: it would be damn poor pedagogy. The reader starts off "naive"; he needs first of all to grasp the basic starting point of the explanation, and this is most easily done via the view from without. To call the objects "putative" right at the outset would only confuse the issue; once we have provided a fuller treatment, we can re-think the starting point.

The same, I want to claim, is the case with Kant; in fact, much more so. The reader beginning the Critique of Pure Reason will certainly have to be considered naive relative to the poor frazzled wretch who ends it. The former needs to be given, to start with, a simple, "level one" description of the knowing process, one very similar to Locke's. This initial description is indeed a view from without, and to that extent incompatible with the full view. But Kant has an even better reason to begin this way than does Locke: his full mature view of the spatio-temporal object is much more intricate and counter-intuitive (in the non-technical sense) than Locke's is. If the naive reader had to be given the full treatment of the Kantian object as it appears in the Transcendental Aesthetic and Analytic, right in the first paragraph of the text, he would be unlikely ever to reach the second. The level-one description "from without" is indeed ultimately incompatible with the full picture, which for Kant even more than for Locke must be a view "from within"; but pedagogically it is necessary to begin this way.

The approach I am proposing to the Problem of Affection, then, is to abandon the requirement of an initial choice between viewing the affecting object as "from without" or "from within". It is instead to regard the whole description of affection as a pedagogically necessary first-level introduction to the nature of human knowledge. As the Critical theory develops, this description becomes ever less applicable to the ever more sophisticated picture Kant is developing. It is difficult to view affection other than "from without"; but as the distinction of appearances as opposed to things in themselves is developed, it is increasingly difficult to see how the entire apparatus can be viewed otherwise than from within. But we could never have reached this distinction of appearance from thing in itself if we had not begun with the first-level description of the knowing process as based on affection.

This approach, admittedly, bears an unfortunate resemblance to certain aspects of the much-maligned Patchwork Theory, among the maligners of which I have always been proud to be counted: it simply accepts the inconsistency of some parts of the Critique with others. I would like to think, however, that my version gives a better reason for the inconsistency than that of Vaihinger, Adickes, and Kemp Smith: for me, it arises from pedagogical necessity, whereas for them, it comes from the piecemeal composition of the different parts. Another virtue I see in the pedagogical approach is that it provides an explanation for another apparent inconsistency in the Critique, one perhaps less obvious though scarcely less serious.

This concerns the set of passages in §13 (A84-91/B116-24), which hold repeatedly that "objects can indeed [allerdings] appear to us without necessarily relating to the functions of the understanding [the categories]." This claim stands in stark contrast to a number of passages which appear to assert just the opposite, in particular the discussion of figurative synthesis in the B-Deduction's §24. My claim is that this apparent inconsistency too can be resolved by means of the pedagogical approach. Time will not permit me to go into detail here, fortunately for all of us; but the gist of the claim is that the §13 passages state a position that holds good, not for the fully-developed theory, but only for the level of development which has been reached at this point in the Critique. Put another way -- and I take Kant's use of allerdings in this and similar passages as evidence for this reading -- the claim would be that as far as we can see at the moment, i.e. at this stage of the explication, appearances don't need the categories. The next stage -- the Transcendental Deduction -- will show this position to be false, and show us that the categories are needed not only to connect appearances with one another, but also to form appearances in the first place (i.e., not only for synthesis intellectualis, but also for synthesis speciosa). Once again, the inconsistency is revealed as one between different pedagogical levels of the exposition, not within the full version of the theory itself.

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But what, one may well ask, is the status of a theory whose exposition requires a starting point the theory holds to be false? The obvious answer would seem to be, a self-refuting theory. Remember, however, that the starting point is not necessary to the theory, but only to the exposition of the theory. The view from without seems unavoidable in elucidating Kant's theory of knowledge: an object affects the mind, which constitutes the object; and it is this which associates Kant's theory with those of his Empiricist predecessors.<sup>20</sup> Once we have assimilated the full theory, we can discard this initial picture, and work entirely in terms of the view from

within. Jacobi was right after all. Without the thing in itself, he could not, from a pedagogical perspective, enter the Critical philosophy, and with it he could not stay there. What he missed was the obvious solution: once there, he should have simply dropped it.

-- Hoke Robinson, Memphis

## N O T E S

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Rogerson, "Kant and Anti-Realism," Southwest Philosophy Review 12 (1996), pp. 1-12; "Kant's World(s) of Appearances and Things in Themselves," Southwest Philosophy Review 15 (1999), pp. 1-24.

<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason [KdrV], Bxxxv; see also the Amphiboly section and elsewhere. (Kant citations to the Critique of Pure Reason refer as is customary to the pagination of the first (A) and second (B) original editions. All other Kant citations refer to the volume, page and, when necessary, line number of the Akademie-Ausgabe [Ak.], Kants gesammelte Schriften, published by the königlich preußische [now deutsche] Akademie der Wissenschaft, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1901- . Translations are my own, but largely follow the standard ones.)

<sup>3</sup> Leibniz, Discourse §24, §33, and elsewhere. Kant's generalizations may be unfair to Leibniz; but point at issue here is Kant's problem, not Leibniz'.

<sup>4</sup> See KdrV, BXVIII f., n.; A264/B320; A44/B61 f.; and elsewhere.

<sup>5</sup> The second (B) edition inserts here, "for us men at least".

<sup>6</sup> KdrV, A19/B33. Note that this discussion of "affection" is almost identical to the phrasing in the Inaugural Dissertation (Ak. II.392.14, in the definition of sensibility - sensualitas - in §3). Other similar passages: KdrV, B41, A35/B51, A51/B75, etc.; in the Anthropology, Ak. VII.140, .153.

<sup>7</sup> In addition to the above-cited passages, see especially KdrV, A494/B522.

<sup>8</sup> KdrV, A30/B45, A42 ff./B59 ff.(esp.. A44/B62), etc.

<sup>9</sup> Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, David Hume über den Glauben oder Idealismus und Realismus (1787), in Jacobi, Werke, Vol. II (Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer d. Jüng., 1815, rpt. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976), p 301f.

<sup>10</sup> In 1953, Herbert Herring attempted to survey all the positions and variants on this question that had been advanced by that time (Herring, Das Problem der Affektion bei Kant, Kant-Studien Ergänzungsheft 67 (1953)); the number was substantial then, and many more have been proposed since.

<sup>11</sup> Erich Adickes, Kants Lehre von der doppelten Affektion unseres Ich als Schlüssel zu seiner Erkenntnistheorie (Tübingen: J. C. Mohr, 1929). This is somewhat unfair to Adickes' sophisticated treatment, but since the issue is peripheral to this paper, I will not deal with it here (nor later either, for that matter).

<sup>12</sup> Hoke Robinson, "Two Perspectives on Kant's Appearances and Things in themselves, Journal of the History of Philosophy 32 (1994), pp. 411-441.



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<sup>13</sup> More specifically, Kant labels the "Principle of Temporal Succession according to the Law of the Connection of Cause and Effect" as, "All alterations occur according to the law of the connection of Cause and Effect," and claims to have already shown in the First Analogy that "all appearances of temporal succession are altogether only alterations, i.e. a successive being and nonbeing of the determinations of the substance that persists throughout."

<sup>14</sup> This approach would have to contend with the difficulty that Kant in fact uses "causality" in the Dialectic and elsewhere as a relation between entities which are not both appearances, e.g. in his discussion of freedom: KdrV, A445/B473, passim.

<sup>15</sup> KdrV, Bxviii-xxi; A42ff./B59ff.; etc.

<sup>16</sup> KdrV, Bxxvi., f.

<sup>17</sup> It might be objected that there are appearances of the soul and of God: that the body, or at the very least its actions, are appearances of the soul, and that nature generally (the world) is in a sense an appearance of God. But in both cases, these appearances are also appearances of things in themselves in the first sense, whereas they are appearances of the soul and of God in quite a different sense.

<sup>18</sup> John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book II, Ch. I, §3. §5: "External objects furnish the mind with the ideas of sensible qualities...."

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, Book II, Ch. XXIII; Book II Ch. 31 § 8; Book IV ch. IV § 11ff.

<sup>20</sup> See Henry Allison, Kant's Transcendental Idealism (New Haven: Yale, 1982), p. 16.