

The Non-spatiality of Things in Themselves for Kant*

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I. IN THE *Transcendental Aesthetic* Kant argued from the a priori nature of our representation of space (and time) to its empirical reality and transcendental ideality. By the "empirical reality" of the representation of space Kant meant its "objective validity" with respect to "outer appearances" or objects of human experience. "Transcendental ideality," on the other hand, refers to its lack of objective validity with respect to the same objects considered as they are in themselves. Appearances, in other words, really are in space, but things in themselves are not. As Kant himself expressed this result:

Our exposition therefore establishes the *reality*, that is, the objective validity, of space in respect of whatever can be presented to us outwardly as object, but also at the same time the *ideality* of space in respect of things when they are considered in themselves through reason, that is, without regard to the constitution of our sensibility. We assert, then, the *empirical reality* of space, as regards all possible outer experience; and yet at the same time we assert its *transcendental ideality*—in other words, that it is nothing at all, immediately we withdraw the above condition, namely, its limitation to possible experience, and so look upon it as something that underlies things in themselves. (A28/B44)

Kant's whole line of argument in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* has been subject to innumerable objections. My present concern, however, is only with one particular objection that can be regarded as classical, namely the neglected alternative charge. This objection was explicitly raised by Trendelenburg in the nineteenth century, and it formed the basis of an extended and acrimonious debate with Kuno Fischer, the details of which have been recorded by Vaihinger.¹ Trendelenburg's main point was that Kant's argument does not rule out the possibility of space being subjective and objective at the same time. As he expressed the matter: "Even if we concede the argument that space and time are demonstrated to be subjective conditions which, in us, precede perceptions

* This is a revised version of a paper which I initially presented at the Eastern Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association in Washington, D.C., December, 1974. The bulk of the revisions are due to my efforts to deal with some of the criticisms offered by my commentator, Professor Richard Aquila, and to make use of the results of a recent and important book by Gerold Prauss, *Kant und das Problem der Dinge an sich*, (Bonn, 1974), which was not available to me at the time that I wrote the initial version of this paper. Although Prauss does not deal with the specific issue of this paper, his results tend to strongly support my analysis.

¹ Hans Vaihinger, *Commentar zur Kant's Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Leipzig, 1892), II, 134–151.

and experience, there is still no word of proof to show that they cannot at the same time be objective forms."²

To be "objective forms" here obviously means to pertain to things in themselves. Trendelenburg's objection is thus that, even if, for the sake of argument, one accepts Kant's claims concerning the apriority and subjectivity of our representation of space, it is still perfectly possible that space itself or spatial relations pertain to things in themselves. The same point has also been put succinctly by Kemp Smith who writes: "Kant recognizes only two alternatives, either space as objective is known *a posteriori* or being an *a priori* representation it is subjective in origin. There exists a third alternative, namely that although our representation of space is subjective in origin, space is itself an inherent property of things in themselves."³

However, although Trendelenburg's formulation decisively influenced all subsequent treatments of this issue, including Kemp Smith's, he was far from the first Kant critic to raise this line of objection. This is because the third alternative, which he and Kemp Smith suggest Kant failed to consider, is no merely logical possibility, but expresses the essence of the Leibnizian position which Kant attacks in the *Transcendental Aesthetic*. We thus find that various forms of this objection were already raised against Kant by some of his more astute contemporaries. Intimations of this are already to be found in the response to the Inaugural Dissertation by both Lambert⁴ and Mendelssohn,⁵ but apparently the first to develop it explicitly was Hermann Andreas Pistorius. According to Vaihinger, Pistorius articulated two distinct versions of the third hypothesis which correspond to two possible interpretations of the Leibnizian monadology. The first and stronger thesis holds both that space is a form of human apprehension and that things in themselves actually are in space (this corresponds to the realistic interpretation of the monadology). The second and weaker thesis maintains that, while things in themselves (monads) are not actually in space, the relations between these things are analogous to the spatial relations between phenomena. The realm of things in themselves or monads thus contains an analogue of space (this corresponds to the idealistic interpretation of the monadology).⁶

A significant development of this line of attack was first formulated by the astute, yet almost totally forgotten critic of Kant, J. G. Maass.⁷ Unlike Pistorius's, Maass's criticism was purely internal. His concern was not to articulate various versions of the possibility which Kant allegedly overlooked, but simply to show that Kant's failure to acknowledge the third alternative is inconsistent with the critical doctrine of the unknowability of things in themselves. Maass's point, which was later reiterated by Kemp Smith,⁸ is that this latter doctrine forbids Kant from moving from the claim that space

² Adolf Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen* (Leipzig, 1862), p. 163; cited and translated by M. J. Scott-Taggart, "Recent Work on the Philosophy of Kant," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, III, 3 (July, 1966), 184.

³ Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1962), pp. 113-114.

⁴ See the letter from J. H. Lambert to Kant of October 13, 1770, *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by the *Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1924), X, 103-110.

⁵ See the letter from Moses Mendelssohn to Kant, December 25, 1770, *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, X, 113-116.

⁶ Vaihinger, *Commentar*, II, 146-147.

⁷ For a discussion of Maass see my *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), esp. pp. 34-36, 40-45.

⁸ Kemp Smith, *A Commentary*, p. 114.

and time are forms of sensibility and appearance to the claim that they do not pertain to things in themselves. To know that things in themselves are not in space is, after all, to know something about them.⁹

In his response to Trendelenburg, Fischer pointed out that, far from ignoring this possibility, Kant had already affirmed it in the Inaugural Dissertation wherein he allegedly proclaimed that space "ist zugleich 'Grundbegriff' in uns und Realität ausser uns."¹⁰ Fischer is here referring to Kant's affirmation of the empirical reality of space, that is, its reality with respect to appearances, a doctrine which Kant had in part already developed in the Inaugural Dissertation. It seems obvious, however, that this response fails to meet both Trendelenburg's objection, which concerned the possible spatiality of things in themselves, not appearances, and the objection of Maass and Kemp Smith concerning the appropriateness of claims regarding things in themselves. We therefore should not be too surprised to find that this line of objection, in one form or another, has been accepted as decisive, even by those who are ignorant of its Leibnizian roots. Indeed, as a recent commentator has proclaimed: "History has so far given the verdict to Trendelenburg. Despite Fischer's advocates including such men as Arnoldt and Caird the final statements on the controversy have been those of Vaihinger and Kemp Smith so that today Trendelenburg's position is almost that of an unquestionable truth."¹¹

II. The purpose of this paper is to question this almost "unquestionable truth." By means of a reconsideration of Kant's argument and his distinction between things in themselves and appearances, I shall try to show (1) that, quite apart from the question of its overall validity, Kant's argument does at least succeed in ruling out the third alternative in either of its forms; and (2) that, Maass and Kemp Smith to the contrary, the contention that things in themselves are not in space or time is perfectly consistent with the critical doctrine of the unknowability of things in themselves.

Let us begin with a very brief review of Kant's well known argument. Kant prefaces his account by raising the metaphysical question of the nature of space, and he offers three possible answers which presumably exhaust the alternatives: (1) Space is some kind of real existence (the Newtonian view); (2) Space is a system of relations holding between real existences, that is, between things in themselves or things as they are apart from the manner in which we perceive them (the Leibnizian view); (3) Space belongs merely to the form of human intuition, and "therefore to the subjective constitution of the mind, apart from which (it) could not be ascribed to anything whatsoever" (the Kantian view) (A23/B37-38).

Having raised the question and outlined the possible answers, Kant immediately embarks upon an analysis of the nature of our *representation* of space. This is the task of the "Metaphysical Exposition" which argues that this representation is both a priori and intuitive. In the "Transcendental Exposition," added in the second edition, he notes that the peculiar nature of this representation implies its subjective origin, and affirms that this explanation, and this explanation alone, "makes intelligible the *possibility* of geometry, as a body of a priori synthetic knowledge" (B41). Finally, in the

⁹ See the *Philosophisches Magazin*, ed. by J. A. Eberhard (Halle, 1789), reprinted by Culture and Civilization (Brussels, 1968), I, 120-123, and *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy*, pp. 34-35.

¹⁰ Kuno Fischer, *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie*, vol. III, *Immanuel Kant und seine Lehre*, 3rd ed. (Heidelberg, 1889), Part One, p. 282.

¹¹ Scott-Taggart, "Recent Work on the Philosophy of Kant," p. 184.

"Conclusions from the above Concepts," Kant arrives at his ontological result. Still dealing with the representation of space, he first asserts that this "does not represent any property of things in themselves, nor does it represent them in their relation to one another." From this he feels entitled to infer that "Space is nothing but the form of all appearances of outer sense" (A26/B42). Moreover, since it is "nothing but" this form, it does not pertain to things in themselves. Thus, although "empirically real" or valid for all objects of human experience, it is also "transcendentally ideal" or not applicable to things in themselves.

The argument, which moves from the nature of our representation of space to the ontological status of that which is represented thereby, is roughly of the *reductio* form. Its nerve is the affirmation of the a priori nature of our representation of space, together with the general connection between apriority and subjectivity, viz., the claim "that we can know *a priori* of things only what we ourselves put into them" (BXVIII). If space were a real existent or a set of relations holding between real existents (things in themselves), then our representation of space could only be obtained through experience, and it would therefore be a posteriori. But it has already been shown that our representation is a priori. Spatiality, therefore, cannot be attributed to things in themselves, whether this be construed in the Newtonian or Leibnizian manner. There is, however, only one alternative left, viz., the Kantian contention that space is merely a form of human sensibility and of appearances. The a priori status of the representation of space thus implies the transcendental ideality of that which is represented.¹²

An analysis of some of the basic terms involved in this argument makes evident the incompatibility of the Leibnizian and the Kantian theories, and therefore shows that no mediating position, which would really be a fourth rather than a third alternative, is possible. Kant's doctrine is clear: if space is a form of sensibility and hence of appearance, then it cannot pertain to things in themselves, i.e., to things as thought through pure reason or noumena.¹³ Such a combination is, to be sure, perfectly possible for a Leibnizian, but this is only because he construes the distinction between a phenomenon, or an object qua sensibly apprehended, and a noumenon, or an object qua intellectually grasped, as the distinction between an obscure and a clear and distinct thought of one and the same entity (the monad). Against this, however, Kant notes:

The concept of sensibility and of appearance would be falsified, and our whole teaching in regard to them would be rendered empty and useless, if we were to accept the view

¹² Edward Caird, *The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, 2nd ed. (Glasgow, 1909), I, 282-284, endeavors to answer Trendelenburg by reiterating this line of argument. His basic point is that the apriority of space and time is inconsistent with our view of them as conditions or attributes of things in themselves. The argument which he adduces for this claim, however, is that it would involve pre-established harmony, and this, of course, is precisely the Leibnizian position! Moreover, he completely fails to deal with the issue of the consistency of the denial of the non-spatiality of things in themselves with critical doctrine of their unknowability.

¹³ For the purposes of this essay, I am equating *Erscheinung* with *Phenomenon* and *Ding an sich* with *Noumenon*. This is, doubtless, not strictly speaking correct, especially since Kant at times explicitly distinguishes between *Erscheinung* and *Phenomenon* (cf. A20/B34, A249 and the long discussion of this issue by Gerold Prauss in his *Erscheinung bei Kant; Ein Problem der "Kritik der reinen Vernunft"* (Berlin, 1971). Nevertheless, although we further grant that *Noumenon* and *Ding an sich* have different senses, the former being an epistemological and the latter an ontological concept, they have the same reference. That which would be known as noumenon, i.e., in a purely intelligible manner, would be a *Ding an sich*. Moreover, Kant himself generally uses these as equivalents (cf. B310, A256/B312, A259/B315, A288/B344-345).

that our entire sensibility is nothing but a confused representation of things, containing only what belongs to them in themselves, but doing so under an aggregation of characters and partial representations that we do not consciously distinguish. For the difference between a confused and a clear representation is merely logical, and does not concern the content. (A43/B60–61)

Moreover, Kant goes on to add:

The philosophy of Leibniz and Wolff, in thus treating the difference between the sensible and the intelligible as merely logical, has given a completely wrong direction to all investigations into the nature and origin of our knowledge. This difference is quite evidently transcendental. It does not merely concern their (logical) form, as being either clear or confused. It concerns their origin and content. It is not that by our sensibility we cannot know the nature of things in themselves in any save a confused fashion; we do not apprehend them in any fashion whatsoever. If our subjective constitution be removed, the represented object, with the qualities which sensible intuition bestows upon it, is nowhere to be found, and cannot possibly be found. For it is this subjective constitution which determines its form as appearance. (A44/B61–62)

Everything thus depends on keeping to the transcendental distinction between phenomena or appearances and noumena or things in themselves. As is well known, however, Kant construed this distinction in two senses, and thus in effect posited two different conceptions of the thing in itself.¹⁴ At times he treated this distinction as one between two species of objects, viz., sensible objects, or objects of possible experience, and “intelligible entities,” or objects other than those of possible experience.¹⁵ This distinction reflects the earlier doctrine of the Inaugural Dissertation wherein Kant posited two kinds of entity, phenomena and noumena, as the respective objects of sensible and intellectual cognition.¹⁶ In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant, of course, denied the possibility of any theoretical knowledge of intelligible entities. Nevertheless, for reasons which stem mainly from his moral philosophy, and which we need not consider here, he insisted upon granting such entities at least a problematic status.

For the most part, however, when the *Critique* distinguishes between appearances and things in themselves, it is not referring to two kinds of entity but to two points of view from which one and the same entity, the empirical object, can be considered. Indeed, as Gerold Prauss has pointed out, Kant usually does not use expressions such as “Ding an sich,” “Ding an sich selbst” or “Sache an sich,” etc., but rather locutions of the form “Ding” or “Sache an sich selbst betrachtet.”¹⁷ Moreover, the short forms, which occur relatively rarely in Kant’s works and very frequently in the secondary literature, can be generally seen merely as abbreviations of the long forms.¹⁸

What then are the two points of view from which the empirical object is to be con-

¹⁴ Bernard Rousset, *La Doctrine Kantienne de l'Objectivité* (Paris, 1967), p. 167, distinguishes between the two senses of the thing in itself discussed below. He calls the first sense “l'en soi transcendant” and the second “l'en soi immanent” or “transcendental.”

¹⁵ Cf. *Critique of Pure Reason*, B308–309, A287–288/B344–345, A741/B769; *Prolegomena*, *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, IV, 350; and most clearly, Kant's letter to Mendelssohn, August 16, 1783, *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, X, 346.

¹⁶ *De Mundi Sensibilis atque Intelligibilis Form et Principiis*, § 4, *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, II, 292.

¹⁷ Prauss, *Kant und das Problem der Dinge an sich*, p. 20.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

sidered if the genuine or transcendental distinction is not to be lost? Once again Kant's answer is clear. Insofar as the object is considered in relation to the forms of human sensibility, space and time, through which alone it can be given to the human mind in experience, it is considered as an appearance or phenomenon. Insofar as it is viewed apart from this relation to the forms of sensibility it is considered as a thing in itself or noumenon. As Kant himself expresses it: "If by 'noumenon' we mean a thing so far as it is *not an object of our sensible intuition*, and so abstract from our mode of intuiting it, this is a noumenon in the negative sense of the term." And later: "The doctrine of sensibility is likewise the doctrine of the noumenon in the negative sense, that is, of things which the understanding must think without this reference to our mode of intuition, therefore not merely as appearances but as things in themselves" (B307).

We cannot here go into the question of why Kant thought that it was possible or important to consider things in this fashion, or how this conception relates to the first conception of the thing in itself. Any adequate solution of these problems requires a full scale treatment of the problem of the nature and function of the thing in itself in the Kantian philosophy. Fortunately, however, this is not necessary to clear up the specific question of the non-spatiality of things in themselves. In order to resolve this question, which is certainly relevant to the larger issue, we have only to combine the claim that space is a form of human sensibility with the two conceptions of the thing in itself just delineated.

The thing in itself in the first sense, the problematic intelligible entity, of which God is undoubtedly the chief example, is by definition non-sensible.¹⁹ It is therefore also obviously non-spatial. Interestingly enough, Kant uses this basic line of argument against the Newtonians. He does so by pointing out that if one denies that space and time are forms of sensibility, and affirms instead that they are conditions of all existence, then one will be forced to admit that they are also conditions of divine existence, an obvious absurdity.²⁰ Thus, far from allowing for the possibility that things in themselves, construed as intelligible entities, might possibly be spatial, Kant viewed it as one of the strengths of this theory of space and time that it repudiated such absurd and theologically dangerous doctrines.

The thing in itself in the second and most common sense is the empirical object considered as it is apart from its relation to the forms of human sensibility through which it appears. Kant deals with the question of the possible non-spatiality (or temporality) of things in themselves construed in this sense in the *Prolegomena*. His concern there is to show that such a claim is self-contradictory and to this end he reflects:

I must not say of what I think in time or in space, that in itself, and independent of these my thoughts, it exists in space and time, for in that case I should contradict myself; because space and time, together with the appearances in them are nothing existing in themselves and outside of my representations, but are themselves only modes of representation, and it is palpably contradictory to say that a mere mode of representation exists without our representation.²¹

¹⁹ Cf. *Critique of Pure Reason*, A741/B769, where Kant describes God and immaterial souls as *Sachen an sich selbst*.

²⁰ *Critique of Pure Reason*, B71.

²¹ *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, IV, 341-342; cited from Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, trans. by P. Carus, revised by Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), p. 89.

Unfortunately, this argument, as it stands, can be easily rejected by the proponent of the third alternative as question begging. The obvious difficulty with it is that it turns on the claim that space and time are *only* modes of representation, which is precisely the point at issue. The proponent of this third alternative acknowledges the results of the *Transcendental Aesthetic* to the extent that he is willing to admit, at least for the sake of argument, that space and time are forms of sensibility. What he refuses to acknowledge, however, is that Kant has succeeded in establishing that they are nothing more than such forms. Moreover, this is required if one is to claim categorically that things considered as they are in themselves are neither spatial nor temporal. Nevertheless, Kant's argument can be reformulated so as to avoid this pitfall. Such a reformulation is based upon an analysis of the conception of the thing in itself in the second sense. Given this conception, together with the positive result of the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, we can say that the claim that things considered as they are in themselves might possibly be spatial is manifestly incoherent. Properly construed, it reduces to the claim, or perhaps suggestion, that things in themselves, by which is *meant* things considered apart from all relation to the conditions of human sensibility, might still somehow be subject to these conditions. This is an obvious contradiction. The point is simply that one cannot consistently maintain *both* that space is a form of human sensibility *and* that it pertains to the nature of things considered as they are in themselves. One cannot do this because to consider things as they are in themselves (in the Kantian sense) means precisely to consider them apart from their relation to human sensibility and its a priori conditions. Finally, it should be noted that such an argument is not question begging. It rests partly on the claim that space is a form of human sensibility, not on the claim that it is only such a form, and partly on a stipulation concerning what is meant by considering things as they are in themselves. Since the third alternative charge allegedly points to an internal contradiction in Kant's account, both of these points must be granted in order even to raise the objection in the first place.

At this point it might be objected that the above argument suffices to repudiate the strong form of the third alternative, which holds that things in themselves might possibly be in space, but that it does not really eliminate the weaker, and genuinely Leibnizian thesis, that the relations between things in themselves (noumena or monads) are analogous to, but not identical with, the spatial relations between phenomena. Surely, this alternative has not been shown to be incoherent. In fact, it seems to be a possibility which Kant is in no position to deny. In order to deal properly with this possibility we must consider concretely what such an analogy would mean in Kantian terms. The starting point of this consideration is a crucial, but previously neglected aspect of Kant's discussion of the representation of space, viz., its intuitive character. The whole point of Kant's demonstration that this representation is an intuition and not a general concept was to show that spatial relations cannot be constructed out of, or reduced to, conceptual or logical relations.²² But things in themselves or noumena, for both Leibniz and Kant, are subject to purely conceptual or logical relations. The claim that there might possibly be some analogy between the spatial relations governing phenomena and the conceptual relations governing noumena thus reduces to the claim that there might possibly be some analogy between two irreducible and completely heterogeneous sets

²² This is argued by Moltke Gram, *Kant, Ontology, and the Apriori* (Evanston, Illinois, 1968), pp. 30–42, and my *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy*, pp. 71–72.

of relations. If such a contention escapes the charge of incoherence or self-contradiction, it does so only by virtue of its utter vacuity.²³

But in showing how Kant can reject the third alternative, and affirm the non-spatiality of things in themselves, have we not arrived at the very un-Kantian conclusion that we can make true, albeit negative, judgments about things in themselves? Would not, as Maass and Kemp Smith assume, a complete agnosticism with regard to the spatiality or lack thereof of things in themselves be the authentically critical stance? The problem with this objection is that it treats Kant's claim about the non-spatiality of things in themselves as if it were a synthetic judgment about the true nature of such things. Our analysis of Kant's argument, however, has revealed that this result follows from the analysis of the concept of a thing in itself. This is equally obvious whether the thing in itself is taken as a problematic intelligible entity or as the same object as the appearance, considered apart from the forms under which it appears. In both cases we have a merely analytic claim about what reason must think with regard to such things, and not a synthetic claim about their real nature or existence. According to Kant, knowledge of an object requires that the object be given to the mind in intuition; and synthetic judgments of theoretical reason involve the predication of concepts of intuitions.²⁴ We have, however, no intuition of these non-spatial things or things in themselves. Thus, the merely analytic claim that our concept of a thing in itself is not a concept of a thing of which one can, without contradiction, affirm spatial (or temporal) predicates, does not provide us with any genuine knowledge of such objects.

III. Yet it might seem that this analysis is inadequate, and that, despite everything that has been asserted, Kant is still open to the neglected alternative charge. Granted, this perhaps cannot be meaningfully directed against the first category of things in themselves, the problematic intelligible entities. Such entities, as we have seen, are clearly non-spatial, and the key question with regard to them is not so much what they are like but whether they exist. It is otherwise, however, with the second category of things in themselves, that is, with empirical things considered as they are in themselves. Our interpretation of Kant's position rests heavily on his use of *betrachten* and its equivalents. In fact, the entire argument seems to reduce to the assertion that in considering a thing as it is in itself, one is considering it as it is apart from its relation to the forms of human sensibility, and hence apart from its spatial features. But, the critic might well ask, does it follow from the fact that we *consider* things in themselves to lack these features, that they *really do* lack them? Has not Kant, by reasoning in this manner, clearly violated his own critical principles, and provided us with a particularly egregious example of transcendental illusion? In order to clarify this objection let us pose an obvious counter-example. We can certainly consider an empirical object apart from its color, that is, we can abstract from its color so as to reflect on its size, shape, etc. This is the way in which a mathematician qua mathematician might treat a physical object. But simply because we can consider a thing apart from its color, we have no right to conclude, nor would we wish to conclude, that it really is not colored. This seems, however, to be precisely what Kant is doing when he denies that things considered as they are in themselves are spatial.

²³ Kant himself clearly suggests the meaninglessness of such assertions in the *Prolegomena*, *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, IV, 289–290.

²⁴ Cf. Gram, *Kant, Ontology*, pp. 43–82, and my *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy*, pp. 46–75.

This line of argument is tempting but radically misconceived. Nevertheless, it is well worth examining precisely because the misconception which it embodies is not only widely spread but also suggested by some of Kant's own discussions of the topic. The root of this misconception can be located in the hypostitization of the thing in itself. This occurs whenever one construes the distinction between things in themselves and appearances in an empirical or quasi-empirical fashion, and thus conceives the relation between the two in terms of the model of a physical object and its mental representation.²⁵ Given this model, it is perfectly natural to attempt to distinguish between the thing in itself as it "really is" and as we consider it. Construed in the transcendental sense, however, the thing as it is in itself simply *is* the empirical object, considered apart from its cognitive relation to the human mind. Prauss has put this crucial point quite nicely when he notes that, when construed transcendently, the phrase "an sich selbst" in "Ding an sich selbst betrachtet" and its equivalents functions adverbially rather than adjectivally.²⁶ As such it modifies "betrachtet" and not "Ding," and this in turn means that it characterizes *how* one considers things in transcendental reflections and not *what kind* of things one considers. Now, we can see from this that the consideration of things in this transcendental manner is a consideration of things as they *really are*, that is, as they are apart from their relation to the human mind and its cognitive forms. There is thus no sense to the suggestion that things as they are in themselves might not be as we consider them. The unique and perplexing feature of this mode of consideration is that it can yield no knowledge of the object, because it deliberately abstracts from those conditions in terms of which knowledge is alone possible for the human mind.²⁷ This very abstraction, however, does at least allow one meaningfully to deny to the object *per se* all of those features which only pertain to it in virtue of its cognitive relation to the human mind.

In conclusion, it is necessary to reiterate the limited aims of this paper. We have not attempted to justify Kant's claim that space is a form of human sensibility and hence appearances; nor have we really endeavored critically to evaluate the transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves. Rather, we have simply tried to show that, given the claim that space is a form of sensibility, and given the transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves (which is opposed both to the "logical" distinction attributed to the Leibnizians and to the common empirical distinction which Kant himself uses at times), Kant is perfectly justified in claiming that things considered as they are in themselves are non-spatial. Nevertheless, although limited, this conclusion is not insignificant; for it serves to help expose some prevalent misconceptions of Kant's position, and to explain how Kant can make certain claims about things in themselves without violating the central critical principle that our knowledge is limited to objects of possible experience.

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²⁵ Cf. Prauss, *Kant und das Problem der Dinge an sich*, esp. pp. 139ff. Prauss develops at length the distinction between the empirical and the transcendental sense of the *Ding an sich* for Kant and shows how many of the errors in the interpretation of Kant's doctrine are based on a hypostitization which in turn is due to a failure adequately to distinguish between the empirical and the transcendental senses of this conception.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

²⁷ Kant seems to have drawn the logical consequence of this in the *Opus Postumum* where he defines *das Ding an sich selbst betrachtet* as a cipher, or *ens rationes* and as an "= X ." Such formulations occur throughout *Convolut VII, Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, XXII, 1-131.