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ARTICLE

KANT'S ONE WORLD: INTERPRETING
'TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM'

Lucy Allais

I

'Kant scholarship has yet to have been overcome by consensus' (Ameriks 1992: 329). Interpretations of Kant's transcendental idealism vary so wildly that sometimes it scarcely seems possible that they are all interpretations of the same philosophical account of the relation between mind and world, put forward by the same philosopher, largely in one book. Variations include seeing the doctrine as making bizarre-sounding metaphysical claims such as that reality consists of supersensible, non-spatio-temporal entities, and that physical objects as we know only seem to exist, and are really just mental entities (P.F. Strawson 1966: 238), as distinguishing between the relational and non-relational properties of things, and claiming that we can only have knowledge of the former (Langton 1998), and as the trivial sounding claim that in order to be known objects must satisfy certain conditions of knowledge (Ameriks 1982: 3¹). Kant's transcendental idealism is at the centre of his critical philosophy, so this lack of consensus is extremely problematic. Beyond Kant commentators, the situation is even worse, and transcendental idealism is generally regarded as mysterious and obscure. My aim here is to show that a coherent version of transcendental idealism is unambiguously presented in the first *Critique*.

Traditionally, interpretations have been divided into those which see Kant as some kind of phenomenalist and those which deny this, although even within these groups there is no consensus. The first aim of this paper is to show that there is overwhelming reason for rejecting any kind of phenomenalist interpretation of transcendental idealism. However, phenomenalist interpreters have made important criticisms of their opponents' views, showing that they tend to trivialize Kant's position, and the second aim of this paper is to give an overview of these criticisms, which gives us a set of conditions that any adequate interpretation of transcendental

¹ This is not a view Ameriks puts forward here, but one he discusses in a survey of literature on the subject.

idealism must meet. Pointing out problems with phenomenalist interpretations is insufficient on its own: to make the case conclusive requires a coherent alternative, and sketching a coherent alternative interpretation is the third aim of this paper. While phenomenalist interpretations are too strongly idealist, the opposing epistemic interpretations are not idealist enough, and I argue that there is middle ground. I do not discuss Kant's arguments for his position at all, nor do I try to develop other arguments to show that the position is true – my aim is simply to understand transcendental idealism.

Kant's transcendental idealism can be divided into three central claims: (1) Kant's *distinction* between things as they appear to us and things as they are in themselves; (2) Kant's *humility* (Langton's (1998) term) – the claim that we do not and cannot have knowledge of things as they are in themselves; (3) Kant's *idealism* – the claim that things as they appear to us are mind-dependent, in some sense and to some extent. Strictly speaking, for Kant, it is only the appearances of things that are transcendently ideal and empirically real, but since Kant calls his position as a whole transcendental idealism, I simply refer to Kant's idealism concerning appearances.

Note: it is sometimes thought that transcendental idealism is a view that is primarily or exclusively about space and time.² However, even in the *Aesthetic*, where Kant is arguing for the transcendental ideality of space and time, he immediately moves on to the more general claim that 'all our intuition is nothing but the representation of appearance; that 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' (A42/B59), and in the *B* preface he claims that the doctrine proved in the *Critique* is that 'we can have cognition of no object as a thing in itself, but only insofar as it is an object of sensible intuition, i.e., an appearance' (Bxxvi, see also Bxx, A190/B235, A490-1/B518-9, A493/B521). My concern is with the generalized doctrine, which of course includes space and time, and which claims that we cannot know things as they are in themselves, and can only know their (mind-dependent) appearances.

II

II.1

The main traditional conflict in interpretations of transcendental idealism is between so called 'two-world' and 'one-world' interpretations of Kant's notorious distinction between things as they are in themselves and things as they appear to us. This classic dispute is exemplified by P.F. Strawson (1966)

² See, for example, Guyer (1987).

and Allison (1983), although of course it precedes them.³ The 'two-world' interpretation has a long and distinguished history, dating to the very first review of the *Critique* (Feder/Garve 2000 [1782]); at one point it was called standard, often by its opponents,⁴ and it may be dominant historically, but in the last half century there has been a proliferation of 'one-world' interpretations.⁵ Despite this, as noted, the literature has been underwhelmed by consensus even among those who generally support a 'one-world' view, and there have been prominent recent attacks on 'one-world' views, by, amongst others, Guyer (1989, 1987) and Van Cleve (1999). I argue here that a 'two-world' interpretation of Kant's distinction can be completely rejected, but that some of the criticisms of 'one-world' views contain important insights, which must be respected by any convincing interpretation of transcendental idealism.

The traditional 'two-world' camp sees Kant's appearances and his things as they are in themselves as *different kinds of entities* that are in some kind of (unknown) relation to each other, and is generally committed to understanding appearances in terms of phenomenalism, as mental or virtual entities.⁶ However, some of the views I include under the 'two-world' banner do not assert the existence of two distinct kinds of *entity*: the purpose of (some) intentional object and adverbial interpretations is to keep appearances in the mind, without making them mental *objects*. For example, Van Cleve rejects 'one-world' views, and interprets Kant as a kind of phenomenalist, but denies that this involves positing an extra set of entities (Van Cleve 1999: 150). Similarly, while Guyer agrees that Kant 'does not postulate a second set of ghostlike nonspatial and temporal objects in addition to the ordinary referents of empirical judgements' (Guyer 1987: 334), and therefore denies that he has a 'two-world' view in one sense, he does think that Kant makes ordinary objects into 'mere representations of themselves' and therefore into 'mere *mental entities*' (Guyer 1987: 335, emphasis added). For our purposes, the similarity of these views to traditional 'two-world' views is more important than the differences: they all attempt to mentalize appearances in some way, whether or not this involves seeing them as actual mental *objects*. One of my main aims in this paper is to reject any attempt to mentalize appearances.

The central feature common to all 'one-world' interpretations is the view that the very same things that appear to us as being a certain way have a certain way they are in themselves, which is unknown to us. Allison, perhaps the most prominent advocate of this view, argues that transcendental

³ See Ameriks (1982) for a summary of the dispute and the allegiances of the disputants. Also see P.F. Strawson (1966: 238, 240, 242–6), Bennett (1966: 23, 126), Turbayne (1955), Guyer (1987: 335) and Van Cleve (1999).

⁴ See, for example, Hoke Robinson (1994: 415), and Allison (1983: ch. 1).

⁵ For example, Allison (1983, 1973), Bird (1962), Collins (1999), Langton (1998), Melnick (1973), Matthews (1982), Pippin (1982), Prauss (1974, 1971).

⁶ See, for example, P.F. Strawson (1966: 236, 1997: 242).

idealism is the view that there is one metaphysical realm of entities, which must be thought of in terms of two *aspects* (Allison 1983: 27). The distinction between the two aspects, he claims, is not metaphysical but methodological, and concerns two ways of considering things, not two ways of being. However, we should not characterize the distinction between the two camps in general as that between ontological and methodological or epistemological interpretations of Kant's distinction, as there are possible 'one-world' views which hold that the distinction is ontological, for example, Langton's view that Kant's distinction is between two kinds of properties (Langton 1998). Other possible 'one-world' interpretations are that Kant's distinction is between two perspectives on things (Hoke Robinson 1994), or that it is between the world and perspectives on it (Matthews 1982).

It is not hard to find passages in the *Critique* that look like supporting the 'two-world' view; what they have in common is that in them Kant calls appearances *representations*, and says that they exist *in us* (See B45, A42/B59, A98, A101, A104, A127, A197/B242, A249, A369, A370, A372, A376, A383, A385, A490 = B518, A492/B520, A494/B522). Kant's use of the term 'representations' is a large factor in commentators such as Van Cleve's argument for a phenomenalist interpretation (Van Cleve 1999: 123), and is the most striking feature of the passages that apparently support the 'two-world' view – any successful 'one world' interpretation must be able to account for this. On the other hand, there are many passages in which Kant says that it is the very same things which we know as they appear to us, of which we have no knowledge, as they are in themselves: '*the things* which we intuit are not in themselves what we intuit *them* to be' (A42/B59, emphasis added, see Bxx, Bxxvi, Bxxvii, A38/B55, A39/B56, A49/B67, B69, A546 = B574, B153–6, A360). Clearly, appealing to isolated passages cannot resolve the dispute, and I will now discuss substantive objections to both interpretations.

II.2

Before discussing the phenomenalist aspect of 'two-world' interpretations, we must briefly look at their view of Kant's things as they are in themselves. 'Two-world' views are generally committed to what has been called noumenalism: the belief that Kant's things in themselves are distinct entities from the entities of which we have experience, and that they are non-sensible, non-spatio-temporal entities (see Matthews 1982: 137, who characterizes 'two-world' interpretations as a combination of noumenalism and phenomenalism⁷). Kant is not a noumenalist. Thinking that he is involves understanding things as they are in themselves as noumena in the

⁷ Bird (1962), from whom Matthews takes this terminology, uses 'noumenalism' slightly differently.

positive sense, a claim clearly and explicitly denied by Kant (B294–315) in the section on ‘Phenomena and Noumena’, which is supposed to be ‘a summary statement’ of the conclusions of the Analytic (A236/B295).

It might be objected that the section on Noumena and Phenomena is often regarded as confusing and ambiguous, and that it does not support any one interpretation, but while this may be true with respect to the section in A,⁸ in B Kant clarifies exactly how he is using these notions, and he clears up the confusions in presentation in A, by stating explicitly that he is using the term ‘noumenon’ in two senses. The notion of a noumenon in the negative sense is ‘a thing *insofar as it is not an object of our sensible intuition*, because we abstract from the manner of our intuition of it [emphasis in the original]’ (B307). In other words, if we take a thing of which we have knowledge and experience and think of it in abstraction from the way we experience it, we have a notion of the same thing, apart from our sensible intuition of it, as it is in itself. Clearly, in the negative sense a noumenon is not a different thing from the things of which we have experience. On the other hand, a noumenon in the positive sense is ‘an *object of a non-sensible intuition* [emphasis in the original]’, and this notion assumes a special kind of intuition, intellectual intuition, ‘which, however, is not our own, and the possibility of which we cannot understand’ (B307). It is the notion of a special kind of object, distinct from the objects of which we have knowledge and experience, which would be an object for a different kind of intuition than ours. Kant immediately identifies the things that we must think of not merely as appearances but also as things in themselves with the notion of the noumenon in the negative sense:

... the doctrine of sensibility [i.e. Kant’s doctrine] is ... the doctrine of the noumenon in the negative sense, i.e., of things that the understanding must think without reference to this relation to our kind of intuition, thus not merely as appearances but as things in themselves... (B307)

The division of objects into *phaenomena* and *noumena*, and of the world into a world of sense and a world of understanding, can therefore not be permitted at all in the positive sense. (B311, see also A289/B345)

Kant says that there *may* be noumena in the positive sense, although we have no idea what they would be (A249, A287/B343). In contrast, he does not think merely that there *may* be things in themselves, but that there definitely are such things, and indeed must be, if there are appearances (see, for example, Bxxvi, A249, A252–3, *Proleg.*: 315). Things as they are in themselves cannot be noumena in the positive sense.

⁸ There are certainly apparent confusions and contradiction in the text in A, but I think that even here, a clear line of thought can be extracted, by seeing that Kant is using the notion of noumena ambiguously, in exactly the two senses that he introduces in B.

II.3

My next concern is to reject the phenomenalist interpretation of phenomena. Since Kant's account is clearly not a theory about the translatability of object statements into statements about sensations (or any other theory of meaning⁹), we are concerned with phenomenalism in a looser sense – either the idea that appearances are mental items or ideas in the Berkeleyan sense, or any other attempt to mentalize appearances, for example by seeing them as constructions out of mental states, or kinds of mental activity. As noted above, there have been a number of attacks on phenomenalist views, and some of the arguments I present have been given by others; in these cases I mention them as briefly as is compatible with making them clearly. Bringing these objections together is necessary to show that the case against the 'two-world' view is overwhelming and that the view cannot be made to cohere with central parts of the *Critique*. Of course, if no alternative were available, the fact that phenomenalism is inconsistent with other things Kant says, or involves him in incoherence, would not matter, so presenting a plausible alternative interpretation is essential to making the case fully persuasive.

- (1) *Kant's explicit rejection of Berkeley*. Kant himself, famously, vehemently denies that his idealism is anything like Berkeley's: (B274, B70, *Proleg.*: 293, 374). However, his relation with Berkeley has been the source of much controversy, and many have thought that despite his explicit statements to the contrary, Kant's transcendental idealism is closer to Berkeley than he wants to admit.¹⁰ It is argued that Kant's criticisms of Berkeley show basic misunderstandings of 'the good bishop's' position, as he accuses Berkeley of making objects mere illusion (B71), whereas Berkeley has the means to distinguish illusion within his system.¹¹ The important point for my purposes is not whether Kant misunderstood Berkeley, but that his idealism is different from Berkeley's – that Kantian appearances cannot be understood as mental entities.¹² However, I will make a brief comment to indicate that Kant's apparent misunderstanding of Berkeley is not as crude as it seems. Although Berkeley can distinguish illusion from reality, there is a clear sense in which any account which has it that what is directly or immediately perceived is something mental (whether this is indirect

⁹ Although transcendental idealism has been seen as a theory of meaning by Bennett (1966), perhaps by P.F. Strawson (1966), and by some anti-realist interpreters, such as Posy (1984, 1983).

¹⁰ See, for example, P.F. Strawson (1966: 35), and, especially, Turbayne (1955).

¹¹ See Allison (1973), Ayers (1982), Justin (1974), Miller (1973), Turbayne (1955) and Wilson (1984), as well as Kant's early critics, in Sassen (2000).

¹² Whether this is the correct understanding of Berkeley is also disputed (see, for example, Yolton 2000).

realism or Berkeleyan idealism) has the result that ordinary perception is illusory in an important sense: perceptual experience subjectively presents as if the qualitative aspects of experience are aspects of mind-independent objects and not aspects of mental states, but if either indirect realism or Berkeleyan idealism is true, this is a widespread perceptual error, or illusion. Further, despite what he says, Berkeley's theory clearly disagrees with 'common sense', in so far as the latter does not regard the objects of perception as mental entities. So we can explain Kant's calling Berkeleyan objects illusions, and even if this rhetoric is not a fair critique of Berkeley, it is not without point as a means of distancing Kant's position from Berkeley's. It might be objected that Kant's rejection of Berkeley concerns the fact that Berkeley is a *mere* idealist, and that Kant's position differs in that he postulates, in addition to phenomena, unknowable things which are somehow their ground. However, Kant's rejection of Berkeley does *not* concern Berkeley's failure to allow for things in themselves, but his characterization of the status of *appearances*. It is the mentalization of empirically real objects in Berkeley's view that Kant rejects, and that I reject as an interpretation of Kant.

- (2) *Kant's claim that his notion of appearances implies things which appear.* As noted above, defenders of the 'two-world' view appeal to Kant's use of the word 'representations'; equally important, I suggest, is the way he uses the term 'appearances'. Kant says repeatedly that his notion of appearances *implies* the existence of the thing which appears, and that it would be absurd to suppose otherwise (Bxxvi, A251–2, *Proleg*: 315); virtual objects, phenomenalist objects, or Berkeleyan objects simply do not *imply* the existence of things of which they are appearances.¹³ Berkeleyan objects, as collections of ideas, require something other than the ideas – the subject who has the ideas – but do not imply the existence of things of which the objects-as-collections-of-ideas are appearances. Someone who believes that objects as we know them are collections of sense-data or ideas may plausibly think that there is something other than these sense-data, which is in some way responsible for their order and existence (for example Berkeley's God), and thus be committed to something like the 'two-world' view of transcendental idealism.¹⁴ However, this is an inference, or explanation of the existence and order of the sense-data, not an implication of them, and there would be no reason to call the sense-data *appearances* of this cause; it would be extremely odd for Berkeley to say that physical objects, on his account, are appearances of God. I do not regard this objection as conclusive, first because there may be versions of phenomenism to which it does not apply, and second as there are

¹³ See Langton (1998: 22).

¹⁴ See Foster (2000) for a defense of this kind of view.

worries about how to understand the force of the ‘must’ in Kant’s claim that something *must* correspond to appearances.

- (3) *Kant’s rejection of Cartesianism.* It is argued that one of Kant’s purposes in the Critique was to reject the Cartesian assumption that we are primarily acquainted with the contents of our own minds, and that knowledge of physical objects is not immediate (B274–9, A367–380).¹⁵ As Kant sees it, Berkeley and Descartes’s views have something in common: both think that we are primarily acquainted with the contents of our minds, and both think that, as a result, there is something problematic about knowledge of external objects independent of our minds: Descartes that this knowledge is doubtful, and Berkeley that the idea of such objects is without sense, so there are none (B274–9, A367–380). Kant wants to argue, against both of them, first that we are not primarily in contact with our own minds, but rather with external objects, and second that the very external objects whose existence Berkeley denies and Descartes renders doubtful are immediately known in perception. Unfortunately the fourth Paralogism in A and the Refutation of Idealism, in which this discussion takes place, are both extremely controversial, and the former contains many of the passages which seem most explicitly to commit Kant to appearances being mental entities. This is why, although I find this line of argument plausible and persuasive, it would require much more detailed assessment of these two sections to make it decisive.¹⁶
- (4) *Empirically real objects and the space in which they exist are public.* This is a central and undeniable part of Kant’s account, and it is incompatible with holding that empirically real objects exist as mental items. It is clear that, for Kant, ‘the very object that one perceiver detects can also be detected by another’ (Collins 1999: 1¹⁷). As Collins points out, if Kantian appearances were essentially private, we would reasonably expect Kant to have at least some discussion of the problems of solipsism and privacy, but this is almost entirely lacking from Kant’s discussion: ‘Kant does not merely fail to make prominent a solipsistic outlook; he argues that such a starting point cannot possibly exist. We are conscious at all, Kant holds, only because we are conscious of things outside our minds’ (Collins 1999: 7).
- (5) *Kant’s distinction between primary and secondary qualities.* Unlike Berkeley, Kant has a clear primary/secondary distinction within the empirically real world: in the Aesthetic, Kant distinguishes space from qualities like colour; colour does not belong to appearances, and is not empirically real (A28/B44). In contrast, one of Berkeley’s first moves is

¹⁵ See Abela (2002), Allison (1973: 45), Collins (1999), Guyer (1987).

¹⁶ See Abela (2002), Collins (1999) and Guyer (1987).

¹⁷ See also Allison (1973: 52), Ameriks (1982: 267), Melnick (1973: 137), Rosefeldt (2001: 265–6).

to deny that secondary qualities lack the same kind of existence and reality as primary qualities, and it is hard to see how Kant could hold that objects exist as mental items but do not have the properties they have in sensation.¹⁸ Further, Kant has a clear distinction between what is in the mind and what is out of it, in terms of what is accessible only to inner sense, and what is presented in both inner and outer sense, and he contrasts objects of inner sense ('the reality of my self and my state') with outer objects in space (A38/B55, Collins 1999: 18, 107–120, Matthews 1982: 134).

- (6) *Kant's realism about the unobservable entities of theoretical science.* For Kant, entities posited by science are part of what is empirically real, whether we can perceive them or not. Magnetic force, for Kant, is part of appearances, but is not something we perceive: the 'crudeness' of our senses 'does not affect the form of possible experience in general' (A226/B237). It is not open to a Berkeleyan idealist to think that things that are too small to be perceived by us, or for which we simply do not have the appropriate perceptual apparatus (such as magnetic force), are empirically real for us, *but this is exactly what Kant does claim*: 'perception too weak in degree to become an experience for our consciousness still belongs to possible experience' (A522/B550).
- (7) *Empirically real objects exist through time and unperceived, and are in causal relations.* The importance of the Analogies, individually and together, for understanding transcendental idealism has not received sufficient attention: they are inconsistent with a mentalized reading of appearances. If appearances were mental items, they would have no being apart from being *currently* apprehended, by particular minds, but this is clearly not Kant's view. In the first and third Analogies, it is clear that Kant thinks that (empirically real) substance exists unperceived. In the first Analogy, he says that the real in appearance, substance, always remains the same in quantity, and lasts and persists through time (A182–2/B225–226, also A185/B228). Kant does not argue that we must interpret and organize our ideas in terms of relations that represent permanence, but that '[a]ll appearances contain that which persists (*substance*) as the object itself' (A182). He clearly thinks that empirically real objects genuinely persist, and are made up of absolutely enduring stuff, and not just that there are certain relations between appearances which represent persistence. No phenomenalist reading of appearances is compatible with this, and, ironically, this is clearly seen by two 'two-world' interpreters who are sympathetic to the analogies, Guyer and Van Cleve (1999), but they simply take this to show that Kant is inconsistent (for example, Van Cleve 1999: 120). In the third Analogy, Kant says that things exist simultaneously if I can

¹⁸ See Allison (1973), Langton (1998: 144, 142–7), Wilson (1984: 161, 165) and B44–5, A28–9, A166/B208, A168/B209.

direct my perception first to one and then to the other, and that the moon exists at the same time as the sun while I am looking at the sun (B257); this means that these things do not exist only in particular events of their being perceived. Kant's necessary conditions of the possibility of experience are not just ways in which we have to construct experience or organize our sense-data, but are true of the (empirically real) objects themselves: the third Analogy says that empirically real objects exist unperceived.

For Kant, there really are necessary connections between things as they appear, but, as Hume and Berkeley argue, the necessary connections we think of as existing between objects could not be the regularity relations between ideas. Kant argues that there must be genuine causal relations (necessary connections) between *appearances*, so the appearances of things are not mental items or properties of mental items. Whether the Analogies are understood as conditions of the possibility of *perceiving* change, objective succession and coexistence, or as conditions of having *knowledge* of these things, it is clear that Kant is arguing that empirically real objects exist through time, are composed of stuff which exists at all times, and exist simultaneously to each other, whether they are being perceived or not. The Analogies, which are central to Kant's metaphysics of experience, are not just in tension with the phenomenalist view of appearances – they entirely contradict it.

- (8) *We do not know what ideas are in themselves.* The difficulties that this central Kantian claim creates for a phenomenalist reading have been underestimated. Virtual or phenomenalist objects are constructions out of subjects' mental states, but talk of mind constructing nature is objectionable on Kantian grounds: minds certainly do not construct nature empirically,¹⁹ and we do not know what thoughts or mental states are as they are in themselves, so we cannot say that minds construct nature transcendently. In Kant's terms, even expressing a phenomenalist interpretation of appearances is problematic, as the interpretation must combine an understanding of appearances that sees their existence as being nothing over and above the existence of certain mental states with the view that we do not know what mental states are in themselves. Phenomenalism requires a transparent understanding of the mental states that make up objects, and Berkeley takes the nature of ideas as given and understood, but this is not the case for Kant. A phenomenalist interpreter must say either that appearances are constructions out of empirical ideas, or that they are constructions out of noumenal ideas: for Kant, the former is straightforwardly false, while the latter is unknowable – not his view of transcendental idealism. Kantian appearances cannot be constructions out of empirical states of empirical subjects, but neither can they be

¹⁹ See Bird 1962: 6–11.

constructions of noumenal states of noumenal subjects. For Kant, empirically ideal means in the mind, in the sense of Berkeleyan ideas, but this cannot simply be translated into the noumenal level: 'transcendentally ideal' does not mean 'in the noumenal mind', 'noumenal sense data' or noumenal mental items'. We can and do (for Kant) have knowledge of the doctrine of transcendental idealism, but we cannot have knowledge of such things as 'noumenal mental states'.

We can summarize these objections by saying that the phenomenalist interpretation conflicts with the genuine empirical realism in Kant's position. I will now discuss objections that have been put to 'one-world' views, some of which can be dismissed, but others of which raise points that must be respected by any convincing 'one-world' interpretation.

III

First, Van Cleve argues that only phenomenalism is compatible with the mind-dependence of appearances, because the only way it is possible for objects to owe any of their traits to our manner of cognizing them is that 'the objects in question owe their very *existence* to being cognized by us' (Van Cleve 1999: 5). But that the objects in question depend on us for their existence is explicitly denied by Kant: 'representation in itself does not produce its objects in so far as *existence* is concerned' (A92/B125). Van Cleve's claim that the best or only explanation of objects conforming to our cognition of them is phenomenalism is not at all compelling: Dummettian anti-realism, for example, holds the former and rejects the latter. It is simply not obvious that existing in the mind is the only way of being mind-dependent. In his account of scientific/empirical law, in the 'Ideal', it is clear that Kant thinks that the lawfulness of empirical laws is derived from us, but the regularities which we subsume under laws are given, and are not up to us. There is clearly a sense in which he thinks that objects depend on us for (part of) the way they are (being subject to laws), but *do not* depend on us for their existence. If it is incoherent that we *literally create* causal order in general, but not particular causal interactions, and it is clear that Kant thinks that we do not create the latter, then it is reasonable to think that his view is that we do not *literally create* casual order in general.

Second, one of the most prominent 'one-world' views is Allison's 'two-aspect' view, which he introduces as saying that there are two ways in which objects can be considered, in terms of our cognitive capacities and apart from these. An objection that has been put to this kind of view is that it seems problematic to say that an object can have contradictory

properties, depending on the way in which it is considered: 'We would not, for instance, accept the possibility of a round square on the suggestion that we distinguish methodologically the consideration of it as round from the consideration of it as square' (Hoke Robinson 1994: 422, also Van Cleve 1999). In similar vein, Guyer points out that 'to choose to *abstract* from a certain property of a thing in some particular conception of it is just to choose to *ignore* that property', not to imply that there is anything that does not have it (Guyer 1987: 338). Aquilla argues that, for Kant, while the antinomies arise from considering the world as a thing in itself, what generates the problem is not 'a mode of considering', but the properties actually imputed to the object so considered: 'the incompatibility of the two ways of considering things must itself stem from some fact about things themselves', as the transcendental realist's mistake is not 'considering things considered in one way *not* in that way', but 'supposing that objects in space and time ... are things that *exist* in themselves' (Aquilla 1983: 90). These criticisms will not be fatal for all 'one-world' accounts, but do create trouble for merely epistemic or methodological interpretations.

Third, the 'one-world' view has it that the things we experience are the things which have a way they are in themselves, but this seems to imply that our experience is some kind of apprehension of things themselves, whereas Kant says that we do not apprehend things in themselves in any way. He says that it would be wrong to think that we have confused representations of things as they are in themselves, rather, '[w]e do not apprehend them in any fashion whatsoever (A44/B62). However, Kant sometimes says that appearances do not represent things themselves (A276/B332), and sometimes says that they do (A251–2), and this apparent contraction can best be explained by seeing that Kant's aim in the former passages is to oppose the Leibnizian view of *confused* representations of things *as they are in themselves*. The 'one-world' view is perfectly compatible with this: Kant thinks that we do not have any representations, not even confused ones, of things *as they are in themselves*, but only have knowledge and experience of them as they appear to us.

Fourth, critics claim that some 'one-world' views render Kant's position trivial and anodyne. This objection has particularly been directed at Allison's account, and similar 'epistemic' interpretations, for example, Langton and Van Cleve argue that Allison makes it analytic or tautologous that things in themselves are not describable spatio-temporally (Langton 1998: 9–10, Van Cleve 1999: 4, also Guyer 1989). The notion of epistemic conditions is crucial in Allison's account, but while he initially defines an epistemic condition as 'a condition that is necessary for representation of an object or an objective state of affairs' (Allison 1983: 10), he also seems to make it part of the definition of such a condition that 'whatever is necessary for the representation or experience of something as an object ... must reflect the cognitive structure of the mind (its manner of

representing) rather than the nature of the object as it is in itself' (Allison 1983: 27²⁰). This practically makes transcendental idealism true by definition, and is what makes his account vulnerable to the criticisms made by Langton and Van Cleve. Triviality is a serious objection to an interpretation of transcendental idealism: Kant thinks that his doctrine is revolutionary, and also that there is something that we are lacking in not having knowledge of things as they are in themselves.²¹ To reduce transcendental idealism to claims such as that knowledge of things is possible only under the conditions of knowledge, or that the human point of view is just the human point of view (Matthews 1982), or that 'we build for ourselves a picture of the world' (Walker 1978: 129), does make it trivial. An adequate interpretation of transcendental idealism should not make it an anodyne view, and this can be expanded into three related points: our interpretation must make sense of Kant's saying that there is something we lack in not knowing things as they are in themselves, while allowing that we can have coherent thoughts about them, must give a sense in which his position is idealist, and must do justice to Kant's view that appearances and things in themselves have a genuinely different status. I will take these in order.

Fifth, Kant thinks that we are missing out on something in not having knowledge of things as they are in themselves, and he thinks that we can have perfectly coherent thoughts about them. In the face of this, 'one-world' views which want to get rid of one of the realms posited by their opponents by denying that there are in fact things in themselves cannot do justice to Kant's account. This is a problem for any view, such as Melnick's (1973) which makes things as they are in themselves a mere posit or limiting concept, rather than a real commitment to the existence of entirely mind-independent reality. Matthews's view that the world as it is in itself is '*ex hypothesi* indescribable and, in a sense, unthinkable' (Matthews 1982: 137), also falls at this hurdle. Since, as he sees it, the important contrast is between the world as thought of in terms of our concepts versus the world as it is apart from our concepts, there is no room for coherent thought about mind-independent reality. In contrast, Kant thinks that our concepts can range beyond the conditions of the possibility of experience – it is the fact that in these cases there is not something given intuition corresponding to our concepts that means we cannot have knowledge here. One of Kant's concerns in the third Antinomy is in fact to argue that the notion of transcendental freedom is coherent; this is crucial for his moral philosophy, and an adequate

²⁰ Guyer has criticized this move in detail (see Guyer 1987: 345–415 and Allison 1989), but Ameriks has offered a reconciliation between Guyer and Allison's positions (Ameriks 1992). However, this reconciliation primarily concerns their accounts of Kant's *argument* for his transcendental idealism (from mere subjectivity to transcendental ideality or vice versa), an issue that is not discussed in this paper, and not their accounts of the position itself.

²¹ See Langton (1998: 10).

interpretation of transcendental idealism must be able to accommodate Kant's views about freedom, morality and God, by leaving room for coherent thought beyond the bounds of experience.

Sixth, an objection to 'one-world' readings is that they fail to account for the fact that Kant's position is supposed to be *idealist*: Van Cleve says that reading much contemporary commentary, 'one can begin to wonder whether Kant's transcendental idealism has anything much to do with idealism at all' (Van Cleve 1999: 4). This is an obvious problem with Langton's (1998) interpretation, according to which Kant distinguishes between the extrinsic causal powers things have, and their causally inert intrinsic properties, claiming that we can have knowledge only of the former: there is nothing mind-dependent about the extrinsic causal powers. It is also a problem for any interpretation which assimilates Kant's transcendental idealism to his rejection of the myth of the given (see Abela 2002), and interpretations which see Kant's distinction as being merely epistemological. An adequate 'one-word' interpretation must make sense of Kant's calling his doctrine idealist, not by explaining it away as terminological confusion, but rather by showing a sense in which the appearances of things are mind-dependent.

Seventh, related to this is one of the most prominent objections to epistemic 'one-world' views, which is that they fail to do justice to what Kant clearly sees as the different ontological status of appearances and things in themselves; Ameriks argues this is a major disadvantage of Allison's account (Ameriks 1992: 334). He says that the claim that human knowledge is governed by certain conditions will not account for 'Kant's own stronger conclusion, which is that there are objects which in themselves have *genuine* ultimate properties that do *not* conform to those conditions' (Ameriks 1992: 334). In similar vein, Guyer has argued that attempts to make Kant's doctrine into a form of epistemic modesty are of no avail in the face of 'Kant's firm announcements that things in themselves *are not* spatial and temporal' (Guyer 1987: 334). It is not just that there is a conception of things that does not include their spatiality and temporality, or that we can think of things apart from their spatiality, but that things in themselves are not spatial and temporal. 'Two-world' commentators often assume that the only way for things in themselves and the appearances of things to have a different status is if they are different entities, but this is not obviously the case. Many philosophers think that primary qualities have a different status from secondary qualities, in that the former are mind-independent and the latter are mind-dependent, without thinking that these qualities belong to different entities.

In summary, we are looking for an interpretation of transcendental idealism which does not make it trivial, which makes sense of Kant's thinking that we are missing something in not knowing things as they are in themselves, and which gives a sense in which appearances are mind-dependent that does not involve existence in the mind.

IV

IV.1. Kant's idealism

To distinguish between things as they appear to us and things as they are in themselves is not necessarily idealist, neither is arguing that we cannot have knowledge of mind-independent reality. Rather, Kant's idealism lies in the claim that all our knowledge and experience of reality, including of course, of the spatio-temporality of things, is only knowledge and experience of appearances of reality, which are mind-dependent, in some sense, and to some extent. The question is, in what sense, and to what extent. The appearances of things are mind-dependent in one sense, and mind-independent in another: they are transcendently ideal but empirically real.

A starting point in understanding the mind-dependence of appearances can be made by analogy with Lockean secondary qualities, and Kant himself presents his point this way, in the *Prolegomena*:

Long before Locke's time, but assuredly since him, it has been assumed and granted without detriment to the actual existence of external things that many of their predicates may be said to belong, not to the things in themselves, but to their appearances, and to have no proper existence outside our representations. Heat, colour and taste are of this kind. Now, if I go further, and, for weighty reasons, rank as mere appearances also the remaining qualities of bodies, which are called primary – such as extension, place, and, in general space, with all that which belongs to it (impenetrability or materiality, shape, etc.) – no one can in the least adduce the reason of its being inadmissible. As little as the man who admits colours not to be properties of the object itself ... should on that account be called idealist, so little can my doctrine be named idealistic merely because I find that more, nay, *all the properties which constitute the intuition of a body belong merely to its appearance*. The existence of the thing that appears is not thereby destroyed, as in genuine idealism, but it is only shown that we cannot possibly know it by the senses as it is in itself. (*Proleg.*: 289)

Kant also, of course, in the *Critique*, denies that the mind-dependence of appearances can be illustrated by analogy with qualities such as colour and taste (B45). This apparent contradiction can best be explained by the fact that he is appealing to different understandings of such properties in the different texts. In the passage quoted above, Kant is drawing an analogy between the way he sees the appearances of things and the way (he thinks) Locke sees secondary qualities, but in the *Critique* he does not seem to understand taste and colour as Lockean secondaries, saying that they are *not* properties of things, but only changes in the subject, which may be different for different people. My argument is not based on giving more weight to the *Prolegomena* than the *Critique*, which would not be right; rather, my point is that since Kant clearly does not present the same account

of secondary qualities in these two passages, he denies that his idealism can be illustrated by comparison with secondary qualities *only on one understanding of these* – one which sees them not as properties of objects, but only as modifications of the sense of the subject. He has not forbidden the comparison using other understandings of secondary qualities, and in fact suggests this, in the passage quoted above. Commentators such as Putnam (1981: 59) and Collins (1999: 11–12) have taken Kant up on the secondary quality analogy, but the problem with the analogy is that it is not clear what view of secondary qualities it appeals to. Locke's account of secondary qualities is bound up with his indirect or representative realist view of perception, and as Van Cleve has argued,²² is not helpful for understanding Kant's idealism. The analogy with secondary qualities as Locke conceives them would either compare Kantian appearances to mind-independent powers and dispositions, or to ideas in our minds which fail to resemble the powers. The former fails to capture any mind-dependence, the latter reverts to the 'two-world' interpretation, and the very use of secondary qualities that Kant forbids. I argue that the account of secondary qualities that we need must be understood in the context of direct realism about perception. Note: I am not saying that Kant's transcendental idealism is based on considerations concerning perception, or that Kant is a direct realist, but that we need a direct realist account of secondary qualities to use the analogy between Kantian appearances and secondary qualities.

I will briefly sketch the direct realist view of perception we need to understand the secondary quality analogy. I do not discuss Kant's view of perception, nor is this an account of his motivation for transcendental idealism – the idea is simply to outline the view of secondary qualities we need to explain Kantian appearances through an analogy to such qualities. Direct realism about perception holds that in perception we are directly and immediately in contact with external physical objects, and denies that we perceive objects in virtue of seeing mental intermediaries, or in virtue of being in mental states which are extrinsically related to the objects perceived. Direct realism holds that perception should not be analysed in terms of subjective, inner states, and external physical causes, and that the qualitative aspects of objects perceived do in fact belong to the objects, and not to mental states of subjects. A plausible account of direct realism must allow for the common and indisputable occurrence of non-veridical perception (sticks which appear bent in water, mountains which appear hazy in the distance, things which appear blurry to the short-sighted, mirages, etc). Since non-veridical perception clearly occurs, if direct realism is to be plausible at all it cannot be naïve realism – it cannot say that perceiving things directly always involves perceiving them exactly as they are. Many philosophers think that, unlike hallucination, we cannot give a disjunctive

²² Van Cleve (1995) argues against Putnam that no version of the secondary quality analogy makes sense of Kant's idealism.

account of non-veridical perception,²³ or at least cannot always do so, as it is often a matter of degree: for example, it cannot be the case that the things which appear blurry at a distance are seen in virtue of seeing mental intermediaries, the things which are in focus close up are directly perceived, and that there is a gradual change in between the two: the direct realist must say that whatever kinds of things are perceived in veridical perception are what is perceived in non-veridical perception (which is why non-veridical perception has often been thought to be the strongest objection to direct realism²⁴). This means that a direct realist must say that when we see a straight stick which appears bent in water, the bent appearance of the stick is a feature of the stick, and not of a mental object, mental state or kind of mental activity – the bent appearance of the stick is a publicly perceivable aspect of the stick. On this view, in non-veridical perception there is not a mental entity that is perceived, or a kind of mental act that is inessentially related to an object – rather, an object appears in a certain way, and the appearance belongs to the object (in relation to the subject). Perception is not a matter of us being in a subjective state that is in (the right kind of) causal relation to objects, rather the way the object appears is a public property of the object: perception involves objects appearing to us in certain ways. It follows from this account that perceiving something directly does not *entail* perceiving it as it is itself, and a direct realist can make sense of directly perceiving something but perceiving it as being different from the way it actually is. The direct realist allows that in cases of non-veridical perception we perceive things as they appear, or the appearances of things, and since there cannot be (or at least cannot always be) a disjunctive account of veridical and non-veridical perception, the direct realist can say that all perception involves perceiving appearances of things – things appearing certain ways for subjects – although this is still far from Kant's account, as the direct realist holds that the way things appear very often transparently reveals the way they mind-independently are.

Of course, non-veridical perception, such as the bent stick in water, is far from Kant's account of appearances, as Kant does not think that the appearances of things are any kind of illusion or non-veridical perception (see B69), and his distinction is not between how things *seem* and how they *really are*. However, the example of the stick which appears bent in water is a helpful starting point, and I draw attention to three features of it, on a direct realist account, that are relevant to our understanding of Kantian appearances. First, the bent appearance of the stick is a perfectly *public* feature of the stick. Second, we can easily make sense of saying that the appearance of the stick *represents* the stick as being bent, or that the stick is bent, in our perceptual representation of it. Third, while it is not a mental entity, mental state or mental activity, the bent appearance of the stick is

²³ See Child (1994: ch. 5), for a disjunctive treatment of hallucination.

²⁴ See Foster (2000) and Howard Robinson (1994).

clearly mind-dependent, as it exists only in our perception of the stick: the bent appearance of the stick does not exist apart from our perception of it

Drawing on this account of direct realism, we are now in a position to give the view of secondary qualities that we need to illustrate Kant's idealism. The version of direct realism I have presented allows that we can make sense of the idea that we (directly) perceive things while perceiving them as being different from the way they are themselves, and this means that it can allow for the possibility that there are some properties of things which do not, as they are in perception, reveal anything about the mind-independent nature of things. Philosophers have often thought that this is the case with colour. According to this view, there are reasons to think that colour experience does not transparently reveal its mind-independent ground, and this means that colour belongs only to the appearances of things, and not to the way they are in themselves. This view does not see colour as a property of mental objects, mental states or mental activities – it is objects that are coloured – but does see it as being mind-dependent, as it is *only* part of things as they appear for subjects like us, and is nothing like things as they are in themselves. Colour is a property of objects, and not a property of mental states, but it is a property which objects have in relation to us and our possible visual experience of them, and not a property which they have as they are in themselves, so it is a mind-dependent property. Such a view of colour is not without problems, but it is a useful way of illustrating Kant's point, and Kant himself uses it in this way, despite the fact that it does not seem to represent his settled view of colour.

Like the bent stick in water, the example of colour has limitations – Kant thinks that we may all perceive colour differently, and therefore that colour is not empirically real (further, he gives a different account of colour in his extremely brief discussion in the *Critique*). However, colour is an improvement on the example of non-veridical perception in a significant respect: while in non-veridical perception we perceive something as seeming to be other than it really is, colour is not plausibly thought to *misrepresent* the surface properties of objects (it certainly is not thought of in this way according to the view of direct realism sketched here), rather (visual), colour does not reveal anything about the way things mind-independently are, so we could see the sense in saying that it does not represent things as they are in themselves at all.²⁵ It is an example of a property with regard to which it is often thought that it does not reveal anything at all about its mind-independent ground, and therefore belongs only to things as they appear, and is mind-dependent. At the same time, this does not mean that colour is a property of mental entities, or that it is not external objects which have colour. On this view, objects have mind-independent properties which we

²⁵ This enables us to make sense of the fact that while Kant calls appearances of things representations, he also denies that they represent things as they are in themselves (A44/B62, A276/B332).

experience as coloured, but this experience does not reveal the nature of the mind-independent properties that are, we could say, the 'ground' of colour. Despite this, colour is a public property of objects, and not a property of some aspect of our minds.

To summarize, if direct realism is to be plausible at all, it must be able to make sense of the idea that sometimes we (directly) perceive things as being different from the way they are, without mentalizing the non-veridical appearances. One way of doing this is saying that perception involves things (directly) appearing to us, but the way they appear may be different from the way they mind-independently are. The next move is to give reason for thinking that there are properties, like perhaps colour, which belong only to things as they appear, and not to things as they are in themselves, and if a non-naive version of direct realism is coherent, this is a perfectly understandable step. To get to Kant's position, we then have to take the further step of saying that *all* the properties of objects which we perceive them to have are only appearance properties in this sense. Kant thinks that none of the properties of things of which we have knowledge and experience resemble or reveal anything about the mind-independent natures of the things that appear; all the properties of things we have experience of are mind-independent in the sense that colour is, on the above view. Since everything we perceive is only part of the way things appear to subjects like us, we can say that we only perceive the appearances of things. For example, for Kant, there must be something about the fundamental nature of reality which we experience as squareness, but our experience of squareness does not reveal the mind-independent ground of the property, as it is in itself. This means that squareness is part of the way something mind-independent appears: 'that which, while inseparable from the representation of the object, is not to be met with in the object itself, but always in relation to the subject, is appearance' (B70n).

It might be objected that this way of looking at Kant makes his (transcendental) contrast between appearances and things in themselves too close to the parallel but different empirical distinction between (ordinary) things and the way they appear. My suggestion is in fact that starting by thinking about this ordinary empirical distinction is the best way to understand Kant's position. We need to start by understanding the distinction between (ordinary) things and the way they appear in such a way that the way a thing appears is not transformed into a mental entity. Then we need to take this understanding of what is involved in things appearing a certain way to us, and deny that the way things appear *ever* reveals to us the way they mind-independently are. The move is to say that *all* the properties of things that are presented in experience only pertain to the way things appear, and not to the way they mind-independently are, at the same time as denying that this undermines the objectivity of the world of experience. Given this move, there is still room *within* our account of the appearances of things for a distinction between ways of appearing that are

intersubjective and that cohere with other aspects of the appearances of things, and ways of appearing that are specific to individuals, or that do not cohere with the rest of the appearances of things. This enables us to explain the point of Kant's transcendental/empirical distinction, and to introduce a parallel distinction within the empirically real world.

Like the idea of non-veridical perception, the secondary quality analogy enables us to make sense of Kant's calling appearances 'representations'. So long as there is a possible view of perception which allows that perception can be directly of external objects, yet not necessarily reveal the way they are in themselves, we can make sense of saying that we perceive objects as they appear, or appearances of objects, and since these may be different from the way objects are as they are in themselves, we can see the point in saying that they *represent* objects. The term stresses the fact that perception involves objects appearing *for* subjects, and that the way things appear presents, or represents, things as being a certain way for subjects. Appearing is a certain kind of relation, perhaps a *sui generis* relation, between objects and conscious subjects, and properties which belong only to things as they appear are dependent on both objects and subjects, and a fortiori are mind-dependent. The secondary quality analogy enables us to make sense of objects appearing to be other than the way they are in themselves without this implying that the way they appear is a mere seeming or illusion: to say that colour is part of the way things appear is not to say that things only seem coloured, or that colour is an illusion. Appearances can be real, public (but mind-dependent) properties of things.

The analogy also enables us to see both the use and the limitations of introducing Kant's position in terms of different ways of *considering* objects, which is the way purely epistemological or methodological commentators like Allison introduce their views. While the idea of considering objects as they are in terms of our visual experience of them, and considering objects as they are apart from this, can be an extremely helpful *introduction* to the secondary quality distinction, colour is not a way of considering objects, or objects considered in terms of the way they look; it is part of the way things look.

According to the view I have presented, appearance properties like colour have a curious status: they are neither entirely mind-dependent, in the sense of existing in the mind, or in the fact that subjects are in certain subjective states, nor entirely mind-independent, in that they do not exist apart from the possibility of our perceiving them. On the one hand, objects have colour whether we are perceiving them or not, and would not change colour if we all died; on the other hand, objects only have colour in relation to subjects like us possibly being able to perceive them. The way Kant expresses this mind-dependence is by saying that appearances do not exist apart from the extent of possible experience.²⁶ Colour is not a property which exists only in

²⁶ This denial of experience-transcendence has led some commentators to compare his position

particular events of our apprehending it, or which exists in the mind, or which exists only in subjects being in certain kinds of states; however, it is not a property which exists apart from our possible experience of it, so while it is mind-independent in one way, it is mind-dependent in another. To paraphrase Kant, colour exists in our possible perception of it and can exist in no other way, and this is Kant's view of appearances in general. Kant says that the appearances of things exist in the extent of possible experience (A226/B237, A493–6/B521–4, A505–6/B533–4, A514, B524); this does not mean that appearances exist in particular events of their being perceived, but that if something is empirically real, it could be perceived. Kant does not give what is unperceived a merely hypothetical existence, as phenomenalism does, but at the same time he thinks that there is an *essential* connection between something's being empirically real and our being able to have experience of it. It is not just that where there is an empirically real thing there is the possibility of experience, which a realist might also think, but that where there is no possibility of experience there is no empirically real thing. The appearances of things do not exist apart from the fact that we could have possible experience of them.

Of course, Kant's view goes further than the example of colour suggests, in that he does not think that the extent of possible experience includes only what we directly sense, but also what can be connected to what is directly sensed, using the categories and principles. This enables him to say that objects posited by scientific theory can be empirically real, even if we do not directly sense them: they are connected to what is directly sensed using the categories and principles. It is crucial for these things being empirically real that they *are* connected to something given in sensation, and without this they would not be empirically real, or part of the extent of possible experience. For Kant, all concepts require intuition to give them content, so even when we use categorical concepts to extend our knowledge beyond sensation, this only gives us knowledge of things as they appear to us – appearances. What is part of the extent of possible experience, and therefore empirically real, must be connected using these principles to something given in intuition, and does not exist apart from this possible connection.

Seeing the appearances of things as existing only in the extent of possible experience is not what is radical about Kant's position, as this account of the mind-dependence of appearances could be accepted by a direct realist who thinks that properties like colour and non-veridical appearances do not

to the Dummettian anti-realist denial of verification-transcendent reality. See Hanna (1993), Kroon (2001), Posy (1984, 1983), Stevenson (1983), Walker (1983), and, for comparison with a slightly different kind of anti-realism, Moran (2000) and Putnam (1987, 1981). Clearly, there are profound differences between Kant's position and the Dummettian position: Kant's account is not a theory of truth or meaning, and Kant obviously believes in verification-transcendent reality – things as they are in themselves are completely verification-transcendent. Despite this, there is a partial parallel between Kant's position and the anti-realist position, in that Kant denies experience-transcendence for the empirically real world.

exist apart from our possible experience. Rather, it is Kant's claim that everything of which we can have experience is only part of the appearances of things that is radical, and that makes everything of which we have experience mind-dependent. At the same time, Kant's formulation of the mind-dependence of appearances in terms of their relation to possible experience represents a major advance on the indirect realist accounts of appearances as mental entities.

This account of Kant's idealism fits his resolution of the mathematical antinomies, as well as his account of scientific methodology, in the appendix to the ideal. The Antinomies make clear that Kant's account is not a theory of meaning, as he does not think that any of the opposed theses and antitheses are senseless, but rather that they assume, he thinks wrongly, that the world of which we have knowledge exists entirely independently of us, and therefore that, for example, its extent in space and time must be determinate. Assuming that our knowledge and experience is of mind-independent reality generates irresolvable conflicts of reason, and realizing that our knowledge is only of the appearances of things, which do not exist apart from our possible experience of them, enables us to dissolve the conflict. Since the appearances of things exist only in the possible regress of experience, they are not determinate in extent, so seeing that our experience is of appearances enables us to see that the world of which we have experience – the world of appearances – is not determinate in extent (A482–3 = B510–1). The empirically real world cannot outstrip our capacity for knowledge and experience of it, as it exists only in relation to our possible experience of it. Since there is no possible experience of appearances as an absolute totality, they do not exist as an absolute totality, and it is false both to say that they are finite and to say that they are infinite in extent, so the Antinomy does not arise.

It might be thought that this is a rather thin and attenuated form of idealism, and certainly it is not like most positions normally thought of as idealist, but then, it is clear that Kant thought of his position as being very different from those normally thought of as idealist, particularly Berkeleyan idealism:

Idealism consists in the assertion that there are none but thinking beings; all other things which we believe are perceived in intuition are nothing but representations in the thinking beings, to which no object external to them in fact corresponds. On the contrary, I say that things as objects of our senses existing outside us are given, but we know nothing of what they may be in themselves, knowing only their appearances. ... Can this be termed idealism? It is the very contrary. (*Proleg.*: 289)

However, there is still a clear point in calling Kant's position idealist, and it still makes a radical claim: that everything we know of things is only

knowledge of mind-dependent aspects of them – the appearances of things. The idea that the spatio-temporality of things, their solidity, the causal relations we experience them as being in, etc., are all only part of their appearances, like colour (on the view mentioned above), is a radical view, and there is a clear sense in calling it idealist, as the view has it that these things are mind-dependent in one sense (although mind-independent in another). If we had knowledge of the mind-independent grounds of the appearances of things, in addition to knowledge of appearances, there would no longer be any point in calling the position idealist. It is because our knowledge of things is *only* knowledge of appearances of things, which are mind-dependent, that we can say that objects-as-we-experience-them are mind-dependent. This brings us to Kant's humility.

IV.2. Kant's humility

Kant says that we cannot have knowledge of things as they are in themselves, and interpreting his notion of things as they are in themselves is a classic problem of transcendental idealism. What follows from my 'one world' interpretation is that the notion of things in themselves is not the notion of a separate kind of thing of which we do not have knowledge, but simply the idea that the things of which we have knowledge have a nature in themselves, that is entirely mind-independent. A central part of Kant's overall position is the fundamental *realist* thought that there is something that is entirely independent of us for its nature and existence, and which is in some sense the origin of our experience. Putting Kant's point this way means that the pressure is not on the notion of things as they are in themselves (Kant's humility is not part of his *notion* of things as they are in themselves) but on his argument for the claim that we have no knowledge of them as they are in themselves. The idea is not that there is something about which, by definition, nothing can be said or known: rather, he *assumes* that there is experience-independent reality, and *argues* that we cannot have knowledge or cognition of it, as it is in itself.

If the notion of things as they are in themselves is the idea that the things of which we have knowledge have a nature, a way they are, independently of us and our having knowledge of them, then Kant's humility can be expressed as the claim that we cannot know the intrinsic nature of these things. The notion of a thing's intrinsic nature is understood here as the way it is apart from actual and possible relations with other things. For a 'one-worlder' Kant's humility cannot be the claim that there are things that we do not know, but rather should be understood as the claim that we cannot know the intrinsic nature of the things of which we do have experience. This means that Kant's point is similar to that of a range of positions which claim that matter is

empirically inscrutable.²⁷ (Of course, calling the position the inscrutability of *matter* is inappropriate in Kantian terms as, for Kant, what we call matter is all on the side of appearances.) These positions have in common the view that although we do have some knowledge of reality, we cannot know the intrinsic or ultimate nature of reality, which is empirically inscrutable. Comparison with the inscrutability of matter thesis should help further to deflate the idea that Kant's things in themselves are metaphysically mysterious, and the idea that Kant has no right to say both that there must be such things and that we cannot know them: Kant is not introducing an extra kind of entity, for which he has no basis, rather, he is claiming that the reality of which we do have empirical knowledge, and which we do know to exist (setting sceptical worries aside), cannot be known by us as it is in itself.

The idea that Kant's view is that we cannot know the intrinsic properties of things has recently been defended by Langton (1998), who argues that, for Kant, we can know only the relational, extrinsic properties of things, and that Kant's view is based on what he calls the receptivity of our knowledge. My view might seem similar to Langton's but my understanding of Kant's distinction, and of intrinsic properties, differs substantially from hers. First, Langton presents her account as an interpretation of Kant's position as a whole, and not just of his humility, but this cannot be right, as the position she attributes to Kant is not in any sense idealist – there is nothing mind-dependent about the extrinsic, causal properties of which we have knowledge, on her interpretation. One of Langton's few concessions to idealism is that Kant's views about things as they are in themselves might imply that ultimate reality is not physical in nature (Langton 1998: 207). As she points out, this would be incompatible with humility, and this is clearly seen by Kant (A341–405). In addition, while Kant allows the *possibility* that ultimate reality is in some sense mental, this *could not* be the point of *transcendental idealism*, as Kant is not a transcendental idealist about things as they are in themselves – his idealism concerns the appearances of things.

My second disagreement with Langton's views is that I find her characterization of intrinsic properties problematic. I do not disagree with her grounds for thinking that things must have an intrinsic nature – an independent thing must have a way that it is, irrespective of its actual and possible relations to other things – but with her claim that this amounts to having *causally inert properties* – properties that are different to and separate from the thing's causal powers. Both the idea of causally inert properties and the idea that causal powers are not intrinsic seem problematic to me, but I cannot argue this here – my concern is simply

²⁷ As far as I know this expression is originally Foster's (1982), see also Eddington (1946), Lockwood (1989), Russell (1967), G.J. Strawson (forthcoming), and see Langton (1998) for a related view of Kant's humility.

to clarify these notions sufficiently to express Kant's position. While I reject Langton's distinction between (extrinsic) powers and causally inert, intrinsic properties, as distinct kinds of properties, I think that a related distinction will give us what is needed to make sense of the idea that we cannot know the intrinsic nature of things. The idea is that we can distinguish between specifying a property in terms of what it is a power to do, i.e. to other things, and describing it as it is in the object in itself. This can be explained in accordance with Foster's distinction between specifying a property opaquely and specifying it transparently, which he illustrates as follows: specifying a triangle as a three-sided figure with such-and-such angles specifies it transparently; describing it as the figure inside the envelope, while this does manage to refer to the triangle, specifies it opaquely (Foster 1982: 87). Both are ways of latching onto, or referring to, the thing – an opaque description still refers to the thing described, but it does not describe it in terms of its intrinsic nature, as it describes the thing in relation to, or in terms of, other things.

Proponents of the inscrutability of matter thesis use this idea to defend their thesis, as it is argued that if we know objects only in terms of the way they affect us and other things we do not know their intrinsic natures. Note, it is not being claimed here that objects have properties over and above their causal powers, but that describing a property as a power is describing it in terms of its potential effects on other things, and not as it is in itself. The object has properties which can be described in terms of potential interactions with other things, but which have a way they are, independent of actual and possible interactions with other things. The idea is that just as experience does not reveal the ground of redness, describing things in terms of their effects on other things does not describe the ground of the causal power, or the property as it is in the object in itself.²⁸

What is relevant and useful about this kind of position for our purposes is that while it does not claim that the intrinsic natures of things are distinct things or distinct properties from the appearances of things, it enables us to make sense of the idea that in knowing the appearances of things we do not know the intrinsic nature of things. Since the appearances of things never reveal the nature of the mind-independent properties which so appear, we cannot know the intrinsic nature of things, even though the appearances of things are the way things, or the intrinsic natures of things, appear. The notion of a thing's intrinsic nature plays a similar role here to that played by Locke's real essence – it is responsible for the observable properties and powers that things have, and there is a sense in which the observable

²⁸ One argument appeals to the claim that the fundamental entities of physics are defined in purely relational terms (see Chandrasekar 1998: 63, 224), and only describe dispositions (see Howard Robinson 1982 and Blackburn 1990). Of course, this will only help to establish the inscrutability thesis if it is assumed (or argued) that things cannot consist entirely of relational or dispositional properties. This cannot be argued here.

properties and powers are nothing more, in the object, than the primary or intrinsic properties (even though our experience of observable properties and powers does not transparently reveal their intrinsic nature). Of course, added to Locke's position here is the claim – to which he sometimes seems sympathetic – that we cannot, in principle, know the real essence of things (Locke III VI).²⁹

On this view, there must be a sense in which the intrinsic ground of a power is *responsible* for the thing's having the powers that it does, and an objection might be that we do not know what is meant by 'responsible' or 'ground' here. This is in fact part of the position: just as we cannot know the intrinsic nature of things, or the grounds of powers, we cannot know the relation between the ground and the powers; if this relation were causal, we would simply have a finer-grained explanation in terms of powers, and not in terms of what is intrinsic. Even Locke sometimes seems to think that we could not, in principle, know the relation between primaries and the secondaries and tertiaries that somehow depend on them.³⁰ For Kant, what we know of things is partly determined by the way they mind-independently are, but our experience does not reach their intrinsic or ultimate nature.

Putting humility together with Kant's idealism, he thinks that not only can our knowledge not reach what is intrinsic, further, our knowledge even of things' causal powers is only knowledge of appearances of things. Many philosophers think that some of the properties we experience things as having pertain only to the way things appear to us, such as colour, and part of the reason for this is that we have explanations of colour experience in terms of other properties. Kant thinks that we shall find that the properties we invoke to explain colour experience are also only understood in terms of their appearances, and not their mind-independent ground, and this is a point that has often been made concerning solidity. His position is that no matter how deeply our scientific explanations reach, they will constitute knowledge only if they are understood in terms of something given in intuition, which is always only appearance. This could be illustrated by the thought that the mathematical knowledge of physics, alone, is an uninterpreted formal system, and the interpretation we give it will always be in terms of mind-dependent appearance properties.

Against Van Cleve's objection that objects can only depend on us for their being a certain way if their *esse* is *percipi*, we have seen that there is a kind of mind-dependence that does not involve existing in the mind. The second objection to 'one-world' views I considered is that objects cannot have different properties depending on how they are considered. In response, first, on my view the claim is not that things have contradictory properties, being

²⁹ Also, Kant's position has the enormous advantage over Locke's that he does not have an indirect account of perception, but thinks that in seeing appearance properties we are directly perceiving external things, but are not perceiving them as they are in themselves.

³⁰ See Locke, II XXIII 16, 23, 29, III VI, 6, 9.

spatial and being non-spatial, just as saying that things are red as they appear to us but not as they are in themselves does not involve saying that they are red and non-red. Second, while the idea of considering a thing apart from its actual and possible interactions with other things is a useful way of introducing the idea of its intrinsic nature, intrinsic properties are real mind-independent properties in the object, and not just a way in which it is considered. Although we can introduce Kant's distinction in terms of different ways of considering things, it is not a distinction between ways of considering, but between the mind-independent and unknown intrinsic nature of things, and things as they are in our experience of them; this is surely a distinction that is both ontological and epistemological. Unlike purely epistemic accounts of Kant's distinction, my interpretation does not make transcendental idealism a trivial doctrine: both humility and idealism make radical claims. Seeing humility as the claim that we cannot know the intrinsic nature of things enables us to make sense of Kant's view that there is something that we are missing out on in not knowing things as they are in themselves – there is something genuinely unknown – as well as his view that we can have coherent thoughts about things as they are in themselves. We can speculate about whether, intrinsically, things are monads, although we cannot have knowledge of whether or not they are. My interpretation makes sense both of the fact that Kant distances himself from any version of idealism which mentalizes appearances, and the fact that he still calls his position idealist: there is a genuine sense in which the appearances of things are mind-dependent, and they therefore have a radically different ontological status from the mind-independent intrinsic nature of things. At the same time, the appearances of things are only partly dependent on us, and are public and objective: this enables us to accommodate a genuine empirical realism within Kant's position.

Kant argues that the fact that our experience of the world is mediated by the senses does not mean that we do not have knowledge and experience of reality, the (objective) world – knowledge of the appearances of things is not merely knowledge of actual and possible subjective states. Equally, this does not mean that we have knowledge of the world as it is apart from relation to us; the intrinsic nature of reality is, in principle, beyond the reach of finite receptive creatures like ourselves. Kant presents an account which has it that we cannot know the way reality is as it is in itself, and can only know mind-dependent appearances of things, while not making the appearances of things into mental items, and showing how, on this basis, we can still have knowledge of an objective, external world. When dealing with a position as complex and controversial as Kant's transcendental idealism, it is impossible both to present and to defend the view in one paper, and I have not argued that the position is true, or even looked at Kant's own arguments for it. My aim is to reject any interpretation of transcendental idealism that mentalizes appearances, and to present an alternative interpretation that takes account of the criticisms that have been made of

'one-world' accounts. In comparing transcendental idealism with contemporary positions, my aim is not to make Kant fashionable, but to suggest that these positions can help us to see that a coherent thesis is unambiguously presented in the *Critique*.

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