

# Transcendental Realism, Empirical Realism and Transcendental Idealism

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The debate regarding the interpretation of Kant's idealism is usually seen as turning on the best way to understand his transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves: that it marks either a contrast between two types of thing (the 'two-object' or 'two-world' view) or one between two sides or aspects of ordinary empirical objects (the 'two-aspect' view).<sup>1</sup> But, even though I have long been associated with the latter camp, I have also thought for many years that this is not the most helpful way to frame the issue. The problem lies in an ambiguity inherent in the two-aspect view. It can be understood either metaphysically, as a thesis about the kinds of properties attributable to empirical objects, that is, as a form of property dualism in which these objects are assigned both phenomenal and noumenal properties, or methodologically, as a contrast between two ways in which such objects can be considered in a philosophical reflection on the conditions of their cognition. Accordingly, I take the fundamental question to be whether transcendental idealism is to be understood in the latter way or as a form of metaphysical dualism (whether as a thing or a property dualism being a matter of relative indifference). And I have further thought that the best way of addressing *that* question is through a consideration of the view which Kant opposes to transcendental idealism, namely, transcendental realism. If this realism is identified with a particular metaphysical doctrine then transcendental idealism must be as well; but if, as I maintain, transcendental realism cannot be so understood, then neither can Kant's idealism.<sup>2</sup>

I shall here argue somewhat obliquely for the latter alternative by exploring the nature of the difference between transcendental and empirical realism.<sup>3</sup> The discussion consists of four parts and a brief appendix. The first part maintains that rather than being

either a distinct ontological doctrine or a mere label for everything to which Kant was opposed, transcendental realism should be understood as the view that spatiotemporal predicates are applicable to things in general. Since this view is shared by all ontologies (at least all those with which Kant was concerned), transcendental realism is not committed to a particular ontology; but, since it is contrasted with an empirical realism, which limits the scope of these predicates to objects of possible experience, it is also not a vacuous label. And from this I conclude that transcendental idealism likewise does not constitute a distinct ontological position, but instead provides a radical alternative to ontology.<sup>4</sup> The second and third parts deal with two possible objections to this reading. The first is that it conflicts with Kant's official account, which charges transcendental realism with conflating appearances with things in themselves rather than with inflating claims about objects of possible experience into claims about things in general. By examining the relationship between the concepts involved, I show that there is no incompatibility between the two characterizations. The second line of objection is that such a non-metaphysical interpretation of transcendental idealism trivializes it by reducing it to a recommendation of epistemological modesty. I respond by acknowledging that transcendental idealism, so construed, does consist essentially in such a recommendation but denying that this trivializes it. The point is further explored in the fourth part, which analyses Kant's indirect argument for transcendental idealism drawn from his resolution of the mathematical antinomies and explores the therapeutic function of this idealism in his treatment of transcendental freedom. In the appendix, I surmise that one reason why many contemporary Kantians are dismissive of transcendental idealism is that they mistakenly assume that a central concern of the *Critique* is to establish a robust realism in the face of a radical sceptical challenge. I suggest instead that Kant argues *from* rather than *to* such realism and that his central concern is to limit its scope to objects of possible experience.

## I.

Kant defines transcendental realism in two places in the *Critique* and in each of them he contrasts it with transcendental idealism. In

the first of these, he characterizes it as the view 'which regards space and time as something given in themselves (independent of our sensibility)' and suggests that such a realist 'interprets outer appearances . . . as things in themselves, which would exist independently of us and our sensibility and thus would also be outside us according to pure concepts of the understanding'. By contrast, transcendental idealism is defined as 'the doctrine that all appearances are to be regarded as mere representations and not things in themselves, and accordingly that time and space are only sensible forms of our intuition, but not determinations given for themselves or conditions of objects as things in themselves' (A369).<sup>5</sup> In the second, transcendental realism is accused of making 'modifications of our sensibility into things subsisting in themselves, and hence makes mere representations into things in themselves', whereas transcendental idealism affirms that 'all objects of an experience possible for us, are nothing but appearances, i.e., mere representations, which, as they are represented, as extended beings or series of alterations, have outside our thoughts no existence grounded in itself' (A490–1/B518–19). Although it is much more explicit in the first, both accounts indicate that the dispute between the two forms of transcendentalism concerns primarily the nature of space and time and, as a consequence of this, the nature of things encountered in them – what Kant terms 'appearances'. In essence, Kant's charge is that by viewing space and time as 'given in themselves', that is to say, independently of the conditions of sensibility, transcendental realism conflates spatiotemporal entities, which for the transcendental idealist are 'mere appearances', with things in themselves.

Since any number of views might be characterized as regarding space and time as 'given in themselves' and since Kant himself accuses philosophies of many different stripes of conflating appearances with things in themselves, these characterizations of transcendental realism seem much too vague to define a metaphysical position with which transcendental idealism might meaningfully be contrasted.<sup>6</sup> Alternatively, if, as is sometimes done, transcendental realism is identified with the scientific realism of the Cartesians and Newtonians (roughly what Berkeley understood by 'materialism'), then the situation seems even worse. First, it implies that Kant's idealism is akin to Berkeley's, something which Kant vehemently and famously denied. Second, it invites the familiar

charge of neglected alternatives.<sup>7</sup> For, clearly, Kant did not intend to suggest that such realism and his idealism exhaust the philosophical universe. As we shall see, this issue becomes particularly pressing in connection with Kant's indirect argument for transcendental idealism through the negation of transcendental realism. Unless it is assumed that they are contradictory opposites, this argument cannot get off the ground.

We thus appear to find ourselves confronted with a dilemma. If transcendental realism is seen as an amorphous, ill-defined metaphysical theory, it becomes difficult to see how it could contribute to an understanding of transcendental idealism; whereas if we identify it with a particular metaphysical theory it leads to the outright dismissal of an argument which Kant thought to be central to his project and, depending on the nature of this theory, perhaps to a highly unattractive view of transcendental idealism as well. My proposed way out of this dilemma is through a consideration of the difference between a transcendental and an empirical realism. In so doing, I hope to show that the former is not to be understood as a distinct metaphysical or, more properly, ontological theory, while at the same time giving it enough shape to preserve the significance of its contrast with transcendental idealism.

The operative question is what makes transcendental realism *transcendental*, which, in turn, calls for an investigation of Kant's multiple uses of this highly elusive, yet ubiquitous, term. But since anything approaching an adequate treatment of the topic is well beyond the scope of the present article, it must suffice to note that Kant seems to work with at least two competing conceptions of the transcendental. The first and featured conception is the one that he introduces in his stipulative definitions of 'transcendental cognition' (A12/B25). According to these definitions, such cognition may (very roughly) be characterized as a second order activity concerned with an investigation of the a priori elements of our cognitive apparatus and the conditions and limits of our a priori cognition of objects.<sup>8</sup> The second conception is the traditional one, according to which transcendental cognition is concerned with the nature of things in general, that is, with the subject matter of ontology or *metaphysica generalis*, as understood by the Wolffian school.<sup>9</sup> And, just as Kant's contemporaries were quite familiar with the latter but had great difficulty understanding the former, so

for many present day readers the situation is virtually the reverse. Nevertheless, as we shall soon see, the recognition of the continued presence in the *Critique* of vestiges of this earlier conception is crucial for the understanding of transcendental realism and, therefore, transcendental idealism as well.<sup>10</sup>

A good illustration of the juxtaposition of these two conceptions of the transcendental is to be found in Kant's remark concerning the meaning of 'transcendental cognition', a remark which Kant advises the reader to keep well in mind, since its import extends to everything that follows (A56/B80). The bulk of this remark is devoted to underscoring the distinction between transcendental and a priori cognition. Although the former is obviously a priori, it differs from ordinary, first order a priori cognition, such as is provided in mathematics, by the fact that it is concerned with the possibility of the latter. Our present interest, however, lies in the concluding and less frequently noted portion of this remark, where Kant adds parenthetically:

Likewise the use [*Gebrauch*] of space about all objects in general would also be transcendental; but if it is restricted solely to objects of the senses, then it is called empirical. The difference between the transcendental and the empirical therefore belongs only to the critique of cognitions and does not concern their relation to their object. [A56–7/B81]

Whereas the contrast between transcendental and a priori *cognition* is a matter of *level*, that between a transcendental and an empirical *use* is a matter of *scope*, which is why it pertains to a critique of cognition. Accordingly, it is here that Kant's employment of 'transcendental' overlaps with the traditional understanding of the term. Moreover, this is not an isolated occurrence or regression on Kant's part to a pre-Critical standpoint, since, as we shall soon see, he systematically uses the term in precisely this way in contrasting a transcendental with an empirical use of the categories and principles of pure understanding. In both cases, it amounts to a contrast between a generic use with respect to all objects and one restricted to a particular domain of objects, namely, phenomena or objects of possible experience.

This has two implications, which are essential to the proper understanding of both transcendental realism and transcendental idealism. The first is that the difference between transcendental

and empirical realism consists in the scope assigned to spatiotemporal predicates rather than the degree or kind of reality attributed to them. In other words, it is not that empirical realism assigns a lesser degree of reality to such predicates, but merely that it restricts their applicability to the domain of possible experience. The second is that, though transcendental realism is committed to the proposition that spatiotemporal predicates are ontological in the traditional sense of applying with strict universality, it is not, as such, committed to any *particular* ontology of space and time.

The latter point is reflected in the Transcendental Aesthetic, where Kant begins by raising the purportedly ontological question: What are space and time? Four possibilities are introduced. They might be: a) actual entities (substances); b) determinations of things (accidents); c) relations of things that 'would pertain to them even if they were not intuited'; or d) 'relations that only attach to the form of intuition alone, and thus to the subjective constitution of our mind, without which these predicates could not be attached to anything at all' (A23/B37–38).<sup>11</sup> The first three represent the traditional ontological options and, therefore, apply to things in general. And of these the second and third correspond respectively to the Newtonian and Leibnizian views, which were the main competitors at Kant's time.<sup>12</sup> The fourth is Kant's Critical view and reflects his rejection of the whole ontological framework in which the question has traditionally been posed, one in which it is assumed that *whatever* status is given to spatiotemporal predicates they apply with strict universality. Thus, from Kant's more comprehensive point of view, the dispute between the Newtonians and the Leibnizians is reduced to a family quarrel.

Seen in this light, Kant's basic charge against transcendental realism (in all its forms) is that it erroneously assumes that spatiotemporal predicates, which he limits to the domain of possible experience, have an unrestricted scope. Moreover, since Kant's doctrine of the ideality of space and time provides the warrant for his scope restriction, this further suggests that transcendental idealism, *even as it appears in the Aesthetic*, is best seen as a deflationary proposal rather than as an ontological thesis in direct competition with the various forms of transcendental realism.<sup>13</sup> Otherwise expressed, inasmuch as the first three of the four possible accounts of space and time that Kant introduces exhaust the recognized ontological alternatives, the fourth, which

represents Kant's Critical position, might be regarded as proposing a radical alternative *to* ontology rather than, as it usually taken to be, a novel move *within* ontology. Specifically, the alternative is to consider space and time as 'two sources of cognition' (A38/B55), that is, as conditions of our *cognition* of things, rather than as themselves either things (substances), properties, or relations of things as such.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, this does not suffice to establish Kant's restriction thesis, since, for all that has been said so far, it might still be the case that space and time are conditions of the cognition of things in general. Thus, it is essential for Kant to demonstrate their connection with human sensibility. What must be shown is that the universality of space and time *within* human experience, a point on which the empirical and the transcendental realist agree, can be understood only on the assumption that their representations are a priori contributions *of* human sensibility, from which the scope limitation to objects of possible human experience (or at least to the experience of cognizers with our forms of sensibility) follows immediately.<sup>15</sup> Whether Kant actually succeeds in showing this is another and more contentious question, which I cannot consider here.<sup>16</sup>

## 2.

Even setting aside the question of the cogency of Kant's arguments, however, it might be objected that this analysis misrepresents Kant's actual accounts of transcendental realism, which make no explicit reference to things in general, but refer instead to things in themselves. In fact, rather than accusing transcendental realism of a simple scope confusion, we have seen that he charges it with the seemingly more heinous crime of making 'modifications of our sensibility' or 'mere representations' into things in themselves. How, then, it may be asked, are these accounts to be reconciled?

Although dealing with this question will unavoidably require a digression from the main line of argument, my hopes are that this can be done fairly expeditiously and that it will eventually help to put the argument in a somewhat clearer light. To anticipate, I shall claim that even though the concepts of a thing (or something) in general and of a thing in itself occupy distinct spheres of philosophical

reflection, they are related in such a way that if spatiotemporal (or, indeed, any) predicates were applicable to the former, they would *ipso facto* be applicable to the latter as well.

As textual support for this reading, I shall rely primarily on Kant's account of the putative transcendental use of the categories and their associated principles, by which he understands one with regard to the cognition of things in general.<sup>17</sup> As was the case with spatiotemporal predicates, this is contrasted with an empirical use, which is restricted to the cognition of objects of possible experience or appearances. Although Kant defines the categories (nominally) as concepts of an object in general, he denies that they could have the former employment, since they would then lack the schemata necessary to link them up to the world.<sup>18</sup> But he also suggests that if (*per impossibile*) they had such an employment, 'as conditions of the possibility of things in general, they [could] be extended to objects in themselves (without any restriction to our sensibility)' (A129/B178). Similarly, Kant states that, 'The transcendental use of a concept in any sort of principle consists in its being related to things in general and in themselves' (A238/B298), which suggests that he considered the relation of a concept to things in themselves to be a direct consequence of its relation to things in general and, therefore, as not requiring any further explanation.<sup>19</sup>

However, since this connection may not be as obvious to contemporary readers as it apparently was to Kant, it will be useful to take a closer look at the concepts involved. To begin with, we have seen that Kant takes the concept of a thing in general over whole cloth from the ontological tradition and that it encompasses whatever pertains to the thought of a thing as such. Accordingly, the project of ontology, traditionally understood, is to provide cognition of things by means of an analysis of this concept. And since this involves an illicit transcendental employment of the understanding, Kant proclaims famously that, '[T]he proud name of ontology, which presumes to offer synthetic *a priori* cognitions of things in general in a systematic doctrine . . . must give way to the modest one of a mere analytic of the pure understanding' (A247/B304). As this passage indicates, the crux of the problem lies in the pretension of ontology to provide synthetic *a priori* cognitions of things in general, when, in fact, all that it can deliver are analytic judgments, which simply unpack what is already thought or presupposed in the concept of an object as such. By



contrast, a 'mere analytic', that is, Kant's Transcendental Analytic, supposedly accounts for the possibility of synthetic a priori cognitions involving the categories by restricting their scope to objects of possible experience, just as the Transcendental Aesthetic does for space and time.

Whereas Kant took over the concept of a thing in general from the ontological tradition and criticized the way in which it was usually used, the concept of a thing in itself is a creation of his own, forming one part of the contrast pair: appearance—thing in itself. Moreover, although this concept shares with that of a thing in general the thought of an independence from any putative conditions of sensible intuition, it understands this in a significantly different way. In the latter case, it is simply a matter of disregarding the manner in which objects are given in such intuition. Since this manner is assumed not to pertain to the thought of a thing qua thing, it is not considered relevant to a traditional ontological reflection. But inasmuch as the concept of a thing in itself contains the thought of something as it is in itself, independently of any sensible intuition, it requires an active factoring out or exclusion of any contribution of sensibility rather than merely a refusal or failure to factor it in.

Nevertheless, it should now be clear why Kant moves so seamlessly from the thought of things in general to that of things in themselves. Since whatever is predicated of the former is predicated of things absolutely or in every relation, it must also be predicated of them as they are in themselves.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, it follows from this that there is no incompatibility between an account of transcendental realism as erroneously attributing spatiotemporal predicates to things in general and Kant's own charge that such realism is guilty of attributing them to things in themselves, thereby treating mere appearances as if they were things in themselves. On the contrary, I believe that the diagnosis offered here helps us to understand why, when seen from Kant's point of view, the transcendental realist would invariably make the latter mistake. It is precisely because he inflates spatiotemporal predicates into predicates of things in general that such a realist unavoidably attributes them to things in themselves as well.

**3.**

Insofar as this reading emphasizes the importance for Kant's project of denying the non-spatiotemporality of things in themselves rather than merely maintaining a cautious critical agnosticism regarding the matter, it is in agreement with Paul Guyer's. We are diametrically opposed, however, in our views regarding the nature, implications and success of this denial. For Guyer, it is a straightforward thesis in dogmatic metaphysics. As he puts it, 'Transcendental idealism is not a skeptical reminder that we cannot be sure that things as they are in themselves are also as we represent them to be; it is a harshly dogmatic insistence that we can be quite sure that things as they are in themselves cannot be as we represent them to be.'<sup>21</sup> And, in light of this, he dismisses my attempted rehabilitation of transcendental idealism as an 'anodyne recommendation of epistemological modesty'.<sup>22</sup>

That transcendental idealism on my reading involves a recommendation of epistemological modesty rather than an illicit venture into dogmatic metaphysics cannot be gainsaid.<sup>23</sup> The question is whether it is also 'anodyne' or otherwise trivial. This line of objection seems to have been fuelled, at least in part, by my previous attempts to argue that the ideality thesis, that is, the denial of the applicability of spatiotemporal predicates to things as they are in themselves, follows directly from the connection of these predicates with the forms of human sensibility, together with the Kantian conception of things as they are in themselves or, more precisely, things *considered* as they are in themselves. Since by the latter is meant things considered independently of their epistemic relation to human sensibility and its conditions or, as Kant sometimes puts it, things as objects of a 'pure understanding', it follows that if space and time are, as Kant argues in the Aesthetic, forms or conditions of human sensibility, then they cannot also pertain to things so considered.<sup>24</sup>

Unfortunately, this has generated the suspicion that I have endeavoured to resolve a substantive metaphysical dispute by a semantic sleight of hand, making the non-spatiotemporality of things as they are in themselves virtually into a matter of definition.<sup>25</sup> In addition, it is sometimes argued that simply because, given the nature of our sensibility, things happen to appear to us as spatiotemporal, it does not follow that they are not also in themselves 'really' such.

And, similarly, simply because in considering things as they are in themselves one is considering them apart from their epistemic relation to the human mind, it does not follow that they do not really (in themselves) have the features that they are taken to have in virtue of this relation.<sup>26</sup>

Since this line of objection is composed of two distinct parts, I shall respond briefly to each. My response to the first part is simply that it ignores the context of the problem, which is that of the classical neglected alternative objection, that is, the charge that Kant neglected the possibility that space and time might *both* be forms of human sensibility *and* pertain in some unspecified way to things as they are in themselves.<sup>27</sup> It does not seem to me to be inappropriate to address *that* objection by pointing out that it rests on a misunderstanding of the terms. Nor does it trivialize Kant's position. Rather, it indicates that the real work is done in the arguments for the claim that space and time are forms of sensibility, by which is meant that they structure the way in which the human mind receives its sensory data in virtue of its peculiar manner of intuiting.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, however problematic these arguments may be, it should at least be clear that neither they nor the conclusions that Kant draws from them are trivial.

With regard to the second part of the objection, my position is that its central claim is correct but irrelevant. Although it is certainly true that the fact that one can consider *x* without considering its *y*-ness does not entail that it does not possess this property, this is not what is being claimed when spatiotemporal predicates are denied of things considered as they are in themselves. The point is rather that in considering things in this manner one is, *ex hypothesi*, considering them apart from the condition under which alone such predicates are applicable to them, namely, in their relation to human sensibility. Accordingly, it is not simply the case that spatiotemporal predicates are ignored or set aside when things are considered in this manner, but that they are denied of the object *qua* considered apart from that relation.<sup>29</sup> The situation is analogous to the treatment of weight in Newtonian physics. Just as for Newton bodies may be said to have weight only insofar as they are considered as standing in a relation of attraction and repulsion to other bodies, so for Kant things may be said to have spatiotemporal properties only insofar as they are considered in their epistemic relation to the human mind and its forms of sensibility.<sup>30</sup>

In spite of significant disanalogies, in both cases it is a matter of a thing considered in a certain relation in virtue of which it falls under a particular description, and the same thing considered apart from this relation, as a result of which the description no longer applies.

The point that I really wish to emphasize, however, is that this whole line of objection reflects an erroneous, albeit widely held, transcendently realistic picture of Kant's idealism. According to this familiar picture, things as they are in themselves are equated with things as they 'really are', whereas things as they appear are things as they are for us, subject to the limits imposed by the nature of our sensibility.<sup>31</sup> And, given this picture, Kant's claim that space and time are merely empirically rather than transcendently real is taken as implying that they are not 'fully' or 'really real', which leads to another uncomfortable dilemma. Depending on one's view of the 'metaphysics of transcendental idealism', we can either attribute to Kant the view that things only seem to us to be spatiotemporal, though in truth they are not, or take him to be positing a distinct set of entities (appearances), which really are spatiotemporal, whereas things in themselves (the 'real things') are not.<sup>32</sup> In other words, according to this picture, transcendental idealism seems to require us to sacrifice the reality of either our cognition or its object.

Admittedly, much of Kant's terminology strongly suggests this unappetizing picture; indeed, it might be claimed that he was never completely free from it.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, inasmuch as it measures human knowledge in light of the ideal of a 'God's eye' view, which it was the express intention of Kant's so-called 'Copernican revolution' to reject, I believe that it distorts the thrust of his view in the *Critique*. And, though this picture might be challenged in a number of ways, I have here attempted to do so by suggesting that the difference between a transcendental and a merely empirical realism concerns the scope of the spatiotemporal predicates they both affirm rather than the kind or degree of reality assigned to them. Furthermore, if this is correct, it follows that transcendental idealism does not require either of the above mentioned forms of sacrifice. What it requires is, rather, the abandonment of the unwarranted presumption that the spatiotemporal structure of our experience is projectible onto things in general.

In order to appreciate the force of Kant's claim, however, it is

essential to keep in mind that the spatiotemporal structure of human experience does *seem* to be projectible in this way, which is why, without the salutary lessons of a critique of pure reason, we are all predisposed to be transcendental realists. Accordingly, Kant found it necessary to curb this projective tendency, which he accomplishes in two steps. The first occurs in the intuition arguments in the Aesthetic, where Kant argues that our representations of space and time are intuitions (singular representations) rather than concepts (general representations). This provides the basis for the reassignment of these representations to sensibility rather than to the understanding (the 'faculty of concepts'); and, as already indicated, this reassignment is crucial because the understanding, by its very nature, tends to project its 'pure' (a priori) concepts onto things in general.<sup>34</sup> The second step, which presupposes the first, consists in the introduction of the concept of the noumenon as a limiting concept, the function of which is to 'limit the pretension of sensibility' (A255/B311).<sup>35</sup> Since this 'pretension' is precisely that sensible, that is, spatiotemporal, predicates apply to things in general and, therefore, to things as they are in themselves, such a limitation is obviously central to Kant's 'critical' project.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, it brings with it the replacement of a transcendental by an empirical realism and therewith a commitment to transcendental idealism.

#### 4.

We learn in the Transcendental Aesthetic and Analytic that the projection of the spatiotemporal structure of our experience onto things in general is unwarranted, but it is only in the Dialectic that we come to appreciate that it is also disastrous. This is the clear message of the most important part of the Dialectic: The Antinomy of Pure Reason, where Kant warns ominously that 'If we would give in to the deception of transcendental realism, then neither nature nor freedom would be left' (A543/B571).

The loss of nature on the assumption of transcendental realism is the main lesson to be learned from the 'mathematical antinomies'. Confining ourselves to the first of these, the problem is that the endeavour to think the spatiotemporal world as a whole, which might be characterized as the 'cosmological project', leads to two

equally warranted but seemingly contradictory conclusions, namely, that this world is infinite in duration and extent and that it is finite in both respects. And this, in turn, suggests that the very concept of a spatiotemporal world, like that of a square circle, must be self-contradictory, since it generates contradictory entailments.<sup>37</sup>

In essence, Kant's resolution of this antinomial conflict consists in claiming that these alternatives are really mere contraries rather than genuine contradictories and that both are false. This is because these conclusions share the unwarranted assumption that the spatiotemporal world is a 'whole existing in itself' (A506/B534).<sup>38</sup> Given this assumption, it follows that the world must have a determinate duration and extent, which presumably must be either finite or infinite; that is to say, there must be some 'fact of the matter' regarding the age and size of the world. After rejecting this assumption on the grounds that it generates a contradiction, Kant argues indirectly for transcendental idealism by implying that transcendental realism (in all its forms) is irrevocably committed to it, whereas transcendental idealism is not. Thus, the truth of this idealism supposedly follows from the negation of transcendental realism.

Although virtually every step in this argument is deeply controversial, I must here limit myself to a brief discussion of two questions:<sup>39</sup> 1. Why is transcendental realism necessarily committed to the proposition that the world is a 'whole existing in itself,' such that it must be either finite or infinite in the relevant respects? 2. Assuming that transcendental idealism follows from the denial of transcendental realism, what does this tell us about the nature of this idealism?

As elsewhere in the Dialectic, Kant's diagnosis of the pathology of transcendental realism in the cosmological domain turns on linking it with his doctrine of transcendental illusion.<sup>40</sup> The locus of this illusion is the seemingly innocent principle of reason: 'If the conditioned is given, then the whole series of all conditions for it is also given' (A497/B525). Since the conditions at issue here are just the components of the sensible world, to assume that the whole series of such conditions is given is to assume that this world constitutes a 'whole existing in itself'. What makes this principle seemingly innocent is that it merely expresses the explanatory requirement to seek the conditions for every conditioned and not to stop until the absolute totality of these conditions, which by

definition is itself 'unconditioned', is attained. What makes it illusory is that such an absolute totality can never be given (whether as finite or infinite) in a possible experience. But since the cosmological dispute concerns the duration and extent of the spatiotemporal world, it purports to be about something that is, at least in principle, an object of possible experience. Thus, the transcendental realist is led by this illusory principle to 'hypostatize', as it were, the spatiotemporal world, that is, to treat it as a higher order empirical object, even though such an 'object' can never be given in accordance with the conditions of possible experience.

In view of our previous analysis, this hypostatization, can be seen as the direct result of the inflation of an empirical realism regarding objects of possible experience into a transcendental one encompassing things in general and in themselves. Although I believe that this concurs with Kant's own account, he poses the issue in somewhat different terms. According to Kant, the key to the problem lies in the assumed 'givenness' of the conditions. Whereas the participants in the antinomial dispute (who are all transcendental realists) assume that the totality of conditions is actually 'given' [*gegeben*] together with any conditioned (in the timeless manner in which the totality of its premises is 'given' together with the conclusion of a bit of syllogistic reasoning), Kant points out that, as spatiotemporal entities or occurrences, these conditions are merely 'given as a problem' [*aufgegeben*] (A498/B526), by which he means that they are accessible only through the regress or 'synthesis' connecting something conditioned with its conditions. Thus, within this context, it no longer makes sense to speak of an absolute totality of such conditions, save perhaps as a regulative idea to be approached asymptotically but never attained.

For Kant, however, the transcendental realist is blocked from appealing to the *gegeben*–*aufgegeben* distinction because he regards the synthesis connecting something conditioned with its conditions as one 'of the mere understanding, which represents things as they are without paying attention to whether and how we might achieve acquaintance with them' (A498/B527).<sup>41</sup> In other words, it is precisely because the transcendental realist systematically ignores the manner in which these conditions are cognitively accessible in a possible experience that he tacitly assumes that they must be given in their totality in the way in which a complete set of premises is given together with a conclusion. And it is because he

assumes this to be the case that such a realist is unable to resist the pull of the illusory principle that the absolute totality of conditions is given, even though it is as such not accessible to the human mind. By contrast, for the transcendental idealist the situation looks rather different. Although it remains natural for such an idealist to *think* that there must be a totality of conditions, that is, some ultimate fact of the matter about the duration and extent of the spatiotemporal world, which would be accessible through a 'God's eye' view of things, she is also aware that this thought is illusory and, therefore, is able to avoid succumbing to it.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, what makes the latter possible is the realization that the scope of the principles underlying the synthesis connecting a conditioned with its conditions is limited to possible experience, which curbs the natural propensity of our reason to extend its reach to the unconditioned.

As already noted, it is only if we view the relation between the two forms of transcendentalism in this way that Kant's indirect argument for transcendental idealism through the negation of transcendental realism can even get off the ground. Nevertheless, it is clear that the negation of transcendental realism does not entail transcendental idealism in any of the metaphysical forms in which it is usually understood, which is why this argument is so frequently dismissed out of hand, particularly by those who are hostile to transcendental idealism on other grounds.<sup>43</sup>

Surely, however, the principle of charity requires us to ask if this dismissal is too hasty, perhaps based on a failure to appreciate what it is intended to show. Adopting this principle, then, let us consider what transcendental idealism must be like, if it were to be established through the negation of transcendental realism. And when the issue is posed in this way several points become evident. To begin with, it follows that the two forms of transcendentalism must occupy the same logical space. Thus, if transcendental realism is an ontological doctrine, transcendental idealism must be one also. But we have seen that transcendental realism cannot be understood in this way, since it encompasses ontologies of widely different stripes – indeed, if my reading is correct, *all* ontologies. Consequently, transcendental idealism must likewise be understood in non-ontological terms.

This further suggests that the force of transcendental idealism is deflationary and its function, particularly in the Dialectic, largely



therapeutic. As I have argued above, it provides the requisite means for resolving the contradiction of reason with itself, which, if unresolved, would spell ‘the euthanasia of pure reason’ (A407/B434). The therapeutic fruitfulness of transcendental idealism is also illustrated, however, by Kant’s treatment of the problem of freedom. In its canonical Kantian form, the problem is to reconcile the assumption that we are transcendently free agents with the conception of ourselves as causally conditioned parts of nature. On the traditional readings, this is supposedly accomplished by a division of metaphysical labour licensed by the resolution of the Third Antinomy. Depending on one’s version of this idealism, Kant’s position is taken to be either that the phenomenal self is causally determined and the noumenal self transcendently free (the two-object view) or, alternatively, that there is a single self, which is determined qua phenomenon and free qua noumenon (the two-aspect view).

It is generally acknowledged, however, that neither of these proposed solutions is satisfactory.<sup>44</sup> In addition to inheriting the notorious difficulties associated with the two-object view, the first appears to commit Kant to an incoherent doctrine of two selves and to yield highly counter-intuitive results regarding the assignment of moral responsibility. As Lewis White Beck pithily put it: ‘We assume the freedom of the noumenal man, but we hang the phenomenal man.’<sup>45</sup> The second proposed solution is commonly thought to be problematic because it apparently requires the ascription of incompatible properties to the self, a difficulty that cannot be overcome simply by localizing these ascriptions to distinct points of view. As Terence Irwin points out, if an action is causally determined qua phenomenal event, then it is causally determined *tout court*, even though considering it from another point of view (noumenally) may involve abstracting from or bracketing the causal conditions of the action.<sup>46</sup>

In order to see how transcendental idealism might provide a somewhat different way out of this all too familiar morass, we need only revisit some of the considerations operative in the resolution of the mathematical antinomies. In particular, we must keep in mind that the whole dispute rested on the shared metaphysical assumption that there was some fact of the matter at issue. Now much the same thing may be said about the dispute regarding freedom, where it is noteworthy that both the purported Kantian

solutions and the objections to them are metaphysical in nature. In short, the assumption that the question 'Are we really free?' is one of deep metaphysical fact is not only made by Kant's critics but attributed by them to Kant as well. Moreover, if my analysis is correct, this is the unavoidable consequence of viewing both the problem itself and Kant's proposed solution to it through transcendently realistic spectacles.

My claim, then, is that not only is transcendental idealism not committed to the assumption that there must be some noumenal fact of the matter regarding freedom, but it functions therapeutically to disabuse us of any such assumption. But, whereas in the case of the mathematical antinomies this therapy served merely to block the threat of a radical scepticism, here it serves also to preserve a place for a meaningful conception of freedom, that is, one adequate to the conception of ourselves as autonomous agents. Basically, what Kant finds necessary is a warrant to assert our freedom from 'the practical point of view', which is quite distinct from a justification of the metaphysical thesis that we are 'noumenally free'. Accordingly, the problem is to explain how we can be warranted to assert something from the practical point of view that we are explicitly prohibited from asserting theoretically.<sup>47</sup> And, assuming that this requires preserving both something like the Kantian conception of freedom and the normativity of the principles of theoretical reason, the only conceivable way in which this could be accomplished is by limiting the scope of the latter. In other words, it is done by deflating a transcendental to a merely empirical realism, which, once again, is just what transcendental idealism does. With this deflation in place, it becomes possible to view both the theoretical and the practical points of view as having their own set of norms, while avoiding the assumption that there must be some context-independent truth or fact of the matter. Otherwise expressed, Kantian dualism is normative rather than ontological.<sup>48</sup>

## Conclusion

I conclude with an observation regarding the endeavour of some contemporary Kantian anti-idealists to divorce Kant's empirical realism from the allegedly disreputable and unnecessary baggage of

transcendental idealism. What these philosophers fail to realize is that this leaves them with a *transcendental* realism, which should give them reason to pause before attempting to separate the substantive results of the *Critique* from Kant's idealism. Moreover, I believe that, apart from being held captive by a misguided picture of the latter, the reason why this point is so often overlooked is that it is assumed that the real burden of the *Critique* is to establish a robust empirical realism in the face of a radical sceptical challenge.<sup>49</sup>

In calling attention to this prevalent tendency, I am not suggesting that Kant was unconcerned with external world scepticism – indeed, he claimed it to be a ‘scandal of philosophy and universal human reason’ that the existence of outer things must be taken merely on faith’ (Bxxxix). My point is, rather, that this was far from the main concern of the *Analytic*, not to mention the *Critique* as a whole.<sup>50</sup> On the contrary, I think it reasonably clear that the central line of argument of the *Analytic* proceeds *from* rather than *to* an empirical realism and that it has two primary goals, namely, to determine the a priori conditions of the possibility of experience, which are also conditions of the possibility of such a realism, and to show that this realism is *merely* empirical, which is the fundamental tenet of transcendental idealism.<sup>51</sup> In short, to be a transcendental idealist is to be an empirical realist and vice versa. Why should one want to be anything more?<sup>52</sup>

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Recently, Allen Wood has termed these the ‘causality’ and ‘identity’ interpretations respectively (*Kant* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 63–76). I agree with Wood that the label ‘two-world’ is a misnomer, since it is applicable to both versions; but, for reasons that I cannot get into here, I am not convinced that his proposal is more useful than the standard terminology for characterizing the contrasting interpretations of transcendental idealism. Thus, I shall, for the most part, continue to use the latter.
- <sup>2</sup> In arguing for a non-metaphysical interpretation of transcendental idealism, I do not intend to deny that this idealism has important ontological or, more broadly, metaphysical implications. Clearly, the arguments of the *Aesthetic*, *Analytic* and *Dialectic*, all of which are intimately connected with transcendental idealism, have such implications and were intended

by Kant to have them. Thus, if anyone wishes to preserve the term ‘metaphysical’ for Kant’s central claims I have no objection. In fact, there would be ample Kantian support for doing so. As will become clear in due course, what I wish to insist upon here is simply that transcendental idealism is not itself to be understood as a metaphysical theory that affirms that the phenomenal has a lesser degree or kind of reality than the noumenal.

- 3 This approach is compatible with, but distinct from, my previous treatments of the topic, the most recent and comprehensive of which is to be found in *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*, revised and enlarged edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), especially pp. 27–34.
- 4 The view I am here attributing to Kant has obvious affinities with the position which Hilary Putnam terms ‘internal realism’, and which he regards as Kantian. I am not sure, however, to what extent Putnam would be willing to accept my reading of Kant as an account of what Kant actually held as opposed to what he should have held. For a useful discussion of Putnam’s ‘internal realism’ and its relation to Kant see Dermot Moran, ‘Hilary Putnam and Immanuel Kant: two “internal realists”?’, *Synthese* 123 (2000), pp. 65–104.
- 5 All references to the *Critique of Pure Reason* are to the standard A/B pagination of the first and second editions and cite the translation of Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). References to other works of Kant are to the volume and page of *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, herausgegeben von der Deutschen (formerly Königlichen Preussischen) Akademie der Wissenschaften, 29 volumes (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter (and predecessors), 1902ff). Citations from the translation of Kant’s *Inaugural Dissertation* (abbreviated as ID) are to the translation by David Walford, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, Theoretical Philosophy 1755–1770*, translated and edited by David Walford in collaboration with Ralf Meerbote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); from the *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* (abbreviated as Pro) are to the Gary Hatfield translation, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, edited by Henry Allison and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- 6 This seems to be denied by Ameriks, who at least at one point characterizes transcendental realism as a ‘particular metaphysical position’, albeit without further identifying the position in question. See Karl Ameriks, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 290.
- 7 Interpreters who take this view include Colin Turbayne, ‘Kant’s refutation of dogmatic idealism’, *Philosophical Quarterly* 5 (1955), 228, and

Sadik J. Al-Azm, *The Origins of Kant's Argument in the Antinomies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 148.

- 8 I say stipulative definitions, since Kant offers a significantly different one in each edition, a point which is often overlooked because of their partial overlap. In the first edition, Kant writes: 'I call all cognition **transcendental** that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our *a priori* concepts of objects in general' (A12). In the second, transcendental cognition is defined as that which 'is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our mode of cognition of objects insofar as this is to be possible *a priori*' (B25). Although these definitions have been frequently discussed in the German, philologically oriented literature, the most thorough treatment of the subject is by Tilmann Pinder, 'Kant's Begriff der transzendentalen Erkenntnis', *Kant-Studien* 77 (1986), 1–40. According to Pinder, in the A version Kant is trying to indicate that the central focus of transcendental cognition and, therefore, of the *Critique* itself will be on our *a priori* *concepts* of objects rather than on objects (or things) themselves, which would characterize the ontological approach. Since a concern with such concepts involves also one with the objects (if any) supposedly falling under them, it will be concerned (albeit indirectly) with the latter as well. Thus, Kant's use of the 'not so much . . . but rather' ['*nicht sowohl . . . sondern*'] locution. By contrast, in the B version, Pinder thinks that Kant's focus has shifted to a more narrow concern with the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments, which reflects the central concern of the *Prolegomena*. Since the details of this shift, as important as they may be for an understanding of the development of Kant's thought, are not directly relevant to the concern of this article, I have attempted to provide a characterization of Kant's definitions that covers both versions.
- 9 Wolff describes ontology, which he equates with first philosophy, as 'that part of philosophy which treats of being in general and of the general affections of being'. And he thereby defines it as 'the science of being in general, or insofar as it is being'. (Christian Wolff, *Preliminary Discourse on Philosophy in General*, 72, translated by Richard J. Blackwell (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc., 1983), p. 39). Similar formulations are to be found elsewhere in Wolff and in Baumgarten.
- 10 This conception of the transcendental is obviously at work in Kant's dismissive treatment of the *transcendentalia* of scholastic metaphysics (B112–16).
- 11 That Kant lists four possibilities, rather than merely the three that I suggested in the first edition of *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, has been noted by Lorne Falkenstein, *Kant's Intuitionism: A Commentary on the Transcendental Aesthetic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995),

- p. 147. As he correctly notes, this was already pointed out by both Hans Vaihinger, *Commentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft 2* (Stuttgart: W. Spemann, 1881–92), pp. 131–4, and Gottfried Martin, *Kant's Metaphysics and Theory of Science*, trans. Peter Lucas (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1955), pp. 11–12. Moreover, there are several other texts in which Kant clearly distinguishes between these possibilities, including ID 2: 400 and 403, *Reflexion* 5298: 18, 146–7, and *Reflexion* 5404: 18, 174. Nevertheless, at least from the time of the *Dissertation*, Kant effectively assumed that the only two alternatives worthy of serious consideration were the Newtonian and the Leibnizian positions.
- <sup>12</sup> It might be wondered why Kant should claim that the Leibnizians ‘ontologized’ space and time in this sense, since, like Kant, Leibniz held that they were ‘ideal’ in the sense that they pertain only to phenomena. Quite apart from the question of the adequacy of his interpretation of Leibniz, however, it is clear that Kant’s Leibniz is committed to the thesis that spatiotemporal predicates (properly construed) are applicable to things in general. As Kant saw it, this is because ‘Leibniz intellectualized the appearances’ (A271/B327), by which Kant meant that for Leibniz the difference between what ‘appears’ or is sensibly represented and what is grasped intellectually or conceptually is a matter of degree of clarity and distinctness rather than of kind. Thus, although Kant was well aware that Leibnizian monads are not in space and time, he also insisted that for Leibniz the spatiotemporal relations holding between the ‘*phenomena bene fundata*’ are reducible in principle (though not for us) to the purely conceptual relations supposedly holding at the monadological level. Moreover, the latter relations are clearly thought by the Leibnizians to apply to things in general. I discuss this issue in *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (2004 edn), pp. 29–31 and at greater length in ‘Kant and the two dogmas of rationalism’ (to appear in *Blackwell Companion to the Rationalists*, edited by Alan Nelson).
- <sup>13</sup> I emphasize the Aesthetic because it is here that the ontological reading of Kant’s ideality thesis seems most compelling. Thus, if this reading can be challenged here, the stage is set for a comprehensive non-metaphysical interpretation of transcendental idealism.
- <sup>14</sup> Once again, if anyone wishes to insist that this remains a move within ontology because it involves a global rejection of the generally accepted ontological alternatives, I have no objection. I would point out, however, that it fundamentally changes the nature of the game by transforming what were formerly regarded as ontological into epistemic conditions.
- <sup>15</sup> Kant holds open the (logical) possibility of both finite cognizers with forms of sensibility other than space and time and of a non-sensible (intellectual) mode of intuition.

- <sup>16</sup> I analyze and attempt to defend Kant's argument in *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (2000 edn), esp. pp. 122–32. Here, I wish merely to point out that a direct and important corollary of this reading is the assignment of a central place to the intuition arguments of the Aesthetic, since it is through these alone that Kant attempts to link the representations of space and time with human sensibility. Assuming their apriority, if space and time were assigned to the understanding rather than to sensibility, Kant would have had to conclude that they are predicable of things in general. Accordingly, it is of no little significance to the Critical project, for Kant to be able to show that, 'Space is not a discursive or, as is said, general concept of relations of things in general, but a pure intuition' (A24–5/B39).
- <sup>17</sup> In addition to the passages cited below, Kant refers to a putative transcendental use of the pure concepts and/or their associated principles at A139/B178, A19/B266, A242, A246/B303, A247/B304, A296/B352–3, A402–3, A515/B544. In most of these places it is contrasted with a legitimate empirical use. In the Transcendental Deduction, however, Kant views this distinction in a quite different way with respect to the faculties of sense, imagination and apperception, each of which is claimed to have a legitimate transcendental use as well as an empirical one (A94/B127). But here 'transcendental' refers to their function as conditions of the possibility of experience, which obviously does not involve any reference to things in general.
- <sup>18</sup> Although Kant explicitly denies that the pure categories can be defined at A245, he there also states that they are 'nothing other than the representations of things in general, insofar as the manifold of their intuition must be thought through one or another of these logical functions'. For Kant's definitions, see A93/B126, A248/B305, A253 and A290/B346. Thus, following Lewis White Beck, I think it best to regard Kant as providing a nominal definition of the categories. See Beck, 'Kant's Theory of Definition', *Studies in the Philosophy of Kant* (Indianapolis, New York, Kansas City: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc., 1965), pp. 61–73.
- <sup>19</sup> See, for example, Bxxvii, where Kant claims that if the distinction between things as objects of experience and the very same things as things in themselves were not drawn, then the principle of causality would be valid of things in general as efficient causes; and B410, where Kant suggests that if the rational psychologists were right, synthetic propositions 'could reach as far as things in general and in themselves'.
- <sup>20</sup> See A324–5/B380–82.
- <sup>21</sup> Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 333.

- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 336.
- <sup>23</sup> Kant himself explicitly says as much when he remarks in response to the Garve-Feder Review: 'The principle that governs and determines my idealism throughout is ... All cognition of things out of mere pure understanding or pure reason is nothing but sheer illusion, and there is truth only in experience' (Pro 4: 374).
- <sup>24</sup> By a 'pure understanding' Kant here means one which, unlike ours, operates independently of the conditions of sensibility, that is, one which purports to cognize objects through the pure or unschematized categories. This locution is especially prominent in the Phenomena and Noumena chapter.
- <sup>25</sup> A related but somewhat different version of the trivality objection has been voiced recently by Rae Langton, *Kantian Humility, Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 8–12. Focusing on Kant's denial that we can have knowledge of things in themselves (which is what she understands by 'Kantian humility') rather than on their non-spatiotemporality, Langton argues that, on my reading, this supposedly momentous discovery on Kant's part reduces to the trivial analytic claim that we cannot know things in themselves because doing so would (by definition) mean knowing them in abstraction from the conditions of our knowledge. My response is that Kant's revolutionary and certainly non-trivial claim is that our cognition is governed by sensible conditions. Granted, given this, together with Kant's account of what knowledge of things in themselves (or as they are in themselves) would require, the unknowability thesis follows. But this hardly makes the latter claim trivial, particularly since the transcendental realists whom Kant was attacking did not acknowledge that human cognition is subject to sensible conditions in anything like the sense insisted upon by Kant and, as a result, they assumed that we could cognize things as they are in themselves.
- <sup>26</sup> For a recent statement of this line of objection, see Robert Howell, 'The conundrum of the object and other problems from Kant', *Kantian Review* 8 (2004), p. 120.
- <sup>27</sup> I have treated this topic in some detail in 'The non-spatiality of things in themselves for Kant', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 14 (1976), pp. 313–21; *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (1983 edn), pp. 111–14; *Idealism and Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 8–11; and in *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (2004 edn), pp. 128–32.
- <sup>28</sup> Recently, my analysis of this issue has been challenged by Lorne Falkenstein, *Kant's Intuitionism: A Commentary on the Transcendental Aesthetic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), esp. pp. 301–5. According to Falkenstein, I ignore the possibility that a transcendentially real space might be just like the space of human sensibility except for its



dependence on the latter. For my response to this criticism, see *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (2004 edn), pp. 130–2.

- <sup>29</sup> The point here is the same as in the distinction drawn above between the ways in which the concepts of things in general and of things as they are in themselves involve an independence from the conditions of sensibility. The critic is, in effect, treating Kant's claim about the latter (the non-spatiotemporality of things as they are in themselves) as if it were about the former.
- <sup>30</sup> I initially appealed to this analogy in *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (1983 edn), pp. 241–2. It has been criticized by James Van Cleve, *Problems from Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 147–9. I defend my use of this analogy against Van Cleve's criticisms in *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (2004 edn), pp. 42–5.
- <sup>31</sup> P. F. Strawson expresses this view with admirable succinctness when he defines transcendental idealism as the doctrine that 'reality is supersensible and that we can have no knowledge of it' (*The Bounds of Sense* (London: Methuen, 1966), p. 38).
- <sup>32</sup> The classical formulation of this dilemma is by H. A. Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), esp. pp. 71–100.
- <sup>33</sup> Kant clearly was in the grip of this picture in the *Dissertation*, when he claims that 'things which are thought sensitively are representations of things *as they appear*, while things which are intellectual are representations of things *as they are*' (ID 2: 292).
- <sup>34</sup> Kant underscores this point in the introductory portion of the Transcendental Deduction common to both editions, when he notes that the seemingly unrestricted scope of the categories 'not only arouses suspicion about the objective validity and limits of their use but also makes the **concept of space** ambiguous by inclining us to use it beyond the conditions of sensible intuition, on which account a transcendental deduction of it was also needed above' (A88/B120–1).
- <sup>35</sup> This is the noumenon in the negative sense, which is just the concept of an object insofar as it is *not* the object of a sensible intuition. By contrast, a noumenon in the positive sense would be an actual object of a non-sensible intuition. The latter is a problematic concept for Kant in the sense that we cannot determine whether such an entity (or mode of intuition) is really possible. Kant indicates the connection between what I have termed the two-steps of his analysis when he remarks that 'the doctrine of sensibility is at the same time the doctrine of the noumenon in the negative sense' (B307). I discuss the different senses of the noumenon and their relation to the transcendental object in *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (2004 edn), pp. 57–64.
- <sup>36</sup> The concept of the noumenon serves to limit the 'pretension' of the understanding as well, albeit in an indirect manner, by way of the dependence

of the understanding on sensibility. Since cognition through the understanding (discursive cognition or judgement) requires that its object be given in sensible intuition, and limitation on the scope of the latter will limit that of the former as well.

- <sup>37</sup> See Pro 4: 341, where Kant poses the issue in this logical form. It is also noteworthy that Arthur Collier, with whose work Kant was probably familiar, used virtually the same antinomial argument in an attempt to prove that ‘an external world, whose extension is absolute, that is, not relatively depending on any faculty of perception’, is self-contradictory. (*Clavis Universalis*, in *Metaphysical Tracts by English Philosophers of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Samuel Parr (London: Edward Lumley, 1837), pp. 46–50).
- <sup>38</sup> Although this assumption does not enter as a premise into either the thesis or antithesis argument of any of the antinomies, it underlies the cosmological debate as a whole. In particular, it makes it possible for each party to argue apagogically from the falsity of the alternative to the truth of its own claim. This also enables Kant to vouch for the soundness of each of the proofs, while at the same time claiming that the whole dispute is based on a deep misunderstanding. Admittedly, these proofs remain highly controversial, but I have endeavoured to defend those of the first and third antinomies against the standard objections in *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism* (2004 edn), pp. 366–84.
- <sup>39</sup> For my analysis of this argument, see *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism* (2004 edn), pp. 388–95.
- <sup>40</sup> For the definitive account of transcendental illusion, see Michelle Grier, *Kant’s Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). My own systematic discussion of the topic, which is greatly indebted to Grier’s but differs on some points, is to be found in *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism* (2004 edn), pp. 322–32.
- <sup>41</sup> Since by such a synthesis Kant understands one that makes use merely of the pure or unschematized categories, in stating that it represents things as they are he is clearly not suggesting that it provides cognition of things as they are in themselves. His point is rather that it regards the items synthesized (the conditioned and its conditions) as a collection of objects whose nature is fixed apart from any sensible conditions that may be necessary for us to access them, that is, as a collection of things considered as existing in themselves. It should also be kept in mind that one of the ways in which Kant characterizes the thought of things as they are in themselves is as objects of a ‘pure understanding’. See note 24.
- <sup>42</sup> The essential point here, which has been developed at length by Grier in *Kant’s Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion*, is the distinction between the illusion and the metaphysical fallacies it generates (which include those committed by the participants in the antinomial conflict). Whereas the former is unavoidable, the latter are not, even though they are based on

this illusion. As Grier shows, failure to keep this distinction in mind underlies much of the confusion regarding Kant's critique of metaphysics in the Dialectic.

- <sup>43</sup> A typical representative of this approach is Guyer. See his *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, pp. 385–415.
- <sup>44</sup> Setting aside the question of philosophical adequacy, it seems clear that the second alternative comes closer to capturing Kant's actual views on the matter. See, for example, Bxxvii–xxviii and R5642: 18, 401. At issue is only whether the two-aspect formulation is to be taken metaphysically.
- <sup>45</sup> Lewis White Beck, 'Five concepts of freedom in Kant', in J. T. J. Szrednick (ed.), *Philosophical Analysis and Reconstruction, a Festschrift to Stephan Körner* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1972), pp. 42–3.
- <sup>46</sup> See Terence Irwin, 'Morality and personality: Kant and Green', in Allen Wood (ed.), *Self and Nature in Kant's Thought* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 38.
- <sup>47</sup> Following the language of Dummett, Putnam and others, I characterize this as a doctrine of 'warranted assertibility from a point of view'. See *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (2004 edn), p. 48.
- <sup>48</sup> I here find myself in fundamental disagreement with Karl Ameriks, who has criticized non-metaphysical interpretations of transcendental idealism such as mine on the grounds that they give 'no reason to think that the non-ideal has a greater ontological status than the ideal', which he sees as incompatible with Kant's deepest philosophical commitments concerning 'the absolute reality of things in themselves with substantive non-spatio-temporal characteristics' ('Kantian idealism today', *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 9 (1992), p. 334). I believe that Ameriks is correct in pointing out that on such readings the non-ideal has no greater ontological import than the ideal; but I question his further claim that this is incompatible with Kant's deepest philosophical commitments. These commitments, I suggest, are to a robust empirical realism, on the one hand, and to a conception of freedom capable of supporting the autonomy of the will required by his moral theory, on the other. Although I assume that Ameriks would concur on both these points, I have tried to show that both are threatened rather than preserved by an ontological reading of transcendental idealism of the sort that he evidently favours.
- <sup>49</sup> This is especially true of Guyer, who views the Refutation or, more precisely, a version of it contained in Kant's late *Reflexionen*, as the culmination of Kant's transcendental theory of experience. See 'Kant's intentions in the Refutation of Idealism', *The Philosophical Review*, 92 (1983), 329–83; and *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, pp. 279–329.
- <sup>50</sup> For my analysis of the Refutation of Idealism see *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (2004 edn), pp. 285–303. I there argue that rather than being incompatible with transcendental idealism, Kant's argument is dependent on it.

- <sup>51</sup> At least with regard to the direction of Kant's argument in the *Analytic* I am in agreement with Ameriks. See his 'Kant's Transcendental Deduction as a regressive argument', *Kant-Studien* 69 (1978), 273–87; and *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy*, pp. 55–63 and *passim*.
- <sup>52</sup> I wish to thank the audiences at the meeting of the Pacific Study Group of the North American Kant Society and the colloquium of the Stanford Philosophy Department, before whom I presented earlier versions of this article, for their invaluable comments and criticisms. I have endeavoured to address many of these in this greatly revised version.