

# A NON-DUAL EPISTEMIC PHENOMENALIST READING OF KANT'S IDEALISM

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## 1. Prolegomena

Kant's distinction between things in themselves, noumena in the negative sense—"a thing so far as it is not an object of our sensible intuition" (B307)—and appearances (*Erscheinungen*) lies at heart of his transcendental or formal idealism. However, as Allais (2011:9) has recently remarked, "there is no agreement in interpretations of Kant's transcendental idealism, not even a tendency to convergence". This disagreement could be ignored if Kantian transcendental idealism was the only marginal doctrine in his *First Critique*, instead of lying at the very core of the work.

Basically, there are two main camps and several positions in between. On the one extreme, there are those who read the transcendental divide between appearances and things in themselves as the metaphysical opposition between two distinct worlds: *mundus sensibilis* and *mundus intelligibilis*, a *phenomenal* and a *noumenal world* that traces back to Kant's pre-critical philosophy, the *Inaugural Dissertation*.<sup>1</sup> Following the literature, let us call this the *two-world view*.<sup>2</sup> *Mundus sensibilis* is the cognisable phenomenal world that only exists inside our minds.

On the other extreme, there are those who read Kant's transcendental divide as the epistemological opposition between two perspectives of one and the same world, one considered from the human viewpoint and the other from God's, *sub specie aeternitatis*, so to speak. Following the literature, let us call this the *two-aspect view*.<sup>3</sup> The underlying assumption here is that the Kantian transcendental divide between things in themselves and appearances is purely epistemological and methodological rather than metaphysical.

In this paper, I aim to present and argue for a novel reading of Kantian idealism. Lacking a better name, I call my interpretation the "non-dual-epistemic-phenomenalist" view. It is "non-dual" because, from a strictly metaphysical viewpoint, my reading rules out the metaphysical mind-world dualism (one-world view). However, I prefer to call it non-dual rather than two-aspect because it does not reduce the transcendental divide between noumena and phenomena to the mere opposition between two ways of considering the same reality. The noumenon functions to limit our cognitive claims (*Grenzbegriff*), but also signifies the underlying nature of reality. Even assuming that the noumenon and phenomenon are numerically identical entities, I reject the associated claim that the phenomenon is the intentional object of the sensible intuition and of human cognition in

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<sup>1</sup> See Schulting (2011:11).

<sup>2</sup> In contemporary Kantian scholarship, the list of adepts of the two-world view is very long. I limit myself to quoting only a few important figures: Ameriks (2011), Aquila (1983), Guyer (1987), Longuenesse (1998) and Van Cleve (1999).

<sup>3</sup> There are several nuances here that cannot be overlooked. According to Allais's anti-deflationary reading, for example, the main assumption is that appearances and things in themselves are metaphysically identical. In contrast, according to Hanna's radical agnosticism, the difference between noumenal and phenomenal properties/concepts rules out any metaphysical identification.

general. The intentional object of our sensible intuition is what Kant in the first edition calls a transcendental object and, in the second edition, the noumenon in the negative sense. Thus, according to the reading that I am proposing, the phenomenon is nothing but the way that that the noumenon in the negative sense (or the transcendental object) appears to our human sensibility or exists inside our human minds as a *mere representation*. Therefore, I also call it ‘phenomenalism’ because we can only cognise things mind-dependently insofar as they appear to us *as mere representations inside our minds*. However, those things are nothing but mind-independently existing noumena. Finally, I also call it ‘epistemic phenomenalist’ because I reject both Berkeleian ontological phenomenism (according to which reality is a logical construction of mind-dependent representations) and non-reductionist two-worlds-plus-phenomenalist views.

The defence of my non-dual-epistemic-phenomenalist view is based on the abundant textual evidence available in which Kant unequivocally identifies the appearance with *mere representations* inside our minds, and also on textual evidence in which Kant claims that appearance and noumenon are one and the same thing. Moreover, my defence is also based on a criticism of the two main opposing readings: the two-world and two-aspect views. Nonetheless, my main line of defence must be seen here as a classic case of inference to the best explanation. Why is this? For one thing, I really do not believe that any reading of Kantian idealism can be supported by just quoting passages. However abundant and clear those passages might appear to the reader, there is also an alternative way of interpreting them, favouring a different reading of Kantian idealism. First, I argue that my non-dual-epistemic-phenomenalist reading is the one that best fits Kant’s Fourth Paralogism without imputing to Kant a Berkeley-like ontological phenomenism or some naïve realism. Second, I also argue that my non-dual-epistemic-phenomenalist reading is the one that best fits the recent reading of Kant’s Refutation of Idealism as proof of the existence of things in themselves (as I shall show is manifest in several passages). Finally, assuming that Kant has not changed his mind in between the first and second editions (that is, taking his own words at face value), I also argue that my non-dual-epistemic-phenomenalist view is the one that best harmonises the Fourth Paralogism with the Refutation of Idealism.

This paper is structured as follows: In the next section, I present the historical background of the controversy over the reading of Kant’s transcendental idealism. Sequentially, I present Paton and Prauss’s two-aspect view, and, in particular, Allison’s deflationary version. The following sections are devoted to presenting and criticising Oberst’s and Schulting’s views. Following that is a brief outline of my non-dual-epistemic-phenomenalist view. The final sections are devoted to showing that my view is the one that best accounts for the Fourth Paralogism and the Refutation of Idealism, and that best harmonises them.

## 2. Historical Background

As Oberst (2015:54) reminds us, the contemporary debate over the transcendental divide between appearances and things in themselves has its origin in Prauss’s *Kant und das Problem der Dinge an sich* (Prauss 1974). Of course, the crucial disagreement about the nature of Kantian idealism in Kantian scholarship is anything but new. The controversy dates back to a Feder-Garve review<sup>4</sup> that appeared in between the first and second editions of the *First Critique*. The reviewers portray Kant’s idealism as a metaphysical doctrine similar to that of Berkeley:

An idealism that encompasses spirit and matter in the same way, that transforms the world and ourselves into representations, that has all objects arising from appearances as a result of the understanding connecting the appearances into *one* sequence of experience, and of reason necessarily, though vainly, trying to expand and unify them into *one* whole and complete

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<sup>4</sup> The Garve (1742–98) and Feder (1740–1821) review was published on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1782 (Feder and Garve 1989).

world system. (Feder and Garve 1989:193)

Indeed, in the Fourth Paralogism, Kant's seems to go hand-in-hand with Berkeleyan metaphysical idealism in the way that he was accused by Feder-Garve. At A370, he states:

The transcendental idealist, on the contrary, can be an empirical realist, hence, as he is called, a dualist, i.e., *he can concede the existence of matter without going beyond mere self-consciousness and assuming something more than the certainty of representations in me*, hence the *cogito, ergo sum*. For because he allows this matter and even its inner possibility to be valid only for appearance—which, separated from our sensibility, is nothing—*matter for him is only a species of representations (intuition), which are called external*, not as if they related to objects that are external in themselves but because they relate perceptions to space, where all things are external to one another, but that space itself is in us. (A370; emphasis added)

Then, at A383, he states:

Why do we have need of a doctrine of the soul grounded merely on pure rational principles? Without doubt chiefly with the intent of securing our thinking Self from the danger of materialism. But this is achieved the rational concept of our thinking Self that we have given. For according to it, so little fear remains that if one took matter away then all thinking and even the existence of thinking beings would be abolished, that it rather shows clearly that *if I were to take away the thinking subject, the whole corporeal world would have to disappear, as this is nothing but the appearance in the sensibility of our subject and one mode of its representations*. (A383; emphasis added)

To be sure, in his Fourth Paralogism, Kant endorses Berkeley's claim that the easiest way of avoiding Cartesian external world scepticism is to assume that what we call material things are nothing but representations in us. He accuses the Cartesian problematic idealist of mistaking the empirical sense of 'things outside us' for the transcendental sense of 'outside us' as mind-independent things in themselves. Thus, the transcendental divide *seems to be* a metaphysical opposition between the material world that only exists inside our minds and a problematic mind-independent world that exists outside our minds, *mundus sensibilis* and *mundus intelligibilis*. Appearances (qua representations in us) and things in themselves are metaphysically distinct objects.<sup>5</sup>

The two-world view was the one that prevailed until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, traditional scholars of Kant<sup>6</sup> still held a two-world view of idealism even when they rejected the Berkeleyan ontological phenomenalist reading. According to Smith, for example:

Since the time of Kant, and largely through his influence, the uncompromising Berkeleyan thesis, that 'material' Nature is mind-dependent, has, indeed, been displaced by what, initially at least, is the more modest, though also usually much less definite, claim that Mind and Nature stand in relations of mutual implication. (Smith 1923:8)

Now, if the Fourth Paralogism tries to avoid problematic idealism by assuming à la Berkeley that material things are nothing but constructions from mental states, whereas the Refutation aims to prove the existence of mind-independent things outside us that are not representations in us, there is a blatant contradiction between the two philosophical projects. According to Kemp Smith (2003:301), for example, the Refutation "proves the opposite of what is stated in the first edition", and is a "striking contradiction between various Kant's Refutations of Idealism". Similarly, Vaihinger (1884:131–2) notes that it is impossible to find an interpretation that can reconcile this "stark contrast" because the two

<sup>5</sup> Still, there is no indication that Kant takes matter to be a construction out of mind-dependent representations.

<sup>6</sup> See Vaihinger (1883, 1884), Smith (2003) and Adickes (1924).

“relate to each other as yes and no, as affirmation and negation, as A and not-A. They were, are, and remain irreconcilable”. Finally, according to Guyer (1987:288), an influential living Kantian scholar, “Kant’s new Refutation of Idealism was meant to break with his reductionism of 1781”.

Guyer may be right, but, since Kant so vehemently rejects that reading as a misunderstanding of his idealism, I think that Kantian scholars must take his words at face value. In the *Critique* Kant states:

One would do us an injustice if one tried to ascribe to us that long-decried empirical idealism that, while assuming the proper reality of space, denies the existence of extended beings in it, or at least finds this existence doubtful, and so in this respect admits no satisfactorily provable distinction between dream and truth. (B519)

As Erdmann (1878/1973) has shown, the plan of the *Prolegomena* was largely modified to afford an opportunity to reply to this “inexcusable and almost deliberate misinterpretation, as if my system transformed all the things of the sensible world into sheer illusion” (Prol, §13, Note III, 4:290). The same idea is stated in the famous letter to Beck:

Messrs. Eberhard and Garve’s opinion that Berkeley’s idealism is the same as that of the critical philosophy (which T could better call ‘the principle of the ideality of space and time’) does not deserve the slightest attention. For I speak of ideality about *the form of representations*, but they interpret this to mean ideality on the *matter*, that is, the ideality of the *object*. (Br, 11:395)

In the Appendix Kant’s reaction is even more blunt:

The reviewer therefore understood nothing of my work and perhaps also nothing of the spirit and nature of metaphysics itself, unless on the contrary, which I prefer to assume, a reviewer’s haste, indignant at the difficulty of plowing his way through so many obstacles, cast an unfavorable shadow over the work lying before him and made it unrecognizable to him in its fundamentals. (Prol, 4:377)

Assuming that Kant never changed his mind, the Feder-Garve review has mistaken the epistemological nature of Kant’s idealism for the metaphysical nature of Berkeleian idealist phenomenalism.

### 3. The Two-Aspect View

In the twentieth century, the debate over the nature of Kantian idealism focused much more on the transcendental divide between things in themselves and appearances. According to Allison’s (2004:xv) two-aspect view, which can be traced back to Paton (1970) and Prauss (1974), the transcendental divide is not a metaphysical one that opposes two realms of reality, the phenomenal and the noumenal. Instead, the divide opposes different perspectives on the same reality. According to the two-aspect view, *mundus sensibilis* and *mundus intelligibilis* are the only two ways of considering the existing world, that of the human and that of the absolute, God’s perspective, *sub specie aeternitatis*. From the human perspective, the world takes the form of appearances (*Erscheinungen*) as the objects of our sensible representation, while, from the God’s-eye-view perspective, the same world takes the form of things in themselves.

Allison’s two-aspect view has at least two great predecessors. Prauss (1974), for example, has argued that Kant’s transcendental distinction is not between appearances and things in themselves, considered as different kinds of things, but rather between two ways of considering the same thing, that is, in itself and as it appears to us. However, to my knowledge, the founding father of the two-aspect view is Paton:

What is the relation between things-in-themselves and appearances? Kant never questions the

reality of things-in-themselves, and never doubts that appearances are appearances of things-in-themselves. The appearance is the thing as it appears to us, or as it is in relation to us, though, it is not the thing as it is in itself. *That is to say, things as they are in themselves are the same things that appear to us*, although they appear to us, and because of our powers of knowing must appear to us, as different from what they are in themselves. *Strictly speaking, there are not two things, but one thing considered in two different ways: the thing as it is in itself as it appears to us.* (1970:61; emphasis added)

The textual evidence that supports the two-aspect view is compelling. In the Preface to the second edition, Kant states explicitly:

[T]hat the same objects can be considered from two different sides, on the one side as objects of the senses and the understanding for experience, and on the other side as objects that are merely thought at most for isolated reason striving beyond the bounds of experience. If we now find that there is agreement with the principle of pure reason when things are considered from this twofold standpoint, but that an unavoidable conflict of reason with itself arises with a single standpoint, then the experiment decides for the correctness of that distinction. (Bxviii–xix n.; emphasis added)

In the Transcendental Aesthetic, we also find abundant evidence in favour of the two-aspect view:

We can accordingly speak of space, extended beings, and so on, *only from the human standpoint*. If we depart from the subjective condition under which alone we can acquire outer intuition, namely that through which we may be affected by objects, then the representation of space signifies nothing at all. *This predicate is attributed to things only insofar as they appear to us, i.e., are objects of sensibility.* (A26–7/B42–3; emphasis added)

But they did not consider that both [space and time], without their reality as representations being disputed, nevertheless belong *only to appearance, which always has two sides*, one where the object is considered in itself (without regard to the way in which it is to be intuited, the constitution of which however must for that very reason always remain problematic), the other where the form of the intuition of this object is considered, which must not be sought in the object in itself but in the subject to which it appears, but which nevertheless really necessarily pertains to the representation of this object. (A38/B55; emphasis added)

These pieces of textual evidence clearly contradict the two-world view. Kant's distinction between formal and material idealism inspired Allison to take a step further and assume his deflationary reading of Kantian idealism. Not only is the transcendental divide purely epistemological or methodological. Metaphysically, Kant never was an idealist. Allison also claims that Kantian idealism does not make a metaphysical commitment whatsoever. He rejects any metaphysical commitments in several passages, as below:

According to many of its critics, transcendental idealism is a metaphysical theory that affirms the uncognizability of the “real” (things in themselves) and relegates cognition to the purely subjective realm of representation (appearances). (Allison 2004:5)

The alternative “one-world” or “two-aspect” reading makes it possible to avoid saddling Kant with the excess baggage of an ontologically distinct, yet cognitively inaccessible, noumenal realm. (Allison 2006:112)

Rather than being straightforwardly metaphysical, or even epistemological, transcendental realism is perhaps best characterized as a metaphilosophical or meta-epistemological standpoint. Specifically, it consists in a Kantian transcendental idealism commitment (either tacit or overt) to what is sometimes described as the “theocentric paradigm” or model of

knowledge. (Allison 2006:113–14)<sup>7</sup>

Here I follow Allais when she claims against Allison’s one-world reading that Kantian transcendental idealism is metaphysically loaded. She summarises her criticism thus:

However, from the fact that Kant [...] is not a Berkeleian idealist, it does not follow that he is not committed to there being a way things are in themselves, which we cannot cognize, or that he is not committed to appearances being genuinely dependent on our minds in some (non-Berkeleian) sense. And while the claim that we cannot know things in themselves is of course an epistemic claim, this does not mean that it involves no metaphysical commitment—such as a commitment to the existence of an aspect of reality which we cannot cognize. (Allais 2010:1)

It does not follow that transcendental idealism does not makes metaphysical claims since a distinction between two ways of considering things is compatible with making metaphysical claims about the aspects of things so considered. (Allais 2010:3)

To be sure, the transcendental divide between appearances and things in themselves is epistemological rather than metaphysical. Kant was never a metaphysical idealist. Still, things in themselves signify not only the world considered from God’s perspective, *sub specie aeternitatis*, so to speak. It also signifies the ultimate nature of reality that we cannot cognize and that non-temporally affects our human sensibility. Thus, Kantian transcendental idealism is committed to two metaphysical claims. First is the assumption that the underlying nature of the outside world in the relevant transcendental sense is made up of unknown mind-independent things in themselves. In the first edition, Kant calls those things in themselves “transcendental objects” (A104), while, in the second, they are noumena in the “negative sense” (A286/B342). The second is the property dualism between intrinsic properties of noumena and relational properties of phenomena. Still, in the same way that we cannot know the metaphysical nature of things in themselves, we do not know the metaphysical nature of their intrinsic properties.

Now, the reader may wonder in what aspects my non-dual-epistemic-phenomenalism differs from Allison’s two-aspect view. To answer this, I have to consider Allison’s interpretation of the main concepts of noumenon, thing in itself (in the first edition) and transcendental object. To begin with, Allison describes the main relation between these concepts thusly:

(Noumenon) is the epistemological concept *par excellence*, characterizing an object, of whatever ontological status, *qua* correlate of a non-sensible manner of cognition. Since sensibility is an essential characteristic of the cognitive structure of human mind, to know an object in this manner is to know it as it is independently of its relation to this structure, and this is equivalent to knowing it as it is in itself. This explains why Kant frequently simply identifies the noumenon with the thing in itself. As we have already seen, however, the critical Kant thought that such knowledge, therefore the noumenon, was problematical as the intellectual intuition through which it could alone be attained. Nevertheless, he did not simply reject the concept as a vestige of superseded dogmatism. On the contrary, he sought to reinterpret it in such a way that it could be incorporated in his critical theory. This, as is well known, was accomplished by giving it the function of a limiting concept. (Allison 1978:55)

The critical understanding must think noumena because this concept is a correlate of the

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<sup>7</sup> See also Allison (2004:6–10, 47, 52, 55). As Allison puts it, any metaphysical reading of Kantian idealism must assume a divide between two realms: the uncognisable realm of things in themselves and the cognisable realm of representations (the two-world view). However, it seems pretty clear to me that we can assume that there is only one realm, made up of things in themselves, which are only cognisable in insofar as they appear to us inside our minds.

transcendental concept of appearance (or phenomenon), and it is thus ultimately connected with the doctrine of sensibility. In fact, it is just this connection with sensibility that enables it to function as a limiting concept. (Allison 2004:58)

In contrast, Allison describes the transcendental object in the following way:

There is, however, another kind of question that emerges from the standpoint of transcendental reflection: namely, just what is contained in this mysterious concept of an object, considered in abstraction from the human mind and its conceptual scheme? [...] We saw there that the object, so considered, can only be described as a completely indeterminate something in general = x. Now this is precisely how Kant characterizes the transcendental object. (Allison 1978:57)

As Allison remarks, in the second edition, the formula “the concept of a transcendental object” is replaced by the new conceptual distinction between noumena in the positive and negative sense. In the first, Kant understands it to be an “object of a non-sensible intuition”, while in the latter “a thing so far as it is not an object of our sensible intuition” (B307). Thus, the old concept of a transcendental object becomes the noumena in the negative sense. In Allison’s own words:

The distinction between positive and negative senses of the noumenon, which is essential to the Second Edition account, is really nothing else than a more explicit and perhaps somewhat clearer reworking of the contrast between the noumenon and the transcendental object drawn in the First Edition. (Allison 1978:60)

Thus, according to Allison’s deflationary two-aspect view, there is one single realm of reality that, when considered from a God’s eye perspective, as the putative correlate of a non-sensible manner of cognition, is called noumenon (in the negative sense or transcendental object). Still, when considered from the human sensible manner of cognition is called phenomenon or appearance. In this sense, noumenon in the negative sense or transcendental object designates essentially an epistemic concept that functions as a limiting concept of our cognition.

In contrast, according to my metaphysical reading, that of non-dual-epistemic-phenomenalism, noumenon (in the negative sense) is the metaphysical concept *par excellence* that characterises the underlying reality that non-temporally affects and modifies our sensible mind. Key differences between Allison’s and my view are noteworthy. First, in the deflationary view, noumenon in the negative sense or the transcendental object—“a thing so far as it is not an object of our sensible intuition” (B307)—is just a product of transcendental reflection whose function is just limiting our cognitive claims (*Grenzbegriff*). By contrast, in my metaphysical reading, the concept of noumenon functions to limit our claims of cognition because it designates the ultimate nature of reality in the first place. Second, and most importantly, for Allison, the phenomenon is the intentional object of the sensible intuition and of human cognition in general. In contrast, in my metaphysical reading, the phenomenon is just the mind-dependent way that the mind-independent noumenon appears to our senses or exists inside our sensible mind as a *mere representation*.

#### 4. The Numerical Identity between Noumena and Phenomena

Schulting (2016) has put forward a similar view based on his reading of Reinhold’s view of Kantian idealism. Our views converge on two crucial points, but radically diverge on another.<sup>8</sup> First, like myself, Schulting claims that there is no way to explain away Kant’s insistent assertion that appearances are nothing but *mere representations in us*. That is what I

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<sup>8</sup> I had no acquaintance with his paper (2016) when I wrote the first version of this paper in 2014.

have been calling here “non-dual phenomenalism”.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, he also claims that only by assuming Kantian phenomenalism can we make sense of “the central argument of the Transcendental Deduction of the categories [according to which] the necessary conditions of self-consciousness are sufficient for the objectivity of the objects of our experience, given sensory input” (2016:89).

Second, Schulting (2016:100) also assumes that Kantian phenomenalism is “of the explicitly non-reductive kind, not a type of phenomenalism that denies the mind- or representation-independent existence of the *things* that are represented”. That is exactly what I have been calling “non-dual phenomenalism”, in opposition to Berkeleian phenomenalism, according to which the material outside world is nothing but a logical construction from representations.

However, our readings clearly diverge when Schulting assumes that appearances and things in themselves are numerically different. He provides two arguments in support of his reading:

**I believe appearances cannot really be numerically the same as things in themselves**, because (1) appearances are merely the effects of deeper grounds, or, accidents of underlying substances, and (2) fundamental appearance properties such as space and time are on Kant’s account, by definition, not properties of things in themselves, even if they were to be seen as merely the relational or extrinsic or subject-relativised properties of things in themselves (and since all appearances are contained in space and time, *no* appearance properties can be properties of things in themselves). Moreover, if space and time and appearance properties were to be seen as properties of things in themselves, even if only as their extrinsic or relational or subject-relativised properties, the pressing question remains—despite it being logically possible that various attributes can be attributes of the same substance—how two *exclusionary* types of property, namely *non-spatial* intrinsic properties and *spatial* extrinsic properties, could be said to be properties of *one and the same* (numerically identical) underlying thing. Such a view is simply difficult to square with Kant’s emphatic claim that space and time are not properties of things in themselves. (Schulting 2016:93; boldface added)

Beyond (1) and (2), Schulting mentions Marshall’s paper (2013) in a footnote which claims that “understanding appearances and things in themselves as qua-objects provides a clear sense in which *they can be the same things while differing in many of their features*” (2013:1; emphasis added). What lies behind Marshall’s qua-object is the Aristotelian hylomorphism:

Objects involve two great ingredients: matter (or substance or subject) on the one hand, and form (the properties or features or qualities or predicates) on the other. The former is primarily responsible for the *individuality* or *particularity* of the thing, and the latter for *what* or *how* the thing is. Within forms, there is a further distinction between those that are essential to the object, those that are necessary but not essential, and those that are merely accidental. (Marshall 2013:7)

The best example of what Marshall has in mind is the relation between the marble (matter) and the statue of David (form).<sup>10</sup> Marshall quotes the following passages in support of his claim that noumena and phenomena are numerically different and, therefore, that the Kantian transcendental divide between noumena and phenomena is metaphysical rather than merely epistemological:

<sup>9</sup> I shall return to this point in the next section.

<sup>10</sup> See Marshall (2013:13). Now, if I follow Marshall here, he is suggesting that the Aristotelian matter of the objects stands for Kantian noumena just like the Aristotelian form does for Kantian appearance. In this way, noumena and phenomena could be the same in so far as they share the same matter, but different in so far as they do not share the same form (Michelangelo could have made a different statute from the very same marble). However, Aristotelian realism is obviously incompatible with Kantian idealism. I rest my case here.



Only to the extent that in no instance whatsoever, not even in the pure intuitions of space and time, does it represent anything more than mere appearances of these things, and never their quality in themselves. (Prol, 4:293, see A276/B332)<sup>11</sup>

[E]verything intuited in space or in time, hence 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 alternations, have outside our thoughts no existence grounded in itself. (A490–1/B518–9)

Following Marshall, Schulting adds the following passages in support of the same claim, namely that noumena and phenomena are numerically different:

[F]or then I would contradict myself, since space and time, together with the appearances in them, are nothing existing in themselves and outside my representations, but are themselves only modes of representation, and it is patently contradictory to say of a mere mode of representation that it also exists outside our representation. The objects of the senses therefore exist only in experience; by contrast, to grant them a self-subsistent existence of their own, without experience or prior to it, is as much as to imagine that experience is also real without experience or prior to it. (Prol, AA 4:341–2)

For in the appearance the objects, indeed even properties that we attribute to them, are always regarded as something really given, only insofar as this property depends only on the kind of intuition of the subject in the relation of the given object to it then this object as appearance is to be distinguished from itself as object in itself. (B69)

However, I dispute that those passages provide any compelling reason in favour of the assumption that noumena and phenomena are numerically different. For one thing, I can provide an alternative reading of all these four passages, showing that Kant's aim is not to vindicate the putative numerical difference between noumena and phenomena, but rather to settle the limits to our cognitive claims to the bounds of sense (*Grenzbegriff*). Here, I side with Allison. In the first quoted passage, Kant states that no *cognition* of space and time and their qualities is possible if we assume that space and time are noumena. In the second passage, he says very much the same: things as they appear to us are to be conceived as mere representations rather than as they are in themselves. The third Kantian statement is an analytical proposition: the way we represent things, or the way they appear to us, should not be taken as the way they are in themselves.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, if we bear in mind that *experience* (*Erfahrung*) and *cognition* (*Erkenntnis*) are technical terms in the Kantian *Critique* that mean almost the same thing, what he is saying, again, is that we only experience or *cognise* things in so far as they appear to us. Finally, in the Fourth Passage, Kant merely reiterates that we can only cognise relational properties of things in so far as they appear to our senses. Thus, we must conceptually distinguish the way things are in themselves (with all their intrinsic properties), from the way they appear to us (with all their relational properties).

However, someone might insist here that phenomena and noumena cannot be numerically identical since, according to Leibniz's Law, they do not share exactly the same properties. There are two answers to this. First, we may follow Kant strictly here and restrict Leibniz's Law to noumena; that is, noumena are identical only when they share exactly the same *intrinsic properties*. Given this, the fact that the relational properties of appearances do not apply to noumena cannot undermine the metaphysical claim that noumena and phenomena are numerically identical; after all, relational properties do not matter.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted from Marshall (2013:4, 6).

<sup>12</sup> Thus, it cannot come as a surprise if its negation is a contradiction, as Schulting remarks. See Schulting (2016:92).

Second, we may assume the reasonable view that relational proprieties are also relevant to the metaphysical claim that noumena are numerically identical to phenomena. However, if noumena and phenomena are metaphysically identical, it *follows logically* (by Leibniz's Law) that all relational properties of appearances are also relational properties of noumena. *The only mistake here is to assume that the relational properties of things in so far as they appear to us are intrinsic properties of the same things as they are in themselves.* Let me give you one example to illustrate my point. I have a sunburn on my skin. The property of causing sunburn in me or in humankind is certainly not an intrinsic property of the sun. Intrinsic properties of the sun are the fact that it burns hydrogen and helium, that it has a certain mass, etc. Still, the power of causing sunburn is a relational property that the sun has relative to me and to humankind. The question is: Is this relational property enough to vindicate the metaphysical claim that the *sun that appears to me* is different from the *sun in itself*? Of course not! If the sun that causes my sunburn is the very sun that burns hydrogen, et cetera, then the sun that appears to me must share all of the relational properties as the sun in itself, including the property of causing me to burn. The moral is the following. Even though Kant has only stated that space and time are properties of things in so far as they appear to us, *as a matter of pure logic*, we could add that space and time are also *relational* properties of things in themselves *in so far as they appear to us* (likewise, sunburn is a relational property of the sun in so far as the sun burns my skin). Again, the only mistake is to assume that those *relational* properties are *intrinsic* properties of the noumena.<sup>13</sup>

Now, I would like to invite the reader to take a closer look at those passages where Kant is not preoccupied with setting the bounds of our cognitive claims (*Erkenntnis*) and experience (*Erfahrung*), but rather with thinking. In those passages, Kant identifies noumena and phenomena metaphysically as one and the same numerically identical thing. Here are a few of them:

Yet the reservation must also be well noted, that even if we cannot *cognize* these same objects as things in themselves, we at least must be able to *think* them as things in themselves. For otherwise there would follow the absurd proposition that there is an appearance without anything that appears. (Bxxvi–xxvii)

The senses represent objects to us as they appear, but the understanding, as they are. (A258)

That thing outside of us is also represented prior to this determination as *noumenon*. (RefI 5984, 18:416)<sup>14</sup>

Let me turn now to Schulting's reasons for rejecting the metaphysical claim that noumena and phenomena are numerically identical, which I shall call reasons (1) and (2). From what I have said above, it is obvious that I cannot accept reason (2) for denying that noumena and phenomena are numerically identical. Again, if we assume, on the one side, that metaphysical identity for Kant entails only the sharing of intrinsic properties of noumena, then the objection does not even get off the ground. *We cannot claim that phenomena and noumena are metaphysically different only because the relational properties of phenomena are not the intrinsic properties of noumena.* However, if we assume, on the other side, that metaphysical identity entails the sharing of all properties (including the relational ones), there is no logical reason to deny that noumena also possess the relational properties of appearing just so to humankind.

Still, reason (1) might jeopardise my position. If appearances are merely the effects of deeper grounds or accidents of underlying substances, as Schulting (2013:93) claims, then, according to Allison (2004:54), "we [must] take appearances and the corresponding things in

<sup>13</sup> I recognise that Kant never said that. Anyway, that is the logical consequence of Leibniz's Law.

<sup>14</sup> As I hope to make clear from the outset, the defence of my reading is not based exclusively on textual evidence like these. My reading is a further case of the argument to the best inference.

themselves as two distinct entities”. To be sure, where there is causation there must be more than one entity involved. However, in opposition to Schulting and Allison, I want to suggest that the causal relation in question is not between noumena and phenomena, but rather between noumena and the affections of the mind. Indeed, when we take a closer look at the main passages where Kant talks about non-temporal causation, we see that Kant never says that phenomena are the effects of noumena. The effects of noumena on our sensibility are what Kant calls the affections of the mind. A phenomenon is the way that the noumenon is given or appears to us by affecting our human sensibility. Consider this:

[T]hat same Something that grounds outer appearances and affects our sense so that it receives the representations of space, matter, shape, etc.—this Something, considered as noumenon (or better, as transcendental object) *could also at the same time be the subject of thoughts.* (A358; emphasis added)<sup>15</sup>

What Kant is saying is that noumena affect our human sensibility, and hence, our senses start to form representations. However, that does not mean that the representation or the phenomenon is the effect of the noumenon. The passage makes much more sense if we assume that the representation or phenomenon are nothing but the way that the noumenon exists inside my human sensibility, or the way that the noumenon appears to my sensible mind.

Let me give you an example to illustrate what I think Kant has in mind. Suppose that a bacterium has infected someone, causing some disease. Of course, there is no causal relation between the bacterium outside and bacterium inside the body, but rather between the bacterium and the disease. Likewise, ‘the effect of deeper grounds’ is not the phenomenon, what appears to our sensibility, but rather the affection of our human sensibility. Thus, when the noumenon affects (‘infects’) our sensibility, the same object appears inside us spatiotemporally and with all its relational properties.

## 5. The Two-World View, again

The two-world view emerges from the old assumption that Kant’s idealism is a Berkeley-like ontological phenomenalism according to which the material, outside world is nothing

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<sup>15</sup> The very same idea is expressed in the *Critique*: “This [intuition], however, takes place only insofar as the object is given to us; but this, in turn, is possible only [for us human beings, at any rate] *if it affects the mind in a certain manner*” (A19/B33; emphasis added).

“Now, since the receptivity of the subject to be affected by objects precedes necessarily precedes all intuitions of these objects” (A26/B42).

“Obviously not otherwise than insofar as it [this intuition] has its seat merely in the subject, as its formal constitution for being affected by objects and thereby acquiring *immediate representation*, i.e., *intuition*, and hence thus only as form of outer *sense* in general” (B41).

“Now since the receptivity of the subject to be affected by objects necessarily precedes all intuitions of these objects” (A26/B42).

“[R]ather it [our kind of intuition] is dependent on the existence of the object, thus it is possible only insofar as the representational capacity of the subject is affected through that” (B72).

“If we will call the receptivity [i.e., its ability] of our mind to receive representations insofar as it is affected in some way sensibility” (A51/B75).

“All intuitions, as sensible, rest on affections, concepts, therefore on functions” (A68/B93).

“The [uncombined] manifold of presentations can be given in an intuition that is merely sensible, i.e., nothing but receptivity; and the form of this intuition can lie a priori in our faculty of representation without being anything other than the way in which the subject is affected” (A130/B129).

“Hence if concerning the determinations of the outer senses we grant that we cognize objects through them only insofar as we are outwardly affected, then we must also concede concerning inner sense that we intuit ourselves through it only as we are inwardly affected *by ourselves*” (B156).

but a logical construction from our representations. Now, on a closer look, I could not find a single piece of evidence that appearances are not representations for Kant. In A129, for example, he says that appearances exist “merely in us”. In B164, he states that appearances “are only representation of things”. Likewise, he reiterates in A250 that appearances “are nothing but representation”. In A387, we can read the very same statement: appearances are merely representations in us.

The same idea is to be found in several *Reflections* from the period after the publication of the second edition of the first *Critique*:<sup>16</sup>

*Appearances are representations insofar as we are affected.* The representation of our own free self-activity is one in which we are not affected, consequently it is not appearance, but apperception. (Refl 4723, 17:688; emphasis added)

A thing in itself does not depend on our representations, and can thus be much greater than our representations reach. *But appearances are themselves only representations [...].* (Refl 5902, 18:379; emphasis added)

Now since in inner sense everything is successive, hence nothing can be taken backwards, the ground of the possibility of the latter must lie in the relation of *representations* to something outside us, and *indeed to something that is not itself in turn mere inner representation, i.e., form of appearance*, hence which is something in itself. (Refl 6312, 18:612; emphasis added)

For what contains *representations* combined in relations of space and time is *mere appearance*. (Refl 6349, 18:673; emphasis added)

The merely subjective element in intuition as the representation of an object is appearance. (Refl 6359, 18:687)

However, the passage that I consider to be decisive is the one in which he defines his own transcendental idealism:

We have sufficiently proved in the Transcendental Aesthetic that everything intuited in space or in time, hence 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*. This doctrine I call transcendental idealism. (A490/B518; emphasis added)

Somehow, we find in the literature numerous attempts by interpreters to explain this identification away. What is in question is whether there is a way of denying that Kant is assuming some Berkeleian ontological phenomenalism. In what follows, I focus on three responses: Longuenesse (2008), Collins (1999), and Hanna (2006). Collins (1999:72) limits himself to stating that Kant includes the identification of appearances with mere representations in us, “Kant never meant to erode the outerness of objects of outer sense”. However, Collins is mistaking the transcendental for the empirical sense of “outside us”. To be sure, in the empirical sense, Kant has never denied the externality of the things of outer sense. For example, the computer I am using now is certainly *outside me in this empirical sense*. Still, in the transcendental sense, they are all inside us as mere representations (even the computer that appears in space outside me in the empirical sense is nothing but a mere representation in me in the transcendental sense).

According to Longuenesse (2008:27), “in us does not mean here ‘is within our mind’”, but “within the scope of the thought I think”. However, Longuenesse is mistaking the transcendental opposition between things inside (appearances) and outside (things in

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<sup>16</sup> The appeal to the *Reflections* of the time is absolutely necessary. For one thing, Kant never made quite clear his position even in the second edition of the *Critique*. For another, Kant rewrote his Refutation of idealism several times after he published the second edition.

themselves) for the opposition between nonconceptual and conceptual mental states. Things outside the scope of our thoughts are the objects of sensible intuition that are not conceptualised (inside us in the relevant transcendental sense), rather than things outside us. Longuenesse's reading cannot account for any of the passages quoted above. Furthermore, in the famous passage §16 of the B-Deduction, Kant explicitly assumes that something could be represented *in me* without being able to be accompanied by the I think.<sup>17</sup> What happens, in that case, is that the representation *in me* would mean nothing for me, that is, would be blind or would not contribute to cognition (*Erkenntnis*). Moreover, when we take a look at all of the passages quoted above, none of them supports Longuenesse's reading that Kant was opposing things outside and within the scope of thought.

Hanna is the only one who really endorses a robust sense of the empirical reality of appearances. According to him, appearances exist mind-independently in the modal sense that they can exist even if minds like ours do not *actually* exist. Then, all that is *required* for the empirical reality of appearances is for minds like ours to be metaphysically *possible*.<sup>18</sup> Still, if I understand Hanna's position, it is congruent with any reading of Kantian idealism that assumes that appearance is a mere representation in us and, hence, that we cognise mind-dependently the mind-independently existing noumena.

Let me return to my previous example. The sun does or does not possess *intrinsic* properties (to burn hydrogen and helium, et cetera) in the set of all possible worlds in which humankind does not exist. However, the property of causing sunburn in humans is a relational property that the sun *actually* possesses only in those worlds in which humankind exists. Nevertheless, we could posit, instead, that the sun *dispositionally* has the relational property of causing sunburn to humans even in those worlds in which humankind does not exist. All that is required is the existence of possible worlds in which humankind exists (or as Hanna puts it, that minds like ours are metaphysically possible). My difficulty is in assuming that the sun *dispositionally* possesses the property of causing humans to sunburn does not make the sun exist in so far as it appears to us *cognitively* mind-independently. The sun in so far as it appears to us remains our mind-dependent way of cognising the mind-independent existence of the sun in so far as it exists in itself. Thus, Hanna's robust empirical realism does not undermine the identification between appearances and mere representations in our mind.

The further question is whether Kant's undeniable identification of appearances with mere representations brings us back to the traditional two-world view of Kantian transcendental idealism according to which appearances and things in themselves are metaphysically different entities. In a recent paper, Oberst (2015) answers this question affirmatively. However, instead of discarding the two-aspect view, Oberst holds that both readings are not only compatible, they even entail each other. I disagree. They are certainly contradictory views: If appearances are, metaphysically speaking, things in themselves (two-aspect view), then they cannot be different (two-worldview). Oberst mistakes the epistemological side of Kantian idealism (Kant's phenomenalism: we cognise only the way things in themselves mind-dependently appear to us as mere representations) for its metaphysical side. To assume the epistemological view that we can only cognise the existing mind-independent world as it mind-dependently appears inside us does not entail the two-

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<sup>17</sup> "The I think must be able to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me that could not be thought at all, which is as much as to say that the representation would either be impossible or else at least would be nothing for me" (B131-2).

<sup>18</sup> Hanna (2006:49-50) expresses his modal reading of Kantian empirical realism as follows: "The world was not made for us by God, nor did we make it ourselves. It is instead, far more modestly, Kant's considered view that truth, objectivity, scientific knowledge, and the natural world itself are impossible without the necessary real possibility of rational human animals or persons (let us call this *weak anthropocentrism*)".

world metaphysical view that the world outside us comprehends two kinds of things: appearances and things in themselves.

To circumvent such blatant contradiction, Oberst introduces the distinction between “appearing objects” and “appearances”. According to him, appearing objects are things in themselves, yet appearances are not. They are the mind-dependent content of our intuitions that result from the affection of things in themselves and, hence, differ from them:

However, appearances are not representations in the sense of mental items (or acts), but rather the *content* of these items [...]. Thus we should say that representations themselves belong to the noumenal world, whereas their content makes up the phenomenal world. The moral is clear: If appearances are only the content of representations, they cannot be numerically identical to things in themselves. (Oberst 2015:56; emphasis added)

In the footnote, he adds:

Admittedly, Kant does not make it explicit that appearances are the content and not the mental items (or acts) of representing. But it is quite obvious that this is how he understands appearances. ‘Content’, I take it, is not to be understood in terms of a relation to outer objects external to our mind or to propositions, nor does it require the existence of entities such as ‘intentional objects’ (unless understood merely as mental content), which (on a Brentanian account) ‘intentionally inexistent’, or ‘sense-data’. It is just a constituent of the item of representation (at least this seems to be Kant’s view). (Oberst 2015:71)

Thus, appearances qua appearing objects are in fact things in themselves, but, qua contents, they are not. Instead, they are intentional or ‘inexistent’ objects of our sensible intuitions, that is, the mind-dependent ways in which we represent things in themselves. The final question is how the two extreme views entail each other. According to Oberst:

However, due to the fact that we cannot create appearances out of nothing but need to be affected by objects external to our mind, there must be objects appearing to us. So there would be no appearances without things that appear. Conversely, the relation of appearing presupposes that there really are appearances. For if we did not synthesize sensations into an organized whole in space and time to which we give the name of an ‘appearance’, there would admittedly be the relation of affection. But affection would not yield more than the raw material of perception, so we could not truly say that things appear to us. Hence appearing requires appearances. As a result, a two-world account presupposes a two-aspect one and vice versa. (Oberst 2015:60–1)

In my non-dual-epistemic-phenomenalist view, appearances are also mind-dependent *from an epistemological viewpoint* as mere representations inside the mind. That is why the view is also phenomenalist. However, I reject Oberst’s further assumption that, being mind-dependent, appearances are different from things in themselves. I assume that what is behind Oberst’s view is Schulting’s assumption that mind-independent things in themselves and mind-dependent appearances cannot be numerically identical. I am not going to repeat my arguments against Schulting. I limit myself here to just reiterating that (1) all the passages that seem to support a metaphysical distinction between appearances and things in themselves can be read epistemologically; and (2) phenomena are not the causal consequence of noumena: the causal relation is between noumena and affection. That allows us to say that phenomena are just the way noumena exist inside our human sensibility or, alternatively, appear to us.

However, Oberst (2015:60) finds further support for his claim by attributing to Kant the so-called content view of perceptual experience in opposition to the so-called relational view: “Thus only those scholars who ascribe a relationist account of perception to Kant, and thus deny a distinct notion of ‘content’, are forced to reject the two-world distinction.”

The central tenet of representationalism (also known as the *content view*) is the claim that intuitions have a content *that can be veridical or falsidical in a similar way that propositional attitudes have a content that is true or false*. In contrast, according to the relationalist, intuition is *just a matter of putting us in direct contact with the world*. Intuition does not possess any content of its own. Intuition is understood here etymologically as a factive verb: There is no intuition (to see, hear, touch, intuit, et cetera) when there is no object being seen, being touched. That then leads the Kantian to forcefully embrace disjunctivism. Even though hallucinations and intuitions may be phenomenologically identical, hallucinations are not intuitions.

Now, there is reasonably good textual evidence that Kant rejects the so-called content view of experience in favour of the so-called relational view. Both in the *Critique* and in the *Anthropology*, as well as his *Lectures on Metaphysics*, Kant states clearly that sensible representations do not possess a representational content of their own that could be veridical and falsidical, independent of judgements, which propositional attitudes possess. First, in clear opposition to what Oberst says, according to Kant, sensible intuitions do require the existence of their object: “it [our mode of intuition] is dependent on the existence of the object” (B72).

As a contemporary relationalist, in B72, Kant seems to take the verbs expressing experience as *factive*: There cannot be an intuiting, unless the seen object exists; there cannot be a perceiving, unless the perceived object exists (likewise with all verbs of perception). Now, in such terms, Kant cannot be a representationalist (content view) about perceptual experience, but rather must be a relationalist and a disjunctivist (relational view).<sup>19</sup>

The second piece of textual evidence in favour of the relationalist reading of Kantian sensible intuition is even more compelling. Both in the First *Critique* and in the *Anthropology*, Kant emphatically asserts that sensibility *per se* never errs. In the First *Critique*, Kant puts this as follows:

[T]ruth and illusion are not in the object, insofar as it is intuited, but in the judgment about it insofar as it is thought. Thus it is correctly said that the senses do not err; yet not because they always judge correctly, but because they do not judge at all. Hence truth, as much as error, and thus also illusion as leading to the latter, are to be found only in judgments, i.e., only in the relations of the object to our understanding. (A293–4/B350)

Exactly the same line of reasoning is found in the *Anthropology*:

*The senses do not deceive*. This proposition is the rejection of the most important but also, on careful consideration, the emptiest reproach made against the senses; not because they always judge correctly, but rather because they do not judge at all. Error is thus a burden only to the understanding. Still, *sensory appearances (species, apparentia)* serve to excuse, if not exactly to

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<sup>19</sup> The relational view *seems* to be the way that Allais (2015) construes Kantian sensible intuition, when she states, for instance, that: “However, given the difficulties, for everyone, that are involved in talking about perception, and the fact that, for many of Kant’s purposes, *Vorstellung* could as well be translated as ‘presentation’, we should not take this word to settle all interpretative issues.” As I shall show, a direct account of perception can do full justice to the way Kant talks about appearances as representations. Because of the extra distractions that may arise from Kant’s using the term ‘representation’, my discussion of perception below avoids the traditional language of ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’, or ‘representationalist’, views of perception. Instead of ‘direct realism’, I follow John Campbell’s (2002) terminology by using the phrase ‘the relational view of perception’ to describe the position within which, I argue, we need to situate the account of colour that shall enable us to make sense of Kant’s comparison with secondary qualities. However, on the same page she adds:

I am not arguing that a particular theory of perception should be attributed to Kant; in particular, I am not claiming that he is a disjunctivist. ‘Disjunctivism’ and ‘the relational account’ of perception are contemporary names for contemporary theories. In my view, there is no systematically presented ‘theory of perception’ in our contemporary sense in the *Critique*, which suggests that there is a clear sense in which it is problematic to argue either that Kant did or did not hold one of these theories. (2015:117)

justify, understanding. Thus the human being often mistakes what is subjective in his way of representation for objective (the distant tower, on which he sees no corners, seems to be round; the sea, whose distant part strikes his eyes through higher light rays, seems to be higher than the shore (*altum mare*); the full moon, which he sees ascending near the horizon through a hazy air, seems to be further away, and also larger, than when it is high in the heavens, although he catches sight of it from the same visual angle). And so one takes *appearance* for *experience*, thereby falling into error, but it is an error of the understanding, not of the senses. (Anthr, §11, 7:146)

The same idea is to be found in the Pölitz Metaphysik:

Illusion (*Illusion*) is still not deception of the senses, it is a hasty judgment which the following one immediately contests. We love such illusions considerably, e.g., we are not deceived by an optical box, for we know that it is not so; but we are moved to a judgment which is immediately refuted by the understanding. Delusions (*Blendwerk*) are to be distinguished from the deceptions of the senses; with a delusion I discover the deception. Because the objects of the senses induce us to judge, the errors are assigned to the senses falsely, since they are properly attributable to the reflection on the senses. We note accordingly the proposition: the senses do not deceive (*sensus non fallunt*). This happens not because they judge correctly, but rather because they do not judge at all, but in the senses lies the seeming (*Schein*). (V-Met-L1/Pölitz, 28:234)

In other words, the error only occurs when the understanding, under the unnoticed influence of the faculty of sensible intuition, mistakes what subjectively appears to our senses to be the way that things really are. Thus, there is no place for illusions in Kant's view of intuition. Therefore, it is not our senses that deceive us (*betriegen*), but rather our ability to judge (*Urteilstkraft*), by taking what appears to the senses to be real when this is not the case. Now, if this is right, then representationalism never crossed Kant's mind: *Sensible intuitions do not possess a content of their own that could be veridical or falsidical independently of judgement.*

Therefore, appearances cannot be the *contents* of sensible representations, even if we allow contents to be modelled as Russellian propositions, that is, structured sequences of objects, properties, and relations. Again, per se sensible intuitions are neither veridical nor falsidical, but rather object dependent. We are acquainted with (*kennen*) the objects (in the Russellian sense of having immediate nonrepresentational contact with) rather than representing them. Thus, Oberst (2015:60) claims that, as a relationalist, Kant could never embrace the traditional two-word view according to which appearances and things in themselves are metaphysically different entities.

## 6. The Non-Dual-Epistemic Phenomenalist View

Now, assuming that appearances are the mental way that noumena appear inside our minds as mere representations, we can also allow that we cognise or become acquainted with (*kennen*) them (appearances) by means of our senses. This is what Kant states in several passages:

‘Noumenon’ properly always means *the same thing*, namely the transcendental object of *sensible intuition* (This is, however, no real object or given thing, but a concept, in relation to which appearances have unity), for this must still correspond to something, even though we are *acquainted with nothing other than its appearance*. (Refl 5554, 18:230; emphasis added)<sup>20</sup>

Put differently, appearances are how the mind-independent world appears to us mind-dependently as something inside our minds with which we become acquainted (*kennen*),

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<sup>20</sup> This view is not entirely new. Kemp Smith (2003:204) in his famous commentary of A104–10 claims that: a “careful examination of the text shows that by it he means the *thing in itself*, conceived as being the object of our representations”. However, in opposition to what I shall argue here for Smith (see Smith 2003:204), such a view is a vestige of his pre-critical period.



what I am calling here “epistemic-phenomenalism”. We know only what is inside our minds. However, it must be clear from the outset that epistemic-phenomenalism does not mean Berkeleian ontological phenomenalism. In my view, Kant is not claiming that what we call the external world is nothing but a construction made out of mind-dependent sense-impressions. What he is saying is that we can cognise or become acquainted with the way things in themselves mentally appear to us as human beings. The question now is how to combine this phenomenalism with the one-world view.

Quite simply, they represent the epistemological and the metaphysical sides of Kantian idealism. My view rules out the traditional dualism between (outside) worlds: the underlying nature of the outside world in the relevant transcendental sense is made up of mind-independent things in themselves. And my view embraces epistemic-phenomenalism because, from an epistemological viewpoint, we can only cognise this existing mind-independent outside world as it mentally appears inside our minds as mere representations.

## 7. The Refutation of Idealism

In the previous section I claimed to have already shown that my two-aspect-plus-phenomenalist view of Kantian idealism is the one that best fits Kant’s overwhelming number of assertions that appearance is merely representation. In this brief section, I show that my non-dual epistemic-phenomenalism is the one that best fits the dominant view today of Kant’s Refutation.

To begin with, it is noteworthy that the standard two-world view does not fit Kant’s Refutation of Idealism at all. According to the two-world view, things in themselves and appearances are metaphysically distinct entities, and phenomena are nothing but constructions arising out of mental states. Now, if metaphysical idealism is the doctrine that the underlying nature of reality is made up of mental states, then how could idealism be refuted by some proof that the underlying nature of reality is mental?

Still, someone might believe that the two-aspect view better fits Kant’s Refutation of Idealism. According to Allison, for example, as the proof of real things is of mind-independent appearances in space, the Refutation of Idealism is not just compatible with the two-aspect view, it presupposes it:

Moreover, the Refutation of Idealism is not merely compatible with transcendental idealism, properly construed; it presupposes it. In order to appreciate this we must keep in mind that its goal is to demonstrate the objective reality of outer intuition, that is, the existence of objects in space (Bxxxix) [...] but this goal cannot be accomplished on the transcendental realistic assumption that our outer intuition or experience must be of things as they are in themselves. (Allison 2004:300)

On a closer look though, Kant contradicts Allison when he says that the Refutation proves the existence of something that is not an appearance:

If the world were an epitome [*ein Inbegriff*] of the things in themselves, so would it be impossible to prove the existence of a thing outside the world; [...] But if we take the world as appearance, it proves just to the existence of something that is *not* appearance. (Refl 5356, 18:305; trans. emended)<sup>21</sup>

Allison complains that if we take outside objects as appearances, the Refutation becomes impossible indeed. However, under his deflationary two-aspect view, we cannot understand either Kant’s motivation for the Refutation of Idealism or the proof itself. For one thing, the problematic Cartesian idealist proves to be a transcendental realist in the first place (see A369). Thus, for him, genuine knowledge is only knowledge of outer things in the

<sup>21</sup> “Wäre die Welt ein Inbegriff der Dinge an sich selbst, so würde es unmöglich seyn, das Daseyn eines Dinges ausser der Welt zu beweisen; [...]. Nehmen wir aber die Welt als Erscheinung, so beweiset sie gerade zu das Daseyn von Etwas, das *nicht* Erscheinung ist.”

transcendental sense of things in themselves. So then, by assuming from the outset that the Kantian opponent in the Refutation of Idealism cannot be a transcendental realist, Allison is begging the question against the Cartesian sceptic or idealist at issue.

That is why many scholars have gradually come to the opposite conclusion: If successful, the Refutation proves the existence of things in themselves. To my knowledge, Pritchard (1909) was the first contemporary Kantian scholar (early 20<sup>th</sup> century) to hold that the Refutation proves the existence of our outside objects *as they are in themselves*. According to him, the argument of the Refutation of Idealism can only be accepted if we consider permanent substances as things in themselves. At the same time, Pritchard was an isolated voice and received much criticism from Paton (1970), among others.

However, since Guyer's work (1987), numerous scholars have endorsed this conclusion. According to Bader (2012), for example, if the Refutation is successful, then it establishes the existence of phenomena, which would license us to infer the existence of *noumena as the ultimate foundation of phenomena*. Chignell (2011) endorses causal inference of the phenomenon of the *thing in itself* on the basis of Guyer's (1987, 2006) interpretations. Almeida (2013) moves beyond mere causal inference and reminds us of the intentional status of our own representations. Shared by all of these authors is the belief that only by reference to the noumenal world can one make sense of Kant's statement that "the perception of this persistent thing is possible only through a thing outside me and not through the mere representation of a thing outside me" (B275).

Indeed, against Allison's position, there is reasonably good textual evidence supporting the assumption that the goal of the Refutation of Idealism is to prove the existence of noumena. Regarding the question of space, I limit myself to a few quotes. In the year 1790, the period just after the publication of the Refutation, Kant states clearly in one of his many reflections:

We remain in the world of the senses [*crossed out*: however], and would be led by nothing except the principles of the [*crossed out*: law] understanding that we use in experience, but we make our possible progression into an object in itself, by regarding the possibility of experience as something real in the objects of experience. (Refl 5642, 18:280–1)

We must determine something in space in order to determine our own existence in time. That thing outside of us is also represented prior to this determination as noumenon. (Refl 5984, 18:416)

Now since in inner sense everything is successive, hence nothing can be taken backwards, the ground of the possibility of the latter must lie in the relation of representations to something outside us, and indeed to something that is not itself in turn mere inner representation, i.e., form of appearance, hence which is something in itself. The possibility of this cannot be explained.—Further, the representation of that which persists must pertain to that which contains the ground of time-determination, but not with regard to succession, for in that there is no persistence; consequently that which is persistent must lie only in that which is simultaneous, or in the intelligible, which contains the ground of appearances. (Refl 6312, 18:612)

Perhaps the most significant textual evidence is found in the *Critique*:

As to the appearances of inner sense in time, it finds no difficulty in them as real things; indeed it even asserts that this inner experience it alone gives sufficient proof of the real existence of their object (in itself) along with all this time-determination. Our transcendental idealism, on the contrary, allows that the objects of outer intuition are real too, just as they are intuited in space, along with all alterations in time, just as inner sense represents them. For since space is already a form of intuition that we call outer, and without objects in it there would be no representation at all, we can and must assume extended beings in space as

real; and it is precisely the same with time. (B519–20; emphasis added)<sup>22</sup>

Thus, regardless of whether Kant’s Refutation is successful or not, there is a reasonable case to be made that the aim was to prove the existence of outer sense objects in the transcendental sense of things in themselves.

Thus, while neither the traditional two-world view nor the traditional two-aspect view can make sense of the Refutation as proof of the existence of things in themselves —“noumena in this merely negative sense” (A286/B342)—my non-dual-epistemic-phenomenalist approach fits a certain widely shared interpretation of the goal of the Refutation, also endorsed by me, quite well. We do not know how things are in themselves, but only as they appear to us as mere representations of our outer senses as bodies and of our inner sense as mental states or events. However, we do know *the existence* of this world in itself, that appears to our outer senses as permanent bodies in space, as the transcendental ground of the alteration or time-determination of our mental states and events in time, which is what Kant calls knowledge of the existence of “noumena in this merely negative sense” (A286/B342). Thus, according to this interpretation, the Refutation of Idealism is the proof of this existence of persistent things in themselves.

### 8. The Fourth Paralogism

Now, I intend to show that my non-dual-epistemic-phenomenalism is the one that best fits the Fourth Paralogism without imputing to Kant either a Berkeleian idealism (Guyer) or a naïve realism.<sup>23</sup> For the sake of argument, let us assume the two-aspect view in the Fourth Paralogism. According to this view, Kant’s answer to the external world sceptic is to ‘restore’ our common sense belief that by using our cognitive apparatus we are acquainted with *mind-independent appearances* in the empirical sense, that is, as appearances in space. Stroud (1984:131) seems to understand Kant’s idealism along these lines:

For scepticism to be avoided, then, all accounts of our knowledge of the world as inferential or indirect must be rejected. The external things we know about must have “a reality which does not permit of being inferred, but is immediately perceived”. [...] In both cases “*the immediate perception (consciousness) of [things of those kinds] is at the same time a sufficient proof of their reality*” (A371). We are in a position in everyday life in which “outer perception [...] immediately proves of something real in space”. (A375; emphasis added)

Stroud (1984:131) draws the natural conclusion that Kant’s “sufficient proof” is very much like Moore’s (1993) proof of the external world. To avoid external world scepticism, all the Kantian must do is persuade the sceptic to look straight ahead at his hands:

We can now see that Kant insists on our possession of just the kind of knowledge G. E. Moore thought he was exhibiting in his proof of an external world. Moore thought that by holding up his hands before him as he did he had proved the existence of two external things. (Stroud 1984:132)

Again, since the Cartesian sceptic idealist is a transcendental realist in the first place (see A369), the sceptic is challenging us to prove the existence outside us, in the transcendental sense, of things in themselves, rather than in the empirical sense, of representations in the outer sense. The best illustration of this is Stroud’s position (1984). He characterises external world scepticism by contrasting the ordinary standards for knowledge of everyday

<sup>22</sup> Transcendental idealism *allows* for the reality of bodies in space, just as it *allows* for the reality of the object of inner intuition along with alterations in time. However, what accounts for or proves the alterations of my mental states in time is the existence of noumena outside me insofar as they appear to me as permanent objects of the outer senses.

<sup>23</sup> See Stroud (1984). Hanna (2000) has also defended a similar view. But my focus here is on Stroud’s reading of the Fourth Paralogism.

life with his higher philosophical sceptical standards (Stroud 1984:40). We can directly prove the existence of other senses just by waving our hands. However, we cannot prove the existence of noumena in the same way. The question that the defender of the two-aspect view faces is the following: How could Kant possibly have thought that he was refuting the Cartesian sceptic just by waving his hands in this way à la Moore? Put differently, how could Kant have believed that by providing knowledge of the external world *in the empirical* rather than *in the transcendental sense*, he was meeting the Cartesian external world sceptical challenge? In light of this view, Kant's answer to the external world sceptic of Cartesian provenance in the Fourth Paralogism makes little sense.

Now, someone could believe that the two-world view fares better under this account. Kant is accusing the Cartesian sceptic of a Paralogism, that is, of mistaking the empirical for the transcendental sense of 'things outside us'. In other words, the Cartesian sceptic is *mistaking* the representation of bodies in space (empirical sense) for the mind-independent world outside his consciousness (transcendental sense).

In that sense, Kant's answer to the external world sceptic is indeed much like Berkeley's: The only way of avoiding external-world scepticism is to assume that material things are nothing but mental representations in us. For one thing, if material things are representations in us, we now have immediate access to them rather than mediated inference. That is what Kant is saying by controversially claiming that matter is nothing more than "a species of representations" (A370), and that "if I were to take away the thinking subject, the whole corporeal world would have to disappear" (A383).

Now, regardless of whether this is a convincing answer to the Cartesian sceptical challenge (certainly it is not), by saying that matter is just a representation in us, Kant is not endorsing Berkeley's metaphysical claim that the outside world in the relevant transcendental sense is made up of mental states. Kant's controversial statements of A370 and A383 must be understood epistemologically rather than metaphysically, at least if we take his complaints against Feder-Garve's accusation as sincere. By claiming that matter is just a representation in us, Kant is claiming that matter is the mind-dependent way that the unknown mind-independent things in themselves appear inside us. Therefore, my non-dual phenomenalism is the reading of Kantian idealism that best fits the argument of the Fourth Paralogism.

## 9. Conclusion: The Fourth Paralogism and the Refutation of Idealism

In this concluding section, I argue that my non-dual epistemic-phenomenalist view is the one that best harmonises my interpretation of the Fourth Paralogism with the widely shared reading of the Refutation of Idealism that I sketched and defended above. The bottom line of my view is a clear distinction between the metaphysical and epistemological sides of Kantian idealism. Again, according to my non-dual-epistemic-phenomenalism, the *mundus sensibilis* and *mundus intelligibilis* are epistemologically distinct ways of considering the metaphysically identical outside world. Appearances are nothing but the way the things in themselves appear or exist inside our sensible minds as mere representations. In this sense, I reject both the two-world view, the two-aspect view, and Allais's deflationary anti-phenomenalist reading.

Thus, in the Fourth Paralogism, Kant tries to persuade the Cartesian external-world sceptic that we do possess direct epistemic access to material things, *because material things are nothing but the immediate way that the mind-independent existing world of things in themselves mind-dependently appear to us as the objects of the outer sense*. Finally, to refute the Feder-Garve accusation of being a metaphysical idealist à la Berkeley, in the Refutation of Idealism, Kant tries to prove *the very existence of mind-independent things in themselves—noumena in the negative sense (A386/B342)—as the metaphysical ground of our mental appearances* by arguing that such an assumption is the only explanation for the time determination or alteration of our mental states.

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