

Kantian Ontology

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There has always been something of a debate concerning the interpretation of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, not least with regard to how seriously one should view the notion of “transcendental idealism” and, indeed, in what the doctrine in question can be said to consist in. Two questions have begun to have serious prominence in this respect in recent years. On the one hand, there is the tendency amongst a generation of interpreters to suggest that Kant’s refutation of idealism is one that in some serious sense conflicts with his own profession of transcendental idealism, a view that has reinforced the tendency of many to reject the latter doctrine in favour of some form of realism.¹ On the other hand, there is an increasing dispute concerning whether the basic investigation that the *Critique* sets out is to be located as a contribution to metaphysics and ontology or, conversely, as part of a reorientation of philosophy away from ontology towards epistemology. Whilst the inquiry into the relationship between realism and idealism is one that interests me greatly, it is not my subject today as I will rather here be bringing out both a charting of the dispute concerning the relative merits of epistemological and ontological readings of the *Critique* and suggesting a distinctive type of ontological reading of the work that is not equivalent to those standardly ascribed to Kant in the contemporary literature.

Epistemological and Ontological Readings of the *Critique*

In beginning to set out the nature of the dispute between epistemological and ontological readings of the *Critique* it is important to point out that the argument between

these rival interpretations is not recent as it has parallels in the reception of Kant's work by his contemporaries² and that the nature of the contemporary disagreement has introduced a number of additional complexities. From the first there were a number of views of the *Critique* from readings that stressed the notion of subjectivity as central to the picture of experience to accounts that were based solidly on assumptions of certain foundational constraints being required to have any basic picture of experience. These early disputes produced an oscillation in the image of Kant from that of an ambitious metaphysical systematizer to a cautious reformer who proffered us instead a piecemeal approach to philosophical problems. The competition between these images has persisted to the present day but in the contemporary philosophical climate the nature and significance of ontological and epistemological claims has acquired a general philosophical character that has grown around the use of analytical models in philosophy to suggest a combination of attention to arguments combined with a sensitivity to issues in semantics. Hence the understanding of the relation between ontology and epistemology has tended to concentrate on meaningful claims concerning either the nature of knowledge or the nature of objects. However the stress on semantic elements in metaphysics has produced a tendency to assimilate ontological and epistemological enquiries to a degree so that the competition between these two forms of reading is better understood as a difference between the degree in which one element should be emphasized over the other rather than a simple preference for one *over* the other.

We can see this point if we begin to attend to how the dispute between the readings of the doctrines of the *Critique* has been formulated. Peter Strawson's interpretation of Kant is one of the foremost sources of the contemporary debates on Kantian doctrines but it is worth mentioning that the reception of Strawson's interpretation has tended to simplify its outlines. There are three components to this interpretation: there is, firstly, a conception that Kant's picture of

perceptual objects as a collection of states of a perceiving subject leads to the view that perceptual objects are no more than a series of sensational elements.³ Coupled with this phenomenalist view of perception Strawson suggests that Kant also carries out a more respectable investigation of the objects of experience that is centred round the question of how universal and particular claims concerning them can be brought together, a conception that relates the Kantian notion of “intuition” to particulars, that of concepts to “universals”.⁴ Whilst this second element is the basis of a positive metaphysics of experience and is the centre of Strawson’s reconstruction of Kantian arguments in the frame of what came to be called “transcendental arguments” the third element of Strawson’s picture is the most relevant for our purposes as this is the metaphysical underpinning for the claim that the conception of spatial objects is phenomenalist. This third element is the understanding of things-in-themselves as having a productive relationship to appearances. This suggestion is one that readers of Strawson have tended to think of as a causal one though Strawson himself suggests that Kant’s metaphysical picture is a *quasi-causal* one in which the casual notion is metaphorical or analogical, appearing in fact to be more a way of speaking with regard to that which is thought to be over-and-above the phenomenalist properties and which thus attaches to the notion of an “object” in general than to a clear commitment to a “two-worlds” view of transcendental idealism.⁵

Strawson’s understanding of transcendental idealism thus combines together epistemological and ontological elements suggesting as it does a doctrine of “objects” that are over and above their phenomenal characteristics and which in some sense are productive of these characteristics even if the way in which they are thought to be so is not one that can be clearly stated. The force of this picture is however based on twin epistemological doctrines thought to be in tension with each other, namely the phenomenalist view of perceptual conditions combined with the appeal to a distinction between particular and universal elements of significant

statements that is thought to provide an objective picture that is more properly representative of the nature of experience for Strawson. The complexity of this model of transcendental idealism is thus considerably greater than is conventionally thought but it does rest on an attribution of a failure on Kant's part to establish demarcation lines between enquiries into conditions of significance and investigations of sensory perception that do not permit real claims about "objects" in experience.⁶

By contrast with the combination of claims in Strawson the clear pole of opposite vantage is Henry Allison whose claim for a distinctive epistemological interpretation of Kant has been one key to the defence of transcendental idealism as not requiring any reference to non-sensible "objects", key, that is, to an *ontologically* respectable view of its metaphysical significance. Allison's conception of his view of transcendental idealism has changed since the publication of the first edition of *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* in 1983 where he presented the doctrine as based squarely on what he then termed "epistemic conditions", a notion he admitted was not used anywhere in the *Critique* and which he found it correspondingly difficult to offer any precise definition of. What was central however to Allison's conception was a recovery of the notion of the *transcendental* aspect of Kant's idealism, an element which had, he claimed, gone missing from Strawson's reconstruction of the doctrine. On this basis Allison rejected phenomenalism as a construal of Kant's views of perceptual objects claiming that the ideality of spatio-temporal conditions was not a statement concerning subjective conditions in some private sense of "subjective" but was rather an argument concerning the dependence of representation of objective states of affairs upon universal and necessary features. The effect of this is that the notion of things-in-themselves is frankly stated to be no more than a limiting conception of what could be presented of objects if there were no sensible conditions of cognition.⁷

The first problem with this view concerns its picture of how certain types of objects can even come to be spoken of as limit-conditions since it would appear that the epistemic conditions referred to as the grounds for sensible cognition would rule out the prospect of any other sort of cognition at all, a point that would prevent the notion of “things-in-themselves” having even minimal sense. This point was subsequently acknowledged by Allison who modified his view to one in which the key claim of transcendental idealism is stated to be the necessity for a discursivity condition for sensible knowledge, a condition which requires that in referring to sensory objects a combination of concepts and sensible forms is required whilst there is a minimal sense to things-in-themselves as having a sense of a purely conceptual order.⁸ Whilst this modification saves some semantic content for the notion of things-in-themselves it would appear to have one of two costs: either rendering the notion of things-in-themselves vacuously derivative of appearances such that the former are analytically derived from the latter, a fact which would make one wonder why no philosopher prior to Kant could have seen such an inference. Or, conversely, there is a metaphysical significance to talk of things-in-themselves as objects that are non-spatio-temporal but such talk is metaphysically dogmatic and not in keeping with Critical guidelines.⁹ To the objection of analytic anodyne conclusions being drawn from the transcendental distinction Allison has argued that the conclusion is indeed analytic but that it is not anodyne due to Kant’s reference to transcendental illusion being a consistent temptation for reason and the analytic inference being the only way to combat this temptation.¹⁰ Whilst this gives some basis for thinking Allison’s account of the distinction has some bite despite the conclusion concerning things-in-things being based on a purely analytic argument it is naturally insufficient to respond to the view that his claim involves the assumption that there are things-in-themselves that are *not* spatio-temporal, a claim that does seem substantive. To this

Allison's full response is rarely given explicitly but surely consists in the view that things-in-themselves are not *objects* in any sense than purely judgmentally, that they are merely thought-events.¹¹ This still does have a problem however which is that the claim of "two-aspects" to which Allison is committed suggests that it is one and the same thing that is being viewed purely intentionally and as having sensible properties, viewed that is, in ways that are mutually incompatible, a fact that indicates that conditions of objects have been insufficiently attended to in an interpretation geared primarily to epistemological ends.¹²

Sebastian Gardner has added a further point to these critical reflections on Allison's understanding of things-in-themselves when he refers to the notion of intellectual intuition, which is used to describe putatively different cognitional equipment to ours. As Gardner puts it: "The hypothesized non-human form of cognition employed at the outset in formulating the discursivity thesis, which allows the suggestion to be derived that a discursive cognition is somehow limited or 'merely finite', can be discharged at the end of the day: if intellectual intuition were possible, then its objects would be things in themselves, but since no possible objective reality can be accorded to the concept of such objects (to do so would be to relapse into transcendental realism/illusion), the possibility of intellectual intuition collapses in turn. In other words, discursivity now seems to be a characteristic of, and Kantian epistemic conditions to be conditions for, cognition *überhaupt*."¹³ This point when added to the question of how the "two-aspects" model is meant to apply reinforces the feeling of ontological redundancy in Allison's picture of things-in-themselves.

If there are the problems I have suggested with the interpretations of Strawson and Allison at opposite poles of the analytic readings of Kant one might wonder what an ontological interpretation of transcendental idealism would, by contrast, look like. The most vigorous proponent of such an interpretation has been, for some time now, Karl Ameriks. What is most striking about Ameriks' ontological

understanding of transcendental idealism is that it is a much less general interpretation of Kant than those of Allison and Strawson. Whereas both Strawson and Allison set out their views of transcendental idealism by reference to contrastive understandings of phenomenal objects and the nature of Kantian talk about things-in-themselves Ameriks is much more specific concerning the types of objects that can be classed as things-in-themselves in Kantian parlance mentioning amongst other things God, the soul and, most importantly of all, noumenal substances.¹⁴ This ontological interpretation has the immediate merit of making clear that transcendental idealism is not merely a view about the nature of perceptually given objects that describes the characteristics of phenomena but also a view of intelligible objects that describes the characteristics of noumena. In making the latter move it also suggests a deep connection between Kant's *Critique* and the concerns metaphysicians have tended to have with such questions as the existence and nature of God, the nature of the substantial question about the soul, including its possible immortality and free agency and, most fundamentally of all, with the quest, since Aristotle, to determine the fundamental claims that can truly be made about the nature of substances.¹⁵

In the Inaugural Dissertation written a decade prior to the composition of the *Critique* Kant also made a distinction between sensible and intelligible principles the key to the possibility of undertaking metaphysics and in the process identified the problem with the form of an intelligible world being one that consists of substances. However whilst the previous section of the Dissertation on the form of the sensible world had made clear the commitment already reached at that stage to the notion that space and time are the prime forms of everything intelligible Kant still found, at this point in his development, that he had a significant metaphysical problem to address after stating this view of sensibility. At the opening of the section dealing with the form of the intelligible world Kant makes this clear when he states that the following question remains in need of

discussion: “*what is the principle upon which this relation of all substances itself rests, and which, when seen intuitively, is called space?*” which question he takes to be equivalent to the following: “*how it is possible that a plurality of substances should be in mutual interaction with each other and in this way belong to the same whole, which is called a world*” (Ak. 2: 407).

The solution that was presented in the Dissertation to this question remained solidly related to the programmes of metaphysics of Leibniz and continental rationalism in the sense that a cosmological argument for the proof of the existence of God was presented in the Dissertation as a response to the problem in question. More importantly than this point however is the fact that Kant here clearly identifies the question of how to relate the conception of substance to phenomenal properties of space and time as the key question. This is not an innovation of the Dissertation either as Kant’s earliest treatises in philosophy such as the *Physical Monadology* (1755) and the *New Elucidation* (1756) were already concerned with the question of how to reconcile claims concerning the divisibility of space with Leibnizian claims concerning the indivisibility of monads on the one hand and with questions about how to conceive of interaction between substances on the other. All of these points give considerable support to Ameriks’ reading, particularly to his basic contention that the question of interaction of substances was one of the key concerns of Kant’s work and motivated the range of his responses to the history of metaphysics.¹⁶ The last point of importance for considering this interpretation is that, unlike many current analytic interpretations of the *Critique*, it also involves placing as much importance on the interpretation of the results of the Transcendental Dialectic as it does the description of experience in the Transcendental Analytic.

However there are two main problems with Ameriks’ interpretation, one of which can be stated quickly and the other of which will require extended response. The first and simpler to state problem is that Ameriks gives surprisingly

little attention to the description of Kant's positive account of phenomenal objects and is thus rather better stating what appearances might be said to be appearances *of* than he is at giving an account of the nature of appearances as things themselves, a major omission that concedes much of the discussion of transcendental synthesis that is arguably one of Kant's major topics in the *Critique* to other readers. Ameriks is effectively little interested in the detail of the account of perception in Kant, in this in fact sharing a blindness to the details of Kant's theory of experience and how it is part of a view of objects that is consistent in contemporary literature on the *Critique*.¹⁷ A second problem concerns the nature of the picture of substance that emerges from Ameriks' interpretation and to which I will now turn.

Ameriks, Kant and Substance

From the writing of the *New Elucidation* (1756) onwards Kant concerned himself with the question of how substances formed part of a whole which could be called a world continuously claiming, against Leibniz, the need for interaction between substances if they were to be claimed to be conjointly part of the *same* world. However, as is clear from the difficulty reached in the Inaugural Dissertation concerning the relation between the form of space and time and the relation to substances Kant struggled unsuccessfully with the attempt to set out a doctrine of the need for substantial interaction alongside a coherent picture of the sensible world. Ameriks' most extended investigation of Kant's response to the tradition of ontology in German School Philosophy is centred primarily on analysis of the lectures he gave at various times on metaphysics, relating them to a discussion of the role of substance in the *Critique*.¹⁸ Ameriks claims on the basis of this comparison that the view presented of substance by Kant in these lectures differs from that given in the *Critique*. One passage in particular that is cited from the lectures of the 1790's entitled *Metaphysik Dohna* is given as a reason for thinking

that here Kant states something at variance with the *Critique* as Kant is here recorded as stating the following: “A phenomenon is in itself no substance, with respect to our senses we call the appearance of substance itself substance. But this phenomenal substance <*substantia phenomenon*> must have a noumenon as substrate. This can be called transcendental idealism.” (Ak. 28: 682).

The reason for thinking this statement is in conflict with the view offered in the *Critique* is that the central argument of the Analogies of Experience appears to consist in a statement to the effect that the notion of substance has purchase in experience and that interaction between phenomena is best expressed as interaction between phenomenal *substances*, a position that allows Kant to claim that we are confronted in experience with *objects* and not merely groups of sensations. Hence the basic argument of the Analogies would be needed to ensure that Kant does not (*pace* Strawson) commit to a view of the objects of experience that is basically a phenomenalist reductive conception.¹⁹ However the statement from *Metaphysik Dohna* seems rather to consist in an argument to the effect that the doctrine of transcendental idealism is based on the view that we do not encounter substances amongst phenomena as it is only with regard to a noumenal substrate that the notion of substance makes any sense. On this basis Ameriks asks us to assess the question, which view is Kant’s considered ontological doctrine and, whilst stating that he finds Kant’s conception “deeply ambiguous”, he opts for the argument that the lectures position is the more consistent statement of Kant’s fuller view. One of the reasons for this move on Ameriks’s part appears to be that Kant states in a number of other lectures that to take space and time to be transcendently real is to commit oneself to Spinozism as the only way that such infinities as time and space could be grounded except as conditions of sensible cognition would be as parts of the single substance.²⁰ Hence there is a requirement, in order to avoid the view of Spinozism

according to these statements, to deny that what we are faced with in experience are genuine substances.²¹

Whilst Ameriks' points here to a rationale for the Kantian claim of the ideality of space and time however this is not sufficient to form the view that the statements of the lectures concerning the commitment of transcendental idealism to the denial of phenomenal substance is truly contradictory of the argument of the Analogies. The Analogies discussion of phenomenal substance is set out as part of the analytic of principles' description of the schematization of the categories of pure understanding. Considered separately from such a procedure there would for Kant be no basis for claims concerning phenomenal substance and it is quite plausible to view the statements from the lectures as a denial of any notion of phenomenal substance separately from the process of schematization.²² Hence it is not required, as Ameriks' thinks, to posit a choice between the lectures' view of phenomenal substance and that of the *Critique*. Even more importantly however to get a clearer picture of Kantian ontology is to require a serious consideration of the argument of the Analogies as this argument would make central the ontological questions of the Transcendental Analytic.

Kant, Intentional Objects and Phenomenal Substances

Subsequent to the writing of the Inaugural Dissertation Kant sent his famous letter to Marcus Herz of February 21st 1772, the letter that formulates the problem with the doctrines of the Dissertation and puts Kant on the path of writing the *Critique*. In this letter Kant announced his intention of writing a work on *The Limits of Sensibility and Reason* and in the process stated a problem he had uncovered with all his previous attempts at metaphysical inquiry:

As I thought through the theoretical part, considering its whole scope and the reciprocal relation of all its parts, I noticed that I lacked something essential, something that in my long metaphysical studies I, as well as others, had failed to consider and which in fact constitutes the key to the whole secret of metaphysics, hitherto still hidden from itself. I asked myself this question: What is the ground of the relation of that in us which we call “representation” to the object? (Ak. 10: 130)

This problem can, I would suggest, be interpreted in one of two ways. Either what Kant is here assessing as a difficulty is how it is the case that statements of cognitive import can attach to “objects” that are not intelligible and yet describe their conditions fully or as pointing to the problem of how, in experience, we are capable of treating phenomenal appearances as being *of* objects rather than mere collections of sense despite the fact that they do not appear capable of being seen as true “substances”. What I want to suggest is that the central argument of the Transcendental Analytic is concerned with bringing these two alternative formulations together and hence that it is best grasped as an investigation into the conditions of there being something like a relation to substances in our experience of the phenomenal world. Evidently I cannot here track this suggestion through the Transcendental Analytic generally but I can make a series of suggestions as to how it might augment our understanding of the argument of the Analogies, something that Ameriks’ has oddly failed to do.²³

The Role of Substance in the Argument of the Analogies

Kant gives a general principle of all three of the Analogies although this principle is stated slightly differently in the two editions of the *Critique*. In the first edition Kant states that the principle of the analogies is

that the existence of all appearances is one that is that subject to *a priori* rules “determining their relation to one another in time” (A176-7), a formulation that shows that the analogies have to describe a universal condition of appearances and that this condition is one connected to *a priori* intuitions. In the second edition the principle of all the analogies is conversely stated to be that experience is possible “only through the representation of a necessary connection of perceptions” (B218), showing that the principle has to demonstrate a *necessary* condition of experiences. Whilst the shift in the formulation from universal conditions to necessary ones is noteworthy the real question is why in the second edition formulation Kant drops the reference to time. The reason, I would suggest, is that the “necessary connection of perceptions” is one that will describe conditions of temporal experience itself, conditions that permit both the presentation of sensible relations as *in* time and, correlatively with this, describe the conditions under which these relations can be connected to a sense of an *object* and that will enable this sensible conception of object to be rendered analogous to the conception of a substance.

If we bring the two formulations together we can also correlate the reference in the first edition to appearances with the reference in the second edition to perceptions. Perceptions are the means whereby anything “appears” to us in experience and what we need to bring out in the argument of the Analogies is what permits what thus “appears” to possess the relative solidity we are interested in when we describe this “appearance” as one that is *of* an “object”. If we now look at the principles of the three separate analogies it will be with the purpose of unveiling the core of the argument that is at work across all three. The First Analogy is where Kant directly addresses the problem of how to schematize the category of substance. In the first edition he states that all appearances “contain the permanent (substance) as the *object itself*” (my emphasis) whilst the changeable is the way the object “exists”. That appearances contain substance, as “the object itself” is precisely what we

have suggested needs demonstration. The second edition formulation, by contrast, indicates that the quantum “of substance” cannot alter when change takes place in appearances, something that seems to relate to the difference between the “object itself” and its determinations as given in the formula of the first edition. Either way the question of duration is at stake and the possibility of how we determine appearances as having a “nature” would appear to be the subject of the argument of the First Analogy.

If we turn from the First Analogy to the Second then we can see in the latter an explicit concern with the principles of the changes referred to as “determinations” of substance in the formulations of the First Analogy. In the first edition Kant speaks of how happenings are dependent on rules (A189) whilst in the second edition by contrast the reference is to alterations which are related to “the law of the connection of cause and effect” (B232). In both cases the nature of change is at issue and this change is expressed as related to a kind of constant principle whether this latter be stated as a rule or a law. Finally, the Third Analogy describes the coexistence of substances that we saw emerge as a problem in the argument of the Dissertation. Here Kant describes this coexistence as grounded in either “mutual interaction” (A211) or “thoroughgoing reciprocity” (B256) with the latter formulation including explicit reference to perception of substances *in space*.

The three analogies combined are therefore explicitly stated to be ways of justifying how it can be that in experience what we are dealing with is, firstly, *objects* themselves which are related explicitly to *substances*, secondly, to change which latter requires some form of constant principle and, thirdly, to an existence and perception of relation between substances in perception.

The Ontological Argument of the Analogies

The problem the analogies are an answer to concerns the ground we have for the view that the notion of “object” is one we are justified in using with reference to sensible appearances. A further reason why there might be a problem here is stated clearly in the A-Deduction when Kant writes:

If cinnabar were sometimes red, sometimes black, sometimes light, sometimes heavy, if a man changed sometimes into this and sometimes into that animal form, if the country on the longest day were sometimes covered with fruit, sometimes with ice and snow, my empirical imagination would never find opportunity when representing red colour to bring to mind heavy cinnabar. Nor could there be an empirical synthesis of reproduction, if a certain name were sometimes given to this, sometimes to that object, or were one and the same thing named sometimes in one way, sometimes in another, *independently of any rule to which appearances are in themselves subject.* (A101, my emphasis)

Here Kant raises the problem of how it is that we can have stability of reference to objects in experience indicating that constant recognition of the same phenomena as being indeed relation to the same thing requires that there are rules to which the phenomena themselves are subject, not just a set of rules we might formulate for our names of the phenomena. These rules have to be ones that phenomena are subject to *over* time. There has to be some sense of continuity in what is given *in* time for temporally available objects to be re-identified *over* time. This is the problem that is at the heart of the analogies and specifying how to resolve

it is related centrally to the question of how it is that we are able to speak of “sensible objects” at all.

What is the condition of continuity of referential assertion with regard to sensible objects? It is that there is something *essential* that can be identified as the basic and enduring *nature* of them. However this is clearly not a characteristic of certain *particulars* whose given conditions of presentation can be described and conditions of confirmation be set out in determinate detail as what the point from the A-Deduction is meant to draw to our attention is the intertwined nature of *experience* of sensory objects such that they inter-connect with one another in the whole that is nature²⁴. Without this inter-connection the variability of any one of them could occur and without the guarantee that any one followed constant rules of appearance there could be no suggestion of any others having a natural connection to each other either so that the names that attach to any object would simply be conventional designators and not attempts to fix the nature of any given thing in an ontological definition.

The argument of the Inaugural Dissertation showed that the coherence of the forms of sensibility is in fact insufficient to guarantee the matter of sense as even with the continuity of the form the matter could be variable in the sense that there is constant experience of distinct “states” that have to follow rules of succession but not *determinate* ones that apply to the nature of the matter in question. If there are determinate ways of referring to sensible objects then what has to be specified are properties of the matter of the objects, not merely the forms of how they have to be given. But what has to be given in sensible experience, *as* matter, is awareness of sensation itself.²⁵ Sensation is what is primarily given to us so we need to ask next what rules follow from the formal properties of space and time for the awareness of the matter of sense. The prime rule is that all matter follows a rule of continuity since for sensation to appear to us is for it to be presented according to successive apprehension and in positions near to or far from us. These two conditions provide basic criteria for experience of sensation. The next

point that can be added is that sensory experience could never be empty, composed only of the forms of sense: there must be connection between each moment of sensory givens. Hence for there to be anything sensible is for there to be a continuous presentation of some awareness of “influence” upon us of that which is sensible. But if there must always be *something* given then what must always be given cannot “in itself” perish even if its form changes. In other words, if the manner in which sensation is given to us alters still the fact of sensation always being given does not and nor can the manners in which sensation is given change as without constancy of presentation there would be no way it would fit the forms of having to be given in the first place.

These two requirements of sensory presentation – that the matter of it cannot cease being given and that its ways of being given must be continuously in relation to the same unalterable form – enable this matter, in the most general sense, to *represent* substance for us in experience, despite the fact that matter in the most general sense is not determinate as without this constancy of given conditions of matter no determinate sensory given could emerge. This also suggests (and in a sense this is the point of the First Analogy) that the real “objects” in experience are not the appearances that take variant forms but rather the natures that are being expressed in these forms according to homogeneous coherent rules.

Once we have attained a comprehension like this of the schema of the concept of substance we can begin to turn to how Kant defends the conception of phenomenal experience as grounded on a lawful relation between its elements. The centre-piece of the argument of the Second Analogy is a demonstration not merely that there is such a thing as “objective succession” but that there is an “object” at all being perceived in successive states. Now if there are such things as “objects” in the most general sense then there are truthful propositions that can be stated concerning the states of affairs in which they are presented. However since “states of affairs” necessarily are descriptive of propositions whose truth is not dependent on a given sensory presentation the

question emerges of what enables us to have stability in reference in sensory matters. We have picked out already that there is one part of sensory experience that can be seen as constant and this is the continuity of relation between its elements. Connected to this must be a description of the natures of what is presented to us that allows us to state that there is a stable connection between certain sets of sensory presentations such that we can term them to be *of* “objects”. The nature of this is probed in the Second Analogy discussion of irreversible perceptual experiences. If what we are perceiving is a succession of relations between distinct events that includes within it a perception of “objects” that stand in relation to each other despite the flux of their manner of being given then there is a condition for this which is that the succession of the “objects” is one that has determinate ways of being given. The determinate ways they have of being given such that we can state them to be of “objects” is that the order of their presentation has a determinate trajectory that cannot be different from what it is, a statement that fixes a *general rule* to “objective succession”, not a rule for *particular occasions*.

Formulating the need for this general rule is important to state that there is any kind of experience of “objects”. To see this let us imagine a situation in which there was only a succession that was expressive of a state of ourselves and not based on the state of anything being given. In such a situation there would be no way that we could avoid the problem described by Kant in the passage I cited earlier from the A-Deduction. Hence, unless there is a way of distinguishing a perception which is truly *of objects* from one in which the relation between parts of a successive presentation is no more than a statement of the states of something being given through my sensory apparatus then there is no clear way of stating that even the successive presentation of the same “object” is truly of that same “object” at all. In other words, given that successive presentation is how even stationary appearances are given to us there would never be any way of stating that we actually

had experiences of the same thing in these states if all order was merely subjective and thus merely subjective temporal presentation could in no sense be said to be *of* “objects” at all, merely of states. This consequence points to a problem with empiricist accounts of perception, namely, that they cannot justify to us a rationale for thinking we *ever* experience anything stable enough to merit the title of “object” at all.²⁶

So if there is anything like a relation to “objects” in experience there is a condition for this being given to us which is that there are rules that must provide such “objects” with determinate necessary modes of being given that regulate their possible ordering. The nature of these rules are further spelled out by Kant in reference to the comprehension of succession as being *of* an object that is itself successive. Should something be given to me in successive form and also be described as a set of successions that describe the object in relation to others then what is required is that there are a set of moments that stand in determinate relation to each other. In such a case a present appearance is taken to *follow-from* a preceding one and to require a further appearance as its *consequence*. If one state is to follow another according to this rule then the given form of presentation of the successions can only be described as one that is beyond one due to the fact that the order is not subject to variation for one. As Kant puts this: “The situation, then, is this: there is an order in our representations in which the present, so far as it has come to be, refers us to some preceding state as a correlate of the event which is given; and though this correlate is, indeed, indeterminate, it none the less stands in a determining relation to the event as its consequence, connecting the event in necessary relation with itself in the time-series” (A198-9/B244). In other terms it is necessary that, given the present state, there had to be a preceding one that required the present one to be as it is if there is a succession that is *of* the object or objects involved. The determination of the temporal order of the states in question is what is what has to

be as it is if there is succession that belongs to the object. But for such succession to have such determinate necessary connections involved with its presentation is as much as to say that the only way of describing succession as something that is *of* the objects in question is by use of the category of causality.²⁷

The final key point is that the determination of the order of time that is required to perceive succession of objects is not merely the condition under which distinction between objects and sameness of recognition of objects is given but is also founded fundamentally on the sense that the order in question is part of a structured nature that manifests order continuously. Alteration of “objects” in relation to each other is expressive of the same operation of laws that requires laws of force in general to be stated to be all part of the same time. For temporal determination to be expressed in the manner suggested is as much as to say that time must operate according to unitary rules.²⁸

Thus the central argument of the analogies relates the conditions of *a priori* intuition to the nature of “objects” being given as such and requires not merely that we can *justify* statements about particulars or formulate a distinction between objective and subjective succession but, rather more importantly, that we are able, through the use of categories in connection with intuitions, to specify the conditions under which experience can be said to be *of* objects at all.

Substance, Space and Co-Existence

These general accounts of the relation between the first two analogies leave over in some senses the key questions, questions that I can now formulate as the ones that need addressing for Kantian ontology. On one level these concern the nature of the relationship between substance and space that was already Kant’s concern in the Dissertation. This is the point of the Third Analogy, a point that connects it to the Refutation of Idealism. On the other

level however the problem emerges of how the appearances are regulated by reference to the understanding of force and matter that is brought out as of central significance for Kant's account of experience and these accounts of force and matter point us beyond the *Critique* to the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* and the *Opus Postumum*. The third level concerns the relationship between phenomenal substance and noumenal substantial claims that Ameriks has rightly brought out involve the key questions of metaphysics and which are subjected to investigation both in the Transcendental Dialectic and in Kant's post-Critical writings. The setting out of these broader and broader horizons indicates the basis for the beginning of a serious enquiry into Kantian ontology.

Endnotes

¹ The first representative of this view of any importance must be counted as Paul Guyer. See Guyer (1983) "Kant's Intentions in the Refutation of Idealism" *The Philosophical Review* Vol. 92, No. 3 and Guyer (1987) *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York), Part IV. This analysis is one to which Rae Langton (1998) *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves* (Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York) is heavily indebted despite indicating a different view to Guyer over many questions. Another work which also bears the marks of the influence of Guyer's analysis despite presenting a different case is Kenneth R. Westphal (2004) *Kant's Transcendental Proof of Realism* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York).

² For an extremely interesting and intricate account of the *Critique* by its first generation of interpreters that incorporates a clear argument as to the influence of these readers on subsequent generations see Karl Ameriks (2000) *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy: Problems in the Appropriation of the Critical Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York).

³ This phenomenalist element in Strawson's interpretation is what leads him to the statement that Kant's transcendental idealism is not far distant from Berkeley's empirical idealism. See Peter Strawson (1966) *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Routledge: London and New York), pp. 20-22.

⁴ This element of Strawson's interpretation is broadly shared by Wilfrid Sellars who, in fact, has a similar penchant for describing Kant's account of spatial perception in phenomenalist terms. See W. Sellars (1968) *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes* (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London and Humanities Press: New York), Chapter 1.

⁵ Strawson's picture of transcendental idealism is usually assumed to be a "two-worlds" one and incautious comments made by him at various points in *The Bounds of Sense* give some credence to this but for the evidence to the contrary on which I am here drawing see pp. 236-9 of Strawson (1966). For the more conventional view see John McDowell (1994) *Mind and World* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass. and London).

⁶ There are two further elements of Strawson's interpretation that would be worthy of extended investigation that cannot be undertaken here. On the one hand, Strawson claims that the conditions of judgment can be austere construed in Kantian terms in such a way that respectable claims about objectivity can be derived from analysis of the subject-predicate relation. On the other hand, he restores a certain credence to Kant's transcendental psychology as a better picture of perception than the phenomenalist conception he takes to be Kant's "official" view in *The Bounds of Sense*. Whilst the account of judgment is set out in parts of *The Bounds of Sense* it is in fact described more fully by Strawson in works in which he is not attending primarily to questions of Kantian exegesis. For some aspects of this picture see Peter Strawson (1959) *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (Methuen & Co: London) and Peter Strawson (1974a) *Subject and Predicate in Logic and Grammar* (Methuen & Co: London). For his reconstruction of transcendental psychology see Peter Strawson (1970) "Imagination and Perception" in Strawson (1974b) *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (Methuen & Co: London). For a detailed discussion of Strawson's engagement with Wilfrid Sellars on predication, judgment and ontology see G. Banham (2005) *Kant's Transcendental Imagination* (Palgrave Macmillan: London and New York) Chapter 2 and see Chapter 4 of the same for a discussion of Strawson's reconstruction of transcendental psychology.

⁷ See H.E. Allison (1983) *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London), Chapter One.

⁸ For these modifications see H.E. Allison (1996) "Transcendental Idealism: A Retrospective" in H.E. Allison (1996) *Idealism and Freedom: Essays on Kant's Theoretical and Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York).

⁹ The vacuous reading is suggested at certain points in Guyer (1987) but more strenuously pursued in Langton (1998). The argument that there is a metaphysical dogmatic sense to the talk of things-in-themselves on the epistemological reading of Allison is the fuller view of Guyer (1987) and there is precedent for this kind of riposte in Norman Kemp Smith (1918) *A Commentary to Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'* (Macmillan: London and New York) where however it is connected to a picture of a combination of phenomenalist and metaphysical claims in Kant that is an ancestor of Strawson's reading.

¹⁰ Allison makes this claim in the revised edition of his 1983 volume that was published in 2004 but in making it frankly acknowledges his dependence here on the analysis of the transcendental dialectic put forward by Michelle Grier (2001) *Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York). The question of the accuracy of the latter account is a subject for another paper.

¹¹ The closest he gets to this is in Allison (2004) p. 73.

¹² This problem with the "two aspects" view of transcendental idealism is ably pointed out by Robert Hanna (2001) *Kant and the Foundations of*

Analytic Philosophy (Clarendon Press: Oxford) who uses it to argue in favour instead of a “two-concept” theory which however I am unconvinced avoids the problems Hanna has himself identified with the “two aspect” theory. Hanna’s problem with the “two aspect” theory is in fact reminiscent of the difficulty Werner Pluhar raised against the conventional solution of the antinomy of teleological judgment by means of an appeal to regulative rather than constitutive approaches to judgment. See Werner Pluhar (1987) “Translator’s Introduction” to Kant (1790) *Critique of Judgment* (1987 trans. by W. Pluhar, Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis and Cambridge) and for a response to Pluhar’s account that proposes a different resolution of this antinomy to Pluhar himself see G. Banham (2000) *Kant and the Ends of Aesthetics* (Macmillan: London and New York), Chapter 8.

¹³ Sebastian Garndner (2005) “Review” of Allison (2004), *Notre Dame Philosophical Review*, <http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id=3761>, accessed 14th October 2005, p. 5.

¹⁴ The three examples given are all stated in Karl Ameriks (2003) “Introduction” to K. Ameriks (2003) *Interpreting Kant’s Critiques* (Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York), pp. 23-4.

¹⁵ A number of features support this concentration. Amongst them we can list the fact that Kant states that metaphysics has three ideas only as the proper object of its enquiries, namely, “*God, freedom, and immortality*” at B395, which amplifies the treatment of the preface to the second edition and illuminates the reference in the preface to the first edition to questions reason can neither ignore nor answer (Avii). That Kant understood the effect of the *Critique* to be a response to these questions is made evident also in the preface to the second edition.

¹⁶ This claim is made explicit in Ameriks (2003), specifically on p. 25. This element of Ameriks’ view is shared by Langton but the latter not only finds much of Kant’s ontology already in the *New Elucidation* but also distinguishes the basic claims she thinks Kant can make concerning substance from his transcendental idealism so although her view is clearly an ontological interpretation of Kant it is less evident that it is an ontological interpretation of transcendental idealism. See Langton (1998) Chapter 10 for a clarification of her views on realism and idealism. See also K. Ameriks (2000) “Kant and Short Arguments to Humility” in Ameriks (2003) for Ameriks’ reply to Langton’s account.

¹⁷ In some respects the major exception to this rule is Paul Guyer whose work on Kant’s theory of experience is more expansive than that of most other commentators.

¹⁸ K. Ameriks (1992) “The Critique of Metaphysics: Kant and Traditional Ontology” in K. Ameriks (2003).

¹⁹ The real core of this problem in terms of the architecture of the *Critique* is worth stating however as one of reconciling the results of the Anticipations of Perception, which centre on claims about sensation with the results of the Analogies of Experience which clearly require and expound a doctrine concerning phenomenal objects.

²⁰ This argument is presented for example in *Metaphysik Vigilantius* (K3) Ak. 29: 976-7 and also at *Metaphysik Dohna* Ak. 28: 666.

²¹ It is worth connecting this point concerning Spinozism to some of the central claims of the *Critique of Teleological Judgment* (Ak. 5: 439-40), an account that has been subjected to a critical assessment in John H. Zammito (1992) *The Genesis of Kant’s Critique of Judgment* (University of Chicago

Press: Chicago and London), Chapter 12. The growing influence of Spinoza in Germany during the 1780's and 1790's is well-documented and is one of the sources of German Idealism, a source that Kant may well have felt the need to cut at root but which some have argued is central to the formation of the *Opus Postumum*. For a critical exchange on the latter question compare Paul Guyer (2000) "The Unity of Nature and Freedom: Kant's Conception of the System of Philosophy" and Jeffrey Edwards (2000) "Spinozism, Freedom, and Transcendental Dynamics in Kant's Final System of Transcendental Idealism", both of which are included in S. Sedgwick (ed.) (2000) *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy: Fichte, Schelling & Hegel* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York).

²² In fact Langton's discussion here is more nuanced than that of Ameriks as she distinguishes between phenomenal substance in general and phenomenal substance as schematized and she makes the following point: "Confronted in experience with forces, even enduring forces, we are required, given (in Kant's opinion) the relational character of forces, to think that they belong to something else. If one knows that the thing one takes /// for a substance is mere *phaenomenon substantiatum*, one must infer the existence of something else. Hence there must be substances, things that conform to the pure category of substance, that are absolute subjects, capable of independent existence. As substances that conform to the pure category, they have an intrinsic nature that is free from all external relations: they have intrinsic properties (A274/B330)." (Langton, 1998, pp. 64-5.) This argument draws a clear connection between the kind of substances Kant can allow for a phenomenal conception of and relates this notion to a sense of noumenal substance in the manner required by the statement from *Metaphysik Dohna*.

²³ A contrast with the following position is however set out by Eric Watkins (2005) *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York), a work which attempts the extrapolation of Ameriks' method to an account of the objects of experience of which Ameriks himself has thus far proved incapable. Watkins' analysis is however mainly concerned only with the understanding of causality, not substance and this ensures that the question of the understanding of the nature of substance that Langton for example raises does not appear on his radar.

²⁴ This view that the argument is precisely one concerning the nature of particulars has Strawsonian ancestry and is the core of Paul Guyer's interpretation of the Second Analogy in Guyer (1987) Chapter 10. The corrective to this position that is emphasized here is also at work in Andrew Brook's notion of a "global object". See Andrew Brook (1994) *Kant and the Mind* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York).

²⁵ This point is made in the Dissertation, the argument of the Transcendental Aesthetic (A20/B34) and the Anticipations of Perception.

²⁶ Effectively this amounts to the claim that perceptual empiricism must always be equivalent to a form of phenomenalism but to show this in detail would really move us to an analysis of the relationship between the argument of the analogies and that of the refutation of idealism. It is however clear that the problem with purely "subjective" experience enunciated here by Kant has important parallels with both Wittgenstein's private language argument and Husserl's argument that objective meaning is the basis for any serious notion of a subject.

²⁷ It is important to note that this does not commit Kant to the view that causal connection is only given when two "objects" are temporally separated

from each other thus preventing a description of simultaneous causal connection. The latter case is one in which the appearance of the two elements together as they are fits the condition of determinacy of connection which indicates that Kant's point concerns not *lapse* of time but *order* of time.

²⁸ A similar argument concerning the dependence of the unity of space on the interaction of substances is at work in the Third Analogy, an argument that would be deserving of extended consideration elsewhere as its connection to the Refutation of Idealism is key to understanding the argument of the latter.