

Rethinking Kant

About the Series

The collection *Rethinking Kant* contains papers presented at the different Study Groups of the North American Kant Society and is part of the series *Kantian Questions*. Its goal is to publish original work on any topic of Kantian scholarship, as well as reflections on contemporary debates that bear the imprint of Kant's thought. The collection features studies from a variety of philosophical traditions and perspectives – the only requirement is scholarly quality and innovation. It thus offers an alternative publishing venue of the highest quality, attractive to scholars who want to reach, through the possibility of paperback editions, a readership of specialists and non-specialist alike.

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Rethinking Kant

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Edited by

Pablo Muchnik and Oliver Thorndike

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Edited by Pablo Muchnik and Oliver Thorndike

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—Pablo Muchnik and Oliver Thorndike

ABBREVIATIONS

All references to Kant's works are in accordance with the *Akademie-Edition* Vol. 1-29 of *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin, 1900-. References to the *Critique of Pure Reason* follow the customary pagination of the first (A) and second (B) edition. Unless otherwise indicated, the English translations are from the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992-). The following abbreviations are used throughout the book:

- AA *Immanuel Kants Schriften*. Ausgabe der Königlich Preussischen (Deutschen) Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 1900-)
- Anth *Anthropologie in Pragmatischer Hinsicht* (1798), AA 7
Anthropology from a Pragmatic Standpoint
- BGSE *Bemerkungen in den Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (1764), AA 20
Notes inserted in the Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime
- BM *Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenrace* (1785), AA 8
Determination of the Concept of a Human Race
- Br *Briefe*, AA 10-13
Correspondence
- EEKU *Erste Einleitung in die Kritik der Urteilskraft*, AA 20
First Introduction to the Critique of the Power of Judgment
- FM *Welches sind die wirklichen Fortschritte, die die Metaphysik seit Leibnizens und Wolf's Zeiten in Deutschland gemacht hat?* (written 1793-1794, published 1804), AA 20
What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made in Germany since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?

- GMS *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785), AA 4
Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals
- GSE *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*
(1764), AA 2
Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime
- GUGR *Von dem ersten Grunde des Unterschiedes der Gegenden im
Raume* (1768), AA 2
*Concerning the Ultimate Ground of the Differentiation of
Directions in Space*
- IaG *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*
(1784), AA 8
Idea toward a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim
- KpV *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (1788), AA 5
Critique of Practical Reason
- KrV *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781, 1787). Cited by A/B pagination.
Critique of Pure Reason
- KU *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790), AA 5
Critique of the Power of Judgment
- LK *Gedanken von der wahren Schätzung der lebendigen Kräfte und
Beurtheilung der Beweise, deren sich Herr von Leibniz und
andere Mechaniker in dieser Streitsache bedient haben, nebst
einigen vorhergehenden Betrachtungen, welche die Kraft der
Körper überhaupt betreffen* (1747), AA 1
Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces
- Log *Jäsche Logik*, AA 9
The Jäsche Logic
- MAM *Muthmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte* (1786), AA 8
Conjectural Beginning of Human History
- MAN *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft* (1786), AA
4
Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science

- MpVT *Über das Mißlingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodicee* (1791), AA 8
On the Failure of all Philosophic Attempts in Theodicy
- MS *Metaphysik der Sitten* (1797-1798), AA 6
Metaphysics of Morals
- MSI *De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis* (1770), AA 2
On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World
- NG *Versuch den Begriff der negativen Größen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen* (1763), AA 2
Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy
- NL *Neuer Lehrbegriff der Bewegung und Ruhe und der damit verknüpften Folgerungen in den ersten Gründen der Naturwissenschaft* (1758), AA 2
New Theory of Motion and Rest, and the Connected Consequences in the First Principles of the Natural Sciences
- NTH *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels oder Versuch von der Verfassung und dem mechanischen Ursprunge des ganzen Weltgebäudes, nach Newtonischen Grundsätzen abgehandelt* (1755), AA 1
Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens, or Essay on the Constitution and Mechanical Origin of the Entire Universe, Treated in Accordance with Newtonian Principles
- Op *Opus postumum*, AA 21, 22
Opus postumum
- Päd *Pädagogik*, AA 9
Pedagogy
- PG *Physische Geographie*, AA 9
Physical Geography

- PM *Metaphysicae cum geometria iunctae usus in philosophia naturali, cuius specimen I. continet monadologiam physicam* (1756), AA 1
The Employment in Natural Philosophy of Metaphysics Combined with Geometry, of which Sample I Contains the Physical Monadology
- PND *Principiorum primorum cognitionis metaphysicae nova dilucidatio* (1755), AA 1
A New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition
- ProI *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können* (1783), AA 4
Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics
- Refl *Reflexion*, AA 14-19
Reflection
- RGV *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (1793-1794), AA 6
Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason
- SF *Streit der Fakultäten* (1798), AA 7
Conflict of the Faculties
- TG *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* (1766), AA 2
Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics
- TP *Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis* (1793), AA 8
On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory But It Is of No Use in Practice
- ÜE *Über eine Entdeckung, nach der alle neue Kritik der reinen Vernunft durch eine ältere entbehrlich gemacht werden soll* (1790), AA 8
On a Discovery whereby Any New Critique of Pure Reason Is to Be Made Superfluous by an Older One

- ÜGTP *Über den Gebrauch teleologischer Principien in der Philosophie* (1788), AA 8
On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy
- VAMS *Vorarbeiten zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, AA 23
Preliminary Works for the Metaphysics of Morals
- VAnth *Vorlesungen über Anthropologie*, AA 25
Lectures on Anthropology
- VE *Vorlesungen über Ethik*, AA 27
Lectures on Ethics
- VL *Vorlesungen über Logik*, AA 24
Lectures on Logic
- VM *Vorlesungen über Metaphysik*, AA 28, 29
Lectures on Metaphysics
- VPE *Vorlesung philosophische Enzyklopädie*, AA 29
Lectures on the Philosophical Encyclopaedia
- VPG *Vorlesungen über Physische Geographie*, AA 26
Lectures on Physical Geography
- VRML *Über ein vermeintes Recht, aus Menschenliebe zu lügen* (1797), AA 8
On a Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy
- VRL *Vorlesungen über Religion*, AA 28
Lectures on Religion
- VvRM *Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen* (1775), AA 2
Of the Different Races of Human Beings
- WA *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* (1784), AA 8
An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?
- WDO *Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren?* (1786), AA 8
What does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?

ZeF *Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf* (1795), AA 8
Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Project

INTRODUCTION

PABLO MUCHNIK AND OLIVER THORNDIKE

In a striking passage in the Amphiboly Chapter of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant says that “the transcendental object, (...) which might be the ground of this appearance that we call matter, is a mere something, about which we could not understand what it is even if someone could tell us.”¹ This aperçu, which is perhaps only matched by Wittgenstein’s famous dictum that if a lion could speak, we could not understand him,² goes to the heart of Kant’s conception of transcendental philosophy. For, pure understanding does not cognize anything unless the representation corresponds to something given in intuition. The same is true in practical philosophy: in the *Groundwork* and subsequent works, Kant argues that a pure morality valid for all rational beings must translate into an actual desire. This implies that, to be efficacious, the moral law must accommodate the human concern for ends, relations, and emotions. Thus, Kant’s philosophy of nature and of morals, his account of cognition and agency, are designed to show how pure reason must learn to speak the language of *human* faculties.

Following this thread, the pieces in this volume explore the theme of the unintelligibility of that which refuses to conform to the human point of view. In the first part, the essays help us rethink Kant’s commitment to the thing-in-itself and our propositional attitudes towards it; in the second, they put into question the traditional picture of Kant as a strict deontologist, indifferent to the struggles and limitations that human fragility and embodiment impose. Together they present Kant as a thinker deeply concerned with the conditions for the possibility of meaning and action in a creature like us.

¹ KrV A277/B333.

² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1953), p.223.

I- Knowledge, Belief, and Opinion: The Thing-In-Itself

Kant's transcendental idealism and its distinction between *phenomena* and *noumena* is in part a response to skeptical worries about our ability to understand the ultimate reality of the self and the world. Given the epistemic constraints that Kant's theoretical account imposes, in "Transcendental Idealism" **Thomas Pogge** argues that the assumption of an ultimate reality is neither coherent nor needed. Pogge asks how, precisely, things-in-themselves are said to be distinct from appearances. Against the background that things-in-themselves could be either (a) independent of sensibility, but – as *Verstandeswesen* – still dependent on understanding, or (b) independent on both sensibility and understanding, Pogge discusses various possible interpretations of Kant's distinction between thing-in-itself and appearance. He argues that any interpretation that assumes (b) is inconsistent, for it posits a wholly subject-independent world in itself and overlooks the fact that "Kant's strictures on knowability would seem to exclude the possibility of our knowing anything about such things, including knowledge even of their existence." [13] Thus, "we cannot even give sense to the question whether or not the world in itself is identical with the world of empirical objects (...) The problem is not that we are in principle incapable of showing the identity of the two worlds — in which case one might still wonder what Kant may have believed or taught on this point. Rather, there is nothing there to be known (...) And thereby the entire dispute between the adherents of the two-worlds view and those of the two-standpoints view would have become meaningless." [19] This conclusion now makes it seem as if the reading of things-in-themselves as conceived in (a) must be the right one. However, Pogge also rejects this alternative. He argues that transcendental idealism is not "committed (...) to accept the concept of an ultimate reality" *at all*. Pogge's position on transcendental idealism is thus much more radical than traditional perspectives, because of its thoroughgoing rejection of an "ultimate reality." His is a fascinating alternative to the highly debated topic of the two-worlds and one-world-two-standpoints readings of Kant's transcendental idealism, which has dominated scholarly attention since the publication of the first *Critique*.

In his "Kant on the Substance–Accident Relation and the Thinking Subject," **Daniel Warren** turns the question about the ultimate grounds of existence away from the thing in-itself conceived as an object, and focuses instead on the cognizing subject. Warren points out a disanalogy between knowledge claims regarding the substance of self and of matter. Warren asks: what does Kant mean by saying that a substance is that which must

always be thought *as subject* and never *as predicate*? He rejects ‘permanence in time’ as a sufficient criterion for saying that something can ‘only be thought as subject and never as predicate.’ Instead of making the idea that substances are basic *particulars* to be the center of Kant’s concern (a position that leads interpreters to focus on problems of reference, identification and re-identification), Warren emphasizes questions about the essence of substances in terms of their essential powers. He inquires into the *dependence relation* between substance and accidents, where the existence of an *accident* is simply a matter of that *substance* existing in a certain way, and where the “grounding relation of a substance to its accidents is to be understood in terms of the powers or forces possessed by that substance.” [43] In the case of matter in general, Kant argues in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, all specific material phenomena are caused by two fundamental forces: repulsion and attraction. But, Warren wonders, what would the analogous substance-accident relation be in the case of the self? What *kind of thing* is a self? To answer these questions, what “we would need to know (...) [is] the character of the powers that are *essential* to thinking substances, and thus the way in which their accidents inhere in them.” [49] Warren explains why this question about the essence of substance, i.e., its essential power, cannot be answered with respect to the self, and concludes: “we can’t know the *kind* of thing that a self essentially is.” [54]

While Warren’s contribution focuses on a reading of the paralogisms, it also has interesting implications for the relation between theoretical and practical philosophy. For, from a practical perspective, we could define the essence of the self in terms of autonomy and self-constitution; however, as far as theoretical knowledge is concerned, Kant’s transcendental idealism does not allow us to define what kind of thing the self essentially is. Thus, Kant’s epistemology alone cannot provide an account of the *self* that would parallel his account of *matter in general* –and this inability might provide additional grounds to understand his thesis about the primacy of practical reason.

Lawrence Pasternack’s “Kant on Knowledge, Opinion, and the Threshold to Assent” picks up the distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy to reflect on the knowledge-belief-opinion triad in Kant’s works. Since Kant is critical of any ‘myth of the given’ and must provide an account of how mental states receive semantic content, these three attitudinal stances are pivotal to both his theoretical and practical epistemologies. This is to say, neither are feelings automatically perceived as good or bad, nor are thoughts automatically likely or unlikely to be true. Kant’s views on propositional attitudes have recently gained attention, as

have the intricacies of his conception of belief. Yet, *opinion* has been either discussed in passing or generally neglected in recent debates. In order to lay the foundations for a more comprehensive analysis of the topic, Pasternack discusses Kant's account of propositional attitudes in terms of their respective degrees of assent and justificatory standards. He makes three key claims: (1) Kant does not hold a fallibilist account of knowledge. (2) Matters of belief are neither objects of empirical cognition nor objects of knowledge, insofar as "belief" is strictly reserved for the use of pure practical reason. (3) Opinion has intersubjective grounds of validity. In spite of those grounds, and given the possibility of collective bias, Pasternack contends that communication cannot serve as the sole touchstone for truth. Pasternack's essay concludes by assigning the proper place to "opinion" within Kant's taxonomy of propositional attitudes. Knowledge is certain; yet, most claims we hold to be true fall short of certainty. Precisely these assertions belong to the sphere of opinion. Opinion is not a failure to achieve knowledge, but rather indicates a domain where knowledge cannot be attained –precisely the domain where most of human existence takes its root.

Anthony Bruno's "Epistemic Reciprocity and Schelling's Late Return to Kant" concludes Part I. Bruno argues that the late Schelling revives Kant's notion of the thing in itself, and that there is a distinctive Kantian thrust behind Schelling's late philosophy. More precisely, Bruno shows that a feature of Kant's critical philosophy, namely, the "*epistemic reciprocity*" which holds, for example, between the categories and experience [76], also underlies Schelling's late philosophy. For Bruno, *epistemic reciprocity* means that experience provides proof that an a priori element of cognition can actually be applied to it: "Like wind rustling wheat, the categories give experience its shape and, like wheat displaying the wind's force, experience demonstrates the categories' work. ... I call this interrelation Kant's *epistemic reciprocity*. ... It aims at giving meaning or significance to the categories through their application to objects of possible experience." [78] In this context, Bruno also has in mind claims in the B-Edition and the Prolegomena, where Kant seems to presuppose the actuality of the sciences. On this basis, Bruno interprets the 1841-2 Berlin lectures, where Schelling critiques German idealism's negative method of regressing from existence to its first principle. Bruno argues that Schelling defends an epistemic reciprocity between the first principle and the fact of existence in order to counter a threat posed by Maimonian skepticism, according to which "it is uncertain *whether* our epistemic practices cognize actuality." [83] For Bruno, the origin of

Schelling's response to Maimon lies in Kant, and hence a return to Kant is essential to understand the fate of German Idealism.

II- Duty, Purpose, and Virtue: the Janus-face of Kantian Ethics

The second part of our collection opens with **Allen Wood's** "Purposiveness in Kant's Practical Philosophy." Wood argues that the long-standing division of moral theories into "consequentialist" and "deontological" is the source of grave misunderstandings when it comes to Kantian ethics. For, although Kant "grounds morality on a categorical imperative" and recognizes "moral constraints that are independent of teleological considerations," he clearly indicates that such constraints concern "duties of right, not of ethics." [97] In Kant's mind, "all action is in its very concept *teleological*." [98] The peculiarity of the so-called "duties of virtue" is that they prescribe ends we *ought* to have, namely, our own perfection and the happiness of others. Wood maintains that what undergirds Kant's teleology is a view of humanity as a self-sufficient end, i.e., not as an end to be effected but as end in itself. So construed, humanity is the "foundation of all [Kantian] teleology" [106], for "[w]ithout this end, nothing would make any difference, nothing would matter." [ibid.] This position has important implications regarding how to interpret the highest good. The *summum bonum* is not to be construed as a preexisting end, in the manner typical of consequentialism, but rather "as an idea projected or constructed" [109], as a product of the moral ends that we pursue. The corollary of Wood's view is that we must abandon the old picture of Kant as a stern deontologist. Such a picture is fundamentally mistaken, for "Kant's theory of practical reason is teleological through and through." [111] Thus, Wood reckons, "we may classify Kant's moral theory as 'deontological' if we understand that term to mean that its fundamental principle does not rest on any ends *given prior to the principle itself*; but it is the very reverse of "deontological" if that term means [that] its principle constrains only action-kinds and has no purposive or teleological content." [98]

In "Norms of Truthfulness and Non-Deception in Kantian Ethics," **Donald Wilson** focuses on one of the duties of virtue. Wilson discusses the morality of lying and proposes a radical shift of perspective to understand it: instead of adopting the model of "deception as interference," which places the immorality of this practice "in the attempt to subvert or control another's agency," [115] he suggests that we interpret deception to others in terms of the model of self-deception. Self-deception

distorts the way in which we think of our character and our actions, introducing a fundamental dishonesty at the core of moral judgment. This is why Kant considers self-deception as "the greatest violation of the duties to oneself,"³ and places self-knowledge as the first, albeit most difficult, of all duties.⁴ Kant's insight is that the way we face this fundamental duty underlies and accompanies the way we relate to others, for the lies we tell to them often *begin* as an act of self-deception. Wilson argues that we should "think of duties requiring us not to deceive others as sharing the same basic concern with inner freedom and thus as requiring a similar respect for the capacity for rational self-constraint *in others* and for the deliberative processes on which this capacity depends." [122] The inner freedom of other agents, however, is not directly accessible – it is, in strict sense, their personal affair. To respect it, then, we must abide by the basic norms of non-interference that Kant describes in the Doctrine of Right. But this is clearly not enough: we must also adhere to "a broader range of norms enjoining an active sensitivity to the efforts of others to organize and control their own lives." [123] The commitment is to what Joseph Raz calls "personal autonomy,"⁵ but understood as being rooted in the broader context of basic justice and the need to preserve inner freedom. So construed, duties of non-deception raise the ethical stakes: they are not limited to avoiding deliberate manipulation, but include prohibitions against indifference and carelessness in our dealings with others. Awareness of the utter fragility of our inner freedom, Wilson concludes, not only expands our ethical horizon, but also provides a more nuanced account of the intricacies of moral judgment.

It should be clear from our discussion that questions about self-deception draw on Kant's theory of conscience. This is the topic of **Samuel Kahn's** contribution to our volume. Kahn tackles two baffling claims in the *Metaphysics of Morals*: that (1) "an *erring* conscience is an absurdity,"⁶ and that (2) if an agent is aware of having acted according to her conscience, then she has done all that can be required of her.⁷ The first claim is baffling, because it seems to deny the problem of moral knowledge; and so is the second, because it seems to undermine the distinction between objective and subjective senses of rightness. However, Kahn argues that such bafflement is based on a misreading of Kant's

³ MS 6:429.

⁴ MS 6:441.

⁵ See Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 369.

⁶ MS 6:401.

⁷ *Ibid.*.

position. This becomes clear, Kahn contends, when we distinguish between conscience, understanding, and reason. While understanding “judges whether an action is in general right or wrong,”⁸ and reason determines whether a particular action stands under the law, conscience has a twofold job: its function is to judge whether the agent has fulfilled her duty in a given instance, and to determine whether reason itself has examined, with “due diligence,” the rightness or wrongness of a certain course of action. In its first capacity, conscience fulfills what Kahn calls the “duty function,” whereas the second task he calls the “moral reflexivity function.” Seen this way, there is no conflation between the subjective and objective senses of rightness, for the two functions of conscience (unlike those of understanding and reason) concern “an agent’s subjective principles” and require “an agent’s prior knowledge of the good.” [148] And this explains why, although my understanding and reason can well be mistaken about duty, conscience, i.e., Kant believes that the judgment whether I have submitted something to practical reason, cannot be.

This view, however, raises the question of how it is possible to *freely* adopt wrong principles. To the extent that Kant identifies freedom with moral self-determination, it would seem that the wicked are not free. If so, they are determined by natural necessity and must be absolved from any responsibility for what they do.⁹ In “The Metaphysics of Vice: Kant and the Problem of Moral Freedom,” **Jeppé von Platz** offers a solution to this problem: “once we distinguish the different modalities of freedom as moral self-determination at work in Kant’s moral philosophy, it becomes clear that Kant consistently maintains that the wicked are free and responsible, yet are not free in the manner that the virtuous are free.” [162] The conventional, “Augustinian solution” to this problem is distinguishing two senses of freedom in Kant: a basic sense, according to which agents are free to choose between virtue or vice, and an honorific sense, according to which freedom is tantamount to autonomy (i.e., moral self-determination). This solution, however, is unsatisfactory: it asserts that there is a fundamental choice between virtue and vice, but provides no argument to support such a view. To fill the gap, Von Platz resorts to the concept of humanity. For, Kant identifies humanity with the capacity to set ends, and this capacity entails freedom on two scores: one must *not be*

⁸ RGV6:186.

⁹ Reinhold was the first to raise this objection (see *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie* (1792)). More influential in contemporary debates, however, is Henry Sidgwick’s version (see “The Kantian Conception of Free Will,” *Mind*, 13, 51 (1888), pp. 405-412, reprinted in *Methods of Ethics*, 7th edition, (London: Macmillan, 1907), pp. 511-6).

determined by inclinations, and hence must *set and pursue* one's own ends. Humanity, thus, "is sufficient both for being an object that must be regarded and treated with respect and for being held accountable for one's doings." [169] This solves part of the problem of freedom, but it seems to entail a leveling of the virtuous and the vicious. Von Platz proceeds to dispel that impression by arguing that the former have, while the latter lack, "moral strength of the will."¹⁰ Such strength entails "self-mastery," the power to withstand temptation and resist inclinations when they invite moral transgression. Virtue for Kant is a good will's self-mastery in the principled performance of duty – a combination of features that singles out the uniqueness of the *human* moral condition and explains why virtue is such a rare achievement. It serves both as an ideal to aspire to, and as criterion to measure an agent's actual moral state. In its first function, it expresses freedom as moral self-determination; in the second, it describes the degree of one's moral accomplishment.

Our collection closes with **Joseph Trullinger's** "Kant's Endorsement of the Fear of God." Trullinger discusses Kant's cryptic observation that "the virtuous man fears God without being afraid of him."¹¹ The air of paradox disappears once we understand that Kant is considering here a non-pathological fear of God, i.e., an emotion aroused by reflecting on God's majesty. Such a fear is the product of a heart sufficiently assured of its own virtue, unafraid of receiving the punishment God reserves for the vicious. When coupled with respect for the moral law, this type of fear is invigorating and fully compatible with human autonomy. For, "the acknowledgment of God's ability to punish wrongdoing is just the logical complement of his ability to ensure the highest good, although this acknowledgement requires the prior cultivation of virtue for it not to devolve into servile crypto-eudaimonism." [189] Far from being a concession to traditional religious language that remains extraneous to Kant's notion of practical agency, this kind of fear functions as a warrant for the virtuous of the viability of the highest good. This is exemplified by the figure of Job who, in Trullinger's analysis, displays a fear that not only results from, but also helps support, his commitment to a life of virtue. Respect for the moral law is thus what distinguishes the *fear of God* from *fearfulness before God*, its pathological counterpart. A figure like Job grounds his faith on morality, not his morality upon faith. This attitude gives rise to an altogether different form of piety: "Job's conscientious character," Trullinger argues, "makes flattering God repugnant to him, for

¹⁰ MS 405.

¹¹ KU 5:260.

he refuses to have God's favor at the price of justice and truth, and in so doing, he wins God's favor at the same time (and for the same reason) that he fears God." [195] In short, Job's sentiment is derivative from his good character and tailored to shore it up: although *not* the beginning of wisdom, the fear of God is necessary to reach it.

With this characterization we come full circle to where we started in this section: the need to revise the stark deontological picture of Kant's morality, a picture in which the motive of duty reigns supreme, excluding not only teleology, but also the richness of human emotion. The essays in this second part show some of the many ways in which such a picture is grossly inadequate. Along with those in the first part, they help us fulfill the desiderata of our series, the project of *rethinking Kant*.

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PART I:

**KNOWLEDGE, BELIEF, AND OPINION:
THE THING-IN-ITSELF**

TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM

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Introduction

“Transcendental Idealism” is Kant’s name for his own account of human cognition. According to this account, the things we encounter in our experience, paradigmatically physical objects, are appearances of things in themselves. This contrast between appearances and things in themselves has troubled Kant’s readers from the beginning — Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, for instance, who wrote in the appendix of his “David Hume über den Glauben” (1787) that “in reading the Critique, I have for years had to start over from the beginning many times, because I always became confused by the fact that, without this presupposition, I could not get into the system, and with it I could not remain in it,” (Jacobi). Jacobi explains the predicament as follows. The notion of sensibility points to something affecting it, and thus seems to require things in themselves. However, Kant’s strictures on knowability would seem to exclude the possibility of our knowing anything about such things, including knowledge even of their existence.

Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, too, was not much impressed with Kant’s transcendental idealism, providing this ridiculing summary of it: “there are out there things in themselves, but without time and space; now along comes consciousness and has antecedently time and space within itself as the possibility of experience, just as in order to eat it has mouth and teeth, etc., as conditions of eating. The things that are eaten do not have mouth and teeth, and as it inflicts eating on the things, so it inflicts space and time on them, as it places the things between mouth and teeth, so it places them into space and time,” (Friedrich Hegel).

To judge whether such perplexity or ridicule are justified, we must first understand Kant’s contrast between appearances and things in themselves. I hope to make two contributions to such an understanding. First, I will discuss two cross-cutting disjunctions that allow us to distinguish four possible interpretations of Kant’s contrast. I will then explore one of these interpretations in detail. I will not claim that Kant always clearly had this interpretation in mind — merely that it finds considerable support in the

B-edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and yields a philosophically interesting account of human cognition.

§1

The word “appearance” occurs both as a two-place and as a three-place predicate. In the first sense, an appearance is simply something that appears to someone. In this sense, Kant’s claim that all we encounter are appearances is trivial: that I encounter something just means that this something appears to me. Essential for Kant is then the three-place predicate — some Alpha appears to us as Beta, or Beta is an appearance of Alpha.

So what is the relationship between these two *relata*? There are two well-known models for understanding this relationship. Model 2 takes the two *relata* to be numerically distinct. A simple example of this would be that of you skyping me and then appearing on a little video screen on my iPhone. There is an appearance of you on my screen, but this appearance is distinct from you and, we might add, causally dependent on you. Another example of Model 2, provided by Kant himself (A45–46/B63), is that of a sun rain producing in the observer the perception of a rainbow; the percept and the rain are numerically distinct from each other with the former causally dependent on the latter.

Model 1 takes Alpha and Beta to be one and the same. A simple example is a play in which you appear in the role of Creon. You are a kind-hearted and modest person but, because you are also a good actor, you will appear cold-hearted and imperious on stage. In this example, Beta, the appearance, is you-as-Creon with the attributes that you have only from a certain perspective or in a certain context (coldness and haughtiness). Alpha is also you, but now you with your essential attributes, such as those of kindness, modesty, and a great talent for acting. Another example of Model 1, provided by Kant himself (A29–30/B45, B70n), is that of a physical rose with all the secondary qualities we perceive it to have (color, smell, etc.) as distinct from the *same* rose as a physicist might describe it as having surfaces that selectively reflect light of certain wave lengths and as evaporating certain esters or odorants (the scientific object).

Both models have in common that the true explanation of the relevant Beta must make reference to the corresponding Alpha (and not *vice versa*). The images on the iPhone screen — that, when, and how they appear — can be explained only by reference to events at your location. And your behavior on stage can be explained only by reference to the fact that you

are present there as an actor, playing a certain role. In Model 2 we have a hidden underlying world of things which produces for us another accessible world of different things. In Model 1 we have a hidden layer of underlying attributes which produces for us another layer of accessible attributes of the same things.

The dispute between the two-worlds and the one-world/two-standpoints readings of Kant is a dispute over which of these two models Kant has had in mind. Members of the two-worlds school, including Vaihinger, Strawson, and Guyer, believe that, according to Kant, our experience of this world of physical objects (and indeed this world itself) is produced by an underlying world of numerically distinct entities. Members of the one-world/two-standpoints school, including Prauss and Allison, believe that, according to Kant, the attributes we ordinarily ascribe to empirical objects do not belong to them essentially, but are produced for us by other underlying attributes that are not accessible to us.

This concludes the introduction of the first disjunction. The transcendental contrast between appearances and things in themselves can be construed according to Model 2 or according to Model 1. Let us now turn to the second disjunction.

§2

Whenever Kant is explaining why he takes empirical objects to be “mere” appearances rather than things in themselves, and whenever Kant is explicating his transcendental idealism, he makes reference to the role of our faculty of sensibility in the constitution of objects. Empirical objects are appearances, Kant says, because their spatiotemporal character is due to our form of intuition.¹ This exclusive reference to our sensibility is surprising because Kant is attributing other universal characteristics of empirical objects to the understanding and thereby asserts of these categorial characteristics as well that their origin lies in the subject. Spatiotemporal and categorial attributes would thus seem equally suitable for illustrating Kant’s claim that empirical objects are dependent on the subject. Why then is Kant explicating his thesis that empirical objects are appearances always by reference to sensibility only, rather than by reference to both sensibility and understanding?

Gerold Prauss explains Kant’s failure to mention the understanding in such contexts as “a kind of left-over from Kant’s *Dissertation*” where

¹ For example, Bxxvf., A28f./B44f., A38/B55, B69, A190/B235, B307f., A267/B332, A369, A380, A493f./B521f., A535/B563.

Kant had indeed one-sidedly asserted the dependence of empirical objects on the form of sensibility alone, (Prauss). Prauss writes that when Kant calls empirical objects phenomena “he is choosing a very one-sided characterization.... For it would be just as accurate and equally good to practice the inverse one-sidedness and arbitrariness by characterizing this dual dependency by mentioning only its other side” — which would mean referring to them as conceptually thought entities or noumena. Before accepting this criticism, let us explore what sort of reading of Kant we arrive at if we take Kant’s own words seriously.

Obviously, any attempt to understand the transcendental contrast between appearances and things in themselves by reference to the forms only of sensibility must not be inconsistent with Kant’s claim that empirical objects are dependent on our pure concepts of the understanding: the categories. If the understanding contributes nothing to the contrast between appearances and things in themselves, the reason is not that appearances, just like things in themselves, are independent of our understanding (as Kant had indeed still maintained in his Inaugural Dissertation).² Rather, the reason must be that things in themselves, just like appearances, are dependent on our understanding. And exactly this is suggested by Kant when he identifies — altogether at least 18 times — things in themselves with *Verstandeswesen* or noumena.³ The second disjunction, like the first, thus concerns not the status of appearances (which are ordinary empirical objects) but that of things in themselves. The question is whether Kant’s transcendental idealism conceives things in themselves as constituents of a wholly subject-independent ultimate reality (Option B, for “both,” as abstraction is made of both faculties) or as things constituted by an understanding independently of how they may appear due to the form of the sensibility with which this understanding is paired (Option S, for “sensibility,” as abstraction is made from sensibility alone).

§3

If we take both disjunctions together, we get to the promised 2-by-2 grid of possible interpretations of the distinction between appearances and things in themselves:

² Immanuel Kant, *De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis* (1770) in *Königlich Preussische Akademieausgabe II*, 385–419.

³ A249, A251, B306f, A254f/B310, A256/B312, A257/B313, A259/B315, A287–89/B343–6, B423n, A562f/B590f.