THE COHERENCE OF KANT'S TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM

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THE COHERENCE OF KANT'S TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM

by

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To Ilona

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This book has been in the making for longer than I expected. I began to explore the question of the coherence of Kant's theoretical philosophy a few years ago. Section 2 of Chapter 4 of this book is partly based on my article "Cartesian certainty and the Transcendental Deduction," in *Descartes: Reception and Disenchantment*. eds. Yaron Senderowicz, and Yves Wahl, Tel-Aviv: University Publishing Projects, 2000. Parts of Chapters 2 and 3 are based on my article "Maimon's "Quid Facti" Argument," in *Salomon Maimon: Rational Dogmatist, Empirical Skeptic*, ed. Gideon Freudenthal. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003.

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"But pure reason is a sphere so separate and self-contained that we cannot touch a part without affecting all the rest..."
(*Prolegomena*, 4: 263)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

Kant considered the doctrine of transcendental idealism an indispensable part of the theory of knowledge presented in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. My aim in this book is to present a new defense of the coherence and plausibility of Kant's transcendental idealism and its indispensability for his theory of knowledge. I will show that the main argument of the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Transcendental Analytic is defensible independently of some of Kant's claims which are said to threaten its coherence.

I have undertaken an inquiry into the coherence of Kant's transcendental idealism for the following reasons. A defense of the *coherence* of transcendental idealism is required by the existing state of Kantian scholarship. The claim that Kant's transcendental idealism is incoherent has appeared in various forms over the last two centuries. The most powerful and elaborate criticism of Kant's transcendental idealism is found in Part Four of Strawson's *The Bounds of Sense*. Several commentators have tried to reestablish its coherence. Although Allison and other commentators have contributed ideas that are valuable for an account of the coherence of Kant's transcendental idealism,[1] their arguments fall short as a response to the standard objection. Indeed, the claim that Kant's transcendental idealism is incoherent continues to be the view held by most thinkers.

I have limited my goal in this book to establishing the coherence of Kant's transcendental idealism due to two related reasons. Some of Kant's ideas seem to be incompatible with discoveries in the exact sciences.[2] In addition, even if one resolves these incompatibilities (which, according to some commentators, is indeed possible), one is left with the task of defending the epistemic view presented in the *Critique* in contrast to all other alternatives.[3] In any case, the decision to

[1] See Allison (1983; 1996). Two interpreters that share Allison's approach to the standard objection are Bird (1962) and Prauss (1974).

[2] Kant's commitment to the absolute necessity of Euclidean geometry is a salient example.

[3] The distinction between space and spatiality is particularly important in order to reconcile Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism with the later discoveries in the exact sciences with which Kant was not familiar. Allison (1983: 98), claims that the argument for ideality can bypass the argument from geometry when he discuses

favor the Kantian standpoint can only be made if the coherence of Kant's position is established.

In order to assess the force of the standard objection to Kant's transcendental idealism, I will begin this chapter by outlining Strawson's argument.[4] I will then present the main points of Allison's response to this objection and the difficulties involved in this type of defense. Finally, I will briefly outline my own response to the standard objection that will be defended in the present book.

2. *Strawson's Attack*

According to Strawson, transcendental idealism can be schematically presented as follows. There is a sphere of supersensible things which are neither spatial nor temporal. Things that belong to this sphere are related by means of a quasi-causal complex relation of affection — A-relation (Strawson, 1966: 236). Experience is the consequence of the complex A-relations that hold in the sphere of things in themselves. It consists of temporally ordered intuitions some of which have the character of a law-governed world of objects. All intuitions are potentially susceptible to self-ascription by a self-conscious subject. Transcendental idealism is in fact equivalent to phenomenalistic idealism. The physical world does not exist beyond our perception (Strawson, 1966: 246). Knowledge that derives from A-relations is knowledge of appearances and not of things as they are in themselves since "the mode of intuition or awareness that we have is one in which the object affects our faculties" (Strawson, 1966: 253).[5]

Transcendental idealism allows for non-empirical knowledge. However, non-empirical knowledge must be the knowledge of appearances. This constraint is connected to Kant's principle of significance: "we can have no non-empirical knowledge...of anything which is not an object of possible sensible experience" (Strawson, 1966: 241).[6] Yet, according

the relevance of the arguments from geometry to the transcendental ideality of space. Brittan (1978: 87-88) maintains that space and spatiality must be distinguished in order to protect the internal coherence of Kant's theory of Knowledge.

[4] Prichard (1909) presents an argument that parallels Strawson's argument.

[5] Throughout this book I will use double quotation marks when I quote whole sentences as well as parts of sentences. Single quotation marks will be used only when another writer whom I have quoted uses them.

[6] It is important to note that Strawson's formulation of Kant's principle makes it possible to distinguish it from a verificationist principle. Kant's principle is not tantamount to the claim that the meaning of all terms must be based on an empirical method of verification. Kant's principle of significance allows for the possibility of

to Strawson (1966: 243), this principle is "either effectively independent of the doctrine of transcendental idealism or at most it depends, for Kant — in some cases of application — only on that relatively familiar phenomenalistic idealism".

Some of Strawson's reasons for his claim that Kant's transcendental idealism is an incoherent doctrine are the following. As Strawson notes, the claim that supersensible reality and the phenomenal sphere are identical seems to be part of what Kant regarded as the demands of morality. It must be also part of the transcendental distinction between appearances and reality. However, the claim that supersensible reality and the phenomenal sphere are identical renders incomprehensible the distinction it is supposed to serve. According to Strawson, any meaningful application of the contrast between appearances and reality presupposes two concepts: the concept of the identity of reference and the concept of the corrected view. A meaningful application of this distinction presupposes two standpoints from which an object is envisaged, namely, the mode in which it appears and what it really is. Judgments made in one of these standpoints are modifications of judgments made in the other standpoint. The identity of reference is established by the spatiotemporal position of the object judged (Strawson, 1966: 250-251). As Strawson adds, the most important example of the philosophical contrast between appearances and reality is the distinction between common sense and common observation and scientific causal explanations. In this context, appearances are regarded as causally dependent on the character of the things themselves and our physiological makeup. Though common sense judgments can tell us something about the causal mechanism involved, scientific judgments serve to correct common sense judgments.

According to Strawson, Kant's distinction between unknowable nonsensible reality and appearances derives all its important features from the above type of contrast between appearances and reality. Yet, according to Strawson, this sense of the contrast is unavoidable but misleading. It is unavoidable, since there is no other sense in which the

the *non-empirical knowledge* of *empirically given* objects and objective states of affairs. This principle determines *the realm of possible objects* to which non-empirical concepts could be applied and not *their sense and significance*. As will be shown later, pure concepts have *transcendental significance* that is related to their (merely presumed) transcendental use. Transcendental use is illicit not in virtue of the transcendental significance of pure concepts but rather in virtue of the fact that objects to which they could be applied must be empirical objects that are given in the forms of intuition.

Kantian distinction can be understood. Yet, it is misleading, since Kant maintains that all the terms involved in the contrast between common sense and common observation and scientific causal explanations belong to the sphere of phenomena and are therefore inadequate for the purpose of positing the Kantian contrast. The doctrine of transcendental idealism must therefore address the following question: "How, given this rejection, is it possible to specify the standpoint of the corrected view and to specify it in such a way that identity of reference to objects as they appear and as they really are is intelligibly secured?" (Strawson, 1966: 254). As Strawson argues, in the context of Kant's theory, a significant application of the contrast between appearances and reality violates Kant's principle of significance. Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism is hence incoherent.

In sum, the main steps in Strawson's argument are as follows:

1. Supersensible things exist.
2. Supersensible things are unknowable
3. One *knows* [a priori!] that experience is the outcome of complex A-relations that hold in the sphere of things in themselves. Supersensible things are the terms of the A-relations. They are the objects that appear in the appearances.
4. Therefore, one knows that supersensible unknowable things, which are distinct from their appearances, are real if one knows that the objects of experience are real.
5. Significant application of the contrast between appearances and reality must involve the concept of the identity of reference and the concept of a correcting judgment.
6. Kant's principle of significance determines the limits of our kind of possible knowledge.
7. Statement (4) cannot be known if one does not significantly apply the contrast between appearance and reality.
8. All relevant correcting judgments necessary for a significant application of the contrast between appearances and reality violate the Kantian principle of significance.
9. The application of the transcendental contrast between appearances and non-sensible real things is therefore incompatible with Kant's principle of significance and a theory committed to both is internally incoherent.

3. Allison's Response

As noted above, Allison addressed the claim that Kant's transcendental idealism is an incoherent doctrine in his book *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: an Interpretation and Defense*. My concern in the present section will be to present Allison's main contentions in order to see if they can serve as a basis for a response to Strawson's argument. Allison's first step (1983: 10) is to define the concept of an epistemic condition as one "that is necessary for the representation of an object or an objective state of affairs". There are two kinds of epistemic conditions, namely, sensible conditions that include the forms of intuition and intellectual conditions that include the pure concepts of the understanding. Allison then proceeds to claim that the standard objection fails to differentiate between the empirical sense in which Kant distinguishes between appearances and things in themselves and, on the other hand, a transcendental sense of this distinction. It also fails to note a corresponding distinction between two senses of the ideality / reality distinction. At the empirical level, the distinction between things in themselves and appearances is a distinction between mental entities (in the Cartesian sense) and physical objects. At the transcendental level, the distinction is between "two distinct ways in which things (empirical objects) can be "considered": either in relation to the subjective conditions of human sensibility (space and time), and thus as they "appear", or independently of these conditions and thus as they are "in themselves"" (Allison, 1983: 8). In other words, a thing as it is in itself at the transcendental level is the empirical object (the thing in itself at the empirical level) considered in abstraction from the human, subjective sensible conditions.

"Ideality" in its most general sense signifies mind dependence. "Reality" signifies independence or "external to mind". At the empirical level, ideality "characterizes the private data of an individual mind" (Allison, 1983: 6). At the transcendental level — the level of philosophical reflection — ideality "is used to characterize the universal, necessary, and, therefore, a priori conditions of Human knowledge" (Allison, 1983: 7). In other words, transcendental idealism is the theory that emphasizes the mind dependence in the broad nonprivate, empirical sense of the objects of human knowledge by means of a philosophical reflection that reveals the a priori, necessary, and subjective conditions of human knowledge. Transcendental idealism is

therefore compatible with empirical realism and is distinct from phenomenalism.

Many points in Allison's interpretation are necessary for an argument for transcendental idealism. Nonetheless, Allison's account cannot be regarded an adequate response to Strawson's objection.

Let us first consider the ways in which Strawson's main steps are addressed and interpreted by Allison. Firstly, Allison endeavors to deontologize the transcendental distinction. According to him, the distinction to which Kant's transcendental idealism is committed is not a distinction between two types of properties allegedly instantiated by one and the same thing but rather between two modes of considering things. Nonetheless, it is clear that Allison is committed to (1) and (4). The object in itself in the transcendental sense is the empirical object considered in abstraction from the subjective sensible conditions. If empirical objects exist, non-sensible objects must be real. They are the objects that appear in the transcendental sense. Allison is also implicitly committed to (5). Things considered as they are in themselves are the same things that appear to us.[7] The possibility of correcting judgments is presumably based on the claim that empirical objects must obey the epistemic *subjective* conditions. These conditions are indispensable for human knowledge and are presumably dispensable when empirical objects are transcendently considered by removing the subjective epistemic conditions.

As noted earlier, Strawson maintains that Kant is unable to significantly apply this distinction without violating his own principle of significance. Can Allison's interpretation serve as a response to this criticism? According to Allison, epistemic, sensible conditions are *subjective* conditions. Given the nature of the differences between the empirical and the transcendental distinction between "appearance" and

[7] When Allison responds to his critics he addresses the problem involved in the claim that things considered as they are in themselves are *the same things* that appear to our senses. According to Kant, phenomenal objects are individuated by their spatiotemporal locations and things in themselves are not spatiotemporal. The claim to identity therefore seems to lack any conceptual grounds. Nevertheless, Allison maintains that the claim that things considered as they are in themselves are *the same things* that appear to our senses does not commit Kant to full or even partial isomorphism between the phenomenal and the noumenal. See Allison (1996: 12).

It should be noted, however, that even if there is no isomorphism between reality considered as it is in itself and empirical phenomena, there must be some sense in which things considered as they are in themselves are the same as the things that appear.

"reality" and the nature of the corresponding distinction between "in itself" in the empirical sense and "in itself" in the transcendental sense, a corresponding distinction between "subjective in the empirical sense" and "subjective in the transcendental sense" could be posited.[8] "Subjective" in the empirical sense presumably means subjective in the private "Cartesian" sense, i.e., "ideality" in the empirical sense and "appearance" in the empirical sense, whereas "subjective" in the transcendental sense means the conditions of human knowledge that are a priori accessible to philosophical reflection, independently of knowledge of things as they are in themselves. If the claim that sensible conditions are both epistemic conditions in the empirical sense and subjective conditions in the transcendental sense were justifiable, this would constitute the basis for a response to Strawson's objections. But a coherent interpretation must not violate the principle that determines the limits of possible knowledge presupposed by the transcendental distinction between "appearances" and "things in themselves".

It is precisely at this point that Allison's interpretation fails. In order to discard the claim that Kant's theory of knowledge is inadvertently committed to skepticism, Allison rightfully contends that one must be careful not to confuse "appearance" in the transcendental sense with mere empirical semblance. The subjective epistemic conditions "do not determine how objects "seem" to us or "appear" in the empirical sense; rather, they express the universal necessary conditions in terms of which alone the human mind is capable of recognizing something as an object at all" (Allison, 1983: 9). If sensible necessary conditions are necessary for recognizing something as an object, one wonders how one can consider an empirical object as a thing in itself in the transcendental sense by abstracting it from sensible, epistemic subjective conditions of human knowledge. Things in themselves are the empirical objects "transcendentally considered". The correcting judgment is presumably the judgment that asserts that the epistemic sensible conditions are *subjective* conditions. However, an epistemic sensible condition determines the limits of possible knowledge. It determines the kinds of *real* objects and real objective states of affairs

[8] The distinction between a transcendental subject (transcendental self-consciousness) and an empirical subject as two distinct entities is an important part of Allison's interpretation of the Transcendental Deduction and the Paralogism Chapters. See Allison (1983), Chapters 7 and 13. Allison's interpretation of Kant's concept of transcendental apperception is discussed in chapter 12.

that we *can represent*.[9] Thus, the principle which determines the universal and necessary conditions for representing something as an object is both necessary for a meaningful application of the distinction between "appearance" and "unknowable things in themselves" at the transcendental level and is violated when the distinction is applied. The question is how one can characterize sensible conditions both as necessary and universal epistemic conditions as well as conditions that are merely subjective. How can one meaningfully claim that these conditions can be abstracted from objects when they are "transcendentally considered" as they are in themselves without renouncing the identity of reference? If one contends that one cannot really consider an object "as it is in itself" in abstraction from the sensible conditions that are necessary for recognizing or representing it, one can no longer adhere to (1), (4) and (5). But in this case there seems to be no sense left in which one may claim that sensible epistemic conditions are subjective conditions.

The other deficiency of Allison's interpretation is the following. Allison characterizes sensible conditions as necessary and universal conditions. Their status as universal and necessary is, to be sure, an important part of Kant's account of the synthetic a priori principles that are the conditions of the possibility of experience. These synthetic a priori judgments are necessary and universal judgments (B 3). But synthetic a priori judgments are necessary only with regard to objects of sensible intuition, whose sensible form are the epistemic sensible conditions. In what sense, however, are synthetic a priori principles known as necessary and as universal principles, if it is possible to consider empirical objects in abstraction from the sensible conditions? The problem that this supposition raises is not merely that synthetic a priori judgments might either be false, or neither true nor false, when things

[9] It is indeed true that Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism must be committed to the claim that we are able to represent things in themselves as objects of the pure understanding. But the claim that (a) things in themselves are *the same things* represented as empirical objects *is not entailed* by the claim that (b) we are able to represent things in themselves as (merely logical) objects of the pure understanding by means of a concept of a thing in itself. The former claim necessarily entails that if empirical objects are real, things in themselves are real. It therefore entails that the concept of the pure understanding that represents noumena is instantiated by real objects independently of whether they are represented by means of sensible epistemic conditions. This indeed seems to be inadvertently implied by Allison's position. However, it can be shown that (b) does not entail (a) if one recognizes the possibility that the concept of the noumenon can be empty even if empirical objects are real.

are considered as they are in themselves (in the transcendental sense). According to Allison, one can apply the transcendental contrast between appearance and reality to empirical objects. One therefore *knows* that things in themselves in the transcendental sense are real if empirical objects are real. Consequently, one *knows* that the necessary and universal judgments one is disposed to make about empirical objects are necessary and universal when these objects are considered as spatiotemporal and either false, or neither true nor false, when the *same objects* are considered in a different way. Hence, if one can consider the empirical objects in two distinct ways, one must conclude that the synthetic a priori principles are *known* to be necessary and are *known* to be not necessary. This flawed kind of modality is what Kant calls subjective necessity. The inconsistency involved in the notion of subjective necessity is involved in a theory committed to (1)-(5) and to the claim that Allison's epistemic conditions are conditions for knowledge of objects.

In order to avoid these objections, important revisions must be made in the standard defense of transcendental idealism. Such a defense must provide a rejoinder to Strawson's objection and to account for the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge without making the inconsistent claims that are related to the concept of subjective necessity. In the following sections, I will outline the defense of transcendental idealism presented in this book.

4. The Existence of Noumena and the Ideality of Space and Time

Strawson and Allison both claim that commitment to the existence of things in themselves is an inherent part of Kant's transcendental idealism. This supposition is at least partly corroborated in Kant's texts. There are, however, other passages that are inconsistent with this supposition. For example, in the preface to the second edition, Kant states that an empirical object "should be taken in **a twofold meaning**, namely as appearance or as thing in itself" (B xxvii). In the same context, Kant maintains that it would be absurd to characterize an empirical object as an appearance that did not have anything appearing in it. In addition, in the *Prolegomena*, when Kant distinguishes his critical theory from idealism, he makes the following claims:

> Idealism consists in the assertion that there are none but thinking beings, all other things which we think are perceived in intuition, being nothing but representations in the thinking

> being, to which no object external to them in fact corresponds. I, on the contrary, say that things as objects of our senses existing outside us are given, but we know nothing of what they may be in themselves, knowing only their appearances, that is, the representations which they cause in us by affecting our senses. (4: 288-289)

Kant's position in the *Prolegomena* is that commitment to the actual existence of things in themselves constitutes the feature of transcendental idealism that distinguishes this position from idealism. These things are the external things that are given to our senses and they are known only as they appear. But a very different position is stated in the chapter "On the amphiboly of concepts of reflection:"

> The understanding accordingly bounds sensibility without thereby expanding its own field, and in warning sensibility not to presume to reach for things in themselves but solely for appearances it thinks of an object in itself, but only as a transcendental object, which is the cause of appearance (thus not itself appearance), and that cannot be thought of either as magnitude or as reality or as substance, etc. (since these concepts always require sensible forms in which they determine an object); it therefore remains completely unknown whether such an object is to be encountered within or without us, whether it would be canceled out along with sensibility or whether it would remain even if we took sensibility away. If we want to call this object a noumenon because the representation of it is nothing sensible, we are free to do so. But since we cannot apply any of our concepts of the understanding to it, this representation still remains empty for us, and serves for nothing but to designate the boundaries of our sensible cognition and leave open a space that we can fill up neither through possible experience nor through the pure understanding. (A 288-289/B 344-345)

According to the above passage, it is not possible *to know* whether anything would remain, if we took sensibility away. In other words, the existence of noumena is not entailed by the fact that things are given to our senses.

It therefore appears that Kant was divided regarding the question of whether the actual existence of things in themselves should be part of his transcendental theory of experience. One may attempt to settle this inconsistency by presenting a fourfold distinction between "thing in it

self", "noumenon", "transcendental object" and "sensible object". Although these terms have distinct meanings in Kant's writings, the inconsistency cannot be resolved merely on the basis of this distinction. Another possibility is to attribute the conflicting positions to the differences between the first and the second editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Yet, the three examples discussed above clarify why it is difficult if not impossible to solve this problem in this manner.

Some of the contexts in which the existence of things in themselves is claimed to be part of transcendental idealism are contexts in which Kant refers to the possibility of freedom. Admission of the existence of noumena seems to be what underlies the possibility of freedom. Whether or not the possibility of freedom presupposes the identity of noumena and human empirical subjects is a question that indeed merits attention. Yet, since my concern here is primarily with Kant's metaphysics and epistemology, I will not pursue an answer to this question. Strawson's argument persuasively points out the undesired philosophical results of the claim that the existence of noumena is entailed by the existence of empirical objects. Nevertheless, as I will show in the Second Part of this book, the fact that Kant was divided on this issue does not indicate an inconsistency in his doctrine of transcendental idealism. His main arguments for transcendental idealism can be freed from the supposition that empirical knowledge of empirical objects entails the existence of noumena. This is possible, however, only if one is willing to acknowledge the essential incompleteness of our kind of knowledge.

In agreement with Allison, I maintain that there are two distinct ways in which Kant distinguishes between appearance and reality. At the empirical level, there is a distinction between empirical substances studied by the physical sciences and appearances, which are their particular modes of givenness. In Kant's theory, as several commentators have noted, intuitions differ from sensations.[10] Intuitions are singular and immediate representations.[11] As I note in Chapter 6 below, the term

[10] Bird (1962: 6) convincingly makes the claim that the term "sensation" does not have the same meaning as "appearance". This distinction is discussed in Chapter 6.

[11] In the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *lectures on Logic*, Kant characterizes "intuition" as a singular and immediate representation of an object. The meaning of "immediacy" and its relation to "sensibility" is a subject of ongoing exegetical controversy. However, all the parties involved agree that "intuition" (Anschauung) does not have the same meaning as "sensation" (Empfindung). See Parsons (1969), Hintikka (1969; 1972), Thompson (1972) and Howell (1973). I will discuss this issue in Chapter 6.

"intuition" denotes the epistemic *act* through which real objects are immediately given. Intellectual intuition and sensible intuition are both subtypes of this generic concept of intuition. Sensible intuitions are epistemic acts in which empirical objects are immediately given to the mind by means of singular representations. Appearances are the immediate *undetermined* objects of sensible intuitions. They are undetermined if they are considered merely as objects *given* in intuition, in abstraction from the determinations of the understanding. The main question discussed by Kant in the Transcendental Analytic is whether undetermined objects of sensible intuitions must be determined by a priori concepts.

A central feature of Kant's concept of an intuition is that the singular representation that is part of a sensible intuition must involve the a priori representations of space and time. The claim that spatiotemporal representations are a priori representations at least means that relations between objects that occupy space and time do not constitute space and time. Other objects could have occupied the same spatiotemporal position occupied by the given objects. The main features of space and time explain why spatiotemporal intuitions are sufficient for distinguishing an empirical object from another object.[12] Space and time are our only forms of intuition.[13]

An argument for the coherence of transcendental idealism must avoid making any commitment to the objective reality of noumena. The claim that space and time are indispensable for us for representing real objects underlies Kant's principle of significance. The ideality of space and time, the fact that they are not features of things in themselves, is his main reason for claiming that we do not possess knowledge of objects as they are in themselves.[14] However, there are two difficulties related to the ideality of space and time. The first of these

[12] Warren (1998) convincingly argues that Kant's arguments for the apriority of space do not employ the supposition that space is necessary for individuation. However, Warren's claim is compatible with the claim made in the "Amphiboly", namely, that space and time are the only representations we actually possess that are sufficient for distinguishing one object from another.

[13] The claim that individuation is not possible by other means is based also on Kant's claim that for finite humans there are no *infima species* — singular concepts of "really possible" objects — but only singular uses of concepts.

[14] As Ameriks notes, Kant's specific reasons for transcendental idealism are "the characteristic features of a prioricity and spatio-temporality and the apparent linkage between the two" (2003: 99). As Ameriks points out, many interpretations and reconstructions of Kant's Copernican revolution simply bypass the specific nature of Kant's position.

is the problem known in the secondary literature as the problem of the neglected alternative.[15] The second difficulty concerns the relation between apriority and subjectivity. According to the received interpretation, the main premise of the argument for the non-spatiotemporality of things in themselves and therefore for the transcendental ideality of space and time is the *subjectivity* of space and time. The claim that space and time are subjective is allegedly entailed by the claim that they are a priori representations. As some scholars have noted, it is not clear why an entity that possesses the features that establish the apriority of space and time must be an ideal entity in the transcendental sense. The reasons that establish the apriority of space seem to be compatible with the possibility that space is a feature of objects as they are in themselves.

As I will show in Chapters 8 and 9, Kant's "missing" argument for the non-spatiotemporality of things in themselves can be reconstructed from claims scattered in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and other relevant writings. The initial premises of this argument are the claim that space and time are a priori and singular, Kant's principle of significance and the features of the *concept* of a thing in itself. The proof invokes a distinction between individuating features of objects and the notion of an individual essence. Individuating features suffice to distinguish one object from another. The characteristics that constitute the identity of a thing in itself determine the individual essence of an individual object "in itself". The relations that an object has to other objects are not a part of its individual essence. A thing in itself must be considered as the individual that it is independently of any possible relation it has vis-á-vis other individuals.[16] If one has knowledge of the individual essence of an object, one can individuate objects. However, it follows from Kant's premises that spatiotemporal positions — the only features of empirical objects that we possess that are sufficient of individuation — cannot be part of the individual essence of anything.[17] Since space

[15] On the history of the problem of the neglected alternative see Allison (1983: 347). See also Parsons (1992).

[16] This does not mean that an object cannot participate in relations. It merely means that relations do not determine the identities of objects.

[17] The basic idea here is somewhat related to Langton's main thesis. According to Langton (1998), Kant's claim that we do not know anything of things as they are in themselves should be interpreted as meaning that we possess no knowledge of the inner properties of things. All we know are the relational properties of things. Yet, there are two important differences between my position and Langton's position. Langton believes that things in themselves must exist, if appearances are given. She

and time underlie all possible empirical properties that could be ascribed to empirical objects, namely, causal properties and sensible properties, no possible empirical property could be a property of a thing in itself. Therefore, empirical objects are not known as things in themselves.

Noumena are introduced to Kant's argument by means of the generic, pre-given *concept of pure reason*.[18] The ideal of pure reason is the archetype of all concepts of things in themselves. The object related to the ideal is merely an *intentional* object. But since neither the ideal nor any derivative concept of a thing in itself could be known to be an object of our kind of intuition, these concepts are empty. The dualism presupposed by the transcendental reflection that determines that we cannot have knowledge of things as they are in themselves is, therefore, one of *two concepts of objects*. An object of experience is "that in the concept of which a manifold of a given intuition is united" (B 137). The concept of such an object necessarily involves sensible intuitions. It is a concept of an object that is applicable to what is given to us. The concept of pure reason of a thoroughly determined object in itself (A576/B 604) suffices for the purpose of portraying all empirical objects as not being things in themselves.

The claim that an empirical object must be identical to some thing or things in themselves is, therefore, not part of Kant's theory. Moreover, as will be shown in Chapter 9, the first edition contains an argument that undermines the claim that the objective reality of empirical objects entails the objective reality of noumena. As established by this argument, there can be no rational grounds for claiming that the objective reality of noumena is established by means of the mere fact that one has empirical intuitions of empirical objects.

The argument outlined above therefore constitutes the beginning of a response to the standard objection. The characterization of empirical objects as appearances is based on a transcendental reflection that compares the general feature of knowable empirical objects and the gen-

also maintains that Kant's unknowability thesis is not based on the transcendental ideality of space and time but rather on the fact that all our knowledge must involve receptivity.

[18] A similar claim is made by Rescher (2000), Chapters 1 and 2. However, Rescher does not connect this claim to an account of the non-spatiotemporality of things in themselves.

eral features of things in themselves that are known by means of a concept of pure reason. The required correcting judgment compatible with the principle of significance is made on the basis of transcendental reflection.

5. *A Priori Knowledge and Skepticism*

Knowledge of the existence of noumena is not merely incompatible with Kant's principle of significance but also with synthetic a priori knowledge. For Kant, a priori judgments are judgments in which one is certain of the necessity of the proposition asserted. The same kind of apriority characterizes analytic and synthetic a priori judgments. A synthetic a priori judgment is a non-contradictory, necessary judgment.

As I will show in Chapter 2, Kant is committed to a distinction between the apriority of non-judgmental representations and the apriority of judgments. According to Kant, the *transcendental significance* of pure concepts cannot be specified by means of the synthetic a priori judgments that we can make, that is, by means of judgments that must involve the pure forms of intuitions. The transcendental significance of pure concepts is the reason why pure concepts seem to allow a *transcendental use*. But transcendental use is illicit. Pure concepts permit only empirical use.

Some commentators interpret the distinction between "logical possibility" and "real possibility" as a distinction between truth in all possible worlds and truth in possible worlds of experience. According to this approach, the role of a priori intuitions in synthetic judgments is to provide models for synthetic a priori judgments.[19] In accordance with Friedman's (1992) criticism of this line of interpretation, I will show that intuitions serve a substantial role in determining the content of synthetic a priori judgments. No synthetic a priori judgment can be specified without intuitions. The realm of knowable possible states of affairs is determined by the synthetic a priori judgments we can make. This important feature of Kant's theory is represented by the claim that although the categories "extend further than sensible intuition... they do not thereby determine a greater sphere of objects" (A 254/B 309).

As I will show in Chapters 3 and 4, this account of synthetic a priori

[19] This view is that of Brittan, (1978), Chapters 1-3 and Philip Kitcher (1975).

judgments is consistent with the relevance and importance of skepticism with regard to the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge. I will show that Kant interprets Hume's skeptical problem by means of his critical notions and transforms it into a problem internal to his critical theory. The skeptical problem pertains to our knowledge that the categories are objectively valid. Since the categories are pure concepts of the understanding, the knowledge that they are objectively valid must be a priori knowledge that they are necessarily applicable to objects given in intuition. The applicability of the categories to objects of sensible intuitions is necessary in order to establish them as a priori (necessary) concepts.[20]

Many commentators are inclined to represent the problem of objective validity as closely related to the Cartesian problem that concerns knowledge of the external world. As others have shown, this view is mistaken.[21] The Cartesian problem concerns "the objective reality of outer sense". This problem is addressed in the Refutation of Idealism.[22] As I will show in Chapter 3, the problem to be overcome by an argument that aspires to establish the objective validity of the categories is that an objective experience of world of objects is really possible even if the categories do not apply to objects of experience. The reality of inner *and* outer sense is presupposed by this problem. The fact that the individual objects given in intuition are individually given might suggest that the "objectivity" of the objects does not require the applicability of pure concepts. In order to demonstrate the necessary applicability of the categories, one must rule out this concept of objective experience.

6. *Transcendental Synthesis*

The key to Kant's solution of the problem of objective validity is the concept of transcendental synthesis. In the Transcendental Deduction, Kant distinguishes between two species of transcendental syntheses: intellectual synthesis and figurative synthesis. An account of both is required for the two-step argument presented in the deduction. In general, figurative synthesis is the act in which pure concepts deter-

[20] There is no room in Kant's theory for pure thought objects in the "weighty" sense. The only knowable real objects are objects given in sensible intuition.
[21] See Ameriks, (1978); (2003) and Engstrom (1994).
[22] This is how Kant depicts the problem dealt with in the "refutation of idealism" in the long footnote that he adds to the preface to the second edition (B xxxix).

mine pure intuitions. The arguments in the Transcendental Deduction merely establish the possibility of such a synthesis. One reason for the obscurity of Kant's account is that he attempts to establish the a priori objective validity of the categories with regard to discursive thought in general, independently of any particular feature of our forms of intuition. Regardless of whether or not such an undertaking is tenable, the meaning and importance of transcendental synthesis is more easily grasped where our forms of intuition are concerned.

As I will demonstrate in the Third Part of this book, the arguments in the Transcendental Analytic are based on a distinction between content and exhibition. The content of each a priori representation involved in empirical knowledge — "I think", time, space, and the categories — does not involve the other a priori representations. None of these representations can be reduced to any of the other. The content independence of each representation is manifested by the fact that the propositional content of judgments which involve only features that belong to one of the transcendental representations — for example, space — can be specified without involving the other representations. The propositional content of judgments that ascribe spatial properties and relations to spatial objects do not involve any temporal predicate, the thinking "I" or the categories. Similarly, judgments about temporal succession among representations do not involve spatial representations, the characterization of temporal order among appearances does not involve causal statements and causal relations are not reducible to temporal orders among events.[23] Though the content of each representation can be detached from its condition of exhibition, the possibility of being exhibited is an essential feature of the representations involved in synthetic a priori knowledge. Each of these representations cannot *be exhibited* to the mind *through itself*. As Kant's arguments in the analytic endeavor to demonstrate, objects can exhibit an a priori representation that is part of the content of synthetic a priori knowledge only if it is presupposed that all the other representations are exhibited. Since apprehension is always successive, spatial real objects cannot be represented without temporal constructions. The categories

[23] As Melnick (1973: 22-30) maintains, the irreducibility of spatiotemporal "intuitive" givenness of objects to categorical determination of objects is compatible both with the claim that real relations of objects such as causality and mutual interaction can themselves only be understood in terms of temporal relations and with the claim that knowledge of temporal determination requires the general applicability of the categories to objects of intuition.

require temporal schemata in order to be exhibited by objects. Temporal sequences of events are possible only if the objects represented are enduring and causally determined spatial objects. All a priori elements involved in synthetic a priori knowledge can be exhibited only if they presuppose that a transcendental "I think" can accompany them. A transcendental reflective self-conscious "I think" is possible only if the "I think" involves awareness of the synthetic unity of the manifold of intuitions.

In other words, there is a network of dependencies between the elements of synthetic a priori knowledge. Each element involved in synthetic a priori knowledge is a representation of objects. Yet, where our kind of knowledge is concerned, all the transcendental representations have *the same domain of objects*, namely, the domain of empirical objects. The fact that the pure category is distinct from the schematized category does not entail that the pure categories have a "wider sphere of objects" (A 254/B 309). Neither does the content independence of space and time entail the "real possibility" of spatial non-temporal objects or temporal, non-spatial objects. The meaning of "I" cannot be fully specified by means of features of spatial and temporal object, yet this does not entail that one is allowed to know that "I" stands for non-spatiotemporal objects. Although a transcendental representation can be grasped a priori, it cannot be experienced *through* itself; it can be experienced only if it is exhibited in empirical objects. Kant's arguments in the Transcendental Analytic aspire to demonstrate that empirical objects must exhibit all the transcendental representations and that they can exhibit a transcendental representation only if all other transcendental representations are exhibited. The concept of an empirical object is the locus of the synthetic unity of the various transcendental representations. Transcendental synthesis — the necessary synthetic unity of the transcendental representations — determines the concept of an object of experience.

7. *Transcendental Synthesis and the Transcendental "I"*

How does Kant establish transcendental synthesis? Kant's transcendental "I" is supposed to be the Archimedean point of the proof of the objective validity of the categories. The fact that "I think" must be able to accompany all "my" representations (concepts *and* intuitions) seems to be an apparent reason for considering the "I think" as a unifying

representation. However, how can self-consciousness of identity of an individual subject be relevant to an argument that aspires to establish the *objective validity of the categories*? The conceptual links between "self-consciousness", sela-ascription", "single consciousness", and "objective judgment" might explain the relations between self-consciousness and objectivity.[24] But this account leaves unexplained the alleged role of "I think" in establishing the objective validity of the *categories*.

A beginning of a solution to this difficulty could be found in the claim the pure "I" stands for "something in general=x".[25] Another closely related view consists in the claim that transcendental apperception must be interpreted in impersonal terms.[26] Nevertheless, although this line of interpretation does provide some reasons for conceiving of how "I think" could be part of an account of the objective validity of the categories, one must note that even if "I think" involves an impersonal layer, impersonality could not be equivalent to the generality of a *concept* of a thinking thing. The contrary supposition is refuted by Kant's persistent use of personal pronouns and possessives whenever he refers to transcendental apperception. The use of personal pronouns indicates that the impersonal feature of transcendental apperception is necessarily linked to the consciousness of reflective *individuals*. The question which must be addressed concerns the nature of this conceptual link.

The key to understanding the role of "I think" in transcendental synthesis is to see why reflective self-awareness must involve *both* personal and impersonal aspects. The formidable difficulty of grasping the unity of both is due to the fact that the two kinds of representations that we possess — singular representations and general representation — are inapt for an account of what genuine uses of "I think" express. "I think" is neither an intuition nor a concept. Indeed, I will show in Chapter 12 that "I think" is inherently ambiguous in Kant's theory. "I think" must express both an *empirical proposition* and a pure representation of the self. The empirical proposition "I think" indicates empirically certain knowledge of *self-existence*. Given Kant's principle of significance, "I" in the empirical proposition "I think" must refer to an *empirical* complex object. This does not rule out the phenomenological fact that self-consciousness must also involve a pure represen-

[24] See for example Strawson (1966) Part Two II/7.
[25] See for example Allison (1983: 282).
[26] This is Keller's main claim in his book *Kant and the Demands of Self-Consciousness* (1998).