

Lior Nitzan

Jacob Sigismund Beck's *Standpunctslehre* and the Kantian Thing-in- itself Debate

The Relation Between a Representation
and its Object

Jacob Sigismund Beck's *Standpunctslehre*
and the Kantian Thing-in-itself Debate

Studies in German Idealism

Series Editor:

Reinier W. Munk, *VU University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

Advisory Editorial Board:

Frederick Beiser, *Syracuse University, U.S.A.*

Daniel Dahlstrom, *Boston University, U.S.A.*

George di Giovanni, *McGill University, Montreal, Canada*

Paul Guyer, *University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A.*

Detlev Pätzold, *University of Groningen, The Netherlands*

Andrea Poma, *University of Torino, Italy*

VOLUME 16

For further volumes:

<http://www.springer.com/series/6545>

Lior Nitzan

Jacob Sigismund Beck's
Standpunctslehre and the
Kantian Thing-in-itself
Debate

The Relation Between a Representation and
its Object



Springer

Lior Nitzan
Haifa University
Haifa, Israel

ISSN 1571-4764

ISBN 978-3-319-05983-9

ISBN 978-3-319-05984-6 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-05984-6

Springer Cham Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014939312

© Springer International Publishing Switzerland 2014

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed. Exempted from this legal reservation are brief excerpts in connection with reviews or scholarly analysis or material supplied specifically for the purpose of being entered and executed on a computer system, for exclusive use by the purchaser of the work. Duplication of this publication or parts thereof is permitted only under the provisions of the Copyright Law of the Publisher's location, in its current version, and permission for use must always be obtained from Springer. Permissions for use may be obtained through RightsLink at the Copyright Clearance Center. Violations are liable to prosecution under the respective Copyright Law.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

While the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication, neither the authors nor the editors nor the publisher can accept any legal responsibility for any errors or omissions that may be made. The publisher makes no warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein.

Printed on acid-free paper

Springer is part of Springer Science+Business Media (www.springer.com)

To My Mother

Foreword

I first became aware of the unique work of Jacob Sigismund Beck when discussing Kant's philosophy with Prof. Michael Strauss. I was surprised to come across a unique view that was very close to my own approach. This first encounter was the trigger for an intensive research both into the role played by Jacob Sigismund Beck within one of the most dynamic periods of the history of German Idealism and into the details of his philosophical position. This research has in turn led me to rethink and adjust my interpretation of Kant's Transcendental Idealism as well as a better formulation of my own epistemological position. This has been a thrilling journey the products of which are given in the following pages.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my two mentors Prof. Oded Balaban and Prof. Michael Strauss. I was lucky to have two such extraordinary teachers. I owe you my direction as well as my love for philosophy.

Berlin, Germany

Lior Nitzan

Abbreviations

Abbreviations of Kant's Works

<i>AA</i>	<i>Kant's gesammelte Schriften</i> . eds. Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin and Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1902–)
<i>BDG</i>	Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes
<i>GMS</i>	Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten
<i>GSK</i>	Gedanken von der wahren Schätzung der lebendigen Kräfte
<i>GUGR</i>	Von dem ersten Grunde des Unterschiedes der Gegenden im Raume
<i>KU</i>	Kritik der Urteilskraft
<i>KpV</i>	Kritik der praktischen Vernunft
<i>KrV</i>	Kritik der reinen Vernunft
<i>MAN</i>	Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft
<i>MSI</i>	De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis
<i>NG</i>	Versuch, den Begriff der negativen Größen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen
<i>OP</i>	Opus Postumum
<i>Prol</i>	Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik
<i>Refl</i>	Reflexion
<i>TG</i>	Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch die Träume der Metaphysik
<i>ÜE</i>	Über eine Entdeckung, nach der alle neue Kritik der reinen Vernunft durch eine ältere entbehrlich gemacht werden soll
<i>UTM</i>	Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral
<i>WDO</i>	Was heißt sich im Denken orientieren?

All references to Kant's works, other than the *Critique of Pure Reason*, include an indication of the specific publication, in which they originally appeared using the above abbreviation system. This is followed by a reference to the volume and page number in the Akademie Ausgabe of *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*.

All references to the *Critique of Pure Reason* are given with the abbreviation (*KrV*) and reference either to the first edition of 1781 (A) or to the second edition of 1787 (B) followed by the page number of the original publication.

Abbreviations of Jacob Sigismund Beck's Works

EmS *Erläuternder Auszug aus den kritischen Schriften des Herrn Prof. Kant, auf Anrathen desselben/Dritter Band, welcher den Standpunct darstellt, aus welchem die kritische Philosophie zu beurtheilen ist/Einzig möglicher Standpunct aus welchem die kritische Philosophie beurteilt werden muss.* Riga: Hartknoch, 1796. Reprinted in *Aetas Kantiana*. Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1968.

In relevant cases, the page number is preceded by the section symbol (§) and section number.

Grundriß *Grundriß der kritischen Philosophie.* Halle: Renger, 1796. Reprinted in *Aetas Kantiana*. Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1970.

In relevant cases, the page number is preceded by the section symbol (§) and section number.

Abbreviations of Johann Gottlieb Fichte's Works

SW *Sämtliche Werke.* Edited by Immanuel Hermann Fichte. Berlin: Veit und Comp, 1845–1846.

References to this edition include the volume and page number.

GA *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.* Stuttgart: F. Frommann, 1962–2012.

References to this edition include the part number, volume and page number.

Contents

Part I Introduction

1	Introduction	3
----------	-------------------------------	----------

Part II Kant's Transcendental Idealism and the Notion of the Thing-in-Itself

2	The Subjective Conditions of Objectivity	29
2.1	From the Early Until the Late 1760s	29
2.1.1	Kant's Theory of Space	29
2.1.2	The Possibility and Limits of Metaphysics	33
2.1.3	The Inability of Reason to Determine the Existence of a Thing	34
2.1.4	The Distinction Between the Real and the Ideal	36
2.1.5	The Internal Order and Coherence of Nature	36
2.2	From the <i>Inaugural Dissertation</i> Until the <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>	39
2.2.1	The <i>Inaugural Dissertation</i> – A Defense of Conventional Metaphysics or a Defense of the Experiential World?	39
2.2.2	The Transition from the <i>Inaugural Dissertation</i> to the <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>	49
3	The Seemingly Inevitable Roles of the Thing-in-Itself	61
3.1	The Receptivity of Sense Perception	61
3.2	The Thing-in-Itself and the Charge of Subjective Idealism	66
3.3	The Extension of the Categories Beyond Sensibility	69
3.4	The Thing-in-Itself in the Transcendental Dialectic	70
3.5	The Thing-in-Itself and Practical Philosophy	71

Part III Jacob Sigismund Beck’s *Standpunctslehre*

4 The Development of Beck’s Thought, Leading Up to the Publication of the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* 75

5 The Problem of the Bond Between a Representation and Its Object 91

6 The Requisite of Resolving the Problem of the Bond Between a Representation and Its Object, for Making Intelligible the *Critique’s* Main Concepts and Distinctions 95

6.1 The Distinction Between A-Priori and A-Posteriori Cognitions 95

6.2 The Distinction Between Appearances and Things-in-Themselves 97

6.3 The Distinction Between Analytic and Synthetic Judgments . . . 99

6.4 The Critical Theory of Space and Time 100

6.5 The Distinction Between Intuitions and Concepts 103

6.6 The Concept of Transcendental Logic 104

6.7 The Possibility of Experience as the Principle of the Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding 105

7 The Highest Principle of Philosophy – The Postulate to Represent Originally 109

8 Original Representing and the Categories 117

9 Synthetic and Analytic Unity of Consciousness 135

10 Original Representing and Practical Philosophy 141

Part IV Beck’s *Standpunctslehre* in Relation to Kant’s Original Doctrine

11 The Relation Between Sensibility and the Understanding 147

11.1 Beck’s Perceptual View of the Categories and Its Consequences 147

11.1.1 The Categories of Quantity and Quality 147

11.1.2 The Categories of Relation 150

11.1.3 The Modal Categories 152

11.1.4 Sensibility and Understanding in Beck’s Commentary of Kant’s First *Critique* 153

11.2 Pre-conceptual Meaning – Perceptual Meaning or Logical Preconditions for Conceptualization 159

11.3 The Basic Opposition Between Sensibility and the Understanding 164

11.4 The Merits of Beck’s View on Its Own Behalf 168

12 The Relation Between a Representation and Its Object 175

 12.1 Beck’s Unique View in Relation to His Contemporaries 175

 12.1.1 Beck and Reinhold 176

 12.1.2 Beck and Fichte 196

 12.2 The Legitimacy of Beck’s Interpretation in Relation to Kant . . . 216

 12.2.1 The ‘Two-World’ View, the ‘Two-Aspect’ View,
 and the Anthropocentric Interpretation 216

 12.2.2 The Extension of the Categories Beyond Sensibility
 and the Status of the Object That Affects the Senses – A
 Critique of Henry E. Allison’s ‘Two-Aspect’ View . . . 235

 12.2.3 The Extension of the Categories Beyond Sensibility
 and the Status of the Object That Affects the Senses –
 A Critique of Erich Adickes’ Version of the ‘Two-
 Aspect’ View 265

 12.2.4 The Anthropocentric Interpretation and the Refutation
 of Idealism 290

 12.2.5 Accounting for the Textual Obstacles for the
 Anthropocentric Interpretation 324

 12.2.6 Beck’s *Standpunktslehre* and the Anthropocentric
 Interpretation 339

 12.2.7 Kant’s Response to Beck’s Interpretation 344

13 The Thing-in-Itself and Practical Philosophy 363

Part V Epilogue

14 Epilogue 375

15 A Short Biography of J. S. Beck 381

**Bibliography of Works by Jacob Sigismund Beck
(in chronological order) 385**

Bibliography 387

Index 395

Part I
Introduction

Chapter 1

Introduction

The subject of this work is anchored in a core issue of Kant's theoretical philosophy, namely, the relation between a representation and its object.¹ The question is what we should understand by 'an object' to which representations are supposed to correspond and how can a representation immanent to consciousness relate or correspond to an object which must be considered as distinct from it. This issue includes the question regarding the status of the object that affects the senses and which brings about the content of our representations. The issue is whether this object is the thing-in-itself or the phenomenal object, a combination of both or neither of the above. The claim that Kant's critical philosophy does not give a clear answer to this question, and more importantly the claim frequently raised by Kant's critics, that due to its inherent structure this system is utterly incapable of giving a satisfactory answer to this question, threatens to shake the foundations of Kant's entire project.

The claim advanced here is twofold. It consists of a systematic-interpretative and an historical claim. Based on an historical reconstruction of the views contained in

¹ The English term 'representation', which stands for the German term 'Vorstellung' may be misleading. The dictionaries list 'image', 'notion', 'perception', 'idea' or simply 'presentation' as probable translations. The prefix 're' added to the mere 'presentation' (a term which refers to the fact that some meaningful content is present to us) may express a relation to something other than the presentation itself – its object. The latter implication of the term 'representation' is certainly fitting and forms the core issue of this work. Kant himself uses the Latin term 'repraesentatio', which includes this very implication. However, the prefix 're' may also reflect an intellectualist unwillingness to acknowledge that element, which is simply given or present to us without appealing to a spontaneous-creative activity of the understanding. Such line of thought may trigger talk about representations of representations, where such a talk is out of place. The English term 'idea' is used by some authors for the German term 'Vorstellung' but in the Kantian context this term may be misleading as well since Kant has his own technical use for the term 'Idee'/'idea'. Moreover, the use of the term 'idea' may be associated with the theory of ideas of Descartes and the English empiricists, a theory, which Kant rejects. Another term that could be used is 'image' but this term also has a technical meaning for Kant and it may be wrongly associated with imagination. The term 'representation' is the most commonly used in the literature and I will continue to use it throughout this work but the above qualifications should be borne in mind.

J. S. Beck's *Standpunctslehre* I argue that the relation between a representation and its object is accounted for exclusively by appealing to the objectifying function of our own understanding. Accordingly, a proper understanding of the basic principles of Kant's philosophy shows that it does not require and is incompatible with the assignment of any positive role to the thing-in-itself in the theory of cognition. By a positive role I mean referring to the thing-in-itself as a special object or a special aspect of the object of cognition, more specifically, as reality per-se, or a per-se aspect of reality, which, as such, is unknown and remains hidden "behind" experiential phenomena, a view which assigns the latter the role of being merely the appearance of this unknown thing-in-itself. I oppose the duplication of reality into a reality in-itself and a second-rated reality, a mere appearance of the former, whether this duplication is intended as a distinction between two ontological domains of objects (the 'two-world' view) or a more moderate distinction between two aspects of one and the same object (the 'two-aspect' view). The thing-in-itself is not at all an object (let alone an "ultimate" object) but a mere legitimate concept free from internal contradiction. This merely legitimate concept or thought has no object and cannot possibly have an object. Not only is it not reality per-se, it is in fact not real at all. It is the most unreal and ideal concept within our thoughts. The thing-in-itself has no role in the positive, constitutive part of Kant's theoretical philosophy, that is, in the Aesthetic and Analytic of Pure Reason, but only within the negative part of his theory of cognition, the Dialectic, and within his practical philosophy.² In Kant's Dialectic of Pure Reason and in his practical philosophy, what is required, and what is appealed to, is only the legitimate concept of that which is not a sensible object (such as the concept of a free agent or the concept of God), but not a special kind of object or an aspect of an object. The seemingly positive references to the thing-in-itself within Kant's theoretical philosophy, as are frequently assumed within the Transcendental Aesthetic, were only intended to facilitate the reception of Kant's critical philosophy by those who have not yet undergone the profound conversion of presuppositions required to understand the full scope of this new form of philosophy. With J. S. Beck I argue that the concept of a thing-in-itself – as an entity or an aspect of an entity, wholly independent of our cognition – is a propaedeutic concept that can and should be revoked once a comprehensive understanding of Kant's new system is achieved. Moreover, this conclusion not only reflects a systematic understanding of Kant's philosophy but it expresses Kant's own intention which, in my humble opinion and as I will try to show, was and still is widely misunderstood. Kant, I believe, had good reasons for not openly

²In other words the merely legitimate concept (but not object) of a thing that is not a sensible object, has no role in Kant's reformed metaphysics of nature (his doctrine of the conditions of possible experience) but merely in his reformed doctrine of traditional metaphysics' special treatment of unique supersensible entities (entities, which even on traditional metaphysics' view are non-experienceable) such as the concepts of God, freedom and the soul. The thing-in-itself (to be sharply distinguished from the transcendental object) has no relation whatsoever to the object of cognition but merely to that which cannot under any circumstances be an object of cognition.

acknowledging this conclusion. These reasons have mainly to do with the implications of this conclusion on religion and the status of God, which Kant equates with a thing-in-itself. The claims made within this book are asserted mainly regarding Kant's theoretical philosophy but I also show their applicability to Kant's practical philosophy.

According to the unique doctrine of J. S. Beck, the object, which corresponds to our representations, the object that affects the senses and brings about the content of our representations is the phenomenal object. In other words, the object of the Transcendental Aesthetic is no other than the object, which according to the Transcendental Analytic is constituted and posited by our own understanding. Moreover, Beck insists that this view is not threatened by the admitted circularity involved and does not lead to idealism. This is so since, as Beck says, "the transcendental statement 'the understanding posits a something originally' is what first of all gives sense and meaning to the empirical statement 'the object affects me'".³ This last statement points to a highly important distinction, appealed to at various states of this work, between an attempt to *justify* experience and a more modest attempt merely to expose and *explain* the conditions that make experience possible. Kant's claim that the aim of his critical philosophy is to explain how experience is possible can be understood in two distinct ways. According to the first reading, implicit in most interpretations of Kant and therefore usually unstated, the demand to explain how experience is possible requires that we prove that experience is indeed real; it requires one to prove that experience is not merely within consciousness but that it has, at least in some sense, a reality independent of consciousness and its representations. Note the shift from a demand to *show how* experience is possible to a demand to *prove that* experience is possible. Moreover, this reading also marks a shift from a demand to prove the *possibility* of experience to a demand to prove its *actuality*.⁴ Such a strong demand requires one of two

³ Jacob Sigismund Beck, *Erläuternder Auszug aus den kritischen Schriften des Herrn Prof. Kant, auf Anrathen desselben/Dritter Band, welcher den Standpunct darstellt, aus welchem die kritische Philosophie zu beurtheilen ist/Einzig möglicher Standpunct aus welchem die kritische Philosophie beurteilt werden muss*. Riga: Hartknoch, 1796a, 157. Cf. also 13f., 172f. Reprinted in *Aetas Kantiana*. Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1968. [henceforth *EmS*]. English translation is taken from George di Giovanni (di Giovanni and Harris 2000, 229). I refer to this third volume of Beck's commentary project as the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*.

⁴ The more modest, but far from trivial, task of explaining how experience is possible does include an element of the character of "proving that". An account of the possibility of experience indeed turns mainly on proving, against Humean doubt, the existence and reference of a-priori concepts and their corresponding synthetic a-priori principles to objects. However, the *Critique* does not intend to prove that experience is real; rather it grants that we have experience and intends to prove something about its structure. Kant's lectures on metaphysics include some very clear statements in this regard: "Must there not be certain synthetic a-priori judgments through which synthetic a-posteriori judgments are possible? And they would certainly be true, because they are the basis of experience, and experience is true." (*Mrongovius Metaphysics* AA 29: 794). "We will show that they [synthetic a-priori principles] are certain because experience is certain and it rests on them" (AA 29: 799). "An a-priori proposition that precedes all experience is certain, for what is more certain than experience, and it is certain only to that extent" (AA 29: 805). All references to Kant's

strategies, or a combination of both. Either experience is logically derived from a single principle considered to be self-evident or experience is anchored in an object which exists fundamentally, regardless of any relation to cognition, that is, a thing-in-itself. Without such grounding the reality of experience remains doubtful. These two strategies are at work in many criticisms of Kant and they also have a central role in the doctrines of Beck's two major contemporaries – Reinhold and Fichte.⁵ I argue that these two strategies – unavoidable when one attempts to justify the reality of experience – are not only contrary to Kant's mode of thinking even 15 years prior to the appearance of the first *Critique*; moreover, they are also self-destructive and doomed to fail from the very outset. On the other alternative, the aim of Kant's critical philosophy requires merely that we expose and explain the conditions on which experience is *de-facto* grounded. While the former approach

works, other than the *Critique of Pure Reason*, are made with reference to the volume and page number in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*. eds. Preussische akademie der Wissenschaften, Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin and Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1902) [henceforth AA]. English translations of the lectures on metaphysics are taken from K. Ameriks and S. Naragon (Kant 1997). Kant's refutation of Humean skepticism regarding a-priori concepts and principles is based on the non-questionable assumption that we indeed have experience of objects, which we further regard as subjected to various synthetic *a-posteriori* principles (cf. the above citations). Kant here has in mind primarily empirical science. The structure of Kant's proof is that of exposing the inevitable conditions of such experience and showing that they consist in precisely those *a-priori* concepts and principles in question. Even if this argument is circular it is nevertheless *not a vicious*, one. This is so since the argument is not intended as a justification of experience but merely as explanation of its character and any explanation must presuppose its subject matter. On the issue of whether Kant intends to justify or merely explain experience my reading is supported by Graham Bird's modest exposition of Kant's intentions (Bird 2006). Michael N. Forster also argues that Kant's argument assumes that we have experience of such-and-such type, a claim, which Kant believes the skeptic is also bound to accept (Forster 2008, 41f.). Forster, nevertheless, thinks that this assumption is vulnerable (Forster 2008, 76–82). By contrast I think that as long as the aim of Kant's argument is to explain, rather than to justify, objective law-governed, experience, then the assumption, not merely of subjective, but also of in some sense objective, experience, is unquestionable. Through this assumption we merely acknowledge that which is in need of explanation. I shall return to these issues in my comparison between Beck's and Fichte's views and in my reconstruction of Kant's refutation of idealism in Part IV, Sects. 12.1.2 and 12.2.4 respectively.

⁵ Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie* inverts the entire question of Kant's *Critique*. In place of expounding and developing the characteristics of cognition out of its own inherent principles (i.e., the task of *explaining how* cognition operates), the task of the transcendental reflection according to Reinhold becomes one of furnishing a link between the whole of cognition and the absolute being (*justifying or proving that* cognition is related to the thing-in-itself), (Cassirer 1999, IV:68). The skeptical attacks of Jacobi, Aenesidemus and the entire neo-Humean school are also grounded in the inability of any kind of philosophy to demonstrate the connection between representations and things-in-themselves, a task, which they took to be the main issue. Their radical skepticism thus shows that they – just like the dogmatists against which they argued – took the above question to be meaningful and relevant. Reinhold's parallel attempt to derive certain aspects of cognition out of a single, self-evident, principle is likewise contrary to Kant's way of thinking, which does not follow a Leibnizean style of logical deduction but a transcendental deduction which is merely an attempt to expose the presuppositions of something given – experience.

purports to prove the validity of the conditions on which experience is grounded and it equally attempts to prove the validity of the criterion used to distinguish reality from illusion, the latter approach accepts the reality of experience as a given fact and attempts merely to expose the conditions on which it is grounded and the criterion actually used to distinguish reality from illusion. This may seem as avoidance from addressing the most intriguing question regarding the actuality of experience. However, according to the latter view, the role of transcendental reflection is not to justify or validate empirical thinking. Rather, in reflection we discover a puzzling question, which requires explanation: since cognition only has representations at its disposal, *how should we even understand the question*, prior to any possible answer, regarding a corresponding object? This is precisely how Beck starts his entire project. On this view, the transcendental account explains how we can distinguish subjective state of affairs from objective occurrences, *within the realm of phenomena*. In other words, the transcendental account explains how the experience of objects is possible given that cognition can only rely on its sensible representations and the tools of its own understanding. It is along this latter way of understanding the aims of Kant's philosophy that Beck's unique interpretation is structured.

A similar contrast between two approaches can be observed in the context of Kant practical philosophy. In this context, as well, Kant's philosophy aims to explain how morality is possible. This question can once again be understood in two different ways. According to the first reading, Kant's practical philosophy should *prove the reality of morality*. In other words, it should be proven that despite the deterministic causality, which reigns throughout nature, freedom of the will, which is inevitable for the possibility of morality, is nevertheless real. This demand requires that we either derive the reality of freedom from a single self-evident principle or that we ground freedom in some in-itself aspect of the self. According to the alternative approach the aim of Kant's practical philosophy is merely to *expose the conditions requisite for the possibility of morality*, that is, freedom and the other two postulates of practical philosophy – God and the immortal soul. In the practical, as in the theoretical, context, it can be argued that the latter approach is circular and redundant since it merely “exposes” the obvious and evades from addressing the main issue: whether freedom, and therefore morality, is valid after all. Furthermore, it can, and actually was argued against Kant, that his practical philosophy contradicts his theoretical philosophy, since his practical philosophy requires that which his theoretical philosophy denies. However, if we recognize, in line with the latter approach, that philosophical reflection accepts the objectivity of experience in the theoretical context and the reality of morality in the practical context, as given facts and merely attempts to expose the presuppositions involved in each of these two aspects of human life, then there is no contradiction. According to the latter approach the practical context presents us with a puzzling question similar to the one presented to us in the theoretical context. Since we only have our own feelings to rely on, how should we understand our appeal to objectively binding moral laws to which we consider ourselves subjected? Regarding both contexts I argue that the former approach is contrary to Kant's way of thinking and

that it is also destined to fail due to its inherent structure. Moreover, the latter approach, exemplified in Beck's thinking, is not the least trivial and valueless. If we follow the latter approach, apart from the fact that we avoid all the difficulties inherent in the former approach, we gain an ability to understand how in the theoretical and the practical contexts alike, cognition can construct an objective system out of its own internal functions.

The uniqueness of Beck's doctrine regarding the relation between a representation and its object can be highlighted by attempting to explain the contention, so crucial for Kant's critical philosophy, that we do not know things-in-themselves but only appearances. This contention can be interpreted in two different ways which in turn lead to two very different ways of understanding Kant's stand between idealism and realism. According to the first interpretation, the above contention means that the statement 'we know a thing-in-itself' is *meaningful but wrong*. It means that we came to the conclusion that we do not know things as they are in-themselves but only as they appear to us. This option leaves open the possibility that some other observer, an "ultimate observer", may know things as they are in themselves. Our cognition, on the contrary, is so constituted that we can only know things as they appear to us. According to the second interpretation, the above contention means that the statement 'we know a thing-in-itself' is *not wrong but meaningless*. Although the words comprising this statement are meaningful, their combination is not. When properly construed, we recognize that this statement is not directed at anything, to which we could attach a meaningful content. A meaningless statement, in this context, is one that *in principle* does not have a truth-value. The question whether this statement is true or false is a question for which no answer *could be* given (by any knowing subject whatsoever). The reason that this question cannot in principle be answered resides not in the difficulties of obtaining an answer but in the very nature of the question itself. The contention that we do not know the thing-in-itself does not result from the unique constitution of our cognition but from the very definition of the thing-in-itself. The thing-in-itself is not included in any representation. The thing-in-itself cannot be represented for to be represented is to be brought under subjective forms of representation, whether sensible or conceptual (or any other), and then it is no longer a thing *in-itself*. The thing-in-itself is by definition that which is beyond any relation to a knowing subject, whether human or otherwise. Thus the statement 'we know a thing-in-itself' is equivalent to the statement 'we know, that which is unknowable'.

The choice between these two interpretations, be it the first or the second one, has far reaching consequences for the status of the object in Kant's critical philosophy. According to the first interpretation, the phenomenal object is not reality per-se but expresses a limited or deficient reality. We would like to know reality 'itself' but we have to suffice with a substitute of it. According to the second interpretation, the phenomenal object is no less real than anything else. The thing-in-itself, the supposed "ultimate reality", is under this interpretation irrelevant. We therefore do not lack anything by not knowing it just as one does not lack anything by not having a round square in his pocket. Moreover, the first interpretation threatens to undermine what I term 'the principle of the subjective

conditions of objectivity', a principle which I see as the most important aspect of Kant's Copernican revolution. Kant wholly reconfigured the issue of objectivity. Against the traditional view, for which objectivity meant to be wholly independent of subjective conditions of cognition, Kant argued that objectivity and subjectivity are inescapably connected. Kant was not the first author to acknowledge that cognition has its unique forms. But while these subjective forms were traditionally viewed as impeding factors, which had to be overcome in order to obtain the object "itself", Kant's philosophy is based on the revolutionary idea that there is no meaning to an object regardless of the subjective conditions of cognition. Consequently, not only are the subjective conditions of cognition not considered as separating cognition from its object, on the contrary, they alone enable cognition to refer to an object in the first place. The traditional view is based on the assumption of the absolute dichotomy between what is subjective and immanent to cognition and what is objective and therefore must be independent and transcendent of cognition. Kant's principle of the subjective conditions of objectivity is a rejection of this dichotomy. The first interpretation mentioned above threatens to undermine this principle for it continues to hold to a sense of objectivity that is wholly independent of subjective conditions; furthermore, it sees only this latter "in-itself" sense of objectivity as reality per-se while the phenomenal world becomes at best a deficient reality and at worst an illusory world. Thus viewed, the subjective conditions of cognition, since they only condition the phenomenal world but not the ultimate reality of things-in-themselves, are no longer regarded as the subjective conditions of objectivity but merely as the subjective conditions of subjectivity. This result is valid whether the thing-in-itself is regarded as distinct ontological entity or merely as a distinct way to consider the very same thing to which we also refer as a phenomenal object. Still, it was this line of thought that was prevalent – in one form or another – whether implicitly or explicitly, in both the interpretations and criticisms of Kant by his contemporaries and it is also at the basis of most modern interpretations of Kant. These interpretations differ in many respects but as long as they insist that Kant's constitutive theory of cognition requires the concept of a thing-in-itself they all share the difficulties addressed above. It seems to me that the reason for holding to such readings of Kant is the widespread belief that without a role for the thing-in-itself in Kant's transcendental philosophy it would eventually be reduced to sheer idealism. This idealist worry indicates that many of Kant's interpreters still hold to the immanent-transcendent dichotomy and that consequently they attempt to understand his system based on an assumption, whose rejection is at the heart of his philosophy. No wonder that such interpretations lead the reader through an endless maze of paradoxes.

It is this issue of the role of the thing-in-itself in the theory of cognition and the status of the phenomenal object that is also the main theme of Jacob Sigismund Beck's so-called *Standpunctslehre*. According to Beck the claim that the object of cognition is phenomenal and not a thing-in-itself, results not from some form of doctrine of the unreachable thing-in-itself, but from the understanding that whatever is at all meaningful to us is already conditioned by subjective forms of our cognition. Accordingly an object can only be regarded as such on behalf of the

objectifying ability of our cognition and here lies the basis for understanding the relation between a representation and its object. No less important, since this object that is dependent on our subjective forms is the only object that is meaningful to us, then its dependence on our subjective forms does not make it any less objective. Consequently, the object that affects the senses is no other than the phenomenal object. Beck's unique approach accounts for the actuality of the object without relying in any way on the thing-in-itself. Beck's *Standpunctslehre* also involves a reconsideration of the relation between the understanding and sensibility in Kant's theory of cognition. Beck's approach, I admit, is not easy to grasp and it may leave the reader with a feeling that the important point has been overlooked in an oversimplified explanation. It requires patience, first, to understand what is meant by this doctrine and, second, to see how it is distinguished from sheer idealism. Doing this is the task of the following research.

Jacob Sigismund Beck was a student of Kant during the early 1780s. In 1791 Kant recommended Beck to his publisher Hartknoch who wished to publish a commentary on Kant's philosophy. Beck subsequently published three volumes. The first two volumes (Beck 1793, 1794) were indeed written as a commentary, while the third volume (Beck 1796a) was dedicated to Beck's unique contribution to the understanding of Kant's critical philosophy. It is subtitled *Einzig möglicher Standpunct aus welchem die critische Philosophie beurteilt werden muss* (The only possible standpoint from which the critical philosophy must be judged).⁶ In this volume Beck addressed the issue of the relation of a representation to an object, the status of the phenomenal object and the role of the thing-in-itself in Kant's theory of cognition. In conjunction with the publication of the third volume of his explanatory abstracts, Beck also published a more concise companion to this work intended to be used as a basis for lectures (Beck 1796b). The latter work was titled *Grundriß der critischen Philosophie* (An outline of the critical philosophy).⁷ As Beck later admitted in a letter to Kant dated June 20th 1797, he only intended "to bar the concept of the thing-in-itself from theoretical philosophy" (AA: 12: 168). It is important to note that Beck saw his approach not at all as a criticism of Kant. He insisted that his theory of the proper standpoint is in fact the very meaning of Kant's critical teaching although the Kantian method of presentation may mislead us into thinking otherwise. It is this theory of Beck, presented mainly in his above-mentioned *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* and the *Grundriß*, collectively referred to as the *Standpunctslehre* that is at the heart of this volume.

The literature on Jacob Sigismund Beck is sparse. This applies both to the reactions to his theory at his own time as well as to philosophical works published until our current time. In Beck's own time there is the limited reaction of Kant as well as some scattered references by Fichte. Reinhold dedicated some space to the discussion of Beck's *Standpunctslehre* in his *Auswahl vermischter Schriften*

⁶ Cf. note 3 above.

⁷ Jacob Sigismund Beck, *Grundriß der critischen Philosophie*. Halle: Renger, 1796b. Reprinted in *Aetas Kantiana*. Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1970. [henceforth *Grundriß*]

(Reinhold 1797) and Schelling briefly discusses Beck's doctrine within an essay, whose subject is Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* (Schelling 1856). In later times there are mainly short references or at best limited-scope discussions, acknowledging Beck's abilities but generally neglecting to appreciate the unique value of his theory. Richard Kroner argued that "Beck has earned the credit for having brought out the true principle of the Critique of Reason. He has penetrated deeper into the transcendental philosophy than Reinhold and his opponent [Aenesidemus]." (Kroner 1961, 326). Nevertheless, since Beck had little influence on the development of contemporary German philosophy, Kroner does not pause to discuss his doctrine at any detail. And Ernst Cassirer argues that Beck succeeded "with veritable mastership" to expose that point of view "from which [Kant's] entire system can be considered as a gradual development of one unique conceptual basic-motif." (Cassirer 1999, IV:66f.). Cassirer further says that "it is Beck's decisive credit that he first recognized the truly basic meaning of the doctrine of the Kantian Analytic" (Cassirer 1999, IV:66).

Despite such favorable statements, Beck was either dismissed as being "merely" an interpreter of Kant, or he was regarded as embodying a preliminary stage for the development of Fichte's and Schelling's idealism. Thus, Friedrich Brüssow, the author of one German necrology, regarded Beck merely as a "Kantian satellite" (Brüssow 1842, 925)⁸ and Max Ernest Mayer, in a dissertational work, claimed without hesitation that Beck should be regarded as nothing but a commentator of Kant's philosophy (Mayer 1896, 51). In his view, Beck has not diverged significantly from, or gone beyond, Kant's critical doctrine. Despite the difference in the mode of presentation, Mayer argues that Beck leaves Kant's doctrine itself untouched (Mayer 1896, 46). He concludes that Beck's *Standpunctslehre* introduces nothing new (Mayer 1896, 44). Most authors, however, held to a different opinion. Wilhelm Dilthey recognized Beck as an "independent Kantian", who had a major role in the development of philosophy in Germany, and yet denied him any originality (Dilthey 1889, 649). Dilthey, nevertheless, argues that Beck introduced incompatible elements into Kant's doctrine (Dilthey 1889, 644). Erich Adickes, as well, holds that Beck "diverges from Kant on essential points" (Adickes 1970, 176, 172),⁹ and that Beck has gone his own way "bending and reinterpreting Kant" (Adickes 1920, 608).¹⁰ This view is shared by more modern historians of

⁸ According to Brüssow (1842, 925), "what constitutes the philosophical character of Beck's work is not the invention of a new system, but the independent conception, further development, and application of something already given." English text is taken from Wallner (1979, 3f.).

⁹ Similar view is held by Hanslmeier (1971, 702) and von Prantl (1875, 214). Hanslmeier argues that Beck's rejection of the thing-in-itself resulted in subjective idealism due to his overemphasis on the productive functions of the understanding. Von Prantl similarly argues that Beck relapsed into Berkeleyanism. The claim that Beck's interpretation brings Kant's position closer to Berkeley is repeated by Wilhelm Stieda (1939, 20).

¹⁰ According to Adickes the deviation from Kant is most apparent in Beck's views regarding the thing-in-itself (608n2). Other authors share the view that Beck has gone beyond Kant, (Pötschel 1910, 20f.); (Krönig-Buchheister 1927, 26, 52); (Noack 1853, 299f.).

philosophy like Herman Jean de Vleeschauer and Lewis White Beck.¹¹ In spite of the wide recognition of his independent contribution to German philosophy, Beck's doctrine was regarded by many authors merely as an intermediary stage in a developmental process, which culminates in Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. Thus, Johann Eduard Erdmann (1848, 538f.), although declaring that Beck held "one of the most honorable positions in the Kantian school", nevertheless labels him as one who was left behind (*Zurückgebliebener*) in relation to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*¹² and Friedrich Bouterwek,¹³ Beck's colleague, is reported as claiming that Beck's work should be seen as a preface to the *Wissenschaftslehre* just as Fichte himself argued on more than one occasion.¹⁴ This view is shared by few other authors (Dilthey 1889, 640, 647; Adickes 1970, 175; Krug 1832, 297; von Prantl 1875, 214; Brüssow 1842, 927; Hanslmeier 1971, 702; Pötschel 1910, 1f., 7n)¹⁵ It is true that "the course of history had no time for the *Standpunktlehrer*" (Mayer 1896, 50). It is an historical fact that Beck was overshadowed by Fichte who was the dominant figure at the time and whose doctrine served as the steppingstone for the further development of the German Idealism that followed. In fact, as I intend to show in this work, the spirit of Beck's unique doctrine was entirely different from the idealistic, rationalistic winds of his time. Despite the seeming similarities with Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, Beck's *Standpunktlehre* has an essentially different theme and it reaches very different conclusions. Richard Kroner is right to argue that "As a mediator between Kant and Fichte, he [Beck] is not significant [...] since the *Wissenschaftslehre* took shape before Beck's so-called *Standpunktlehre*, and thus could not learn anything of substance from it." (Kroner 1961, 326). It is nevertheless regrettable that, as Kroner adds, "for this reason, we shall only remember him here in passing, and dispense with a

¹¹ According to de Vleeschauer (1962, 166) Beck is classed with the Kantian "apostates" who in "the pursuit of formal correction [...] were unable to avoid making certain doctrinal corrections". L. W. Beck (1967, 301) classes J. S. Beck with the "semi-Kantians", "who were forced by difficulties in Kant's position to criticize, reconstruct, and ultimately to some extent to transcend it". In a book based on the author's thesis, Beck is negatively presented with very little discussion. It is said that Beck's doctrine is "*a model-case of a usurpation of a concept*" and that his idea of the Kantian 'critique' had nothing to do with the latter (Röttgers 1975, 78ff.).

¹² Erdmann dedicates a relatively large space for a presentation of Beck's doctrine; however, he suffices with a mere description of Beck's work and does not engage himself with a wider-scale evaluation of Beck's doctrine.

¹³ Friedrich Bouterwek (1766–1828) studied philosophy in Göttingen under Johann Georg Heinrich Feder. He was a colleague and friend of Beck who made efforts to help the former in securing a teaching post. A letter from Beck to Bouterwek dealing with these issues is reprinted by Stieda (1939, 33f.).

¹⁴ Bouterwek's opinion is reported by Erdmann (1848, 539). On Fichte's view, cf. Sect. 12.1.2 below.

¹⁵ Pötschel additionally argues that Beck should be seen as a necessary phase in the development of Kantian philosophy leading up to Schelling (Pötschel 1910, 7f.). An interesting link between on the one hand Beck and on the other hand Fries and Schopenhauer, is argued by Dilthey (1889, 649). Such a connection seems to me to be fruitful for further investigation; however, I cannot pursue this path within the scope of this current work.

presentation of his thought.” (Kroner 1961, 326).¹⁶ Despite few arguable influences and counterinfluences, it is a fact that Beck was indeed passed-over by the history of philosophy. However, this historical fact should dictate nothing to us when we attempt to embark on a systematic inquiry into the possible merits of his doctrine itself. Nor should the characterization of Beck as an interpreter of Kant mean that he is merely a Kantian satellite who introduces nothing new. I argue with Ingrid Wallner that “Beck’s ‘doctrine of the standpoint’ is a unique and original contribution, substantially distinct from other systematic post-Kantian development of his time” (Wallner 1979, 8). However, in contrast to Wallner who sees Beck’s contribution in going beyond Kant in a way she designates as “phenomenal”, I argue that, on the main issue of this work which also constitutes the main factor of Beck’s own doctrine – the relation between a representation and its object – Beck’s view stands for a legitimate interpretation of Kant. Moreover, I argue that it is the preferable interpretation of Kant. Beck is in my view highly important precisely as an interpreter of Kant because he reveals what I think is the core of Kant’s philosophical revolution, which remains up to these very days, widely misunderstood.

The last 100 years has known few systematic attempts to discuss Beck’s views mainly in dissertations written on the subject. These include, in chronological order, the following¹⁷:

Max Ernest Mayer’s dissertation, “Das Verhältnis des Sigismund Beck zu Kant” (1896) is unfortunately very thin in its philosophical analysis. Mayer states the obvious when he claims that Beck intended to reverse the didactic method of the first *Critique* but he fails to see the deeper meaning of this didactic shift. Mayer’s analysis does not go very deep and in relation to the main issue of this research it has little bearing if any.

Walter Pötschel’s dissertation, “J. S. Beck und Kant” (1910) mainly focuses on the distinction between mathematical and philosophical concepts in Beck’s understanding of Kant. Although this issue touches on a main characteristic of Beck’s theory of original representing the work remains too focused on this context and does not give a more comprehensive analysis of Beck’s theory. It too has little bearing on the issue of this current research.

Gretchen Krönig-Buchheister’s dissertation, “Das Problem des Selbstsetzung in seiner Entwicklung von Kant bis Fichte mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von J. S. Beck” (1927), is written from the Fichtean perspective, which sees Beck’s *Standpunctslehre* as an incomplete introduction or an early developmental stage towards Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*. It judges Beck according to Fichtean criterions and finds his exposition in many places wanting. Unfortunately, it fails to see Beck’s unique understanding of Kant regarding the issue of the objective relation.

¹⁶ The English translation of Kroner is taken from Wallner (1979, 8).

¹⁷ There is one work (Lodovici 1932) not mentioned here, since, due to language limitations, it was inaccessible to me.

Josef Reiser's dissertation, "Zur Erkenntnislehre J. S. Beck" (1934), as well, touches very little on the issues of this current research. As Thomas Ludolf Meyer (see below) indicates, its title is quite misleading as Beck's name is mentioned less than half a dozen times in the entire thesis. It focuses on the Kantian problem of validity (*Geltung*) and its reference to other aspects of Beck's theory is rather limited.

Josef Schmucker-Hartmann's work, *Der Widerspruch von Vorstellung und Gegenstand/Zum Kantverständnis von Jacob Sigismund Beck* (1976)¹⁸ focuses mainly on a presentation of Beck's *Standpunktslehre*. He does that by dividing Beck's theory into negative and positive starting points. The former denotes Beck's discussion of the emptiness of the concept of a bond or connection between a representation and its object. The latter denotes his analysis of the original representation, which fills the empty space left by the negative starting point. This work's title suggests its relevance to the research presented here. Nevertheless, Schmucker-Hartmann's work is lacking in many respects. In general it presents Beck's work with too little patience and he reaches the conclusion that Beck contradicts himself, which in my view represents no more than the author's own misunderstanding of Beck. Schmucker-Hartmann replaces Beck's original terms with his own which complicates matters for no reason. He does not consider Beck's approach to the thing-in-itself problematic in an historical context and he fails to see the unique features of Beck's approach.

Ingrid M. Wallner dissertation, "J. S. Beck's Phenomenological Transformation of Kant's Critical Philosophy" (1979), of all others, is the most relevant to my current research. It is a systematic analysis of Beck's *Standpunktslehre* aided by historical considerations. As its title indicates, the key concepts in terms of which the work's main claim develops are those of 'phenomenology' and 'transformation'. By the term 'phenomenal' the author means not the modern meaning of the term but the focusing of the theory of knowledge on phenomena, that is, appearances, the elevating of phenomena from the status of mere illusion and at the same time distancing it from reality "in-itself". The author claims that this phenomenal tendency has its roots in the work of J. H. Lambert, that it developed through the critical works of Kant and was then further elaborated and advanced by Beck. The emphasis on 'transformation' highlights the author's claim that Beck, in spite of his declared intentions, had nevertheless indicated difficulties in Kant's critical philosophy and brought about important changes into it. These difficulties and consequent changes have to do, according to the author, with Kant's "'pre-suppositional framework' concerning the possibility of experience" (Wallner 1979, 18). By the 'presuppositional framework' she means Kant's radical separation of the understanding from sensibility on the one hand and his adherence to "a systematic position for transcendent elements of cognition (the thing-in-itself as

¹⁸ This work was simultaneously published as a dissertation under the title "Das ursprüngliche Vorstellen bei Jakob Sigismund Beck. Versuch einer kritischen Darstellung." PhD diss., Universität Mainz, 1976.

well as an unconnected manifold prior to synthesis)” on the other hand (Wallner 1979, 15). The author emphasizes the originality of Beck’s ideas and the distinctness of his approach from those of his Kantian contemporaries – mainly Reinhold, Maimon and Fichte. In order to account for the uniqueness of Beck’s *Standpunctslehre* she addresses the issue of the ‘given’ in transcendental philosophy and Beck’s approach to sensibility. This is followed by an evaluation of the justifiability of Beck’s theory. The author has chosen to focus her analysis on the relation between the understanding and sensibility in Kant’s original theory and in Beck’s version of it. The related but nevertheless distinct question of the role of the thing-in-itself or transcendent elements in Kant’s philosophy is considered only as it arises out of the former issue and does not receive a central place in the exposition.¹⁹ By this I do not mean to criticize this work but to indicate a fact, which distinguishes it from the current work. There is another respect in terms of which my own work differs from Wallner’s. While Wallner takes a somewhat conservative interpretation of Kant’s position for granted (regarding mainly the issue of the given and the role of the thing-in-itself) I devote a significant space for considering the possible interpretations of Kant’s original intentions. She therefore presents Beck as modifying Kant’s original position while I think that – as Beck himself argued – on the main issue of this research Beck was expounding the true intentions of Kant, which were widely misunderstood. I believe that a deeper understanding of Kant’s own intentions also enables us to better understand Beck’s main aims in his *Standpunctslehre*. It exposes the profound transformation of presuppositions brought about by Kant’s transcendental philosophy, which, when not properly acknowledged, may induce a wholly inverted understanding of his philosophy. This has to do with Kant’s doctrine of the subjective conditions of objectivity and consequently the renouncement of the immanent-transcendent dichotomy, an issue, which stands at the heart of this research.

Thomas Ludolf Meyer’s work, *Das Problem eines höchsten Grundsatzes der Philosophie bei Jacob Sigismund Beck* (1991) gives a comprehensive account of Beck’s philosophical work throughout his entire life. T. L. Meyer explicitly states that his main point of view is historical. This work includes an extensive exposition of Beck’s early stages towards his mature *Standpunctslehre*. It succeeds in identifying few anonymous articles published in L. H. Jacobs’ magazine, the *Annalen der Philosophie und des Philosophischen Geistes* written by Beck. The latter publications show Beck’s early view of Reinhold, Fichte and other contemporary figures. Meyer’s work addresses the *Standpunctslehre* and the reactions to it by Beck’s contemporaries and it gives a brief exposition of Beck’s works written later in his life. Although T. L. Meyer’s work is structured along an historical timeline it does combine the historical analysis with a systematical claim. He presents Beck’s

¹⁹ Cf. also in an article based upon her dissertation in which the issue of the relation between a representation and its object arises within Wallner’s introduction of Beck’s doctrine only in a footnote, (Wallner 1984, 297n10). A presentation of Beck’s *Standpunctslehre* which was undoubtedly inspired by Wallner’s research is given by George di Giovanni who acted as the supervisor of Wallner’s doctorate project (di Giovanni 2000, 36–42).

theory of original representing as an attempt, similar in intention to that of Reinhold, to base philosophy on one self-evident principle. While it is understandable that one should come to this conclusion, I nevertheless think that Meyer fails to see the unique character of Beck's first principle.²⁰ I believe that unlike Reinhold whose motivation was clearly to justify the objectivity of experience, Beck's motivation tends more towards understanding the objective structure of experience. While Reinhold's attempt at justification pulls him towards foundationalism, pure speculation and conceptual derivation, Beck's attempt to understand how cognition operates directs his search towards pre-conceptual content and here lies a great difference.

T. L. Meyer's analysis of Beck's unique approach to the thing-in-itself is limited in scope. He cannot devote an extensive space for this discussion since it occupies only one aspect of one stage – even if it is the main stage – of Beck's entire philosophical lifework. In addition, Meyer's systematic analysis of Beck's doctrine regarding the thing-in-itself is based mainly on the views of Gerold Prauss and therefore it is limited in breadth. He fails to see the unique features of Beck's approach as outlined in this current work. Nevertheless, Meyer's work is important in many respects and it provided helpful materials for my own research.

In addition to the above, few articles on Beck's doctrine have recently appeared. Edmund Heller has published an article titled "Kant und J. S. Beck über Anschauung und Begriff" (1993); Ingrid M. Wallner has published two articles apparently out of her above mentioned dissertation: "A new look at J. S. Beck's 'Doctrine of the Standpoint'" (1984) and "J. S. Beck and Husserl: The new episteme in the Kantian tradition" (1985); Eckart Förster has written on "Fichte, Beck and Schelling in Kant's *Opus Postumum*" (1990); and finally George di Giovanni includes reference to J. S. Beck in his "The facts of consciousness" (2000), the opening article to his co-edited translation volume, *Between Kant and Hegel*, which includes an English translation of the main chapters of Beck's *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt*. Each of these articles highlights some aspect of Beck's theory and thus contributes to the work here presented. Nevertheless, none of them approaches the issue from the perspective suggested here.

This work is divided into three main parts (aside from the Introduction and the Epilogue). Following the Introduction (which forms Part I), Part II discusses the issue of the relation between a representation and its object as it arises within Kant's original doctrine and sets the stage for the later analysis of Beck's unique interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism. This part is divided into two chapters. In the first chapter, I present and discuss the principle of the subjective conditions of objectivity, which I see as the key to understanding Kant's revolutionary approach

²⁰ In my view Beck's *Standpunktstheorie* is essentially opposed to the foundationalism of Reinhold and Fichte. I therefore side with Ingrid Wallner when she argues that "Beck's epistemological enterprise cannot be correctly understood if it is interpreted as an effort to build a deductive system on the basis of a first principle from which other principles are supposed to 'follow', being entailed in a process of inferential reasoning." (Wallner 1979, 20). While Meyer does not present Beck as a foundationalist, he nevertheless fails to emphasize the distinct character of Beck's first principle.

to the issue of the relation of a representation to an object. The sections comprising this chapter are built as an historical reconstruction of the development of Kant's views along approximately two decades stretching from the early seventeen-sixties until the publication of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. I attempt to show how the development of Kant's views eventually led to the idea of the subjective conditions of objectivity. It is crucial to bear in mind that by the latter principle I do not mean any ontological statement, but rather an epistemological one. The principle of the subjective conditions of objectivity should not be understood as a statement about being as such but rather about the notion of being and about the way in which this notion functions for human cognitive subjects. Regarding Kant's works during the seventeen-sixties, I discuss his theory of space in which we can detect a shift from a rational, material, object-oriented, and contingent view of space towards a sensible, formal, subject-oriented, and necessary view of space. I also discuss Kant's recognition, as early as 1766, of the limits of metaphysics and the inability of human reason to determine the existence of anything without reliance on observations derived from experience. In continuation to the above I discuss Kant's important recognition of the distinction between the real and the ideal with special emphasis on the concept of causality, which as a real ground cannot be derived from the logical principle of identity and contradiction. I also discuss Kant's commitment to the internal principle of order and coherence, which is essential for his understanding of our view of nature. All of these discussions are directed at demonstrating Kant's emphasis on observable experience and his reluctance to go beyond a reality, which can be empirically investigated. It is this empirical reality, in which human forms of cognition are inevitably embedded. I then discuss the *Inaugural Dissertation*, which, on the one hand, reinforces the defense of the reality and internal cohesiveness of the experiential world, but, on the other hand, seems to reintroduce the same kind of metaphysics, which was rejected by Kant only few years earlier. I propose a reading of the *Inaugural Dissertation*, which, at least partly, neutralizes the tension between these two themes. In the works of the seventeen-sixties Kant mainly argued against the tendency of metaphysics to interfere with the affairs of science. It follows from the *Inaugural Dissertation's* strict separation between the sensible and the intelligible world that the metaphysical doctrine of intelligible entities does not pretend to offer an insight into the deeper properties of nature overlooked by science. It also leaves completely intact the internal order of the sensible world and our ability to construct true judgment within this world. Moreover, the recognition of the two modes of knowledge – the sensible and the intelligible – is not derived from an ontological view of two domains of objects. Rather the opposite is true. The two worldviews are derived from an epistemologically held doctrine about two modes of representation available to us. In my reading of the *Inaugural Dissertation* I emphasize the influence of Leibniz's *New Essays* published for the first time in 1765. Nevertheless, the *Inaugural Dissertation* has an undeniable dogmatic theme in that it does purport to give us access to a world of things-in-themselves entirely beyond the natural world. In the *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant also contrasts the phenomenal world which is merely subjective since it is dependent on the receptivity of our

sensible faculty and the subject's ability to be affected in a certain way, with the intelligible world which is purely objective. The dichotomy between the subjective and the objective world and the identification of the world of things-in-themselves with the latter, inevitably portrays the sensible world as a world of diminished reality. On the one hand, the *Inaugural Dissertation* does go a long way in the direction of a recognition of subjective conditions of objectivity since time and space, despite the fact that they pertain merely to the sensible world, are nevertheless considered as ultimate conditions within this world, without which no object can appear to us within experience. What was required to view time and space as truly subjective conditions of objectivity was therefore only to renounce the relevance of a higher form of reality pertaining to the world of things-in-themselves. The case with the forms of the understanding was more complicated. In their case, the conversion of the point of view required that we consider whether they indeed have a pure use wholly independent of sensibility. I argue that while the main innovation of the *Inaugural Dissertation* was the strict separation of the sensible and the intelligible faculties, the theme of the silent decade, which eventually led to the publication of the first *Critique*, was the mutual interdependence of the two cognitive faculties. Slowly Kant came to realize that the forms of the understanding have no use other than in application to sensible intuitions and that their pure use in relation to things-in-themselves must be relinquished. Additionally, we can only account for the ability of cognition to relate representations to an object on behalf of the mutual interaction between the sensible and the intelligible faculties. Consequently, the object of cognition is only a phenomenal one, constructed by the application of the forms of our sensible and intelligible faculties, both considered as subjective conditions of objectivity.

The second chapter of Part II is designed to present the various contexts, which pose obstacles for the reading of Kant's philosophy as based on the principle of the subjective conditions of objectivity, a reading which portrays the thing-in-itself as irrelevant for this philosophy. These contexts set forth both the theoretical arguments, arising from within Kant's own texts, which pose an obstacle for the interpretation I advanced above and also the historical background against which J. S. Beck's *Standpunctslehre* is a reaction. In this chapter I discuss the receptivity of sense perception including various paragraphs from Kant's works, which suggest that the thing-in-itself "hides behind" appearances and causes representations to emerge in our minds as a result of being affected by these things-in-themselves. I point to the famous criticism of F. H. Jacobi and G. E. Schulze based on the incompatibility, and yet what they saw as the inevitability, of the thing-in-itself for Kant's theoretical philosophy. I discuss the constant claim raised against Kant by both empirically and rationally oriented critics that his philosophy cannot escape the charge of subjective idealism. I mention the claim that the interpretation of Kant, along the lines suggested in the first chapter of this part, neglects to take into account the extension of the categories beyond sensibility and especially the claim, frequently raised by Kant, that, while things-in-themselves cannot be known, they nevertheless can, and even must, be thought of. I also point to the role of the thing-in-itself for the transcendental dialectic and most importantly for Kant's practical

philosophy. In all these contexts I do not intend – at this stage of my argument – to exhaust the discussion of these difficulties but rather merely to raise the questions, which any interpretation along the lines suggested above must address. As I noted, the discussion of these contexts sets both the systematic and the historical background for the exposition of the views of J. S. Beck, which follows next.

Part III is devoted to a detailed exposition of J. S. Beck's *Standpunctslehre*. I think that a major fault of previous works written on the subject of Beck's *Standpunctslehre* and its relation to Kant, is first, that they take the interpretation of Kant's theory for granted, and second, that they discuss the legitimacy and uniqueness of Beck's doctrine within its initial presentation. I believe that in order to properly evaluate the legitimacy of Beck's doctrine as an interpretation of Kant we must first dedicate a separate space for a detailed presentation of Beck's doctrine, its presuppositions and the process through which it came about. I think that Beck's doctrine has a unique internal structure and I believe that without a patient effort to analyze both its details and its overall outlook we may come to the wrong conclusions when we attempt to evaluate its merits.²¹ Part III, therefore, starts from an historical reconstruction of the development of Beck's thought leading up to the publication of the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*. It comprises the correspondence between Kant and Beck during the period in which Beck wrote the three volumes of his explanatory abstracts. It also includes a discussion of several review-articles concerning the works of some of Beck's contemporaries, written by Beck at around the same time. The reconstruction of the development of Beck's thought proves to be – at least in my mind – a good introduction to his later more mature views. Through this developmental process, we can already see Beck's preoccupation with the issue of the relation of a representation to its object and his view that the object that affects the senses is no other than the phenomenal object. Following the discussion of the early development of Beck's views, I discuss the course of argument, which Beck follows in his major work, the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*. First, I discuss the issue, which is the core of Beck's doctrine: the problem of the bond between a representation and its object. Beck argues that since we only have representations within our consciousness to begin with, it seems unclear what we mean by an object that is supposed to be distinct from them and to which representations allegedly correspond. The next stage in Beck's argument is to show that without accounting for the relation between a representation and an

²¹ A major difficulty with Wallner's discussion of Beck's *Standpunctslehre* derives from embarking on an evaluation of Beck's doctrine without preceding this evaluation with a detailed exposition of the doctrine itself. It follows that many of Wallner's formulations of Beck's ideas may seem unintelligible to a reader who is not already familiar with Beck's thought. This is evident not only in the introduction to her dissertation but even within the text itself. Immediately in the opening chapters of her work, Wallner cites Beck's commentary on the *Critique of Pure Reason*, contained in the fourth and last part of Beck's *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*. Thereby, Wallner appeals to various distinctions used by Beck, which only make sense when construed on the background of the wider context of Beck's detailed exposition of his entire doctrine in the second and main part of his *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*.

object all of Kant's most important distinctions and principles remain inexplicable. Such is the case with the distinction between the a-priori and the a-posteriori, the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves, analytic and synthetic judgments, the critical theory of time and space, the distinction between intuitions and concepts, the concept of transcendental logic and the principle of the possibility of experience. Beck then presents the principle, which in his mind expresses the only standpoint from which Kant's philosophy can be properly understood. This is the postulate to represent originally. In order to explain the meaning of original representing, Beck gives the example of the geometer who, when asked to explain the three-dimensionality of space, does not appeal to conceptual arguments and definitions but simply requires that one represent space to oneself. Beck argues that as long as we operate with mere concepts the problem of the relation between a representation and its object remains inexplicable. This is so since a concept is a representation, whose object is considered as distinct from itself. Therefore, any attempt to account for the relation between a representation and its object by appealing to concepts, already assumes this very relation. The problem with concepts is not merely in terms of their validity, that is, their relation to an object, but also in terms of their meaningfulness. In order to explain the meaning of a concept we have to define it. However, this definition requires the use of other concepts, which in turn require definition and so on. If we merely appeal to concepts we are confined to an endless line of regression. According to Beck, both the meaningfulness and the validity of our concepts rely on a pre-conceptual cognitive process, which he indicates by the term 'original representing'. Beck then proceeds to explain the categories as original modes of representing and the principle of the original-synthetic, objective-unity, of consciousness. My discussion of Beck's unique doctrine emphasizes the fact that it has two aspects: one pertaining to the relation between sensibility and the understanding and the other pertaining to the relation of a representation to an object. These aspects are related and yet they are distinct and the legitimacy of Beck's doctrine must be later evaluated separately regarding each of these two aspects. The heart of Beck's unique doctrine is the claim that the relation between a representation and its object is explicable only in terms of an original activity of our cognition, through which we combine representations and posit them as an object. We can only understand what we mean by 'an object' by appealing to the objectifying function of our own understanding. It follows that the thing-in-itself is irrelevant for Kant's theoretical philosophy (at least for its positive, constitutive part). In Part III, I also discuss Beck's extension of this argument to Kant's practical philosophy.

The aim of Part IV is to evaluate the legitimacy of Beck's *Standpunctslehre* as an interpretation of Kant. I discuss this issue mainly in the context of Kant's theoretical philosophy but also in the context of Kant's practical philosophy. In the context of Kant's theoretical philosophy, I divide my discussion into the two aspects of Beck's doctrine: the relation of sensibility and the understanding and the relation between a representation and its object. Although only the latter aspect is the proper issue of this research, I think that no evaluation of Beck's doctrine can avoid referring to the former aspect, which in addition to its central role within Beck's doctrine has also

important implications on the issue of the relation between a representation and its object. My argument is that Beck's doctrine, which practically merges the forms of the understanding with formal and even empirical intuition, obviously goes beyond the limits of a legitimate interpretation of Kant. Nevertheless, the analysis of the differences between Beck's and Kant's doctrines regarding the relation of sensibility and the understanding is helpful in furthering our understanding of the views of both these authors. It is also helpful in revealing the advantages and disadvantages that each of these views may have from a general epistemological point of view.

Before embarking on a detailed analysis of the legitimacy of Beck's interpretation of Kant regarding the relation between a representation and its object, I dedicate two sections to the emphasis of the uniqueness of Beck's doctrine in this regard, by contrasting it with his two major contemporaries: Reinhold and Fichte. Beck devotes a significant part of his *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* to a criticism of Reinhold's theory of the power of representation. The exposition of Beck's criticism of Reinhold and also Reinhold's criticism of Beck, which fortunately is also available to us, is helpful in understanding Beck's unique stand on the issue of the relation between a representation and its object. The contrast with Fichte, whose *Wissenschaftslehre* seems at first to have much in common with Beck's *Standpunctslehre*, is also highly important in order to expose the uniqueness of Beck's views. I attempt to show that both Reinhold and Fichte assume – either implicitly or explicitly – the absolute dichotomy between the immanent existence of representations in consciousness and the transcendent existence of things-in-themselves. Reinhold's defense of realism in his early *Elementarphilosophie* has therefore an irresistible appeal to the existence of things-in-themselves, without which he cannot account for the content of the representation. Fichte, accepting Jacobi's and Schulze's criticism and attempting to rid transcendental philosophy of this inconsistent element, conceded that the transcendental explanation – at least within theoretical philosophy – must remain within immanent bounds. In the case of Fichte, we shall see that despite his official position, which eliminates the thing-in-itself entirely, some remnants of this notion keep creeping into his theoretical philosophy, and are mostly apparent in his practical philosophy. Even if within his theoretical philosophy the non-ego is merely posited by the ego's own activity and according to its own rules – and even this much is highly controversial – it seems that within the practical context the free activity of the ego must be understood against the background of some truly independent reality, which also provides the medium for the realization of our moral duties. There is thus some room for the view that Fichte appeals to practical reason in order to provide a proof of the existence of a representation-independent world, a task that could not be accomplished by an appeal to theoretical reason alone. Both Reinhold and Fichte, therefore, operated with the representation–thing-in-itself dichotomy in mind. Neither opponents nor supporters of Kant's critical philosophy saw any other alternative. To be exact, none other than J. S. Beck, whose views I contrast with those of both the above authors.

I start my analysis of the legitimacy of Beck's interpretation of the Kantian doctrine of the objective relation by charting a general map of possible Kantian

interpretations. The two extreme positions on this map are idealism and realism and the question is how to locate Kant's position on this scale. I argue that both idealism and realism have a shared assumption, according to which there are only two, diametrically opposed, modes of existence – either that of representations immanent to cognition or that of things-in-themselves wholly independent of cognition. I further argue that the two rival interpretations of Kant's distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves – the 'two-world' and the 'two-aspect' view – share this basic assumption. Therefore, both schools insist that reality is ultimately something *in-itself*. Since authors operate under the assumption of the absolute dichotomy between appearances and things-in-themselves, then, in their minds, realism can suffice with nothing less than a thing-in-itself or an in-itself aspect of ordinary objects. In other words, the object of knowledge must ultimately be considered as an ontologically-distinct entity, or at the very least, an entity that has an in-itself aspect. Without an ontologically-distinct entity or an ontologically distinct aspect of ordinary objects, we are left with nothing but representations and Kant's position deteriorates into sheer idealism. Authors of both schools – with very few exceptions – thus insist on the existence of things-in-themselves and their inevitable role for Kant's theory of experience. Insisting on the central role of the thing-in-itself in Kant's theory of experience naturally motivates some authors to discuss, even if only minimally, not only the existence but also the nature and function of things-in-themselves. I raise two basic objections against this commitment to things-in-themselves, or things, considered as they are in themselves. The first has to do with the dogmatism involved in this commitment and what appears to me to be a breach of the limits that Kant has so meticulously laid down for human cognition. How can we know anything about either the existence or the constitution of that which is supposed to be beyond the limits of possible knowledge? This objection is especially pressing when we recognize that what we usually mean by a 'thing-in-itself' is a thing wholly independent of *any* kind of relation to *any* kind of knowing subject. Thus understood it is, *by definition*, beyond any sensible or intelligible cognitive form. As such it can neither be sensibly represented nor even be thought, except for its nominal definition. The second objection has to do with the fact that contrasting empirical reality, accessible to us, with an ultimate, in-itself form of reality, that is denied us, inevitably leads to a view of empirical reality as a lesser kind or degree of reality. Or worse, it might even promote the view that only things-in-themselves are real and phenomenal objects are nothing but sensible representations combined in certain ways by our understanding. In contrast to the two commonly acceptable interpretations – the two-world and the two-aspect view – I humbly propose an alternative, which I term anthropocentric. According to this view, the thing-in-itself is entirely irrelevant for Kant's doctrine of objectivity. An in-itself mode of existence is not required to ground appearances and it plays no role in Kant's theory of the influence of an object on our senses. Nor can we say that things-in-themselves are that which appear to us in the appearance. None of the categories apply to them and *all questions*, prior to any possible answer, about either their existence or their nature, are empty questions. Despite the above, I argue that a certain notion of the thing-in-itself – when it is understood as a mere

logically-possible concept for which no object could possibly be given (Kant's notion of a negative noumenon, on which the Ideas of pure reason are modeled) – does play a role in Kant's Transcendental Dialectic and in his Practical Philosophy. The following chapters of Part IV are designed to address two major objections to the above-proposed anthropocentric interpretation, a form of which, I argue, is defended by Beck. One has to do with the proper understanding of the Kantian distinction between cognizing an object, which can only be a sensible one, and merely thinking an object through pure, unschematized, categories, which allegedly allows a relation, even if a merely thin one, to things-in-themselves. Such a distinction is indeed employed by most authors who claim that things-in-themselves have a role in the theory of experience. The second objection has to do with the charge that without some role for things-in-themselves in Kant's theory of experience, the latter is reduced to sheer idealism and is moreover inexplicable.

The analysis of the issue of the extension of the categories beyond sensibility and the proper meaning of Kant's distinction between thinking and cognizing is conducted in the form of a criticism of Henry E. Allison's and Erich Adickes' versions of the 'two-aspect' view. The latter two doctrines are based precisely on the distinction between thinking and cognizing. According to both authors, the thing-in-itself cannot be eliminated from Kant's theoretical philosophy and some form of transcendental affection must be accepted, otherwise Kant's philosophy would be reduced to sheer idealism. The distinction between thinking and cognizing provides them with the way to explain how the thing-in-itself can be consistently upheld within the Kantian system. Against this view I argue that according to Kant, it is impossible to think *any object* whatsoever in complete abstraction from intuition. Moreover, according to Kant's own text, pure, unschematized categories, considered in abstraction from even the forms of intuition, are not only devoid of any possible relation to an object they are also devoid of meaning. In fact, without intuition, which provides thought with content, it is impossible to think at all. This was Kant's position as early as 1763. The extension of the categories beyond sensibility is not to be accounted for by appealing to an alleged logical or intelligible content, which is an aberration, but by recognizing that thought, whose unique feature is the function of synthesis, can synthesize sensible representations in ways, which either complies with or disregards the formal conditions of intuition. In thought we can connect sensible representations in ways, which are free from internal contradiction but yet are incompliant with the formal conditions of intuition. Such concepts, or better ideas, are thinkable since they are free of contradiction but they are non-cognizable since they cannot be sensibly represented. Within this discussion I also point out that in relation to experience Kant uses the concept of the thing-in-itself merely in the role of a transcendental object. The latter is not an object considered as transcendent but merely a projection of the unity of apperception in front of itself. It is the highest principle of unity, which derives from the transcendental unity of apperception, and which grounds the specific functions of unity, the categories. The transcendental object can be viewed as a presupposition according to which beyond the contingent, subjective connection of representations in the individual consciousness, there is also a necessary, objective

connection of representations. Although it is merely an assumption it is nevertheless an assumption that is inevitable for the construction of experience. The result of these considerations is that the notion of the thing-in-itself is legitimate and even required but only in one of the following two senses: either it is considered as a mere Idea of Pure Reason, that is, as a thought-construction, which despite the fact that it is free from internal contradiction, cannot be sensibly represented and therefore cannot possibly have an object; or it is considered as a transcendental object which is nothing other than the expression of the objectifying function of our own understanding. Neither of these two legitimate notions refers to a transcendent entity, which plays a role in ontologically grounding appearances, in the theory of the influence of external objects on our senses and in general in explaining the possibility and genesis of experience.

Following the above argumentation it becomes pressing to consider whether without any role for the thing-in-itself within the theory of cognition, Kant's philosophy is not indeed reduced to sheer idealism. I therefore dedicate a specific section to present my reading of Kant's refutations of idealism, in his various writings, which in my view succeeds without any reference to the thing-in-itself. One must remember, though, that Kant does not pretend to provide a proof for the reality of experience based on a factor independent of all consciousness but merely to show how the criterion actually employed by our empirical thinking is indeed useful to distinguish reality from illusion *within experience*. On my view, Kant's response to idealism builds on the tools already established in the Analytic of Concepts and the Analytic of Principles and I reconstruct it under the titles of externality, reality, objectivity and actuality. The discussion of externality, reality and objectivity is intended to demonstrate that the question regarding the status of external objects can only be considered within the realm of appearances and that each and every outer object is immediately, without inference, perceived as external, as real and as objective, that is, as epistemologically, rather than ontologically, independent of cognition. The discussion of actuality is intended to show how we can indeed distinguish the genuine from the illusive within the phenomenal realm, and only within it. The framework of my reconstruction is based on showing why the appeal to a transcendently independent reality is completely misconstrued and irrelevant and how Kant's view of empirical reality provides all the tools to explain our notions of objectivity and truth.

In spite of the above, it can be argued against Beck's and against my own view that assuming that this is indeed the correct interpretation of Kant's intentions, why had he not made this absolutely clear. In order to address this difficulty I offer a two-fold argument based on a methodological-propaedeutic consideration also provided by Beck himself, and a religious-political consideration. Part IV also includes a discussion of some important omissions in Beck's account of the relation between a representation and its object. Towards the end of Part IV I address the historic and systematic facets of Kant's personal response to Beck's *Standpunctslehre*. Finally, I discuss the consequences of Beck's elimination of the thing-in-itself on the proper understanding of Kant's practical philosophy and the legitimacy of Beck's interpretation in this latter context. I defend the view that, as

Beck argued, Kant's practical philosophy does not require a special kind of object but only the legitimacy of a special kind of concepts. Even the objective reality given to these concepts, the postulates of practical reason, within the practical context does not imply the existence of any kind of non-sensible objects but merely the role that such concepts – or better ideas – which cannot be sensibly instantiated, play as conditions of practical reason.

Kant's philosophy was in his own time, and, in my humble opinion, still is today, widely misunderstood. The reason for this predicament lies in the fact that Kant's philosophy is read while implicitly holding to a certain assumption, the rejection of which was, in my view, the cornerstone of his philosophical revolution. The principle of the subjective conditions of objectivity replaces the implicit assumption, which accepts only two dichotomized modes of existence – the immanent existence of representations in consciousness and the transcendent existence of things-in-themselves. According to the assumed immanent–transcendent dichotomy, for an object to be distinct from a representation it must eventually be considered as a thing-in-itself. If it has no “in-itself” mode of existence then it is ultimately reduced to the immanent existence of representations in consciousness. As I have already argued, we are driven to this dichotomy when we attempt to justify the reality of experience. I think that Kant's theoretical philosophy has a more modest objective, which is merely to explain how experience is possible, that is, to expose its presuppositions. When we view the problem of the relation of a representation to its object in terms of the immanence-transcendence dichotomy then the problem is impossible to solve, but no less important, it is also irrelevant. Since things can only come before us in appearance, as Kant frequently tells us, the question what things would be in themselves and in complete abstraction from all relation to a knowing subject is completely irrelevant.

Interpretation in general faces an inherent difficulty. The interpreter cannot approach the original text without carrying with him at least a minimal set of presuppositions. The difficulty arises when the basic assumptions of the interpreter (which are usually unstated and even unconscious, specifically because of their role as basic presuppositions), do not match, or even oppose, the presuppositions assumed by the text he is attempting to interpret. In such cases, proper understanding is impossible and the interpretative task of explaining the original text soon turns into hostile criticism. In my view, this was the fate of Kant's transcendental philosophy and also of Beck's unique interpretation of this philosophy. I cannot hide my fear that my own approach will suffer the same misfortune.

I therefore ask that my reader make the distinction between an illegitimate interpretation and an interpretation that one may not accept although one admits its legitimacy. I think that any philosophical doctrine has more than one, but less than an infinite number, of legitimate interpretations. For an interpretation to be considered legitimate its presuppositions must be at least plausible, it must be free of internal contradiction and it must have sufficient basis in the original text. I hope that my interpretative approach in this work will at least be regarded as legitimate even if one does not accept it as his or her preferred interpretation.

Part II

Kant's Transcendental Idealism and the Notion of the Thing-in-Itself

The argument of this part is divided between two chapters. Chapter 2 presents and analyzes what I regard as the basic principle of Kant's transcendental idealism – the principle of the subjective conditions of objectivity. In Chap. 3, I set forward the major contexts, within which the main objections against a reading of Kant along the above principle of the subjective conditions of objectivity could be raised.

By the 'subjective conditions of objectivity' I mean that unlike other metaphysical theories which view the object as a thing-in-itself, wholly independent of the knowing subject, Kant concedes that an object is only such as is already conditioned by the subjective forms of our sensible and intelligible faculties. Additionally, it includes the claim that an object thus understood is no less objective because it is dependent on subjective conditions. This is so, first, since on this view the object can still be distinguished from a representation, and it offers the only way to make this distinction without becoming dogmatic; and second since the alternative of a thing-in-itself is completely irrelevant. An object that is wholly independent of our representations is nothing for us. It cannot serve as a criterion of truth and our inability to know it does not deprive the object that can be known of its objective status. At this early stage of the discussion, this reading of Kant's transcendental idealism may still seem obscure or it may raise the objection that it is either wrong or fails to vindicate Kant of the familiar charge of idealism. As it is the main theme of this book I hope that it shall become clearer as the discussion advances. In the following chapters, I introduce the issue of the subjective conditions of objectivity from a combined historical and systematic point of view.

When attempting to offer even a limited historical reconstruction, one is faced with two major dilemmas: the first confronts us with the question of where to begin; the second has to do with the tension between historical continuity and the recognition of innovative new beginnings. Regarding the first of the above dilemmas, I believe that for the purposes of exposing the roots of Kant's critical thought, the balance between overstressing the historical dimension on the one hand and overlooking important milestones on the other hand directs us to start the exposition

with Kant's thought during the early 1760s.¹ It is at that time that the major seeds for Kant's critical thought started to crystallize and become evident. Obviously, one could look for further hints within even earlier periods. However, since I use the historical discussion merely to provide the necessary background for a systematical analysis, it seems to me that stretching this discussion to earlier periods shall not serve my purposes well.² Regarding the second dilemma, I shall attempt to balance the search for historical connectivity with the admission of innovative milestones. Although the period stretching from the early 1760s until the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781 shows signs of gradual development it is also marked by the emergence of some originally new ideas and I shall do my best to account for these aspects.

For the purposes and aims of my own discussion, I divide the relevant time period into two major subsections: first, from the early until the late 1760s (Sect. 2.1); second, the period stretching from the publication of the *Inaugural Dissertation* in 1770 (Sect. 2.2.1), through the so-called silent decade, until the publication of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781 (Sect. 2.2.2).

Chapter 3 puts forward the challenges that must be faced by any interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism, which claims that the notion of the thing-in-itself plays no role in relation to the possibility of experience and in relation to the proper understanding of the notion of the object of knowledge. This chapter deals with issues such as the receptivity of sense perception and the origin of the empirical content of sensibility, the charge of subjective idealism, the extension of the categories beyond sensibility, the requirements of the Dialectic of Pure Reason and those of Practical Reason. The discussion in this chapter is not intended to solve these obstacles at this early stage of the analysis. Rather, it is intended to set the stage for the detailed systematic analysis (Part IV) and to set the historical background against which Beck's *Standpunctslehre* (Part III) is a reaction.

¹ Some references will, nevertheless, be made to earlier periods.

² It should nevertheless be noted that the principle of the internal order and coherence of experience, which I discuss below, derives from Kant life-long defense of physical science as based on the idea of real interaction as opposed to pre-established harmony. This important aspect of Kant's philosophy goes back to his very first publication of 1747 (cf. Chap. 2, note 2) and its centrality for Kant's critical philosophy shall become evident as I continue to develop my argument. Alison Laywine indeed attempts to explain the emergence of Kant's critical philosophy out of his defense and commitment to the idea of real interaction (Laywine 1993).

Chapter 2

The Subjective Conditions of Objectivity

2.1 From the Early Until the Late 1760s

In the current subsection, I describe the development of Kant's thought regarding the following issues: the theory of space; the question of the possibility of metaphysics; the distinction between the real and the ideal; the inability of reason to determine the existence of an object regardless of experience; and the significance of the principle of internal order and coherence for understanding the notion of nature. These aspects form the background for Kant's later development of his critical theory.¹

2.1.1 Kant's Theory of Space

In *Living Forces* (1747),² his first published work, Kant still held to the Leibnizian view that space is a function of the interaction between substances.³ He explains extension out of the attractive and repulsive powers that exist between substances.

¹ Of course these are not the only issues that arise out of Kant's works of this period. But in my view these are the main issues that are required for understanding the later development of Kant's critical philosophy.

² *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.* (AA 01: 1–181).

³ Kant was never a follower of any previous author but a *Selbstsdenker* (a free thinker). From an early age his thought was original, critical and innovative. While he may have accepted some of Leibniz's ideas, Kant's support of real interaction against pre-established harmony always kept him away from Leibniz. To this we can add the fact that Kant was never dazzled by the rationalist syllogistic method of deduction. Ironically, Kant only slowly learned to appreciate Leibniz's metaphysics as he was beginning to work out the ideas that eventually lead him to the *Critique of Pure Reason* (cf. below Sect.2.2.1 dealing with Kant's *Inaugural Dissertation*).

The three dimensionality of space is thus deduced from the laws of motion governing matter.⁴ Space in general is derived from the essential order governing matter; geometry from physics. When this view is combined with the Leibnizian view of possible worlds we arrive at the additional conclusion that had God created a different kind of matter with a different kind of order within it, space too would have different characteristics.⁵ Thus at this stage of the development of Kant's thought, space as a form of order was still embedded in matter and with matter, space too, was considered to be contingent. This view of space is still present in *New Elucidation* (1755)⁶ and in *Physical Monadology* (1756).⁷ In *The Only Possible Argument* (1763)⁸ we detect some changes. There, within Kant's argument for the necessary existence of God we also see a shift in his view of space. In this work Kant argues that the very possibility of thought in accordance with the law of identity and contradiction requires there to be some data that can be thought. This data constitutes the material element, of which our concepts are made and which can either be internally consistent or internally self-contradictory. Thus possibility – even when taken as a mere logical possibility (the absence of internal contradiction) – presupposes the existence of matter in general, without which nothing can be thought at all. Kant concludes that something must absolutely and necessarily exist for its negation is at the same time the negation of all data that can be thought.⁹ This is in brief Kant's a-priori argument for the existence of God in *The Only Possible Argument*. Kant then adds an a-posteriori consideration according to which the unity and harmony in nature could not be understood to encompass such an immense variety of individual things as we find in nature were not the unity and order in nature grounded, along with the very possibility of matter itself, in a common ultimate principle – God. Thus the unity and order that prevails in nature along with the existence of matter in general is deduced from a single ground so that space as part of the entire unity of nature is intimately tied to the matter to which it applies. Despite the fact that in this work space in particular and natural order in general are still tied up with matter itself,¹⁰ there is nevertheless a noteworthy

⁴ Compare this with Kant's opposite claim in the *Prolegomena* that Newton's law of universal attraction derives from the spatial characters of spherical surfaces of different radii, (*Prol.*, AA 04: 321).

⁵ In this work, Kant therefore recognizes the possibility of non-Euclidean geometries, (*GSK*, §10, AA 01: 24).

⁶ *Principiorum primorum cognitionis metaphysicae nova dilucidatio*. (AA 01: 385–416).

⁷ *Metaphysicae cum geometria iunctae usus in philosophia naturali, cuius specimen I. continet monadologiam physicam*. (AA 01: 473–487).

⁸ *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes*. (AA 02: 63–163).

⁹ The critically mature Kant had a quite different view. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant no longer speaks of the objective existence of God but merely of the Idea of God, which must not be regarded as an existing thing if we are to avoid the fallacy of hypostatizing a mere legitimate thought for which no object could possibly be given. For Kant's mature view on this subject, cf. Sect. 12.2.5.

¹⁰ Note that in *The Only Possible Argument* the order that prevails in nature is not deduced directly from the possibility of matter in general but both are deduced from a common ground – God.

change of views, for space and natural order in general are no longer considered to be contingent but necessary. Kant makes a distinction between God as the Supreme Being and God as a willful Author of the world. Although the will and free choice of God is responsible for *the existence of specific things* – so that the possibility of other worlds with different objects occupying them is admitted – Kant still claims that *the possibility of matter in general* presupposes the laws of motion governing it. “That is to say: If the possibility of matter is presupposed, it would be self-contradictory to suppose it operating in accordance with other laws. This is a logical necessity of the highest ground.” (*BDG*, AA: 02: 100).¹¹ Therefore, at this stage Kant has already abandoned the view that the laws of motion, and with them the Euclidean character of space, were contingent. In this work we also witness the beginning of a shift from a rationalistic, analytic paradigm of explanation found in Leibniz towards recognition of fundamental, non-analyzable concepts. Kant notes that the word ‘representation’ is one example of terms, which cannot be analyzed by means of a definition (*BDG*, AA 02: 70). In another passage he admits that “the whole of our cognition ultimately resolves itself into unanalyzable concepts” (*BDG*, AA 02: 73).¹² That space is, or includes such “unanalyzable concepts” is, in this work, not stated but it is explicitly claimed in *Inquiry* (1764)¹³ (*UTM*, AA: 02: 280f.). It seems to me that the recognition of the indefinability and unanalyzability of space is a sign of a shift from a conceptual towards a pre-conceptual and therefore sensible view of space. The view of space as sensible and yet not contingent takes a clear and open form in the short but very important *Directions in Space* (1768).¹⁴ Here space and especially directions in space are explained as fundamental, non-analyzable principles, which prove to be quite resistant to analysis by means of reason although they are very easily grasped intuitively (*GUGR*, AA 02: 383).¹⁵ While in *Living Forces* the three dimensionality of space was derived from Newton’s inverse-square law of universal attraction, in *Directions in Space* it is derived from the human sense of directionality. Thus Kant’s preliminary insight into the indefinability and unanalyzability of space becomes here an explicit statement in favor of the sensible character of space and its contrast with conceptual analysis. Kant does not yet make the further step of arguing that space is the form of our sensible intuition – this move had to wait until the publication of the *Inaugural Dissertation* (1770)¹⁶ – but he nevertheless does

¹¹ All English translations of this work are taken from David Walford and Ralf Meerbote (Kant 1992).

¹² A similar claim recognizing original fundamental principles which cannot be conceptually analyzed is made in *Dreams*, cf. note 21 below.

¹³ *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral*. (AA 02: 273–301).

¹⁴ *Von dem ersten Grunde des Unterschiedes der Gegenden im Raume*. (AA 02: 375–383).

¹⁵ The concepts of ‘above’, ‘below’, ‘right’, ‘left’, ‘in front of’ and ‘behind’, some of which were already discussed in *Inquiry* as unanalyzable and indefinable, are here emphasized as crucial for human orientation and for the visual representation of an object, (*GUGR*, AA 02: 379).

¹⁶ *De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis*. (AA 02: 385–419).

state that “space is not an object of outer sensation; it is rather a fundamental concept which first of all makes possible all such outer sensations” (*GUGR*, AA 02: 383).¹⁷

The main theme of *Directions in Space* is to establish the reality of absolute space. This is not at all to be understood in terms of independence of cognition, since Kant argues that space is intimately tied to human sensibility. What Kant sets out to establish is that “*Absolute space, independently of the existence of all matter and as itself the ultimate foundation of the possibility of the compound character of matter, has a reality of its own.*” (*GUGR*, AA 02: 378).¹⁸ The fundamentally new view that this work presents is therefore the distinction and independence of space as a formal principle of order from the matter to which it is applied. Kant achieves this by reference to the idea of directions in space which is an essential aspect of space but which cannot be reduced to the relations existing between different parts of space. The relations between the parts of a figure remain unaltered even when viewed as a mirror image. The directionality of space can only understood in terms of the relation of a whole figure to “universal space as a unity, of which every extension must be regarded as a part” (*GUGR*, AA 02: 378).

Kant’s view of space in *Directions in Space* can be put into the following main points: (a) the characteristics of space derive from human sensibility and to a large degree resist conceptual analysis; (b) Absolute space is a formal principle of order that is independent of the matter to which it is applied; (c) Absolute space has a reality of its own; (d) The characteristics of space are not contingent but absolutely certain. The first and second of the above features do not oppose each other; on the contrary, their combination may have led Kant, only 2 years later, to his revolutionary new theory of space as a form of our sensible intuition. In this way space was still regarded as sensible and yet independent of the content or matter of sensibility. The real and non-contingent character of space did nevertheless harbor potential conflicts with the sensible character of space. It can be argued that Kant’s arguments in this work support the subjective and ideal character of space much more than prove its realty or independent character. It seems that this tension resulted in the *Inaugural Dissertation* in the waiving of the real character of space and the acceptance of its ideality. The absolute certainty of space was nevertheless upheld by admitting that space is only applicable to objects as they

¹⁷ Kant also argues that “This relation to absolute space, however, cannot be immediately perceived, though the differences, which exist between bodies and which depend exclusively on this ground alone, can be immediately perceived.” (*GUGR*, 02: 381). All English translations of this work are taken from David Walford and Ralf Meerbote (Kant 1992).

¹⁸ I think that by ‘absolute space’ Kant mainly indicates the independence of space from the matter to which it applies. While I do admit that in *Directions in Space* Kant refers to space thus understood as real, this is not the main thrust of his argument for absolute space as it is not the main thrust of this whole work. Kant mainly argues against the Leibnizian theory to which he himself held in the earlier stages of his career, according to which space is derived from the interaction of substances and thus is not something on its own behalf. The objective reality of space which in this work is taken for granted is another aspect of Kant’s current view of space but I think it should not be confused with the meaning that Kant’s attributes to the term ‘absolute space’.

appear to our senses and not to objects as they are in themselves. In this way Kant could retain the main features of his view in a fully consistent way. Space as the form of sensibility is independent of the matter which fills it; space is indeed subjective and ideal but nevertheless universally applicable with absolute certainty to sensible objects.

2.1.2 *The Possibility and Limits of Metaphysics*

Kant's awareness of the question regarding the possibility and limits of metaphysics can obviously be traced back to *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* (1766).¹⁹ Although earlier signs can possibly be argued for,²⁰ *Dreams* shows an explicit awareness of this issue. The context of the discussion in *Dreams* is the possibility of spirit-beings, which are active in space without filling it. Kant aims to establish that we have no means through which to discuss, much less decide, either the possibility or impossibility of such beings. Experience cannot help in this regard since all objects, which present themselves to our experience exercise resistance on behalf of filling the space, which they occupy. Regarding spirit beings, which are active but not filling space "I would have deprived myself of a concept by means of which the things which present themselves to the senses are otherwise thinkable for me; and the inevitable result must, therefore, be a kind of unthinkability". Kant adds that the above "cannot be regarded as a known impossibility" (*TG*, AA 02: 323). Since the concept of a spirit deviates to such a degree from what we are accustomed to in experience, we cannot form a judgment based on experience regarding either its possibility or its impossibility. While the concept of a spirit remains free of contradiction we are unable to discuss its possibility any further. On the basis of the above considerations Kant concludes that "from now on it will be possible, perhaps, to have all sorts of opinions about but never knowledge of such beings" (*TG*, AA 02: 351).²¹

¹⁹ *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik*. (AA 02: 315–373).

²⁰ In his previous works Kant had discussed the general state of metaphysics and its ability to become a science (*Living Forces*), the foundations of metaphysics and its main principles (*New Elucidation*), and its methods (*The Only Possible argument, Negative Magnitudes, Inquiry*). But only in *Dreams* does he discuss the *possibility* and *limits* of metaphysics. Michael N. Forster convincingly argues that Kant was triggered into this stage of skepticism of a Pyrrhonian character, around 1765, by considering the nature and earlier version of the Antinomies (Forster 2008, 16–20).

²¹ Kant notes that even within the bounds of experience the investigation eventually comes to a stop once we reach certain fundamental, non-analyzable concepts. We can recognize such principles but not understand them, neither by experience nor through reason. Examples of such principles are the resistance exercised by material bodies (*TG*, AA 02: 322) or the concept of a cause (*TG*, AA 02: 370). All English translations of this work are taken from David Walford and Ralf Meerbote (Kant 1992).

The alternative to experience would have been to turn to metaphysics, which may, by the power of sheer reason, be able to determine something about the possibility of spirit beings. Metaphysics indeed seems to offer such insights into the hidden properties of things. But such a promise is all too often disappointed by the outcome. Alas, metaphysics consists merely “in knowing whether the task has been determined by reference to what one can know, and in knowing what relation the question has to empirical concepts, upon which all our judgments must at all times be based. To that extent metaphysics is a science of the *limits of human reason*” (*TG*, AA 02: 367f.).²² One would thus do better to “spare himself the trouble of all futile research into a question, the answering of which demands *data* which are to be found in a world other than the one in which he exists as a conscious being” (*TG*, AA 02: 369).²³ To establish the possibility of anything – beyond the mere absence of contradiction – what are required are observations, which can be subsumed under laws of sensations. Without such evidence neither the possibility nor impossibility of a thing can be asserted (*TG*, AA 02: 369–372).²⁴ It is striking, that even at this stage of the development of his thought Kant did not regard metaphysics as leading us beyond experience but as merely charting the limits of possible experience.

2.1.3 *The Inability of Reason to Determine the Existence of a Thing*

In continuation of the discussion above regarding the possibility of metaphysics and its merely negative role in exposing the limits of what can be known, we can add that after 1766 Kant is fully aware that reason alone cannot determine the existence

²² Kant therefore sees metaphysics as mainly a reflection on the limits of empirical knowledge; rather than producing knowledge of things it aims at the knowledge of the knowledge of things. In a passage that could easily have been lifted out of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant argues that philosophy should aim at “knowledge not only of the objects themselves but also of their relation to the human understanding”. (*TG*, AA 02: 369). Similar views are found even prior to *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, in Kant’s personal notes on his own copy of his 1764 *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (Observation on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime) probably written in late 1764 or early 1765. There he writes that “One could say that metaphysics is the science of the limits of human reason” (AA 20:181). And in another passage he says that “the final end is to determine the vocation of mankind”. (AA 20: 175. Cf. also AA 20: 41, 45). Translations of Kant’s personal notes are taken from C. Bowman, P. Guyer and F. Rauscher (Kant 2005).

²³ This statement is highly important for my argument that whatever exceeds possible experience is irrelevant and pointless. Cf. also my following discussions regarding the internal order and coherence of nature.

²⁴ Cf. also Kant’s letter to Mendelssohn April 8, 1766, (AA 10: 69–73, especially AA 10: 70, 71f.), a letter written in response to Mendelssohn’s discomfort from Kant’s *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, in which Kant repeats the same convictions and argues boldly against the false pretensions of speculative metaphysics.

of anything. For the establishment of the existence of a thing there are required sensible observations capable of being subsumed under universal laws.²⁵ Without such evidence we are left with no more than a mere logical possibility. The recognition of the inability of reason to establish the existence of things without relying on sensible observation is of major importance for the purposes of the argument of this work. Following this recognition of the limits of reason, any refutation of idealism and any argument for the reality of external things will have to work without relying on reason to prove the absolute existence of objects regardless of experience (Beiser 2002, 42; Ameriks 2000, 110). This view of the limits of reason is obviously based on the acceptance of the empiricist presupposition according to which sensation provides the data for all positive thought and that the senses constitute the ultimate foundation of all our judgments (*TG*, AA 02: 351f., 357). The recognition of the reliance of all our cognitions on our sensible representations has an obvious implication for the issue of realism and idealism. Signs for this important insight were evident even prior to the publication of *Dreams*. In his lectures from 1762 to 1764 Kant refers specifically to Berkeley and concedes that since appearances of outer bodies are mere representations in us, it remains unclear whether these appearances can testify to the existence of real objects. Since additionally all knowledge requires the data of the senses it follows that idealism cannot be refuted on logical grounds (*Metaphysik Herder*, AA 28: 42f.).²⁶ In other words, reason cannot refute idealism by proving the existence of objects independent of sensible experience.

²⁵ The dependency of existence on sensible observations was already implicit in *The Only Possible Argument* where Kant notes that in order to demonstrate the correctness of an existential judgment one points to the sources of one's cognition and says "I have seen it" or "I have heard it" (*BDG*, AA: 02: 72f.). The additional requirement that observations be subsumed under universal empirical laws is of utmost importance for Kant's defense of empirical realism in spite of the dependence of phenomena on subjective forms of our cognition. The issue of the compatibility of observations with universal laws is of course tied to Kant's defense of the principle of real interaction.

²⁶ In these lectures Kant argues that idealism which admits merely the existence of the self and other spirits is only a small step from egoism (what we would call solipsism), which admits only of the existence of the self. Since idealism cannot be refuted by an appeal to reason and since its decline towards egoism poses a serious danger to theology, it can and should be refuted by an appeal to one's personal convictions. Ironically this line of thought is reminiscent of Jacobi's argument that reason inevitably leads to egoism and that the only alternative is faith. While it is clear that Kant never abandoned the appeal to reason it is nevertheless clear that at this stage of his development he didn't yet have a better solution. Kant's early awareness of the difficulties of relying on pure reason for the refutation of idealism strengthen my conclusion that Kant's subsequent solution given in the Fourth Paralogism of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (to be discussed in Sect. 12.2.4) reflects a rejection of the thing-in-itself as the criterion of objectivity and truth. Otherwise one falls back to the same confusion that Kant describes in his above-mentioned lectures.

2.1.4 *The Distinction Between the Real and the Ideal*

Another aspect that becomes explicit in Kant's works during the 1760s is the distinction between the real and the ideal. Already in 1755, in the *New Elucidation*, it is clear that Kant is aware of Crusius' important distinction but his attention there is not focused on this matter. The issue is explored at length in *Negative Magnitudes* (1763)²⁷ where it constitutes the main theme of the work. There, Kant distinguishes between logical opposition, which is reducible to the law of identity and contradiction and real opposition, which cannot be similarly expressed. Kant discusses forces operating in different directions as a physical example of real opposition and feelings of pleasure and displeasure as a psychological example of real opposition.²⁸ Kant notes the analogous distinction between a real and a mere logical ground. In the concluding section of this work, he discusses the concept of causality as an example of a real ground. We cannot understand by reference to the law of identity and contradiction why since something is, something else also is. Kant claims that the concept of causality is a fundamental and non-analyzable concept. If one insists on analyzing this concept into yet simpler concepts one shall end up with concepts "the relation of which to their consequences cannot be rendered distinct at all" (*NG*, AA 02: 204).²⁹ Kant's awareness of the distinction between a mere logical ground and a real ground is highly important and it anticipates his later distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments.³⁰

2.1.5 *The Internal Order and Coherence of Nature*

Finally I wish to emphasize an issue that goes back to Kant's early works of the 1750s (and even to his very first work of 1747), an issue which crystallized and became central to the works of the 1760s and which is crucial for Kant's later

²⁷ *Versuch den Begriff der negativen Größen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen* (AA 02: 165–204).

²⁸ Compare with Kant's discussion of the Amphiboly of the Concepts of Reflection (*KrV*, A260-292/B316-349). All references to the *Critique of Pure Reason* (*KrV*) are given with the common reference to the first edition of 1781 (A) and to the second edition of 1787 (B) with the page number of the original publication.

²⁹ All English translations of this work are taken from David Walford and Ralf Meerbote (Kant 1992).

³⁰ Kant's awareness of the difference between analytic and synthetic judgments in general and in particular the view that time, space and force are synthetic is evident in the *Reflexionen* of the mid-60s. For example: "All ideas of metaphysics are analytic, except for space, time, and force." (*Refl* 3716, AA 17: 257); Kant's preoccupation with the analytic-synthetic distinction and even the emerging awareness of the importance and possibility of synthetic a-priori judgments is traceable to other *Reflexionen* of the same period (*Refl* 3738, 3744, 3914, 3944). The mention of Crusius in these fragments is of course not a coincidence. English translations of the *Reflexionen* are taken from C. Bowman, P. Guyer and F. Rauscher (Kant 2005).

defense of empirical realism – the internal order and coherence of nature. In *The Only Possible Argument* Kant's explicit aim is to prove the existence of God but on a closer look we can see that as far as scientific inquiry of nature is concerned, God is moved to infinity and becomes in most cases – though not all – irrelevant. This result is brought about first by distinguishing between a moral and a non-moral dependence on God. Kant designates the dependency of a thing on God as moral when God is the ground of that thing through his will. In other words, a dependence of a thing on God is moral when that thing owes its essence and/or being to God's direct intervention in the world (*BDG*, AA 02: 100). In these cases the thing or event in question is either partially or completely independent of natural order and is therefore classed as supernatural.³¹ The important point is that according to Kant these situations are very rare indeed. Nature abides by universal laws; harmony and order are its intrinsic qualities, which cannot be undermined without thereby undermining nature itself.³² The bottom line is that Kant reduces God's intervention in the world to such a minimum that his recognition of some such remote cases could arguably be regarded as an empty lip service. But even this is only half of the picture. Kant urges us to seek to explain the order that prevails in nature according to ever more general laws and not through a direct appeal to the divine will. This is the main criticism that Kant directs at the common version of the physico-theological proof of God's existence. According to the common view, God's existence is deduced from the order of nature conceived of as *contingent*. According to Kant an inevitable feature of nature is its internal dependency on ever more general laws. Thus according to Kant's version of the physico-theological argument, God's existence is deduced from the unity of nature conceived of as *necessary*.³³ Kant's version of the physico-theological argument thus reduces the relevance of God to scientific explanation to a minimum. First God's direct and indirect intervention was limited to a minimum and now even the designation of God as the source of the possibility of matter in general and of the

³¹ Kant distinguishes two kinds of supernatural events. An event is either materially or formally supernatural. In the former case "the immediate efficient cause is external to nature, that is to say, the divine power produces it immediately". In the latter case, while the immediate cause is within nature, nevertheless, "the manner in which the forces of nature are directed to producing the effect is not itself subject to a rule of nature." (*BDG*, AA 02: 104). In the former case the event is completely independent of nature while in the latter case it is only partially so.

³² Kant argues that minimizing God's direct and indirect intervention in the world does not undermine God in any way. Only those who "have fallen into complete savagery, or when their eyes have been sealed by stiff-necked wickedness" recognize the existence of God based only on their belief in miracles (*BDG*, AA 02: 116).

³³ God's existence can be deduced from the order that prevails in nature either when this order is conceived of as contingent or necessary, although the nature of the dependency on God is different in the two cases. When God's existence is deduced from natural order conceived of as contingent, the dependency on God is of a moral kind since we rely on God's choice. When God's existence is deduced from natural order conceived of as necessary, the dependency is non-moral since here we rely not on God's will (his role as a willful Author of the world) but on God as a supreme being, the ultimate ground of the possibility of matter in general.

lawfulness of nature is pushed to infinity. While on Kant's view God is necessary to explain both the possibility of matter in general and the possibility of the infinite harmony and order found in nature, nevertheless, God should not all too easily be invoked to explain phenomena which seem to be contingent. We should always seek to show how events, which at first sight seem to escape natural order are, nevertheless, subsumed under necessary laws. The common physico-theological view thus "constitutes a serious impediment to the dissemination of philosophical knowledge" (*BDG*, AA 02: 119) for it turns to God's will instead of searching for more general laws of nature. In this fashion Kant attempts to provide a scientific explanation for the origin of the solar system, which Newton thought could only be attributable to the will of God.³⁴ Exempting ourselves from the search for an orderly explanation of events is nothing but "lazy self-complacency" (*BDG*, AA 02: 121). Kant recognizes an appeal to the divine will only in cases, which are "obviously artificial" (*BDG*, AA 02: 126).³⁵ The end result of Kant's arguments in this work is that while God's necessity as an ultimate ground of the world is forcefully argued, nevertheless, his relevance for scientific explanations of nature is minimized and pushed to infinity. This vigorous defense of the internal coherence of nature and its dependence on necessary universal laws is repeated in *Dreams*. Once more Kant claims that the "different appearances of *life* in nature, and the laws governing them, constitute the whole of that which it is granted us to know" (*TG*, AA 02: 351). Scientific inquiry should limit itself to what can be brought under universal laws of sensation. Anyone who ventures to invent things and properties "without having any proof from experience at his disposal, he would have justly deserved to have been treated as a fool and made the object of mockery" (*TG*, AA 02: 371). While it is true that the complexity of natural phenomena, even the simplest ones, can never be fully exhausted by scientific explanation, nevertheless, this inexhaustibility should not be confused with the futile attempt to obtain knowledge of that which in principle cannot be brought under laws of sensation (*TG*, AA 02: 351). Kant's insistence in *Dreams* on the limits of both experience and reason echoes a familiar passage from the *Critique of Pure Reason* which reads: "Observation and analysis of the appearances penetrate into what is inner in nature, and one cannot know how far this will go in time. Those transcendental questions, however, that go beyond nature, we will never be able to answer, even if all nature is revealed to us" (*KrV*, A278/B334). The final paragraphs of *Dreams* argue that not only are such inquiries, which go beyond the lawful order and internal coherence of nature impossible, they are also unnecessary. As yet another passage of the first

³⁴ Cf. the seventh reflection of the second section of *The Only Possible Argument*. This is in fact a restatement of views that Kant published as early as 1755 in his *Universal Natural History (Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels oder Versuch von der Verfassung und dem mechanischen Ursprunge des ganzen Weltgebäudes, nach Newtonischen Grundsätzen abgehandelt)*. AA 01: 215–368).

³⁵ Cf. also the following paragraph in which Kant concedes that "there are, of course, innumerable arrangements in nature which are, from the point of view of the universal laws of nature, contingent." (*BDG*, AA 02: 121).

Critique, argues: “what the things may be in themselves I do not know, and also do not need to know, since a thing can never come before me except in appearance” (*KrV*, A276f/B332f.). In *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* Kant argues that these questions, which transcend our experience of nature are superfluous for science and they are also redundant for morality.³⁶ “What”, Kant asks, “is it only good to be virtuous because there is another world?”; “Does not the heart of man contain within itself immediate moral prescription? Is it really necessary, in order to induce man to act in accordance with his destiny here on earth, to set the machinery moving in another world?” (*TG*, AA 02: 372). We shall later see how the rejection of all that exceeds experience and the complementary defense of the internal order and coherence of experience became the two main pillars of Kant’s unique combination of transcendental idealism and empirical realism.

2.2 From the *Inaugural Dissertation* Until the *Critique of Pure Reason*

2.2.1 *The Inaugural Dissertation – A Defense of Conventional Metaphysics or a Defense of the Experiential World?*

The *Inaugural Dissertation* must seem surprising and perplexing to anyone familiar with Kant’s works from the 1760s. Against his arguments in *Inquiry* and in *Negative Magnitudes*, arguments which received a bold emphasis in *Dreams*, that metaphysics must renounce its pretension to knowledge which exceeds the bounds of experience, Kant now openly proclaims – as the title of the *Inaugural Dissertation* “On the form and principles of the sensible and the intelligible world” immediately reveals – that metaphysics can offer us knowledge of an intelligible and supersensible world. How can we explain the fact that Kant doesn’t even mention his previous insights and puts forward a theory of the supersensible world when only four years earlier he made such a systematic case against the false pretensions of speculative metaphysics? We cannot but assume that Kant didn’t think that his new theory regarding the sensible and the intelligible worlds contradicted his previous views but, on the contrary, that it was in line with his previous insistence on the limits of reason. We must ask ourselves what exactly was Kant ruling out in the works of the 1760s and whether the *Inaugural Dissertation* could be interpreted as not exceeding those limits.

³⁶ By this Kant does not mean to restrict morality to the boundaries of possible experience. He only means that morality is not dependent on any *knowledge* of what exceeds experience but on our inherent disposition toward the good. That morality is dependent on reason but not on reason’s capacity for knowledge, is one of the main achievements of Kant’s mature practical philosophy.

If we look closely we shall see that what Kant was opposing in *Dreams* was the use of reason “to spy after the more hidden properties of things” (*TG*, AA 02: 367). He was against the tendency of metaphysics to meddle with the affairs of science by pretending to offer us insights into the supposed deeper or more essential truths about nature; truths that are inaccessible to science, which inevitably relies on sensible observations. If we now look at the thesis of the *Inaugural Dissertation* we see that Kant does not promote some mysterious ability of reason to penetrate into the hidden properties of nature. The strict separation between the forms of the sensible and the intelligible worlds ensures that whatever is said about the intelligible world does not have any negative effect on our ability to construct true judgments within the sensible world, regulated by its own unique forms. Moreover, we do not derive our different modes of knowledge from a dogmatically held picture of two ontologically distinct worlds, as did Plato. Rather, it is the other way around – we derive the two different worldviews from an epistemological recognition that we have two distinct modes of representation. An interpretation along these very lines is offered by Ernst Cassirer whose reading of the *Inaugural Dissertation* is part of a larger account of the historical-developmental process through which Kant came to see things in this light (Cassirer 1981, 92–115).³⁷ Cassirer notes that the years between 1765 and 1770 witnessed a renewed interest in Leibniz’s thought due mainly to the publication in 1765 of Leibniz’s until-then unpublished and unknown *New Essays in Human Understanding*. The latter work has been buried in the library of Hanover for 60 years and its publication brought Leibniz once more to life and to the forefront of academic discussions. According to Cassirer, Kant was extremely influenced by this work.³⁸ Cassirer argues that in the

³⁷ Cassirer’s account is based on the following stages: (a) the influence of Leibniz’s *New Essays in Human Understanding* which was only rediscovered and brought to public attention in 1765. On reading Leibniz’s *New Essays* Kant was able to see metaphysics not as sheer speculation but as grounded in a distinct faculty of the mind. Accordingly he could now recognize the role of pure concepts not derived from sensibility. (b) Kant’s struggle with the status of space and time and consequently with mathematical reasoning. If space and time are pure concepts of the understanding they possess universality and necessity but their application to experience is a mystery. If on the other hand they are empirical concepts derived from observations than their application to natural things is understood but they lose their necessity and universality. The solution was eventually achieved by regarding them as the forms of sensible intuition. (c) Kant’s discovery of the antinomies that exist between the sensible and the intelligible modes of representation. Here Cassirer notes only the influence that Leibniz’s work had on Kant while many other authors (such as Manfred Kuehn, Frederick Beiser, Lewis White Beck and de Vleeschauer) emphasize the influence of Hume’s work.

³⁸ The evidence for the influence of Leibniz’s *New Essays* on Kant’s *Inaugural Dissertation* is not explicit but Cassirer’s account is, nevertheless, quite plausible given the impact made by the publication of the *New Essays*; additionally, some aspects of the *Inaugural Dissertation* do indeed seem to echo Leibniz’s ideas. This is mostly apparent in Kant’s account of pure concepts. Cassirer even puts Kant’s text next to Leibniz’s to demonstrate the similarity between the two (Cassirer 1981, 103n95). L. W. Beck as well refers to the possible influence of Leibniz’s *New Essays* on Kant prior to the compilation of his *Inaugural Dissertation*, (Beck 1969, 457). L. W. Beck also notes (1969, 476) that some of Kant’s basic formulations in the first *Critique* mirror Leibniz’s in the *New Essays*.

New Essays Kant saw Leibniz for the first time not as a philosopher of nature or a speculative metaphysician but as an epistemological critic.³⁹ He now saw Leibniz's theory of the monads not as an alternative description of nature rival to that given by physicists but as expressing a unique mode of representation distinct from the sensible one and which is, nevertheless, presupposed by experiential knowledge.⁴⁰ As Kant described it years later, in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, Leibniz's monadology "has nothing at all to do with the explanation of natural appearances, but is rather an intrinsically correct *platonian* concept of the world devised by *Leibniz*, insofar as it is considered, not at all as objects of the senses, but as a thing in itself, and is merely an object of the understanding, which, however, does indeed underlie the appearances of the senses" (*MAN*, AA 04: 507).⁴¹ What is important to notice for the purposes of our current discussion is that Kant viewed Leibniz's monadology not as a speculative theory of the inner nature of things in a dogmatic and ontological sense, a view according to which the understanding has some mysterious capability to represent the ultimate nature of things completely independent of experiential observations. Rather than something transcendent, the world of the understanding expresses the immanence of our own self-consciousness. Thus understood it now becomes clear how this view of the intelligible world could be seen as compatible and continuous rather than contradictory of Kant's views in the 1760s. What he rejected then, as well as now, is only the speculative pretension of reason to possess knowledge of the nature of things regardless of any data given by sensibility and this is the reason why Kant rejected the common form of metaphysics. With Leibniz he now found a different kind of metaphysics, which bases its contentions not on unrestrained speculation but on immediate awareness of our inner self.⁴² This view is compatible with Kant's new

³⁹ It is widely recognized that Kant's view of Leibniz had many flaws. In a certain sense it is understandable given that important parts of Leibniz's works were not published during the eighteenth century and even the rest was scattered and not readily available to the scholars of the time. But more than that, if our current task is to clarify Kant's own thought then what is important to know is how Kant understood Leibniz and it is hardly relevant whether this understanding is more or less adequate to the historical Leibniz. This attitude applies both to Kant's earlier view of Leibniz and to his new view after reading the *New Essays*. It is quite probable that Kant interpreted this work in an overly epistemological way due mainly to his own course of theoretical development and it is possible that he read some of his own ideas into Leibniz. Nevertheless, as long as it is Kant's thought that we are after we need not settle these issues here.

⁴⁰ In the *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant indeed argues that experience presupposes the application of reason in its logical use to appearances. This issue shall be discussed below.

⁴¹ English translations of the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* are taken from Michael Friedman (Kant 2002).

⁴² As already noted (note 39 above), it is irrelevant if this view correctly represents Leibniz's own intentions. Regarding Kant's view of metaphysics at that time I refer to the many notes where Kant argues that metaphysics is a science not of things but of the laws of reason itself (*Refl* 3716, 3952, 3964, 3970, 4152. Cf. also after 1770, *Refl* 4284, 4368, 4369, 4445, 4453, 4455, 4457). Additionally there is a multitude of notes in which Kant stresses time and again the merely subjective validity of the principles of pure reason in contrast with the objective validity of empirical

conception of Leibniz's theory of pure concepts. Rather than being innate concepts that on account of a peculiar pre-established harmony relate to objects considered independently of all consciousness, they merely express the laws immanent in the mind itself (*MSI*, §8, AA 02: 395).⁴³ On the occasion of reading Leibniz's *New Essays* Kant probably realized that something important was indeed lost in his exposition of metaphysics in the mid 1760s. In accordance with his long lasting insights he could now put forward a systematic theory of those concepts, which cannot under any circumstances be derived or abstracted from sensibility. The concepts of possibility, existence, necessity, substance, cause, etc., contain universality that cannot be abstracted from particular and concrete sensations although we can only become aware of them "by attending to its [the mind's] actions on the occasion of experience" (AA 02: 395. Cf. also *Refl* 3930, AA 17: 352).⁴⁴ The understanding of Kant's development towards the *Inaugural Dissertation* is thus important since it alone can guard us from an overly dogmatic interpretation of this work.

Frederick Beiser also offers a reading of the *Inaugural Dissertation*, which presents it as compatible with, rather than contradictory to, Kant's works of the 1760s. Beiser views Kant's *Inaugural Dissertation* as ontology but nevertheless such as

does not speculate about a distinct kind of entities, but simply determines the necessary laws by which our reason can think any object whatsoever. Although Kant sometimes loosely speaks of his noumena as if they were a kind of entity, we must be careful not to reify them. They are not a type of existing thing, but simply the forms or structures to which any existing or possible thing must conform. (Beiser 1992, 49)

Beiser concludes that this form of ontology "does nothing more than determine those concepts that are necessary limits and conditions of reason" (Beiser 1992, 49). As Beiser writes, and I agree, this reading is supported by many *Reflexionen* of the same period (*Refl* 3946, AA 17: 359; *Refl* 3931, AA 17: 353; *Refl* 3959, AA 17:367). It should be noted, though, that Beiser does not base his view on an assumption regarding a relation between Kant's *Inaugural Dissertation* and Leibniz's *New Essays*, as does Cassirer. Beiser convincingly shows that Kant had appealed to

concepts, which arise from the influence of an object on the senses (*Refl* 3716, 3747, 3914, 3938, 3942, 3948, 3954, 3969, 3977, 3988).

⁴³ The important distinction here is between a law or a function and a thing.

⁴⁴ The above-cited passage is highly important for as we can see Kant recognized from the very beginning that pure concepts, despite the fact that they are not abstracted from sensation, are nevertheless only recognizable when they are applied to sensible intuitions. In this regard cf. Kant's distinction between two senses of the term 'abstraction': "Properly speaking, we ought, namely to say: *to abstract from some things*, but not: *to abstract something*. The former expression indicates that in a certain concept we should not attend to the other things, which are connected with it in some way or another, while the latter expression indicates that it would be given only concretely, and only in such a way that it is separated from the things which are jointed to it. Hence, a concept of the understanding *abstracts* from everything sensitive, but it is *not abstracted* from what is sensitive." (*MSI*, §6, AA 02: 394). All English translations of the *Inaugural Dissertation* are taken from David Walford and Ralf Meerbote (Kant 1992).

metaphysics, from his very first publication in 1747, as a means to salvage freedom, and therefore morality, from the bitter fate of deterministic mechanism. Beiser thus argues that in the *Inaugural Dissertation* “Kant gives the intelligible or noumenal world a strictly moral meaning, just as he had done in the *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*” (Beiser 1992, 50). Accordingly, the dogmatic use of reason of the *Inaugural Dissertation* is to be understood in a regulative rather than a constitutive sense, within the moral rather than the theoretical domain. According to Beiser, the intelligible world does not state what exists but what ought to exist (Beiser 1992, 50). Beiser and Cassirer offer alternative accounts but both reach similar conclusions regarding the pure use of reason within the *Inaugural Dissertation* and the compatibility of the latter work with Kant’s skeptical references to metaphysics in the works of the 1760s. Not only is there no contradiction between the two accounts, I think that they in fact complement each other. By separating the sensible and the intelligible worlds Kant was able to achieve two goals at the same time. Kant could now explain why metaphysics – which object is the intelligible world – has no implications whatsoever on the natural world, the object of science; and similarly he could explain how the mechanistic determinism of the natural world has no implications whatsoever on the possibility of morality and religion.

Nevertheless one cannot ignore the fact that there is a double theme in the *Inaugural Dissertation*. On the one hand it defends the autonomy of the sensible world based on its own unique forms and principles and on the other hand it promises to give us access to a world of things not merely as they appear but as they are in themselves.⁴⁵ This dual theme is reflected on another level. The *Inaugural Dissertation* harbors two very different models of reason.⁴⁶ The first is expressed by what Kant calls the ‘logical use’ of reason and the other by what he calls the ‘real use’ of reason. The logical use is manifested by comparing concepts and by subordinating specific concepts to general ones, regardless of the origin of these concepts, whether sensible or intelligible (*MSI*, AA 02: 393). Already in the *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant recognizes that the activity of the understanding on sensibility is required to transform appearances into experience. By appearances he means raw sensible representations “which precede the logical use of the understanding” while experience “arises when several appearances are compared by the understanding” (*MSI*, §5, AA 02: 394). Within its logical use, the understanding is therefore part of the conditions of constructing experience out of mere appearances. According to this epistemological model of reason, the intelligible world stands for the ground of appearances not because it represents the ultimate characteristic of natural objects, which lies beyond the reach of ordinary science but because it

⁴⁵ This form of dogmatism is referred to by Kant as his “dogmatic slumber” from which Hume’s skepticism has awoken him (*Prol*, AA 04: 260). The claim that by his “dogmatic slumber” Kant refers to his views of things-in-themselves in the period between 1770 and 1771, a view from which he has awoken around 1772, is supported by more than a few authors, (Beck 1969, 439, 465); (Beck 1978, 101–110); (de Vleeschauwer 1962, 64f.); (Beiser 1992, 54, 60n40).

⁴⁶ In the *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant does not make a distinction between reason and the understanding and so in this context I too will use them as synonyms.

stands for the ultimate conditions under which alone cognition can represent objects.⁴⁷ On this view the thing-in-itself is not to be understood as something, which transcends all powers of our consciousness, but as a Leibnizian monad, whose essence and existence is drawn from within itself, and we once more return to the paradigm of self-consciousness.⁴⁸

Alongside the logical use of the understanding, Kant also recognizes a ‘real use’. By the real use of the understanding “the concepts themselves, whether of things or relations, *are given*” (MSI, AA 02: 393).⁴⁹ Within the real use of the understanding pure concepts of reason do not serve as part of the conditions of experience but as an independent source of knowledge in a way quite reminiscent of the old dogmatic kind of metaphysics, that which Kant is supposed to have renounced.⁵⁰ The dual use of the understanding, here presented, and the corresponding duality in Kant’s concept of reason runs back to the works of the 1760s (Cassirer 1981, 76f.). There we can trace two very distinct models of reason. While in *Inquiry*, in *Negative magnitudes*, and especially in *Dreams*, Kant presents a model of reason that is confined to the role of elaborating and analyzing what is given to it through sensible observation, in *The Only Possible Argument* he presents a model of reason, whose unique prerogative is to ground and give evidence to the necessary existence of an absolute being, lying far beyond the bounds of all possible experience. Equivalently in the *Inaugural Dissertation*, aside from the role of reason in relation to experience, reason is also related to God as the absolute being. God conceived of by the principles of pure understanding plays the roles of noumenal perfection in the theoretical sense and of moral perfection in the practical sense (MSI, §9, AA 02: 395f.). God is thus the ultimate anchor in both the theoretical and the moral senses similar to the roles assigned to God in *The Only Possible Argument*. This unresolved duality harboring two quite incompatible paradigms of reason played a crucial role in the further development of Kant’s thought towards the *Critique of Pure Reason*, to be discussed in the next section.

⁴⁷ Cf. also *Refl* 3980 dated to 1769 in which Kant states that “there are in reason further conditions, without which we cannot conceive certain objects through reason, even though these conditions are not determinations of the objects themselves”. (AA 17: 355).

⁴⁸ In the Paralogisms of Pure Reason in the first *Critique*, Kant explains that it is self-consciousness by which we become aware of our transcendental self in contrast with the phenomenal self.

⁴⁹ It is worth noting that Kant’s above distinction between the logical and the real use of reason is exactly opposed to his usage of these terms in the first *Critique* in which the logical use of reason abstracts from any relation to an object and therefore from any relation to experience and the real use of reason pertains merely to experience and not to any alleged supersensible realm.

⁵⁰ One should nevertheless note the restrictions Kant puts on the intellectual cognition of things as they are in themselves. In §10 of the *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant argues that intuition is the only means by which we can obtain singular concepts in the concrete. Since intuition is for us only sensible, intellectual cognition is limited to symbolic cognition of universal concepts in the abstract. The latter are devoid of content, which can only be given to us through the senses. Although in the *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant still thinks that the cognition of the noumenon is nevertheless not annulled, the rejection of intellectual intuition leaves the intelligible cognition of the noumenon hanging on a thin thread.

In connection with the above-discussion of the more dogmatic model of reason present in the *Inaugural Dissertation* we can add that the very separation of the sensible and the intelligible worlds, designed to prevent the sensible world from being negatively evaluated by reference to principles that relate to the intelligible world, nevertheless does contribute to this undesirable consequence. This is so since on the background of the purely objective intelligible world of things as they are in themselves, the phenomenal world is viewed as a world of deficient reality. In the *Inaugural Dissertation*, after establishing the basic opposition between sensibility and the understanding and their irreducibility, Kant turns to discuss the character of these two faculties.⁵¹ He defines sensibility as “the *receptivity* of a subject in virtue of which it is possible for the subject’s own representative state to be affected in a definite way by the presence of an object” (*MSI*, AA 02: 392). His definition of intelligence is of negative character as “the *faculty* of a subject, in virtue of which it has the power to represent things which cannot by their own quality come before the senses of that subject” (*MSI*, AA 02: 392).⁵² Kant then argues that each faculty has its own object. The object of sensibility is the sensible or *phenomenon*; the object of the intelligence is the intelligible or *noumenon*. Sensible cognition is dependent on the special character of the subject and his ability to be affected by the presence of an object. The phenomenon is therefore subjective. The noumenon is cognized by the understanding and one would expect it to be dependent on the understanding’s unique character. Nevertheless, Kant says that the intelligence is “exempt from such subjective conditions [that is, sensible forms] and relates only to the object” (*MSI*, AA 02: 392).⁵³ We should note the explicit dichotomy that is introduced here between the subjective and the objective, a dichotomy that runs through the whole of Kant’s *Inaugural Dissertation* and shall

⁵¹ The central aspect of the distinction between sensible and intelligible cognitions derives from the singularity and concreteness of sensible intuitions in contrast with the general and abstract character of concepts of the understanding. In §10 of the *Dissertation* Kant stresses that “There is (for man) no intuition of what belongs to the understanding, but only a *symbolic cognition*; and thinking is only possible for us by means of universal concepts in the abstract, not by means of a singular concept in the concrete.” (*MSI*, AA 02: 396. Cf. also *Log*, §§11–16, AA 09: 97–101). Kant stressed the basic opposition between the universality of concepts and the concreteness of sensibility as early as the mid 60’s (*Ref* 5716, AA 17: 255).

⁵² In his famous letter to Herz of February 21, 1772 Kant remarks on the insufficiency of a merely negative definition, which leaves open “the further question of how a representation that refers to an object without being in any way affected by it can be possible”. (AA 10: 130f.). All English translations of texts from Kant’s correspondence are taken from Arnulf Zweig (Kant 1999).

⁵³ Here is the origin of an issue that will be further discussed in this work regarding a possible distinction between the noumenon as the correlate of the understanding and the thing-in-itself as a transcendent entity which is supposed to be beyond any relation to the subject, regarding both the subject’s sensible and intelligible faculties. Kant here follows the Platonic tradition, in line with traditional rational metaphysics, according to which the understanding knows things regardless of any subjective condition. In this regard cf. Markus Hertz’ review of Kant’s *Dissertation* to be discussed below. Note that my distinction is different from another distinction, which exists in the secondary literature where the thing-in-itself is a thing that appears and the noumenon is a wholly distinct entity unrelated to appearances.

also be in the focus of the transition to the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Phenomena, as a result of the nature of sensibility, are only subjective. Noumena, as a result of the nature of the intelligence, are exempt from any subjective conditions and are therefore purely objective. What is subjective cannot, as such, be also objective. What is objective, as such, is purely devoid of any admixture of the subjective. It follows that we must assume two distinct worlds; one is *only* subjective, a world of “things as they appear”, the other, a purely objective world of “things as they are” (*MSI*, AA 02: 392).⁵⁴ I emphasize the word ‘only’ since according to this line of thought it is clear that there is a real alternative to the subjective world and therefore its reality is somewhat diminished.

The central role of the intelligible world is strengthened when we observe that Kant refers to the supersensible world as the ground of the sensible world, not merely epistemologically but also in a quite ontological way. In §11 of the *Inaugural Dissertation*, Kant argues that phenomena, “as things caused, witness to the presence of an object, and this is opposed to idealism” (*MSI*, AA 02: 397). There are two ways to understand the status of this object, whose presence Kant takes as opposed to idealism. It can either be an object of experience as opposed to mere appearance or it can refer to a distinct ontological entity.⁵⁵ This interpretative dilemma – including its varieties – follows any attempt to interpret Kant’s refutations of idealism throughout his critical writings. But if this case is inconclusive, other passages of the *Inaugural Dissertation* seem to be more explicit in their support of the dogmatic alternative. These passages may in turn incline us to view the above citation as well in a more ontological light. In another passage Kant notes that the sensible world, as a world of things merely as they appear, does not embrace the cause of this world. “Since it is in virtue of this cause that mind itself exists and is active through all its senses, that cause cannot be an object of the senses” (*MSI*, §13, AA 02: 398). The argument is clear. The existence of the mind,

⁵⁴ Kant here uses the term ‘things as they are’ which is also repeated in some places in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This term is in most cases synonymous with the term ‘things as they are in themselves’. In other places in this work Kant uses the term ‘things as they exist in themselves’. Note that some paragraphs of the *Dissertation* suggest that it is the same world viewed in two different ways, either as it is in itself or as it appears to us. See the following paragraph: “But the world, in so far as it is regarded as phenomenon [. . .]”; “Accordingly, whatever the principles of the form of the sensible world may be, in the end, its embrace is limited to *actual things*, in so far as they are thought capable of *falling under the senses*.” (*MSI*, §13, AA 02: 398). The distinction between a ‘two-world’ view and a ‘two-aspect’ view shall be discussed later in this work.

⁵⁵ The question is more complex. We must be clear how to understand (a) that which bears witness to the presence of an object, (b) the object to which reference is made and (c) the relation between the two. The various views in the secondary literature are discussed and evaluated by Luigi Caranti (2007, 24f.). Caranti proposes the view that, in the above context, phenomena which bear witness to the presence of an object are to be understood as mental-entities or modifications of our mind and the object to which the former bear witness are noumena understood as extra-mental. My own assessment is close to that of Caranti. In addition to the attempt to explain the proper interpretation of the text, Caranti also attempts to relieve the tension brought about by the fact that Kant appeals in the *Dissertation* to a causal argument despite the fact that according to Caranti Kant had already rejected this kind of argument against idealism in his works from the 1760s (Caranti 2007, 26f.).

and, we may add, its affecting objects, cannot be accounted for by the phenomenal world since the latter presupposes the former. The cause of the sensible world in virtue of which the mind itself and the objects that affect it exist in the first place, must be found beyond the phenomenal world. This is not all. In a concluding remark to the chapter on the form of the intelligible world Kant somewhat hesitantly notes that the discussion of the intelligible world may have an added value of shedding light on “the causes of sensitive intuition, which may be known through the *understanding* alone” (*MSI*, AA 02: 409).

For, indeed, the human mind is only affected by external things, and the world is only exposed to its view, lying open before it to infinity, in so far as the mind itself, together with all other things, is sustained by the same infinite force of one being. Hence, the mind only senses external things in virtue of the presence of the same common sustaining cause. (*MSI*, AA 02: 409f.)

Kant’s reference to the “infinite force of one being”, and a “common sustaining cause”, apparently God, is reminiscent of the role assigned to God in *The Only Possible Argument*.⁵⁶ The attempt to ground the validity of the phenomenal world in an ontological anchor beyond the bounds of experience seems like an attempt to overcome the limitations of the use of reason that Kant himself imposed on metaphysics only a few years prior to the *Inaugural Dissertation*, in *Dreams*.

However, alongside the defense of the sensible world by appealing to a super-sensible world, we also find a defense of the sensible world by appealing to its internal coherence and order. Despite the superiority of the intelligible cognition of things-in-themselves, the *Inaugural Dissertation* makes a very strong case for sensible cognition and objects of experience. First, each of the two cognitions has its own kind of object so that sensible cognition is measured as to how well it attains the phenomenal object regardless of the intelligible cognition of things-in-themselves. Second, sensible and intelligible cognitions each have a distinct principle of order. The principles of order in sensible cognition are time and space while the principles of order of intelligible cognition are the ideas of reason. The distinction between the two faculties and their corresponding objects allows Kant not only to safeguard metaphysics from any sensible admixture but also to offer a strengthened defense of the internal unity of the sensible world. Against Leibniz, Wolff and the Platonic tradition, Kant argues that sensible cognitions are not confused cognitions of things-in-themselves but distinct cognitions of appearances.⁵⁷ Geometry, the paradigm of sensible cognition is more successful in achieving distinct cognitions than metaphysics where much effort is devoted to dispelling clouds of confusion. Moreover, Kant argues that even though phenomena provides knowledge of

⁵⁶ The presence of the doctrine of God as presented in *The Only Possible Argument* in the *Inaugural Dissertation* is most evident in §9 in which God is described as the paradigm of noumenal perfection both in the theoretical and the moral contexts. Within the former context God is the Supreme Being and in the latter context he stands for moral perfection. This presentation mirrors the double role assigned to God in *The Only Possible Argument* discussed above.

⁵⁷ An early allusion to this view is found in *RefI* 3717 (AA 17: 262).

appearances and not of ideas in the Platonic sense and even though they do not express “the internal and absolute quality of objects” they nevertheless enable us to construct true judgments; that is, they provide knowledge, not illusions. This result is to a large degree dependent on the new theory of time and space as the forms of the sensible world.⁵⁸ Although time and space have no application to the world of things-in-themselves, nevertheless in relation to the sensible world they express truth of the highest degree. For nothing can come before the senses unless it accords with the laws inherent in the mind and according to which alone things can appear before it. Time and space are therefore the universal conditions of all sensible things. On behalf of the universality of time and space the sensible world constitutes one unified whole. This theory enables us to explain first, the absolute certainty ascribed to arithmetic and geometry and second how even the empirical sciences, primarily physics, are possible at all. In the first case, since the axioms of arithmetic and geometry directly express the nature of time and space and since the latter are absolutely necessary in relation to the sensible world it is easily seen how arithmetic and geometry obtain the highest level of certainty in relation to objects of experience.⁵⁹ In the case of the empirical sciences, even though their judgments are not directly derived from time and space, nevertheless, the very possibility of constructing true empirical judgments requires that the predicates and the subjects of such judgments be both governed by the same principles so that they at least could be related to one another (*MSI*, §11, AA 02: 397). In other words, although relations between objects of experience express more than the relations between empty parts of time and space, they nevertheless do express relations, which are spatial and temporal in character. If we could not rely on the absolute applicability of time and space to empirical objects, the very search for spatial and temporal relations between objects would be in vain. We could then be looking for relations that are not to be found at all. In order for some judgments to be probable, other judgments must be more than probable.⁶⁰ The above arguments substantiate Kant’s claim for the non-illusory character of the sensible world by appealing to internal arguments from within the phenomenal world. The *Inaugural Dissertation* thus strengthens the case for the internal order and coherence of experience, which we have already seen present in Kant’s earlier works.

⁵⁸ Some signs anticipating this new theory were already present in Kant’s previous works of the 1760s. *Directions in Space* in particular holds key factors in this regard, most notably the sensible character of space, its contrast with conceptual analysis and its independence of the matter, which fills space. Evidence for the development of the theory of space and time in the period between the publication of *Directions in Space* and the *Inaugural Dissertation* is given in Kant’s notes from around 1769, (*Refl* 4077, 4078, 4188–4191, 4315, 4316).

⁵⁹ Kant repeatedly argues that only as subjective forms of sensibility can we explain how time and space have apodictic certainty. If we explain them empirically as arising out of the content of experience then we have to grant that they are as certain – or as uncertain – as any empirical judgment.

⁶⁰ Cf. also in the *Prolegomena* where Kant argues that “since truth rests upon universal and necessary laws as its criteria, for *Berkeley* experience could have no criteria of truth, because its appearances (according to him) had nothing underlying them *a priori*” (*Prol*, AA 04: 375).

Looking back on the drastic dichotomy between the subjective world of things as they appear and the objective world of things as they are in themselves we may conclude that there is yet no clue for the radical idea of the subjective conditions of objectivity. Nevertheless, the innovative theory of time and space as the ultimate forms of the sensible world was already a major step towards acknowledging them as subjective conditions of objectivity. First, as we have seen, although the sensible world was described as subjective, still it was far from being characterized as a world of illusion and dream for it has its own principles of order. The truth of particular judgments within this world is not dependent on their correlation with things-in-themselves but rather on their internal compatibility with other judgments within the sensible world. The emphasis on the internal order of the sensible world lays the ground for the transition from correlation to coherence model of objectivity and truth.⁶¹ Second, Kant's phenomenal world, based on the formal principles of time and space, includes the sciences of geometry, algebra and all of the natural sciences, primarily physics. It is clear that Kant, an admirer of the achievements of the natural sciences, did not regard these sciences as illusory. Third and most important, since time and space were already regarded as subjective and yet at the same time as the universal conditions of the sensible world, what was required to view them as subjective conditions of objectivity was to renounce the alternative of a noumenal world which in the *Inaugural Dissertation* was alone regarded as truly objective. The phenomenal world would thus be seen as the real world and not as a world of things *merely* as they appear. Regarding the status of the formal conditions of the understanding, we should note that within the logical use of the understanding, pure concepts were already treated, although to a limited extent, as part of the conditions of experience. What was therefore required to view them too as subjective conditions of objectivity was once again to renounce the real use of the understanding and additionally to extend the recognition of their role in relation to experience.⁶²

2.2.2 *The Transition from the Inaugural Dissertation to the Critique of Pure Reason*

While the core idea behind the *Inaugural Dissertation* is the basic opposition between the sensible and the intelligible faculties, the main theme motivating the

⁶¹ For the issue of the transition from correlation to coherence model of objectivity and truth, cf. Sect. 12.2.4 below.

⁶² Kant's recognition of the role of pure concepts as requisite conditions of experience in the *Inaugural Dissertation* was still very limited. The logical use of the understanding was only required to combine appearances, referred to by Kant as raw sensible representations into experience. Kant would later recognize that the original synthesis of the understanding is requisite for having representations in the first place. Thus, even the possibility of having sensible representations presupposes the original synthesis of the understanding.

further development of Kant's thought is the mutual dependency of the two faculties. While Kant never changed his mind about the inherent opposition between the two faculties, he gradually became more appreciative of the extent to which each faculty is dependent on the other. Although in the *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant recognized the role assigned to reason in elaborating raw sensible intuitions thereby producing general empirical concepts out of them,⁶³ he still did not see the extent to which sensible cognitions themselves and especially their characterization as arising out of the influence of an object are dependent on intelligible principles.⁶⁴ Furthermore the profound dependency of intelligible on sensible cognition was in 1769–1770 little recognized. As we shall see below the transition from the *Inaugural Dissertation* to the *Critique of Pure Reason* was marked by a dual aspect process, at the heart of which stand the recognition of the extensive interdependency of the two cognitive faculties: first, the renouncement of the real use of the understanding and with it the possibility of an intelligible cognition of things-in-themselves; second, the acknowledgment that only the mutual interaction between the two faculties can account for the ability of cognition to relate its representations to an object. The combined effect of this dual aspect process is the recognition that the object of cognition is only phenomenal and that the forms of our sensibility as well as the forms of the understanding are the subjective conditions of objectivity.

Kant's recognition that space and time are not merely subjective but at the same time also objective was obtained from his views at the time of the *Inaugural Dissertation* with relative ease. Already in 1769 Kant repeatedly argued that space and time, as the sensible conditions without which an object cannot be given to us, are for this very reason objective (*Refl* 3747, 3942, 3952, 3969, 3988, 4292). He qualifies this statement merely by adding that this is so only "under the hypothesis of sensibility" (*Refl* 3747, AA 17: 281. Cf. also *Refl* 4292), that is, as long as the reality of the sensible world is admitted. In the *Inaugural Dissertation* as well, Kant's characterization of time and space as subjective is not intended to rule out their application to objects but is only meant to indicate that as fixed laws of the mind they are not derived from the objects themselves. Only as subjective laws of the mind could Kant defend their absolute certainty regarding the sensible world. If they were considered as objective (in the sense of being derived from the objects),

⁶³ Cf. §5 of the *Inaugural Dissertation*, in which Kant makes the distinction between appearances, that is, sensible cognitions "which precede the logical use of the understanding" and experience "which arises when several appearances are compared by the understanding". (AA 02: 394).

⁶⁴ We should note that sensible representations depend on the synthesis of the understanding not only for their connection in constructing an object but also for their intrinsic unity. This is the role of the mathematical principles under the categories of quantity and quality. Cf. also Kant's distinction between the *forms of intuition* and formal *intuition*. The latter presupposes a unity that derives from the unifying function of the understanding (the categories) not from the senses although this unity pertains to time and space themselves; only in accordance with this synthetic function do time and space become themselves intuitions capable of giving rise to representations (*KrV*, B161, Footnote).

they could not be differentiated from the matter of sensibility, sensations, and the sciences built upon them would lose their unique validity and certainty. Therefore, within the discussion of the sensible world there was no obstacle to regard them as both subjective and objective. Already in the *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant stressed that although time and space are subjective conditions of the mind, they are nevertheless at the same time the highest principles of truth in the phenomenal world. What was required in order to say that time and space are subjective conditions of objectivity was to view the phenomenal world as the real world and not as a world of things *merely* as they appear contrasted with the world of things as they are. Thus, to complete this new conception of time and space as subjective conditions of objectivity, a complementary alteration of the view of the nature of the forms of the understanding was required. This change of views will be discussed below. At any rate I believe that in the case of the forms of sensibility a relatively small step was required to view them as subjective conditions of objectivity and thus to solve the riddle of their nature.

Regarding the dual status of space and time it is also illuminating to consider the objections of J. H. Lambert and Moses Mendelssohn to Kant's view in the *Inaugural Dissertation* of time as subjective.⁶⁵ Both these men argued that if changes in time are real, so is time too. If on the contrary time is not real then changes in time are also not real. Kant addresses this objection in his February 21, 1772 letter to Marcus Herz. His response reflects the renunciation of the traditional view of objects as things-in-themselves with the implicit dichotomy of the subjective and the objective. If we assumed that changes in time apply to things-in-themselves then indeed one could not both hold that these changes are objective and real while time itself is subjective and ideal. But since changes in time pertain not to things-in-themselves but to objects as appearances then there is no contradiction in holding to both claims. In this case there is no difficulty in accepting that although time is subjective and ideal, changes in time are objective and real.⁶⁶

There is another important aspect regarding Kant's reply to Lambert's and Mendelssohn's objection. In his above-mentioned letter to Herz, Kant wonders why is it that this objection is made regarding the ideality of time but not that of space. His response exposes the fact that the objection implicitly accepts the basic premise of skeptical (problematic) idealism: that while the reality of objects in

⁶⁵ Cf. Lambert's letter to Kant of 18 October 1770, (AA 10: 103–111, at 106f.); Mendelssohn's Letter to Kant of 25 December 1770, (AA 10: 113–116, at 115); Another objection to the subjective nature of time and space was made by J. G. Sulzer in his letter to Kant of 8 December 1770, (AA 10: 110ff., at 111).

⁶⁶ Cf. also *KrV*, A36f./B53f. (the Elucidation to the discussion of time), in which Kant explicitly refers to the criticism of Lambert and Mendelssohn and explains his solution. If objectivity is understood as the objectivity of phenomena then there is no problem to accept that time is both transcendently ideal and empirically real. For it is empirically real only on behalf of being a subjective condition of the phenomenal world. So it can be both subjective and objective, but only as long as 'objective' means empirical reality and not absolute reality. Cf. also *KrV*, A27ff./B43f., including Kant's note on his own copy referring personally to Mendelssohn (AA 23: 44).

space has to be inferred from our representations and is therefore uncertain, the reality of changes in time is given with the representations themselves. In contrast, Kant argues that both time and space have the same status as subjective conditions of the sensible world. The reality of objects in space need no more be inferred from our representations than the reality of events in time for the objects of both outer and inner sense are not things-in-themselves but phenomenal objects and their reality is given with the representations of them. This argument, crucial for Kant's refutation of problematic idealism in the Forth Paralogism of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is one that has been and still is widely misunderstood as inevitably leading to radical idealism. We shall return to consider this argument and the blame of idealism later in this work (Sect. 12.2.4 below).

Regarding the nature of pure concepts, the first issue to be noted is their dependency on the forms of sensibility. Despite the *Inaugural Dissertation's* strict separation of the forms of sensibility and the forms of the understanding we find in Kant's notes from around 1769 evidence for his awareness of the dependency of the forms of the understanding on the sensible principle of time. Regarding causality Kant argues that without "ideas of time one will find no explanation that does not include a circle, and there seem to be no others" (*Refl* 3942, AA 17: 357). In another passage he makes a more general claim that "because everything is represented in time, all of our concepts of reason are always at the same time thought under the condition of phenomena." (*Refl* 3976, AA 17: 372). This line of thought is continued in the *Inaugural Dissertation* itself, where despite the strict separation of the cognitive faculties Kant argues that the principle of contradiction, the relation of substance and accident and the causal relations, all require the principle of time to be represented.⁶⁷ At the end of the chapter on the forms of the sensible world Kant says that

Time, on the other hand [in contrast to space], more nearly *approaches a universal and rational concept*, for it embraces in its relations absolutely all things, namely space itself

⁶⁷ "For *A* and *not A* are not *inconsistent* unless they are thought *simultaneously* (that is to say, at the same time), about the *same thing*, for they can belong to the same thing *after one another* (that is to say, at different times)." (*MSI*, AA 02: 401, Also cf. *MSI*, AA 02: 406). Under item 5 of §14, (*MSI*, AA 02: 400), he says similar things about the relation of the concept of substance to the principle of time: "And, thus, the concept of time, as the principle of form, is prior to the concepts of substance and accident." Regarding causality Kant argues that "In the case of all objects, however, whether they are external or internal, it is only with the assistance of the relation of time that the mind can be instructed as to what is earlier and what is later, that is to say, as to what is cause and what is caused." (*MSI*, AA 02: 406). In the same place he also says similar things regarding space: "Above all, if we focus our understanding on experience, we shall see that the relation of cause and caused, at least in the case of external objects, requires the relations of space." Note that in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant makes clear that the principle of contradiction – unlike the real relations of cause-effect and substance-accident – is essentially not conditioned by time. There, Kant emphasizes that a contradiction between the subject and the predicate concepts does not require the condition of time and thus signifies the purely logical (analytical) aspect of the principle of contradiction. The latter is differentiated from a contradiction between two predicates in which case the contradiction only arises if the two predicates are predicated of the same object at the same time. (*KrV*, A150-154/B189-193).

and, in addition, the accidents which are not included in the relations of space, such as the thoughts of the mind. Furthermore, whereas time does not dictate laws to reason, it does, nevertheless, constitute the main condition in virtue of which the mind is able to compare its notions, in accordance with the laws of reason. (MSI, AA 02: 405f.)

On the basis of the dependency of pure concepts on time, Kant's friend Johann Schultz objected to Kant's claim that intellectual intuition is impossible.⁶⁸ Schultz claimed that time was not just a form of sensation for Kant, but also of thinking. Although the claim of intellectual intuition may seem odd, Schultz's arguments contributed to the reconsideration of the real use of the understanding. For it may rightly be asked what then remains of the real use of the understanding if so much of it requires the condition of time and in some cases also the condition of space. Schultz's claim that time may not be just the form of the sensible world but also of the intelligible world, if its force is recognized, requires one of two strategies: either to let go of the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible world, a direction that Kant could hardly have taken; or at least to accept the extensive dependence of the understanding on the forms of sensibility and to wonder whether the understanding has indeed a pure use which is wholly independent of sensibility.

In 1771 Marcus Herz published a commentary on Kant's *Inaugural Dissertation*. Some of his comments were directed against the separation between the forms of sensibility and the forms of the understanding and they at least reemphasize the dependence of the latter on the former. Herz brings up this issue in relation to the concept of causality:

So much seems certain: the repeated observations of two successive events is the only thing that provided us the occasion to expect them, in accordance with the rules of probability, as constantly conjoined with each other, and to call that which was prior in time *cause*, and that which was later *effect*. The concept of time, which has entered into both concepts, and which thus belongs to them just as it belongs to all experiential knowledge, is so conjoined with them in our representation that we cannot think cause and effect without space and time even in pure rational cognitions where space and time are not present. (Herz 1990, 64f.)

Although Kant said basically the same things in the *Inaugural Dissertation*, these lines of Herz emphasize that the concept of causality seems to *lose all meaning* when stripped of spatial and temporal relations. While Kant only meant to say that the logical use of the understanding, that is, the understanding's application to experience, is conditioned by the forms of sensibility, the above remarks, nevertheless, may have triggered him to consider whether we can still speak of a real use of the understanding regardless of time and space. It may be that the reemphasis, by Schultz and Herz, on elements that were already present in Kant's *Inaugural Dissertation* and even prior to it, stressed for him the extent of the dependence of pure concepts on time and space.

In addition to the dependency of pure concepts on sensible principles, there is much evidence that the characterization of the intelligible faculty as purely

⁶⁸ Schultz's review of Kant's *Inaugural Dissertation* was published in the *Königsberger gelehrte und politische Anzeigen* on November 22 and November 25, 1771.

objective reflects only a part of Kant's views on this matter. In Kant's notes prior to the publication of the *Inaugural Dissertation* we find a multitude of passages in which Kant repeats the claim that the pure forms of reason are merely subjective (*Refl* 3716, 3747, 3914, 3938, 3942, 3948, 3954, 3969, 3977, 3988). He argues that in contrast to empirical cognitions, which arise from the influence of an object on the senses and are therefore objective, the principles of reason stand only for the rules of thought. These rules merely determine the conditions "without which we cannot conceive certain objects through reason" (*Refl* 3938, AA 17: 355)⁶⁹ but they do not determine anything about the objects themselves. While as the ultimate rules of thought they are universal they nevertheless do not necessarily have application to an object. This view is accompanied by the repeated claim that metaphysics has a merely negative role of expressing the limits of reason, that is, the confinement of the latter to the elaboration of given experiences (*Refl* 3716, 3952, 3964, 3970, 4152. And after 1770, *Refl* 4284, 4368, 4369, 4445, 4453, 4455, 4457). Kant therefore characterizes metaphysics as "only a science of the subject" (*Refl* 3948, AA: 17: 361).⁷⁰ He argues that logic, since it deals with merely analytic judgments, which can be abstracted from the concepts of which they are asserted, is objective. But metaphysics, which deals with synthetic judgments, which do not arise from the influence of an object on the senses, is only subjective.⁷¹ Kant is torn between two poles: on the one hand synthetic, real grounds must be derived a-posteriori on the basis of experience but on the other hand, since these principles – mainly causality – include a necessary connection they must be derived from reason (*Refl* 3972). In one passage Kant argues that "ground and consequence is not any property of things that is given by means of reason alone, but rather is given only by means of experience. It is, however, a law of reason to look for this relation; all general rules of reason about cause and effect have no validity whatsoever for objects." (*Refl* 3977, AA 17: 373). By distinguishing the a-priori forms of sensibility and the understanding and recognizing that both are synthetic, Kant is slowly driven to formulate the crucial question regarding the possibility of synthetic a-priori judgments.⁷² The latter are especially problematic regarding pure reason. Kant is clearly aware that there are pure concepts of the understanding and even though they can be

⁶⁹ Kant therefore concludes that "All synthetic judgments of pure reason are accordingly subjective, and the concepts of them signify actions of reason toward itself." (AA 17: 355)

⁷⁰ Cf. also *Refl* 3716: "Metaphysics is not a philosophy about objects, for these can only be given by means of the senses, but rather about the subject, namely, the laws of its reason." (AA 17: 259).

⁷¹ For the contrast of logic, which is analytic and objective with metaphysics, which is synthetic and subjective, cf. *Refl* 3747, 3950, 3954, 3974, 3976.

⁷² Kant initially recognizes only analytic-a-priori and synthetic-a-posteriori judgments – *Refl* 3716, 3738, 3744, 3747 (this note includes a later addition which shows a recognition of synthetic a-priori principles of both the understanding and sensibility), and *Refl* 3750. These notes are from around 1764–1766. *Refl* 4633 dated to 1772–1773 shows Kant's awareness of the importance of a-priori cognitions relating to objects, despite the fact that these a-priori cognitions are not derived from the experience of objects. In *Refl* 4634 we find an explicit exposition of the problem (and solution) of the possibility of synthetic a-priori judgments.

applied to sensible representations, they are not derived from them but from pure reason (*Refl* 3930, 3988, 4172). Since they are not derived from experiences Kant, in some passages, even finds it difficult to admit that they are synthetic (*Refl* 3988 and earlier *Refl* 3738). This evidence shows that despite the explicit thesis of the *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant was seriously questioning the objective character of the understanding. But presenting the issue as a dilemma between either objective or subjective status of the understanding misses the point. The dilemma is rather between two different models of objectivity. According to the first model objectivity is understood in opposition to subjectivity. In other words objectivity is understood as transcendence from cognition and it is opposed to subjectivity, which in turn is understood as immanence to cognition. On the other model objectivity is not opposed to subjectivity; on the contrary, some subjective aspects are recognized to be inevitable conditions of objectivity. On this model, objectivity is understood as dependent on some subjective grounds and never independent of them. These two models of objectivity correspond to the two models of reason present in Kant's thought, which we have already discussed in the previous section. Kant was now reaching the point when he would have to decide between the epistemological and the ontological models of reason and with it the kind of objectivity that follows.

An important criticism against the thesis of the strictly objective character of the understanding, and especially the relation of pure concepts to things-in-themselves, was made by Marcus Herz within his above mentioned commentary:

I believe, however, that I can maintain with great persuasiveness that there exists a much too great difference even between the relations of things as we determine them in accordance with the laws of pure reason and what is true of these things independently from our cognition. I base this on nothing less than the nature of our cognition in general. Locke shows that it never extends further than the qualities which these things have [. . .] But what makes the substrate, which has all these qualities, can itself not be a quality again [. . .] It thus ceases to be an object of our cognition [. . .] (Herz 1990, 64)

While Herz, in his reliance on Locke, confuses the concept of substance (the substrate, as that to which qualities belong) with the issue of the possible knowledge of things-in-themselves, still he does have a point. The understanding, just like sensibility, is a faculty of our cognition, and an object known through the understanding is no less dependent on cognition, and therefore no less subjective, than one that is represented through our sensitive faculty.⁷³ Indeed according to Kant's own arguments prior to the *Inaugural Dissertation* the pure principles of reason may even be more problematic and subjective than the pure forms of sensibility. This line of thought was strengthened by Hamann who on July 1771 published anonymously two articles, which were a translation of the concluding chapter of

⁷³ In his letter to Herz of June 7, 1771 Kant acknowledges that the principles of the understanding are just as subjective as the principles of sensibility. He argues that it is important "to distinguish with certainty and clarity that which depends on the subjective principles of human mental powers (not only sensibility but also the understanding) and that which pertains directly to the objects". (AA 10: 122).

Book I of Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature*.⁷⁴ In that part of his book, Hume points out to the subjective nature of the causal relation; he stresses that the causal relation "lies merely in us", and that it is nothing but a "determination of the mind". There is a controversy among scholars whether Kant had read the article and whether he knew Hume to be its true author.⁷⁵ If he did read it – even without knowledge of the identity of its original author – it might have contributed to his doubts about the validity of various metaphysical ideas.⁷⁶ In any case, as I have discussed above, Kant had already acknowledged the subjective nature of pure concepts of the understanding even prior to the *Inaugural Dissertation*.

While the objections that pointed to the dependence of the understanding on the conditions of time and space threatened to ruin all hopes for a real use of the understanding, a use that would give us things as they are in themselves, the emphasis on the subjective nature of pure concepts was far more devastating. As subjective principles that do not arise from the influence of an object on the senses, they appear to be merely fictional, and their relation to an object – even a phenomenal one – becomes a mystery.⁷⁷

There is good reason to believe that in late 1771 or early 1772 Kant finally conceded that the real use of the understanding as presented in the *Inaugural Dissertation* could no longer be upheld. In his famous letter to Herz of February 21, 1772 Kant reports of his newly "turn of mind". He then lays out the following question: "What is the ground of the relation of that in us which we call 'representation' to the object".⁷⁸ He argues that "if a representation comprises only the

⁷⁴ The text was published anonymously and without any indication that it was a translation. For a long time it was thought to have been written by Hamann. The first to recognize that it was a translation was Rudolf Unger (1925, 932).

⁷⁵ Those supporting the claim that Kant read the article are Kuehn (1983) and Gawlick and Kreimendahl (1987); Those contesting this claim are Falkenstein (1995) and Beiser (2002, 46f.). Even if Kant did not read Hamann's essay he may have been triggered to consider Hume's skeptic views about the validity of the causal principle and its implications for metaphysics due to the 1772 publication of a German translation of Beattie's *An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth* in which Hume's views from the *Treatise* were discussed. There seems to be a wide recognition (Forster 2008, 24) that the translation of Beattie's work was read by Kant and made Hume's views on the validity of the causal principle available to him (such views were not contained in Hume's *Enquiry*, a German translation of which was available to Kant as early as the 1750s). Forster refers to B. Erdmann, N. Kemp Smith, R. P. Wolff, and L. W. Beck as authors who support the latter view, (Forster 2008, 107n20).

⁷⁶ It is interesting to note that in his July 9, 1771 letter to Kant, Herz is struck by the report delivered to him by David Fridländer (a distinguished Jew from Königsberg who later moved to Berlin and became a prominent member of the city's Jewish community) according to which Kant is "no longer such a great devotee of speculative philosophy" as he used to be. (AA 10: 124).

⁷⁷ "These concepts may lie in us where they will: whence do they derive their connection [?] Are they revelations, prejudices, etc. [?]" *Refl* 4634 (AA: 17: 617).

⁷⁸ This is the *exact* same question that J. S. Beck makes the center of his philosophizing.

manner in which the subject is affected by the object, then it is easy to see how it⁷⁹ is in conformity with this object, namely, as an effect accords with its cause, and it is easy to see how this modification of our mind can *represent* something, that is, have an object.” (AA 10: 130).⁸⁰ On the other hand the relation of intellectual representations to an object is much more problematic. In this regard he analyzes two alternatives. If the understanding would either create the object (*intellectus archetypus*) or if it could intuit it directly (*intellectus ectypus*), then there would be no problem to conceive of the relation of an intelligible representation to an object.⁸¹ But our intellect neither creates its object nor can it intuit it independently of sensibility. Kant accepts the claim that pure concepts of the understanding “have their origin in the nature of the soul” and since “they are neither caused by the object”, as sensible representations are, “nor do they bring the object itself into being”, their relation to an object is left open. Thus the question is

How my understanding may formulate real principles concerning the possibility of such concepts, with which principles experience must be in exact agreement and which nevertheless are independent of experience – this question, of how the faculty of the understanding achieves this conformity with the things themselves is still left in a state of obscurity. (Kant’s letter to Hertz of February 21, 1772, AA 10: 131)⁸²

⁷⁹ There is some confusion in meaning resulting from Kant’s use of pronouns. The little word “it” is in the German original “er” which must be a mistake. As noted by Arnulf Zweig (Kant 1999, 137n2) in his notes to his English translation of Kant’s correspondence, “es” is possible in which case the correspondence would be between the subject and the object causing its state. But “sie” would even be better, for then the correspondence would be between the representation and the object as its cause. In my view the latter is the preferred reading for the question with which Kant deals is that of the relation of the representation to its object.

⁸⁰ Kant, at this stage, takes for granted that sensible representations, since they arise out of the influence of an object on the senses, have a relation to an object. Later in the *Critique of Pure Reason* he will recognize that even the relation of a sensible representation to an object is more complicated than may at first seem; “for through mere intuition nothing at all is thought, and that this affection of sensibility is in me does not constitute any relation of such representation to any object at all.” (*KrV*, A253/B309). “With us **understanding** and **sensibility** can determine an object **only in combination**.” (*KrV*, A258/B314). All English translations from the *Critique of Pure Reason* are taken from Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Kant 1998). J. S. Beck clearly sees this point. Beck emphasizes that in basing the relation of a representation to an object on the influence of the object on our senses, we employ a concept of an ‘affecting object’. But this ‘affecting object’ is itself a representation and it can rightly be asked whether the representation of such an affecting object is itself valid (whether the latter representation indeed has an object). For Beck’s views on this subject, cf. Chap. 6 below.

⁸¹ It is important to note that in both cases the so-called “object” would not be a thing-in-itself. If the object is created by the understanding, then obviously the object is dependent on the understanding in which case it cannot be a thing-in-itself (at least as long as the latter is construed as a transcendent entity). On the other alternative, the intellectual representation (as an intuitive one) is taken to be identical with its object and therefore fully adequate with it. But then again this so called “object” cannot be a thing-in-itself for if the representation is identical with the object then the object is also identical with the representation. And what is identical with a representation can hardly be a thing *in-itself*. It would seem that this kind of intuitive understanding knows nothing more than itself or its own representations but not something independent of it.

⁸² On the significance of this paragraph see the exchange of papers between L.W. Beck and Wolfgang Carl in Förster (1989, 24f.).

Very similar considerations are evident in Kant's notes of the same period.⁸³ In my view, as I have already noted, there is here a double sided problem. First, how can we account for the real use of the understanding through which things as they are in themselves are supposedly given; and second, how can we account for the relation of pure concepts of the understanding to an object at all, be it even a phenomenal one. While the former question casts doubt only on the real use of the understanding, the second threatens to overthrow the use of the understanding altogether. In his letter to Herz, Kant does not disclose his solution to this difficulty but it does appear in his notes. In *Refl* 4473 Kant explains that "experiential cognitions are not mere impressions", that is, they presuppose certain activities of the mind.⁸⁴ "We must ourselves think something in the case of impressions so that such cognitions can arise. Thus there must be cognitive actions that precede experience and by means of which these cognitions are possible." (*Refl* 4473, AA 17: 565). In *Refl* 4634 he adds that "if certain concepts in us do not contain anything other than that by means of which all experiences are possible on our part, then they can be asserted *a priori*, prior to experience, and yet with complete validity for everything that may ever come before us." (*Refl* 4634, AA 17: 618). It now becomes clear that

In that case, to be sure, they [pure concepts] are not valid of things in general, but yet of everything that can ever be given to us through experience, because they contain the conditions by means of which these experiences are possible. Such propositions would therefore contain the condition of the possibility not of things but of experience. However, things that cannot be given to us through any experience are nothing for us; hence we can very well treat such propositions as universal from the practical point of view, only not as principles of speculation about objects in general. (*Refl* 4634, AA 17: 618)

In another passage Kant explicitly states that even though pure concepts are merely subjective, "these subjective conditions are objective with regard to the employment of reason with respect to experiences". (*Refl* 4292, AA 17: 498).⁸⁵ The solution was therefore to apply to pure concepts of the understanding the same principle of subjective conditions of objectivity, which Kant applied to the forms of sensibility. The transition regarding the understanding was of course much more complicated. While time and space were already acknowledged as subjective, the same recognition regarding the understanding must have been difficult as the above evidence shows. Nevertheless once this new understanding was settled, all that remained was to apply to the forms of the understanding the same solution already

⁸³ Cf. *Refl* 4473 dated to 1772 and *Refl* 4634 dated to 1772–1773.

⁸⁴ Cf. also Kant's early recognition that analysis presupposes synthesis, *Refl* 3716 (AA: 17 261).

⁸⁵ To avoid confusion one should note that in this note Kant refers first, to the conditions without which objects cannot be given (the forms of sensibility) which Kant regards as objective. Second, he refers to the conditions without which objects cannot be understood (by this he means the logical-analytical aspect of reason). In accordance with other notes of the same period he regards these conditions as objective as well. Third, he refers to the conditions without which we cannot have insight into things. The latter are the pure concepts of reason (the synthetic principles of reason) which he regards as subjective and yet in application to experience objective.

applied to the forms of sensibility. The dependence of intelligible cognitions on sensible ones must have facilitated this result. Both forms, of sensibility and of the understanding, were now seen as determinations of the knowing subject, and, at the same time, as conditions of objectivity. Finally, the renouncement of a real use of the understanding, and with it a positive world of things-in-themselves, have rendered the phenomenal world the only world to which both sensibility and the understanding refer.⁸⁶ While Kant has not given up the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible faculties, he did give up the relation, so crucial to the thesis of the *Inaugural Dissertation*, of each faculty to its own object. No longer is there a subjective world of things as they appear in contrast to an objective world of things as they are. There is only one world – the experiential world.

To recapitulate, then, the transition from the *Inaugural Dissertation* to the *Critique of Pure Reason* was made on the basis of two main lines. First, subjectivity and objectivity, which were initially seen as two dichotomized poles, are now crucially interconnected. The subjective forms of sensibility and of the understanding are now at the same time also conditions of the objective world. The very idea of objectivity can no longer be conceived regardless of subjective conditions. Second, whereas in the *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant only emphasizes the distinctness of the faculties of sensibility and the understanding, he now adds to it an inevitable interdependence. Neither sensibility nor the understanding has a relation to an object without the other.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Cf. *Refl* 4012, the date of which is unclear, either 1769 or 1770–1771, or 1773–1775 or even 1776–1778. Here Kant explicitly states that the principles of reason are only valid for objects of experience.

⁸⁷ It is interesting to note another aspect regarding the distinction between sensibility and the understanding. In the *Dissertation* Kant is more concerned to protect the intelligible world from sensible infection while in the *Critique* – since a real use of the understanding has been given up – he is concerned with reason crossing its boundaries and attempting to provide knowledge independent of intuition.

Chapter 3

The Seemingly Inevitable Roles of the Thing-in-Itself

In the previous chapters I have presented a reading of Kant's transcendental idealism as based on the principle of the subjective conditions of objectivity according to which the thing-in-itself, as an object considered in complete abstraction from any subjective conditions, is irrelevant for Kant's philosophy. Against this view I want to discuss some important contexts in which it seems that the thing-in-itself has an inevitable role, not only for epistemology at large, but also specifically for Kant's transcendental philosophy. This chapter is therefore designed to put forward the obstacles, which Beck's interpretation, and indeed any interpretation along similar lines, has to overcome. It should be borne in mind that the following chapters are not intended as a conclusive analysis of these contexts, the problems that arise within each of them and Kant's actual or possible replies; I defer such detailed discussions until after I have presented Beck's interpretation of Kant. The following chapters are intended first to present and set forward the various contexts within which the difficulties arise and second to set the historical background against which Beck's *Standpunctslehre* is a reaction.¹

3.1 The Receptivity of Sense Perception

Under this title I list two related issues: first, the issue of the object that affects the senses and second, the issue of the origin of the matter of appearances.

¹J. S. Beck's *Standpunctslehre* should be regarded, not only within the context of Kant's empiricist and rationalist critics, but, to a very large degree, against the background of the new wave of followers-turned-critics, predominantly Reinhold and Fichte, who, in the first half of the 1790s, were at the forefront of the philosophical discussion regarding the status of critical philosophy. I shall discuss Beck's understanding of the thing-in-itself in relation to Reinhold's and Fichte's views on the same issue in Part IV of this work (cf. below Sects. 12.1.1 and 12.1.2 respectively).

The definition of sensibility as “the capacity (receptivity) to acquire representations through the way in which we are affected by objects” (*KrV*, A19/B33) opens up a troubling question regarding this ‘affecting object’. Since this ‘object’ cannot itself be a mere appearance it seems that the only open alternative is that is a thing-in-itself, a thing independent of consciousness and its representations. This consideration opens up the notorious problem of transcendental affection.

The Transcendental Aesthetic is full of statements that attempt to distinguish things as they appear to us from things as they are in themselves. It is implicitly suggested that things as they are in themselves “hide behind” the experiential world of things as they appear. There are passages where it seems that Kant refers to things-in-themselves as a different world unknown to us and there are other passages where it seems that appearances and things-in-themselves are just two ways of referring to the same things, either as they appear or as they are in themselves (*KrV*, A38/B55). But in both cases the existence of things-in-themselves seems to be implied. Thus Kant says

[...] that objects in themselves are not known to us at all, and that what we call outer objects are nothing other than mere representations of our sensibility, whose form is space, but whose true correlate, i.e., the thing-in-itself, is not and cannot be cognized through them, but is also never asked after in experience. (*KrV*, A30/B45)

And

[...] about these appearances, further, much may be said *a priori* that concerns their form, but nothing whatsoever about the things-in-themselves that may ground them. (*KrV*, A49/B66)

Similar passages in other works also suggest a positive role for the thing-in-itself within Kant’s theory of sensibility. For example in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* Kant says that

[...] we must admit and assume *behind appearances* something else that is not appearances, namely things-in-themselves, although, since we can never become acquainted with them but only with *how they affect us*, we resign ourselves to being unable to come any closer to them or ever to know what they are in themselves. (*GMS*, AA 04: 451. The emphasis is my own. Translations of texts from the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* are taken from Mary J. Gregor (Kant 1996a)).

This citation seems to openly declare the existence of things-in-themselves “behind” appearances as that, which affects the senses and brings about representations in us. A similar statement can be found in the *Prolegomena*:

Idealism consists in the claim that there are none other than thinking beings; the other things that we believe we perceive in intuition are only representations in thinking beings to which in fact no object existing outside these beings corresponds. I say in opposition: There are things given to us as objects of the senses existing outside us, yet we know nothing of them as they may be in themselves, but are acquainted only with their appearances, i.e., with the representations that they produce in us because they affect our senses. (*Prol*, AA 04: 288f. English translations of texts from the *Prolegomena* are taken from Gary Hartfield (Kant 2002))

This citation, like many others, allows few interpretations and I shall address them in due course. Still, on the face of it, it seems to imply that objects as they are in themselves, which remain unknown to us, affect the senses and bring about representations in us.²

An issue that is closely related to that of the affecting object is the issue regarding the origin of the matter of appearances. Kant defines the matter of appearances as “that in the appearance, which corresponds to sensation”. In contrast to the form of appearance, which lies a-priori in the mind, the matter of appearances “is only given to us a-posteriori” (*KrV*, A20/B34). But where does the matter of appearances, or sensations, originate? If they are not produced by the mind, they must originate in something independent of the mind.

In Kant’s essay against Eberhard’s attack on his system, the work titled *On a discovery whereby any new Critique of Pure Reason is to be made superfluous by an older one* (1790),³ we find the following statement:

Having raised the question (p. 275): “who (what) gives sensibility its matter, namely sensations?” he believes himself to have proclaimed against the *Critique* when he says (p. 276): “We may choose what we will – we nevertheless arrive at *things-in-themselves*.” Now that, of course, is the constant contention of the *Critique*; save that it posits this ground of the matter of sensory representations not once again in things, as objects of the senses, but in something super-sensible, which *grounds* the latter, and of which we can have no cognition. It says that the objects as things-in-themselves *give* the matter to empirical intuition (they contain the ground by which to determine the faculty of representation in accordance with its sensibility), but they *are* not the matter thereof. (ÜE, AA: 08: 215. Cf. also ÜE, AA: 08: 207). All English translations of this work are taken from Henry Allison (Kant 2002).

The assignment of a positive role to the thing-in-itself within the theory of affection is not only incompatible with the interpretation of Kant along the lines I suggested above. The main difficulty is whether Kant’s philosophical system has any means of avoiding self contradictions.

²Ironically this rather trivial and dogmatic interpretation of Kant’s transcendental idealism was how Kant was understood even by some of his defenders (Cf. for example Schaumann 1789, 131–175). The referred to pages of the latter work were written as a letter to J. G. H Feder in response to Feder’s attack on Kant in his *Raum und Causalität* (1788). In attempting to defend Kant against the charge of idealism, Schaumann argues that despite Kant’s limitation of knowledge to appearances, transcendental idealism nevertheless insists on the existence of things-in-themselves, which affect the senses. Despite the fact that things-in-themselves remain unknown to us they still prove the reality of the external world and thus refute idealism. By this Schaumann pushed transcendental idealism straight into the arms of Jacobi’s famous criticism (detailed below). According to this understanding of Kant’s critical philosophy, Kant has not abandoned the fundamental view of objectivity and at best he is proposing a third alternative to the realistic-idealistic dispute but one which still assumes the dichotomy between the subjectivity of representations and the objectivity of things-in-themselves.

³*Über eine Entdeckung, nach der alle neue Kritik der reinen Vernunft durch eine ältere entbehrlich gemacht werden soll* (AA 08: 185–251).

F. H. Jacobi's criticism of Kant in the addendum to his *David Hume* (Jacobi 1787, 209–230), exploits exactly this difficulty.⁴ Jacobi's criticism of the thing-in-itself consists of two steps. First, he refers to the question of what affects the senses and causes representations. He dismisses the empirical object since the latter is itself no more than a representation. He then argues that the cause of representations equally cannot be an object that is beyond our representations. Jacobi uses the term 'transcendental object' but I am rather skeptical whether Jacobi indeed meant the specific meaning that this technical term occupies in Kant's terminology.⁵ He argues that the cause of our representations cannot be the transcendental object since Kant explicitly argues that we cannot have any knowledge of it. If we have no knowledge of it then we also cannot know it to be the cause of our representations. The next step in Jacobi's argument is the claim that while an object that causes our representations is inconsistent with Kant's philosophy it is nevertheless inescapable. An object independent of our representations is necessary for Kant for he argues that our sensible faculty is receptive and passive and therefore something must act upon it. In Jacobi's view Kant postulates a passive faculty only to avoid the otherwise inevitable result that all reality collapses into the content of consciousness. Without upholding the concept of the thing-in-itself Kant's critical idealism becomes sheer idealism and even worse – solipsism (the term used by Jacobi is 'egoism'). Jacobi stated the result of his criticism in the famous formula that one needs the assumption of things-in-themselves in order to enter the Kantian system but with this assumption one cannot remain in it (Jacobi 1787, 223). It should be

⁴The text appears in the addendum to this work, titled "On Transcendental Idealism". This criticism had an enormous effect on the understanding of Kant's stand on the issue of idealism and realism and it had a great influence on the development of post-Kantian philosophy. Jacobi's criticism stems from his attack on reason on behalf of faith and it boldly expresses the presupposed dichotomy between the immanence of representations and the transcendence of things themselves. Jacobi argues that Kant has discovered "the principle of subject-object identity" which is in fact the paradigm of all knowledge. This principle states that we can only know a-priori what reason creates of its own accord. The paradigm of all knowledge is therefore that of self-knowledge. According to Jacobi this principle results in nihilism. When self-knowledge is made into the paradigm of all knowledge the result is 'speculative egoism', that is, solipsism, which dissolves all reality into representations of our own cognition. This solipsism is the result of Kant's philosophy for according to Kant we only know our own representations. It follows that we do not know any reality that exists apart from, or prior to, the activity of reason. Jacobi leaves philosophy only two alternatives. Either this principle is infinite which leads to the inevitable result that all reality dissolves into nothingness or this principle is finite and then we have to admit that we only know ourselves while reality remains unknown to us. If both options are unfavorable then we have to abandon reason altogether and uphold faith in its place.

⁵Jacobi is obviously influenced in his use of terms by Kant's usage of the term 'transcendental object' in the Fourth Paralogism, which Jacobi cites at length and which serves as his main target of criticism. The distinction between the thing-in-itself and the transcendental object is highly important for the argument I intend to develop later in this work and, as I will show, it is not a coincidence that Kant uses it in the context of the argument of the Fourth Paralogism. It is clear that Jacobi made no such distinction. It should be noted, though, that this omission is rather widespread, even with modern Kant interpreters (and even when some distinction is made it is usually not the one I point to).

noted that Jacobi's understanding of the issue was influenced by the presupposition of the absolute dichotomy between the immanence of representations and the transcendence of things-in-themselves. Without the latter he sees no middle option other than a negation of reality altogether.⁶

Similar criticism was put forward by G. E. Schulze. In his *Aenesidemus* (Schulze 1792)⁷ Schulze criticizes mainly Reinhold but this work also includes important criticism of Kant's critical philosophy in its original form. Schulze argues that Kant cannot consistently hold to the concept of the thing-in-itself. He mainly targets the view that the thing-in-itself affects the senses and brings about representations in us. He argues that this view assumes a causal relationship between things-in-themselves and the whole of the experiential world while according to Kant's critical philosophy all of the categories including that of causality apply only within the experiential world between appearances.⁸ According to Schulze, Kant's critical philosophy can only be consistent if it not only gives up the concept of being affected, and not only refrain from asserting anything regarding the thing-in-itself, but more than that, it must explicitly renounce the thing-in-itself and make clear its impossibility. It should declare this concept a self-contradictory one. It is important to note that Schulze himself does not abandon the concept of the thing-in-itself. However, he argues that it cannot be consistently held by supporters of the critical philosophy and he uses this argument against them. Schulze does not abandon the thing-in-itself for two related reasons. The first reason is his adherence to the correspondence theory of truth, which states that a representation is true only if it corresponds to an object, as it exists apart from consciousness. The elimination of the thing-in-itself would result in the destruction of the principle of truth for there would be nothing outside consciousness with which our representations could be compared. Schulze argues that this is indeed the result of Kant's and Reinhold's versions of the critical philosophy. The second reason for not eliminating the concept of the thing-in-itself is that without it the real world is reduced to an

⁶ Jacobi thinks that in order to avoid the perversion of language and public confusion, we must be clear that an object is only such as is independent of our representations. "For according to the general use of language, the object must signify a thing that exists outside of us in the transcendental sense, and how would we arrive at such a thing in the Kantian philosophy?" (Jacobi 1787, 227f.) Cf. also: "what we realists call actual objects [are] things that are independent of our representations" (Jacobi 1787, 216). The English translation is taken from Sassen (2000, 175, 171). Throughout his short criticism it is repeatedly emphasized that what a realist calls truth or "truly objective significance" is only the correspondence of appearances with things-in-themselves.

⁷ This work was published anonymously in the spring of 1792. For a while the name of its author remained unknown and other writers referred to him by the name of the work itself – *Aenesidemus*. The true author was Gottlob Ernst Schulze, the then little known but respectable professor at the university of Helmstadt. This work quickly became well known and had a remarkable influence on the philosophical scene of the time.

⁸ Contrary to the common view, it was Schulze and not Jacobi, who pointed out the fact that according to Kant the category of causality is not applicable to things-in-themselves and their supposed relationship with the whole of the experiential world.

aggregate of forms, which are the effects of the mind. Schulze thus accuses Kant and Reinhold of formalism and subjectivism. On Schulze's understanding, without the concept of the thing-in-itself Kant's critical idealism cannot be distinguished from Berkeley's idealism placing all reality within the realm of consciousness. It is clear that Schulze too presupposes the absolute dichotomy between representations and things-in-themselves.⁹

3.2 The Thing-in-Itself and the Charge of Subjective Idealism

The subjectivist interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism according to which without the thing-in-itself Kant's system collapses into the immanent realm of consciousness was shared by almost all of Kant's early critics. It goes back to the *Critique's* first significant review – the notorious Garve-Feder review in the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*.¹⁰ According to this review Kant's idealism cannot be distinguished from the idealism of Berkeley since like the latter, Kant's philosophy limits our knowledge to representations and therefore it reduces experience to a dream or illusion.¹¹ The authors of the review admit that they cannot

⁹ Regarding the principle of truth Schulze fails to notice that Kant has in fact abandoned the correspondence theory in favor of the principle of the unity and cohesion of experience. This issue was already mentioned above and it shall be discussed at length in Sect. 12.2.4 below). This claim is supported by Beiser (1987, 283f.). Regarding the realism-idealism dispute, Schulze does not recognize, as most of Kant's contemporaries failed to recognize, that Kant had abandoned the subjective-objective dichotomy. The dependence of experience on the subjective conditions of cognition does not lead to the conclusion that objects of experience are any less objective or that they express a deficient reality. The subjective forms of sensibility and understanding do not separate cognition from the real world but on the contrary they are what make the relation of cognition to an external world possible in the first place. These issues shall be addressed in detail in Part IV below.

¹⁰ Appeared anonymously in *Zugaben zu den göttingischen Anzeigen von gelehrte Sachen* 3 (January 19, 1782), 40–48. Reprinted in Karl Vorländer's edition of Kant's *Prolegomena* (Kant 1951, 167–174). The review is also reprinted with original pagination by Albert Landau (1991, 10–17). For a historical and systematic discussion of the Göttingen review, cf. Beiser (1987, 172–177) and Beiser (2002, 88–92). For a recent English translation along with the original Garve review, cf. Sassen (2000, 53–77). All below English citations from the Göttingen review are taken from Sassen's translation.

¹¹ The review argues that Kant's new system "is a system of higher or, as the author calls it, Transcendental Idealism" which "encompasses spirit and matter in the same manner [and] transforms the world and ourselves into representations. . ." (Sassen 2000, 40). Note that the authors argue that Kant *transforms* the world into mere representations. The authors thus implicitly assume that we can start the discussion by referring to an independent world, a question, which Kant makes into the problem of all problems, the possibility of which must be analyzed before we can continue our discussions. The review goes on to argue that since on Kant's view all our cognition springs from sensations which are nothing more than modifications of ourselves, about which causes or origin we know nothing, then we can only assume that there are objects and we believe

comprehend how the distinction between the actual and the merely imagined can be based on no more than the application of concepts of the understanding to sensible intuitions without the latter containing in itself any mark of actuality (Sassen 2000, 42).¹² They protest against what they see as Kant's blurring of the distinction between inner and outer sensations and his attempt to refute idealism not by defending the reality of external bodies (by which they mean objects independent of our representations) but by the negation of the privilege that our consciousness of our own existence has over our consciousness of outer objects (Sassen 45, 47f.).¹³ Feder continued this line of argument in his *Raum und Causalität* (1788). In this work Feder repeats the claims of the Göttingen review in more details. He argues that Kant cannot refute idealism by relying on the empirical reality of objects in space for on Kant's own terms space is nothing but a form of our own representations. The idealist would easily concede that we have representations of objects in space but the question is not about that but whether the latter correspond to something independent of consciousness, which Kant fails or refuses to establish (Feder 1788, 61–83*, 114–118).¹⁴ Feder himself concedes that we know nothing more than appearances of things-in-themselves and on this account he complains against what in his opinion is Kant's careless language. If Kant agrees that external objects in space are actual, not merely imagined, and if he agrees that they continue to exist even when we do not perceive them, then why does he insist on saying that these external objects in space are nothing more than representations in us!? If on the contrary he stands by his latter claim then he should drop the strange language

that we know them only because appearances have something in common. The review ends with an even bolder accusation of idealism: "and when, to assume the most extreme position with the idealist, everything of which we can know and say something is merely representation and law of thought, when representations in us, modified and ordered in accord with certain laws are just what we call object and world, why then the fight against this commonly accepted language, **why** then and **from where** this idealist differentiation?" (Sassen 2000, 48).

¹² This shows that the authors demand a material criterion of actuality based on the correspondence of our representations with something wholly independent of them, rather than Kant's formal and subjective criterion (for Kant's characterization of his modal principles as subjective cf. *KrV*, A233f./B286). It also shows their strong empiricist inclination. Cf. also the authors' own conviction at the bottom of page 47 of the review that "we have to adhere to our strongest and most enduring **sensations** or the strongest and most enduring semblance [Schein] as our reality". In this regard I point to Kant's distinction between reality and actuality (to be discussed in Sect. 12.2.4 below).

¹³ It is clear that the authors confuse what Kant calls the empirical and the transcendental distinction between the inner and the outer. To them inner representations are immanent while outer representations are, or at least supposed to be, transcendent and only by proving the latter case (what they refer to as the existence of outer objects) can idealism be refuted. Kant sees this way of putting things as the ground of skeptical idealism, which he hopes to solve by showing that both inner and outer representations have the same status and that the thing-in-itself is wholly irrelevant for the theory of objectivity (cf. Sect. 12.2.4 below).

¹⁴ Note that some pagination in this work was transposed when printed so that what should have been page 97 is marked as 79 and all the following pages are marked consecutively.

he has adopted and admit that he is an idealist (Feder 1788, 83f., 81n).¹⁵ Feder does not argue for the incompatibility of the things-in-themselves with Kant's system and he equally fails to see the difference between Kant's and Berkeley's principle for distinguishing reality from illusion within experience. I shall return to discuss these objections following the presentation of Beck's interpretation of Kant and the possible answers contained therein. What is important for my purposes at this point is only to stress the widespread view according to which the thing-in-itself is required to prevent Kant's transcendental idealism from collapsing into sheer idealism and even solipsism.

Adam Weishaupt – Feder's ally in his battle against Kant – was another proponent of the subjectivist interpretation. His arguments in his *Gründe und Gewissheit des menschlichen Erkennens* (1788) defending the charge of subjective idealism against Kant can be put into the following main points¹⁶: (a) Kant limits all knowledge to appearances and he further claims that appearances are nothing but representations "in us" (Weishaupt 1788, 119f.); (b) the existence of things-in-themselves is incompatible with Kant's critical principles and therefore in order to remain true to his own system Kant must embrace idealism (Weishaupt 1788, 62f., 125f.); (c) Kant claims that objectivity consists in the conformity of a representation to a rule but even if this is granted it is still possible that the representation does not correspond to reality itself (Weishaupt 1788, 20f., 107, 157, 164); (d) Kant's claim that causality is only a subjective rule of the understanding implies that we can never get outside of our representations to know their causes or origins (Weishaupt 1788, 171f.).

H. A. Pistorius, a critic most respected by Kant himself (*OP*, AA 21: 416; *KpV*, AA 05: 06, 08), argued along similar lines. He too claims that if it wished to be consistent, Kant's idealism could not be distinguished from that of Berkeley. Like Garve, Feder and others he reads Kant's system into the presupposition that reality refers to things-in-themselves. His main dissatisfaction with Kant therefore centers on the inevitable conclusion of this interpretation according to which Kant deprives us of any access to reality itself and limits our knowledge to an internal world of illusion and dream no matter how orderly and harmonious this world of appearances may be (Pistorius 1786, 107f., 115f.). Pistorius continues to argue that

¹⁵ Feder's whole attempt to defend realism is at the end based on the immediate testimony of common sense and he openly admits that. He argues that in some matters – and the idealist-realist dispute is one of them – one should not push his inquiry further than what common sense tells us. Otherwise, one will find oneself in complete embarrassment (Feder 1788, 64f.). In §19 (89–93) Feder explicitly raises Berkeley's and Kant's objection that since all that cognition has at its disposal are sensible representations and since the latter are obviously 'in us' then it remains a disturbing question how these representations 'in us' **can** nevertheless refer to and object 'outside us' conceived of as wholly independent of our representations. Being unable to respond to this objection, he insists that the idealist may not be allowed to raise this question and that the philosopher should suffice with the evidence of common-sense **that** we do have such objects before us. This repeats an earlier claim that "The undeniable assertions of common sense are never absurd." (Feder 1788, 79). All English translations of Feder's *Raum und Causalität* are taken from Sassen (2000).

¹⁶ I take this division from Beiser (1987, 187).

although incompatible with his system, Kant is obliged to retain things-in-themselves “because all **things-in-themselves must** after all lie at the ground of appearances that indicate their existence whether we know something of them or not” Pistorius (1786, 108).¹⁷ It follows that “if it was not the case that the author’s whole unsettled system had to be given a kind of composure and foundation, we would simply not require anything at all but apparent objects, and no other subjects but merely logical ones.” (Pistorius 1786, 114).

According to Pistorius, there are in Kant’s system only appearances but these are neither appearances *of* something nor are they appearances *for* someone. Appearances are not of something for that would be to assume that they represent things-in-themselves, a claim that violates the limits of knowledge according to Kant. Appearances are also not for anyone since the self in Kant’s critical system does not denote any existing substance but merely the formal unity of apperception (Pistorius 1786, 93, 114n).¹⁸ Aside from his criticism of Kant’s ethical theory to be discussed below, Pistorius is known for his criticism of Kant’s refutation of idealism in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Pistorius 1788). Reminiscent of Jacobi’s dichotomist dilemma, Pistorius inquires about the nature of ‘objects in space’, whose reality is supposed to refute idealism. If by ‘objects in space’ Kant merely means objects represented by outer, rather than by inner sense, then he begs the question against the idealist. The idealist does not doubt that we have representations of external objects in space, but that these external representations correspond to an independent reality. If, on the other hand, by ‘objects in space’ Kant means objects independent of consciousness, then he flatly contradicts his own doctrine.

Regarding the above critics it is clearly visible that they all assume the absolute dichotomy between the immanence of our representations and the transcendence of things-in-themselves and therefore for them to refute idealism one must rely on the existence of things-in-themselves.¹⁹

3.3 The Extension of the Categories Beyond Sensibility

Time and space are limited by their own nature to objects of experience, that is, to objects that can appear before our senses. This is clear since time and space are the forms of sensibility and therefore as Kant says “they are only in the senses” (*KrV*,

¹⁷ All English translations of Pistorius’ work are taken from Sassen (2000).

¹⁸ Alternatively if the knowing subject is only an appearance, which on Pistorius’ view is the only acceptable claim that can be made within the Kantian system, then it follows that all we ever know are appearances of appearances and Pistorius begs Kant to explain what that should mean (Pistorius 1784, 345).

¹⁹ Other critics, rationally rather than empirically inclined, also shared the same basic criticism, according to which Kant’s system is reducible to subjective idealism (Eberhard 1788, 28f.; Schwab 1796, 121f.; Flatt 1792, 78f.).

§23, B148). In contrast, the categories as the pure forms of the understanding “are free from this limitation and extend to objects of intuition in general, whether the latter be similar to our own or not, as long as it is sensible and not intellectual” (*KrV*, §23, B148). The categories are not only separated from everything empirical. They are also totally separated from the forms of intuition (*KrV*, A65/B89). The categories are the forms of *thought* of an object *in general* and include within themselves no limitation of any specific forms of intuition. The categories include intrinsically only the condition that they are to be applied discursively to intuition. Since intellectual intuition is denied them, they must rely on an external faculty of sensible intuition but they include no limitation or internal relation to any specific type of intuition such as our own.

The categories can extend further than sensibility since they originate from a separate source in our cognition. While intuition supplies the manifold, the understanding supplies the principle of unity. Accordingly, when abstracted from sensibility, the manifold is missing but there still remains “the form of thinking, i.e., the way of determining an object for the manifold of a possible intuition” (*KrV*, A254/B309). Thus, without sensibility there remains the *capability* of the understanding to bring about unity. The categories, as the modes through which the understanding brings about unity, therefore seem to allow a reference beyond the conditions of time and space. In this way the allusion inherent in the receptive character of sensibility to a super-sensible object is linked to the extension of the categories beyond sensibility and thus arises an inclination to connect the understanding with an intelligible object, a noumenon, and assign to it the roles of a thing-in-itself that were left open within the Transcendental Aesthetic (*KrV*, A249f., A251f., B306f.).²⁰ This issue is connected with Kant’s distinction between thinking (*denken*) and cognizing (*erkennen*), (*KrV*, §22, B146ff.) and with his parallel distinction between the intelligible synthesis of pure categories and the figurative synthesis, expressed by the schemata of pure categories (*KrV*, §24, B150ff.). This gives rise to the view that while the thing-in-itself cannot be known it can, nevertheless, be thought through pure, unschematized, categories.

3.4 The Thing-in-Itself in the Transcendental Dialectic

Within the Transcendental Dialectic, the thing-in-itself is required to explain transcendental illusion. Without the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves the illusion inherent in the paralogisms, the antinomies and the Ideal of pure reason would be impossible. While the dialectic does not require, and indeed negates, a positive role of the thing-in-itself as an existing entity it

²⁰ The emergence of this line of thought can already be recognized in the *Inaugural Dissertation* (*MSI*, AA 02: 409f.).

nevertheless requires a meaningful concept of a thing-in-itself to account for a region that is inaccessible but yet meaningful beyond the domain of experience.

3.5 The Thing-in-Itself and Practical Philosophy

The thing-in-itself as a special kind of object seems to be required for the possibility of freedom, indispensable for morality. Kant claims that if the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves had not been made then the principle of natural causality would be applicable to all things without distinction. The human soul as part of this world would then be subjected to the universal law of natural causality and we could not refer to it as free, that is, as a first cause not determined by prior causes. It is only on behalf of the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves that we can say that the self as an appearance in space and time is indeed subjected to the deterministic mechanism of natural causal laws but as a thing-in-itself it is not subjected to such laws for causality has no application to things-in-themselves. A very bold expression of this view is given in the preface to the second edition of the first *Critique* (*KrV*, Bxxvii–xxviii), as well as in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Moral* (*GMS*, AA 04: 451ff.). So it seems that without the notion of the self as a thing-in-itself it would be impossible to uphold morality. Moreover, morality also presupposes God as a thing-in-itself to ensure the compatibility of nature with the moral law. Thus, not only the self but also God as a thing-in-itself seems to have an inevitable role for morality.

Like the issue of the object that affects the senses, the issue here is not only whether Kant does or does not assign a role for the thing-in-itself within his practical philosophy, but the more troubling question of whether Kant can avoid the inconsistencies which arise therefrom. This argument was already exploited by some of Kant's early critics. It was argued that the reliance of Kant's practical philosophy on the thing-in-itself is on the one hand inescapable but on the other hand puts Kant's practical philosophy in conflict with his theoretical philosophy and the limits it imposes on possible knowledge. H. A. Pistorius indeed argued that the dependence of Kant's moral theory on the self as a thing-in-itself requires us to go beyond the limits of knowledge set forth by Kant's theoretical philosophy (Pistorius 1786, 109ff.). Thomas Wizenmann used subtle arguments to insist that similar contradictions can be found between Kant's theory of rational faith and Kant's theoretical philosophy.²¹ According to Kant the existence of God is required

²¹ Thomas Wizenmann is known for his involvement in the Pantheism dispute between Mendelssohn and Jacobi. He published anonymously in 1786 the work titled *Der Resultate Jacobi'schen und Mendelssohn'schen Philosophie kritisch untersucht von einem Freywilligen* in which he analyzed the opinions of both sides of the dispute. Kant finally entered the controversy, following frequent demands from his friends with his *Was heißt sich im Denken orientieren?* (What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?), also published in 1786. In this latter work Kant referred to Wizenmann as "the acute author of the *Resultate*". Wizenmann (1787) responded to Kant with an

for morality not merely hypothetically, as a regulative principle, but actually, as a constitutive principle (*KpV*, AA 05: 122ff., 134ff.).²² But this requirement seems to put practical reason in contradiction with theoretical reason and the limits it set forth on speculation.

It may be that the distinction mentioned above between the cognition of things-in-themselves, which is ruled out, and the mere thought of things-in-themselves, which is granted, holds the solution to the apparent contradiction. Nevertheless, this path is not as straightforward as it may seem. I shall in due course address the issue of thought through pure, unschematized, categories and the question whether objects as things-in-themselves can indeed be attained by such a cognitive mode (Sects. 12.2.2 and 12.2.3). I shall also address the question whether the possibility of the moral law indeed requires the notion of the thing-in-itself as a special kind of object (Chap. 13).

essay titled, “An den Herrn Professor Kant von dem Verfasser der Resultate jakobischer und mendelssohnscher Philosophie kritisch untersucht von einem Freywilligen”. In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant referred to Wizenmann by name as “a very subtle and clearheaded man” and attempted to answer Wizenmann’s objections (Kant’s footnote on *KpV*, AA 05: 143). Unfortunately this fruitful dialogue was abruptly interrupted due to Wizenmann’s untimely death in 1787. For more details on the Pantheism dispute, cf. Beiser (1987, 44–108). On Wizenmann’s and Kant’s exchange of views cf. Beiser (1987, 109–126).

²²The moral law does not commands us to act in such a way that we would be happy but to act in such a way that we would be *worthy* of happiness (*KrV*, A806/B834; *KpV*, AA 05: 130). Nevertheless, if happiness in natural life would be incompatible with the moral law then morality would be an unattainable ideal. Morality therefore requires a benevolent author of the world – God – who, by combining the highest good will with control over nature, ensures that happiness in nature and the moral obligation shall be compatible. God is therefore a constitutive postulate of morality, not indeed for the authority of the moral law itself (for which only freedom is a condition) but for the compatibility of nature with the moral law (*KrV*, A810f./B838f.; *KpV*, AA 05: 124f.; *WDO*, AA 08: 139).

Part III
Jacob Sigismund Beck's *Standpunctslehre*

Chapter 4

The Development of Beck's Thought, Leading Up to the Publication of the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*

The genesis of Beck's explanatory abstracts of Kant's writings goes back to the year 1791. On April of that year Kant received Beck's Magister's Dissertation,¹ to which Beck apparently appended some considerations regarding Kant's critical philosophy.² In his reply, Kant complemented Beck: "You have understood my concepts far more correctly than many others who otherwise applaud me" (Kant's letter to Beck, May 9, 1791, AA 11: 256). When, only few months later, in mid-August or early-September 1791,³ Kant was approached by his publisher Hartknoch, who was interested in finding a suitable person, both able and willing, to take on himself the task of composing an integrated summary of Kant's writings, Kant did not hesitate and recommend Beck for the task (Kant's letter to Beck, September 27, 1791, AA 11: 289). Hartknoch initially asked Beck to write an abstract in Latin of Kant's complete writings. Beck confessed to be insufficiently competent in Latin (Beck's

In this part of this research I am concerned with the development of Beck's own thought. I discuss Beck's correspondence with Kant and his early reviews of Reinhold, Fichte and other contemporary writers, in order to expose the main issues with which Beck's own mind was occupied. The discussion of the differences between Beck's views and Kant's original doctrine, as well as the distinguishing marks between Beck's *Standpunctslehre* and the views of his two major contemporaries – Reinhold and Fichte – deserves a separate discussion and shall follow in Part IV. In the following chapters I shall occasionally make references to the relation between Beck's views and Kant's text, however, I do so only to facilitate the understanding of Beck's intentions, for a reader who, I assume, is far more acquainted with Kant's critical project than with Beck's.

¹ *Dissertatio de Theoremate Tayloriano, sive de lege generali, secundum quam functionis mutetur, mutatis a quibus pendent variabilibus* (Halle, 1791). From the beginning of his studies, Beck was interested in both mathematics and philosophy. This dissertation is in the field of mathematics regarding a theorem by Brook Taylor (1685–1781).

² Beck's dissertation was attached to his letter to Kant dated April 19, 1791 (AA 11: 252). Kant's reply dated May 9, 1791 (AA 11: 255–257), indicates that "some theses" were appended to it regarding his own critical writings.

³ The exact date is unknown since the relevant letters exchanged between Kant and Hartknoch are not extant.

letter to Kant, October 6, 1791, AA 11: 292)⁴ but suggested writing an examination of Reinhold's theory of the faculty of representation or a treatise comparing the Humean and the Kantian philosophy. Beck also expressed his willingness to write an abstract of Kant's *Critique* (Beck's letter to Kant, October 6, 1791, AA 11: 292ff.).⁵

Beck had initially started working on the review of Reinhold's theory. It was intended to be an essay against Reinhold, upholding the worthlessness of his new theory against the truth of Kant's *Critique*. Beck had even sent Kant a preliminary draft for review but had eventually dropped the project. It could not have escaped Beck that such a polemic would put Kant in a very awkward position since both Beck and Reinhold were his friends.⁶ Regardless of Kant's unappreciative comments about Reinhold's theory of the power of representation (Kant's letter to Beck, September 27, 1791, AA 11: 291),⁷ Kant was forever indebted to Reinhold for his contribution to the extensive acceptance of Kant's philosophy.⁸ As Kant emphasizes to Beck, he did not want Reinhold to get the impression that he, Kant, in any way encouraged Beck to write a polemic against him. Above all, one must

⁴ Following his refusal to embark on a Latin abstract of Kant works, as Hartknoch initially planned, Beck recommended his friend, Magister Rudolph Gotthold Rath from Halle, for this task. Rath indeed set to work on this project and even sent a sample of his translation of the *Transcendental Aesthetic* to Kant (Rath's letter to Kant, September 8, 1792 and Kant's reply on October 16, 1792). The plan did not materialize though. The translation of Kant's works into Latin was eventually carried out by Friedrich Gottlob Born in Leipzig 1796, under the title of *Immanuelis Kantii opera ad philosophiam criticam*.

⁵ Cf. also the preface to Beck's first volume of his explanatory abstracts (Beck 1793). There, Beck reveals that he initially intended to write a third volume in which he planned to answer some of Kant's critics. This plan eventually turned into the work known as the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*. For more details regarding the events that led to the birth of Beck's project cf. Dilthey (1889, 592–650).

⁶ Kant's hesitation from Beck's planned criticism of Reinhold is clearly apparent from his letter to Beck dated November 2, 1791 (AA 11: 303ff.).

⁷ In this letter Kant admits that Reinhold's theory is not yet intelligible to him. Cf. also Kant's letter to Beck, November 2, 1791 (AA 11: 304), in which Kant is more explicit that "Reinhold's theory of the faculty of representation is so weighed down with obscure abstractions, making it impossible to explain what he means by examples, that even if the theory were correct in every part (which I am really unable to judge, since I have so far been unable to penetrate his thoughts), these difficulties would still make it impossible to have any extensive or permanent effect."

⁸ This was due mainly to Reinhold's publication of the *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*. These *Letters* were first published as a series of articles, in *Der Teutsche Merkur*, in issues from August 1786 to September 1787. These articles were republished as a book in 1790. The 1790 book version not only adds new letters (12 instead of the original 8) but also changes passages in the previous edition, making reference to Reinhold's later *Elementarphilosophie*. A second volume of the book appeared in 1792 discussing new topics. In 1923 the two volumes of the book were mechanically reprinted and published together, edited and introduced by Raymund Schmidt (Reinhold 1923). An English version recently appeared (Reinhold 2005). This translation distinguishes between the original letters as they appeared in the *Teutsche Merkur* and the 1790 book version and gives useful tools to compare them, although it does not attempt to make a full reference to all changes made in the later version.

remember the overly tensed polemic atmosphere of the time. At that period, Kant's philosophy was under constant attack from both empirically, as well as rationally, oriented critics. It was a period of friends against foes of the critical philosophy and any quarrel between Kant's disciples would have obviously damaged Kant's cause.

Thus, Beck devoted himself to a thorough analysis of Kant's critical project. From the very beginning it was clear that while Beck was a loyal supporter of Kant, he always retained an independent stand.⁹ On Kant's encouragement he insisted on discussing issues that did not satisfy his reflective analysis.

When we look at the correspondence between Beck and Kant we observe that the issue of the relation of a representation to its object was the major issue that occupied Beck's mind from the very beginning. In a letter dated November 11, 1791, he objects to the *Critique's* definition of intuition as a representation that relates immediately to its object (*KrV*, A19/B33). Since it is only on behalf of the application of the categories to intuitions that the latter acquire a reference to an object, Beck is "in favor of leaving out that definition of 'intuition' that refers to it as a representation relating to objects" (AA 11: 311). He adds: "I find in intuition nothing more than a manifold accompanied with consciousness (or by the *unique* 'I think'), and determined by consciousness, a manifold in which there is as such no relation to an object." (AA 11: 311).¹⁰ Beck similarly rejects the definition of a concept as a representation mediately related to an object. "Both intuitions and concepts acquire objectivity only after the activity of judgment subsumes them under the pure concepts of the understanding" (AA 11: 311). A relation to an object is the function of the categories and prior to their introduction no representation can be said to have a reference to an object.

Kant acknowledged the importance of Beck's remarks. In response to Beck's letter of November 11, 1791, and a non-extant letter by Beck of December 9, 1791, he replied on January 20, 1792: "You have presented me with your thorough investigation of what is just the hardest thing in the whole *Critique*, namely, the analysis of an experience in general and the principles that make experience in general possible" (AA 11: 313). Kant adds that he already made plans for a system of metaphysics to address this difficulty and to begin with the categories. He agrees that it should be emphasized that "no experience of objects of the sense is possible except in so far as I presuppose a priori that every such object must be *thought* of as magnitude, and similarly with all the other categories" (AA 11: 313f.).

Kant then reverts back to the distinction between the principle of synthesis or unity, which must be *produced* and the manifold to be unified which can only be

⁹ Throughout his career Beck has never criticized Kant. He even saw his *Standpunctslehre* as an exposition of the true intention of Kant's own work.

¹⁰ Although Kant frequently says that even without assuming the activities of the understanding an object can be given to us in intuition, he nevertheless stresses (*KrV*, §14, A93/B125f.), that properly speaking what is given to us in intuition are only appearances (which he elsewhere defines as the undetermined object of an empirical intuition, *KrV*, A20/B34). In order to regard that which is given in intuition as an object, the application of concepts of the understanding, and therefore also the application of the categories, must be presupposed.

given. This distinction between, on the one hand, the principle of unity, grounded in the spontaneity of the understanding, and, on the other hand, the manifold that is given in the receptivity of intuition, was at the core of Kant's theory of cognition since his 1770 *Dissertation*. The strict separation between spontaneity and receptivity always channels Kant back to refer to intuition as immediately related to an object on behalf of the object's affect on our sensibility.¹¹ Beck repeats similar concerns in a letter of May 31, 1792:

It seems to me that one ought not to define 'intuition', in the Transcendental Aesthetic, as a representation immediately related to an object or as a representation that arises when the mind is affected by the object. For not until the Transcendental Logic can it be shown how we arrive at objective representations. (AA 11: 338)¹²

While Kant's reply of July 3, 1792, shows an appreciation of Beck's attempts at new definitions, this reply too, reiterates the distinction between the a-priori form, in accordance with which the given manifold is synthesized, and the manifold itself, which can only be given (AA 11: 347f.). Kant's letter of October 16 (or 17), 1792, repeats similar concerns (AA 11: 376).

The issue of the relation of a representation to its object is at the heart of Beck's difficulties with the *Critique*. This relation must be original. It must be the initial stage of the cognitive process without which we could not account for the objective relation of either intuition or concept. At this time the full scope of this issue was

¹¹ My concern here is only with the understanding of the development of Beck's thought. At this stage of my discussion I do not attempt a comparison of Kant's original view and Beck's new ideas. Such a comparison, and an evaluation of the legitimacy of Beck's view as an interpretation of Kant, shall follow in Part IV.

¹² Following the above-cited paragraph, Beck suggests defining intuition as "a thoroughly determinate representation in relation to a given manifold". By this definition of intuition, Beck attempts to avoid any reference to an object and only indicate the determination of some meaningful content and the consciousness of this content being given or imposed on us (cf. also the passage cited above, from Beck's previous letter to Kant, November 11, 1791). Kant's reply in his letter of July 3, 1792, insists that "the thorough determination must be understood as objective, not merely as existing in the subject (since it is impossible for us to know all determinations of an object of empirical intuition)" (AA 11: 347). Beck accepts this remark and repeats Kant's words, almost to the letter, in his preface to the first volume of his explanatory abstracts (Beck 1793, 8. Note that the preface is not paginated in the original). Interestingly, on page 7 of the preface to the first volume, Beck notes that he gave the manuscript to a person he does not name, but known to the public as an "examiner and defender of the critical philosophy". Beck reports that this person also gave him a remark regarding his unique definition of intuition. As is evident from Beck's letters to Kant and from the preface to the first volume, it was highly important for Beck to remain as loyal as possible to Kant's original intention and text. This may explain the obedient manner Beck adopted in the early stages of his project. It is also worth noting that in his third volume, the *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt*, Beck explicitly renounces his above-mentioned initial definition of intuition, on the ground that it is discursive. In other words, Beck's initial definition attempted to define intuition by attributing properties to its concept rather than by directing our attention to the postulate to represent originally (*EmS*, 204). The full extent of Beck's meaning by 'original representing' and its contrast with discursive thinking shall be better understood as the exposition of Beck's thought advances.

not yet clear to Beck and we shall trace its development until the publication of his third volume of his explanatory abstracts, the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*.¹³

By the end of 1792 Beck has made much progress with the first volume of his explanatory abstracts. He sent Kant the part dealing with the deduction of the categories and asked for Kant's opinion. Kant reviewed it, made but few remarks and complemented Beck on the correctness of his presentation.¹⁴ In his letter to Kant dated November 10, 1792, the letter to which Beck appended the transcribed pages of his commentary on the deduction of the categories, Beck also reports of a visit of Garve to Halle and of a conversation Beck had with Eberhard, who held a position in Halle, regarding Garve's visit.¹⁵ Beck reports that while Garve strongly defends the *Critique*, he is nevertheless "forced to admit that Critical Idealism and Berkeleyan Idealism are entirely the same" (AA 11: 384). Beck's reaction to the latter statement is very important for the understanding of his future views:

I cannot understand the way these worthy men think and I am in truth convinced of the opposite opinion. Even if we assume that the *Critique* should not even have mentioned the distinction between things-in-themselves and appearances, we would still have to recall that one must pay attention to the conditions under which something is an object. If we ignore this, we fall into error. Appearances are the objects of intuition, and they are what everybody means when they speak of objects that surround them. But it is the reality of just these objects that Berkeley denied and that the *Critique*, on the other hand, proved. (Beck's letter to Kant, November 10, 1792, AA 11: 384)

Beck's response shows, that despite his characteristic negative stand regarding the role of the thing-in-itself in Kant's theoretical philosophy, he nevertheless did not think that this stand commits Kant to idealism. Moreover, as can be seen from the first part of the above citation, Beck holds that a distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves is not required to substantiate the Kantian claim that the surrounding objects are appearances and not things-in-themselves. The conventional approach to critical idealism presupposes, either explicitly or implicitly, the existence of things-in-themselves. It assumes that reality is something in-itself, that

¹³ Beck's correspondence with Kant between 1791 and 1793 includes important discussions of few other issues. Amongst those is an aspect of moral philosophy regarding whether there could be actions required by the moral law, but, nevertheless, incompatible with natural law. Another issue, which occupied a large part of the correspondence, refers to the relation between space, and matter, which fills space. In my current exposition I am obliged to focus only on those issues of the Kant-Beck correspondence, relevant to the current study.

¹⁴ For a detailed unfolding of the events, cf. Beck's letter to Kant, November 10, 1792 and Kant's letter to Beck, December 4, 1792. Beck had initially sent Kant the part that deals with the first *Critique* up to the Transcendental Dialectic. Following a misunderstanding of the deadline by which Beck needed to get the manuscript back, Kant had returned the work without reviewing it. On Kant's advice, Beck had the part dealing with the deduction of the categories transcribed and sent it again to Kant. This time Kant reviewed the text and sent his remarks back to Beck.

¹⁵ Christian Garve, as is known, was the original author of the notorious 'Garve-Feder' review of Kant's first *Critique* in which Kant was accused of idealism and his philosophy equated with that of Berkeley. Johann August Eberhard was a rationalistically oriented philosopher and a prominent critic of Kant. Eberhard was the founder of the *Philosophisches Magazin* (later replaced by the *Philosophisches Archiv*), a journal whose explicit aim was to attack Kant's critical philosophy.

is, something wholly independent of the knowing subject and his or her representations. The conventional approach argues roughly along the following lines: we would like to know things as they are in-themselves but we have to suffice with mere appearances. It follows from this line of thought that the objects of ordinary experience are of diminished reality, precisely because they are contrasted with things-in-themselves. On the other hand, according to Beck, the restriction of knowledge to appearances does not rely on an appeal to an alleged ultimate reality beyond the reach of human cognition. Rather it only appeals to the cognitive conditions under which alone something can be an object for us. The recognition of the inevitable contribution of cognition to what we call 'an object' suffices to deduce that the objects that surround us are appearances. Beck's approach avoids demoting appearances to a lesser kind or degree of reality, specifically because it does not oppose the reality of ordinary experiential objects to an ostensible higher form of reality. I believe that the above difference brings out the uniqueness of Beck's approach in comparison to the conventional explanation.¹⁶

In line with the above analysis, Beck argues that Kant's idealism is distinguished from Berkeleyan idealism by Kant's insistence, in comparison to Berkeley's denial, of the reality of objects as appearances. Beck's exposition of the Kantian limitation of knowledge to appearances, by relying on the conditions of our own cognition rather than on the contrast between that which can be known by us and an alleged knowledge of things-in-themselves, opens the way to a defense of the reality of objects as appearances without thereby diminishing the reality of these very objects. Nevertheless, this important shift of focus does not yet specify exactly how the defense of the reality of objects as appearances should be accomplished.

Below the above-cited paragraph Beck mentions the actual argument on which Kant bases his support of the reality of objects as appearances, and thus distinguishes himself from Berkeley. This has to do with Kant's and Berkeley's concept of an object. For Berkeley an object is simply an association of sensible representations. In comparison, for Kant, "the dignity that representations acquire in referring to objects consists in the fact that thereby the synthesis of the manifold is thought of as necessary" (Beck's letter to Kant, November 10, 1792, AA 11: 385).¹⁷ This is a highly important recognition. Kant's concept of objectivity, indeed, does not rely on an alleged relation to a thing-in-itself. Rather, it relies on the formal criteria, whereby in accordance with an a-priori rule of the understanding, we refer to a certain connection of representations as necessary. Thereby we distinguish the arbitrary association of representations in the individual mind from a necessary connection of representations in the object. I shall return to this unique, and commonly ignored, feature of Kant concept of objectivity in Sect. 12.2.4 below.

¹⁶ The above considerations shall be better understood once we advance in the exposition of Beck's *Standpunctslehre*.

¹⁷ Compare this with Kant: "If we investigate what new characteristic is given to our representations by the **relation to an object**, and what is the dignity that they thereby receive, we find that it does nothing beyond making the combination of representations necessary in a certain way, and subjecting them to a rule." (*KrV*, A197/B242).

Beck's commentary project appeared under the title '*Erläuternder Auszug aus den kritischen Schriften des Herrn Prof. Kant aus Anraten desselben*' (Explanatory abstracts of the critical writing of Prof. Kant, prepared in consultation with the same).¹⁸ The first volume of this series appeared in 1793 including the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*.¹⁹ The second volume appeared in 1794 and includes a commentary of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and the *Metaphysical Foundation of Natural Science*.²⁰ This second volume also includes parts of Kant's, non-published, extended introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, which Kant had entrusted with Beck.²¹

The early development of Beck's third volume, the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*, can be seen in a letter written to Kant on June 17, 1794, as well as in Beck's introduction to the second volume of his explanatory abstracts.²² In the above-mentioned letter, Beck seeks Kant's opinion on his planned third volume of his explanatory abstracts. His ideas, stemming from the issue of the relation between a representation and its object, are better shaped but they are still in a state of preliminary development. Beck claims that the *Critique* leads the reader only gradually to the highest point of transcendental philosophy and thus its main statement is obscured. The *Critique*, Beck argues, speaks of intuitions by means of which something is given and concepts by means of which something is thought. It presents the categories initially as concepts and only later does it explain that the

¹⁸ I take the translation of the English title from di Giovanni and Harris (2000).

¹⁹ As noted by T. L. Meyer (1991, 33), the disproportioned space given in Beck's first volume to the *Critique of Pure Reason* (378 pages) in comparison to the space given to the *Critique of Practical Reason* (102 pages) is indicative of Beck's interests. Nevertheless, I tend to put less emphasis than Meyer on such quantitative distinctions.

²⁰ According to J. E. Erdmann (1848, 537) the first two volumes of Beck's explanatory abstracts were praised by Kant and his followers (though no sources are cited by Erdmann for this statement). Erdmann also notes that Reinhold's student, Friedrich Karl Forberg (1770–1848), based his lectures of Kant's philosophy, given in Jena in 1795, on Beck's and Reinhold's publications. Erich Adickes also commends Beck for his praiseworthy commentary in the first two volumes (Adickes 1920, 608).

²¹ Kant promised and indeed sent to Beck the original Introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, which Kant had discarded due to its length (Kant's letters to Beck, December 4, 1792 and August 18, 1793). Beck published parts of this text as an appendix to his second explanatory volume under the title 'Über Philosophie überhaupt, zur Einleitung in die Kritik der Urteilskraft' (On philosophy in general, towards an introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*). The full text of this original introduction was published by Ernst Cassirer in 1914, as part of his edition of Kant's works. An English translation of the full introduction was published as part of the Cambridge Edition of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Kant 2000). The translator's introduction to the latter also includes a description of the history of this manuscript, (xlii–xliii).

²² Some clues for the next stage of the evolution of Beck's thought can already be seen from his letter to Kant dated August 24, 1793. In this letter Beck reports to Kant that his extensive study of Kant's works has brought him to a clearer understanding of "the highly important distinction between thinking and cognizing, between playing with concepts and concepts having objective validity, and more than anything I have learned to view as synthetic, the connection thought in the moral law, which is often represented as analytic [. . .]". (AA 11: 442).

categories are “actually the activity of the understanding through which it *originally* creates for itself the concept of an object and produces the ‘*I think an object*’” (Beck’s letter to Kant, June 17, 1794, AA 11: 509). This is again Beck’s complaint that the *Critique* does not start with an explication of the objective relation. He states that he has become used to calling this activity of the understanding, expressed by the categories, through which the synthetic unity of consciousness is created, as the “*original attribution*” (ursprüngliche Beilegung).²³ He compares this original activity by which we initially create for ourselves the concept of an object, to the postulate of the geometer. “He starts his geometry from the proposition ‘Conceive of space’ and no discursive representation whatsoever could take its place” (AA 11: 509). In the preface to the second volume of his explanatory abstracts, written on April 3, 1794, just two months prior to the above-mentioned letter to Kant, Beck explains his intentions at greater length. From this preface we can extract that by ‘discursive representation’ Beck means the thought of an object by means of concepts or general properties. Beck argues that discursive representation presupposes an original activity from which it is derived. Discursive representation must always be traced-back to the original attribution, to which Beck also refers by the term ‘representation of a fact’, if it is to become a cognition. He claims that the *Critique* refers to this postulate as the production of the synthetic unity of consciousness and that this principle expresses what the *Critique* means when it says that every analysis presupposes synthesis. Beck’s ideas are presented here in raw form and they would obviously seem confusing to anyone who is introduced to them for the first time. We can see from Kant’s reply to Beck that he too was unsure about Beck’s intentions. “Could you”, he asks, “also make clear what you mean by the word ‘Beilegung’ in Latin?” (Kant’s letter to Beck, July 1, 1794, AA 11: 515). Kant’s uncertainties are clearly expressed in a paragraph at the end of his short letter, in which, following some remarks, he adds: “I notice, as I am writing this down, that I do not even entirely understand myself and I shall wish you luck if you can put this simple, thin thread of our cognitive faculty under a sufficiently bright light.” (AA 11: 515). Despite of the preliminary form in which Beck’s ideas are presented, we can, I believe, see its main characteristics. Beck, as we have seen, was from the very beginning concerned with the relation of a representation to an object. He now argues that this issue should be approached by appealing to an original activity of cognition whereby the relation to an object is first created and which

²³ The term ‘ursprüngliche Beilegung’ (original attribution) is a term that Beck will change in his *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt* to the term ‘ursprüngliche Vorstellen’ (original representing). In the *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt* he uses the term ‘attribution’ exclusively for discursive representing, the representation of an object by means of a concept, that is, the predication of general properties to a reference point. In the work of one author I have found a translation of the term ‘Beilegung’ as ‘reconciliation’. (Thandeka 1995, 46). This dictionary-translation misses the point entirely. The term ‘attribution’, chosen by Arnulf Zweig in his recent translation of Kant’s correspondence as part of the Cambridge Edition of Kant’s works, seems to me to be far better. Additionally, Thandeka does not notice that in his *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt*, Beck no longer uses the term ‘beilegung’ in the context of the original representing.

should serve as a starting point for the epistemological analysis. Beck expresses his conviction that “the postulate ‘to conceive of an object by means of the original attribution’ is the highest principle of philosophy as a whole” (Beck’s letter to Kant, June 17, 1794, AA 11: 509). He argues further, that only by means of this principle can we account for the *Critique*’s distinction between analytic and synthetic, a-priori and a-posteriori, judgments.²⁴ Moreover, this principle alone can explain

What it really is that affects us – whether it is the thing in itself or whether this expression only means a transcendental Idea, or, instead, the object of empirical intuition itself, that is, appearance – and whether the critique argues circularly when it makes the possibility of experience into the principle of synthetic a-priori judgments and yet conceals the principle of causality in the concept of this possibility. (Beck’s letter to Kant, June 17, 1794, AA 11: 510f.)²⁵

The acknowledgment that we can only refer to an object on behalf of an original activity of the understanding brings Beck to the clear conclusion that the object that affects the senses is not a thing-in-itself but an appearance. He has therefore stated, although in general terms, what would later become the main thesis of his *Standpunctslehre*.

At the time when Beck worked on his explanatory abstracts of Kant’s critical philosophy, he was working as a private teacher at the University of Halle.²⁶ He became a close friend of L. H. Jacob, a Kantian professor in Halle. In the time period between the appearance of the second and the third volumes of his commentary project, Beck published anonymously a series of review-articles in the *Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophisches Geistes*, a journal founded by Jacob. These reviews, in chronological order are: Review of J. C. C. Visbeck’s *Die Hauptmomente der Reinholdischen Elementar-Philosophie* (Beck 1795a)²⁷; Review

²⁴ In the preface to the second volume (Beck 1794, 8. The preface is not numbered in the original), Beck confesses, that since he only became aware of the significance of this principle, after the first volume has already been published, it follows that some of his own explanations do not in fact explain but merely repeat Kant’s text.

²⁵ Similar ideas are contained in Beck’s preface to the second volume of his explanatory abstracts (Beck 1794, 9).

²⁶ It was customary that following the submission and successful defense of a dissertation, one would attain the title of a ‘Magister’ and be allowed to offer lectures to students. A Magister offering such courses for students’ fees was called a ‘Privatdozent’ (Private teacher). Unlike the appointed professors who received a steady salary from the university, a Privatdozent was depended on the number of students who attended his classes. Students’ fees were usually not enough to make a living and it was common for young Magisters to supplement their income by having a second job, usually as teachers at local schools. Through his friendship with L. H. Jacob, Beck received a teaching position at the local Gymnasium. In his younger years Kant too had a second job as a sub-librarian in Königsberg.

²⁷ The ascription of this essay to J. S. Beck is based on Meyer (1991, 44, 208–210n3). Meyer bases the ascription of this review to Beck on methodological, thematical and terminological arguments. The methodological argument points to the fact that in all of the reviews ascribed to Beck, the author commences the review with a characterization of the contemporary situation of Kantian oriented philosophy and he locates the reviewed author within this general picture. This methodological argument would appear to be circular since all other reviews ascribed to Beck were also

of J. G. Fichte's *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* and *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (Beck 1795b)²⁸; Review of the second volume of C. L. Reinhold's *Beyträge zur Berichtigung der Mißverständnisse der Philosophen* (Beck 1795c)²⁹; Review of J. H. Abicht's *Hermias, oder Auflösung der die gültige Elementar-Philosophie betreffenden Aenesidemischen Zweifel* (Beck 1795d).³⁰

In all three reviews, which deal, either directly or indirectly, with Reinhold's theory of the power of representation, we witness the centrality of the question regarding the status of the object which affects the senses and which brings about the content of our representations. Beck targets the implicit assumption that this 'object' is the thing-in-itself. He repeatedly mentions the objection of Aenesidemus-Schulze regarding the role of the thing-in-itself in Kant's and especially in Reinhold's version of critical philosophy. It is quite clear that Aenesidemus' objection had a decisive influence on the development of Beck's thought. This is evident, for example, in the Visbeck review. Beck begins his review by mentioning the current debate regarding the alleged cognition of things-in-themselves. He presents Reinhold's attempt to reach the same result as Kant's *Critique* through his famous proposition of consciousness (*der Satz des Bewusstseins*) which reads: "In consciousness, the representation is distinguished from, and related to, the subject and object, by the subject" (Reinhold 1790,

published anonymously. Nevertheless, as shall be discussed below, the ascription of the Fichte review to Beck is quite certain and there are other corroborating arguments for the designation of Beck as the author of the currently discussed, as well as the other, reviews. The thematical argument is based on the author's repeated reference to Reinhold's reshaping of Kant's transcendental philosophy as fragile in light of the objections raised by Aenesidemus-Schulze, an argument, which is repeated in all of the reviews associated with Beck. More than all, the terminology used is very characteristic of Beck. No other contemporary writer other than Beck, used terms and phrases like the following ones: "Verbindung der Vorstellung mit ihrem Gegenstand", "ursprüngliche Vorstellungsart der Kategorien", and "ursprüngliche Synthesis". Moreover, no other cotemporary writer used these terms in the exact same context and meaning as Beck did. The combined effect of the above arguments brings Meyer to the conclusion that Beck was the author of the Visbeck review. I support Meyer's conclusions in this regard.

²⁸ The ascription of this review to Beck is based on Beck's own testimony (Beck's letter to Kant, June 24, 1797, AA 12: 175), as well as L. H. Jacob's letter to Kant (June 22, 1795, AA 12: 26). The ascription of these reviews to Beck is also supported by Adickes (1970, 175) and Dilthey (1889, 642n31). Jacob's letter also confirms that the Reinhold and the Abicht reviews were written by Beck. Fichte was also aware of the identity of the reviewer of his works (cf. *Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, J. G. Fichte, *Sämtliche Werke*. Edited by Immanuel Hermann Fichte. Berlin: Veit und Comp. 1845–46, I:469. [henceforth SW]). The ascription of the Fichte review as well as the Reinhold and Abicht reviews is also supported by the editors of the 13th volume of Kant's Akademie Ausgabe (AA 13: 396). It should also be noted that Beck reviewed the *first* edition of *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*, which appeared in 1794.

²⁹ The ascription of this essay to J. S. Beck is based on the editor of the 13th volume of Kant's Akademie Ausgabe (AA 13: 396) and L. H. Jacob's letter to Kant (June 22, 1795, AA 12: 26). Style and content make this ascription quite certain.

³⁰ The ascription of this essay to J. S. Beck is based on the editor of the 13th volume of Kant's Akademie Ausgabe (AA 13: 396) and L. H. Jacob's letter to Kant (June 22, 1795, AA 12: 26). Style and content make this ascription quite certain.

168ff.).³¹ According to Reinhold, the representation refers to an object on behalf of the matter of the representation, which the object brings about. Against this, Beck points out to the objection raised by Aenesidemus regarding this very relation between the representation and its object. "Since the representation and its object are not the same thing, then a question arises regarding the connection between the latter two; and prior to answering this question, claims of the sort made by the theory of the power of representations are a mere play with words." (Beck 1795a, 85f.). Beck concludes his review by arguing that Visbeck's attempt to free Reinhold from the commitment to the thing-in-itself as that which affects our receptive faculty and brings about the content of our representations, is futile, ineffective and contrary to Reinhold's own text. Beck brings few citations from Reinhold in which the latter explicitly argues for the inevitable role of the thing-in-itself (Beck 1795a, 87f.).³²

In his review of Reinhold's *Beiträge*, Beck similarly argues that Reinhold failed to respond properly to Aenesidemus' objection and that in this work, no less than in his previous publications, Reinhold understands by the affecting object, the thing-in-itself (Beck 1795c, 443, 469). It follows that Reinhold cannot defend himself against Aenesidemus' objection to the circularity included in the principle of the possibility of experience. "If the application of the categories to objects is derived from the principle of the possibility of experience, then the deduction of the categories is circular; this is so since the explanation of the principle of the possibility of experience already presupposes the validity of the law of causality." (Beck 1795c, 430).³³ In other words, the objective validity of the principle of causality is derived from its being a necessary condition for the possibility of experience. However, experience is only objective and real on the non-stated and yet indispensable assumption that it results from the influence of the thing-in-itself on the subject's sensible faculty. Since the objectivity of experience presupposes the causal law then the deduction of the categories from the possibility of experience is circular. All difficulties, Beck argues, can be traced back to an assumption shared by skeptics and dogmatists alike. "To the essence of all dogmatism, regarding which there is a consensus between the skeptic and the positive dogmatist, belongs the covertly assumed and yet self-contradictory claim, that objective reality is constituted by the agreement between the representation and the thing-in-itself." (Beck 1795c, 469). Beck claims that Kant, on the contrary, explains objective reality and the possibility of philosophy as a strict science, without any commitment to an alleged cognition of things-in-themselves.³⁴

³¹ Cited by Beck (1795a, 85). The English translation of texts from all of Beck's reviews discussed below is my own.

³² Beck refers to Reinhold (1789, 248, 376). I shall discuss the details Beck's arguments against Reinhold in Sect. 12.1.1.

³³ Beck has already mentioned the circularity claim in his letter to Kant, June 17, 1794, and in his preface to the second volume of his explanatory abstracts.

³⁴ By rejecting the relevance of an alleged cognition of things-in-themselves for Kant ("Kant has demonstrated [...] that objective truth is possible without absolutely any cognition of

The Abicht review repeats arguments similar to the previous two reviews. This review in its entirety is built around Aenesidemus' objection, which in Beck's words is translated into the by now familiar claim that neither Reinhold nor Abicht can demonstrate the connection between a representation and its object. The attempt to solve this riddle by appealing to the influence of the object on our senses is a futile one since it can still be objected that no connection has been demonstrated between the representation of this affecting object and the affecting object itself. This argument is the core of Beck's objections to Abicht's attempt to defend the objective reality of our cognition by appealing to the principle of contradiction. Abicht argues that we necessarily refer to our representations as caused by the influence of an object. The claim that no object corresponds to them would contradict an absolutely necessary thought and he deduces from this the general correspondence of objects to our representations with apodictic certainty. Against this Beck points out, basing himself on Aenesidemus, that Abicht's argument at best proves the necessity of thought. Nothing, however, follows from this argument regarding the existence of an object distinct from our thoughts.

I believe that the question with which Beck was concerned in these reviews, a question around which, in Beck's view, Kant's entire critical philosophy revolves, is quite clear. This is no other than the question regarding the relation of a representation to an actual object and the related issue of the role of the thing-in-itself in Kant's theoretical philosophy. Equally clear is the relation of this systematic issue to the contemporary debate regarding the role of the thing-in-itself in Kant's critical philosophy. This debate centered around the objection, forcefully voiced by Aenesidemus-Schulze and Jacobi,³⁵ but shared by many other critics of Kant, that without the thing-in-itself Kant's system is reduced to sheer idealism, while any attempt to retain even the slimmest role for the thing-in-itself, contradicts the basic tenets of Kant's critical philosophy.

While the issue with which Beck was concerned is clear, the solution, to which Beck alludes in these reviews, is far from being clear. Beck recommends to Visbeck to turn his attention to "the original manner of representation in the categories, the original synthesis towards objects" (Beck 1795a, 88). Similarly he expects Reinhold to carefully analyze "the original synthesis in the categories, which comprises the true transcendental standpoint, from which alone the spirit of the Kantian deduction of the categories can be accomplished" (Beck 1795c, 54). In another passage of the Reinhold review, Beck deals with the objection regarding the

things-in-themselves", (Beck 1795c, 469)), Beck *entirely* rejects the relevance of the thing-in-itself for Kant's positive theory of cognition. See also my discussion of Kant's defense of objective reality, Sect. 12.2.4 below. Beck does not mention the possible distinction between cognition and thought in this regard. I shall, in due course (Sect. 12.2.2 below), analyze this issue at length to see how we should understand Kant's claim that although we cannot cognize things-in-themselves we can, and in contexts must, think them. In light of this analysis we shall be able to reevaluate Beck's interpretation of Kant.

³⁵ For the significance of Jacobi and his famous dilemma for Beck's thought, cf. Beck's letter to Kant June 20, 1797 (AA 12: 165). For a brief discussion of Jacobi's and Aenesidemus-Schulze's objections, cf. Chap. 3 above.

perplexing persistence of substance in general. He argues against an attack on this principle that: "It [the objection] requires intuition for the substance, since this objection does not notice that the original composition of the homogeneous, (the intuition), is yet not the original positing of a substrate, whereby time itself can first be represented." (Beck 1795c, 440). In the Abicht review, Beck demands attention to the "true transcendental point, on which the whole use of the understanding is founded, that is, the postulate: to represent something originally; the latter is the spirit of the category and its schema, whereby it is an original composition and original recognition" (Beck 1795d, 559).³⁶ These passages must have seemed enigmatic to anyone of Beck's contemporaries who, *ipso facto*, could not have been familiar with Beck's not yet published *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*.

Beck's review of Fichte's *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* and the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* focuses mainly on a criticism of Fichte's foundationalism, that is, Fichte's attempt to uncover the highest principle of all philosophy.³⁷ Fichte argues that all scientific truths should be grounded on basic principles inherent within each of the specific sciences. The basic principles

³⁶ Here Beck mentions for the first time the 'original synthesis' and 'original recognition', which, as we shall soon see, constitutes the two aspects of each and every category.

³⁷ Beck makes it clear in the very beginning of his review that he is disappointed from Fichte's line of thought. His tone and his arguments throughout the review emphasize his negative attitude. L. H. Jacob, the editor of the *Annalen*, added a note below Beck's review mentioning that another review, by a different reviewer, follows the current review. This may indicate Jacob's discomfort from Beck's negative attitude and his intention to balance this with another review of a different tone. No such second review of Fichte's above-mentioned works was published. At least since 1797 Fichte was aware of the identity of his reviewer, as is clear from a note in the *Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre* (SW, I:444f.) and also a note in the *Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre* (SW, I:469). Fichte expressed his dissatisfaction and even bitterness regarding the review on various occasions: (a) the separately published introduction to the first edition of the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* which appeared in July-August 1795, (SW, I:89); (b) the above mentioned notes to the *Erste* and *Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*; (c) the introduction to the second edition of *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*, published in September 1798, (SW, I:34f.). Beck's review was appended by Fichte to the second edition of *Über den Begriff* along with another review which strangely was not a review of Fichte's latter work but a review of a work of Schelling; (d) a letter written to L. H. Jacob, March 4, 1799 (J. G. Fichte, *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*. Stuttgart: F. Frommann, 1962–2012, III(3): 205 [henceforth GA]). This letter was translated into English by Daniel Breazeale (1988, 424). I concur with Fichte that Beck's review did not penetrate deep into Fichte's intentions (for a more detailed discussion of Beck's understanding of Fichte in the above-mentioned review, cf. Meyer (1991, 57–67)). Beck was convinced that his own *Standpunctslehre* alone represented the correct view of critical philosophy. Since he recognized at the very beginning that Fichte's doctrine, in contrast with the *Standpunctslehre*, is a form of foundationalism, which concerns itself only with conceptual analysis and conceptual derivation (as opposed to Beck's emphasis on original, pre-conceptual, representation), he adopted a rather dismissive attitude and did not pay much attention to the details of Fichte's ideas. Finally, it should be noted that this review of Fichte's early works contributes relatively less to the understanding of the development of Beck's thought towards the *Standpunctslehre* than the previously mentioned reviews, which aim, directly or indirectly, at Reinhold's theory of the power of representation.

of the specific sciences should be grounded on the principles of the science of knowledge (the science of all sciences), which in turn are grounded on the basic principle of the science of knowledge itself. Fichte recognizes that the varieties of the individual truths of the specific sciences cannot simply be derived from or reduced to one basic principle of the entire science of knowledge. Fichte therefore argues that the science of knowledge determines principles that are necessary but of general character. The science of knowledge, therefore, leaves it to the specific sciences to determine how these necessary principles are to be realized in each and every case. Fichte demonstrates the above by the relationship between the science of knowledge and the specific science of geometry. The science of knowledge, he argues, determines space and the point as necessary absolute limits. It nevertheless prescribes complete freedom to the imagination in determining how to posit and move the point in space. Thus, the doctrine of how the point describes a line through its movement in space belongs to the science of geometry, which operates within the general boundaries or conditions set by the science of knowledge (Beck 1795b, 129–136). Beck objects to Fichte's method, which consists of combining and analyzing mere concepts and of deriving and grounding conceptual principles on one another (Beck 1795b, 122, 133). Regarding the example of the relationship between the science of knowledge and the specific science of geometry, Beck argues that space is not given prior to the drawing of lines in it; rather space is only given with the synthetic activity through which a lined is drawn. According to Beck it is impossible to separate space from its synthesis, that is, from the original composition of the homogeneous (Beck 1795b, 139f.). In contrast to Fichte's doctrine of deriving truths from higher and higher principles Beck speaks of the importance of an original representing. Beck does not elaborate on the meaning of the term 'original representing' and his intentions therefore remain unclear. The issue of the thing-in-itself is mentioned in this review only once. Beck refers to Fichte's remark in the introduction to the first edition of *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* (SW, I.29) according to which although we represent things only as appearances we nevertheless feel them as things-in-themselves. Beck notes that this view presupposes that we have cognition of the thing-in-itself, which supposedly affects our feelings.³⁸ In his characteristic manner Beck asks what connects this cognition with its object (Beck 1795b, 124).³⁹ The distinction

³⁸ Although Fichte claims that the thing-in-itself is related to our feelings (rather than to our representations), nevertheless this claim itself is a theoretical claim, which presupposes the existence of the thing-in-itself including its relation to our faculty of feelings.

³⁹ According to Meyer (1991, 54) this criticism of Beck's caused Fichte to exclude this footnote from the second edition of *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*. In my view, whatever reasons Fichte had to remove this note from the second edition of *Über den Begriff*, it cannot be concluded that he renounced the doctrine behind it. First, the appeal to feeling is repeated in the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (SW, I:279). In reply, it can be argued that since the latter appeared in 1794/1795, only shortly after *Über den Begriff*, then the reference to the *Grundlage* is inconclusive. However, the idea behind the appeal to feeling is rooted deep in Fichte's doctrine. In his 1798 *System der Sittenlehre* he uses the appeal to feeling (Gefühl) as part of his argument for

between representing and feeling in relation to the thing-in-itself constitutes only a part of Fichte's stand on the issue of the thing-in-itself and it shall be better understood on the background of the larger context of Fichte's doctrine. I therefore defer further discussion of this issue to Sect. 12.1.2, dedicated to the comparison of Beck's and Fichte's views on the issue of the thing-in-itself.

The third volume of Beck's explanatory abstracts (Beck 1796a) appeared under the sub-title: '*Einzig möglicher Standpunct aus welchem die critische Philosophie beurteilt werden muss*' (The only possible standpoint from which the critical philosophy must be judged). Although this work was not, strictly speaking, a commentary of Kant, Beck nevertheless believed he was expounding the true, essential, intention of Kant himself. Beck therefore published the book under the same title as the first and second volumes: *Erläuternder Auszug aus den critischen Schriften des Herrn Prof. Kant aus Anraten desselben* (Explanatory abstracts of the critical writing of Prof. Kant, prepared in consultation with the same).⁴⁰

Beck's *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* comprises four parts. The first part is intended to unfold the difficulties and contradictions, with which the dogmatic form of thinking is entangled and the entirely dogmatic character that Kant's critical philosophy must inevitably assume when viewed from the common standpoint. For this purpose Beck first presents the perplexing status of the concept of the bond between a representation and its object. In order to demonstrate the centrality and inescapability of this issue Beck undertakes two tasks. First he discusses various Kantian distinctions or concepts, and he attempts to show that these concepts must remain unintelligible to us as long as the main question regarding the bond between a representation and its object remains unresolved. Secondly, Beck devotes a large section of his work to demonstrating the inability of Reinhold's theory of the power of representation to overcome these difficulties and the inherent circularity of its arguments due precisely to its inability to address the main issue of the bond between a representation and its object. The second part of the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* presents and discusses the details of Beck's theory of original representing. This part could be compared with the Transcendental Aesthetic and Transcendental Analytic of the first *Critique*. The third part of Beck's work is devoted to demonstrating how the other parts of Kant's critical project are equally dependent for their intelligibility on our ability to master the transcendental standpoint, which, according to Beck, is the highest principle of the

the belief in the existence of the external world where it is also tied to Fichte's concept of drive (Trieb). The ego knows itself as an active being through its drives and it perceives its drives through feeling. Fichte argues that insofar as I think and will, I am free. However, insofar as I have drives and feelings I am constrained for in the latter case I am part – and only part – of nature (*SW*, IV:109f.). Within a larger context, the appeal to feeling is part of Fichte's doctrine of the primacy of practical reason and this is another reason to doubt whether Fichte's exclusion of the above-mentioned note from the second edition of *Über den Begriff* signifies any change of opinion.

⁴⁰This issue, especially the use of the words "prepared in consultation with the same [Kant]", which gave the wrong impression that Kant authorized this work of Beck's, later became the formal trigger of the deterioration of the Kant-Beck relationship. Cf. Sect. 12.2.7 below. The English translation of the title and the subtitle are taken from di Giovanni and Harris (2000).

whole of critical philosophy. This part includes discussions of the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, the Dialectic of the first *Critique*, practical philosophy as in the second *Critique*, and the power of judgment as in the third *Critique*. The fourth and last part is a commentary of the first *Critique* from the introduction up to the end of the analytic of principles, undertaken from Beck's unique standpoint.

In the following chapters I focus mainly on those parts of Beck's work, which concern his analysis of Kant's first *Critique* and more specifically its analytical parts. These parts occupy by far the largest aspect of Beck's work. I therefore base my discussion mainly on the first, second and fourth parts of Beck's *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*.⁴¹ I shall also devote some space to the discussion of Beck's view of Kant's practical philosophy. Due to limitations of scope I am obliged to leave out the discussion of other parts of Beck's work which are less relevant to the systematic question of this current study and which in addition do not constitute the main focus of Beck himself.

⁴¹ I defer the comprehensive discussion of Beck's criticism of Reinhold and the comparison between these two authors, to Part IV. This shall allow me, in the following chapters, to present Beck's own ideas in a more fluent manner, as well as to discuss Beck's criticism of Reinhold within a larger systematic context. In the following chapters I base my presentation of Beck's views mainly on the third volume of his explanatory abstracts, the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* (Beck 1796a). I supplement this with references to Beck's *Grundriß der kritischen Philosophie* (Beck 1796b), which Beck intended as a more concise guidebook to his view of transcendental philosophy.

Chapter 5

The Problem of the Bond Between a Representation and Its Object

Beck starts his discussion in the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* by posing a paradox, the recognition of which is, in his mind, the first step to unraveling the secrets of critical philosophy and indeed of the whole use of our understanding:

What could be stranger than the claim that a certain concept lies firm in our minds, whenever our faculty of cognition is active, and that all of our representations represent something to us only insofar as we operate with this concept, and yet this concept itself is completely empty and has no object whatsoever? Nevertheless this is indeed the case with the concept of the relation of our representations to objects. (*EmS*, 8)¹

Beck notes the peculiar status of the statement that “I relate my representation to an object” or the similar statements that “to my representation there corresponds an object” or that “it [my representation] is objectively valid” (*EmS*, 8). Since we only have representations and yet the object that corresponds to them must be distinct from them, it seems unclear what we mean by saying that our representations relate or correspond to an object. Beck adds that it is of no use to appeal to the influence of the object on the senses. The bewilderment reemerges immediately when attention is paid to the question of the bond or connection between the concept of this ‘affecting-object’ and this ‘affecting-object’ itself. The concept of ‘an affecting-object’ is a concept like any other. The object of this concept is distinct from the mere concept. The concept of ‘an affecting-object’ is, therefore, no less dependent on the general question regarding the relation between representations and objects.²

It equally does not suffice to say that a representation, *as such*, refers to an object.³ This is of course true, but since a representation is distinct from its object, it still remains open whether a representation in fact has an object. “Not only that an

¹ Unless otherwise mentioned, the translation of texts from Beck’s *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* is taken from George di Giovanni (di Giovanni and Harris 2000, 204–249) where such is available, with minor changes.

² Beck already brought up this argument against Abicht (Chap. 4 above).

³ “The issue here does not depend on whether we analyze the concept of a representation in a certain way and it cannot suffice to say, in response to the above question, that that the very concept of a representation entails that it represents an object” (*EmS*, 9). This is clearly a reference

object is being represented through it, which is valid of any representation, but also that it *has* an object.” (*EmS*, 130)⁴

It should be noted that the problem is not the connection of a specific empirical representation to its object. Many empirical representations turn out to be devoid of objects. However, *the very question* whether a specific empirical representation has or has not an object already presupposes that such a question can be asked. In order to look for such a connection in any particular case, the possibility of relating representations to objects is presupposed. It is the concept of such a connection *in general* that is a condition for thinking such a connection in any concrete case. In Kantian terms it would be the issue of the transcendental condition that makes possible the connection of any empirical concept with its object.

Dogmatism assumes such a bond between a representation and its object without being able to account for it and, as Beck notes, the idealistic move to renounce any such bond has an undeniably reasonable force.⁵ Dogmatists assume the existence of an object as an entity wholly independent of our representations of it. It is therefore no other than the assumption of the existence of a thing-in-itself; this is a *petitio principii* since the existence of an entity distinct from our representations – and all the more so a thing-in-itself – is exactly what is in question here. Idealists, unwilling to succumb to such dogmatism, renounce the existence of an entity independent of cognition and are then left with nothing but representations. Both dogmatists and idealists alike assume that an object distinct from our representations, an object to which representations correspond, can only be a thing-in-itself. Otherwise the object could not stand over and against our representations. Both parties operate with only two dichotomized types of existence – either that of a transcendent thing-in-itself or that of representations immanent to cognition. Both dogmatism and idealism alike fail to appreciate the possibility of an object distinct from a representation, and yet not a thing-in-itself. Neither side of the argument attempts to find the source of the bond between a representation and its object. They fail to comprehend what is meant by the Kantian claim that the objects of cognition are appearances. Beck admits that the claim that we know objects only as they appear to us and not as they are in-themselves may seem to equate Kant’s critical idealism with Berkeley’s idealism. It may seem to follow that our cognition is nothing but mere dreaming. “For how else, after all, are we to understand the *Critique*’s own statement that the objects of our cognition are not things-in-themselves but mere representations?” (*EmS*, 12)⁶

to Reinhold and his followers. Cf. also the discussion of Beck’s reviews of Reinhold and Abicht, Chap. 4 above.

⁴ This statement could be restated as follows: ‘The representation of an object is not the same thing as the object of a representation’.

⁵ Beck is far from advocating idealism. His note is only made to emphasize a step in the construction of his argument (*EmS*, 10f.). Compare this with Kant’s respect for skeptical idealism in the Fourth Paralogism (*KrV*, A377f.).

⁶ This is, in so many words, the constant objection shared by the majority of Kant’s critics and which is usually based on the text of the Fourth Paralogism of the first edition of the first *Critique* (Chap. 2 above). I shall return to the issue of the immanence-transcendence dichotomy and its perils in Sect. 12.2.1.

Beck insists that no solution to the perplexing problem of the relation of a representation to its object is possible by means of discursive representation, that is, by the use of concepts. Discursive representation, by which Beck intends thought by means of concepts, cannot get around the problem of the bond between a representation and its object for such a bond is already presupposed by any usage of discursive representation. A concept is a representation of an object. Since any object is regarded as distinct from its mere concept, discursive representation already presupposes that an answer has been given to the main question under discussion – the relation of representations to objects in general. The solution to this paradox must be found in a cognitive process that is different from discursive representation. Both the meaning and the validity of our concepts lie in what Beck calls ‘original representing’. Only the clarification of the process of original representing – in contrast to discursive representation, which is only derived – can clarify for us the meaning of the *Critique*’s statement that we do not know things as they are in themselves but only as they appear to us.

We need to note, Beck argues, that the concept of the connection between a representation and its object is only empty as long as we operate with discursive representation that is “as long as the thing in-itself is being represented in it” (*EmS*, 13).⁷ From this perspective, Berkeley’s denial of the existence of objects in space is completely understandable and irrefutable. One should not expect to find in Kant’s refutation of idealism a statement diametrically opposed to Berkeley. In other words, one should not expect to find in Kant, a proof of the relation of a representation to an object using conceptual analysis. Such an argument would amount to an attempted proof of the existence of things-in-themselves. The relation between representations and objects can indeed be substantiated, but this can only be accomplished by appealing to the original representing and the principle of the original synthetic unity of consciousness. Appealing to such a principle, pertaining to the knowing subject, would of course mean that the object, whose reality is proven, is not a thing-in-itself but a phenomenal one.

In this preliminary stage of his exposition, Beck cannot yet disclose the full meaning of his notion of ‘original representing’ and his aim is only to make the reader attentive to the complications that arise when we remain by discursive representation. The next stage of his argument is therefore devoted to showing that as long as the relation of representations to objects remains unaccounted for, all of the major distinctions of Kant’s critical philosophy must seem unintelligible to us.

⁷ Since discursive representation cannot account for the relation to an object, the existence of this object is therefore presupposed as prior to, and regardless of, all activity of our cognition. It is then inevitably seen as a thing-in-itself.

Chapter 6

The Requisiteness of Resolving the Problem of the Bond Between a Representation and Its Object, for Making Intelligible the *Critique's* Main Concepts and Distinctions

6.1 The Distinction Between A-Priori and A-Posteriori Cognitions

The main difficulty with the familiar distinction – common to both dogmatic as well as critical philosophy – between a-priori and a-posteriori cognitions is revealed immediately when we attempt to clarify for ourselves what in general is meant by the term ‘cognition’. The answer, in Beck’s words, is that to cognize something means “to represent to ourselves the connection between a representation and its object” (*EmS*, 16).¹ It follows that any cognition, *as such*, whether a-priori or

The following chapters correspond to §3–§9 of the first part of the *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt*. These sections of Beck’s work were not included in di Giovanni’s translation and therefore all translations of passages from these sections are my own. In general I make an effort to follow Beck’s text as closely as possible. In order to make the discussion short and clear, I try to make the arguments more concise and orderly, when required. I admit that in the following series of chapters there is some repetition of arguments, both between the arguments of these chapters themselves, and in respect of the arguments discussed above within Beck’s correspondence with Kant and within Beck’s review-articles. I have chosen to present Beck’s discussions of these issues, despite the repetition involved, for the following reasons: (a) the repetitions are included in Beck’s original work and since Beck is a relatively less known author it is, in my view, preferable to adopt a general attitude of widening rather than narrowing down the exposition of his views; (b) the majority of the arguments in the following chapters are directly relevant to the main issue of this research. In spite of some repetitions, they highlight this rather slippery issue from different angles and thus they are helpful in providing a better understanding of the issues in question.

¹ Beck’s formulation has the disadvantage that it implies a reflective attitude since it follows that cognition is not the representation of an object (or a representation connected to an object) but the representation of the connection of a representation to an object. This clearly was not Beck’s intention by this definition. After all, the point, which Beck wishes to establish, is that in cognition there is a gap or distinction between the representation and its object. He does not mean that in cognition we represent this gap itself (which would make cognition into a second-order representation), but only that this gap is present in any cognition. It seems that Beck – knowingly or unknowingly – follows a similar unfortunate definition made by Kant himself, cf. *KrV*, A68/B93: “Since no representation pertains to an object immediately except intuition alone, a concept is thus

a-posteriori, already presupposes the general validity of the connection between a representation and its object. Since the latter has been shown to be merely imaginary, then “one can do nothing less than to deny all cognitions, be them empirical or pure” (*EmS*, 16). Directing the attention of the reader to this issue could have been enough to show that without resolving the general question regarding the bond between a representation and its object, one could not even begin to discuss the distinction between a-priori and a-posteriori cognitions. However, Beck points out further difficulties, which become apparent when we attempt to clarify the specific distinction between a-priori and a-posteriori intuitions and similarly between a-priori and a-posteriori concepts.

It is commonly argued that a-priori or pure intuition is distinguished from a-posteriori or empirical intuition by the fact that the latter does while the former does not arise from the influence of an object on our senses. This formulation leaves both kinds of intuition in a very vulnerable state. As Beck has already shown, the appeal to the influence of the object on us cannot, under any circumstances, account for the relation of empirical intuitions to an object. The state of pure intuitions seems to be even worse. The appeal to the influence of an object is irrelevant in this case and there does not seem to be any other possible solution. Another difficulty arises when one attempts to justify the claim that a pure intuition is distinguished from an empirical one by the fact that the former can, while the latter cannot, be converted into a universal concept. But how can we vouch for this unique feature of pure intuitions? Regardless of their distinction from empirical intuitions, pure intuitions are nevertheless concrete, singular representations. One must be able to account for the construction of universally valid propositions upon them, as in the case of the axioms of geometry. It would seem that the state of empirical intuitions is better than the state of pure intuitions. In fact, unless we can explain the general relation of representations to their objects, and in particular the relation of both pure and empirical intuitions to their objects, then both kinds of intuitions shall remain empty for us (*EmS*, 19).²

Similar difficulties emerge when we turn our attention to the distinction made between empirical and pure concepts. Empirical concepts are said to arise from experience. However, this explanation is nothing more than a restatement of the appeal to the influence of an object, an appeal, which we have already analyzed. The state of pure concepts, like the state of pure intuitions, seems to be even worse. “How in the world have we come by these pure concepts when experience could not

never immediately related to an object, but is always related to some other representation of it (whether that be an intuition or itself already a concept).” Kant only intends to say that a concept is not directly, but only indirectly, related to an object, through intuition. Nevertheless, Kant’s statement may imply that while intuition is a representation of an object, a concept is the representation of a representation of an object. The latter formulation transforms a concept into a reflective representation, which clearly was not Kant’s original intention.

²One must remember that Beck does not mean that these questions are in principle unanswerable. Rather, he wants to convince his readers that these questions are unanswerable *as long as we operate with mere concepts*.

have been their source?" (*EmS*, 21). The answer of dogmatic philosophy that these concepts are innate is in Beck's mind, nothing more than *qualitas occultas*, that is, a mysterious answer, which hides more than it reveals. For it still remains unaccounted for, how we came to possess these concepts completely independent of experience. The answer of critical philosophy that these concepts make experience itself possible does not fare any better. On its own, this answer too does not explain how it is possible that we possess in us a-priori the conditions for the possibility of experience.

Beck's discussions may at first seem as nothing more than preliminary remarks designed to trigger the uninitiated student to pay attention to the main questions of critical philosophy. Nevertheless, Beck thought that many of Kant's supporters were doing no more than repeating the *Critique's* words without being able to explain the essential doctrine behind these words. It is indeed not enough to say that pure intuitions are universally valid for objects since they are the forms to which all intuition must comply. The latter explanation remains no more than a mere play on words unless it can be demonstrated that pure intuition is the universal form of the intuition of *objects*. It is not enough to show that pure intuition is a condition of our own sense perception. The requirement is to show that it applies to actual objects. Similarly, to attempt to ground the validity of pure concepts of the understanding in the claim that they stand for the very possibility of experience is on its own no explanation at all. Without being able to show what authorizes us to relate representations to actual objects, the above statements remain no more than an empty use of words since the main issue here is the distinction between something merely represented and something actual.

6.2 The Distinction Between Appearances and Things-in-Themselves

In this chapter Beck's discussion is directed at showing that as long as the question regarding the connection between a representation and its object remains unaccounted for, then Kant's critical idealism is doomed to fluctuate between two equally extreme positions: either that of dogmatic realism or that of material idealism.

Beck first presents the main dogmatic claim according to which we know things as they are in themselves when we abstract from our representations all that which belongs merely to our own sensibility. Similarly, according to dogmatism, we know things as appearances when we attribute to them what in truth belongs only to our own manner of sense representation. Against the dogmatic distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves Beck brings the following objections. First and foremost, we must acknowledge that, as representations, intellectual representations are just as dependent on the validity of the relation between representations and objects, as sensible representations. As long as this relation remains

unaccounted for, intellectual representations cannot be said to relate to any kind of object, all the more so a thing-in-itself. Second, even dogmatism confesses that we cannot attribute any positive characteristic to the noumena. In this respect Beck argues that as long as an object is represented through mere negations, then this is as good as admitting that thereby no object is represented at all. Third and last, Beck argues that when we abstract from our representations all that which belongs to our sensibility, there is left nothing at all and we can no longer represent any object whatsoever (*EmS*, 24f.).³

Beck now claims that when taking all of the above considerations into account, the dogmatic claim for the alleged knowledge of things-in-themselves becomes much closer to the claim of critical idealism, which limits our knowledge to appearances. Nevertheless, Beck continues, there seems to be an important distinction between dogmatic and critical philosophy. According to dogmatic philosophy, truth consists of the agreement of our representations with things-in-themselves, while according to critical philosophy truth consists of the agreement of our representations with appearances. Dogmatic philosophy takes for granted that things-in-themselves, notwithstanding the inability to attribute even a single positive characteristic to them, exist as something independent of our representations and constitute the substrate which lies at the basis of our appearances. In contrast, critical philosophy, although it mentions things-in-themselves, nevertheless speaks of appearances and posits the reality of our cognitions in the consciousness of objects as appearances. However, the latter move seems to commit critical philosophy to idealism. Although the reader of the *Critique* ultimately expects its author to ground the reality of appearances in the existence of things-in-themselves and thereby to openly oppose itself to Berkeleyan idealism, the *Critique* suffices with proving the existence of appearances only. It therefore proves the existence of that which no one doubts.

Everyone must admit that all our cognition has no reality whatsoever, when one denies from it that through which it is related to things-in-themselves. In the end, critical idealism amounts to the claim that appearances (mere representations) exist, and therefore there can be no more striking agreement than that between the claims of critical and Berkeleyan idealism. (*EmS*, 27)

Although a closer consideration of the dogmatic claim for the cognition of things-in-themselves would convince us that it is an empty cognition – for it actually consists of mere negations – nevertheless dogmatic philosophy at least maintains that our representations are related to something that is not a representation and this latter relation constitutes what is in fact real in our cognition. The critical philosopher must admit that what he calls empirical truth is nothing more

³ This is indeed a frequent claim of Kant, which is commonly ignored. This issue is related to the proper interpretation of the Kantian claim that the understanding extends beyond sensibility. This issue shall be discussed at length in Sects. 12.2.2 and 12.2.3 below. In this regard, cf. also Kant's claim in *The Only Possible Argument* of 1763, that without content, thought itself is annulled (discussed in Sect. 2.1 above).

than a mere wordplay since according to him reality is no more than an inter-connection of representations (*EmS*, 28, 30).

The two alternatives, between which the interpretation of critical philosophy oscillates, can most easily be brought out when attempting to explain the statement, with which the *Critique* begins its exposition. It says that objects influence us and that this influence triggers our cognitive powers into action and that as a result representations arise within us. Most expositors have understood under this ‘influencing object’, the thing-in-itself. Beck acknowledges that this interpretation is very understandable, “for it would be very strange indeed to say that the representation produces itself, which would follow had we understood these objects to be appearances” (*EmS*, 30). Critical philosophy therefore has only two alternatives. If it wishes to uphold the reality of our cognitions, it must side with dogmatism and suffer all of the latter’s inherent contradictions. If, on the other hand, it chooses to avoid the difficulties, with which dogmatic philosophy is inevitably entangled, then it must admit that it is not different from the material idealism of Berkeley.

In this entire section of his work – the first half of the first part of the *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt* (*EmS*, 15–58) – Beck makes an effort to make the best case possible against critical philosophy. This is obviously done for methodological reasons only. By making the strongest case against the view he intends to defend, Beck shows that he is fully aware of what may be the most persistent and irritating objection against critical philosophy. He puts in plain sight the issues that need to be addressed if the demands of this objection are to be met with. He also builds up the tension and the expectation for his promised solution to this difficulty.

At the end of his discussions in this chapter, Beck makes a statement that is highly important for my own argument in the current research:

The following [continuation of this work] shows very clearly, that *the understanding thinks an object in itself only as a transcendental object*, regarding which it remains completely unknown, whether it is found in us or outside of us, and whether it is annulled along with sensibility or whether something would be left over when the latter [sensibility] is removed. (*EmS*, 31. The italics are my own)

Beck does not expand on this statement and I can neither do so at this stage. I shall, however, return to the issue of the transcendental object later in this work (Sects. 12.2.2, 12.2.3, and 12.2.4 below).

6.3 The Distinction Between Analytic and Synthetic Judgments

Beck’s argument regarding the Kantian distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments employs a similar tactic to the one used in the previous chapters. In an analytic judgment we ascribe to an object a predicate that was already thought in the concept, which functions as the subject of the judgment. In a synthetic judgment we

ascribe to an object a predicate that was not included in the subject concept. Beck emphasizes the fact that in both cases we presuppose an object as a reference point to which predicates may be attached, regardless of the further question of whether these predicates were or were not already thought in the subject concept of the judgment in question. Since this reference point cannot be accounted for then the whole discussion of the above distinction is irrelevant.

Beck's discussion – according to which both analytic and synthetic judgments include a relation to an object – may seem to blur the distinction, so crucial for Kant, between the logical and the real. Analytical judgments express a merely logical relation and they therefore abstract from any relation to an object. A relation to an object is included in synthetic judgments only. This relation to an object in synthetic judgments is due to their reliance on intuition, either empirical or pure (*KrV*, A247f./B304). Nevertheless, Beck is correct to argue that any judgment, as such, expresses a connection of concepts, and it therefore presupposes a reference point. This is just as true for analytic, as it is for synthetic, judgments even though this reference point is, in the case of analytic judgments, merely tentatively or, to use Kant's terms, problematically presupposed. Conceptual thought, *as such*, presupposes a reference point to which predications can be attached.

Beck's emphasis, within his discussions in the current chapter, on the objective relation included in synthetic judgments – both a-priori and a-posteriori – shows that he is aware of the central role that this relation has within the latter kind of judgments.⁴ The discussion of the objective relation in synthetic a-posteriori judgments points back to the complexities we have already discussed regarding empirical intuition and its relation to an object. The issue of the objective relation in synthetic a-priori judgments points back to our discussion, above, of the objective relation within pure intuition. It is also linked to the issue of the possibility of experience, an issue that will be discussed below.

6.4 The Critical Theory of Space and Time

In order to demonstrate the difficulties in understanding the *Critique's* doctrine of space and time, Beck discusses the complexities inherent in various aspects of this doctrine. Beck discusses, first, the *Critique's* claim that time and space are the pure forms of our own intuition. This critical claim stands in contrast to the dogmatic claim according to which space is the order of things as simultaneous and time is the order of things as successive. The dogmatic doctrine is clearly vulnerable to the objection regarding the missing link between a representation and its object. For I

⁴The relation to an object is essential for synthetic judgments. In contrast, the analytic judgment, despite the fact in it the relation to an object is still presupposed, abstracts from the concrete consequences of the relation to an object. An analytic judgment indeed refers to *something* but it completely disregards the question of whether this thing has or has not objective reality.

must ask myself “what connects my representation of things in this or that order and [my representation of] this order with the same things and the same order as objects” (*EmS*, 36). In other words, my representation of space and time is distinct from space and time themselves. I refer to them by means of my representations, but that to which I refer – time and space as objective – are distinct from the mere representation of them. “One must consider that it is beyond the point to think and to connect representations as it pleases us; rather, hereby we have in mind a reference point, an object, that determines us to think in this and no other way.” The question remains “how we stand in regard to this reference point, and what it is that connects our representation to it, that is, to the object” (*EmS*, 36f.).

The *Critique*, of course, does not refer to time and space as objective relations completely independent of the knowing subject. Nevertheless, the *Critique* does refer to time and space as objective. Although time and space are not themselves things, they are nevertheless inevitably thought of as connected to things; that is, things, which stand in this or that relation to one another. Whether time and space are thought of as empirical or as pure intuitions, they are, in both cases, assumed to be valid for objects. We are, therefore, brought back to the problem of the bond between a representation and its object. As already demonstrated, this relation to an object is just as pressing regarding a-posteriori as it is regarding a-priori intuitions. It may be argued that the *Critique* is exempt from this criticism since it speaks of time and space rather than of *representations of* time and space. However, Beck argues, this claim appears to be meaningless. We only operate with representations and it would be self-contradictory to say that a representation represents nothing. Although the *Critique* refers to time and space as the forms of our own intuition, nevertheless, the *Critique* cannot but argue that what it tells us about the nature of time and space is not arbitrary but is determined by the real nature of time and space.

Beck’s discussion above implicitly includes two distinct arguments. The first is based on the fact that since according to critical philosophy time and space are valid for objects (they are not merely subjective but are also objective), then the doctrine of time and space is still dependent on the general question regarding the relation of representations to their objects. The second argument is based on the fact that a reflective representation is no less related to an object distinct from itself, than a non-reflective representation. Critical philosophy is not concerned with objects but with the mode of the knowledge of objects, and it is therefore reflective, or second-order, in kind. Nevertheless, even in reflection there exists the same gap between the second-order reflective representation and its object (the first-order, non-reflective, representation). In terms of the gap between a representation and its object, a reflective representation is not distinguished from a non-reflective representation.

In his discussions, Beck, in fact, alludes to a possible way out of this circularity. What is required is that the way to make something meaningful to ourselves would not presuppose the gap between a representation and its object. However, it is yet unclear how such a cognitive relation could be possible.

Next, Beck discusses the *Critique's* claim that time and space are necessary representations. The stages of Beck's argument in this regard are similar to those we have just discussed in the previous context above. Necessity, according to the critical doctrine, does not reside in things but in our relation to things. The representation of a thing is unaffected, whether we think of its object as possible, actual or necessary. Thus, we need only remember that time and space, as something objective, are distinct from the representations *of* time and space, and additionally note that necessity does not reside in the things themselves, to see that we cannot account for the ascription of necessity to time and space (as something objective). Since necessity is related by the subject to an object then its validity to objects collapses together with the concept of the connection of representations in general to objects. As in the previous context, it could be said that the *Critique* may be exempt from this criticism by the claim that time and space are themselves representations. The *Critique* would thereby attempt to avoid the gap between time and space as objective and the mere representations of them. However, in this case we once again come face to face with the self-contradictory claim that we operate with a representation, which represents itself, in other words, that a representation represents nothing at all.

Beck also remarks that the *Critique's* reference to time and space as *given* quantities must seem unintelligible when closely considered. One cannot explain the meaning of the statement that an object is given as long as the question regarding the connection between a representation and its object remains unaccounted for (*EmS*, 42).

Finally, Beck argues that unless we can account for the relation of representations to their objects, then the *Critique's* claim that time and space are the subjective conditions of intuition, leads to the inevitable conclusion that critical idealism is no different from radical idealism. It seems that the *Critique* admits the emptiness of the relation of a representation to its object and therefore argues that time and space are themselves mere representations. According to the *Critique*, time and space, as well as the objects in time and space, are not things-in-themselves, which would remain if we abstract from the subjective conditions of our own sensibility. It therefore follows, despite the *Critique's* protests, that what it calls appearance (*Erscheinung*) is nothing more than mere illusion (*bloß Schein*). We can say no more than that we imagine that our representations of time, space and objects in time and space have corresponding objects, but not that they have or even could have actual objects.

It [the *Critique*] gives not a single proof for the existence of things-in-themselves, but rather claims (although it does say that when one posits appearances, one must also posit something which appears), that in the end we cannot possibly know where to posit this thing, whether it is in us or outside of us, and whether in general such a statement is even meaningful. (*EmS*, 45)

6.5 The Distinction Between Intuitions and Concepts

Under the above title, Beck discusses the *Critique's* principal statement that intuitions and concepts are the two elements of which our cognition consists. Through intuitions an object is given to us in the receptivity of sense perception and through concepts an object is thought in relation to the former intuitions.

Beck first notes that since we cannot account for the connection between the representations that we have of our own self and our real self as an object, then we cannot possibly base any claim regarding the elements that constitute the faculties of our own self. By this Beck applies the general question regarding the connection between a representation and its object to the current issue of the elements, which constitute our own cognition. We must distinguish what our cognition *seems to be* made of and what it actually *is* made of. Since we cannot account for the general question regarding the connection between a representation and its object we equally cannot base our claims regarding our own self, but only what it seems to be.

Beck then analyzes the *Critique's* more specific claim that intuitions are distinguished from concepts by the fact that the former are singular while the latter are general representations. Once more Beck points out that as long as we operate with representations *of* something, that is, as long as there is a distinction between the representation and its object, and we, in addition, cannot show what connects our representations to their objects, then all of our distinctions made by means of representations are nothing but mere imagining. We cannot say that intuitions *are* singular and concepts *are* general but only that we represent them as such; moreover, we arbitrarily represent them as such. If I cannot compare my representation against its object then I can represent whatever I want. Since my own individual representations depend only on my own free will, then I can even represent a singular representation to be at the same time a general representation.⁵

Lastly, Beck discusses the *Critique's* claim that through intuitions an object is given to us and through concepts it is thought and cognized. Beck argues that if this statement is to be meaningful then it can only be interpreted as meaning that an intuition is a representation regardless of whether it corresponds to an object, that is, regardless of whether it is objectively valid. Accordingly, an intuition acquires objective validity, that is, it becomes related to an object, when a concept is applied to it.⁶ However, Beck asks, how is this distinction related to the previously discussed one? In other words, Beck asks, how can it be explained that intuition as a singular representation acquires objective validity simply because it passes into

⁵ One could object to this last statement by saying that it would be self-contradictory to refer to a representation as both singular and general. Nevertheless the important issue for Beck here is merely to note that without an object, which determines us to think in a specific way, our thoughts are only arbitrary.

⁶ Beck rules out the *prima facie* reading according to which in intuition *an object* is given to us, since it is obvious that for Kant, an object, *as such*, is never given but must be constituted. Cf. also Beck's attempts, discussed above, in the correspondence with Kant, at defining intuition in such a way, which does not include a relation to an object.

a general representation? Furthermore, if we consider that the *Critique* refers to the object of a representation as itself a representation then its claim to have found the origin of the objective validity of our representations is very deceptive indeed. “What can be stranger than to claim that the object of a representation is a mere appearance, consequently nothing but a representation, and nevertheless to believe to have found the origin of cognition.” (*EmS*, 48).⁷

6.6 The Concept of Transcendental Logic

Beck argues that it is common for critical philosophers to distinguish transcendental logic from general logic by defining the latter as a science, which abstracts from the distinctness of the various objects and makes the thought of an object in general as its object. However, as Beck notes, this manner of explanation seems void, for transcendental logic, as well, abstracts from the distinctness of the various objects. A better formulation would be to say that “general logic abstracts from all content of cognition, that is, from all relation of cognition to an object. In contrast, the object of transcendental logic is precisely this relation.” (*EmS*, 49). According to this mode of explanation, transcendental logic is nothing other than the science of the objective validity of our concepts. However, as we have repeatedly showed, the concept of the connection between a representation and its object is an empty one. It therefore follows that there is no object for that science called transcendental logic. The attempt to avoid this difficulty by arguing that the appearance is the much sought after object, leads to an internal contradiction. Since an appearance is nothing more than a representation (*KrV*, A104, A191/B236, A250, A370), it therefore follows from the above mode of explanation that a representation, whose definition requires that it represent something, in fact represents nothing at all.

From the above also follows that the *Critique*’s distinction between transcendental analytic and transcendental dialectic is also inadmissible. The transcendental analytic should, according to the *Critique*, list all a-priori concepts which, despite being completely independent of experience, are nevertheless objectively valid. In comparison, the transcendental dialectic is designed to dispel the ungrounded and yet deceptively appealing objective validity, which we erroneously attribute to other a-priori concepts. As we have discussed above, even the more basic distinction between a-priori and a-posteriori concepts is annulled by the emptiness of the general concept of a connection between a representation and its object. It follows that the attempt to make a further distinction between two kinds of a-priori concepts, one which is, and another which is not, objectively valid, is completely baseless. When we recognize that the general issue of the connection between a

⁷ By the term ‘cognition’ at the end of the above citation Beck, of course, means the representation of an object, distinct from the representation itself.

representation and its object cannot be resolved, then the distinction between these two kinds of a-priori concepts collapses as well.

6.7 The Possibility of Experience as the Principle of the Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding

In this chapter Beck repeats in greater details the claims he has already made in his earlier letters to Kant and in the reviews of Reinhold and his followers. Beck argues that as long as the connection between a representation and its object remains unaccounted for, then the deduction of the categories out of the principle of the possibility of experience is circular and begs the question it was designed to answer.

The *Critique* argues that a special kind of representations – pure concepts of the understanding – have objective validity simply because they are the general conditions that make ordinary experiential concepts possible in the first place. However, this manner of explanation presupposes – without providing any justification – the objective validity of experiential concepts. It presupposes that there is indeed a connection between a concept, which arises out of experience and an object. We must nevertheless remind ourselves that this object of experience is a mere appearance, namely, nothing more than a representation. It follows from the above that the deduction of the categories out of the principle of the possibility of experience is a mere game. We say that a representation of an object is objectively valid if an object corresponds to it. If, however, the *Critique* admits that the representation of an object corresponds to nothing but a mere representation, then this admission annuls the very meaning of objective validity. Moreover, as Beck has already noted, to say that a representation corresponds to nothing but a mere representation, contradicts the very concept of a representation and therefore this statement violates the basic requirements of the principle of contradiction. The bottom line is that the deduction of the categories out of the principle of the possibility of experience can have no more validity than the concept of the connection between a representation and its object.

It would seem that the connection between an experiential object and its representation could easily be demonstrated by appealing to the influence of the object on the senses. The object affects us and thereby causes representations to arise within us, and this is the explanation commonly given for the connection of an experiential concept and its object. However, as soon as one poses the question regarding that which connects the concept of this affecting object with the affecting object itself, then it immediately becomes clear that such an appeal to the affect of the experiential object on the senses amounts to no answer at all.

Beck summarizes the objections that can be made against the deduction of the categories out of the principle of the possibility of experience, in the following points:

1. Even granted that the categories express the ultimate conditions of the possibility of experience, they can have no more objective validity than that of experience itself. The attempt to deduce the objective validity of experience from the analysis of its very concept – by appealing to the influence of the object on the senses – fails. Thus, the actuality of experience is merely presupposed without providing any justification. One can therefore deny the validity of experience itself and with it the validity of the categories.
2. The categories are supposed to account for the connection of representations to their objects. However, the categories are themselves representations and their own objective validity presupposes the validity of the concept of the connection of representations to their objects.
3. The objective validity of the categories derives from the objective validity of experience. Yet at the same time, the objective validity of experience depends on the objective validity of the categories.
4. The concept of causality is one of the categories and as such its objective validity derives from role of the categories as conditions for the possibility of experience. Nevertheless, the concept of the possibility of experience already presupposes the causal relation (as part of the doctrine of the influence of objects on our senses). The whole argument is therefore circular.
5. The concept of possibility is also listed as one of the categories. It is therefore an obvious tautology to attempt to derive its validity from the concept of the possibility of experience.⁸
6. Since one cannot demonstrate the basis for the actuality of experience it follows that one equally cannot base anything on the principle of the possibility of experience.⁹
7. The *Critique* criticizes dogmatic philosophy for its characterization of pure concepts as innate. It is clear that the term ‘innate’ simply indicates the ignorance of dogmatic philosophy regarding the origin of these concepts. However, the *Critique* does not fare any better than dogmatic philosophy in this regard, for it equally cannot account for the origin of these pure concepts.

As a last step in his discussion of the deduction of the categories, Beck argues that we should also consider the role of the transcendental schematism in this regard. Although the deduction of the categories is not directly dependent on the transcendental schematism, Beck argues that “with this schematism the *Critique* intends to put a crown on top of its deductive enterprise” (*EmS*, 55) and therefore it deserves attention.

Beck brings two arguments against the schematism. First, he reminds us of the *Critique*’s claim that time is that which connects pure concepts to empirical intuitions (more precisely the empirical aspect of intuition). However, one can

⁸The fourth and fifth objections are clearly specific statements of the third one. For the inherent circularity in the attempt to deduce the objective validity of the categories from the mere concept of the possibility of experience, cf. also *EmS*, 196.

⁹This objection is clearly a restatement of the argument included in item 1.

further ask what connects empirical intuitions with time and similarly what connects pure concepts with time. These questions shall require us to interpose a new mediator between empirical intuitions and time as well as between pure concepts and time. It is easily seen that this objection leads to an endless regression. The end result is that the main issue from which we started – the question regarding the connection between intuitions and concepts – remains unanswered.¹⁰

The second objection argues that the *Critique* transforms the unanswerable question, regarding the connection of a representation to its object, into a new one. The *Critique* refers to the empirical intuition as the object of the representation and it refers to pure concepts as the representation of the object. Thus it converts the question regarding the connection of a representation to its object into the question regarding the connection between mere representations to one another. Not only is this course of argument self-contradictory for it follows that a representation in fact represents nothing at all; moreover, when shedding the mystical cloud behind the strange claim that the object of the representation is itself a representation, we are left with nothing more than the obvious claim that a representation is a representation – in other words, that we have representations of objects – a claim which no one doubts.

¹⁰ The main issue behind this objection is not so much the relation between a representation and its object but that the issue of the relation between conceptual and pre-conceptual meaning. Beck's main claim can be restated as claiming that *as long as we operate with concepts alone*, we are incapable of elucidating the transition from pre-conceptual to conceptual meaning. The recognition of pre-conceptual meaning and its irreducibility to conceptual structures requires that we acknowledge the limitation of what can be converted into concepts and words. The claim that everything that can be sensibly perceived can afterwards, fully and without any residue, be described and explained by means of concepts, is a defining characteristic of rationalism. As we shall later see, Beck's objection to this line of thought is an important feature, which distinguishes him from his contemporaries.

Chapter 7

The Highest Principle of Philosophy – The Postulate to Represent Originally

At this stage of the development of his theory of the standpoint, Beck analyzes the idea of a highest principle in philosophy, widely appealed to by his contemporaries.¹ While a principle is “a cognition which grounds certain other cognitions” (*EmS*, 120), a principle, assumed to be the highest, should be a principle, which is not itself derived from any logically prior principle. Unfortunately, as soon as we consider closely the very idea of a highest principle, we discover that it leads to an inherent difficulty. This is so since any connection of concepts within such a principle, necessarily requires further reflection or rethinking in order to demonstrate its validity. Even the principle of contradiction, which can be stated as follows: ‘no object can be represented through mutually contradicting determinations’, requires some rethinking in order to demonstrate its validity (*EmS*, 121).² However, by appealing to any such further rethinking in order to provide the alleged highest principle with justification, it is easily seen that the principle, thought to be the highest, is not self-evident after all. Moreover, not only does the objective validity of the connection of concepts in such a principle require further consideration, the very concepts, which constitute the principle in question, also require explanation. If we appeal once more to the principle of contradiction, “the meaning of the expression ‘object’, which appears quite comprehensible to any student of philosophy, is a source of embarrassment to any man who has begun to philosophize independently.”

¹ The significance given to the issue of the highest principle on which philosophy is grounded, obviously did not originate from Kant’s own way of philosophizing. It is grounded in the spirit of the time (the late 1780s and the first half of the 1790s), triggered initially by Reinhold’s and later Fichte’s method of presenting the challenges facing critical philosophy. As Beck himself notes (cf. *EmS*, 122 in which Beck cites *Aenesidemus*, Schulze 1792, 53f.), the centrality of this issue is also grounded in Aenesidemus-Schulze’s criticism of the attempts to ground philosophy on a self-evident first principle.

² Although not explicitly stated by Beck, it can nevertheless be argued, based on his own ideas, that it is one thing to recognize that our own thinking is subordinated to the principle of non-contradiction, but it is quite another thing to argue that the actual objects are also subordinated to the same principle. Any proposition, which aspires to be objectively valid, requires some justification.

(*EmS*, 121). Yet another consideration, which must be taken into account, is that in many cases the principle considered to be the highest, although not derived from prior principles, nevertheless presupposes some such prior principles. The principle of contradiction argues that no object can be represented through mutually contradicting determinations; however, it presupposes that in general objects can be represented through the attribution of various determinations to them. We can also look at Reinhold's proposition of consciousness, which argues that "Consciousness is the being referred of representation to object and subject, and it cannot be separated from any representation" (Reinhold 1789, 321; *EmS*, 121f.). Regarding this principle, one can rightfully ask what is meant by the concept of 'being referred' to something. Reinhold argues that a representation refers to an object on behalf of its content, which the object produces or brings about. We can accordingly ask whether the concept of 'being referred' is to be understood in terms of this production and further what this 'production' itself means.

The above considerations lead Beck to argue that the failed attempts to find the highest principle of philosophy, in fact point us to the only direction where this principle can truly be found. We can observe that in all such principles it is required that their certainty follow from *the very representation* of the object of these principles. The conclusion is that we expect the validity of the highest principle of all philosophy to be grounded in an original mode of representation. If we take the example of the principle of contradiction, then in order to be convinced of its validity we need only attempt to represent an object through mutually contradicting properties. In the example of Reinhold's principle of consciousness we need to represent to ourselves the concept of a 'representation' in order to be convinced of the inherent relation included in this concept to both subject and object.

In order to understand what is meant by 'original representing' Beck gives the example of the geometer. The geometer draws both the meaning and the validity of his axioms of space by simply representing space to himself. When asked how his science commences he replies that it starts with the requirement to represent space to oneself. No other explanation or foundation can be given to the basic tenets of geometry save this requirement or what mathematicians call a postulate. No explanation by means of concepts can clarify the meaning of the geometric axiom according to which space has only three dimensions. To understand this, one has to represent space (*EmS*, 120–131; *Grundriß*, §8, 6f.). As we have seen above, the same requirement stands at the basis of all principles assumed to be the highest. Beck therefore states that the basic principle, not merely of all philosophy, but in fact of all understanding and meaningfulness, is expressed by the postulate to represent originally. It is highly important to note the unique features of Beck's basic "principle" as a postulate, in contrast to the prevailing pursuit by his contemporaries of a basic principle of all philosophy.³ Regular principles, taken to stand at

³ Beck himself notes various versions of such alleged highest principles (*EmS*, 136): (a) the principle of contradiction which could apply to rationalistically oriented authors as well as Schulze; (b) the principle of consciousness, by which Beck refers to Reinhold; (c) the principle

the peak of all philosophizing, are propositions stated by means of concepts. If you ask their advocates what grounds their principles, they say that their basic principle is a ‘fact’.⁴ Beck argues that by appealing to ‘facts’ without attempting to elucidate what a fact really means, these authors show that they have completely misunderstood Kant’s intention to direct our attention towards the way through which facts expressed by means of concepts first acquire their meaning. General logic indeed concerns itself merely with thinking through concepts. General logic starts from the mere fact that we have concepts. It completely disregards the question of what a fact itself is or similarly the question of how we came to have concepts in the first place. Transcendental philosophy, in contrast, is the science, whose object is the original representing itself. In other words, it is the science of the origin of meaningfulness since original representing should account for the process through which we first make something meaningful to ourselves. Transcendental logic, according to Beck, aims at “the presentation of the *original generation* of concepts [. . .] This science [transcendental logic] will not aim at definitions, or the unfolding of concepts, or at drawing up lists of determinations which we attribute to objects when we think of them; for in all this the actual fact of thinking is not taken into consideration at all.” (*EmS*, 137).⁵ Beck therefore concludes that authors who only offer conceptual formulations for the highest principle, authors who argue that their principle is self-evident since it is recognized as a fact, without analyzing the very meaning of ‘a fact’, are operating merely on the level of general logic. They thus miss the essential meaning of transcendental philosophy. When we inquire more about what we mean when we say that a certain principle is simply a ‘fact’, we discover that it eventually means that one is only required to represent this principle to himself, to become aware of its meaning and truth. Thus it seems that all principles offered as basic principles, in fact point to the only one which is truly so. This is no other than the postulate to represent originally. A postulate is distinguished from a regular principle in that the latter is a proposition and is therefore constructed by means of concepts. A postulate – although it has to be stated by concepts – is a requirement to act, to transpose oneself into this unique mode of representing. As a postulate, it is

of animation (*Beseelung*). According to George di Giovanni, Beck may be referring here to Maimon and also to other authors influenced by the romantic revival of Spinoza and Leibniz as well as to Herder and the neo-Spinozistic movement in general (di Giovanni and Harris 2000, 247n20). In another place di Giovanni mentions that by the principle of animation Beck refers to J. H. Abicht, the review of whose work by Beck we have discussed above (di Giovanni and Harris 2000, xvi); (d) the principle of determinability, which according to di Giovanni refers to Maimon (di Giovanni and Harris 2000, 247n21); (e) the principle of selfhood (*Ichheit*) which applies to Fichte.

⁴ As noted above, Beck has in mind, mainly Reinhold’s *Elementarphilosophie*, but also other authors who developed a philosophy of the basic elements (*EmS*, 169).

⁵ Cf. also *EmS*, 139: “It is only on that basis [of original representing] that any train of thought enjoys the dignity of being understandable, and in the absence of this standing, anyone who deals with mere concepts does not even understand himself. We can very aptly call transcendental philosophy, therefore, an art of understanding oneself, and we can consider our postulate as the principle of all intelligibility.”

irrelevant to ask what an ‘object’ is and similarly what we mean by ‘original’ or by ‘representing’ something. Any attempt to give a verbal account of these terms would require us to resort to concepts and thus it would lead us astray and further away from the true meaning of original representing. The best answer to the above questions is simply to require that one represent originally (*EmS*, 124f.). Beck emphasizes that “there can never be any question of an ‘original representation’, but only of an ‘original representing’, for what we want to signify by this expression is truly the act by which we generate for ourselves the representation of an object, and not the representation which we already have of it and through which we think it.” (*EmS*, 130).⁶ The distinction is between the act of representing and its end result – the representation. An act is better expressed by a verb than by a noun. It is important to note that Beck’s postulate to represent originally puts an emphasis on pre-conceptual meaning which grounds all conceptual meaning.⁷ “Undeniably the mistake made in every age was to neglect the *understandable* and to strive only after the conceptualizable” (*EmS*, 138).

Another aspect of original representing becomes clear when we contrast it with its opposite. Discursive or derived representing, namely, the thought of an object by means of concepts, is defined by Beck as follows:

When I think an object, a reference point is given to which my representing subject stands in relation through an activity which can be best designated by the expression ‘attribution’ [Beilegung].⁸ For I attach determinations to this reference point, and this attribution is what we have in mind whenever we say that we have a concept of an object. (*EmS*, 134).⁹

Beck, in my view correctly, notes that when we predicate properties to an object we do not simply connect properties to one another. Rather, we connect properties by referring them to a common reference point. Beck therefore argues that in the

⁶ As Beck later stresses (*EmS*, 141) there can be no original representing of an object, but only original representing.

⁷ The pre-conceptual character of the original representing is emphasized in a brief discussion of Beck’s *Standpunctslehre* by Thandeka (1995, 41, 45–50), and by Klotz (2002, 24ff.). Thandeka’s exposition, nevertheless, fails to properly distinguish the cognitive stage of original representing and the cognitive stage of conceptual, derived, representation. She argues that the act of original reconciliation (her term, cf. Chap. 4, note 23) “produces the awareness of the conceptualized object [...] The same activity, Beck suggested, thus generates concepts and produces consciousness by means of reconciliation through the concepts of that which is conceptualized.” (Thandeka 1995, 47). Thandeka also fails to recognize the distinction made by Beck between the act of original representing and the original-synthetic, objective unity of consciousness (below Chaps. 8 and 9). According to Beck, the latter is the result of the former and neither has anything to do with concepts.

⁸ In contrast to his views when he only began to work on the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*, Beck now dedicates the term ‘attribution’ (Beilegung) to discursive representation only. This term is completely inadequate to describe the activity of original representing. Beck therefore does not make any more use of his earlier term ‘original attribution’ (ursprüngliche Beilegung). Cf. also Chap. 4, note 23 above.

⁹ This is Beck’s first detailed exposition of what he means by ‘discursive representing’ in contrast to ‘original representing’. Cf. also *Grundriß* §1, §4 (*Grundriß*, 1, 2f.).

judgment ‘the air is pure’ we do not simply connect the property of ‘being pure’ with the property of ‘air-ness’. Rather, we have in mind a reference point, to which we attribute the properties of ‘pure’ and ‘air’, whereby we represent the object of ‘pure air’. Beck recognizes that we always require a reference point for the construction of a concept, regardless of whether the concept in question has or has not an actual object (*EmS*, 134).¹⁰ Beck gives as an example the concept of matter, which exists merely on behalf of its extension in space.¹¹ According to Kant this is an empty concept. As Beck notes, the statement that in such a case we do not really have a proper concept, is indeed correct, although it must be further qualified.¹² Nevertheless, even such an empty concept requires a reference point in order to be thought. This is equally true of an object represented through mere negations. In this case as well, we can say that we do not have a proper concept of such an object; however, the appeal to a reference point cannot be avoided. It is only on behalf of this operation of fixing a reference point that we can say that we have a concept of something.

Original representing has the advantage over discursive thinking and propositions by means of concepts that regarding original representing the question regarding the connection of a representation to its object cannot even arise. Discursive representing, that is, thought by means of concepts, always presupposes an object as a reference point to which determinations can be attached and therefore it is locked in a vicious circle when it attempts to account for such an object (*Grundriß*, §7, 4f.). Original representing escapes this vicious circle since within it meaning is first created without there being a gap between the representation and something distinct from it (the object). Thus, Beck emphasizes that “there really is no original representing ‘of an object’, but simply an original representing. For whenever we have representations of an object, it is already every time a concept,

¹⁰This is a very important observation. Thereby we can understand the Kantian distinction between the constitution of the content of a concept and the attribution of a modal status. The first stage of the cognitive process is the stage by which we attribute sensible properties to a reference point, an operation by which we appeal to the first three groups of categories. Only after this operation is concluded does the question arise regarding whether there is an actual object corresponding to our concept. The latter process of modal status attribution does not affect the first stage for which a reference point is required (the positing of this reference point is achieved by the categories of relation), even in cases where we later conclude that the concept in question does not have an actual object.

¹¹This example is borrowed from Kant’s constant claim that an actual object cannot exist merely on behalf of its extension in space. An object requires some matter, which fills space.

¹²Beck explicitly defers the elucidation this statement, namely, whether we do or do not have a concept of such an object, to a later stage of his exposition. Nevertheless, in order to facilitate understanding, I can add that in such cases we have a concept only in the technical or nominal sense. We understand the definition of this concept. However, since we cannot trace this concept back to an original representing, as Beck insists every concept must be capable of (in Kantian terms, since the connection of the properties in this concept cannot be sensibly represented), we do not really understand the meaning of this concept (*EmS*, 175). We have only a nominal, but not a real, concept of it. This explanation shall be better understood as we continue the discussion of Beck and later its comparison with Kant’s original views.

that is, it is already always the attribution of certain determinations by means of which we fix for ourselves a reference point.” (*EmS*, 141). In original representing we do not represent an object; otherwise stated – we do not represent something distinct from the representation itself. Rather, within original representing we immediately make some meaning present before us without there being a gap between the representation and its object. Therefore, “the question, i.e., ‘what joins the representation of an object with its object?’ can appear to have meaning and to be very crucial only to somebody who fails to take to heart the original mode of representing.” (*EmS*, 130f.).

When we reflect on Beck’s presentation of the original representing, it seems that two distinct functions can be extracted, which this unique cognitive mode is designed to perform.¹³ The first involves the general relation between the understanding and sensibility, and more specifically, the relation of meaning to the bearers of meaning in application to concepts of the understanding on the one hand and to sense perception on the other hand. The second issue refers to the relation of a representation to its object. Within both these aspects there is a difficulty, which arises from the presence of a gap. In the first case, the gap is in terms of meaning, between that *towards which* we intend and that *by means of which* we intend. In the second case, the gap is in terms of status, between the subjective and the objective.¹⁴ Within the first aspect, original representing is expected to explain how our concepts acquire meaning, in other words, how they can function as bearers of meaning. Within the second aspect, original representing is expected to explain how our concepts acquire objective status, that is, how they acquire a relation to an object. Regarding the first level of consideration, the problem is as follows. Thought is conducted by the means of concepts. These concepts acquire their meaning through their definition. However, the definition of concepts appeals to other concepts, which in turn must also be provided with a definition through yet other concepts. This inevitably leads to an infinite regression. It follows that in order to understand how concepts acquire their meaning we must eventually appeal to some pre-conceptual cognitive function, which does not depend on definitions. The problem, to be more precise, resides in the relation of meaning to a symbol as the bearer of meaning. A concept makes use of the cognitive function of symbolization in which there is a distinction between the symbol as the bearer of meaning and the unit of meaning for which the symbol stands. This distinction or gap is expressed by the fact that the meaning is not embedded in, or given immediately with, its carrier. Due to this gap, the cognitive function of symbolization, which forms the basis for our conceptual thinking,

¹³ At this stage of the discussion Beck does not yet make a clear distinction between these two functions of his original representing but it is important that we become aware of it at this early stage in order to enable a detailed and nuanced analysis of his theory. Later on we shall observe how these two functions of the original representing correspond to Beck’s distinction between original synthesis and original recognition.

¹⁴ In making the distinction between these two spheres of discussion I am indebted to Strauss (1977, 11–21; 1984, 36–61).

cannot by itself account for the ability of a symbol to function as a carrier of meaning. There must be another kind of meaning-bearing function whereby meaning is embedded within its carrier. This latter kind of meaning-bearing function is to be found in sense perception. The further development of this issue extends far beyond the scope of this work.¹⁵ My intention in bringing this issue up is only to clarify what Beck's original-representing is intended to solve and to distinguish this level of discussion from the other one. It is clear that by the postulate to represent originally, expressed by the example of the geometer, Beck points out to a pre-conceptual (namely, sensible) cognitive function in which meaning arises with, and is embedded within, the representation itself. The second aspect of Beck's original representing refers to the relation of a representation to its object, which we have discussed at length. On this level we note that due to the distinction between the concept of an object and the object itself, conceptual thought cannot account for the relation of a representation to its object, and, as Beck argues, the uniqueness and advantage of original representing is expressed by the fact that within this mode of representing this gap does not yet exist. This is, in my view, the second function, which Beck's original mode of representing is supposed to perform.

¹⁵ I recommend as further reading, the invaluable work of Michael Strauss mentioned above and also volume 3 of Ernst Cassirer's *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (Cassirer 1957). Note Cassirer's distinction between the meaning-bearing functions of representations and expressions and Strauss' development of these very issues. Especially important is Strauss' explication of the ability of a symbol to function as a bearer of meaning by appealing to a special kind of expression (in which meaning is embedded in its bearer) which he calls the symbolic expression (Strauss 1977, 41–58; 1984, 135–196). Of course, Beck's discussion is not even remotely close to revealing the complexities of the issue as they become apparent from the work of Cassirer and Strauss as well as the larger scene of the discussion of meaning in the twentieth century. A detailed discussion of these issues shall obviously take us far beyond the subject of this research. Nevertheless, I think that by noting the relevant systematic issues involved in the issue of Beck's original representing, we can at least locate Beck's concerns within a more detailed systematic context. In the next part of this work, in which I evaluate Beck's views against Kant's original intentions, the distinction between the context of the relation of the understanding to sensibility (to which the current discussion of the meaning-bearing function belongs), and the context of the relation of a representation to its object, shall enable us to make a more nuanced comparison of Beck's and Kant's views.

Chapter 8

Original Representing and the Categories

Undoubtedly the presentation of the categories is the heart of Beck's *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt*. All previous discussions were only meant to serve as an introduction, in order to prepare the reader for this main stage. The current task is to bring the reader directly to what Beck considers to be the highest principle of all philosophizing. In other words, we now come to the detailed analysis of the postulate to represent originally. Beck repeatedly argues that although this presentation, in his mind, represents Kant's true intentions, the *Critique*, nevertheless, leads its reader to this point only gradually. True to his plan, Beck intends to reverse this method. Original representing consists of the categories, and therefore the analysis must commence from the exposition of the categories themselves.

Beck explains that the categories are essentially not concepts but modes of original representing. The categories can be used as concepts but then they are not original but derived. As concepts, as derived representations, they are not different than any other concept. To attribute to some object the characteristic of being a substance or a cause of some event is not different from attributing to it the characteristic of having a red color or of being liquid or solid. In both cases a reference point is implicitly assumed and characteristics are being attributed to it (*EmS*, 140).¹ As concepts the categories are just as vulnerable as empirical concepts to the objection regarding the relation between a representation and its object. If we refer to the categories as concepts we miss their unique role "to bestow intelligibility and status [Haltung] upon our concepts" (*EmS*, 140).² Intelligibility or understandability on the one hand, and status or validity on the other hand, correspond to the two functions of the original representing discussed in the previous chapter. Keeping in mind the two functions of original representing, it

¹ Unlike Kant, Beck does not discuss the role of the categories in judgment but starts immediately from their role in the construction of experience, an exposition, which corresponds to Kant's discussion of the Principles of Pure Reason. This already shows his tendency to refer to the categories in their schematic rather than pure meaning.

² The German term 'Haltung' in this context means either status or validity.

becomes clear that the categories cannot be viewed as concepts. In the latter case they would lose their ability to account, first for what is understandable in our concepts, and second for the objective validity of regular concepts. Moreover, these two concerns would arise anew regarding the categories themselves. As concepts it would remain open how they acquire their meaningfulness as well as their objective validity.³

In accordance with the two functions of original representing, Beck speaks of two aspects inherent in any category – original synthesis and original recognition. Through the first, meaning is first constituted, while through the second, this meaning acquires determinacy and thus objectivity (*EmS*, 142f.; *Grundriß*, §9, 7). We shall now see how these two aspects are exemplified in the detailed analysis of each and every category.

Beck refers collectively to the categories of quantity as magnitude⁴ and he defines it as the original synthesis of the homogeneous which proceeds from the parts to the whole. He identifies it with space itself. (*EmS*, 140; *Grundriß*, §10, 7f.).⁵ Beck refers to space, or this mode of original synthesis, as pure intuiting. He notes again the difference between pure intuiting and pure intuition. The suffix ‘ing’ emphasizes the fact that the original synthesis is an act and not a concept of something. Beck repeatedly stresses the distinction between a concept and an original representing. For example, a concept of a straight line is something quite different from the drawing of the line, namely, its original synthesis. Within this original synthesis space is generated. Space itself *is* this synthesis, rather than its end result. Space is thus not something of which we have a representation, as in discursive representation. Rather, space *is* this *act* of original representing.

In this synthesis of the homogeneous, which proceeds from the parts to the whole, time arises. The determination or fixating⁶ of time is the act of original recognition.⁷ The determination of time in the original recognition results in the

³ Cf. the corresponding discussion of the nature of pure concepts in Kant’s original doctrine, in Sect. 12.2.2 below.

⁴ Beck uses the term ‘Größe’ (magnitude) instead of ‘Quantität’ (quantity), although later in his exposition he also uses the term “Quantität” for the same purpose.

⁵ The identification of the category of quantity with space itself makes explicit Beck’s view of the categories as schematic forms rather as ‘mere categories’ (what Kant terms ‘die bloße Kategorie’), that is, the category in its mere logical form. I shall address this issue in further details as part of the comparison of Beck’s and Kant’s views in Part IV.

⁶ Beck uses alternatively the terms ‘bestimmen’, ‘festmachen’ or ‘fixieren’ (*EmS*, 143). The appropriate English terms are ‘determining’, ‘securing’ (in the sense of solidifying), or ‘fixating’, respectively.

⁷ According to this presentation of the category of quantity, time, unlike space, is not identified with the original synthesis of the homogeneous, which proceeds from the parts to the whole. Rather, time has a role only within the original recognition, equally present in all categories. It should, nevertheless, be noted that in another passage (*Grundriß*, §10, 8) Beck does mention time, as well as space, as belonging to the original synthesis in the category of quantity: “Time itself is hence an original synthesis of the homogeneous which proceeds from the parts to the whole.” All English translations from the *Grundriß* are my own.

determination of the original synthesis. What Beck means, is that the original synthesis is a process that has an extension in time and could in principle extend indefinitely. The determination of its extension in time is at the same time the determination of the synthesis itself. Through the original recognition in the category of quantity, space, which is created within the original synthesis, acquires a specific figure. Thus original synthesis and original recognition together constitute the whole of the original representing in the category of quantity.⁸ Beck gives the following example. I see a house. We ignore, at this time, the fact that we think this object through the concept ‘house’; that is, we ignore the fact that we think this object by relating the characteristics, which constitute the content of the concept ‘house’, to a reference point. When I see a house, I synthesize originally and in this synthesis space is generated. Space, as was mentioned above, *is* this synthesis. During this synthesis, time arises for me. The original recognition is the fixing of the time through which the synthesis is constituted. Through the determination of time I also fix or determine the original synthesis itself and thus I obtain the specific figure of the house in front of me.

The category of reality is defined by Beck as the original synthesis of the homogeneous, which proceeds from the whole to the parts (*EmS*, 145; *Grundriß*, §11, 8f.).⁹ The category of reality is the original synthesis of sensation (*EmS*, 145).¹⁰ Once again, Beck prefers referring to reality as empirical intuiting, rather than as empirical intuition. As in the category of quantity, in this synthesis as well, time arises. The determination of the time, which arises during this synthesis, is the original recognition in the category of reality. The determination of time brings about a determination of the original synthesis and thus we acquire a sensation of a specific degree, or intensive magnitude.

Beck stresses repeatedly that space, time, and sensation as the real in things, are in no way a manifold given prior to the original synthesis and original recognition (*EmS*, 142, 149, 170f.). To say this is to speak for example of space as something existing and meaningful regardless of all activity of cognition. It is to speak of it discursively as something, which we describe by attributing determinations to it. It thus becomes paradoxical – an “existing non-thing” (*EmS*, 149). The moment we leave the field of original representing we return to the puzzling question of what connects our representation with its object. For if space exists prior to the original representing then it can first be asked how we know that it exists, and second how we know its characteristics. If we have a representation *of* space rather than a representation that *is* space then we are once again faced with the perplexing

⁸ I disagree with di Giovanni’s explication of Beck’s original recognition as “a reflective moment” (di Giovanni 2000, 39), a claim that is also to be found in Wallner (1979, 324–327).

⁹ Beck refers here to reality, which in Kant’s table of categories is the positive aspect of quality. In the *Grundriß* Beck refers to this category also as thing-hood (Sachheit). Compare with the *Critique of Pure Reason* (*KrV*, A143/B182) where Kant, as well, refers to reality as thing-hood.

¹⁰ Once more it should be noted that Beck’s identification of the category of reality with sensation itself (in a similar manner to his identification of the category of quantity with space), shows his schematic, or even outright sensible, understanding of the categories. Cf. note 5 above.

question regarding what connects our representation of space with space as an object.

Space, as Beck says, is a “connected manifold” and prior to this connection there is nothing that is connected (*EmS*, 142).¹¹ This highly important observation has two aspects, which Beck discusses jointly but which I wish to distinguish.¹² The first aspect refers to meaning and its construction while the other refers to the relation of a representation to its object. Regarding the first aspect, Beck refers to the familiar Kantian claim that analysis presupposes synthesis (*KrV*, §15, B130; *EmS*, 144). By this statement Kant opposed the classic theory of ideas associated with Descartes, the English empiricists and also with Leibniz, Arnauld and Malebranche. Kant rejects some of the main tenets of this theory, amongst which is the assumption that an independent idea or an impression is something complete and self-sufficient. According to Kant an individual idea acquires its significance from the role it plays within a whole. It is one of Kant’s most important insights that a principle of unity is presupposed by the very meaningfulness of the individual parts. In a sense it can be said that the whole of Kant’s Copernican revolution is based on the holistic idea that the whole is logically prior to its parts. The manifold, therefore, is not meaningful to us prior to, and independently of, its synthesis. We can only recognize the manifold as an aggregate of separate parts as a result of a process of abstraction and analysis, which follows a more basic process of synthesis (Beiser 2002, 135).¹³ In light of the above we can recognize the importance of Beck’s characterization of space, not as a manifold given independently of all synthesis but only as a manifold of which we become aware *within* the synthesis. Similar considerations apply to the discussion of sensation and its synthesis (Cassirer 1999, IV:73f.).

I believe that part of what further complicates matters is the entanglement of the issue of meaningfulness with the issue of the relation of a representation to an object. The latter aspect regards the question of the origin of the manifold. It seems that there are only two diametrically opposed alternatives. Either the manifold is a direct product of the synthesis itself, a view which results in radical idealism, or the manifold is given to us in complete independence of the synthetic activity of cognition, in which case it is viewed as a thing-in-itself (or as originating from a thing-in-itself). Beck’s unique interpretation enables us to view Kant as avoiding this dichotomy. The claim that the manifold is distinguishable from the synthesis but nevertheless recognizable only within it enables us to refer to this manifold as originating from an object, which is neither a representation nor a thing-in-itself. The crucial point regarding the idea of a ‘connected manifold’ is that this

¹¹ The German term used by Beck is “verbundenes Mannigfaltiges”. Note also that the term ‘prior’ should be understood as logically prior.

¹² I am not arguing that these two aspects are totally disconnected but only that we can distinguish between them.

¹³ Beiser’s entire discussion of Kant and the way of ideas (Beiser 2002, 132–147) is in my view an excellent exposition of Kant’s position on these matters.

connection lies in an act of consciousness, and not in an assumed thing that would then become a thing-in-itself. The statement of the *Critique*, according to which we know things, not as they are in-themselves, but only as they appear to us, acquires its meaning from the analysis of the original representing. This statement “says no more and no less than that the understanding combines originally and that we therefore err if we posit this combination in the things” (*EmS*, 150).¹⁴ The meaning of the claim that we know things only as they appear to us – and the distinction of this claim from radical idealism on the one hand and from dogmatic realism on the other – shall become clearer as we discuss, in due course, the categories of relation.

The original representing in each category consists of the two aspects: original synthesis and original recognition. All categories as original synthesis and original recognition are not representations of something but *modes* or *functions* that must be used.¹⁵ When they are applied in any particular case they generate the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness. It is important to distinguish the modes of representing from the product of their application. The original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness stands for the meaningful content that is generated in any particular case as a result of using our cognitive powers. Regarding the categories of quantity and quality presented above, this original synthetic unity is the specific spatial figure and specific degree of sensation that fills space, which were generated in the original synthesis and original recognition in these categories. The original synthetic unity of consciousness must be clearly distinguished from the analytical unity of consciousness, which expresses thinking by means of concepts. Analytical unity stands for the construction of a concept by attributing general properties to a reference point. For example: I attribute the property ‘red’ (and then other properties) to a reference point to create the concept of a rose. ‘Red’ is here a general property which can be applied to any concept whatsoever. But the general property ‘red’ is an abstraction. It first came to our consciousness as part of an original representing where it was inevitably connected with other properties. Only on behalf of abstracting properties from an original synthetic unity can we then use them in an analytical unity.¹⁶ This original synthetic unity is the source of all meaning of which we are aware. From this original synthetic unity the understanding then abstracts general properties and constructs concepts by attributing these properties to a reference point. Both the properties and the reference point have their original meaning in the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness to which they must always be capable of being traced back (*EmS*, 144f.;

¹⁴ If space, time and the real in things were something prior to the introduction of the original representing they would exist in complete independence of the activity of cognition and thus they would be things ‘in-themselves’.

¹⁵ Beck refers to the categories as “ursprüngliche Vorstellungsarten” (original modes of representation) or “ursprüngliche Verstandsgebrauch” (original employment of the understanding). When referring to the categories as *modes* we do not err if we say that they are modes of representation instead of representing. As modes it is clear that they are not themselves representations but only a way to achieve representations.

¹⁶ Compare with Kant’s discussion of the same distinction (*KrV*, B133f., footnote).

Grundriß, §15, 12ff.). The transition from the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness to the analytical unity of consciousness shall be discussed in further details in the next chapter.

Another distinction made by Beck is between the original synthesis, which is only subjective and the original recognition, which is the ground of all objectivity (*EmS*, 155f.). The original synthesis is by itself merely subjective. It is only perception. The original recognition, which gives the original synthesis its determinacy, transforms the mere perception into experience, which is objective.¹⁷ If we take the examples of the categories of quantity and quality then we see that the original synthesis is only the non-determined synthesis of the homogeneous. This synthesis has not yet acquired a specific figure and a specific intensive degree. The determining or fixating of the original synthesis is what accounts for its specificity and thus objectivity. The original synthesis on its own therefore stands for the original but merely subjective unity of consciousness while the dignity of objectivity is attained by the original recognition, by the time determination, which also determines the original synthesis (*EmS*, 155f.).¹⁸

The category of substantiality is the original positing (setzen) of something persistent in respect to which time itself is first represented (*EmS*, 150f.).¹⁹ The original synthesis of this category consists of the synthesis of sensations, namely, in the unification of various sensations together. Unlike the category of reality where

¹⁷ This is reminiscent of Kant's distinction between judgments of perception and judgments of experience in the *Prolegomena* §18 (AA 04: 298). However, in making the above distinction, Beck does not intend judgments, concepts and objects, which, in his view, properly pertain to discursive, derived representation only. Cf. also note 18 below. Beck views the function of the original recognition as expressing the "transcendental schematism of the category" (*EmS*, 142).

¹⁸ One must note that by the above distinction between the subjective and the objective unity of consciousness Beck refers only to the *determinacy* of our synthesis. The objective character obtained through the original recognition should be distinguished from the *positing* of a certain synthesis as something persistent or as a cause, a result achieved by the categories of relation, to be discussed in the following paragraphs. In my view, such confusion occasioned Adickes' criticism of Beck, which – regardless of its validity – should be directed at Beck's doctrine of the act of positing rather than against his notion of original recognition. Adickes argues that "The original recognition, and the creation of the concrete which it affects are the darkest points in Beck's theory [...] It is not readily intelligible how Beck, with this standpoint in theoretical philosophy, could reject the Fichtean conclusion, that the understanding makes the thing [...]" (Adickes 1920, 610; 1970, 175). The English translation of Adickes is my own. Another author, who similarly conflates the function of original recognition and that of original positing, is Dilthey, (1889, 647). Moreover, the objective character obtained through the original recognition should not be confused with a representation of an object, which is obtained only through conceptual, discursive representing rather than within the primitive stage of original representing. We must take care not to be misled by the terminology used and be attentive to the inner structure of Beck's thought (for such a confusion followed by a criticism of Beck, cf. Edmund Heller (1993, 93f.)). Beck himself constantly reminds us that although we cannot but discuss the original representing by resorting to words and thus to concepts, the subject of our discussion is an original mode of representing in which there is yet no distinction between the representation itself and a distinct object.

¹⁹ Cf. also in the *Grundriß* (§12, 9f.), where Beck describes all three categories of relation in a single paragraph.

the original synthesis is the synthesis of sensation itself, an act, which generates its intensive magnitude, the original synthesis in the category of substantiality is the synthesis of various sensations to form a unity. The activity of original recognition in this category consists of positing the subject as something persistent and by relating its changes over time to it. Thus time itself is first represented as a continuum. To represent time we need something that undergoes changes. This means that we must represent something *persistent* and some changes as *its* states at different times. If there were not something persistent in relation to which various states could be represented then time itself would not be a continuum and representations would not make out one unity.

Beck once more warns us not to think of substance in terms of concepts. It is not the thought of some thing through its characterizations but an original activity that is prior to the use of concepts. As mentioned above, Beck sees the categories as originally expressing a schematic-figurative synthesis rather than a purely intellectual synthesis.²⁰ Beck therefore refers to the categories as much closer to sensible intuition than Kant describes them to be. The example of the representation of space by the geometer helps to understand Beck's intentions.²¹ Keeping this in mind helps one to understand Beck's insistence that the categories, as original mode of representing, are not to be confused with concepts.

The following example used by Beck (*EmS*, 151f.) may help to illuminate matters. I see a piece of wood. We completely ignore the fact that I think this object through the concept 'wood' and we concentrate our attention only on the original representing through which this thing is at all an object for me. *First*, space is generated in the original synthesis of the homogeneous that goes from the parts to the whole. This synthesis obtains its determinacy by the original recognition in the category of quantity through the determination of time that arises in this synthesis. Thus I obtain a specific figure. *Second*, we notice the original synthesis of the homogeneous that goes from the whole to the parts. This accounts for the reality, that which fills space. It is the synthesis of sensation. Through the original recognition – the determination of time – this synthesis acquires a specific degree, an intensive magnitude. *Third*, I posit a 'something' as the foundation of this synthesis. It is this 'something' in which we unify the extensive and intensive magnitudes

²⁰ Cf. Kant's distinction between the figurative synthesis (*synthesis speciosa*) and the intellectual synthesis (*synthesis intellectualis*), (*KrV*, §24, B151).

²¹ The example of the geometer also demonstrates the growing difficulties with this view as we move from the mathematical to the dynamical categories. It is one thing to think of the synthesis of space as united with space itself but it is quite another to think of substance, causality and reciprocity as something sensible. Beck later explains this discrepancy between his view and Kant's text by the method used by Kant to bring the reader slowly to the highest point of his critical philosophy. The detailed comparison between Kant's and Beck's views shall be done in Part IV. At this stage of the discussion I wish to focus on the presentation of Beck's doctrine and I only note these aspects to enable better understanding of Beck's own intentions.

(space and sensation) as its properties.²² This positing is the original synthesis of the category of substantiality. The original recognition of this category consists of viewing this posited thing as persistent in time and relating all its states in different times back to it. The original representing of the persistent in relation to its changing states is the representation of time itself.

The category of causality consists of an original positing that fixes the original synthesis of my sensations as successive (*EmS*, 154). In this category as well, the original synthesis consists of the connection of my sensations and the original recognition is the addition of the dimension of time, in this case fixing this synthesis of sensations as successive in time. A stone falls from the roof. In the original synthesis of the category of causality I connect the two states of the stone, on the roof and on the ground below. In the original recognition the temporal relation of the two states is fixed. I view one as before and the other as after. This fixating of the temporal relation is made on behalf of positing a ‘something’ as a cause, which determines the temporal relation of the synthesized states.

The category of reciprocal action (community) is an original representing in which the synthesis of my sensations is fixed as an arbitrary one (*EmS*, 164). As with the previous two categories of relation, here too the original synthesis consists of the connection of my sensations. The original recognition fixes the relation between the connected sensations as reciprocal. In temporal terms this means that each equally determines the other as successive. Their temporal relation – which comes before and which after – is therefore arbitrary.

Beck emphasizes that while the categories of quantity and quality are identified with intuiting, the categories of relation are distinguished from it. “The categories of relation just expounded concern the existence of things.” (*EmS*, 156).²³ In the categories of relation we *posit* that which fills space as persistent in time. We posit an object as in front of us and as that, which affects us and brings about sensations in us. The usage of the term ‘object’ should not confuse us. It is not an object thought through the attribution of determinations to a reference point but the recognition of an object in general.²⁴ The recognition of an object in general is

²² Strangely Beck describes the original synthesis in the category of substance by referring to predicates or properties. These terms seem more appropriate to conceptual thought rather than to the original mode of representing. I think that this aberration indicates Beck’s difficulties in referring to substance in sensible terms.

²³ Compare *KrV*, B110, where Kant distinguishes the categories of quantity and quality, which he calls ‘mathematical’, from those of relation and modality, which he calls “dynamic”. The mathematical categories are “concerned with objects of intuition (pure as well as empirical)” while the dynamical categories are “directed at the existence of these objects (either in relation to each other or to the understanding)”.

²⁴ In order to understand what is meant by a relation to an object “in general” Beck suggests to us to imagine that we are transposed into a world completely unknown to us. Nothing we see can be described in the terms known to us. In such a situation we could not refer to the objects in front of us by using concepts for no concepts in our possession would apply to them. However, these objects would still be objects to us. They would be objects simply due to our ability to represent whatever appears to us as an object or something in general. I must note that such a drastic

the result of the generation of meaningful content in the process of original synthesis and the determination and objectification of this content within the original recognition. The categories of relation concern the existence of things and this is expressed by the *positing* of something. Through the act of positing, the real in space acquires its independent status. It thus becomes something to which we refer as independent of cognition, as something “in front of us” and as capable of affecting us externally.

Condensed in few pages of Beck’s discussion of the categories of relation is a clear exposition of the main thesis of the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*, which is also at the core of this current research.

Existence then is an original representing. This assertion must seem as the height of idealism to anyone who deals with mere concepts. It should however be noted that our concepts first obtain their sense and meaning in this original representing. (*EmS*, 162)

Whenever I am asked how I arrive at the representation of the object that I see in front of me, I answer: ‘the object affects me’. The object that I see or touch brings about a sensation in me through the medium of light or due to its impenetrability. In spite of this, however, I shall also say that the understanding synthesizes originally in the generation of the original-synthetic objective-unity; in this original synthesis it is I who posits something persistent in respect to which I represent time itself. It is I who posits something (a cause) through which my own subjective states. . . obtain their temporal determination. There is nothing contradictory in all this. It must be remembered that the transcendental statement ‘the understanding posits a something originally’ is what first of all gives sense and meaning to the empirical statement ‘the object affects me’. (*EmS*, 156f. Cf. also *EmS*, 172f., and *Grundriß*, 13f.)

The last two sentences in the above-cited paragraph are highly important. On Beck’s view the transcendental and the empirical accounts are not contradictory since the transcendental account is only intended to explain the empirical account. Rather than attempting to justify the empirical account by appealing to a thing-in-itself wholly independent of cognition, the transcendental account is only intended to expose and explain what is meant by the empirical account. According to Beck’s view, cognition first creates meaning by positing that which fills space as something in front of us, as something that affects us and that brings about sensations in us. Critical philosophy, then, agrees with common sense when it says that the object affects us. However, it reminds us at the same time that we can only speak of some object in front of us on behalf of the original representing in the category of

situation is quite impossible. As strange as this world would be we could always use some basic and general concepts to refer to whatever we encounter there (one could still characterize what he sees in terms of shape, color, etc.). Still I think that this example is useful to understand Beck’s intentions. He means something, which we find very hard (even if not impossible) to characterize and yet it is an object for us.

substance. Likewise we can only say that this object affects us on behalf of the original representing in the category of causality (*EmS*, 348, 367, 369, 402f.).²⁵ Admitting that it is cognition that does the positing does not land us in idealism.²⁶

²⁵ Compare my reading of Beck against the view of Angelica Nuzzo (2007). She argues that similarly to Maimon, “Beck rejects the idea of all true “affection” [...] For Beck, there are no things in themselves, and hence no affection through them is possible.” This way of posing the problem already makes clear that Nuzzo understands the issue of affection in metaphysical terms. Otherwise she would not have deduced from Beck’s rejection of the thing-in-itself the strange conclusion that Beck allegedly rejects all “true affection”. She then continues: “And yet, since there must be (somehow) an affection in order for representations to be produced, Beck concludes that this affection must come from appearance. This is a clear circle: we produce appearances through the “original act of representing”, and we are affected by appearance, whereby representations are produced in us.” (Nuzzo 2007, 163). Beck’s account seems to Nuzzo to express a vicious circle since she expects the transcendental account to *justify* the empirical appeal to an object distinguished from our representations by anchoring this appeal in a thing-in-itself, wholly independent of cognition. However, once we recognize that on Beck’s view, the role of the transcendental account is not to justify the empirical account but merely to *explain* its inner structure, then the circularity involved is no longer an obstacle. A similar view to Nuzzo was held by Friedrich Ueberweg (1866, 191). Ingrid M. Wallner also addresses this issue by asking whether “Beck’s solution of ‘empirical affection’ – of appearances causing appearances – entail that the cause of the given is itself something given, does not lead to an infinite regress (and consequently to a ‘bottomless transcendental idealism’, as Fichte would have it)?” (Wallner 1984, 308). Wallner thinks that the difficulty is avoided by recognizing that the complete elimination of the thing-in-itself in Beck’s doctrine results in viewing the phenomenal object as not merely a shadow of the thing-in-itself but as a “full-bodied sensible object, which is not reducible to our consciousness of it” (Wallner 1984, 308). Although more needs to be said, I believe that Wallner’s view is an important step in the right direction. On the charge of circularity and of subjective idealism cf. Sect. 12.2.4 below.

²⁶ I completely reject di Giovanni’s labeling of Beck’s doctrine as “immanentism”, and even, “absolute immanentism” by which di Giovanni intends a doctrine which confines knowledge to the inner circle of consciousness (di Giovanni 2000, 40). In this light di Giovanni claims that “Beck’s project [...] is as consistent an attempt to reduce critical philosophy to phenomenalism as possible” (di Giovanni 2000, 41). The view of Beck’s doctrine as “immanentism” and as consistent “phenomenalism” is also found in Wallner (1979). I also reject di Giovanni’s interpretation of Beck’s doctrine of original representing as “unwillingness to grant that any content is given to consciousness” and similarly denying that mere thought is dependent on sensibility in that respect (di Giovanni 2000, 40). First, we must remember that according to Beck, mere thought – that is, conceptual-derived representation – is indeed empty when it cannot be traced back to the original-synthetic, objective-unity of consciousness. Beck’s latter claim corresponds to Kant’s claim that thought is empty without the content supplied to it by sensibility. Second, Beck’s explication of the real, which fills time and space, as a form of original representing does not mean that we literally create this real out of thin air. It only means that we become aware of such content *within* our original synthesis and not in complete abstraction from any cognitive activity. Third, there is nothing in Beck’s *Standpunctslehre*, which prevents him from referring to the empirical intuitive content, as well as the object of cognition, as given. The latter statement should only be qualified to mean that the reference to an external object implied by the term ‘given’ should be understood in light of the positing included in the categories of relation. Indeed in sensation “we feel our sense being impinged upon by external things” and di Giovanni recognizes that Beck intended to save this fact. However, di Giovanni argues that according to Beck the saving of this fact “cannot be done by appealing to some supposed factor external to consciousness, as if the impinging began outside it” (di Giovanni 2000, 41). Di Giovanni similarly argues that Beck failed to recognize that

This is so for the simple reason that the transcendental consideration should not be viewed as an alternative to the empirical consideration. Rather, the transcendental consideration is only intended to explain the possibility of, and give meaning to, the empirical consideration. As long as we ignore the contribution of cognition to the constitution of the object, then the question regarding the connection between a representation and its object turns into a question regarding the connection of a representation to an object viewed as a thing-in-itself (*EmS*, 179). Thus construed, the question itself is, according to Beck, meaningless. It has been the task of the entire first part of Beck's *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* to demonstrate this meaningfulness.²⁷ As long as we ignore the cognitive act of positing representations as an object, then the question regarding the objective validity of the concept of the connection between representations and their objects is not merely an unanswered question. *The very question is meaningless.* It is Beck's constant claim, that since we only have representations and yet the object must be something distinct from them, then it is unclear what we mean when we ask for an "object" which may or may not correspond to them. The question regarding an object can only be meaningful if we take into consideration the transcendental explanation, which accounts for the way by which cognition constitutes an object. However, in the latter case there is really no question to be solved, since the answer is given within the proper understanding of the question itself. This is exactly how Kant treats the question regarding the reality of external objects. As long as this question refers to the reality of objects as things-in-themselves then this question is insolvable. On the other hand, if properly construed, as a question regarding the reality of objects as appearances, then given that we do not doubt the reality of our own representations, there really is no question regarding the reality of external objects either.²⁸ Beck's important contribution is that he makes an explicit distinction between an unanswered question and a meaningless question. (*EmS*, 146f., 158).

The statement, 'This question is not directed at anything' means something quite different from 'This question is unanswerable'. The latter applies whenever a question actually has an object; it has meaning, therefore, because it actually aims at something. It is unanswerable, however, because the object it is enquiring about is so constituted as to be inaccessible to our cognition. An example of this kind of question is the one regarding the constitution of the matter at the center of the earth. For some sort of matter is surely there; but since to

"consciousness [...] is constantly transcending itself" (di Giovanni 2000, 41f.). On di Giovanni's view Beck never explained how "in the synthesis of 'reality' we find ourselves affected by external things [...] this is the heart of the problem of consciousness, and Beck ends up ignoring it altogether" (di Giovanni 2000, 42). On the contrary, I think that Beck only rejects an appeal to a factor completely independent of any contribution on behalf of cognition and he upholds an appeal to an object external to consciousness as long as the latter is understood as external in space and its independence from consciousness is understood as the result of being posited within the application of the categories of relation. On these issues cf. also Sects. 12.1.1 and 12.1.2 where Beck's view of contrasted with the views of Reinhold and Fichte respectively as well as Sect. 12.2.4 which presents my understanding of Kant's defense against the charge of subjective idealism.

²⁷ Cf. above Chaps. 5 and 6.

²⁸ Cf. Sect. 12.2.4.1 below.

examine it, as it truly is, surpasses our means, the question is unanswerable. The true sense of the proposition, ‘This question is not directed at anything’, will gradually emerge for the reader from the analysis of original representing. For it will become clear to him step by step, that the entire sense and meaning of our concepts rests on the original representing; original representing *constitutes* all meaning. (*EmS*, 146f.)²⁹

The object does not become an illusion because we recognize the role of cognition in constituting it. On the contrary, this is the only meaningful object that we can have. This is how cognition operates: it synthesizes originally in the categories of quantity and quality, and then, through the categories of relation, it posits this meaningful content as something persistent in time and as something that affects us (*Grundriß*, §84, 66f.). This ‘thing’ – the empirical object – is the only object that is ever meaningful to us. Ignoring the fact that it is our cognition that does the positing is just the other side of ignoring the fact that the activity of cognition consists precisely of positing something as independent of us, as persistent in time and as something that affects us. The two kinds of ignorance are just the two faces of the same coin. The first ignores the contribution on behalf of cognition and ends in dogmatism while the other is dissatisfied with cognition’s inability to reach an object as a thing-in-itself and therefore regards the object posited by cognition – for which cognition has no meaningful alternative – as an illusion, and ends in idealism. The idealist request – in both its skeptical and radical dress – that a relation between our representations and things-in-themselves be demonstrated, tacitly presupposes that a request for such a relation is meaningful, and here lies its very fault (*EmS*, 158; *Grundriß*, §19, 16–19).³⁰

²⁹ It must be admitted, though, that if a question is meaningful then it is in principle answerable, even if only remotely so. The distinction, to be more precise, should be made between a question, which seems, *at the current time*, to be unanswerable, and a question, which is, *in principle*, unanswerable and therefore, as Beck says, it is a question that aims at nothing. Take for example the question regarding the constitution of the matter at the center of the earth, or a similar question offered by Beck as an example of the same sort regarding whether there are inhabitants on the moon (*EmS*, 158). These questions are, in Beck’s terminology unanswerable. Both questions may have sounded far beyond the reach of science at the eighteenth century although they would not look the same way even to a layman in the twenty-first century. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that scientists need no more reach the center of the earth or the moon to make an intelligible conclusion about what lies there, than historians need to go back in time to make empirically reasonable statements about past events. We can infer from that which is offered for observation to other realities not directly observed, as long as all of our judgments can cohere together under universal empirical laws (cf. *KrV*, A225f./B273; *Prol*, AA 04: 290f.). This note is not intended as a criticism of Beck. I assume that he would accept this minor adjustment had it been presented to him since it does not affect the main issue at hand according to which we need to distinguish a question which aims at something meaningful but cannot yet be answered and a meaningless question. The latter is a question, which aims at nothing since we do not even understand what it could be about.

³⁰ For further discussion regarding the question of whether Beck’s view leads to radical idealism, according to which the object is “created” by cognition, cf. also Sect. 12.1.2, in which I compare Beck’s and Fichte’s views. Compare my above arguments in defense of Beck’s view against the charge of subjective idealism, with the analysis of Ingrid M. Wallner. She does not emphasize the act of positing in the categories of relation and she fails to recognize the significance of Beck’s

According to Beck, Kant's defense of realism becomes clearer when his views are compared with those of Berkeley. Both Berkeley and Kant recognize that cognition has only representations at its disposal. Since any inference regarding the reality of external bodies can rely on nothing other than our representations, then it is clear that we cannot justify the existence of objects as things-in-themselves.³¹ Berkeley, who assumes that external bodies can only be real if they are taken to be something 'in-itself', completely independent of cognition and its representations, concludes, therefore, that the reality of external bodies can never be established. Kant, according to Beck's interpretation, recognizes that the desire to find a relation between our representations and an object as a thing-in-itself is meaningless and therefore irrelevant. Kant's denial of our ability to know things-in-themselves does not lead to the denial of the reality of external objects. On the contrary, it is the only consistent way to uphold the reality of external objects. For, as Beck argues, without the transcendental account we do not even understand what we mean when we speak of 'an object' and its 'influence' on our senses. The transcendental account is not in conflict with the empirical account. On the contrary, it is only intended to give sense and meaning to the empirical account. "According to the critical system, external objects affect us. They are the causes of our sensations..." and consequently "we live in a real world – not in an imaginary one." (*EmS*, 172).³² Our modes of original representing delimit the domain of experience, which is also the domain of meaningfulness. "From these original representing follows all meaning of our concepts and therefore the question regarding the cause of our specific representations, either has no meaning at all or it has meaning only within the boundaries of meaningfulness, that is, in the domain of experience." (*EmS*, 163).³³ The bottom line of the above considerations is that "the

highly important statement that the transcendental account is only intended to explain the empirical account (this claim of Beck's is mentioned by Wallner as a matter of fact (Wallner 1979, 227–237) but she fails to see its importance).

³¹ "If appearances were things-in-themselves, then no human being would be able to assess from the succession of representations how the manifold is combined in the object. For we have to do with our representations; how things-in-themselves may be (without regard to representations through which they affect us) is entirely beyond our cognitive sphere." (*KrV*, A190/B235). Note that by the words in the brackets, Kant does not mean to imply that things-in-themselves affect us. He only intends to say that regardless of our representations, through which objects affect us, we can say nothing about these objects. Therefore what we call objects cannot be things-in-themselves.

³² Cf. also the text surrounding the above citation (*EmS*, 172f.).

³³ As I already stated, my current discussion is focused at the presentation of Beck's views rather than on their evaluation. Nevertheless, in order to better serve the purpose of understanding Beck's views, I wish to note the following. Although I think that Beck properly interprets Kant when he argues that any distinction between truth and falsehood can only be decided *within* the realm of empirical experience (and consequently that any question whether experience as a whole conforms to a world 'in-itself' is meaningless and irrelevant), I nevertheless think that Beck does not properly explain the criterion according to which the distinction between truth and falsehood is made in each particular case. Beck attempts to address this issue (*EmS*, 163), but I think that his explanation is lacking, especially since a better account can be found in Kant's own work. This issue shall be analyzed in details in Sect. 12.2.6.

appearances (and not things-in-themselves) affect us and produce sensations” (*Grundriß*, §84, 67).³⁴ “The appearances are the objects of our cognitions; they are truly existing objects, and it is not illusion but truthfulness when we say about our representations of them [of these objects] that they correspond to objects.” (*Grundriß*, §85, 67).

On Beck’s account, Kant can defend the reality of objects as appearances without ever mentioning the alleged existence of things-in-themselves, neither positively nor negatively:

Critical idealism [...] is entirely in agreement with common sense. Just like common sense it declares that the objects affect us and generate sensations in us. But it secures the rightful claims of common sense by deriving the original representing done in the category of causality from the very employment of the understanding, and by exhibiting this representing as the original synthesis of the states of a permanent substratum, and as an original recognition through which, in being fixated, the synthesis becomes objective [...]. This kind of idealism is expressed by the *Critique* through the proposition that we know things, not as they are in-themselves, but as they appear to us. Appearances are the objects of cognition that affect us and bring about sensations in us. Thereby nothing is thought about things-in-themselves. (*EmS*, 158f. Cf. also *Grundriß*, §14, 12)

According to Beck, we say that we know things only as they appear to us simply on behalf of acknowledging that a ‘thing’ and all that is meaningful to us is already conditioned by our modes of representing. Whatever is an object for us can only be such an object on behalf of the activity of our own cognition and therefore it is not a thing-in-itself but an appearance. According to Beck’s view we do not need to contrast our experiential knowledge with an alleged knowledge of things-in-themselves, which we lack, to argue that we only know things as they appear to us. We need only to pay attention to the transcendental inquiry into the original modes of representing which are our own and without which all meaning is lost (*Grundriß* §55, 43f., and §58, 46). This is a reaffirmation of the views Beck expressed in his letter to Kant, November 10, 1792 (AA 11: 384) discussed above in Chap. 4. As we have emphasized there, the advantage of Beck’s view is that it avoids demoting the reality of ordinary experiential objects to a lesser kind or degree of reality.

It is indeed true that Beck does say that we know objects as they appear to us *and not as they are in themselves*. It can thus be argued that Beck too does not avoid the contrast with things-in-themselves. However, Beck’s argument which determines that what we refer to as objects are appearances, does not rely on the contrast between the knowledge of appearances available to us and another kind of knowledge which evades us. Beck’s argument only mentions things-in-themselves in order to distinguish critical philosophy from dogmatic philosophy. The important

³⁴ Beck also explains himself clearly in his commentary of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the fourth part of the *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt* (*EmS*, 347ff., as well as *EmS*, 367f.). Cf. also: “Thus the object, which produces sensations in us, is the appearance, and this whole ‘production’ is the original positing of a something, (cause), which stands for the fixation of the original synthesis of my perceptions.” (*EmS*, 369). Cf. also *EmS*, 397 as well as Beck’s letter to Kant June 20, 1797 (AA 12: 165): “the object that affects me must therefore be an appearance and not a thing-in-itself”.

point is that Beck's view does not contrast the knowledge of objects as appearances with an alleged knowledge of things-in-themselves and therefore he does not appeal to a real or positive distinction between two domains of objects, one that is and another that is not accessible to us. I refer to Beck's explicit distinction between the contrast between intellectual and sensible *concepts*, which is admissible and the contrast between intellectual and sensible *objects*, which is inadmissible. The former distinction employs the thing-in-itself in the limited sense of a negative noumenon, while the latter distinction employs the thing-in-itself in the sense of a positive noumenon (*Grundriß*, §57, 45f., and §58, 46).³⁵ According to Beck we do not lack anything by not knowing things-in-themselves for the very desire for such knowledge turns out upon reflection to be meaningless. In the *Grundriß*, §56, Beck further argues that "the very question, whether noumena exist, is senseless" (*Grundriß*, 44). Beck explains that the concept of a thing-in-itself – in the sense of a negative noumenon – abstracts from our original modes of representing and yet existence is only meaningful as a form of original representing. It follows that the very question whether the thing-in-itself exists or does not exist is meaningless (*Grundriß*, 45f.). In the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* Beck similarly argues: "what may be the case with things-in-themselves, in abstraction from all original use of the understanding, is not only unknown to us but completely meaningless, because in this case we abstract from the use of the understanding" (*EmS*, 398). On Beck's view, therefore, the statement that we know objects only as they appear to us does not turn ordinary experiential objects into a diminished kind or degree of reality.³⁶

Finally Beck discusses the modal categories. Possibility, according to Beck, is the tracing of a mere concept through which an object is thought, back to the original representing in the categories of quantity, quality and relation (*EmS*, 165; *Grundriß*, §13, 11, in which Beck describes all three categories of modality). Beck repeatedly emphasizes that every concept must find its source in original representing if it is to have meaning at all. Accordingly, a concept that *can be* traced back to the original representing (in other words, a concept which is compatible with the original modes of representing) is a possible concept. A concept that cannot be so traced-back is an impossible concept.³⁷

³⁵ Beck's distinction corresponds to Kant's distinction between a logical distinction and a real distinction. When I say that we know objects only as appearances, it therefore logically follows that these objects are not things-in-themselves. This logical distinction, however, implies no real distinction. For more details, cf. Sect. 12.2.2 below, especially the discussion of the noumenon in its mere negative sense.

³⁶ At this stage of this work I focus on presenting Beck's doctrine and the arguments he himself brings forward in its defense. In Part IV, as part of the comparative discussion of Beck and his two major contemporaries (Reinhold and Fichte) and as part of the evaluation of Beck's doctrine against Kant's original views, I shall bring out more arguments to support Beck's view regarding the status of the object and the alleged roles of the thing-in-itself.

³⁷ Notice that Beck does not differentiate between the general conditions of intuition on the one hand and those of thought on the other. This is so since Beck views the categories as originally unified with the forms of intuition.

Actuality is the original representing itself upon which the concept of an object initially follows. Actuality consists of the original representing (in the categories of quantity, quality and relation) itself rather than in the mere capability of being traced-back to it. What this means is that the existent thing must be actually present in original representing so that its concept is shown to have been drawn out of the original representing.

Beck's distinction between possibility and actuality may seem marginal. George di Giovanni (2000, 40) therefore argues that according to Beck "the sphere of 'possibility' [...] is ultimately reducible to the sphere of 'actuality'". Di Giovanni even thinks that according to Beck the mere *logical possibility* (distinguished by Kant from *real possibility*, expressed by the category of possibility) is coextensive with actuality (di Giovanni 2000, 40). In my view, Beck intends Kant's distinction between possibility as compatibility with formal conditions and actuality as conformity with concrete observations. Although Beck does not distinguish the categories from intuition, his theory still allows him to distinguish the mode or manner according to which cognition constitutes an object and the concrete result of the application of this ability in any particular case. In Beck's terms it is the distinction between the categories as modes of original representing and the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness. It follows that possibility, in Beck's terms, is the tracing back of a concept to the modes of original representing while actuality is the tracing back of a concept to the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness. Although not stated by Beck, this reading seems to me to be the only way to understand his distinction between possibility and actuality. My reading is to some degree supported by Beck's definition of actuality in the *Grundriß*, as "the generation of a concept of an object out of this original use of the understanding" (*Grundriß*, §13, 11). Further support for my reading is found in §17 (*Grundriß*, 15) in which Beck defines objective validity as the tracing back of the analytical unity of a concept to the original-synthetic unity of consciousness. Nevertheless in the exposition of the principles of pure understanding in the *Grundriß*, the distinction between possibility and actuality is once again blurred (*Grundriß*, §50–§51, 41f.).³⁸

Necessity is the original positing of an object represented only through a concept, that is, not in original representing. Necessity signifies that through a concept of one object (that is not originally represented) we posit originally the objective validity of another concept. In other words, the object of the latter concept is originally posited on behalf of the mere concept of the former. We assume the actuality of one concept and from this we deduce the actuality of another.

The relation of Beck's definitions of the modal categories to Kant's original definitions can certainly be recognized. However, it seems that Beck's distinction between the original synthesis and the original recognition is, in the case of the

³⁸ Regarding the distinction between original representing and the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness, cf. above in this chapter and also in more details in Chap. 9 below.

modal categories, rather loose and that it is necessitated only by the systematic structure of Beck's theory. Regarding the category of possibility he argues that the original synthesis consists of the tracing of the concept to the categories of quantity, quality and relation while the original recognition in the category of possibility consists of the determination of this tracing-back. Presumably the original recognition is the determination of whether the relevant concept can or cannot be so traced-back. Regarding the category of actuality the original synthesis consists of the categories of quantity, quality and relation themselves (rather than a mere capability to be traced back to them) and the original recognition likewise consists of the original recognition of these very categories. In the category of necessity the original synthesis consists of the representation of one object through the mere concept of another while the original recognition in this category consists of the final determination of this synthesis, that is, the actual positing of an object.

Chapter 9

Synthetic and Analytic Unity of Consciousness

This chapter focuses on the transition from the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness to the analytical unity of consciousness. The discussion shall emphasize Beck's view of the distinctions between a-priori and a-posteriori concepts, between analytical and synthetic judgments and finally between synthetic a-priori and synthetic a-posteriori judgments.

The categories, according to Beck, are original *modes* of representation and they must be distinguished from the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness, which is *the product of their application* in any concrete case. The categories are the expression of the postulate to represent originally. A postulate is a requirement to act and accordingly the categories must be applied. Through their application cognition synthesizes originally and through the determination of this synthesis in the original recognition we create the representation of a specific figure with a specific intensive degree (sensation), which we then posit as persistent and as a cause of the alterations of our sensations. The result of the application of the categories is the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness. But the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness is not yet a representation of an object. The original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness is a pre-conceptual awareness of meaning. It is not a representation *of something* in which there is inevitably a distinction between a representation as a symbol and an object as the symbolized. We can only represent an object to ourselves through the attribution of characteristics to a reference point as in discursive thinking. In order to represent an object, consciousness picks characteristics out of the original-synthetic objective-unity and attributes them to a reference point. Thereby part of the content of the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness is separated and converted into a general property. The characteristics picked out of the original-synthetic unity of consciousness must be abstracted from their concrete form to allow them to be used as general properties. The process of attributing properties to a reference point constitutes the analytical unity of consciousness. In order to attribute redness to something we must abstract the property 'red' from the original-synthetic unity of consciousness where it is present as a sensation, which is always connected to other sensations. The above describes the transition from the

original-synthetic unity of consciousness, which results from the application of the categories as modes of original representing, to the analytical unity of consciousness, of which thinking subsists (*EmS*, 185f.).

We can use the above description to explain the distinction between a-priori and a-posteriori concepts. The categories are original modes of representation but they can also be used as concepts. As concepts the categories – like all other concepts – are based on the analytical unity of consciousness. Whether I say of an object that it is red or I say that it is a cause of some event, I assume – in both cases – a reference point to which I attribute the characteristics of either being red or of being a cause. The connection of concepts in a judgment is always based on the analytical unity of consciousness. What then distinguishes the concept of a cause as an a-priori concept from that of the concept of redness as an a-posteriori one? The concept of redness is based on the original synthetic unity of consciousness, from which it was picked out in order to be used as a property that can be attributed to a reference point. By contrast, the concept of causality cannot be traced back to the original synthetic unity of consciousness. Rather, it is grounded directly in the original representing through which the original synthetic unity of consciousness is created. In other words, when we look for the validity and meaningful origin of our concepts we find that a-priori concepts are an expression – a conceptual reconstruction – of our original modes of representation. A-posteriori concepts are not grounded directly in our original modes of representation but in the synthetic unity of consciousness that is the result of their application. As concepts, the categories are an immediate expression of the original modes through which we initially create representations. The categories as a-priori concepts are grounded in the categories in their true and original sense. A-posteriori concepts, by contrast, express specific contents created by the use of the categories as our original modes of representation (*EmS*, 178f., 184; *Grundriß*, §22, 21).

According to Beck, the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments is made wholly within the realm of thought; that is, the realm of discursive representing by means of concepts. Both kinds of judgments – as such – stand for the connection of concepts and therefore they are only derived rather than original. The process of constructing a concept by the attribution of properties can be broken into two stages: first, the construction of a basic, general concept and second, the adjustment the basic concept for the purpose of the subsuming a specific object under it. The exposition of those characteristics through which we constitute the basic concept is the analytical judgment. After we have attributed those characteristics that make out a concept we thereby have a basis. Without altering this basic concept that we have in mind, we need to add or abstract certain characteristics in order to adjust this concept to particular cases with which we are confronted. The addition or subtraction of characteristics from an already determined analytic unity stands for the synthetic judgment (*EmS*, 186f.; *Grundriß*, §23–§24, 22f.). Beck gives an example that helps to illuminate the above explanation.

I see a tree. Thereby the understanding synthesizes originally and the transcendental time-determination (original recognition) fixes this synthesis. Through this original representing the objective synthetic unity of consciousness is created. In this synthetic unity, I still do not represent an object to myself; rather, for this to happen, the understanding lifts certain

characteristics out of the original synthesis and by attributing them, it fixes the objective unity, which is called by the Critique “the analytical unity of consciousness”. Thereby, the original representing has passed into thinking. The objective unity is fixed through characteristics as *such* a figure, *this* reality, etc. The exposition of these characteristics, which constitute the analytical unity, make out the analytical judgment. Once the analytical unity has been secured, the understanding can join other characteristics to it, or separate characteristics from it, without thereby disturbing it. For example, the understanding thinks of the tree, which now is covered with leaves, as it will be stripped from them in the autumn, etc. This representation of the object through characteristics that are alien to its analytical unity is what constitutes the synthetic judgment. The synthesis of the latter is merely derivative and is not to be confused with the original synthesis of the category. It is a connection of concepts which analytical unity always presupposes an original synthetic one. (*EmS*, 187f.)

Discursive thought first creates the general concept ‘tree’. This concept includes, among other properties, the property of being covered with leaves. The property of having leaves is not inevitably included in the general concept ‘tree’, nor is any other property. The question of which properties would be included in the basic concept is to some degree arbitrary.¹ The important point is only that according to Beck thought operates in two stages. At first a general concept is created, whatever its properties may be. Then, while still keeping the general concept in mind, we attempt to apply this concept to experience and for that purpose we must, in each case, make some adjustments. The exposition of the properties, which are included in the general concept, is the analytical judgment. The addition or subtraction of properties to allow the concept to be applied in any concrete case is the synthetic judgment.

Beck’s reconstruction of the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments may seem odd, but it nevertheless does emphasize a major aspect of the analytic-synthetic distinction often overlooked by Kant’s critics and interpreters. While analytic judgments merely relate concepts to concepts, the role of synthetic judgments is to relate concepts to objects. In this latter respect, Beck’s explanation of analytic and synthetic judgments emphasizes the importance of this distinction for Kant. The distinction is not merely a logical one between essential and accidental properties, whereby the former are necessarily included in the subject concept while the latter are only contingently included in it.² The distinction between analytic and synthetic judgment does not merely reflect the relations of subject and predicate but it has to do with the grounds for their connection. Either the connection is purely

¹ The decision regarding which properties to include in the basic concept may serve practical purposes and is not here the issue. It is practically comfortable to have a general concept, which requires as little adjustment in its application to the widest variety of objects with which we are confronted. Beck does not discuss this issue at all and I mention it just to complete the picture and prevent irrelevant questions from diverting the discussion from its proper course.

² Compare my exposition with that of Ingrid M. Wallner. She fails to distinguish between on the one hand the contrast between analytic and synthetic unity of consciousness and on the other hand the contrast between analytic and synthetic judgments. Furthermore, she describes the analytic judgment (which she conflates with the analytic unity of consciousness) as having to do with essential properties in contrast to the synthetic judgment, which has to do with accidental properties. Her entire exposition of the issue of the transformation from the originally synthetic unity of consciousness to the analytic unity of consciousness is, unfortunately, confused and unclear (Wallner 1979, 198ff.).

logical, an arbitrary connection based solely on the non-contradiction of the subject and the predicate, in which case it is an analytic judgment; or it is a real connection based on experience, in which case it is a synthetic judgment.³

On the basis of the above we can now present the distinction between synthetic a-priori and synthetic a-posteriori judgments. A synthetic judgment is a-posteriori when the connection of concepts of which it consists, is grounded on the original synthetic unity of consciousness. The judgment is a-priori when the connection of the concepts, which are thought through it, rests on the original representing itself. This can be exemplified with reference to the above-cited example. The judgment that the tree is now without leaves is synthetic a-posteriori. It is based on the lifting of characteristics out of the synthetic unity of consciousness that were not already thought in the basic analytical unity. When, on the contrary, I say that an event must have a cause, this judgment is synthetic a-priori. The latter judgment is not grounded on the synthetic unity of consciousness, which is the product of the application of the original representing in the categories but on the original representing itself.

General pure logic deals with concepts. It does not inquire into the origin of these concepts but only deals with their connection and interaction. Transcendental logic on the contrary, deals with the meaningful origin of our concepts; it is the science whose object is the original representing itself. According to Beck, the understanding and the power of judgment have a role in both general and transcendental logic. The understanding in its mere logical sense is the capacity for concepts. It deals with the connections of concepts, with the construction of complex structures from simple ones, etc. But it does not inquire into the origin of these concepts and it has no special concepts which characterize the understanding and with which the understanding is identified. The power of judgment in its mere logical form is the power of recognition. It is the capacity for recognizing that an object is subsumed under a specific concept constructed by the understanding.⁴

The understanding in its transcendental sense is expressed by the original synthesis. It is where meaning is first created and on which the synthesis of concepts is based. Although transcendental logic does not merely deal with relations of concepts, still the understanding in its transcendental sense has special concepts, which characterize it. The categories as a-priori concepts are unique concepts for they immediately express the original forms of representation with which the understanding in its transcendental sense is identified. The power of judgment in its transcendental sense is identified with the original recognition. Unlike the power of judgment in its logical sense, which consists of subsuming an object under a concept, the power of judgment in its transcendental sense stands for the original determination of time through which the original synthesis is fixed. Although the transcendental power of judgment does not deal with concepts, it nevertheless has an immediate expression in synthetic a-priori judgments. Just as the transcendental use of the understanding is expressed by the

³This issue is emphasized in Kant's polemical essay against Eberhard's criticisms – *On a discovery whereby any new critique of pure reason is to be made superfluous by an earlier one.*

⁴For a concise exposition of the understanding in its logical sense, cf. *Grundriß*, §1–§7, 1–5.

categories as a-priori concepts, so the transcendental power of judgment is expressed immediately by the principles of pure reason as synthetic a-priori judgments. These judgments are immediately grounded on the original recognition (*EmS*, 194f.).

We can summarize the above by saying that general pure logic consists of the synthesis of concepts in the understanding and in the recognition that an object is subsumed under a certain concept within the logical power of judgment. Beck calls the first stage thinking and the second judging. Both logical uses of our cognition belong to the analytical unity of consciousness for they express the interaction between mere concepts and do not inquire into their origin. Thinking and judging stand for the two stages of the logical use of our cognition. Thinking is identified with the analytical judgment, in which the understanding constructs concepts by attributing characteristics to a reference point to create a basic conceptual structure. The power of judgment is identified with the synthetic judgment intended to subsume an object under a certain concept. Synthesis and recognition both have a pure logical and a transcendental sense. Synthesis belongs to the understanding while recognition to the power of judgment. The figure below is a sketch of the cognitive structure described above (Fig. 9.1).

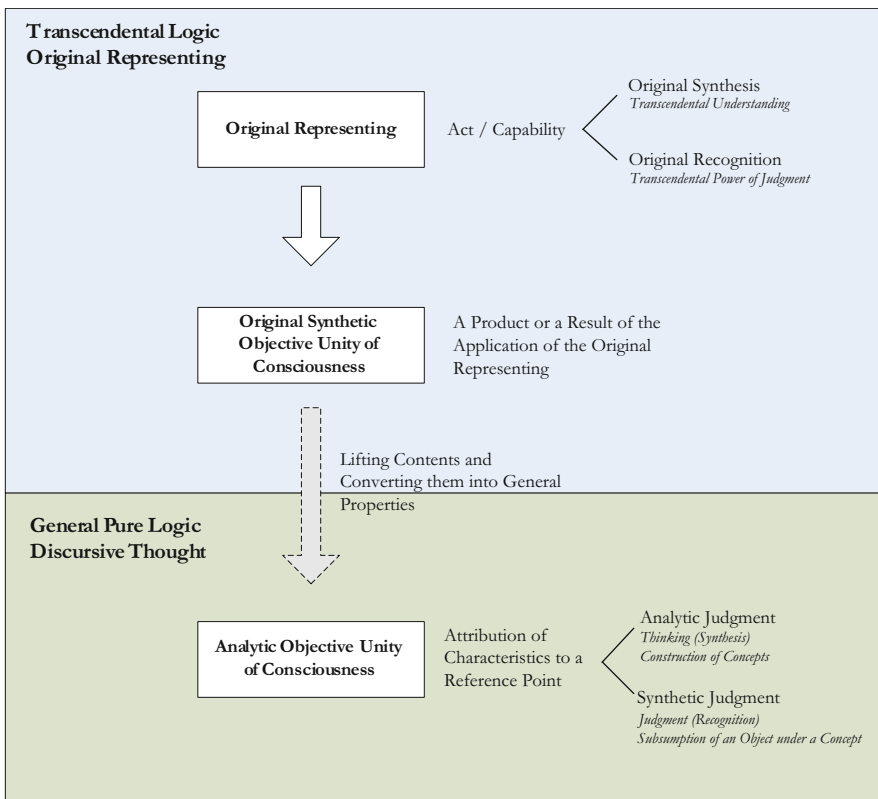


Fig. 9.1 The structure of consciousness according to Beck

Chapter 10

Original Representing and Practical Philosophy

Beck presents an explanation of practical philosophy, that is, morality, in a continuous manner to his presentation of the theoretical part of critical philosophy, without resorting to the concept of a thing-in-itself. Beck attempts to elucidate the distinction between natural necessity and moral necessity. Through the distinctness on the one hand and the connection on the other between these two senses of the concept of necessity, Beck shows the integration of theoretical and practical philosophy. Since the concept of necessity, in both its natural and moral sense, is an original representing, the meaning of both kinds of necessity and the distinction between them can be made on merely subjective grounds without involving the problematic concept of the thing-in-itself.¹

As we have seen above, necessity was defined by Beck as the original positing of an object through the mere concept of another object. We merely assume the actuality of one concept and on behalf of this assumption we then posit another concept as an object. If I say that a stone held above the ground shall, when released, fall and rest on the ground below, this reflects the positing of an objective state of affairs – the stone as it is on the ground – on behalf of the mere concept of another state of affairs – the stone released above that point at which it is said to lie. This is the definition of *natural* necessity. It is important to notice that the assumed initial event, from which the second event is deduced, must be a part of the natural world. Although it may not actually be observed at this very moment, it nevertheless must be such an event that can be observed. Put in Beck's terms this means that the concept, through which the positing of the necessary object is obtained, must be such that can be traced back (*zurückgeführt*) to the original-synthetic objectivity of consciousness.

What should we then say of a very different kind of necessity which is found to be a fact of our being, a concept of necessity according to which one *should* refrain from doing some act, for example, one *should* not lie? What kind of necessity is

¹For Beck's exposition of practical philosophy from the transcendental standpoint cf. *EmS*, 276–302.

expressed by the term 'should'? According to Beck, this term expresses the moral necessity, which consists of the original positing of an object through a concept that cannot be traced back to the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness. In other words, the concept from which we deduce the moral necessity of an event is not a natural event. The necessity expressed by the term 'should' is deduced from the concept of freedom, which is not a part of the natural world. When we follow the meaningfulness of the moral 'should' we see that it consists of a concept of necessity that is totally independent of nature. This is exactly the meaning of the moral imposition, which is binding regardless of any actual event. Even if I did, as a matter of fact, lie, still I can say that I should not have lied. The moral 'should' is not dependent on actual events.

Any natural event has a cause determining it. The cause is in turn a natural event, which in turn has a cause, etc. No natural event is exempt from this general law. Human actions are part of this world. As natural events they are not free but determined by prior causes. Nevertheless, it is a fact that we have another different kind of law – the moral law expressed by the term 'should'. Under the moral law we view our actions as determined by our free will. The free will is not a natural event and is not predetermined by any prior natural event. Freedom, according to Beck, is grounded not in the self as a thing-in-itself but in a unique concept of necessity, which expresses a unique kind of original representing.

If the concept of necessity was a property of things rather than a subjective mode of relating to things, then the two kinds of necessity could not exist side by side. Natural necessity would indicate that human actions are predetermined by prior natural causes while the concept of moral necessity would instruct us that regardless of natural events we should have acted in a specific manner. Necessity, however, is only a mode of our own capability of representing. It is a mode according to which cognition imposes order. As such there is no contradiction in us having two distinct ways of viewing the necessary connection of human actions.

According to one possible interpretation of the Kantian text, the apparent contradiction whereby the very same things are considered to be at once causally determined and free is resolved by the fact that the applicability of natural causality is limited to appearances while freedom is ascribed to things-in-themselves. However, this line of thought assumes two distinct domains of existing objects; the first is the common world of phenomenal objects while the second is the intelligible world of noumenal objects. It pulls us towards theoretical speculation regarding the nature of things-in-themselves (since we have acknowledged two domains of actual objects) which would run counter to the limitations Kant so meticulously set out for theoretical reason. This interpretation makes Kant vulnerable to the objection made against him that what he ruled out in the theoretical account is reinstated through the practical account. The flaw in this kind of interpretation is in the attempt to subsume practical reason under the requirements of theoretical reason. This tendency becomes obvious when we recognize that the above interpretation requires that freedom be realized in some actually existing object. Contrary to this interpretation, which relies on two distinct domains of objects, Beck's interpretation relies on two distinct ways of relating to objects. Through the first we ask what *is* and

through the second we ask what *ought* to be. It is simply a matter of fact that we have these two distinct ways of relating (*EmS*, 283, 284, 289). Beck's view enables us to maintain the distinction between natural and moral necessity without requiring the concept of the thing-in-itself as a unique kind of object (*EmS*, 287, 290, 293, 300).

Part IV

Beck's *Standpunktslehre* in Relation to Kant's Original Doctrine

As we have already discussed, Beck's original representing is designed to perform two related and yet distinct tasks. The first task refers to the process through which concepts acquire their meaning. This issue is translated in the Beck-Kant context into the issue of the relation between sensibility and the understanding. The second task refers to the process through which concepts acquire their objective validity. This issue refers to the relation of a representation to its object. These two aspects of Beck's doctrine of original representing also form the two contexts within which I intend to discuss the legitimacy of Beck's doctrine as an interpretation of Kant's critical philosophy.¹ Although only the latter issue is the proper subject of this research, nevertheless a discussion of the former issue is inescapable for the following reasons. First, despite the fact that the above two issues are distinct, they are nevertheless not unrelated. It is, in my view, impossible to properly understand Beck's stand on the issue of the relation of a representation to its object without first analyzing his views regarding the relation between sensibility and the understanding. Second, the issue of the relation between sensibility and the understanding is the first thing that comes to mind when one reads Beck and no discussion of his *Standpunktslehre* can be complete without addressing this core aspect of his theory. Third, most, if not all, of Beck's contemporaries, as well as the secondary literature concerning his work in the last 200 years, tended to conflate these two issues resulting in either rejecting or approving his theory en-bloc without making finer distinctions. I believe that only by discussing these two aspects separately can we arrive at more nuanced conclusions. Moreover, only by discussing these two aspects separately can we then account for the interrelations between them.

In order to facilitate understanding of my own views I would like, already at this early stage of our discussion, to make my intentions clear. In the following chapters I argue that Beck's theory regarding the issue of the relation between sensibility and

¹ An important disadvantage of Ingrid Wallner's (1979) discussion of Beck's *Standpunktslehre* is that she does not distinguish these two aspects. This omission prevents her from separately evaluating Beck's doctrine in relation to these two contexts.

the understanding goes beyond the limits of a legitimate interpretation of Kant. In this regard Beck's *Standpunctslehre* may have various advantages and disadvantages over Kant's original views, and I shall make references to some of these, but it must, Beck's protests notwithstanding, be regarded as an independent development of Kant's views on this matter. Regarding the issue of the relation of a representation to its object, I hold that despite some important omissions, Beck's view is not only within the bounds of legitimate interpretation, it is even a much preferable interpretation of Kant which captures Kant's unique stand between realism and idealism.

Chapter 11

The Relation Between Sensibility and the Understanding

In this chapter I proceed according to the following plan: first, I present a detailed comparison of Beck's views with Kant's original text. Part III focused on presenting Beck's arguments as fluently as possible, without comparative interruptions, since it was designed to enable a comprehensive view of Beck's *Standpunctslehre* as integral whole. Here, I assume that Beck's theory sits firmly in our minds and I proceed to discuss the details of its comparison with Kant's text. I do so both by referring to Beck's presentation of the categories and by referring to Beck's commentary of Kant's first *Critique* in the fourth and last part of his *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* (Sect. 11.1). Second, I attempt to bring out two core issues, which although not explicitly discussed by Beck, nevertheless stand at the heart of the controversy. The discussion of these two issues shall enable me to highlight the distinctness of Beck's view in relation to Kant (Sects. 11.2 and 11.3). These discussions shall allow me in the last section to propose a wider perspective from which both Kant's and Beck's views of the relation between sensibility and the understanding can be regarded so that we can determine, at least in outline, the advantages and disadvantages of the two theories (Sect. 11.4).

11.1 Beck's Perceptual View of the Categories and Its Consequences

11.1.1 *The Categories of Quantity and Quality*

Beck's stand, which practically merges the categories with intuition on the one hand and with the schemes of the power of imagination on the other hand, emerges immediately on Beck's initial presentations of the categories. Beck defines the category of quantity as "the original synthesis (putting together) of the homogeneous, which proceeds from the parts to the whole" and he further states that "it is

space itself” (*EmS*, 140).¹ Rather than expressing the general capability of bringing about synthesis, the category is identified with the actual synthesis of space and with space itself. By contrast, according to Kant, the pure category of quantity, as an *intellectual* synthesis, is distinguished from the *figurative* or *schematic* synthesis on the one hand (*KrV*, B151) and from both time and space on the other hand. Kant distinguishes three elements. *First*, the *pure concept* (the intellectual synthesis) expressing a *rule* of unity in general, which admittedly can only be used in application to intuitions but is nevertheless not limited to any specific kind of intuition. *Second*, the *schema* (figurative synthesis) which is also a general *rule* of unity but such that is limited to the specific condition of human intuition. This latter condition of intuition, in its most general form (in relation to both internal and external sense), is time. The schema is therefore homogeneous both with the pure category and with time. *Third*, the *image* of the schema in a *concrete* case. The following is Kant’s explanation of the distinctions and relations between the concept, the schema and the image:

The concept of the understanding contains pure synthetic unity of the manifold in general. (*KrV*, A138/B177)

The Schema is in itself always only a product of the imagination; but since the synthesis of the latter has as its aim no individual intuition but rather only the unity in the determination of sensibility, the schema is to be distinguished from an image. Thus, if I place five points in a row... this is an image of the number five. On the contrary, if I only think a number in general, which could be five or a hundred, this thinking is more a representation of a method for representing a multitude (e.g., a thousand) in accordance with a certain concept than the image itself, which in this case I could survey and compare with the concept only with difficulty. Now this representation of a general procedure of the imagination for providing a concept with its image is what I call the schema for this concept. (*KrV*, A140/B179f.)

In application to the category of quantity the above doctrine is manifested as follows:

The pure image of all magnitudes for outer sense is space; for all objects of the senses in general, it is time. The **pure schema of magnitude** (*quantitatis*), however, as a concept of the understanding, is **number**, which is a representation that summarizes the successive addition of the one (homogeneous) unit to another. (*KrV*, A142/B182)

In Beck’s doctrine of original representing the concept becomes irrelevant for it is set aside and relegated to discursive representing. Thus Kant’s three-fold distinction becomes in Beck’s doctrine a two-fold distinction between two aspects of the original representing: the original synthesis and the original recognition. In both these senses, the category as an original mode of representing – rather than as a mere concept – consists in merging that which Kant calls a schema and that which he calls an image. Beck’s original synthesis is described as the successive addition of the homogeneous manifold, which in Kant’s terms is ‘number’, the schema of the

¹ Cf. also Chap. 8 above. In another place Beck argues that the transcendental deduction of space is actually one and the same as the transcendental deduction of the pure concept of magnitude (*EmS*, 435).

pure concept of magnitude. Beck's claim that the category of quantity is one and the same as space itself is an explicit identification of the category with an image. Beck's definition of the category of quality similarly identifies the category with, on the one hand, the successive synthesis of sensation which for Kant is the schema of the category of reality, and on the other hand with sensation itself (*EmS*, 145). Regarding the original recognition Beck argues that it is equivalent in Kant's terms to the transcendental schematism (*EmS*, 142). By this Beck explicitly identifies the category with a schema. Both Kant and Beck regard the schematism as the determination of time. However, for Kant the schematism represents the transition from the *pure synthesis of the understanding* towards a specific form of synthesis corresponding to human sensibility, while for Beck it is the transition from a *synthesis embedded in sense-perception* (Beck's original synthesis) towards the determination of this synthesis (Beck's original recognition). For Kant the main issue is the mediation between two non-homogeneous elements while for Beck it is a distinction between two aspects of one process, which is essentially sensible whereby mediation is not an issue at all.

The identification of the pure category with a schema and furthermore with an image is definitely not a Kantian move and so is the straightforward identification of the mathematical categories of quantity and quality with pure and empirical intuition respectively (*EmS*, 141, 146).² It can, and it actually was, argued against Beck

² Cf. also: "In contrast, the reader who is truly familiar with the transcendental standpoint of the category knows that the intuition is the original synthesis of the homogeneous, and therefore that it is one and the same as the category of magnitude (as original employment of the understanding)" (*EmS*, 367) and similarly: "Empirical intuition is nothing other than original employment of the understanding in the category of reality, namely, the original synthesis of the homogeneous which proceeds from the whole of the sensation to the parts (intensive magnitude)." (*EmS*, 370). The translation of the above passages is my own. For a view similar to mine regarding Beck's identification of the category with a schema and with an image, cf. George di Giovanni's notes to his translation of the core parts of Beck's *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* (di Giovanni and Harris 2000, 247n24, 248n26). Cf. as well, di Giovanni's exposition of Beck in his introductory essay (di Giovanni 2000, 39). I nevertheless disagree with di Giovanni's conclusion that Beck's identification of the category with its schema reinforces immanentism. The illegitimacy of Beck's interpretation of Kant regarding the merging of sensibility and understanding, concept and intuition, was already recognized in an early review of the three volumes of Beck's work, published anonymously in 1796 in the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung*. The review is concise, mainly descriptive and generally sympathetic of Beck's views except for the reviewer's dissatisfaction with what he thinks is Beck's overly confident or even arrogant tone. The reviewer was Johann Benjamin Erhard, a physician and philosopher of the Kantian circle. Erhard reveals himself to be the reviewer of Beck's work in a letter to Kant dated January 16, 1797. In this letter, after expressing his opinion that "It really is a pity that Fichte loses himself in nonsense so much, just to make himself look deeply profound", Erhard says: "Mr. Beck too seems to have gone overboard in the third part of his abstract. I could not abstain from reprimanding him, in the review, for his arrogance, as I did not spare Schelling for his nonsense". (AA 12: 144). The reviewer was wrongly identified by Adickes as Pörschke (Adickes 1970, 172). Beck was similarly criticized by Reinhold and Schelling for failing to distinguish sensibility from the understanding, cf. Sect. 12.1.1 below. Edmund Heller regards Beck's theory of original representing as criticism of Kant's concept of the concept. Heller argues that contrary to the general character of the concept according to Kant, Beck's concept of the concept is individual in character (Heller 1993, 83).

that he merges the intuition into the pure concepts of the understanding and that thereby it follows that we have an intuitive understanding which creates the object entirely, not merely its form but also its content.³ I wish to defer the analysis of the blame concerning the creation of the object to the discussion of Beck's views regarding the relation of a representation to its object in the next section of this part of the current research. Regarding the other accusation according to which Beck merges the intuition into the understanding I think that it consists of a misunderstanding which results in part from Beck's adherence to Kant's use of terms and at the same time from not paying attention to the main thrust of Beck's *Standpunctslehre*.⁴ Following Kant, Beck refers to the categories as original tools or functions of the understanding (*ursprüngliche Verstandsgebrauch*) and since he identifies them with pure and empirical intuition it seems that he arrives at intuitive understanding. In fact, rather than being guilty of infusing the intuition into the understanding, I think that Beck is guilty of the opposite, that is, of merging the understanding into the intuition. The very meaning of the postulate to represent originally and the requirement to transpose ourselves into a pre-conceptual mode of representation whereby meaning is simply present before us, exemplified by Beck's repeated appeal to the example of the geometer, is clear evidence that by original representing Beck intends sense perception.⁵

11.1.2 *The Categories of Relation*

Beck indeed distinguishes the categories of relation from intuition and argues that they concern the existence of things (*EmS*, 156). This should be compared with Kant's statement that the mathematical categories pertain "merely to the intuition" while the dynamical categories pertain to "the existence of an appearance in general" (*KrV*, A160/B199). Nevertheless, Beck's view of the categories of relation is no less perceptual. He reminds us repeatedly that

We must take care, however, to keep our attention fixed on the original representing, and not allow it to slide off through concepts into representations. For to the extent that we

³The accusation was put to Beck by Johann Schultz as is evident from Beck's letter to Kant June 20, 1797 (AA 12: 165f.). Kant's letter to Beck, which included Schultz's criticism, is not extant.

⁴Ingrid M. Wallner, as well, argues that "Beck's functional adaptation [...] involves the inclusion of space and time as categorical adaptations of the understanding" (Wallner 1979, 29; Cf. also Wallner 1984, 303). I think that Wallner is led to this conclusion by Beck's use of terms and more importantly by the fact that Beck regards time and space as part of a spontaneous activity (Wallner 1979, 55; Wallner 1984, 305). On the contrary, I think that Beck retains a distinction between sensibility and understanding in terms of his distinction between original and discursive representing. However, he infuses spontaneity into the original representing which he understands as part of sense perception.

⁵This view is reaffirmed by a multitude of passages from Beck's commentary on Kant's first *Critique* in the fourth part of his *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*.

allow ourselves to ask what substance or accident are, i.e., to look for concepts by which we can represent them to ourselves, to that extent we also lapse from the spirit of the postulate of original representing. (*EmS*, 151)

Nowhere does Beck tell us that the original representing in the categories of relation is to be understood in a different sense than in the case of the categories of quantity and quality. The only difference is that the categories of relation do not concern the contents of the original representing but the positing of these contents as something which persists in time or as something that affects us. But the nature of the original representing itself with its paradigmatic example of the geometer and its contrast from conceptual representation is the same in the dynamical categories (of relation and modality) as in the mathematical categories (of quantity and quality) (*EmS*, 161f.). The identification of the categories, as such, with sense perception is definitely contrary to Kant's strict separation of sensibility and the understanding but it becomes much more problematic as we move from the categories of quantity, to those of quality, of relation and finally to those of modality. Clearly to argue that causality can be represented in the same manner as the geometer represents his figures to himself cannot be viewed as a legitimate interpretation of Kant's intentions.⁶ The difficulties in referring to the categories of relation as perceptual in character even manifest themselves in Beck's own text. When he attempts to elucidate the meaning of the original synthesis and original recognition in the category of substantiality he is forced to refer to 'predicates' which properly belong to conceptual rather than original or perceptual representation.

Thirdly [in the category of substance], I lay down 'something' (i.e., the permanent real) as the foundation of this original synthesis and then refer its predicates to it; it is just these, the predicates, that are obtained in the original positing. In the original recognition I determine time by positing this substratum as *something permanent*. (*EmS*, 152)

Beck indeed recognizes the difficulty that in order to communicate his ideas he is inevitably forced to resort to the use of concepts, but Beck sees this obstacle as merely methodological (*EmS*, 152, 161). In contrast, it seems to me that the necessity to resort to 'predicates' to explain the original representing indicates a difficulty that is more than methodological. Although Beck's approach, considered on its own behalf, may include important insights, nevertheless I think that his insistence on a purely perceptual character of the categories of relation is much too radical and thus the difficulties that emerge are real ones. Above all, these views cannot be considered as a legitimate interpretation of Kant.

The most important difficulty with Beck's perceptual view of the categories of relation is tied to the notion of positing (*setzen*).⁷ The unique feature of the

⁶ "No one would say that the category, e.g., causality, could also be intuited through the senses and is contained in the appearance" (*KrV*, A137f./B176f.).

⁷ The difficulties with Beck's exposition of the act of positing itself and its role within the doctrine of objectivity shall be discussed in Sect. 12.2.6. Here I only want to emphasize the difficulties that result from Beck's perceptual view of this principle.

categories of relation is that they all express the positing of something (as persistent in time or as a cause). First, we must note that the very function of positing is to refer to something as that which stands in front of or over-against our own representations.⁸ The act of positing is intended to create the very gap or distinction between the subjective and the objective. This is even implied in Beck's recognition that the categories of relation concern the existence of things. It is therefore not a coincidence or a mere methodological-terminological difficulty that in explaining the meaning of the act of positing we are required to refer to *something*. Beck insists that within the original representing there is not yet a distinction between a representation and its object and that this distinction only emerges in conceptual discursive representing. However, the need to account for the act of positing already within the theory of original representing creates an internal tension in his doctrine. On the one hand the act of positing, which lies at the core of the categories of relation, inevitably means to refer to something *as an object* while on the other hand the original representing is supposed to be free from the complications which arise from the distinction between a representation and its object.⁹ The second aspect, which should be noted, is that the act of positing is clearly not perceptual. The positing of a certain connection of representations as an object is according to Kant – and also, as we shall later see, from a wider epistemological perspective – not a part of perception but of the activity of judgment which pertains to the understanding. This is especially evident in the fact that in many cases the positing of a certain connection of representations as an object goes against the immediate connection of representations in the apprehension. As Kant notes in the *prolegomena*, the sky may appear to be rotating around the viewer but when judged objectively we say that it is in fact the other way around (*Prol*, AA 04: 291). Sense perception provides us with appearances but the further issue of how the latter are connected in the object is not included within immediate sense perception (*KrV*, §19, B140ff.; Cf. also the Second Analogy of Experience, *KrV*, A189ff./B233-236). Finally, Beck's perceptual account of the categories neglects to account for the necessity which accompanies the positing of a certain connection of representations as an object and which is expressed by all of the categories of relation. This omission results in Beck's incomplete account of Kant's concept of objectivity (this omission is the main issue of Sect. 12.2.6 below).

11.1.3 *The Modal Categories*

The main difficulty with Beck's account of the modal categories refers to his account of actuality in terms of a correlation or a mere tracing back (*zurückführen*)

⁸ The German term 'Gegenstand' (standing in front of or over-against) makes this aspect of the act of positing very explicit.

⁹ This internal tension is exploited in a criticism of Beck by Heller (1993, 85).

of the analytical unity of the concept to the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness. By contrast, I think that the proper interpretation of Kant's modal category of actuality consists of a transition from a correlative model to a model based on coherence.¹⁰ This issue properly pertains to the discussion of Kant's concepts of objectivity and actuality and shall be addressed in Sect. 12.2.4 below.

11.1.4 Sensibility and Understanding in Beck's Commentary of Kant's First Critique

Beck's commentary of Kant's first *Critique* in the fourth and last part of his *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt* offers us a bold expression of Beck's merging of sensibility and the understanding. It also offers us a view of the consequences of the above for the issue of the applicability of the categories to intuitions on one the one hand and for the issue of the extension of the categories beyond sensibility on the other hand.¹¹

Kant, for example, states regarding concepts and intuitions that "both are either pure or empirical [. . .] thus pure intuition contains merely the form under which something is intuited, and pure concept only the form of thinking of an object in general." (*KrV*, A50f./B74f.). Following the citation of Kant's above text, Beck writes: "This expression: 'form of intuition' and 'form of thinking', is in one word the same as saying 'original employment of the understanding' [ursprüngliche Verstandsgebrauch]." (*EmS*, 404). Beck is fully aware that "these are the categories that the *Critique* alludes to by the expression 'form of thought', or 'pure concepts' and it is space and time which it [the *Critique*] understands by the 'form of intuition' or 'pure intuition'." (*EmS*, 404). But Beck nevertheless argues that "this wide separation of sensibility from the understanding, however, can itself be understood only through the standpoint of the original employment of the understanding" (*EmS*, 403). Since in its original sense the category is one and the same as intuition itself "one immediately sees clearly and maturely what is meant by the connection of intuition and concepts into cognition." (*EmS*, 405). In other words, according to Beck, when viewed from the proper transcendental standpoint the issue of the separation of sensibility and the understanding turns out to be a non-issue. For instance, paragraph §17 of the first *Critique* (*KrV*, B136) commences with a clear distinction between the formal conditions of sensibility (space and time) and the formal conditions derived from the understanding. In response to this Beck replies: "These two principles coincide for those readers who are already familiar with the transcendental philosophy, namely, [they are united] in the concept of the original-synthetic unity of consciousness." (*EmS*, 445).

¹⁰ I have already mentioned this transition in Sect. 2.2.1 above.

¹¹ The translation of all texts from this part of Beck's book is my own (these sections were not included in di Giovanni's translation).

In response to a multitude of passages from the first *Critique* in which Kant claims that “our cognition arises from two fundamental sources in the mind, the first of which is the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), the second the faculty for cognizing an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts)” (*KrV*, A50/B74), Beck argues time and again that “the *Critique* leads the reader to the transcendental standpoint only gradually. It arrives here at the categories, and it presents them, however, at first as mere concepts, as predicates of things, and only in the deduction of them does the *Critique* show that these categories [in fact] make out the original employment of the understanding upon which rests the possibility of considering them as predicates” (*EmS*, 402f.).¹² According to Beck the categories seem to be wholly separated from intuition only on behalf of the methodology adopted by Kant in the first *Critique*. When considered as mere concepts, as belonging to the logical capacity of the understanding, the categories indeed seem to be totally separated from intuition and therefore the complexity of their application to intuition first arises. Let’s look at another example. Beck cites the following passage from Kant:

In a transcendental logic we isolate the understanding (as we did above with sensibility in the transcendental aesthetic), and elevate from our cognition merely that part of our thought that has its origin solely in the understanding. The use of this pure cognition, however, depends on this as its condition: that objects are given to us in intuition, to which it can be applied. (*KrV*, A62/B87)

Following the above citation Beck argues:

It is here as always the standpoint of mere concepts, out of which the *Critique* first introduces the categories, while it reserves the presentation of the truly transcendental standpoint for the deduction of the categories [. . .] He who is familiar with the transcendental philosophy knows, that the application of the categories to objects of intuition, i.e., the representation of these objects through the categories as their determinations, rests on the original employment of the understanding in the categories, in which what is called intuition and what the category (as original representing) is, coincides and are not so wide apart from each other as some would like to think. (*EmS*, 412f. Cf. also 404f.)

Since Beck views the categories as originally identical with their schemata, and furthermore with intuition itself, there is, to be sure, no real problem of their application to intuition or to objects of intuition. While according to Kant the problem of the application of the categories to intuition first arises when we become aware of the separate origin of the categories, for Beck this alleged difficulty is simply the result of a misunderstanding. When we acknowledge that the categories are not mere concepts but original modes of representing we understand that there really is no problem at all. The categories, by their very nature, are one and the same as intuitions and their application to objects is given immediately with their true character as original modes of representing.¹³ Beck’s view is especially evident

¹² For Beck’s complaint against the method of the *Critique*, which presents the categories initially as mere concepts cf. also *EmS*, 425, 440, 462f., 490.

¹³ Di Giovanni (di Giovanni and Harris 2000, 248n26) as well notes that for Beck the problem of the schematism and in general the issue of the application of the understanding to intuitions is a non-existent problem.

when we observe his commentary on the schematism chapter. There, Kant is explicit that “pure concepts of the understanding, however, in comparison with empirical (indeed in general sensible) intuitions, are entirely un-homogeneous, and can never be encountered in any intuition” (*KrV*, A137/B176). From this follows an essential problem: “how is the subsumption of the latter under the former, thus the application of the category to appearances possible, since no one would say that the category, e.g., causality, could also be intuited through the senses and contained in the appearance?” (*KrV*, A137f./B176f.). Beck's response is that: “This question cannot worry those who have grasped the deduction of the categories in its exact spirit.” (*EmS*, 467). For Beck the deduction of the categories does not consist in demonstrating the application of the categories to intuition but in turning our attention to the categories in their original, rather than derived form, whereby they are originally identical with intuition itself.

While Kant argues that the categories originate from the understanding and he sees their original function as forms of judgment, Beck reverses this view and argues that the categories are originally identical with the forms of intuition and he sees their original function in their schematic form within the power of imagination. Thus, Beck argues that “the *Critique* calls the understanding in its original employment, the transcendental imagination, and it calls the capacity of mere logical employment of the understanding, [simply] the understanding as such.” (*EmS*, 424). And in response to Kant's distinction between the intellectual synthesis of the pure category and the figurative synthesis of the schemata within the power of imagination (*KrV*, 151), Beck argues that “the figurative synthesis is that of the original employment of the understanding through which original-synthetic unity is created. The intellectual synthesis of the logical employment of the understanding creates the analytical unity and is the connection of mere concepts.” (*EmS*, 460).¹⁴ By this Beck explicitly reverses the relation between the intellectual synthesis and the figurative synthesis, viewing the latter rather than the former as original.

Accordingly, in response to Kant's claim that “we can, however, trace all actions of our understanding back to judgments, so that the **understanding** in general can be represented as a **faculty for judging**” (*KrV*, A69/B94), Beck states that “the same employment of the understanding which the transcendental philosophy comes to know as original, also presents itself in relation to mere concepts in which it is known as a logical employment of the understanding.” (*EmS*, 418). In various passages Beck struggles to avoid confrontation with the text of the *Critique* when Kant explicitly identifies the understanding with the power of judgment and further argues that “the same function that gives unity to the different representations **in a judgment** also gives unity to the mere synthesis of different representations **in an intuition**, which, expressed generally, is called the pure concept of the

¹⁴ Cf. also below on the same page: “Thus this figurative synthesis is distinguished from the mere intellectual [synthesis], precisely in that it [the figurative synthesis] pertains to the original-synthetic unity of consciousness, while the other [the intellectual synthesis] pertains to the analytical unity.”

understanding.” (*KrV*, A79/B104f.). Unable to confront such an explicit statement equating what in Beck’s mind is merely derived (the function of synthesis in judgment) and what in his mind is truly original (the function of synthesis in relation to intuition), Beck “only begs the reader to read these lines with attention. He [the reader] will be convinced that our argument of the transcendental standpoint reflects the whole meaning of the author of the *Critique*.” (*EmS*, 424). And similarly when Kant argues that “in such a way there arise exactly as many pure concepts of the understanding which apply to objects of intuition in general *a priori*, as there were logical functions of all possible judgments in the previous table” (*KrV*, A79/B105), Beck cannot but argue that “it [the *Critique*] introduces the categories initially as mere concepts” (*EmS*, 425).

As I have already noted, the merging of the categories with the intuition should not be viewed as an intellectualization of sensibility but rather as a perceptual view of the categories. Regardless of any advantages or disadvantages that Beck’s approach may have when considered on its own behalf, it obviously cannot be considered as a legitimate interpretation of Kant. *As far as the relation between the understanding and sensibility is concerned*, Beck’s claim that Kant leads his reader only gradually to the highest point of transcendental philosophy must be rejected. For Kant the issue of the applicability of the categories to intuitions and the problem of mediation is a real one. According to Kant the categories are originally separated from sensibility and their original function is derived from their role in judgment. They originally express the intellectual synthesis rather than the figurative synthesis of the power of imagination.

The same originally perceptual view of the categories also brings Beck to reject as a mere misunderstanding, Kant’s concern with the extension of the categories beyond sensibility. Accordingly, in response to Kant’s discussion of the seductiveness of making “use of these pure cognitions of the understanding and principles by themselves, and even beyond all bounds of experience [. . .], of judging without distinction about objects that are not given to us, which perhaps indeed could not be given to us in any way” (*KrV*, A63/B87f.), Beck replies that “as long as the philosopher does not come by the discovery that the categories themselves originally make out the original employment of the understanding [. . .] then he lacks the criterion to distinguish the intelligible from the unintelligible and even self-contradictory, and he is then of the mind that the latter [the categories] encompass a special sphere of so-called intelligible things” (*EmS*, 414). In other words, the extension of the categories and their alleged application to intelligible objects is only a result of not acknowledging their original character whereby they are by their true nature limited to objects as appearances. Note that Beck not only dismisses the dogmatic assumption regarding an alleged relation between pure understanding and things-in-themselves; moreover, Beck even views Kant’s entanglement with the hypothetical possibility of such a relation as irrelevant. Kant thinks that the categories originally spring from a distinct source than sensibility and that therefore only by acknowledging that sensibility (whether our own or a different kind) is the condition of the application of pure concepts to objects, can we rest assured that the categories have no relation to things-in-themselves. By contrast, Beck thinks that

when we acknowledge the true nature of the categories then such a problem does not even arise. In response to Kant's explicit claim that "the pure concepts of the understanding are free from this limitation [of sensibility] and extend to objects in general" (*KrV*, B148) Beck retorts that we are only led to this worry by referring to the categories in their logical capacity, as predicates of objects, without paying attention to their true nature as original modes of representing (*EmS*, 456). The exact same attitude is evident in Beck's response to the citation of the first paragraph of §24 of the first *Critique*, which claims that "pure concepts of the understanding are related through the mere understanding to objects of intuition in general" (*KrV*, 150). Beck responds by saying that "This problematical view [...] comes about because we come across the employment of the understanding in the categories also as mere logical use in judgments" (*EmS*, 457). Moreover "we discover this concept's total unintelligibility when we observe it through the standpoint of the original-synthetic unity itself" (*EmS*, 458).

Obviously this view of Beck's cannot be regarded as a legitimate interpretation of Kant. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether due to Beck's dismissive view regarding the alleged extension of the categories beyond sensibility, his view regarding the role of things-in-themselves in Kant's theoretical philosophy, is likewise mistaken. I shall return to this issue in Sect. [12.2.2](#).

It must be noted though that Beck's merging of the categories and intuition does not rule out the possibility of constructing conceptual constructs, which goes beyond the limits of sensibility, at least in a purely logical sense. According to Beck, the categories are indeed identified with their schemata and even with intuition proper. However, this identification regards their original character. The latter doctrine does not rule out the possibility of constructing conceptual constructs, which are free of contradiction but nevertheless cannot be traced back to their original representing. This is exactly the status of the ideas of reason, which are devoid of logical contradiction and yet cannot be sensibly represented. I therefore reject di Giovanni's conclusion that Beck "has precluded even the logical possibility of an object that could transcend, ideally, the limits of sensible experience" (di Giovanni 2000, 39). I nevertheless concede that in declaring meaningless all conceptual constructs, which cannot be traced back to the original representing, Beck failed to distinguish different senses of 'meaninglessness'. Concepts, which cannot be traced back to the original representing – or the ideas of reason, to use Kant's term – are indeed meaningless in the sense that they cannot be sensibly represented. Thus they are mere wordplay. However, they are distinguished from sheer gibberish. We understand what is required of us in order to construct such a concept but we cannot accomplish the task. Such exactly is the status of the thing-in-itself. We understand that by it we mean a 'thing' as it is regardless of any contribution of behalf of cognition. However, in attending to this idea we see that this concept cannot be represented since in doing so we inevitably contribute the forms of our own thinking and sensing. The definition is meaningful in a merely nominal but not in a real sense. For further discussion of these issues, cf. Sects. [12.2.1](#) and [12.2.2](#) below.

Finally I wish to note the influence of the issue regarding the relation between a representation to its object on the issue of the relation between the understanding and sensibility. It seems to me that Beck arrives at his views regarding the latter issue due to difficulties he encounters in the former issue. Beck sees the problem of the relation of a representation to its object as the main issue of transcendental philosophy, an issue that must be addressed prior to any other. Before we can say anything about something whatsoever, the relation between thought and “things” must be accounted for. Beck must therefore “start from the categories” in order to account first of all for the original constitution of the objective relation. Beck is mainly concerned with two issues, which motivate him to the merging of sensibility and the understanding: (a) the relation – according to the text of the *Transcendental Aesthetic* – between our sensible faculty and objects even prior to the introduction of the function of pure concepts of the understanding; and (b) Kant’s insistence that in intuition there is a manifold given in complete abstraction from any principle of synthesis which expresses the spontaneity of the understanding. In the first case, as long as we refer to an object without emphasizing that an object is only such as is posited by the understanding, then it seems that the object, which is immediately given to us in intuition, is a thing-in-itself. In the second case if a manifold is given to us in intuition in complete abstraction from any synthetic activity of the understanding then this manifold is something in-itself. Beck’s refusal to accept this result – in both these cases – leads him to think that only by viewing sensibility and the understanding as originally united can the above distortions be avoided. However, it seems to me that Beck’s objectives could in fact be achieved without such a radical merging of sensibility and the understanding. What is required is only to recognize the interdependence of the two cognitive faculties concerning the relation of a representation to an object. In order to avoid the allusion to things-in-themselves it would have been enough to say that in sense perception there is initially only the presence of some meaningful content without yet any relation to an object. Additionally, it would have been enough to recognize that we can only say that sense perception is the result of the influence of an object on the senses, on behalf of the category of causality, which originates from the understanding. In fact, the view that prior to the introduction of the categories, sensibility cannot be said to have any relation to an object was Beck’s claim from the very early stages of the development of his *Standpunctslehre* (Chap. 4 above). Similarly, the claim that sense perception can only be said to originate from the influence of an object on behalf of the category of causality is repeatedly argued by Beck (*EmS*, 402f., 348, 367, 369, 483). Therefore, it would have been enough to stress – as Kant does – the interdependence of the two faculties without going as far as wholly merging them. It seems to me that Beck is nevertheless pushed towards a radical merging of the understanding into sensibility because of his attempts to anchor the objectifying function of our cognition – through the act of positing – in the process of original representing. Since Beck attempts to account for the relation of a representation to an object within the act of original representing he is required to infuse the functions, which according to Kant pertain to the understanding, into his notion of original representing.

Similarly Beck's objectives regarding the separation of the manifold and its synthesis could be achieved without wholly merging sensibility and the understanding. What is required in order to avoid referring to the sensible manifold as given in complete abstraction from any contribution of our cognition (and therefore as something *in-itself*) is only to argue that some form of synthesis – which expresses a contribution on behalf of the knowing subject – is embedded within sense perception itself. There is no need to go from one extreme –whereby the manifold is only given in sensibility and synthesis originates from the understanding alone – to the other extreme whereby the manifold and its synthesis are inseparable. It can be argued that some form of synthesis is originally embedded within, and can only be abstracted in reflection, from the manifold to which it applies in sense perception. This view still allows that some other form of synthesis, which pertains to the understanding, is not derived from sense perception and even that there exists an inherent opposition between these two forms of synthesis. As shall be emphasized in Sect. 11.3, both Kant and Beck, as well as many of their contemporaries, were attempting to penetrate the issue of the relation between sensibility and the understanding prior to some important researches – both psychological and epistemological – that were undertaken in the late nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth century into the nature of both these faculties. They were, thus, in many respects, searching their way in the dark, leaving some important alternatives unexplored.

11.2 Pre-conceptual Meaning – Perceptual Meaning or Logical Preconditions for Conceptualization

I think that in order to better understand Beck's *Standpunctslehre* and its relation to Kant, the recognition of an important aspect of Beck's thought is beneficial. Beck is in my mind correct to argue that pure concepts are not, strictly speaking, concepts; in other words, they are not concepts of a special kind (Sect. 12.2.2 below). Nevertheless, while Kant understands pure concepts as pre-conceptual in the sense of being logical preconditions for conceptualization, Beck construes the pre-conceptual nature of pure concepts as perceptual in character. Beck, thus, converts what is for Kant a logical precondition into an actual cognitive process of perceptual nature.¹⁵ Let me explain.

¹⁵ Criticism of this spirit is also included in an early review of Beck's work by Johann Benjamin Erhard. Erhard (1796, 511f.) argues that "Space as the form of intuition must already be the basis of the space of the geometer; and any explanation of the original space [as used by the geometer] cannot contain anything conceivable, because it already presupposes space." The English translation is my own. Erhard wrongly accuses Beck that it follows from his doctrine that space and time are the *products* of the original representing. Beck, as we discussed above, explicitly distinguishes the act of original representing itself – to which time and space belong – from the synthetic unity of consciousness, which is the result of the application of the original representing

Beck argues vigorously that pure concepts are not simply a special kind of concepts.¹⁶ As a unique kind of concepts which do not arise out of experience but spring originally from pure understanding they would seem to be innate concepts, as dogmatic philosophy describes them to be, and their relation to objects would remain a mystery. Pure concepts are supposed to account for the relation between regular empirical concepts to objects. If pure concepts themselves are regarded as concepts then they become vulnerable to the same skeptic worry regarding the relation of all concepts to their objects (*EmS*, 415f.). As shall be discussed at greater length in Sect. 12.2.2, I hold that Beck properly interprets Kant when he argues that pure concepts are not a special kind of concepts. According to Kant, a pure concept is not a concept but merely the logical form of a concept (*KrV*, A95); it is a principle according to which concepts are structured. Pure concepts are logical preconditions, or better, transcendental-logical preconditions, for the construction of concepts. They are the logical functions, which account for the ability of regular concepts, as mere representations, to relate to an object considered as distinct from them. In other words, they are the rules governing concepts without which no concept could be said to relate to an object in the first place.

The crucial point is that while Beck is correct to argue that pure concepts must be understood as pre-conceptual, he is nevertheless mistaken when he construes the pre-conceptual nature of pure concepts as perceptual in character rather than as expressing logical preconditions or presuppositions. It is no coincidence that the term ‘condition’ (*Bedingung*), so central for the first *Critique*, is hardly ever mentioned in Beck’s *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt*. Kant indeed argues that the categories cannot be defined without descending to the conditions of sensibility (*KrV*, A82f./B108f., A240/B300) and that they, as well as the original-synthetic unity of the apperception, on which they are grounded, can only be recognized in application to sensible intuitions (*KrV*, A108). Beck finds here support for his claim that the categories are essentially not concepts but original modes of representation (*EmS*, 428). Both Beck and Kant argue that pure concepts are not concepts of a special kind; however, they do this for very different reasons. For Kant the categories express a *potential capacity* and *as such* they can only be recognized in their application. Beck transforms that which for Kant is a presupposition or a logical precondition into an *actual cognitive process* of perceptual character exemplified by the paradigm of the geometer.¹⁷ For Beck, the original synthesis of the categories has an extension in time. This corresponds to Beck’s schematic view of the categories, which pertains to the categories as they are applied to intuition. By

in any concrete case. Nevertheless, Erhard is correct to point out that time and space, as well as the categories, perform the role of *conditions* for the possibility of experience, an issue which Beck fails to take into consideration. In a similar fashion, Beck was accused by another author to have psychologized the account of representation (Pötschel 1910, 22).

¹⁶ Discussed above in Chap. 6. Cf. also Beck’s claim that the categories are not concepts but functions (*EmS*, 426).

¹⁷ Cassirer similarly argues that Beck reconstructs Kant’s logical intention in psychological language (Cassirer 1999, IV: 77).

contrast, for Kant, the categories, as preconditions or logical forms, have no extension in time.

Beck's view of the original-synthetic unity of consciousness is another clear example of his deviation from Kant's intentions. For Kant the transcendental, originally synthetic, unity of apperception is precisely not an actual cognitive process but a potential ability, an indispensable presupposition without which we could not understand the possibility of connecting various representations in one consciousness and relating them to an object.¹⁸ Unless we presuppose an originally identical self, to whom all representations could be related, we would not understand the possibility of uniting sensible representations together. The terms that should be emphasized to capture Kant's intentions are 'could', 'possibility' and 'condition'. It is noteworthy that Kant made the following correction on Beck's draft of the deduction of the categories in the first volume of Beck's explanatory abstracts. Kant notes that on page eight of Beck's draft "Instead of the words at the end of the paragraph 'The *I think* must accompany all the representations in the synthesis', [should be written] 'must *be capable of* accompanying'." (Kant's letter to Beck, December 4, 1792, AA 11: 395). This incident alone is an indication of Beck's tendency to transform something potential into something actual. As we remember from the previous section of this work, Beck argues that the original-synthetic unity of consciousness is the result of the application of the categories, out of which we lift characterizations and relate them as predicates to an object within conceptual-discursive representing. In contrast, for Kant, the original-synthetic unity of consciousness is not a result of the application of the categories but rather a logical condition, which lies at their basis. According to Kant the categories are the specific modes through which the original synthetic unity of apperception is manifested.¹⁹ Beck therefore reverses the relation between the transcendental unity of consciousness and the categories. While for Kant the transcendental originally-synthetic unity of consciousness is the logical condition on which the categories are grounded, for Beck it is an actual cognitive state, which is the result of the application of the categories.²⁰

¹⁸ The issue is most clearly explained in the A-Deduction of the categories (*KrV*, A103-110).

¹⁹ Some significance could also be attached to the fact the Beck speaks of the original-synthetic unity of *consciousness* (*Bewußtsein*), while Kant refers to the original-synthetic unity of the *apperception*. On the one hand, apperception is the Latin term for consciousness and it seems that Kant uses the two terms quite interchangeably. Nevertheless, apperception, in its Leibnizean context from which Kant had borrowed it, points to something potential while consciousness implies an actual cognitive state. This line of thought is, however, doubtful.

²⁰ For Beck's discussion of the relation between the synthetic and the analytic unity of consciousness, cf. Chap. 9 above. Cf. also the paragraph in which Beck cites Kant's footnote in *KrV*, B133f. (*EmS*, 441ff.). While Kant refers to the synthetic unity of consciousness as a *precondition* for the *possibility* of an analytical unity, Beck refers to the synthetic unity as a *concrete* cognitive state from which we lift characteristics when we construct the analytical unity of the concept. For Kant the very possibility of employing general properties, which by definition can be applied to many different things, each of which has other properties besides the one here considered, presupposes a synthetic unity. The assumption of an original synthetic unity, to which all properties *could be*

It can be concluded that Beck's misinterpretation of the nature of the categories resides in overlooking the fact that pre-conceptual meaning is not necessarily perceptual. In Kant, pre-conceptual meaning can either point to sense perception or to logical preconditions. We become aware of the latter not by sensibly representing them as the geometer represents his figures to himself but by being self-conscious of our own potential abilities.²¹ Beck therefore changes the whole thrust of Kant's transcendental inquiry. Instead of turning our attention to inevitable preconditions or presuppositions, Beck merely points to the role of sense perception in the construction of the meaningful content of our concepts.

An aspect correlated to Beck's ignorance of the character of the categories and the original-synthetic unity of consciousness as logical preconditions is his understanding of the concept of necessity. Throughout the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* Beck repeats the claim that necessity should only be understood in terms of a derivation of one concept or principle from another in accordance with the structure of a logical syllogism.²² We deduce the actuality of one event (the conclusion) from the actuality of another event (the minor premise) on the assumption of a universal law (the major premise) governing the relation between these two events. This explanation captures the employment of the concept of necessity regarding empirical concepts *within* experience. Since he accepts only the latter mode of necessity, Beck rejects – more or less elegantly – Kant's claims that the forms of the intuition and of the understanding are necessary, for that would imply that they are considered as concepts (*EmS*, 353f., 361, 377f., 382f., 390f.). According to Beck, the distinction between empirical and pure concepts, in the context of necessity, is similar to the distinction between theorems and axioms in geometry. A Theorem is necessary since it is deduced as a consequence from a valid syllogism. An Axiom is not a conclusion but a major premise and therefore it cannot be necessary in the same sense (*EmS*, 198–201). Beck argues that we should interpret the *Critique's* claim that time, space and the categories are necessary, simply as directing our attention to their role in original representing.²³ Otherwise, to attribute necessity to them is to employ these original modes of representation as mere concepts.

referred, is requisite for understanding of the possibility of operating with general properties. Beck's commentary completely overlooks Kant's emphasis on a *possible* synthetic unity (*EmS*, 450f.).

²¹ See Kant's discussion of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason where Kant refers to the "I think" as solely being consciousness of myself as thinking and he refers to the categories as "modes of self-consciousness of myself in thinking". (*KrV*, B406f.). Cf. also the way Kant understood the categories in the *Inaugural Dissertation* influenced by his reading of Leibniz's *New Essays*, discussed above in Sect. 2.2.1.

²² Cf. Beck's official definition of the category of necessity (*EmS*, 166) and of its corresponding principle (193f.). Cf. also the following paragraph: "Necessity always concerns cognition out of concepts" (*EmS*, 361), and: "Regarding necessity we thus claim that it pertains to a cognition insofar as it is thought of as a conclusion in a logical derivation [...]" (*EmS*, 473). The English translation is my own.

²³ Cf. above our discussion of Beck's explanation of the distinction between a-priori and a-posteriori concepts (Chap. 9). The mark of a-priori concepts is that they are based immediately on the original representing rather than on its product in any concrete case.

Beck is indeed correct that the necessity of pure concepts, which function as major premises, is not the necessity of a conclusion in a syllogism. However, Beck completely misses the point of Kant's regressive analysis. It is Kant's characteristic mark that he analyzes a certain field of thought or action to expose the generally unstated, and therefore in many cases unconscious, assumptions which make that field possible. In his theoretical philosophy Kant attempts to expose the assumptions or preconditions, which enable us to relate mere representations to objects. These preconditions – if they have no alternatives – are necessary in relation to that field for which they function as preconditions. Rather than empirical necessity, which is the necessity of the conclusion in a syllogism, transcendental necessity is the necessity of the major premise, which makes possible the derivation of conclusions from minor premises in various concrete cases. Beck clearly sees the role of pure concepts as major premises; however, instead of recognizing their logical function – and therefore their unique mode of necessity – he looks for their origin in sense perception.

I believe that what motivates Beck to reject the role of logical preconditions and to prefer the perceptual alternative is his attempt to justify the objective relation in our cognition, that is, to justify the aspiration of cognition to be able to relate representations, immanent to our cognition, to an object considered as distinct from them. Insofar as the issue is an attempt at justification then Beck is correct to reject the appeal to logical conditions. As we have already discussed, Beck's highest principle of all philosophy is very different from those principles appealed to by his contemporaries. Beck rejects the attempt to deduce the whole of philosophy from a single principle as if it were the major premise in a logical syllogism. By this Beck captures Kant's distinction between the real and the ideal. According to Kant, real relations can never be deduced from mere logical ones. So far as we aim at justifying or deriving real, objective relations, then, as Kantians, we should reject the attempt to do so from mere logical reasoning. But insofar as we aim not at justification but at explanation, then the case is very different. We can recognize that without the general assumption – the non-justified, and even non-justifiable, assumption – of a possible distinction between the way things subjectively appear to us and the way things objectively are, we would lack the ability to make such distinctions in any concrete case. The claim that beyond the subjective state of affairs there is an objective one is indeed no more than an assumption, or as the neo-Kantian Hans Vaihinger called it, one hundred years after Kant – a fiction (Vaihinger 1935). However, it is a fiction without which there would be for us no distinction at all between a subjective and an objective world. It seems to me that Beck cannot accept this fictive or presuppositional view since it leaves the objective relation unjustified, that is, without a proper basis. Since Beck correctly rejects the attempt to ground the objective relation in a logical principle he turns to pre-conceptual, sense perception, as the only remaining resort.²⁴ I, therefore,

²⁴ Refer to our discussion in the previous section of Beck's attempt to ground the relation of a representation to its object in an original act of positing and the difficulties that result from Beck's perceptual view of this act.

think that despite the advantages of Beck's highest principle as a postulate, compared with the common appeal to a logical principle, Beck nevertheless shares – at least to a limited degree – the common, and in my view mistaken, tendency of his contemporaries to justify rather than merely explain the possibility of experience.²⁵

11.3 The Basic Opposition Between Sensibility and the Understanding

Another consideration that can help put both Kant's and Beck's views in perspective, is to ask in what way each of them maintains the basic opposition between our sensible and intelligible faculties.

First we must pause to reflect on the historical importance of this issue (Kuehn 2001, 183–187). The issue of the relation between sensibility and reason – in both theoretical and moral contexts – was a major issue in German philosophy at that time. Regarding morality, in 1764, in his Prize Essay, the *Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality*, Kant himself was undecided whether our moral judgments were grounded in moral sense and feeling or rather in reason, which alone could bestow the dignity of universality and allow for proof and evidence of the higher sort. The debate in Germany was influenced not only by the German rationalist tradition of Wolff and Leibniz but also by the leading English thinkers of the time. The works of Locke, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume, Smith, Ferguson and others were widely known in Germany, many of which were translated into German. The German thinkers were not blind to the arguments of their English contemporaries. The main issue was how to incorporate the English emphasis on sensibility into the German traditional view of the primacy of reason. The spirit of the time was nicely captured by Moses Mendelssohn:

Our neighbors, and especially the English, precede us with philosophical observations of nature, and we follow them with our rational inferences; and if it were to go on like this, namely that our neighbors observe and we explain, we may hope that we will achieve in time a complete theory of sensation. (Mendelssohn 1758, 290f. English translation is taken from Manfred Kuehn 2001, 184)

As noted above, the issue was not limited to the moral aspect. The Germans were interested in the broader problem of the relation of sensibility and reason in general. In this light one should also view August Eberhard's *Allgemeine Theorie des Denkens und Empfindens* (A universal theory of thought and sense) published in 1776 in response to a question posed by the Prussian Academy. What is important

²⁵ Although Beck does seek to ground cognition's claim for objectivity, nevertheless, his avoidance of a logical derivation of this principle and his reliance on the factuality of original representing, distinguishes him from his contemporaries. This feature of his doctrine points to his moderated appeal to justification and a relative tendency to suffice with explanation of the possibility of experience.

to note is the general acceptance of what can be called the “continuity thesis”.²⁶ Sensibility and reason, in spite of their obvious differences, were nevertheless thought to be compatible with one other. The major problem was to explain exactly how the two faculties are inter-dependent and how they influence one another. In other words, what was required was an explanation of how reason elaborates, clarifies and universalizes the initially confused data of the senses. Kant’s views until around 1769 were not essentially different from this general opinion. His approach to both theoretical and moral issues radically changed when he adopted the idea that sensation and reason cannot be understood as continuous. This is undoubtedly the most important feature of his *Inaugural Dissertation* and marks the beginning of Kant’s critical philosophy. Although Kant’s thought had undergone few highly significant changes until the publication of the first *Critique*, he never changed his mind regarding this basic opposition (Sects. 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 above). In the *Inaugural Dissertation* he describes this opposition in the context of the relation between the parts and the whole. Kant points to an important distinction between two ways of conceiving the relation between the parts and the whole.

Thus it is one thing, given the parts, to conceive for oneself the *composition* of the whole, using an abstract concept of the understanding, and it is another thing to *follow up* this general *concept* [. . .] by the sensitive faculty of cognition, that is to say, to represent the same thing to oneself in the concrete by a distinct intuition. (*MSI*, AA 02: 387)

When using a *universal* concept, we can *think* of a whole, which is not a part of a greater whole, and likewise we can think of parts, which are simple, that is, they are not themselves wholes composed of yet smaller parts. The difficulty arises when we attempt to *represent* the ultimate whole and the ultimate parts with *concrete* intuition.²⁷ The concrete intuition “rests upon the *conditions* of time”; it requires the “successive addition of part to part” (*MSI*, AA 02: 387) to progress from the parts to the whole. The same gradual process is required in order to go from the whole to the parts. Again, according to the laws of intuition this is only possible by a gradual regression of splitting a whole into its parts and repeating the process over and over again. The synthesis of parts into the ultimate whole in the first case and the analysis of a whole into the ultimate parts in the second case can only be completed if the respective process of synthesis or analysis can be accomplished in a finite period of time. But since, regarding synthesis, time is an infinite magnitude and regarding analysis it is a continuous magnitude, then this process can, in principle, continue indefinitely. In other words, we cannot represent in intuition *the whole* or *the parts* but only *a whole* and *some parts*, the products of a process of synthesis or analysis that can in principle continue indefinitely.²⁸ Thus,

²⁶ I take this term from Kuehn (2001, 185).

²⁷ For the distinction between the universality and abstraction of concepts in contrast with the concreteness of intuitions cf. also *MSI*, §10 (AA 02: 396f.).

²⁸ The same ideas are repeated in the Anticipations of Perception (*KrV*, A169f./B211f.), as well as in the first two Antinomies (*KrV*, A426-433/B454-471).

The concepts of both the *continuous* and of the *infinite* are frequently rejected. For, indeed, according to the laws of intuitive cognition, any representation of these concepts is absolutely impossible. (*MSI*, AA 02: 388)

While we can think the general concept of an ultimate whole and ultimate parts, in intuition “it is hardly possible to conceive how the *never to be completed series* of states of the universe, which succeeds one another to *eternity*, can be reduced to a whole, which comprehends absolutely all its changes”. (*MSI*, AA 02: 391)

The core of this discussion is clearly expressed in the following paragraph:

For this lack of accord between the *sensitive* faculty and the faculty of the *understanding* – the nature of these faculties I shall explain later – points only to the fact that *the abstract ideas which the minds entertains when they have been received from the understanding very often cannot be followed up in the concrete and converted into intuitions*. (*MSI*, AA 02: 389)

This basic distinction between the sensible and the intelligible forms of representation also stand at the core of the distinction between the connection of representations in sensible apprehension and the connection of representations in the object.

The apprehension of the manifold of appearance is always successive. The representations of the parts succeed one another. Whether they also succeed one another in the object is a second point for reflection, which is not contained in the first. (*KrV*, A189/B234)

As I have already mentioned above, the positing of a certain connection of representations as an object, by ascribing necessity to it, very often stands in opposition to the immediate connection of representations in the apprehension. From this arises the contrast between the subjective and the objective unity of consciousness.²⁹

Whether I become **empirically** conscious of the manifold as simultaneous or successive depends on the circumstances, or empirical conditions. Hence the empirical unity of consciousness, through the association of the representations, itself concerns an appearance, and is entirely contingent. [. . .] One person combines the representation of a certain word with one thing, another with something else; and the unity of consciousness in that which is empirical is not, with regard to that which is given, necessarily and universally valid. (*KrV*, §18, B139f.)

The common example of a teaspoon, which appears broken in a cup of water, is clear evidence that the transition from the subjective connection of representations in the apprehension to the objective connection of representations is not a seamless one. In the construction of objects, the understanding, in many cases, opposes itself to the immediate testimony of the senses.

Beck’s view of the categories merges the understanding and sensibility. Nevertheless it should be noted that Beck does not completely annul the distinction between the two faculties of cognition. He still maintains a distinction between

²⁹ Despite the differences in the concept of an object, the *Inaugural Dissertation* and the *Critique* both share the basic view of the opposition between the synthesis of apprehension and objective representation.

discursive thought and original representing into which Beck interprets Kant's original distinction between sensibility and understanding. In few passages Beck explicitly argues that, when correctly understood from the proper transcendental standpoint, the traditional distinction between intuitions and concepts, expresses nothing other than the distinction between the original-synthetic unity of consciousness and the merely derived analytical unity of consciousness.

For example, following the citation of Kant's explicit separation between the two sources of our cognition at the beginning of the *Transcendental Analytic* (*KrV*, A50/B74; *EmS*, 402), Beck writes:

On the contrary, when we have in mind the synthetic-objective unity of consciousness in the categories, then we notice the goal towards which the *Critique* strives with this distinction of the intuition from concepts. It is namely the postulate of the original employment of the understanding itself, that it [the *Critique*] indicates. The latter is the generation of the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness, on which the analytical unity of the concept must be based. (*EmS*, 404. English translation is my own)

Similarly, Beck brings the following citation from Kant: "For without intuition all of our cognition would lack objects, and therefore remain completely empty" (*KrV*, A62/B87). Beck then explains this citation as follows:

When considered out of the transcendental standpoint, this means nothing other than, when we do not trace back the analytical unity of our concepts to the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness, we find ourselves with them [our concepts] in unintelligibility, that is: in emptiness. (*EmS*, 413. English translation is my own)³⁰

And, following Kant's discussion of the problematic concept of an intuitive understanding (*KrV*, B135), Beck replies that "This is a concept of an understanding, in which the analytical unity of consciousness coincides with the original-synthetic [unity] [. . .]". (*EmS*, 444. Cf. also *EmS*, 453. English translation is my own).

Beck's concept of original representing indeed merges the principle of synthesis with the manifold but he still sees a distinction between pre-conceptual original representing and discursive-conceptual representing. Rather than a distinction between the givenness of the bare manifold versus the spontaneity of pure synthesis he makes a distinction between two levels of meaning construction, one conceptual, the other pre-conceptual, each with its own characteristics. I shall later consider the possible advantages and disadvantages of Beck's own doctrine. For the purposes of our current discussion I only wish to point out that Beck's translation of the Kantian distinction between sensibility and the understanding into the distinction between the original-synthetic unity of consciousness and the analytic unity of consciousness, in effect annuls the basic opposition between the sensible and the intelligible

³⁰ Cf. also Beck's letter to Kant, June 20, 1797 (AA 12: 169): "No one, of all the friends of the critical philosophy, has stressed the distinction between sensibility and understanding more than I have. I do it under the expression: a concept has sense and meaning only to the extent that the original activity of the understanding in the categories lies at its basis – which in fact is the same as your contention that the categories have application only to what is directly experienced [. . .]"

faculties. According to Beck, we construct concepts by simply lifting characteristics out of an original synthetic unity and relating them as predicates to a reference point. Similarly, when considering the meaningfulness and the validity of any given concept we simply have to trace the concept back to the original synthetic unity to see if it was or was not included within it. According to Beck there does not seem to be any opposition but rather continuity between the synthetic and the analytical unity of consciousness.

11.4 The Merits of Beck's View on Its Own Behalf

I am compelled to start this section with some apologetic remarks. In order to systematically discuss the merits of Beck's view of the relation between sensibility and the understanding versus Kant's view on the same matter, I would need to establish an independent theory of sense perception and its conceptual elaboration that would serve as a vantage point from which we could then evaluate both Beck's and Kant's own views. Obviously such a project goes beyond the scope of this current research and probably even beyond the scope of any single research project of a similar size. Nevertheless, I feel that even a limited reflective discussion of this issue can help to shed light on the unique stands of both these authors and enable us to better understand them. Therefore, rather than presenting a systematic, exhaustive analysis of the relation between sensibility and the understanding, my objectives in this section are more modest. I wish to highlight some aspects of the above-presented Beck-Kant controversy and discuss their implications on more general epistemological questions.

The issue of the opposition on the one hand and the interaction on the other hand, between sense perception and thought by means of concepts is a complex issue that requires empirical research into the nature of both faculties followed by a theoretical analysis of the empirical findings. Such empirical research was lacking in Kant's time. It is ironic that such a research was advanced in the beginning of the twentieth century by German empirical psychologists of the Gestalt school rather than by the empirically oriented English scientists. In my view there is still much to be done on this subject, both in terms of empirical research and in terms of theoretical evaluation of empirical observations. For an analysis of visual perception and its opposition from conceptual thought I recommend the excellent work of Gaetano Kanizsa (1979).³¹ I believe that Kant's early insight into the intrinsic

³¹ Kanizsa recognizes that a strict separation between "pure" perception and "pure" thought is impossible. Nevertheless, the recognition that distinctions are hard to make and that a "pure" or "strict" separation is impossible should not deter us from attempting to explain a wide variety of situations in which it is quite clear that perception and thought do not form one continuum. Kanizsa discusses in details a large group of so-called optical "illusions" in which we can observe that the rules of sense perception and its modes of organization stand in bold opposition to the rules and modes of organization that reside in thinking. The term 'illusion' is very misleading; it

opposition between the two faculties was correct. His emphasis on the inherent dissent between the forms of sensibility and the forms of our intelligible faculty opened the way for further research. His own discussion is preliminary and to some degree distorting for two main reasons. First, since the discussion is inevitably held in terms of concepts, there is a constant danger that our description of the sensible faculty would be unconsciously taken-over by conceptual constructs (this is explicitly acknowledged by Beck who nevertheless too lacks the means for a better analysis of sense perception). For example Kant describes time and space – as the forms of sensibility – as infinite and continuous. But Kant himself concedes that we cannot perceive the infinite and continuous character by means of the senses. So the characterization of time and space as infinite signifies their conceptual rather than their perceptual representation. I can point to examples given by Henri Poincaré (1952, 17–34) and Hans Vaihinger (1935, 61–64) who stress that the infinite and the continuous are conceptual constructs that are opposed to sense perception.³² These accounts support Kant's view of the opposition between sense perception and conceptual understanding but they make a better distinction between what belongs to sensibility and what belongs to the understanding. It enables us to discuss the sensible perception of both time and space in contrast to their conceptual reconstruction. A second aspect that limits the horizons of Kant's discussion is his attempt to uphold the forms of both sense perception and conceptual thinking as fixed and unchanging. This is the issue of the a-priori character of time and space as the forms of sensibility and of pure concepts as the forms of the understanding. Both Poincaré and Vaihinger alter Kant's original view. Regarding our conceptual forms of representation, they emphasize our ability to replace them and thus they expose their conventional character. In this regard, the works of C. I. Lewis (1956) and R. G. Collingwood (1984) are invaluable. The historical development of our conceptual forms of thought is also the basis for Thomas Kuhn's classic work concerning the structure of scientific revolutions (Kuhn 1996).³³ I think that developments in the empirical research of sense perception and of conceptual structures on the one hand and the theoretical consideration of these findings on the other hand, enable contemporary researchers and theorists to revisit the issue that so occupied Kant and which stands at the heart of any epistemological theory.

Insofar as we consider the intrinsic opposition between sensibility and the understanding, I therefore think that Kant's doctrine has important advantages over Beck's theory. Nevertheless, Kant's distinction between sensibility and the understanding has two more specific aspects regarding which, in my view, Kant's doctrine is too extreme. The first aspect concerns the distinction between the bare manifold and pure synthesis while the second aspect concerns the distinction between receptivity and spontaneity (or equally the distinction between givenness

expresses the prejudice of thinking against the inherent rules of our sense perception in cases in which the outcomes of the two faculties do not coincide. However, the appeal to the term 'illusion' clarifies that there is indeed some opposition between two distinct points of view.

³² Cf. also Vaihinger's discussion of simple elements as the fiction of the atom (1935, 70ff.).

³³ On Kuhn's work and its relevance to Kant's critical idealism, cf. Sect. 12.2.1.

and productivity). Out of these two aspects the first belongs to the issue of the relation between sensibility and the understanding to be discussed in the current section while the latter belongs to the issue of the relation between a representation and its object, to be addressed in Chap. 12.

Kant is very explicit about the absolute distinction between the manifold and its synthesis.

Apperception and its synthetic unity is so far from being the same as inner sense that the former, rather, as the source of all combination, applies to all sensible intuitions of objects in general, to the manifold of **intuitions in general**, under the name of the categories; inner sense, on the contrary, contains the mere **form** of intuition, but without combination of the manifold in it, and thus it does not yet contain any **determinate** intuition at all, which is possible only through the consciousness of the determination of the manifold through the transcendental action of the imagination (synthetic influence of the understanding on the inner sense), which I have named figurative synthesis. (*KrV*, B154)

The understanding therefore does not **find** some sort of combination of the manifold already in inner sense, but **produces** it, by **affecting** inner sense. (*KrV*, B155)

Similar statements can be extracted from Kant's letters to Beck when the latter was working on the first volume of his explanatory abstracts. When we observe Kant's letter to Beck of January 20, 1792, it is clearly noticeable that the discussion is rooted in the issue of the status of the sensible object. Kant accepts Beck's claim that sensible objects are only such as are constituted by the understanding by means of the categories. In other words, one can only speak of 'an object', 'given' to the senses, on behalf of the function of the categories. But immediately following the recognition of the interdependence between the sensible and the intelligible faculties, Kant emphasizes that we should always be aware of the distinction between them and he describes this in terms of the distinction between the givenness of the manifold than the spontaneity of the synthesis³⁴:

But one may still ask: How can the union of representations, being *complex*, be represented? Not through the awareness that it is given to us; for a union requires *uniting*, (*synthesis*), *of the manifold*. It must thus, (*since it is a union*), *be produced* [...]. (Kant's letter to Beck, January 20, 1792, AA 11: 314)

Since composition [...] cannot be *given* but must be *produced*, it must rest on the spontaneity of the understanding [...]. (AA 11: 316)³⁵

In spite of my support of Kant's claim regarding the basic opposition between sensibility and the understanding, I nevertheless think that his understanding of this opposition in terms of a strict separation between the bare manifold and its synthesis is much too extreme. If sensible intuition, on its own behalf, is completely devoid of synthesis or organization then it comprises a manifold of atomistic units, which are completely indifferent to each other and are also devoid of any

³⁴ In all of the below examples the distinction between the manifold and the synthesis is intimately tied to the distinction between givenness and production. At this time I only discuss the former aspect of the dichotomy.

³⁵ For similar statements cf. also Kant's letter to Beck July 3, 1792 (AA 11: 347f.), and Kant's letter to Beck October 16/17, 1792 (AA 11: 376).

interrelations. It is at least doubtful whether such a manifold (if such non-related units can even be called a manifold) can be meaningful to us since it seems to me that whatever is meaningful to us is always based on relations (Lewis 1956, 128). The above considerations are even acknowledged by Kant himself:

If every individual representation were entirely foreign to the other, as it were isolated and separated from it, then there would never arise anything like cognition, which is a whole of compared and connected representations. If therefore I ascribe a synopsis to sense, because it contains a manifold in its intuition, a synthesis must always correspond to this, and **receptivity** can make cognitions possible only if combined with **spontaneity**. (*KrV*, A97)

Kant even further argues that “intuition, which to be sure provides a manifold [...] can never effect this as such, and indeed as contained **in one representation**, without the occurrence of such a synthesis” (*KrV*, A99). The recognition of the requisiteness of synthesis stands at the basis of Kant's distinction between time and space as mere forms of intuition and time and space as formal intuitions.

Space and time are represented *a priori* not merely as **forms** of sensible intuition, but also as **intuitions** themselves (which contain a manifold), and thus with the determination of the **unity** of this manifold in them. (*KrV*, B160)

Thus Kant argues, in the note immediately following the above citation, that space as the geometer represents it to himself “contains more than the mere form of intuition, namely the **combination** of the manifold” (*KrV*, B160 footnote).³⁶ Without the synthesis of the apprehension we would have no manifold and without the further synthesis of the imagination we would have no determinate manifold. Thus,

We cannot think of a line without **drawing** it in thought, we cannot think a circle without **describing** it, we cannot represent the three dimensions of space at all without **placing** three lines perpendicular to each other at the same point, and we cannot even represent time without, in **drawing** a straight line [...] attending merely to the action of the synthesis of the manifold through which we successively determine the inner sense. (*KrV*, B154)

In the context of the above, it can even be understood why Beck interpreted Kant as denying any possible separation between the manifold and its synthesis. However, for Kant the above arguments only support the interdependence between the manifold and its synthesis, leaving Kant's essential belief in their separate origin completely unaffected. Beck goes the extra mile by explicitly negating any such separate origin.

Regarding the theory of sense perception, I think that Beck's doctrine, which holds that a certain form of synthesis or organization is embedded in sense perception itself, is preferable to Kant's doctrine.³⁷ In my view, it is even easier to understand the opposition between sensibility and the understanding as referring

³⁶ Kant uses the German term ‘Zusammenfassung’, which the Guyer and Wood, the translators of the Cambridge Edition chose to express by the English term ‘comprehension’ but I think would be better expressed by the term ‘combination’.

³⁷ Beck's view of sense-perception as having an intrinsic form of organization rather than being a bare manifold is mostly evident in his view of space as a connected manifold (verbundene Mannigfaltiges) (*EmS*, 142). Cf. also: “For we think of time and space as something connected”

to the contrast between two different forms of synthesis rather than in terms of an opposition between a bare manifold and pure synthesis.

In spite of Beck's more balanced view of sense perception, his own doctrine of both sense perception and conceptual thought is nevertheless problematic for the following reasons. The difficulty with Beck's view of sense perception is that some of the functions assigned to it within his doctrine are functions that can be associated with sense perception only with difficulty. This is especially true of Beck's exposition of the categories of relation (although it can be demonstrated regarding the categories of quantity and quality as well). I think that Kant is correct to argue that causality, for example, and especially its inherent notion of necessity cannot be derived from sensibility itself. Beck sees himself as an expositor of Kant and he is tied to Kant's terms and notions. Therefore when he merges the categories with intuition, as part of his view of the original representing, he ends up imposing on sense-perception functions that properly belong to the understanding. There are, however, further considerations, which may shift the balance of argument once more towards Beck's direction. Some researches convincingly showed that a certain sense of a causal relation is indeed inherent in sense perception itself (Michotte 1963, 1991). The emerging overall picture leads me to think that some causal relation is sensibly perceived and while the intelligible concept of causality shows traces of the preliminary sensible forms it nevertheless differs from it in important respects. Judging from this point of view, Beck may be said to be correct to insist that some forms of synthesis and organization originally belong to sense perception while his specific description of these forms and their relation to conceptual forms is deficient. These reflections of mine may understandably seem partial. I therefore emphasize that these statements should only be taken as guidelines for further research and rethinking rather than as settling the involved issues. I included these considerations here only because I think that despite their preliminary character, they nevertheless enable a wider perspective of the alternatives provided by both Kant and Beck and therefore they contribute to a better understanding of the views of both authors.

The difficulties with Beck's view of the conceptual forms of the understanding derive from his overly perceptual tendency. I have already mentioned Vaihinger's view of the categories and the ideas of reason as fictions (which nevertheless perform an important cognitive function) and I have noted the conventional view of Vaihinger, Poincaré and C. I. Lewis. Kant does not go as far as the latter authors since he views the categories as ultimate and unchanging forms, for which, at least for us humans, there is no alternative. Nevertheless he emphasizes the character of the forms of the understanding as presuppositions and he refers to the ideas of reason as irrepresentable and yet as having an invaluable role in relation to experience. Beck, on the contrary, anchors the understanding in intuition and his view limits the flexibility of human thought to a very large degree. Let me briefly

(*EmS*, 445), and: "It [the concept of space] is the concept of a connected manifold (mannigfaltigen zusammen Gesetzten) [...]" (*EmS*, 447f.). English translation of these passages is my own.

note two scientific developments, which demonstrate the above claims. The first example is taken from the field of geometry that was so close to Beck's heart; the second example is taken from the development of the theory of movement. Both Beck and Kant saw before their eyes only Euclidean geometry, which to a large degree conforms to our sense perception.³⁸ However, immediately after Beck's death in 1841 there began a highly significant revolution with the discovery of non-Euclidean geometries, a revolution which, by the time of Riemann's famous *Habilitationsvortrag* (probationary lecture) given on June 10, 1854, had shaken the very foundations of the science of geometry. All kinds of non-Euclidean geometries are based on abandoning some of the commonsensical assumptions about the nature of space in favor of presuppositions that cannot be sensibly represented. And yet these new forms of geometry proved over time to be invaluable not only for the science of geometry itself but also for physics. Beck's insistence on deriving all the characteristics of space from immediate sense perception stands in obvious contrast to these formal, non-perceptual developments in geometry. Moreover, the tendency of scientific presuppositions to move away from the structure of sense perception and immediate observation is evident throughout the history of science. The Aristotelian paradigm of movement could be rephrased as claiming that when no force is applied to a body it lies still, and indeed this is how things appear to us in immediate observation. For Galileo the paradigm of movement was slightly more abstract as that of circular movement in constant speed, as a ship would move seamlessly around the earth (following the application of an initial force) had there been no friction. For Newton the paradigm was made furthermore formal and abstract as a movement in constant speed along a straight Euclidean line stretching to infinity. To conceive of this kind of paradigm one would have to think of the much less common view of a body moving in empty space. Even Newton was aware that this was an ideal case, a concrete example of which is hardly possible to come by. Obviously Einstein's paradigms of both space and time are far more removed from what can be sensibly represented.³⁹ These examples only suggest that the direction of developments in physical science, as well as in geometry, was leading the scientific assumptions further away from immediate sense perception, quite contrary to Beck's insights.

³⁸ It should be noted that even the simple notions of Euclidean geometry are already removed from immediate sense-perception. For example the Euclidean notion of an abstract point, which has no area, or that of a line, which has no width, can hardly be represented. It is also worth noting that in his very first published work, Kant did acknowledge the possibility of space with more than three dimensions (cf. Sect. 2.1). Nevertheless, Kant's mature philosophy leaves no room for a real possibility (as opposed to a mere logical one) of such an option. Moreover, Kant never developed these early ideas any further.

³⁹ For a more detailed discussion of some of these examples, cf. Toulmin (1961, 44–61).

Chapter 12

The Relation Between a Representation and Its Object

12.1 Beck's Unique View in Relation to His Contemporaries

In the following two sections my aim is to highlight Beck's unique views on the issue of the relation between a representation and its object by comparing and contrasting it with the views of his two major contemporaries – Reinhold and Fichte. In my view, the two latter authors incline towards two extreme positions and the advantage of Beck's view is that he escapes these two polarities. The emphasis of my discussion below, in line with the main argument of this research, is to analyze the systematical issues involved in the debate between Beck and both Reinhold and Fichte. Obviously, I am aided in the attempt to achieve this goal by a limited historical reconstruction. However, as I have already noted, an extensive historical reconstruction of the interrelations, influences and counter-influences between these writers is beyond the scope of this work. The discussion of the authors below is not intended as a general review of their works and it should not be taken as a comprehensive reconstruction of the historical background. Rather, I present their views on the issue of the thing-in-itself attempting to highlight the main argument running through the current research. I hold that both those authors who rejected Kant's transcendental philosophy as well as those authors who intended to defend or develop this philosophy in their own way – like Reinhold, Maimon and Fichte – operated under the general assumption of the absolute dichotomy between the immanence of representations and the transcendence of things-in-themselves. Accordingly, those who defended realism viewed the concept of the thing-in-itself as inevitable. Reinhold, despite his cautious maneuverings, could not let go of this concept. Jacobi and Schulze criticized Kant that since the concept of the thing-in-itself was incompatible with his system the result was the reduction of all reality to the immanent realm of consciousness. Maimon and Fichte, accepting Jacobi's and Schulze's criticism and attempting to rid transcendental philosophy of this inconsistent element, conceded that the transcendental explanation must remain within immanent bounds. Neither opponents nor

supporters of Kant's critical philosophy, other than J. S. Beck, saw any other alternative.

12.1.1 *Beck and Reinhold*

Beck devotes a large section of his *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* to a criticism of Reinhold's theory of the power of representation (*EmS*, §§ 10–11, 58–119).¹ Since my aim in the current section is not a discussion of Reinhold's theory, per-se, but an attempt to highlight the uniqueness of Beck's views by comparing it with Reinhold's theory, and since Beck's discussion of Reinhold reasonably covers the relevant issues, I therefore chose to structure the following section along Beck's own criticism of Reinhold. This method has the additional advantage that it allows both the presentation of the historical controversy and a systematical discussion of these issues.² Fortunately we also possess two texts in which Reinhold relates back to Beck and I shall discuss these texts at the end of this section.

The main theme which runs through Beck's criticism of Reinhold is the inability of Reinhold's theory to address the question regarding the connection between a representation and its object; consequently that Reinhold's theory is based on an unfounded implicit assumption of a transcendent thing-in-itself as the object of cognition.

¹ All English translations from these sections of Beck's book are my own (these sections were not included in di Giovanni's translation). Beck was undoubtedly acquainted with the two volumes of Reinhold's *Beiträge zur Berichtigung der Mißverständnisse der Philosophen*, (the second volume was reviewed by Beck in L. H. Jacob's *Annalen*, and the first volume is mentioned in that review. Beck also cites Reinhold's famous proposition of consciousness (der Satz des Bewusstseins) as contained in the first volume of the *Beiträge*, within his review of the work of J. C. C. Visbeck. These reviews were discussed in Chap. 4 above) (Reinhold 1790, 1794). We can reasonably assume that Beck was also familiar with Reinhold's *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie* (as appeared in the *Teutsche Merkur* in 1786–87), as well as *Über das Fundament des philosophischen Wissen* (1791) (Reinhold 1923, 2005). Nevertheless, Beck opted to use in his above-mentioned criticism of Reinhold only the *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens*, of 1789. It may be that Beck based the text included in the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* on his non-published manuscript (to my knowledge not extant) against Reinhold, mentioned in his early correspondence with Kant (cf. above Chap. 4). Since I use Beck's criticism as the basis for the following section, I shall also refer mainly to this work of Reinhold's. Note that the term 'theory' in Beck's text is Beck's abbreviation for Reinhold's theory of the power of representation.

² Admittedly, Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie* unlike Beck's *Standpunctslehre* was not intended as an interpretation of Kant. Still, it is an attempt to justify and defend the conclusions of Kant's critical philosophy from within, by supplying it with a firm foundation, which according to Reinhold was missing in Kant's first *Critique*. The *Versuch* on which Beck bases his criticism is undoubtedly a part of Reinhold's Kantian period and should be seen in the latter's light. Therefore, the discussion of the thing-in-itself within Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie* and especially within the *Versuch* is still contained within the general framework of its Kantian origin.

Right at the beginning of his discussion Beck notes a fundamental difficulty with Reinhold's theory. One thing at least is certain, says Beck – that a representation of an object is not the object itself. It therefore follows that no analysis of the concept of a representation can carry us over the divide, which separates the representation from its object (*EmS*, 60).³ The same can be said of the analysis of the concept of the power of representation (*Vorstellungsvermögen*).

We can similarly stop the advancement of the theory at the very beginning by posing a single question: 'what connects the representation of the power of representation with this power of representation as an object?' This question in reality should be answered prior to any theory of the power of representation. (*EmS*, 64.)⁴

Beck further notes that it is inadmissible to claim that such a question cannot be answered until a detailed exposition of the power of representation has been presented since the difficulty is inherent in the very nature of a representation and its distinction from its object.⁵ Rather than addressing this core issue, Reinhold starts the presentation of his theory by stating that:

To any representation belongs, as its inner condition (as an essential part of the mere representation), something, which corresponds to the *represented* (the object distinguished from the representation through consciousness); and this I call the *content* of the representation. (Reinhold 1789, 230. All below English translations of Reinhold's *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens* are my own)

And also

³This was also Beck's main complaint against Reinhold – triggered by schulze's *Aenesidemus* – in his 1795 reviews in L. H. Jacob's *Annalen* (cf. above Chap. 4).

⁴One should not be confused by Beck's term 'the power of representation as an object'. This could sound like an aberration since the power of representation pertains to the knowing subject. Nevertheless, in reflection the knowing subject indeed becomes the subject matter, that is, the object. Beck intends here to distinguish one's thought about something and that something itself. If one speaks about the power of representation he means by it the power of representation as it truly is and not merely one's subjective thoughts about it. Otherwise, there wouldn't be any need to base and support one's arguments. So clearly we distinguish our representations of 'x' (in this case the power of representation) and the same 'x' as an object.

⁵Beck has another interesting criticism against the method used by Reinhold. This criticism concerns the process through which concepts acquire their meaning rather than to the process through which concepts acquire their objective validity. Beck notes that Reinhold attempts to grasp the concept of a representation in its widest sense so that all parties, idealists, materialists and skeptics would all agree on that sense of the term 'representation'. Reinhold thus sets aside the notion of an organic body for it would obviously be objected to or doubted by idealists and skeptics. Regarding this abstractive method, Beck argues: "we ask: what is it then, that makes this concept so stable, that we can be assured that no man would once again rise and ask that we abstract something from this concept which he dislikes?" (*EmS*, 63). The process of abstraction can in principle continue until the concept of 'representation' would lose the entirety of its predicates. The process of abstraction must therefore have a goal in front of itself, a goal obtained by some non-abstractive method or what Beck calls 'a direct way'. By 'direct way' Beck intends some original, pre-conceptual sense, which should guide our use of concepts. In other words, this is a reference to Beck's original representing and its requisiteness for the construction of meaningfulness.

To a representation in general belongs, as its inner condition (as an essential part of the mere representation), something, through which the mere content becomes a representation, and this thing I call the *form of a representation*. (Reinhold 1789, 235)⁶

Beck notes that Reinhold makes a welcomed distinction between the content of a representation and the object itself (*EmS*, 65). The content, Reinhold argues, cannot exist without the representation while the object can exist without it. “However”, Beck asks, “what does he wish to indicate by the word *corresponds*?” (*EmS*, 66.). The content of a representation is that through which a representation corresponds to or indicates an object. “It [Reinhold’s theory] therefore intends something, which we cannot grant it, namely, it claims with this [correspondence] a connection between the representation and its object.” (*EmS*, 66). In other words, according to Beck it is unclear what allows Reinhold to claim a relation between a representation – through its content – and an object.

Beck repeatedly argues that Reinhold indeed comes very close to the main problem of transcendental philosophy but that he eventually philosophizes like a true dogmatist (*EmS*, 60, 62, 65, 66). Reinhold, Beck says, acknowledges that there are representations of non-existing objects and that these representations must also have content (Reinhold 1789, 232f.). This acknowledgement is important for it follows that the recognition of the content of a representation does not allow us to conclude anything regarding a relation between the representation and an object. At best we can say that a representation has an assumed relation to an object but we have nothing on which to base the claim that a representation (any representation) even could have a relation to a real object, one that is not merely assumed. Reinhold, however, glosses over this result. Beck further applauds Reinhold for rejecting the common view of a representation as a mirror or a picture of an object and consequently the view of the relation between a representation and its object as based on some form of resemblance. Reinhold acknowledges that such a language assumes the impossible. It assumes that we can get “outside” our consciousness to see if our representations correspond to their objects, which exist apart from them. However, Beck argues that despite these promising statements, Reinhold “speaks of the impressions left by the object on the mind, through which the mind is provided with content [and he] speaks of the rose as an object distinguished from the representation, [an object] which, independently from the representation in which all its predicates inhere, is for me a mere subject = x” (*EmS*, 66; Reinhold 1789, 240–244).

Beck argues that despite Reinhold’s careful and cautious approach, he tacitly agrees with the claims of dogmatic philosophy in that he argues for a relation between a representation and an independent object without being able to account for such a relation.⁷ According to Beck, on Reinhold’s account,

⁶The above two paragraphs from Reinhold’s *Versuch einer neuen Theorie* are cited by Beck (*EmS*, 65).

⁷“However, as aforesaid, we have an honest respect for the astute author of the theory, and we are far from accusing him of willfully hiding unpleasant aspects [of his theory]. We nevertheless think

The things-in-themselves affect the mind and through their impressions, (their causality), though not the representation itself, (since for that a form is additionally necessary, which the mind must produce out of its own sources), nevertheless bring about in the mind the content of a representation; on such an account I cannot believe that critical philosophy essentially distinguishes itself from dogmatic philosophy. (*EmS*, 67)

Even dogmatists, who assume that things-in-themselves exist and are the objects of our cognition, do acknowledge that we only have representations to rely on. Hardly any of them straightforwardly identifies his own representations with how things are in-themselves, in spite of the fact that dogmatism views the objects that influence the mind and bring about representations in us as things-in-themselves.⁸ It therefore follows that on Reinhold's account there is very little difference, if any at all, between critical and dogmatic philosophy (*EmS*, 66f., 70).

The above claims shall become clearer as we follow Beck's analysis of Reinhold's explanation of our inability to know things-in-themselves. Reinhold supports Kant's claim that we cannot know the thing-in-itself. He even thinks his *Elementarphilosophie* can supply better support for this result than Kant's *Critique*. He argues that the inability to know the thing-in-itself is a special case of the inability to represent it (Reinhold 1789, 255). The argument goes as follows. The content of a representation cannot enter consciousness unless it conforms to the form of the representation. But by conforming to a form the content acquires a new identity; it is no longer pure content and thus cannot represent the object, as it is in-itself. In other words, since the content changes as it take on a form, the content can no longer represent the object, as it exists prior to appearing to the knowing subject. The thing-in-itself is by definition that which is independent of subjective forms; it is a formless thing. But nothing can be represented unless it conforms to a form. It is thus clear that the thing-in-itself cannot be represented (Reinhold 1789, 244–248, 251f., 276, 433).⁹

The irrepresentability of the object as thing-in-itself also follows from Reinhold's distinction between the content of a representation and the object itself. He gives the following example. As I approach a tree in front of me, I detect more details and I represent the tree with ever more predicates. The content of my representation of the tree therefore changes but not the tree itself. The latter remains unaffected by the extent of the content of my representation through which I represent it. It follows that whatever I can represent is only the content of my

that the theory on its own behalf does not want to declare aloud, that its actual opinion is that things-in-themselves affect us and produce the content of our representations, since this statement would be an open confession of dogmatism" (*EmS*, 74). Beck's verdict is confirmed by various other writers as Beiser (1987, 252–265), Bergman (1967, 8) and Windelband (1922, 201). Thomas Ludolf Meyer (1991, 85ff.) also agrees with this main aspect of Beck's criticism of Reinhold.

⁸ Cf. for example Feder in his *Raum und Causalität*. He argues that he completely agrees with Kant "that we can have only sensible cognition of the world of bodies and cannot either **say what the things in themselves are** (an expression that makes no sense at all when clearly illuminated)" (Feder 1788, 83). Cited as translated in Sassen (2000, 146).

⁹ Reinhold also argues that the irrepresentability of the object as a thing-in-itself is analogically applicable to the subject as a thing-in-itself (Reinhold 1789, 250–255).

own representations and not the object as it is in-itself, namely, as something distinguished from my representation of it (Reinhold 1789, 230ff.).¹⁰

Since Reinhold agrees that we do have a concept of the thing-in-itself and since a concept is a species of a representation, Reinhold is obliged to explain the apparent result that we do nevertheless have a representation of the thing-in-itself. He argues that we should distinguish between a representation of a determinate, individual, existing thing and a general concept of the understanding, which only represents a thing in general. The concept of the thing-in-itself, he contends, is no more than a representation of a logical being (Reinhold 1789, 247f.).

According to Beck, the above double meaning of the term ‘thing-in-itself’ and the comparison between the sense, which Reinhold rejects, and the one, which he upholds, reveals his true colors. It now becomes clear that Reinhold rejects the representability of the thing-in-itself only as long as it is viewed as a real thing, that is, as long as we attribute properties to it, which occurs when we confuse the thing-in-itself with the contents of our own representations.¹¹ However, Reinhold legitimizes and even requires the appeal to a thing-in-itself as long as we do not attribute any properties to it and refer to it as a mere logical being. This is, in so many words, a distinction between essence and existence. The thing-in-itself is irrepresentable in terms of its essence (because the properties through which we represent a thing are only the contents of our own representations); but it is utterly inevitable in terms of its existence. The above reading of Reinhold’s view is confirmed by Reinhold’s own explicit words.

The things-in-themselves can be as little denied as the represented objects themselves. They are these objects themselves, insofar as they cannot be represented. They are that something, which the mere content of a representation must presuppose as its ground outside the representation; however, since its representative (repräsentant), the content, must accept the form of the representation, it cannot be represented as it is independently of this form but only as the negation of the form of the representation, i.e., as that to which no other predicate can be attributed except as that which is not a representation. (Reinhold 1789, 248f.)

The thing-in-itself is the object itself as far as it is stripped of all the predicates through which we represent it within our own cognition; that is, it is the object itself insofar as it is a thing distinguished from our representations.¹² On this view it is

¹⁰ Note the absurd consequence that instead of speaking of a representation of an object, Reinhold is forced to argue that we represent to content of the representation, a formulation that includes an infinite regression.

¹¹ Reinhold indeed claims that dogmatism consists in exchanging the thing-in-itself for the mere representation, and he argues that materialism consists of exchanging the thing-in-itself for the contents of the representation (Reinhold 1789, 235, cited in *EmS*, 72f.).

¹² Reinhold’s mistake is that he does not distinguish between the transcendental object, which is merely a *presupposition* or a projection of the unity of apperception, and an *ontological* thing *in-itself*. He therefore confuses a *transcendental* presupposition with a *transcendent* thing. Compare Beck’s remark that Reinhold’s emphasis on the irrepresentability of the object itself (that is, the object beyond the representations through which we represent it), only indicates that discursive representing presupposes a bare reference point to which properties can be attached (*EmS*, 81f.).

clear that the thing-in-itself cannot be eliminated. Although it cannot itself be represented (by its very definition) it can hardly be eliminated for in that case we are left with contents of representations, which correspond to nothing at all.

The thing-in-itself and its qualities distinguished from the form of the representation are not only nothing impossible; on the contrary, they are even something *indispensible* for the mere representation, since no mere representation is thinkable without content and no content is thinkable without something outside of the representation, which does not have the form of the representation, that is, [no content is thinkable] without the thing-in-itself. However, in this character the thing-in-itself is in no way *represented* as a thing (Sache), but only as a *concept* of a thing, which is irrepresentable; and the representation of it is not a representation of an actual thing as it is in itself, but a representation of a *subject* stripped from all its predicates, which however is not a thing (Sache) but merely the most abstracted of all concepts. (Reinhold 1789, 249)

In a note under the above text he adds:

I do not say: in these characteristics *is* (exists) the thing-in-itself, a mere concept; but it is only *representable* as a mere concept. (Reinhold 1789, 249n)

In light of the above it can hardly be doubted that according to Reinhold the thing-in-itself is regarded as the object of cognition. Since the object must be distinguished from – and in Reinhold's understanding, independent of – the representation, it cannot *as such* be represented. Beck recognizes that Reinhold explains the irrepresentability of the thing-in-itself in such a way that it becomes a serious problem to understand how an object, *any object*, can be represented at all (*EmS*, 71, 83). According to Reinhold the content of a representation represents the object but as it now turns out it cannot represent the object *itself*. It thus seems unclear what the content represents. How can it represent the object, which is still distinguished from the content of the representation but not the object itself? This ambiguity is expressed by the double meaning of Reinhold's use of the term 'object'. "The theory understands under this term ['object'] on the one hand the content of the representation insofar as it already accepted a certain form, and on the other hand also the thing-in-itself which is outside of the representation." (*EmS*, 71).¹³ Beck nicely captures Reinhold's view by saying that

The reference point itself cannot be represented for it is that which is presupposed by the possibility of attributing representations to a thing distinguished from them. This 'bare reference point' is in my view Kant's transcendental object. It is a presupposition and inevitable condition on behalf of which we can refer to a certain connection of representations as independent or "outside" of our representations. Reinhold (at least implicitly) makes this transcendental presupposition into a transcendent thing-in-itself. Beck, as I have already mentioned, attempts to account for this aspect of conceptual thought by referring back to sense perception. In my view the correct account would be to admit that this is a mere presupposition which we can never justify but which is nevertheless an inevitable presupposition without which we could not relate representations to an object considered as distinct from them. Cf. the discussion of the transcendental object in Sects. 12.2.2, 12.2.3, and 12.2.4 below.

¹³ Cf. also *EmS*, 92f. There is here another difficulty not mentioned by Beck. Since Reinhold defines the content of a representation as what the representation represents, it results that there are now two levels of representation. On the first level the representation represents its content and on

The borderline, which the theory has in mind between things-in-themselves and appearances could be expressed by the following concise statement: the object, which is represented, is not the representation itself. (*EmS*, 79)

As aforesaid, according to Reinhold the thing-in-itself is regarded as the object of cognition. Differently stated we can say that according to Reinhold the object of cognition is inevitably regarded as something *in-itself*, wholly independent of our representations. It is an unknowable X, which is nevertheless assumed to be the object, which affects our senses and brings about the content of our representations.

Beck welcomes Reinhold's distinction between two senses of the givenness of the content of the representation.

The content is only a component of the mere representation insofar as it *is* given (*ist gegeben*), not insofar as it *is being* given (*wird gegeben*). (Reinhold 1789, 262, cited in *EmS*, 75)

By the above Reinhold intends to focus on the mere representation and its content rather than on the giving of the content, which implies something beyond the mere representation. Beck understands the 'is given' as indicating the original givenness or in Beck's terms the original representing rather than a further conceptual elaboration of the given. However, while Beck applauds Reinhold's above distinction he notes that Reinhold's demand that we set aside or abstract the 'being given' in order to obtain the 'is given' indicates that he does not really start from the original givenness but from its conceptual representation. Moreover,

Whether the content of the representation *is* given or *is being* given, still the following question must be answered: what is it, then, that is given there? Whether this is, as the theory answers, the unknown x, or according to dogmatic philosophy the partly known a^x, still the idealist must further ask: what then connects the this x or this a^x with its representation, and regarding this question hopefully neither party will have a ready answer. (*EmS*, 76)

The same difficulty that arises when we inquire regarding the object which gives us the content of a representation, also arises regarding the subject, which produces the form of the representation. Following the claim that the power of representation consists of receptivity and spontaneity, Reinhold argues that

Insofar as the receptivity and spontaneity of the power of representation are grounded in the representing subject in itself, insofar it is completely irrepresentable. (Reinhold 1789, 272)

Once again Beck tells us that according to this form of explanation, the irrepresentability of any object, as such, can be argued, since the reason behind it is no other than the distinction between the representation of an object and the object itself (*EmS*, 80). Reinhold explains the irrepresentability and yet inevitability of the subject as a thing-in-itself, in an analogical manner to his discussion of the irrepresentability and yet inevitability of the object as a thing-in-itself.¹⁴ The latter,

the second level the content represents the object. It follows that a representation is in fact a representation of a representation of an object.

¹⁴ Cf. also note 9 above.

like the former, can only be regarded as a logical ground of the power of representation. It is a mere logical substrate stripped from the predicates through which alone it can be represented, and therefore nothing else remains in it than an empty concept of the subject (Reinhold 1789, 272–275). In response Beck reminds us that “the theory nevertheless concedes that this subject is the real ground of the power of representation, that is: that it is that something on which the receptivity and the spontaneity rely. Therefore its claim that this subject is irrepresentable, can say no more than that this subject is not the same as its representation.” (*EmS*, 80f.). Reinhold's theory thus results in a monstrous view of critical philosophy according to which the phenomenal world based on the unification of representations hovers between an unknowable X of an object as a thing-in-itself and an equally unknowable X of a subject as a thing-in-itself, where both are dogmatically held rather than being accounted for on epistemological grounds. An analysis of the very meaning of a representation indeed seems to imply that the subject who has it relates it to, and distinguishes it from, itself and the object. But while this relation of the representation to subject and object is for Kant the main problem which requires explanation, this very relation is for Reinhold a fact of consciousness from which he attempts to derive the conclusions of Kant's critical philosophy. Moreover, while Kant's analysis attempts to explain these relations from within consciousness, Reinhold, whose declared method commits him the same obligations, derives his conclusions from realist ontological assumptions against which Kant's criticism was intended in the first place.

The role of the thing-in-itself in Reinhold's theory is also apparent in his distinction between subjective and objective content. The former,

is, in its objects, that which is merely a quality of the power of representation, given to the representing subject in and with the power of representation, consequently given prior to all representations, although only in his objects, i.e., only as forms of the mind. (Reinhold 1789, 294)

In contrast,

The objective content is that which is distinguished, not only from all representations but also from the representing subject; it belongs to the object and insofar as it is found in our representations, it is the ground of the distinction of our subject from objects outside us, and it includes as well the only possible ground for our conviction of the existence of objects outside us. (Reinhold 1789, 295)

Note also that Reinhold defines the thing-in-itself as follows:

The thing-in-itself is that something outside us, to which the mere content of our representation, without its form, alone befits; and regarding which no form of our representation, whether that of an intuition or that of a concept can be related, and which consequently allows neither intuiting nor thinking. (Reinhold 1789, 433)

And in another passage he argues:

I say, the certain mode of being-affected inherent in the power of representation; and I distinguish it from that certain mode which pertains to *things-in-themselves*, *outside* of the power of representation, how these latter things, affect the receptivity through the objective content. Through this mode of being affected, grounded in the characteristics of things

outside us, nothing is determined in the sensible representations but the content, through which the latter [sensible representations] correspond to certain things outside the mind. (Reinhold 1789, 376)

In my view, Beck correctly concludes that,

The objective content in our representations is that which belongs to the objects outside us, that is: to things-in-themselves (that something, which, it is true, cannot be represented by us, but regarding which we nevertheless know that it *exists*). (*EmS*, 95)

And,

Since the theory gives no answer to the question regarding the connection between our representation and its object, it therefore also fails to make any distinction between subjective and objective content, as well as to properly distinguish appearances from things-in-themselves. (*EmS*, 95)¹⁵

In the context of Reinhold's above claim that the objective content "is the only possible ground for our conviction of the existence of objects outside us", his rather benign statement that "the existence of objects outside us is as certain as the existence of our representations in general" (Reinhold 1789, 299) takes on a new meaning. As Beck notes, while Kant argues that objects outside us are not things-in-themselves but appearances which in turn are nothing more than representations and he therefore bases his defense of the reality of external objects on our consciousness of having representations of objects in space, Reinhold bases the reality of objects outside us on our awareness of the objective content, that element which, according to Reinhold, bears evidence to the existence of things-in-themselves (*EmS*, 96).¹⁶

The fact that Reinhold anchors the reality of the external world in the 'being affected' (*afficiert sein*) by an object outside us, by which Reinhold implies the thing-in-itself, is apparent in his explication of the concept of existence (Reinhold 1789, 476–479). Reinhold distinguishes the merely thought-of-actuality from the cognized-actuality or similarly the mere logical being from the real being. Most philosophers, he argues, view existence as a quality of things-in-themselves completely independent of our mind. On the contrary Reinhold argues that being "is an *objective unity* which is either a mere product of the spontaneity out of the represented manifold in general, thus a *logical being*, [...] or a product of the spontaneity and receptivity affected through a thing outside us, thus a real,

¹⁵ Beck also argues that Reinhold's theory cannot account for the relation of a representation to its object and that the attempt to do so by appealing to the role of the objective content through the influence of an object is "an empty pile of words" (*EmS*, 115). In spite of Reinhold's struggles it is easy to demonstrate that his concept of an objective content is inconsistent with the basic tenets of his own theory. For as Reinhold himself contends we cannot represent anything and nothing can be present in our consciousness without taking on the forms of our faculty of representation. But the objective content is a formless thing. We can no more have a representation of the objective content than we can have a representation of the thing-in-itself. We cannot abstract from the forms of receptivity and spontaneity and still have a representation of the objective content for to abstract from these forms is to have no representation at all.

¹⁶ For my reading and defense of Kant's refutation of idealism, cf. Sect. 12.2.4 below.

cognizable being" (Reinhold 1789, 479). Since, as we have already discussed, Reinhold regards the thing-in-itself as the object of cognition, or otherwise said, he regards the object of cognition as something *in-itself*, Beck concludes that

The existence of things is a certain product, brought about as much by the influence of the thing-in-itself as by our own spontaneity; and the theory is a frame of mind distinguished from the dogmatist merely by the fact that the latter makes existence into a quality of the thing-in-itself while the theory makes it a product of the thing-in-itself and the spontaneity. (*EmS*, 119)

The emphasis put by Reinhold on the objective content within his account of the reality of external objects and similarly his allusions to the thing-in-itself within his account of the concept of existence indicates that despite his denials Reinhold nevertheless adheres to the conventional correlation model of actuality and truth. In his review of the second volume of Reinhold's *Beyträge*, Beck explicitly argues that the difficulty with Reinhold's theory is that he defines objective reality in terms of an agreement or correspondence between a representation and a thing-in-itself. It should be noted that a correspondence theory couldn't escape making reference to a thing-in-itself. This is so since correspondence as a criterion of truth is only meaningful if the object to which the representation is supposed to correspond is on its own behalf independent of the representation. Otherwise the attempt at validation is circular and pointless. In the above-mentioned review, Beck notes that Kant accounts for objective reality without ever mentioning things-in-themselves.¹⁷

Aside from the dogmatism involved in the reliance on the thing-in-itself, Reinhold's correlation model of actuality harbors an internal difficulty. According to Reinhold the distinguishing mark of real, cognizable existence, rather than the merely thought-of existence, is the *givenness* of content of sensible intuition and its reference to the *being affected* by a representation-independent object. However, according to Reinhold himself, all representations must have content given through the receptivity of sensible intuition; additionally, the content inevitably corresponds to an object although the latter may or may not be an actual one. The mere presence of sensible content is thus insufficient to conclude anything regarding the actuality of an object.¹⁸ As cited above, Reinhold himself concedes that being does not merely concern the givenness of the content, but is a matter of objective unity.¹⁹ He further emphasizes that unity is only the effect of the spontaneity and, as such, is the product of the mind and not of the being-affected by an object (Reinhold 1789,

¹⁷ Cf. Beck's Review of Reinhold's *Beyträge* (Beck 1795c, 469). For a more detailed discussion of the contrast between a correlation and a coherence model of actuality and truth, cf. Sect. 12.2.4 below.

¹⁸ Cf. above Reinhold's insistence that all representations must have content whether they do or do not have an actual object.

¹⁹ Thomas Ludolf Meyer (1991, 87) also notes the inconsistency in Reinhold's account of objectivity which relies on the one hand on the synthetic activity of the spontaneity and on the other hand on intuition and its reference to an object prior to, and independent of the spontaneous activity of the mind.

432). It therefore remains unclear how either the givenness of sensible intuition or the objective unity brought about by the faculty of spontaneity can account for the actuality of an object.

It seems that the difficulty with Reinhold's theory stems from his understanding of Kant's form-content distinction. Instead of distinguishing aspects of a representation – its *what* from its *how* – Reinhold distinguishes elements or constituents which can be taken apart. This interpretation inevitably leads, Reinhold's protests notwithstanding, to the further question regarding the source of each constituent and thus to a dogmatic assertion of the existence of a fundamental subject and a fundamental object, the very assertion that Kant attempted to avoid. Reinhold's understanding of Kant's problem of objective relation inverts its core structure and most important principle. Instead of Kant's principle of the subjective conditions of objectivity he appears to have found the objective conditions of subjectivity. Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie* thus shows its affinity with the dogmatic rationalism against which Kant directed his criticism in the first place.

As we have seen above Reinhold needs the thing-in-itself to counteract idealism and uphold the reality of the external world independent of our representations. Although Reinhold is aware of Kant's recognition that a thing can only be an object for us insofar as it is conditioned by subjective forms, he is tempted to go beyond this boundary and claim the existence of the thing-in-itself. This is so since in his view giving up a fundamental object, that is, the thing-in-itself would be to let go of a proper foundation of the real world and of the theory of cognition altogether. In my view Reinhold does not see that the object does not become any less objective and real by acknowledging its subjective conditions. Reinhold clearly operates under the assumption of the dichotomy between the immanence of representations and the transcendence of things as they are in themselves and since he wants to uphold realism he opts for the latter. In Reinhold's mind, in order for the object to be distinguished from a representation it must be ontologically independent of our representations. The object must therefore be a thing-*in-itself*. However, on this view, it becomes impossible to explain how our representations can be related to an object thus understood. Reinhold therefore cannot escape from dogmatically presupposing the existence of the object as a thing-in-itself. By contrast, Beck understands an object to be distinguished from a representation and yet not a thing-in-itself, a view which in my mind is the key to the understanding of the true meaning and only foundation of Kant's critical idealism.²⁰

Finally, I would like to discuss Reinhold's response to Beck's *Standpunctslehre* and to Beck's attack on his *Elementarphilosophie*. Reinhold addresses these issues within the second volume of his *Auswahl vermischter Schriften* (1797) and within a letter addressed to an unknown friend, written on February 22, 1797.²¹ In the

²⁰ Cf. Sect. 12.2.4 in which I argue that Kant's reply to idealism succeeds without any mention of things-in-themselves.

²¹ Reinhold's above mentioned letter is reprinted in Dorow (1841, 151–160). In the latter publication there is no indication of the addressee of Reinhold's letter. Nevertheless, since Reinhold

introduction to the second volume of the *Auswahl vermischter Schriften*, Reinhold declares his conversion to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. The 13th chapter is titled "Der Anhänger der einzig möglichen Standpunktslehre" (The proponent of the only possible standpoint) and is the origin for the name *Standpunktslehre* by which Beck's contemporaries referred to his theory of the standpoint. In this section Reinhold merely presents Beck's *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt* along with extensive citations but without any criticism or discussion. The 14th chapter is titled "Der Anhänger der Wissenschaftslehre" (The proponent of the *Wissenschaftslehre*); however, it is devoted to an analysis of the faults inherent in two previous systems – Beck's *Standpunktslehre* and the earlier version of Reinhold's own *Elementarphilosophie*. The discussion of Beck's *Standpunktslehre* and his objections to Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie* occupies most of the section while only a small space is given to Reinhold's renouncement of his own previous positions. The section ends with Reinhold's declared allegiance to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, which, as Reinhold now argues, is alone capable of addressing the issues left open by previous systems.

For purposes of convenience of discussion, Reinhold's arguments against Beck can be divided into three groups with some admitted overlapping.²² The first concerns Beck's merging of the forms of the understanding and of sensibility; the second concerns the status of the object that affects the senses and which brings about representations; the third concerns the nature of Beck's postulate of original representing.

Reinhold argues, first, that Beck's *Standpunktslehre* annuls the significance of Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic and with it the distinctions so crucial for Kant between "transcendental sensibility and transcendental understanding as well as between transcendental and empirical sensibility" (Reinhold 1797, 295).²³ Reinhold uses strong words to express his repulsion from the way Beck "twists and turns against Kant the opposite of what he [Kant] has said" (Reinhold 1797,

indicates that the addressee was the reviewer of Beck's *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt* in the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung* (it is implied in the letter that the addressee has affirmed this himself), then it can be assumed that the addressee was J. B. Erhard (regarding the identification of the reviewer of Beck's work, cf. Sect. 11.1, note 2). In his letter, Reinhold applauds Erhard for the criticism of Beck in his review. Reinhold's arguments in this letter closely correspond to his arguments in the second volume of his *Auswahl vermischter Schriften*. This is understandable since both were written at about the same time.

²² This is not Reinhold's classification but my way of presenting Reinhold's arguments.

²³ All English translations from Reinhold's 1797 *Auswahl vermischter Schriften* are my own. I believe that the term 'transcendental' should be reserved for reflexive discussions about the a-priori. Therefore, Reinhold would have better distinguished a-priori or pure understanding from a-priori or pure sensibility and similarly a-priori or pure sensibility from empirical sensibility. In his above-mentioned letter, Reinhold similarly argues that Beck missed Kant's intentions in the Transcendental Aesthetic and that he must have also misconstrued Kant's intentions in the Transcendental Analytic. According to Reinhold, Beck fails to recognize the distinctness and yet the connection between understanding and sensibility (Dorow 1841, 153f.). Reinhold accuses Beck of placing everything of importance in the categories and this includes time, space and even sensation itself (Dorow 1841, 155).

295). Reinhold completely dismisses the assumption that “Kant, in order to be understood, had initially lowered himself to the public’s common, hitherto held, way of thought; that Kant had accommodated himself to the common language and distanced himself from the views he had adopted before; that his method is to be blamed for the meaning imposed in some passages, a meaning which has to be denied by Kant’s true claims” (Reinhold 1797, 296). We have already discussed the illegitimacy of Beck’s interpretation of Kant insofar as it concerns the relation between sensibility and the understanding. All the evidence gathered from Kant’s first *Critique* and from his correspondence with Beck, as well as the review of Kant’s development towards his critical philosophy, make it clear that his distinction between the forms of the understanding and of sensibility is an essential feature of his teaching and not a mere methodological tool. Therefore, from a factual standpoint, I agree with Reinhold’s criticism of Beck on this matter although I do not share his cynical tone.²⁴ As we shall see in the following sections, while Beck’s arguments regarding Kant’s accommodation of the common-traditional view should be rejected when discussing the legitimacy of his interpretation of Kant regarding the relation between sensibility and the understanding, the opposite is true when discussing the legitimacy of his interpretation of Kant regarding the relation between a representation and its object (and consequently the status of the object that affects the senses and the role of the thing-in-itself in Kant’s theoretical philosophy).²⁵ Moreover, even regarding the relation between sensibility and the understanding Beck’s arguments are not completely misguided and Reinhold’s criticism is far too harsh. As I have discussed in Sect. 11.4, while Kant undoubtedly held to a strict separation between the manifold of sensibility and the synthesis which pertains uniquely to the understanding, his no less persistent views regarding the interdependence between these two constituents is an indication that in his view neither the manifold nor the synthesis can be considered in abstraction from the other. Indeed Reinhold himself concedes that “the mere content and the mere form of the representation in general are absolutely irrepresentable.” (Reinhold 1789, 276). In his criticism of Beck’s merging of sensibility and the understanding and similarly the merging of the pure and the empirical aspect of intuition, Reinhold cites the first page of Kant’s introduction to the first *Critique* (*KrV*, B1f.). There,

²⁴ Reinhold’s claims are repeated by Schelling in an essay which discusses Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre* in the context of Kant’s original views and dedicates some space for a discussion of Beck’s *Standpunktstheorie*. “We have no choice but to join Mr. Reinhold’s objection, namely, that the ‘Doctrine of Standpoint’ altogether erases the entire Transcendental Aesthetic and the distinction, so often affirmed by Kant, between transcendental sensibility and transcendental understanding” (Schelling 1856, 423). Schelling’s essay “Abhandlungen zur Erläuterung des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre” (Treatise explicatory of the idealism in the science of knowledge) initially appeared in few installments in the *Philosophisches Journal* in spring 1797 under the original title “Allgemeine Übersicht der neuesten philosophischen Literatur” (Survey of the most recent philosophical literature). The English citations are taken, with some changes, from Pfau (1994, 117). Schelling, like Reinhold, uses a negative, even offensive, tone against Beck.

²⁵ In this context compare Cassirer’s view on the same matter, diametrically opposed to Reinhold’s discussed in Sect. 12.2.5 below.

Kant makes a quite straightforward separation of the pure from the empirical. However, it can easily be granted that on such a preliminary stage of his exposition, Kant had to compromise the exactness of the presentation in favor of simplicity and clarity.²⁶ These methodological-propaedeutic considerations become even more explicit as we move from the manifold-synthesis distinction to the givenness-production dichotomy; in other words, as we move from the issue of the relation between sensibility and the understanding to the issue of the relation between a representation and its object. Obviously it is the latter issue that mainly interests Reinhold and on behalf of which he criticizes Beck so fiercely. It is therefore no coincidence that immediately following his general objections regarding Beck's merging of sensibility and the understanding, Reinhold brings citations of the first *Critique*, which deal with the givenness of sensations and the influence of an external object on our senses.²⁷ He then mocks Beck's commentary according to which the object, which affects the senses, is no more than an appearance posited on behalf of the category of causality. He similarly rejects Beck's claim that sensation is nothing but the original employment of the understanding in the category of reality, that is, the original synthesis of the homogeneous, which proceeds from the whole to the parts (Reinhold 1797, 298f.; *EmS*, 369). In his above-mentioned letter to Erhard, Reinhold especially targets Beck's view of sensation as an original mode of representation. The category of reality, he argues, is nothing but the a-priori *form* of what can be sensibly perceived and it is distinguished from the *empirical matter* of sensibility. Reinhold, therefore, argues that Beck does not posit the object unconditionally (Dorow 1841, 154).²⁸ What disturbs Reinhold, aside from the strangeness of Beck's definition of the categories and the fact that these definitions cannot be found in Kant's original text, is the idealism that, on Reinhold's view, stems from them.²⁹ Understandably, it would appear to anyone holding to the immanence-transcendence dichotomy that the argument according to which the affecting object is no more than an appearance and similarly the argument according to which sensation is an original synthesis, inevitably leads to the

²⁶ For further discussions of arguments supporting Beck's view of Kant's gradual mode of exposition, cf. Sect. 12.2.5 under the subtitle of methodological-propaedeutic considerations.

²⁷ This time Reinhold quotes from the opening pages of the Transcendental Aesthetic (*KrV*, A20/B34).

²⁸ Reinhold argues that through his doctrine of original representation, Beck expels the empirical on behalf of the transcendental but in Reinhold's view Beck shall be forced to reintroduce this element independent of the original representation to enable the original representation to be realized. In Reinhold's view, then, Beck cannot escape the thing-in-itself against which he argues so vigorously (Dorow 1841, 155).

²⁹ This worry, as well, is shared by Schelling in his above-mentioned essay (cf. note 24 above). Schelling argues that Reinhold is right to argue that "the efforts of the [present doctrine] to explain the Real, i.e., the sensation in our representations, prove futile, because it is incapable of adducing anything but ideal acts, and because it must bluntly proclaim that sensation is the activity of the original *understanding*, which may indeed make sense, but only if we understand words such as *understanding*, etc., against the grain of their common usage" (Schelling 1856, 423; Pfau 1994, 118). Cf. also Schelling's note appended to the above-cited paragraph.

conclusion that the object is no more than the product of the spontaneity of the understanding. As Reinhold states, transcendental philosophy cannot become a science unless it can establish the proper ground of that empirical element of cognition, which bears evidence to the reality of external objects (Reinhold 1797, 320). Considered in this light, Beck's *Standpunctslehre* seems to abolish all hope, for it follows – at least in Reinhold's eyes – that this empirical element as well as the object from which it originates is the product of our own minds.³⁰ However this is not the only way to understand Beck's intentions. On my view, Beck only means that we become aware of the content of sensibility *within* its synthesis and not independently of it. There is nothing in Beck's view which prevents him from explaining – as indeed he does – how empirical cognition, after becoming aware of some sensible content, views this content as the result of the influence of an object. If Beck's account seems circular it is simply due to the fact that, unlike the theories of his contemporaries, Beck's theory is not intended as a metaphysical justification of the existence of an object entirely independent of cognition but merely as an explanation of the empirical distinction between mere subjective representation and an object. It is also worth mentioning that Kant himself nowhere says that sensation, as a raw matter, is given and is meaningful to us in complete abstraction from the forms of sensibility and from the synthesis of the apprehension, which brings into play the spontaneity of the understanding. Even Reinhold concedes that the bare content as it is in itself, that is, as it is abstracted from all forms, is irrepresentable (Reinhold 1789, 276). Reinhold is deterred by Beck's definition of sensation as an original-activity of the understanding (Reinhold 1797, 299, 304f.). This of course contributes to his conclusion that on Beck's view sensation is a product of the spontaneity of the understanding.³¹ I have already mentioned that Beck's terminology can mislead readers into thinking that sensibility is absorbed into the

³⁰ Meyer (1991, 159) also puts the emphasis of Reinhold's objection on this very point. K. L. Reinhold's way of thinking – according to which the thing-in-itself cannot be avoided – is also apparent in the criticism of J. S. Beck by Ernst Christian Gottlieb Reinhold (K. L. Reinhold's son). Following a brief, merely descriptive, exposition, he turns to evaluate the merits of Beck's doctrine. He argues that Beck's doctrine ignores that which existence cannot be accounted for by appealing to our own spontaneity and which must be presupposed by the empirical use of the understanding – that is, sensations. He goes on arguing that according to Beck's doctrine "the question regarding the correspondence between the represented object and the representation becomes known here as completely unauthorized [. . .]" (Reinhold 1839, 534). This is so since (in his view) according to Beck the human spirit cannot transpose itself out of the sphere of the original representing and it can possess no cognition or concept, which does not owe its existence to that original representing. He concludes that Beck's view brings out the consequences of Kant's critical idealism even better than in Kant's own words – it shows its character as subjective idealism. While Kant kept ambiguous about the question of the correspondence between things-in-themselves and human cognition, Beck shows that this correspondence is completely unauthorized (Reinhold 1839, 536). It is obvious that Reinhold Junior, even more so than his father, views the issue regarding the relation of a representation to its object in metaphysical, dogmatic terms, as if the question is considered from the external vantage point of a God-like observer.

³¹ Similar arguments are put by Reinhold regarding space and its synthesis. According to Reinhold it follows from Beck's doctrine that space is generated out of its synthesis (Reinhold 1797, 305).

understanding while I think that the exactly the opposite is true. It seems to me that on a closer reading of the text and in light of Beck's paradigm of the geometer's method it becomes clear that Beck merges the understanding into sensibility and not the other way around.³² Therefore, Beck should not be interpreted as arguing that sensations are the product of the spontaneity of the understanding. Rather, he should only be understood as claiming that the content of sensibility is only meaningful to us as part of a synthesis, and not in complete abstraction from any contribution on behalf of cognition. Put this way, Beck's claims coincide with Kant's and even with Reinhold's own claims. Aside from terminological aspects, what makes Beck's view so hard to accept is that we expect the transcendental account to *justify* the cognition-independent origin of sensations and when this expectation is disappointed we conclude that we have not succeeded in going beyond the immanent realm of representations. The same can be said of Beck's account of the status of the affecting object. This account fails only if we expect it to *justify* our appeal to an independent object.³³ However, if the transcendental account – as Beck explicitly says – only aims to *explain* how empirical cognition operates, that is, how cognition, out of its own resources, distinguishes an objective connection of representations from a merely subjective connection, than the situation is quite different.³⁴

The continuation of Reinhold's text clearly demonstrates that his motivating factor is the status of the object that affects the senses. He argues that Kant distinguishes the object, which affects our cognitive faculty from the cognitive faculty itself, and from the representation itself. The main question, he explains, is what should be understood under this 'affecting object'. Reinhold argues that the investigations of the *Critique* lead to the conclusion that

It understands under that thing, which the appearance regarding its *matter* relies on and which is thinkable neither as an *appearance* nor as a *thing-in-itself*, the *noumen*; it is that thing which is represented through reason, a thing, which is relied upon by the appearance *merely through reason*. (Reinhold 1797, 300)³⁵

Reinhold then makes an explicit reference to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* from which the above solution is taken. The *Wissenschaftslehre*, Reinhold argues, has solved this difficulty by appealing to "a necessary *outer reference-point* established through pure reason, without which no objective reality of our representations, indeed, no sensibility and no understanding, could be thought" (Reinhold 1797, 300). In order to properly evaluate this solution the larger context of Fichte's theory regarding the affecting object must be presented. This investigation shall follow in

³² Cf. Sect. 11.1 above.

³³ This demand to validate the independent status of external objects as the source of the empirical aspect of sensibility is evident in Reinhold's explanation of what is required of philosophy to become a strict science.

³⁴ On the distinction between an attempt at justification and a more modest attempt at explanation, cf. Sects. 12.2.1 and 12.2.4 below.

³⁵ Cf. also in Reinhold's letter to Erhard (Dorow 1841, 156–160).

the next section. Nevertheless, we can already acknowledge both the function that the noumenon is supposed to perform as well as the difficulties it harbors. The noumenon, as used by Fichte and Reinhold, is designed to function as a middle way – on the one hand it is more than a mere appearance so that it can be regarded as its basis, and on the other hand it is less than a thing-in-itself. Following Fichte, Reinhold looks for some sense of an object, which escapes both the immanence of representations as well as the transcendent character of the thing-in-itself. However, as shall become clearer within the discussion of Fichte’s views, the very role that the noumenon is intended to perform also sets the stage for the reemergence of the difficulties it was supposed to solve. As long as we implicitly hold to the immanence-transcendence dichotomy then there can really be no middle way and the noumenon shall be doomed to fluctuate between the two extremes. Only as a transcendent thing can the noumenon be truly regarded as the cause of our representations but in that case we have once again gone beyond the legitimate boundaries of critical philosophy. The attempt to find some sense in which the thing-in-itself can be compatible with the presuppositions of Kant’s critical philosophy and still perform the tasks of the affecting object, thereby accounting for the reality of cognition-independent external objects, is a feature which is repeated through the works of many authors who set out to save Kant’s critical philosophy from internal inconsistency and dogmatism on the one hand and from sliding towards idealism on the other hand.³⁶ On this background, the uniqueness of Beck’s view is that he argues that no concept of a thing-in-itself can be compatible with the presuppositions of Kant’s critical philosophy, moreover, that no such concept is necessary in order to defend Kant against the accusation of idealism. Section 12.2.4 is intended precisely to evaluate these claims.

Reinhold defends himself against Beck’s accusations of dogmatism by claiming that he did not go further than Kant himself who in referring to the thing-in-itself intends only the noumenon. Furthermore, Reinhold complains that Beck’s accusations are unjust since Reinhold distinguishes, even better than Kant does, between the noumenon and the “thing-in-itself, which is self-contradictory”, and which, according to Reinhold, is “not merely non-cognizable but also in general an irrepresentable thing” (Reinhold 1797, 302). In another passage Reinhold recasts his theory of the power of representation in a purified manner without ever mentioning the thing-in-itself, not even by implication (Reinhold 1797, 318f.).³⁷

However, the difficulties with the double function of the noumenon, as noted above, become apparent in Reinhold’s own words. Reinhold argues that his *Elementarphilosophie*, just like Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, distinguishes the empirical from the transcendental. Both systems, he argues, regard the empirical

³⁶ The above shall be exemplified through the analysis of Henry E. Allison, and Erich Adickes, cf. Sects. 12.2.2 and 12.2.3 below.

³⁷ Reinhold (1797, 302f.) objects that Beck did not grant the theory of the power of representation the same kind of productive interpretation as Beck strived to give to Kant’s original doctrine. By ‘productive interpretation’ Reinhold means an interpretation intended to present the theory as free from internal contradictions.

element (whether it is referred to as sensation, as impressions on our receptive capacity or as objective content) as *presupposed* by the faculties of understanding and sensibility rather than being *posited* by them (Reinhold 1797, 321f.).³⁸

Since the empirically intuited object, that is, the object already represented under the forms of sensibility, is only the appearance, then the theory of the power of representation called that which the mere impressions devoid of that form [of sensibility] relate to – a thing-in-itself; however eventually since the latter is only made possible through the theory of reason, the theory explained it to be a noumen. (Reinhold 1797, 322)³⁹

Reinhold nevertheless admits that the above is not yet the whole solution. If the noumenon is only grounded in representation through pure reason then it is nothing but the form of representation in pure reason. On such an account it cannot be thought of as that which brings about the sensation. If on the other hand it is not thought of as a mere form of the representations of reason but as that to which that form applies then we are left with nothing more than sensation as a fact to which reason adds in thought a ground located outside itself. We are left with either an irrepresentable thing-in-itself or a mere empirical fact (Reinhold 1797, 322f.).⁴⁰ Reinhold concludes that his previously held *Elementarphilosophie* is guilty of deriving that fundamental (empirical) element of cognition from mere consciousness just as Beck's *Standpunctslehre* derives it from original representing.⁴¹ Both systems are guilty of not properly grounding theoretical philosophy. Both systems are also guilty of concerning themselves merely with theoretical philosophy while completely ignoring practical philosophy. Reinhold now declares – along Fichtean lines – that if a solution is to be found it must take into consideration both theoretical and practical philosophy and express a principle that is the highest for all philosophy, not merely its theoretical branch (Reinhold 1797, 323f.).⁴²

Reinhold's last group of arguments concern Beck's postulate of original representing (Reinhold 1797, 306–318). Reinhold argues that this principle is obscure. How do we know, Reinhold asks, whether we have succeeded in transposing ourselves into this unique mode of representing? How do we know whether we have arrived at the original meaning of our concepts? Can we really avoid using words and concepts to explain the meaning of 'representing', 'cognizing' or 'thinking'? Since Beck's description of the original representing is not yet the original representing itself – into which we must transpose ourselves – then Beck's doctrine is always open to criticism from all directions. Reinhold notes

³⁸ Reinhold uses the contrast between the German verbs *setzen* and *voraussetzen*.

³⁹ This argument is reminiscent of a very recent argument by Henry E. Allison, discussed in Sect. 12.2.2 below.

⁴⁰ Cf. also Reinhold's letter to Erhard (Dorow 1841, 156).

⁴¹ According to Reinhold (1797, 320) it is insufficient to account for the empirical element of cognition by referring to it as a mere presupposition or a postulate as does Beck's *Standpunctslehre*.

⁴² Reinhold's discussion is based on Fichte's solution. It shall therefore be better understood after the detailed discussion of Fichte's views in the next section.

that Beck himself conceded that original representing can only be communicated and be made comprehensible by resorting to concepts. Reinhold therefore concludes that we inevitably concern ourselves with concepts and not with some mysterious pre-conceptual mode of representation.⁴³ Reinhold argues that his own theory of the power of representation as well as Kant's critical project both aimed at conceptual representations; the latter are aimed at expressing the basic, self-evident, or what Beck calls original, principles but nevertheless these principles are described and explained by concepts and they are grounded on arguments (Reinhold 1797, 307).⁴⁴ A proper theory must aim at conceptual representations (what Beck calls derived representations) for otherwise it remains unclear and unaccounted for. Reinhold argues that "the only way to succeed in that transposition appears to us to be by *reflecting* about the notion of *representing* and by *abstracting* from everything that is not *original representing*" (Reinhold 1797, 314). This task can indeed be postulated with few words, but it can only be achieved by a detailed and patient process of thought. Aside from its obscurity, Beck's postulate of original representing is, according to Reinhold, an oversimplification of Kant's doctrine.⁴⁵ While Kant progresses slowly, carefully and with much effort

⁴³ This line of criticism, as well, is shared by Schelling in his above mentioned essay regarding Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. Like Reinhold, Schelling argues that Beck's "Doctrine of the Standpoint" becomes entangled with its own postulates because it conceives of the original representing in the categories as a non-discursive, pre-conceptual, mode of representing and yet it admits that this unique mode of representing cannot be explained other than by resorting to concepts. However, Schelling adds that the problem with Beck's doctrine is its merely theoretical orientation. A theoretical postulate must indeed be explicated in order to be comprehended. Therefore the inability to express it properly through concepts is a major obstacle. In contrast, a practical principle is a requirement to act and according to Schelling (who, in this essay, follows Fichte) we are entitled to demand of others that they find the consciousness of freedom within themselves for without it no moral demand would be intelligible (Schelling 1856, 419f.).

⁴⁴ Erich Adickes argues, on the contrary, that "Beck's great service consists in this: that he eliminated from Kant's and Reinhold's doctrine of the categories the not inconsiderable remnants of conceptual philosophy, which still remained in them." Adickes argues that "Reinhold's doctrine of the categories, [...] is in the last resort only a play upon concepts [...] Beck, on the other hand, brings Kant's war with conceptual philosophy to an end, by going back [...] to the *original* operation of the understanding (not to *judgments*), whereby *objects* are primarily created, and judgments rendered possible; and by rendering the categories only as the conceptual expression of these operations of the understanding. It is, therefore, entirely owing to these last, that an intuition can, certainly, never arise and persist without a corresponding *original operation of the understanding*, but may well do so without the latter's fortuitous *conceptual* expression." (Adickes 1970, 177). The English translation of Adickes' text is my own.

⁴⁵ Criticism of a similar sort is found in Nelson (1971, 31ff.). Nelson, a German mathematician and philosopher, initially argues that in his *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt*, "Beck [...] tackles the problem of the Subjective Deduction of the Categories and he really does get to the heart of it." (Nelson 1971, 31). Nevertheless, Nelson sees Beck's work a failed attempt to justify the validity of the categories. He argues that "What Beck entirely overlooks is that transcendental synthesis is originally [that is, in Kant] quite obscure. He makes it out to be such a simple matter, as if by an arbitrary decision one could take up the standpoint of original representation and thereby come to perceive without more ado the validity of the Categories [...]. He does not see that the whole

through the deduction of the categories, Beck simply tells us to transpose ourselves into the mode of original representing where everything is supposed to become clear to us. Reinhold argues that it is unclear how we should obtain this unique view and what guarantees us that we have reached the exact true meaning of the original representing, no more and no less than the self-evident principle of all philosophy. According to Reinhold, Beck's version of this controversial principle is postulated in a simplified manner, without proper explanation and validation. Beck at best points to the result of a long process of reflection but he leaves out all the detailed examination which is intended to lead us towards this result. According to Reinhold, were we not familiar with Kant's text to begin with, we would have never understood what Beck means by his formulations.⁴⁶ Reinhold also argues that Beck's reference to the method of the geometer is unhelpful in making his intentions clear. Even if we assume that the geometer posits the geometrical figures through what Beck calls 'original representing', still the case of the original representing itself – time, space and the categories – is very different. The latter cannot be constructed like the geometrical objects; rather, time, space and the categories are the presuppositions and preconditions, which make the representations of the geometer possible in the first place.

In my view, in order to evaluate Reinhold's objections against Beck's postulate, we have to distinguish between two aspects. Insofar as Reinhold's objections are directed against the doctrine of sensible, pre-conceptual meaning and its relevance to a theory of cognition, then Reinhold's objections reflect no more than his own rationalistic presuppositions. As a rationalist Reinhold is inclined towards thought by means of concepts and he denies any relevance to perceptual meaning, which precedes its conceptual reformulation. However, Reinhold is indeed correct to argue that Beck completely ignores the role of time, space and the categories as logical preconditions, which make representations and objective unity possible.⁴⁷

Against the doctrine of pre-conceptual meaning, Reinhold demands – in a similar manner to contemporary authors who also deny the relevance of

history of philosophy is one long and overwhelming disproof of the self-evidence he assumes for original representation." (Nelson 1971, 32f.).

⁴⁶ Schelling (1856, 421) also argues that Beck's doctrine of the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness "seems to have descended from heaven" and he concurs with Reinhold (1797, 315) that this principle, as well as other principles used by Beck, would not be understood by Beck's readers had they not been previously acquainted with Kant's own doctrine and its detailed exposition in the *Critique*.

⁴⁷ Reinhold's claim that Beck's postulate is obscure can also be understood in light of the above two aspects. The obscurity claim pertains in part to Beck's emphasis on pre-conceptual meaning and in this sense it should be rejected. However, it also refers to Beck's ignorance of the function of the categories as necessary preconditions. As I shall develop in detail in Sect. 12.2.6, the latter omission prevents Beck from recognizing that Kant's theory of objectivity, and consequently also his theory of actuality and truth, is not based on a correspondence model – neither the dogmatic model of correspondence between representations and things-in-themselves nor a model of correspondence between concepts and original representations, as Beck assumes – but a model based on formal coherence.

pre-conceptual meaning – that these “principles” be described and explained. Since description and explanation requires the use of concepts it follows that pre-conceptual meaning – if it exists at all – is ineffable. As convincing as this simple argument sounds, it reflects no more than the analytical judgment that pre-conceptual meaning is, by its very definition, non-conceptual. The argument proves neither the inexistence nor the irrelevance of pre-conceptual meaning. This argument only reflects the inclination of authors who support it towards those meanings, which can be expressed with words and concepts.⁴⁸ Indeed those who support the doctrine of sensible, pre-conceptual meaning resort to sensible representations – mostly visual representations – to make their case. Such are the empirical experiments of A. Michotte (1963, 1991) in the field of phenomenal causality as well as the work of G. Kanizsa (1979) in the field of visual perception mentioned above. Reinhold nevertheless has a strong claim against Beck regarding the role of time, space and the categories as logical preconditions. We have already discussed this aspect in Sect. 11.2. I have argued that Beck’s emphasis on the primacy of perceptual meaning comes at the expense of his ignorance of the role of the categories as logical preconditions. Beck therefore misses the central thrust of Kant’s deduction of the categories.

12.1.2 *Beck and Fichte*

In the previous section I chose to discuss Reinhold’s views on the thing-in-itself debate as they were reflected in Beck’s own criticism of Reinhold. Such a method was possible since apart from the early reviews of Reinhold’s works and the works of few of his followers, Beck dedicated a significant part of his *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* to a detailed criticism of Reinhold; moreover, Beck’s criticism of Reinhold centers precisely on the latter’s references to the role of the thing-in-itself in the theory of cognition (Beck 1796a). The case is different regarding Beck’s controversy with Fichte. Aside from few general references to the principle of selfhood, Fichte is not mentioned at all in Beck’s *Einzig möglicher Standpunct* or in his *Grundriß der Critischen Philosophie* (Beck 1796b). Fichte’s work is only

⁴⁸ Reinhold (1797, 312) also objects to Beck’s claim that original representing is not a representation of an object. “The original representing is thus without a *represented*, it represents *nothing* and yet it is a *representation!*” This objection goes hand in hand with the demand that all meanings should be expressed by concepts. As we have discussed above (Chap. 7), concepts make use of the cognitive function of symbolization whereby there is a distinction between the symbol and the symbolized. In other words, in concepts the content of the representation is referred to as an object, namely, as something distinct from the representation itself. In contrast to concepts, the meaningful content of sense perception is not referred to as something distinct from the representation but as embedded within and given immediately with the representation itself. It therefore follows that the demand that all meanings should be translated into concepts runs parallel to the expectation that the content of the representation should in all cases be referred to as an object distinct from the representation. On this issue cf. Strauss (1977, 63–68; 1984, 154–159).

discussed by Beck in two reviews published anonymously. One is a review of the first edition of Fichte's *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* and his *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, both published by Fichte in 1794 (Beck 1795b)⁴⁹ and a review Fichte's *Grundlage des Naturrecht* published by Fichte in 1796 (Beck 1796c).⁵⁰ The former of the two reviews includes only one reference – although an important one – to the issue the thing-in-itself⁵¹ while the latter review deals with Fichte's theory of right.⁵² It follows that in order to present and discuss the role of the thing-in-itself in Fichte's doctrine we must turn to Fichte's own works.⁵³

⁴⁹ Cf. Chap. 4, note 28.

⁵⁰ The ascription of this essay to J. S. Beck is based on Adickes (1970, 175), and Dilthey (1889, 642n31). There is some controversy concerning the possibility that Beck wrote a third review of Fichte's works. The *Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophisches Geistes von einer Gesellschaft gelehrter Männer* ran in 1795 two different reviews of Fichte's *Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten*. According to Erich Adickes (1970, 175) the first of these reviews, published in Vol. 1(37): 289–296, was “very probably” written by Beck. On the other hand, Daniel Breazeale (1988, 426n3) argues that the second review, published in Vol. 1(46): 361–368; 1(47): 369–374 is “generally attributed to J. S. Beck” (Cf. also Breazeale 1994, 30n24). I find Breazeale's conjecture more plausible but I feel that there is too little evidence to uphold either of the two claims.

⁵¹ In his review of Fichte's *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*, mentioned in Chap. 4 above, Beck refers to Fichte's claim that while things-in-themselves cannot be represented they can nevertheless be felt. This issue shall be addressed below as part of the more detailed discussion of Fichte's doctrine regarding the thing-in-itself. It must be borne in mind that, in line with the main argument of this work, I focus in this section on the comparison of Fichte's and Beck's views regarding the issue of the thing-in-itself. The larger context of the relationship between these two authors, including the possible influences and counter-influences of one on the other, is beyond the scope of this work. For a consideration of the latter kind cf. Meyer (1991, 52–67, 148–159).

⁵² Fichte's *Grundlage des Naturrecht* includes an original, interesting argument, which aims to prove the existence of other rational beings – which in Fichte's context means other freely acting, moral beings. Differently stated, Fichte attempts to prove that the external world outside me includes not merely objects but also a special kind of objects – freely acting agents. The latter argument has therefore important consequences for Fichte's general argument directed at proving the reality of the external world against the claims of radical idealism. Fichte's proof of the reality of the external world – as we shall see within this section – is rooted in his view of the primacy of practical reason and is intended to ground the belief in a reality *wholly independent of the self*. Beck's arguments within his review – aside from including various objections to Fichte's inferences along this work – oppose both these tendencies (Beck 1796c, 408f.). First, Beck objects (at least implicitly) to Fichte's subordination of theoretical reason to practical reason. Second, Beck rejects the proof of a reality wholly independent of the self; more importantly, he even rejects *the need to prove* such a reality in order to refute radical idealism. Therefore, already in this review we can recognize some of the differences between Fichte's and Beck's doctrines that will be discussed in further details in the following pages.

⁵³ It should be borne in mind that Beck did not have before him at around 1796, Fichte's first and second introductions to the *Wissenschaftslehre* (published in 1797) with their important references to the issue of the thing-in-itself in Fichte's doctrine. It is also noteworthy that Beck's review of the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* is extremely thin and fails to address the important discussion of the thing-in-itself included in §5 of this work. Another highly relevant work of Fichte

Fichte's early idealism, the so-called Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*, developed by Fichte between 1794 and 1799, was and still is the subject of intense controversy. The literature is dominated by two opposing interpretations. One group of authors refer to Fichte's early idealism as a form of absolute idealism since it claims the existence of an absolute ego which posits itself as well as all reality out of its own spontaneity. According to this view Fichte wholly renounces the thing-in-itself as well as the role of the empirically given manifold. The opposing group of authors views Fichte's early idealism as a form of subjective idealism. According to this view Fichte's doctrine is basically a form of solipsism since he limits all knowledge down to the representations of the finite subject, trapping the ego inside the circle of its own consciousness. This latter view presents Fichte as affirming, rather than denying, the existence of things-in-themselves as well as the empirically given manifold. The view I present below is based mainly on Frederick Beiser's recent attempt to find a middle path between the opposing and irreconcilable interpretative tendencies described above (Beiser 2002, 217–345).⁵⁴ I think that Beiser's reading is more balanced than the two extremes and it acknowledges the complexity and even conflicting tendencies within Fichte's own thought. It should be noted, though, that Beck's view is very different from both of the above alternative interpretations. According to Beck's *Standpunctslehre* the object, as well as the matter of sensibility, are neither created by the sheer spontaneity of the knowing subject, as claimed by the absolute idealist interpretation of Fichte; nor does it follow from a proper understanding of Beck's theory that our knowledge is restricted to the realm of mere representations as argued by the subjective idealistic interpretation of Fichte. Both alternatives have an essentially metaphysical core not to be found in Beck's *Standpunctslehre*. Accordingly, Beck's doctrine does not include a dialectic between the self and the non-self nor is Beck's doctrine a form of foundationalism which purports to deduce all philosophy and to justify its appeal to an object by resorting to a logical derivation from a primary, self-evident principle.⁵⁵ It is therefore not essential for the purposes of my exposition to decide between the competing Fichtean interpretations, a task, which would have required a separate work. It is enough to show how the major tendencies in Fichte's thinking are essentially different from the major threads of thought in Beck's doctrine. In the current section I first present and discuss Fichte's attitude towards the concept of

that was available to Beck at the time was Fichte's review of Schulze's *Aenesidemus*. Unfortunately, Beck did not review or comment on Fichte's latter work.

⁵⁴ In the introduction to his discussion of Fichte, Beiser (2002, 217f.) describes the two dominant interpretations and the leading authors associated with each of them.

⁵⁵ As I explained in the exposition of Beck doctrine, despite the fact that Beck presents his principle of original representing as the highest principle of philosophy, which must be presupposed if we are to understand Kant's critical philosophy, this principle does not function in his doctrine as a major premise in a form of foundationalism. I therefore think that Meyer's title for his book on Beck (Meyer 1991) – *Das Problem eines höchsten Grundsatzes der Philosophie bei Jacob Sigismund Beck* – is misleading.

the thing-in-itself. On the background of this presentation I then address similarities and dissimilarities between Fichte's and Beck's doctrines.

Fichte's attempt to overcome the difficulties in the concept of the thing-in-itself exemplifies once again the consequences of the assumption that there are only two, mutually exclusive, modes of existence: the immanent existence of representations and the transcendent existence of things-in-themselves. Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* attempts to find a middle path between dogmatic idealism and dogmatic realism.⁵⁶ The former denies altogether any reality independent of consciousness while the latter holds to a concept of a thing-in-itself, which is completely beyond the bounds of human consciousness. Fichte cannot accept the dogmatic idealist's renouncement of an independent reality; additionally this view cannot explain the infinite striving of our limited human cognition, which is at the heart of Fichte's system. He equally cannot concede to a transcendent concept of a thing-in-itself for it is incompatible with the core ideas of critical philosophy. He is torn between the two extremes and his system reflects his difficulties in searching for a middle path between them. I shall attempt to outline briefly how this result is brought about.

Fichte wholly rejects the concept of the thing-in-itself insofar as it is understood as something entirely independent of cognition. In order to be truly a thing *in-itself* this notion must be understood as referring to something that is independent both of our forms of sensibility, time and space, and of our forms of the understanding, the categories. However, in this sense it is not only imperceptible but also inconceivable.⁵⁷ It can neither be represented by the senses nor be thought of by the

⁵⁶ Following Beiser (2002, 224ff.), I argue that Fichte constructed his critical idealism not only in opposition to transcendental or dogmatic realism but also in opposition to dogmatic idealism (as references Beiser points to the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, SW, I:147, 155, 172, 178, 281). Fichte saw the main goal of philosophy in providing support for our belief in the reality of external objects against rising doubts of neo-Humean skeptics. With Kant, Fichte thought that it was the greatest advantage of transcendental idealism that it could account for empirical realism. His motivating factor was his conviction that Kant's version of this form of idealism was vulnerable to skeptical criticism and his own *Wissenschaftslehre* was designed to provide it with firmer foundations.

⁵⁷ This line of argument is first found in Fichte's review of Schulze's *Aenesidemus*. According to Fichte, critical philosophy "shows that the thought of a thing possessing existence and specific properties *in itself* and apart from any faculty of representation is a piece of whimsy, a pipe dream, a non-thought" (SW, I:17). English translation is taken from Daniel Breazeale (1988, 71). In reply to Aenesidemus' objection that it is engrained in human nature to be satisfied with our knowledge only when we have seen the complete connection and agreement between our representations and something which exists entirely independent of them, Fichte replies as follows: "However, it is by no means engrained in human nature to think of a thing independent of *any* faculty of representation *at all*; on the contrary, it is downright impossible to do so." (SW, I:19). And: "But no matter how often one pretends the contrary, no person has ever had or can have Aenesidemus' thought of a thing, which has reality and distinctive properties independent not merely of the human faculty of representation, but also of any and every intellect." (SW, I:19; Breazeale 1988, 73). In the *Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte similarly argues that the concept of a thing-in-itself is "a complete perversion of reason, an utterly unreasonable concept". (SW, I:472). English translation is taken from Daniel Breazeale (1994, 56). We have seen a similar argument put forward by

understanding. Thus according to Fichte, the thing-in-itself, insofar as it is indeed *in-itself*, is irrelevant for critical philosophy.

Fichte also rejects the notion of the thing-in-itself as the transcendental cause of appearances. This view amounts to arguing that something completely unlike representations is the cause of our representations. Such a view presupposes two distinct kinds of worlds, moreover that despite the immense gap between these worlds, members of one world act on, or bring about, members of the other world. This view also involves the application of the category of causality beyond the realm of appearances, an application, which is contrary to the major principles of the critical philosophy. Fichte rejects as dogmatic and as a total misunderstanding of Kant, any interpretation that assigns to things-in-themselves the role of being the cause of the entire order of appearances.⁵⁸ Fichte argues that the assumption that the thing-in-itself is the cause of appearances results from a confusion between two levels of discourse: the standpoint of the philosopher, who reflects on the conditions of consciousness and the standpoint of empirical consciousness which presupposes and acts according to these conditions. From the standpoint of empirical consciousness objects indeed appear to be things-in-themselves. We refer to ordinary phenomenal objects as prior to and independent of our perception of them, since we do not reflect on the role of consciousness in synthesizing them. From the standpoint of the philosopher we acknowledge the role of consciousness in constituting objects and we therefore admit that these objects are nothing more than appearances (Fichte's note in the *Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, SW, I:482f.).⁵⁹ Fichte appeals to this solution both as reflecting his own view regarding the question of transcendental affection as well as an interpretation of Kant. In the following paragraphs we shall examine whether Fichte himself adheres fully to this argument. Later in this work I shall have an occasion to present my own interpretation of Kant regarding the issue of transcendental affection.

Reinhold, who argued as early as 1789, that the thing-in-itself is not only uncognizable but also irrepresentable (Sect. 12.1.1).

⁵⁸ Cf. §6 of the *Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, (SW, I:482). According to Frederick Beiser (2002, 270) "Fichte fails to recognize Kant's important distinction between knowing and thinking an object according to the categories". The view, which links Kant's doctrine of the thing-in-itself with his distinction between knowing and thinking an object, is shared by many other leading writers, for example Henry E. Allison, and is supported by some of Kant's own formulations. My own differing interpretation regarding the Kantian distinction between thinking and knowing an object as well as its implications of the latter distinction on the issue of transcendental affection shall be discussed in Sect. 12.2.2 below.

⁵⁹ Fichte identifies the philosophical standpoint with idealism and he identifies the empirical standpoint with realism. This move allows him to argue that there is no contradiction between idealism and realism since each pertains to a different level of discourse. However, according to this line of argument the philosophical standpoint is irreconcilable with the empirical standpoint although the former is only intended to explain to latter. Moreover, as we shall see, Fichte attempts to defend realism – and indeed more than a mere empirical realism – from a philosophical standpoint so that the contrast between idealism and realism eventually reemerges within the philosophical standpoint itself.

Up until this point it seems that Fichte is reluctant to go beyond the immanence of representations. Any such move would amount to an illegitimate reference to a transcendent entity. The implicit but nevertheless important role of the assumption of the dichotomy between the immanence of representations and the transcendence of the thing-in-itself is evident in Fichte's reasoning and is reminiscent of Maimon's line of thought.⁶⁰ Fichte is nevertheless willing to accept, and he even requires, the concept of the thing-in-itself insofar as it is understood as the noumenon (*Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, SW, I:482f.).⁶¹ Fichte refers to the noumenon as an object created by the necessary laws of reason. Reason adds this notion to appearances to give them objectivity. The noumenon is thus required to explain how an object is more than a representation and yet not a transcendent entity. According to Fichte, therefore, the notion of the noumenon is an inevitable aspect of Kant's empirical realism. Understood as a noumenon, in the sense detailed above, the thing-in-itself is not wholly beyond cognition and its conditions. While it is beyond sensibility it is not beyond reason, and thus it is compatible with the premises of critical philosophy.⁶² But this move pushes Fichte too much in the direction of radical idealism. Fichte therefore adds that the thing-in-itself cannot be a mere noumenon (*Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, SW, I:284). This

⁶⁰ The implicit assumption of the immanence-transcendence dichotomy in Fichte's thought can be observed not only in his views regarding the thing-in-itself. It is evident already in his presentation of the task of critical philosophy. Fichte argues that critical philosophy must explain the apparent paradox that representations in our minds are assumed to correspond to natural objects while the mind and the world are so different from one another (cf. the introduction to the *System der Sittenlehre*, SW, IV:1f.; and also *Vergleichung des vom Herrn Prof. Schmid aufgestellten systems mit der Wissenschaftslehre*, SW, II:434ff.). The immanence-transcendence dichotomy is also evident in Fichte's argument that there are only two possible systems of philosophy: dogmatism and criticism. The former explains experience according to the object in itself while the latter explains experience according to the subject in itself. Either we attempt to explain experience from the starting point of transcendent things-in-themselves or we attempt to achieve the same goal from the immanent starting point of the representing subject (cf. *Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, SW, I:426). Accordingly, in the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, he states that: "critical philosophy is thus *immanent*, since it posits everything in the self; dogmatism is *transcendent*, since it goes beyond the self" (SW, I:120). All English translations of Fichte's *Grundlage* are taken from Peter Heath (Fichte 1982). The influence of the immanence-transcendence dichotomy is further apparent in Fichte's arguments against dogmatism. According to Fichte, representations and especially the additional aspect of self-consciousness cannot be explained from the starting point of things-in-themselves. The main problem is that a representation and a thing "lie in two different worlds between which there is no bridge" (*Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, SW, I:436). All English translations from Fichte's First and Second Introductions to the Science of Knowledge are taken from Daniel Breazeale (1994).

⁶¹ In Sect. 12.2.2 below, I argue that this role in conferring objectivity is assigned by Kant to the transcendental object rather than to the noumenon and I explain the important differences between these two notions.

⁶² Fichte makes an important distinction between the thing-in-itself as a transcendent entity, which, as such, is both imperceptible and unthinkable and the noumenon, which is imperceptible but thinkable as the object (or better, supposed object) of pure reason.

conclusion is reinforced once we introduce Fichte's idea of infinite striving, the interplay between the ego and the non-ego and his concept of the stimulus or obstacle (Anstoß).

The idea of the obstacle, again reminiscent of Maimon's not yet illuminated or conquered content of consciousness, explains the aim of the ego to encompass an element that is opposed to itself and which, at least in part, forever evades the ego and resists its activity. Here Fichte is forced to go beyond the pure activity of the ego to explain the limited power of human cognition.⁶³ Fichte is still a critical philosopher and he insists on maintaining the character of knowledge as always en route toward a target that is never fully attainable. He therefore must postulate something beyond consciousness, something that is not a result of its activity, to explain why in principle the cognitive task cannot be fully accomplished. On the assumption of the immanence-transcendence dichotomy, that which is beyond consciousness must be in some sense transcendent. The thing-in-itself is therefore both a noumenon, created by the activity of consciousness and at the same time an unknown entity, transcendent to consciousness. This is how Fichte himself presents this delicate issue:

This fact, that the finite spirit must necessarily posit something absolute outside itself (a thing-in-itself), and yet must recognize, from the other side, that the latter exists only *for it* (as a necessary noumenon), is that circle, which it is able extend into infinity, but can never escape. (*Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, SW, I:281; English translation is taken from Peter Heath (Fichte 1982))

The end result is that the thing-in-itself in its new clothing as the non-ego or the obstacle plays more than a regulative role in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. It would seem that the obstacle acts upon the ego and brings about representations in it. This involves the illegitimate transcendent application of the category of causality beyond appearances. It is not possible to avoid the contradiction by arguing that the obstacle exists only from the standpoint of empirical consciousness. Obviously it is here Fichte's philosophical standpoint from which the existence of this entity is postulated. Fichte tries to counteract this uncomfortable implication by distinguishing between representing and feeling (Gefühl). Fichte maintains that we represent things as appearances but we feel them as things-in-themselves (Fichte's footnote in the introduction to the first edition of *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*, SW, I:29 and also *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, SW, I:279f.). While representation has a reference to an object, feeling is nothing more than a subjective state of consciousness.⁶⁴ Fichte argues that the connection of cognition with things-in-themselves (a connection not denied by Fichte) is achieved not indirectly through representation but directly through our feelings. Things-in-themselves, he adds, are

⁶³ In explaining how Fichte's philosophy transformed from transcendental philosophy into metaphysics, Dieter Henrich (2003, 24) says that Fichte "required some idea independent of the mind in order to account for the conditions, under which the unity of basic mental activity might be possible. All this is to say that the condition Fichte sought was not an effect of the mind's activity."

⁶⁴ Cf. also the *Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, in which Fichte remarks that feeling "becomes a sensation only when it has been related to an object by means of an act of thinking" (SW, I:490).

known only subjectively insofar as they affect on our feelings. Although Fichte's use of the term 'feeling' has an implicit reference to practical reason in contrast to 'sensation', which is more closely related to representation in the context of theory and contemplation, it should be noted that Fichte states that "no representation at all would be possible without feeling" (*Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*, SW, I:29; English translation is taken from Daniel Breazeale (1988, 95)).

We must therefore note that despite the above distinction between representing and feeling, nevertheless, the obstacle is required to limit the activity of the ego and is a force that can be felt even though it cannot be represented. The thing-in-itself as an independent entity still plays a constitutive role for Fichte for without it he cannot account for that element in consciousness that is not produced by the ego and without it he equally cannot explain the limited and finite character of human cognition.⁶⁵ The thing-in-itself is thus not only a goal or an "inner" limit but serves also the role of an "outer" limit.⁶⁶

Fichte attempts to find a middle path between two extremes. The thing-in-itself cannot be a mere Idea of Pure Reason whose reality depends upon the ego and it equally cannot be a mysterious entity completely independent of the ego. But since for Fichte there are only two modes of existence, that of a representation immanent to the mind and that of a thing-in-itself wholly transcendent of it, his middle path is attained by holding to both extremes at the same time. He concludes that the thing-in-itself is both a noumenon and an unknowable entity. Fichte is aware of the instability of his view and he attempts to account for it by saying that the ego indeed postulates something that transcends it but it then finds out that this positing outside itself is only made according to an immanent law of reason so that this apparently independent thing is nothing more than a mere noumenon. Fichte concedes that the above line of thought is not the final word for it only pushes the discussion to a higher level where the thing-in-itself reemerges. According to Fichte there are

⁶⁵ In §5 of the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* Fichte discusses the argument according to which non-ego is merely posited by the ego. On this latter view the self-determination of the ego is manifested by the ego's act of positing the non-ego as opposed to itself (SW, I:249f.). This implies that Fichte is committed to a form of absolute idealism whereby the ego produces the entire reality out of itself including the non-ego's form as well as its content. However, it is striking that Fichte rejects this radical idealistic view for it follows that the ego must both posit itself absolutely and limit its own reality, which is absurd (SW, I:252, 257). Alternatively, if the ego were indeed the cause of the non-ego, the latter would cease to be a *non-ego* because it would no longer be opposed to the ego. If the non-ego is to function as a check or a limit to the ego then the ego cannot be the cause of the non-ego (SW, I:254). Fichte, therefore, concludes that "according to the Science of Knowledge, then, the ultimate ground of all reality for the self is an original interaction between the self and some other thing outside it, of which nothing more can be said, save that it must be utterly opposed to the self", (SW, I:279). English translation is taken from Peter Heath (Fichte 1982).

⁶⁶ It should also be noted that Fichte's concept of the thing-in-itself is different from Kant's in one important respect. While for Kant the thing-in-itself is absolutely indeterminable, for Fichte it is infinitely determinable. According to Fichte, knowledge advances as the ego subjects more of the non-ego to its activity. For Fichte, therefore, the unknowability of the thing-in-itself is not absolute but is a matter of degree.

levels of explanation whereby on each level the ego explains the object according to its own laws but is nevertheless compelled to admit that this explanation presupposes some further condition independent of itself and thus the discussion is moved to the next level where the same process repeats itself (*Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre, SW, I:280, 282f.*). Fichte's maneuvers cannot conceal the difficulty. If the thing-in-itself is in the end merely a noumenon, the product of the self, then we end up with dogmatic idealism; more importantly we cannot explain why the ego cannot encompass the whole of consciousness if both the ego, and the non-ego, are indeed the product of its own activity. If, on the other hand, we attempt to account for the limits of theoretical cognition then we must admit that the element that limits the ego is not merely the self positing itself as the not-self, but a fundamental entity independent of the self, limiting the ego as it were from the "outside". Fichte therefore explicitly argues that what distinguishes his critical idealism from dogmatic idealism is his own recognition of the reality of a non-ego which, independently of the ego, acts upon the ego and moves or triggers the ego into activity. By contrast, dogmatic idealism recognizes only the ego, to which the non-ego is reduced (*Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre, SW, I:279ff.*). The emphasis on the obstacle to the ego's activity indicates that Fichte defends more than the mere empirical realism. While empirical realism is based on the conformity of experience to universal, necessary laws, Fichte is committed to a stronger kind of realism, which ultimately presupposes a thing-in-itself as the basis of the possibility of experience.⁶⁷

In my view Fichte's insistence on the circle in which the philosopher is caught while attempting to explain consciousness is neither a solution to this problem nor even an explanation of it but at best a good restatement or description of that which is in need of explanation.⁶⁸ I further argue that on the implicit assumption that there are only two modes of existence, that of a representation immanent to the cognition and that of a thing-in-itself wholly independent of it, we are bound to go endlessly around in circles tiring ourselves with efforts to provide an explanation to a problem that on our own assumption is insolvable.

It is highly important to recognize, though, that according to Fichte, the aspect of the thing-in-itself whereby it is more than a mere noumenon, cannot be grounded from within theoretical reason itself. Theoretical reason is grounded on the principle of the ego – the self-consciousness of my freedom – and it cannot limit its own spontaneity. Fichte emphasizes time and again that theoretical reason cannot prove the existence of an external world independent of our representations. Theoretical reason is dependent for this fundamental principle on practical reason. According to Fichte we can assume the existence of an external world only as a condition for

⁶⁷ On this point I am in full agreement with Beiser (2002, 316). Fichte's concept of objectivity is therefore based – at least partly but nevertheless in a very important sense – on the resistance of the obstacle, as a cognition-independent entity, to the activity of the ego.

⁶⁸ I, nevertheless, do agree with Fichte that those who deny this circle are doing no good service to philosophy.

moral action (*Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, SW, I:261f.).⁶⁹ The external world is the necessary medium for the realization and execution of our moral duties.⁷⁰ Practical reason therefore gives us the right and also the duty to believe in anything, which is a condition for our moral action. Fichte thus conferred on the principles of morality – in addition to their roles for morality itself – the role of being transcendental conditions for possibility of experience within theoretical reason.⁷¹ Like Kant, Fichte rejects any dependence of theoretical reason on the dogmatic assumptions of transcendental realism. However, in contrast to Kant who grounds theoretical reason on its own internal principles, Fichte turns to practical reason to justify the appeal of theoretical cognition to an object considered as wholly independent of the knowing subject and his or her representations. In this sense, practical reason performs for Fichte's version of critical idealism the same function, as did transcendental realism for conservative dogmatism.⁷²

Seemingly Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* and Beck's *Standpunctslehre* agree on few central issues. First, both authors refer to the highest principle of philosophy as a postulate rather than as a conceptual proposition.⁷³ Additionally, they both refer to this principle as an act rather than a fact. Second, they both emphasize that their theories are aimed at eliminating, or even eradicating, the notion of the thing-in-

⁶⁹ Cf. also the third part of *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*, which appeared only in the first edition of this work (GA, I:150ff.). In my view, Fichte's admission that theoretical reason is incapable of grounding the reality of the external world and his subsequent appeal to a non-justifiable demand of practical reason is a significant concession to the skeptical objection. Kant famously argued that it was a "scandal of philosophy" that the existence of things outside us should be assumed merely on faith (footnote in *KrV*, Bxxxix). The distance between Kant's original view and Jacobi's notorious *salto mortale* is greatly diminished by Fichte's doctrine of the primacy of practical reason.

⁷⁰ "Defining the mind as a moral agent means already talking about a certain image of the world, which is, of course, not the mind itself but rather the entity toward which the moral agent directs its energy" (Henrich 2003, 20).

⁷¹ The constitutive role of the thing-in-itself in its new dress – as discussed above – is not deduced from theoretical reason itself but from practical reason. Thus, it is more precise to say that according to Fichte the regulative principles of practical reason perform the role of constitutive principles of theoretical reason.

⁷² Fichte turns to this route since it seemed to him that by appealing to theoretical reason alone, while remaining within the limits of theoretical reason set forth by Kant, the existence of the external world is nothing more than a non-justified assumption, vulnerable to skeptical attacks. Any attempt to achieve more through theoretical reason itself would be dogmatic. The only way to justify the reality of the external world, Fichte thought, would be by appealing to practical reason. Kant, in contrast, bases the reality of the external world from within theoretical reason itself. As I will discuss in Sect. 12.2.4, Kant's view is based on the notion of the transcendental object rather than on a noumenon or a transcendent entity. The transcendental object is indeed no more than an assumption but, as I will attempt to show, this does not lead to subjective idealism. Fichte's turn to practical reason is not merely an illegitimate interpretation of Kant (regarding both the letter, as Fichte has himself conceded, and also its spirit) but also an epistemologically unnecessary turn.

⁷³ According to Christian Klotz (2002, 25f.) Fichte in his *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, has borrowed Beck's idea of a postulate and with it the program of grounding his theory on a "standpoint".

itself from transcendental philosophy. Closely related to the issue of the thing-in-itself is the issue regarding the givenness of the object or similarly the givenness of the empirical content of consciousness that is referred to an object. It seems to follow from both doctrines that, as Fichte says, the object is neither wholly nor partly given but produced, with all the idealistic implications this statement carries. Nevertheless, despite the similarities there are important differences. I believe that exposing these differences is helpful in bringing out the essentially different orientations of both Fichte and Beck.

Regarding the nature of philosophy's first principle, the distinction between Fichte and Beck is primarily based on the different context in which the argument is set. For Fichte the characterization of the first principle as a postulate and the emphasis on its character as a demand to act rather than a proposition or a fact, derives from the context of practical philosophy. Fichte understands the postulate as a moral command to act (*Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, GA, IV(2):20–28; *Eigene Meditationen*, GA, II(3):26).⁷⁴ By contrast, Beck's description of the highest principle as a postulate remains within the context of theoretical philosophy. It is designed only to distinguish the act of original synthesis, first, from the results of its application (the actual synthetic unity of consciousness in any concrete case) and, second, from a conceptual proposition from which conclusions are derived. Another important distinction between Fichte and Beck in this regard is that Fichte's first principle is related to reason while Beck's first principle is rooted in sense perception.⁷⁵ This distinction connects to another aspect, which separates Fichte's and Beck's systems. Fichte's philosophy is essentially a form of foundationalism. Despite the fact that the first principle itself is a moral requirement

⁷⁴ In an essay on Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, Schelling explains that the practical, rather than merely theoretical, understanding of the postulate has important consequences. First, a merely theoretical principle cannot possess necessity. Within theoretical reason only mathematics possesses such force. "Yet in philosophy, theoretical postulates [...] can obtain their *compulsory* force exclusively through an affinity with *moral* postulates, for the latter ones are categorical [and] hence are *binding* themselves." (Schelling 1856, 416). Moreover, since philosophy is not a regular science but rather it is a special science, which should indicate the proper standards and methods for all other sciences, then its highest principle cannot be something that everybody possesses. Therefore, "it cannot proceed from a theoretico-universal postulate of a priori validity". The highest principle of philosophy as a postulate expresses what ought to be rather than what is. "In short, it must proceed from the principle that, even though it does not apply universally, *should* be universally valid." (Schelling 1856, 417). English citations were taken from Pfau (1994, 113f.). Elsewhere Schelling argues that "the principle of philosophy can be neither theoretical nor practical alone, it must be *both* at once. It is in the *postulate* that the two are united, a concept that is *theoretical* in that it requires an original construction, [and] *practical* because (as a postulate of philosophy) it can borrow its compulsory force (for inner sense) only from practical philosophy. Thus the principle of philosophy is of necessity a *postulate*." (Schelling 1856, 448; Pfau 1994, 135).

⁷⁵ We can also mention an apparent closeness between Fichte's view of self-consciousness in terms of intellectual intuition and Beck's doctrine of original representation. Both are characterized as non-conceptual, immediate and spontaneous. However, Fichte emphasizes the *intellectual* character of self-consciousness while Beck's original representing is *perceptual* in character.

to act, once the first principle is set, it forms the head of the pyramid and the rest of the philosophical system is logically derived from it in a hierarchical manner. By contrast, Beck's system is not a form of foundationalism. Beck stresses time and again that his system is not based on a logical derivation of principles from yet higher principles. This latter method belongs to what Beck calls derived, rather than original, representing. Appealing to the analogy of the pyramid we can say that the sensible character of Beck's original representing results in setting the pyramid on its head. Rather than a logical derivation from top down, Beck's method is equivalent to a construction from the bottom up. Admittedly, when observed from Fichte's point of view, this is one of the main weaknesses of Beck's theory. In §7 of the *Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre* Fichte describes two kinds of critical idealism. The proper kind of critical idealism "actually derives from the fundamental laws of the intellect the system of the intellect's necessary modes of acting and, along with this, the objective representations that come into being thereby" (SW, I:442). The other kind of idealism, referred to by Fichte as "half-critical" idealism, and which Fichte argues is exemplified by Beck, "attempts to grasp the same laws in the form in which they are already immediately applied to objects in any particular case" (SW, I:442). It befalls the latter kind of idealism that it cannot *prove* that the laws of the intellect are indeed as this idealism describes them to be (i.e., the laws of substantiality and causality, etc.) since these laws are not logically derived but merely drawn from experience⁷⁶; even more disturbing, it cannot *prove* that these laws are indeed the immanent laws of the intellect rather than, as dogmatism contends, the general properties of things-in-themselves.⁷⁷ The contrast between Beck's and Fichte's methods expresses two intrinsically different philosophical orientations. Fichte relies on logical foundationalism while Beck seeks his answers in the sensible origin of our conceptual constructs. It is a contrast between a form of rationalism, which relies on conceptual analysis and a form of empiricism, which recognizes the inevitable limits of such conceptual deductions. In §7 of the *Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre* Fichte goes even further and requires that not only the formal relations of experience be derived from the activity of the intellect but also the content of consciousness, and therefore the object itself. I shall return to this latter issue, below, within the discussion of the given content of consciousness and its origin.

Let us now look at the issue which is most characteristic of both Fichte's and Beck's theories. Both Beck and Fichte described the main character of their version

⁷⁶ Schelling similarly argues against Beck that his principle of the objective-synthetic unity of consciousness as the highest employment of the understanding is merely asserted without proof and that therefore it seems to have been descended from heaven (Schelling 1856, 421). Schelling concurs with Beck that one could not proceed beyond the original synthesis, however, Schelling criticizes Beck that he has only asserted the preceding, without being able to prove this claim (Schelling 1856, 424f.).

⁷⁷ Cf. §7 of the *Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre* (SW, I:442–445). This criticism is reminiscent of Kant's criticism in the *Prolegomena* of Aristotle's method of obtaining the list of categories.

of Kant's transcendental philosophy as the removal of the thing-in-itself from this doctrine.⁷⁸ However, Fichte operates, implicitly and at times explicitly, under the general assumption according to which there are only two, diametrically opposed, modes of existence: the immanent existence of representations in consciousness and the transcendent existence of things-in-themselves. It is no coincidence that in the *Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre* (SW, I:426) Fichte argues that there are only two possible systems of philosophy: criticism and dogmatism, both of which are described as monistic. The former explains experience according to the subject while the latter explains experience according to the object.⁷⁹ Since Fichte rejects the dogmatic alternative he is forced to retreat into the immanent realm of consciousness. Fichte insists on a strict justification of experience and therefore he must logically derive it from a single principle. Indeed, insofar as we aim at a justification of experience, dualism is an obstacle. Despite the fact that the task of philosophy – even according to Fichte – is to explain the empirical standpoint, which is admittedly dualistic, the drive to justify experience compels Fichte to attempt to replace this dualism with a monistic point of view. Dualism was for Fichte not only the object to be explained by philosophical reflection but also, and more importantly, the main problem to be overcome. This is the reason why Fichte's theoretical philosophy is purely idealistic.

Fichte's intention to justify experience has another aspect. Aside from justifying the properties of experience, its essence (the German 'so-sein'), by deriving them from the immanent laws of the intellect, Fichte also wishes to justify the objective validity of experience, its existence, (the German 'Dasein'). The elimination of the thing-in-itself leads him, at least from the point of view of theoretical reason, to a subjective idealistic conclusion, which the *Wissenschaftslehre* was intended to counteract. The removal of the thing-in-itself also causes Fichte's philosophical reflection to conflict with the empirical standpoint according to which the object is independent of consciousness. This is a difficulty since the philosophical standpoint was only intended to explain, not replace, the empirical standpoint. Fichte therefore ends up postulating the existence of a non-ego, completely independent of consciousness, although from within practical reason. We can conclude that according to Fichte, *how* the ego represents things to himself is dependent merely on the immanent activity of the ego itself. However, *that* the ego represents things in the

⁷⁸ Cf. Beck's letter to Kant, June 20, 1797, in which Beck argues that "My intention was to bar the concept of the thing-in-itself from theoretical philosophy." (AA 12: 168); Cf. Fichte's draft letter to Jens Baggesen, April/May 1795: "Mine is a system of freedom. Just as France has freed man from external shackles, so my system frees man from the fetters of things-in-themselves, which is to say, from those external influences with which all previous systems – including the Kantian – have more or less fettered man." (GA, III(2):298). The English translation is taken from Breazeale (1988, 385). In the above paragraph I discuss the consequences of the removal of the thing-in-itself on Fichte's and Beck's theoretical philosophies. In Chap. 13, I address the legitimacy of Beck's view of Kant's practical philosophy. In that context I shall refer to the implications of the removal of the thing-in-itself on Beck's and on Fichte's understanding of practical philosophy.

⁷⁹ Fichte even concedes that dogmatism is intrinsically consistent and he rejects it simply since in his view it cannot explain experience. (SW, I:428ff., 438).

first place, is dependent on the non-ego, completely independent of ego itself (*Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, SW, I:248). Fichte, like many of his contemporaries, Beck included, viewed the main issue of theoretical philosophy in accounting for the correspondence between representations in the mind and objects in the world, given the radical distinction between the realm of thought and the realm of being.⁸⁰ However, due to the assumption according to which there are only two, extremely opposed, modes of existence, dualism presented a problem that had to be overcome. Both the attempt to justify the properties of experience and the attempt to justify the validity of experience required the rejection of dualism. An *explanation* of the possibility of experience can suffice with demonstrating how, when objects are regarded as appearances and not things-in-themselves, cognition applies its a-priori tools to distinguish a certain connection of representations regarded as objective from other alternative connections regarded as merely subjective. By contrast, a *justification* of experience requires that we prove that the objectifications made by our empirical cognition (or at least those objectifications regarded as true) actually agree with a reality independent of all consciousness.⁸¹ Since Fichte intends to silence the skeptical attack on the critical philosophy once and for all he cannot suffice with showing how empirical consciousness actually operates but he must validate this against some independent reality. It follows from Fichte's attempt to justify experience – both regarding its properties or essence and regarding its objective validity or existence – that dualism cannot be explained other than by being explained away. Fichte's task was therefore to remove all residues of dualism, which gave way to skeptical doubts.

⁸⁰ Aenesidemus-Schulze's entire criticism, whose influence on both Fichte and Beck cannot be exaggerated, is based on a repeated appeal to the dichotomy between representations and things-in-themselves, thought and being. It seems to me that in spite of the fact that Fichte criticizes Schulze precisely for the assumed correspondence between representations and things-in-themselves, nevertheless, Fichte himself is not free from this assumption.

⁸¹ We can distinguish two aspects of justification: a weaker justification aimed merely at proving the possibility of empirical reality by demonstrating the applicability of necessary, universal laws of the understanding to sensible perceptions; and a stronger justification aimed at a transcendental reality, that is, aimed at demonstrating a connection between our representations and things-in-themselves wholly independent of cognition. Kant is committed only to the weaker kind of justification, and although Fichte declares that he too aims only at demonstrating the validity of empirical reality, nevertheless, his attempt to avoid the skeptic's charge of subjective idealism leads him, as we have seen above, to commit himself to a stronger kind of realism based on the demands of practical reason. Moreover, even Fichte's defense of the applicability of universal necessary laws to experience is to some degree based on a connection between the ego and a consciousness-independent reality. He argues that we experience events as having an objective order, independent of our will and imagination, because we encounter resistance in our actions and have to realize them according to a definite order (*System der Sittenlehre*, SW, IV:94f., 97f.). Thus even the validity of universal necessary laws is anchored in the recognition of a consciousness-independent reality. In this research I address only the difficulties of the attempt at justification of the stronger kind. However, the weaker kind of justification poses serious problems as well, and addressing them leads, in my view, to a post-Kantian, moderate pragmatism or conventionalism, as for example Vaihinger's *The Philosophy of 'as if'*.

By contrast to Fichte, the unique features of Beck's *Standpunctslehre* is first, that he eliminates the thing-in-itself without reintroducing it in a new dress; and second, that he does not think that dismissing the concept of the thing-in-itself leads to subjective idealism. The reason for the two aspects of Beck's doctrine is that Beck does not operate with the immanence-transcendence dichotomy in mind. Beck's account merely explains – rather than justifies – how on the one hand empirical consciousness is the result of an original synthesis of our own cognition, and on the other hand, that this synthesis consists precisely in positing an object as distinguished from our representations. Thus Beck's philosophical standpoint does not come into conflict with the empirical standpoint; quite the contrary, it agrees with empirical consciousness and it explains how it works by exposing aspects used, but not reflected upon, by the empirical standpoint. By abandoning the attempt to provide a final justification, Beck can better explain the possibility of experience.⁸² I admit that this account may sound to some as avoidance from confronting the main issue at hand – is the object ultimately dependent or independent of consciousness? It may also be argued that Beck's complete dismissal of the thing-in-itself is similar to Fichte's tentative suggestion that non-ego may be no more than the result or the effect of the ego itself. Fichte rejects this alternative since in his mind it leads to radical idealism.⁸³ In reply to such concerns I remind the reader that the question whether the object is ultimately dependent or independent of consciousness presupposes that it is either the former or the latter; it also presupposes that the role of philosophical reflection is to justify the relation between a representation and an object considered as wholly distinct from it. The attempt to justify compels us to settle for nothing less than a reality completely independent of consciousness. Otherwise the justification of the reality of experience is circular and begs the question. When critical philosophy cannot provide such an independent anchor we conclude that it inevitably leads to radical idealism. However, we only find ourselves in this perplexing position on behalf of the implicit assumption

⁸² Admittedly Beck does not make an explicit distinction between an explanation and a justification of experience. An explicit distinction would compel one to admit that the objectivity of experience is a presupposition, more precisely, a fiction, in the sense employed by Hans Vaihinger in his philosophy of the 'as-if'. Beck is not willing to go that far. His insistence on tracing our concepts back to the original-synthetic unity of consciousness shows that he was interested, at least to some degree, in grounding both the properties (the 'so-sein') and the validity (the 'Dasein') of experience in some primordial sense. Nevertheless, his non-foundationalist view mitigates his former tendencies and it is precisely due to this non-foundationalist view that Beck is criticized by Fichte for failing to properly ground experience.

⁸³ Cf. note 65 above. Schelling similarly criticized Beck that he removes the thing-in-itself without proposing an alternative thus leaving experience unaccounted for. "Mr. Beck can merely exterminate the *thing-in-itself* without knowing how to replace it. Nevertheless, it is impossible to continue without a *supersensible* ground for the reality of our representations, for why else could Kant have employed that expression, so contradictory for his "explicators", to designate this ground? To be sure, Mr. Beck can *prove* the inconsistency of a thing-in-itself, yet he cannot explain how a reasonable being could nevertheless find [the expression] meaningful." (Schelling 1856, 424). English translation is taken from Pfau (1994, 118).

that it is the role of philosophy to justify the premises of ordinary, non-reflective thought. If only we recognized that empirical, non-reflective, thought does not need a "philosophical certificate of authenticity", that philosophical reflection is *ex-post* or retrospective in character, and that its role is merely to explain empirical thought by exposing what is presupposed by it, then we need not appeal to either of the immanence-transcendence extremes.⁸⁴

The analysis of the given element in consciousness once again reveals the influence of the immanence-transcendence dichotomy and the shortcoming of the attempt to justify rather than merely explain experience. Fichte approaches the question regarding the status of the object from a God's-eye perspective. When observed, as it were, "from above" it would indeed seem that the object is either created or it is given and similarly the empirical content of consciousness is either produced by the activity of the subject or it is given by a thing-in-itself. In my view, the metaphysical character of some of Fichte's formulations is not merely a matter of presentation. In §7 of the *Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre* Fichte criticizes Beck that his "half-critical" idealism cannot properly refute the dogmatic derivation of both the categories and, more importantly for our current issue, the content of our representations, from things-in-themselves. Fichte argues that Beck's idealism cannot explain how *the object itself* comes into being. At best it can account for the formal relations of the object. "But what is the origin of that which possesses these particular relations and properties? What is the origin of the content that assumes this form?" (*SW*, I:443). Fichte therefore concludes that "So long as one does not allow the thing in its entirety to come into being before the eyes of the thinker, dogmatism has still not been pursued into its final hiding-place." (*SW*, I:443). On the same occasion, Fichte also applauds Beck for recognizing that "the object is given neither entirely nor in part but is produced" (*SW*, I:444n). Nevertheless, Fichte is explicit that Beck stopped short and he expresses the hope that Beck will eventually raise himself to an even higher standpoint, obviously the standpoint of the *Wissenschaftslehre*.⁸⁵ According to Fichte, Beck reaches the

⁸⁴ Beck repeats the constant claim that the final line of defense of all philosophy obtains its highest level of dignity by being a principle aimed at enabling us to "understand ourselves"; "The opposing view is one and the same with the delusion of the thing-in-itself." (*EmS*, 236; cf. also *EmS*, 348f.).

⁸⁵ In a footnote in his public announcement of a new presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte similarly argues that "Prof. Beck was on the path to the *Wissenschaftslehre*, and if he had only clearly grasped the nature of his project, then he would have discovered the *Wissenschaftslehre*" (*GA*, I(7):156). The English is taken from Daniel Breazeale's translation (Breazeale 1994, 189). Fichte thus regarded Beck's *Standpunctslehre* as merely a stage in the progress towards his own *Wissenschaftslehre* and he recommended Beck's book to his students as a good preparation to his own system (*SW*, I:444n). Regarding the distinction between Fichte and Beck on the issue of the givenness of the object, cf. also Reinhold's 1798 review of four of Fichte's writings towards the *Wissenschaftslehre* (*Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung* 8: 58f.). Reinhold is keen to stress that the similarities between Beck and Fichte regarding the givenness of the object are only apparent and that Fichte's doctrine alone can properly account for the status of the object by appealing to the spontaneity of the ego.

correct conclusion but he fails to prove this conclusion since he does not derive it from a higher principle. Beck therefore fails to provide a sufficient response to dogmatism. In §6 of the *Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre* Fichte combats the widely spread interpretation of Kant according to which “*the objective ground of appearances lies in something that is a thing-in-itself* and it is only for this reason that phenomena are *bene fundata*” (SW, I:481).⁸⁶ Fichte poses the historical question: “Did Kant really base the empirical content of experience upon *something distinct from the I?*” (SW, I:480). It is important to see that the very manner in which the question is posed is metaphysical. The question presupposes that the empirical content of consciousness is either derived solely from the immanent I or it originates from the thing-in-itself. Fichte recognizes only these two extreme alternatives. Fichte argues that Kant uses the term ‘thing-in-itself’ in the sense of a noumenon, which is something, produced by our own thinking. He then ridicules the common “Kantians” that “their thing-in-itself, which is nothing more than a mere thought, is supposed to *have an effect* upon the I!” (SW, I:483; Cf. also I:488). Fichte argues that this noumenon is what is added to appearances by the understanding to constitute an object. Therefore the object, considered as something given or as something that affects our senses, “*is also something merely thought of*” (SW, I:488). Fichte concludes that “All our cognition does indeed begin with *an affection*, but not an affection *by an object*.” (SW, I:488). While I agree with Fichte’s attempt to avoid reference to a transcendent entity, I disagree with the metaphysical character of his conclusions. Fichte is absolutely correct when he argues that in the *Critique of Pure Reason* an object, *as such*, is never simply given but constituted. As Kant argues, “we say that we cognize the object if *we have effected* synthetic unity in the manifold of intuition” (*KrV*, A105. The emphasis is my own).⁸⁷ Fichte asks how an object, thus understood, can be regarded as having an external effect on the subject. However, this is a problem only when the subject and the object are viewed metaphysically under the immanent-transcendent dichotomy. The difficulty disappears if we recognize that the transcendental account is

⁸⁶ This is Fichte’s (almost precise) citation from Johann Schultz (1789–1792, II:99). In the latter work, Schultz cites J. A. Eberhard who, within his publicized polemic with Kant, understood him in exactly this way, namely, that things in themselves ground our appearances. In his reply to Eberhard, Kant confesses that this position is also the position of the *Critique*. This is apparently one of Kant’s most direct references to the thing-in-itself as the source of the sensible content of consciousness. In Sect. 12.2.5 below I analyze this Kantian reference and propose a different reading.

⁸⁷ This sentence is imprecisely cited by Fichte (SW, I:487). It is noteworthy that Fichte does not cite Kant directly by making reference to the *Critique* itself. Fichte refers to Jacobi’s citation of Kant within Jacobi’s criticism of Kant’s transcendental idealism in the appendix of Jacobi’s *David Hume über den Glauben, oder, Idealismus und Realismus*. As noted by Daniel Breazeale (1994, 59n25), Fichte uses the third, 1790 edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (which is identical to the second edition with minor corrections of printer’s errors and several changes in the use of italics). Breazeale suggests that since the citation of Kant referred to by Fichte appears only in the first edition, this may explain why Fichte quotes from Jacobi rather than directly from Kant (Breazeale 1994, 73n42).

only intended to explain how empirical consciousness operates rather than justifying it by deriving it from a fundamental element. We should also keep in mind that the transcendental-reflective and the empirical modes of consideration are distinct. We either think empirically about an individual case or we think reflectively about the general structure of the empirical way of thinking. The reflective recognition that cognition contributes an essential factor to the notion of an object does not contradict the empirical standpoint, which cannot but refer to the object as an entity distinct from itself. It may be helpful to cite Beck's own words on this issue once again:

Whenever I am asked how I arrive at the representation of the object that I see in front of me, I answer: 'the object affects me'. The object that I see or touch brings about a sensation in me through the medium of light or due to its impenetrability. In spite of this, however, I shall also say that the understanding synthesizes originally in the generation of the original-synthetic objective unity; in this original synthesis it is I who posits something persistent in respect to which I represent time itself. It is I who posits something (a cause) through which my own subjective states. . . obtain their temporal determination. There is nothing contradictory in all this. *It must be remembered that that the transcendental statement 'the understanding posits a something originally' is what first of all gives sense and meaning to the empirical statement 'the object affects me'.* (EmS, 156f. The emphasis is my own. Cf. also EmS, 172f., and Grundriß, 13f.)

Fichte concedes that there is in cognition a merely empirical element which is absolutely contingent and he designates this element as "*feeling*: sweet, red, cold, etc." (SW, I:490). He stresses that philosophy must take into account the role of original feeling. Otherwise it becomes an incomplete philosophy, which is unable to account for the purely sensible predicates of objects. However, "the wish to provide a further explanation of this original feeling and to attribute it to the efficacy of "something" leads, as I have just shown, to the dogmatism of the Kantians" (SW, I:490). Fichte, therefore, in a manner similar to Maimon, refuses to answer the question regarding the origin of content of consciousness, for in his view any such attempt would inevitably lead to the dogmatism of the thing-in-itself. Fichte recognizes that from an empirical standpoint it appears that the content of our sensibility is the result of the influence of a thing wholly independent of consciousness. Nevertheless, from a philosophical standpoint this is unacceptable because we recognize the role of cognition in constituting objects. However, Fichte recognizes that the content of consciousness, as something contingent, cannot be derived from the necessary laws of the intellect.⁸⁸ Having rejected the only two possible answers, Fichte refuses to provide further explanations. "All *transcendental* explanation" he argues "comes to an end with immediate feeling" (SW, I:490). In the *Zweite Einleitung*, just as in the *Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte praises Beck that his *Standpunktslehre* is the sole exception to the common, completely mistaken, Kantian interpretation (SW, I:480). However, Fichte still

⁸⁸ In the *Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre* it seems that Fichte opts for the purely idealistic view according to which the entirety of consciousness is derived from the intellect alone. Cf. the discussion above.

criticizes Beck. Although Beck dismisses the thing-in-itself as the affecting object, he still argues, *from a philosophical standpoint*, that the content of our consciousness is the result of the influence of an object (SW, I:488f., 490). From Fichte's point of view, Beck's claim can at best qualify for the empirical standpoint; however, the philosophical standpoint must be clear and decisive. It must either account for the content of consciousness dogmatically by deriving it from a thing-in-itself or critically by deriving it from the pure I; else it must refuse an answer altogether. Fichte's desire to find an absolutely final ground for the empirical content of consciousness compels him to accept only two fundamental, that is, ontological, options. The result is that Fichte's philosophical reflection cannot explain the empirical point of view.

However, the case is very different when viewed from an epistemological standpoint. On this view, philosophical reflection takes as its starting point the observed phenomena according to which empirical cognition refers to objects considered as independent of cognition. The philosophical reflection then attempts to explain how this is possible given that all that cognition has at its disposal are only representations.⁸⁹ From an epistemological standpoint the task of the philosophical reflection is not to justify empirical consciousness by deriving its claims from either a fundamental object or a fundamental subject. Rather, philosophy has the more modest task of explaining how cognition can distinguish objective states of affair from merely subjective ones, *within the realm of representations*. In my view this is precisely how Kant presents the task of the refutation of idealism in the much discussed, but widely misunderstood, Critique of the Fourth Paralogism of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This account also accords with Beck's understanding of the task of philosophy. As I have already mentioned, Beck's doctrine should not be read as implying that the object is created or produced by the cognitive activity. Beck didn't think so either and he vehemently rejected the association of his doctrine with Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* in this regard.⁹⁰ It is noteworthy that, contrary to a common interpretation, Fichte, as well, didn't think that the object was simply created out of thin air by the productive imagination. The overly idealistic view found in the *Erste* and *Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, does not encompass his entire doctrine. Elsewhere Fichte recognized that we, as finite beings, are limited by an external reality, which is

⁸⁹ Obviously from an epistemological standpoint the appeal to the "starting point" according to which empirical thought actually refers to objects considered as independent of the thought of them, does not function as a justification. If that were the case the whole argument would have been viciously circular. However, when the attempt at justification is replaced by an attempt at explanation, the involved circularity is not a problem. The "starting point" is not used as justification; it merely describes that which requires explanation.

⁹⁰ Cf. Beck's letter to Kant, June 20, 1797 (AA 12: 168) in which Beck defends himself against Court Chaplain Schultz' accusation of idealism: "It never entered my mind to say that the understanding creates the object: a piece of naked nonsense!" Cf. also Beck's letter to Kant, June 24, 1797 (AA 12: 174): "And Schultz also quotes me as saying the 'the understanding produces objects'. I infer from this that you [Kant] and Herr Schultz have been discussing Herr Fichte's strange invention, since these expressions I quoted sound completely Fichtean to me."

ultimately given.⁹¹ Similarly Fichte did not argue that the imagination literally produces the entire content of experience. In more than few passages he is explicit that the raw matter of sensation is given to us (*Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, SW, I:297–301, 313f.). The infinitely determinable content of sensation, which to some degree forever remains beyond the control of the ego, plays an important role within Fichte's theoretical philosophy.⁹² The distinction between Fichte and Beck is that Fichte refers to the raw matter of sensibility as something given in a transcendental sense, that is, independently of all consciousness. By contrast, Beck recognizes the givenness of the matter of sensibility only in an empirical sense and he rejects any reference to something given prior to the synthetic activity of cognition.⁹³ From a metaphysical standpoint, which assumes a subject (in itself) and an object (in itself) as the fundamental elements of experience, there are indeed only two extreme alternatives. However, from an epistemological standpoint, which attempts to explain cognition without assuming an external standpoint, things look very different. On such a view, we first become aware of certain sensible contents. Cognition then organizes this content and refers to a certain connection of representations (a connection which can be subsumed under universal empirical laws) as an object distinct from cognition itself. Only on behalf of referring to a certain connection of representations as an object (that is, positing an object) can we then say that the contents, from which we started, were given by such an object. The important point is that the characterization of the sensible content as 'given' is not a condition of, but is conditioned by, the constitution of the object. To refer to the sensible content as 'given' implies some object from which it is given and this characterization is already dependent on the distinction between subjective and objective state of affairs. It is only when we implicitly adopt an external-metaphysical standpoint that the given seems to be given prior to any contribution on behalf of cognition. Differently put, we begin with some meaningful content in sense perception. In order to even ask questions about this sensible data, in order to characterize it as 'given' or to ask whether it is indeed 'given' or 'produced', or to wonder about its 'origin', *we must already presuppose the notion of an object*, distinct from the sensible data from which we have started. The *epistemological distinction* between subject and object

⁹¹ "The science of knowledge is therefore *realistic*. It shows that the consciousness of finite creatures is utterly inexplicable, save on the presumption of a force existing independently of them, and wholly opposed to them, on which they are dependent in respect of their empirical existence." (*Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, SW, I:279f.; cf. also, I:253, 270, 275, 354f.). English translation is taken from Peter Heath (Fichte 1982).

⁹² This is so despite the fact that Fichte arrives at this irreducible check or obstacle from within practical philosophy alone.

⁹³ Indeed from Fichte's point of view, according to which realism relies on the recognition of some non-ego completely independent of the ego itself (cf. for example *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, SW, I:279f., cited in note 91 above), Beck's position was considered to be too radical and therefore too idealistic. This is implicit in Fichte's letter to Reinhold, July 4, 1797, which briefly mentions Beck in such a light (GA, III(3):73). This letter is translated into English by Breazeale (1988, 419).

(a distinction, which animals do not possess) is, therefore, *a condition for our very ability to formulate questions* in any empirically concrete case. The notion of the ‘given’, thus, does not point to an ontological entity but to the epistemological recognition of the objectifying function of our own cognition. On this view it is easy to see why the conclusions of the philosophical reflection do not contradict the empirical standpoint, but rather, enable us to understand how the latter operates. I shall return to these issues in Sect. 12.2.4, as part of the final analysis of Kant’s response to idealism.

12.2 The Legitimacy of Beck’s Interpretation in Relation to Kant

12.2.1 *The ‘Two-World’ View, the ‘Two-Aspect’ View, and the Anthropocentric Interpretation*

Kant’s critical idealism expresses his solution to the ever-long dispute between idealism and realism. In this section, I would like to chart a map of possible interpretations of Kant’s unique stand and then position my own view in relation to this map. The discussions in this section are only preliminary and they are intended to introduce, rather than resolve, the issues at hand. The discussions in the following sections shall address all related issues in further detail.

I shall start by placing the traditional idealist and realist views on opposite sides of the scale. Idealism is the view that only knowing subjects are things, which exist in themselves. Whatever is not a knowing subject is a representation immanent to the cognition of a knowing subject. Realism on the other hand holds that not only knowing subjects exist on their own behalf. According to realism there are also objects, which exist in themselves. Above all, nature and all objects that inhabit nature are things-in-themselves.

In spite of their differences idealism and realism have a shared presupposition: that there are essentially only two, extremely opposed, modes of existence – either that of a representation or that of a thing-in-itself. Accordingly, both idealism and realism agree that if a thing is not a representation immanent to cognition then it can only be a thing-in-itself. Idealism, based on reflective considerations, emphasizes the relation and dependence of all that can be present in cognition on conditions of the knowing subject. It therefore renounces objects as things-in-themselves and accepts as legitimate the only other available alternative according to which all things we call objects are nothing but representations. Realism refuses to regard nature as immanent to cognition and therefore concludes that nature must be a thing-in-itself. I term all approaches, which acknowledge only these two opposing modes of existence – fundamental views. According to these views anything that is not a representation can only be a thing-in-itself, which exists fundamentally, a

thing which being and essence, both subsist internally in the thing itself. Both idealism and realism are therefore fundamental.

Most of the interpretations of Kant construe him as accepting the basic representation-thing-in-itself dichotomy. They thus place his view as a middle position on the idealist-realist scale. These interpretations can be termed fundamental, as well as the idealist-realist dispute for which Kant is supposed to have offered a solution. The fundamental character is apparent in the fact that almost all interpreters insist that the notion of the thing-in-itself, in one form or another, plays a crucial role in relation to the possibility of experience. This notion cannot be dispensed with, at least as long as we want to avoid idealism and as long as we want to be able to answer the question regarding the origin of the empirical content of sense perception. In what follows I wish to examine the two main approaches to the interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism – the so-called 'two-world' and 'two-aspect' view – by addressing the question regarding the nature of the object, which appears to us in the appearance. I shall subsequently present the outlines of my own differing view. As I wish to suggest, there is another alternative, less explored, which sees Kant as abandoning the representation-thing-in-itself dichotomy and replacing it with a new mode of existence – that of a phenomenal object. On this view Kant's position is not at all on the idealist-realist scale. On this view Kant looks at the whole dispute and its possible mean positions from a reflective distance and acknowledges the weakness of its presupposed dichotomy. On this view Kant's position is much more radical than on interpretations which accept the fundamental presupposition.⁹⁴ I argue that J.S. Beck offers such a non-fundamental interpretation, an interpretation that I defend to a very large degree.

12.2.1.1 The Object and Its Appearance

What appears to us in the appearance? This question has occupied the minds of Kant's followers, critics and interpreters ever since Kant published the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Almost all authors reject the empirical object as that which appears in the appearance. The empirical object, after all, is nothing more than an object in appearance. As such, it stands for the effect, within our consciousness, of the influence of some other thing, independent of consciousness, on our sensible apparatus. We are looking for the influencing object rather than its effect

⁹⁴The basic contrast I appeal to between fundamental interpretations of Kant and the non-fundamental view I wish to propose is, despite difference in terms, similar to Graham Bird's distinction between traditional and revolutionary interpretations (Bird 2006, 1–18). Bird shows how on the assumption of the exhaustive dichotomy between immanent representations and transcendent things in themselves, fundamental-traditional interpretations tend either to equate Kant with subjective idealism or to ascribe to him some form of transcendental realism (Bird 2006, 8ff.).

within us.⁹⁵ If we are to avoid a vicious circle, so the argument goes, then we must regard that which appears as ontologically independent of its appearances. I take issue with the core assumption that an ontologically independent thing can appear to us (or to any other knowing subject). Initially, there seems to be no inherent difficulty with this claim. Moreover, it accords with how we commonly regard our relation to the natural world. We regard the latter as totally independent of us. The world is there – it exists – whether any knowing subject does or does not represent it at any given moment. It has its own qualities regardless of what we may think of its characteristics and regardless of how the constitution of our own human cognitive apparatus may confine us to perceive it. Both the existence of the natural world (its *Dasein/that* it exists) and its properties (its *so-sein/how* it exists) are assumed to be independent of any knowing subject and his or her representations. Nevertheless, we think we can and do encounter this ontologically independent world and represent it to ourselves within our own sensible and intelligible forms. Although our knowledge of the world is indeed dependent on our forms of sensibility and understanding – as Kant argues – we think we know an object, which exists in-itself. What can be more natural than such a worldview?⁹⁶ Below, I discuss my objections against this common view in two stages. First, I address the difficulties that arise in the context of the traditional formulation of the two-world view. I then consider whether the various formulations of the two-aspect view allow us to escape the objections previously raised in the context of the two-world view.

On the traditional two-world view the thing-in-itself is indeed regarded as the object of knowledge, as that which appears to us, and as that, which affects our senses. A crucial feature of this view is that the thing-in-itself is regarded as totally divorced from, or ontologically independent of, the contents of our sensible intuition and yet *at the same time* as something that, *as such* (as an ontologically independent thing), can appear to us within our sensible intuition. Differently put, the contents of our sensible intuition are regarded as both disconnected from the thing-in-itself, (since the latter is regarded as ontologically independent of the former), and yet as appearances *of it*. This view requires both separation and continuity between the thing-in-itself and what we refer to as *its* appearance. The validity of the possessive connector is precisely the issue.

The initial representatives of the two-world reading – most notably P.F. Strawson in *The bounds of sense* – were explicitly aware of the instability of this metaphysical view. Their reading was intended to show the implausibility of Kant's transcendental idealism by demonstrating the inevitable tensions and contradictions harbored within the Kantian system, and the idealism to which it must

⁹⁵ Henry Allison (2004, 67) thus argues: "It certainly follows that this something that affects the mind cannot be taken under its empirical description (as a spatio-temporal entity). To do so would involve assigning to an object, considered apart from its relation to human sensibility, precisely those features that, according to the theory, it only possesses in virtue of this relation."

⁹⁶ The above formulation is admittedly a simplification but at this initial stage I only want to indicate the core assumption behind the very notion of the thing-in-itself as the object of knowledge.

inevitably lead. "The doctrine", says Strawson, "is not merely that we can have no knowledge of a supersensible reality. The doctrine is that reality is supersensible and we cannot have any knowledge of it." (Strawson 1966, 38). Strawson and his followers further argued that aside from the inevitable idealism, in which it must culminate, the Kantian doctrine is also incoherent. According to Strawson, a consistent Kantian must admit that we can say nothing at all about things in themselves. Strawson then went on to criticize Kant since on Strawson's view he, Kant, requires such a notion in his theory of affection and in his practical philosophy.⁹⁷

As long as we remain by the traditional two-world view it is, I believe, relatively easy to show that the thing-in-itself cannot be said to appear to us. The latter claim includes the implied requirement that the in-itself, non-relational, character of this alleged thing, *as such*, be manifested or expressed in relational terms, accessible to some knowing subject. That, which is by-definition non-relational, is required to be manifested relationally! The core meaning of the term 'thing-*in-itself*', a meaning which I think, at least implicitly, always plays a role when we use this term, is that of a thing, which being (Dasein) and essence (so-sein) both inhere in the nature of the thing itself, independently of *any* relation to *any* kind of knowing subject, more pointedly, independently of any relation to anything other than itself. This is why, in order to be fully consistent, Spinoza, using his own terminology, argued that there could be only one Substance. If there were more than one such Substance (even without mentioning the special case of knowing subjects) then that would contradict the very notion of a Substance. The latter, *as such*, could not be said to stand in any relation to anything other than itself.

I shall refer to this notion of the thing-in-itself as the notion of a fundamental object or a wholly transcendent entity. As such, it follows *from its very definition* that no cognitive form, whether sensible or intelligible, whether human or otherwise, could apply to it. The notion of the thing *in-itself* is designed to fulfill the role of a totally independent reality, towards which all kinds of cognition are allegedly directed. However, if *its* unique, essential, character could be captured by any cognitive form of any kind of knowing subject then it could no longer be considered as a thing *in-itself* since the latter is supposed to be, *by definition*, independent of any cognitive form of any kind of knowing subject. We must conclude that as long as we have this core sense of the thing-in-itself in mind then neither time and space, nor the categories, and in general no cognitive form whatsoever, are applicable to it. As such, it has nothing in common with appearances for it can neither be perceived nor even be thought. More precisely, *the very question* regarding what appearances and things-in-themselves *could possibly* have in common is itself impossible since this question *presupposes* that *in principle* quantitative and qualitative distinctions apply to the thing-in-itself, beyond appearances, which

⁹⁷ I agree with Strawson who argues that the very distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves is – according to Kant's own doctrine – unintelligible (Strawson 1966, 250–256). Cf. also Wilkerson (1976, 195, 198). Another author, not ascribing a two-world view to Kant, but who also emphasizes the illegitimacy of the concept of a thing-in-itself within Kant's transcendental idealism (despite admitting that Kant does use it) is Bennett (1974, 52f.).

contradicts the view of the term ‘thing-*in-itself*’ as independent of any cognitive form whatsoever, whether sensible or intelligible, whether human or non-human. An important conclusion from the above analysis is that a thing-*in-itself* cannot be said to appear to us. Once again, if *it* appears, if through the appearance we truly know *it* – if some subjective cognitive form can capture its unique character – then it is no longer a fundamental being, a thing *in-itself*, a thing, which essence and being inhere in the thing itself without any relation to anything else. The traditional rationalist metaphysics of the Leibnizean-Wolffian school, a tradition which dates back to Plato, argued that we know the object as an appearance when we attribute to it properties which are nothing other than characteristics of our own sensible apparatus. On the contrary, this tradition argued, we know objects as things in themselves when we abstract from these sensible conditions and represent objects merely through our understanding. However, the forms of our understanding are no less dependent on our, metaphysically contingent, cognitive constitution than the forms of our sensible apparatus. The thing *in-itself* should be free from any subjective admixture and this should apply to any cognitive form of any knowing subject whatsoever. Even Karl Reinhold – despite his own rationalistic tendencies – seems to have been aware of this subtle point. Reinhold regards the thing-*in-itself* as pure content, prior to the imposition of cognitive forms of any knowing subject on it. Reinhold recognizes, in line with a Kantian way of thinking, that the content of a representation cannot enter consciousness unless it conforms to the form of the representation. However, by conforming to a form the content acquires a new identity; it is no longer pure content and thus cannot represent the object, *as* it is *in-itself*. In other words, since the content changes as it take on a form, the content can no longer represent the object, as it exists prior to appearing to the knowing subject. The thing-*in-itself* is, by-definition, that which is independent of subjective forms; it is a formless thing. But nothing can be represented unless it conforms to a form. Thus, it is clear that the thing-*in-itself* cannot be represented! (Reinhold 1789, 244–248, 251f., 276, 433. Cf. Sect. 12.1.1).

It should also follow that the thing-*in-itself* is a concept that apart from its definition is inaccessible to us. We understand that in order to construct this concept (of a “pure” object) we have to abstract from all of our cognitive functions, and yet in abstraction from the latter we can represent nothing at all. It is as if one was asked to cut off the branch on which he or she was sitting without falling off the tree. The definition of the task required of us is thus meaningful but since this task, as defined, cannot be accomplished, we cannot, properly speaking, even have a concept of a thing-*in-itself*.

George di Giovanni’s exposition of Kant’s transcendental idealism is sensitive to the above-discussed difficulty. Di Giovanni interprets Kant as committed to two theses:

[According to the first thesis he] assumes an original empty reference to the ‘thing-*in-itself*’ which is only to be realized, however, when restricted to the appearances of this intended ‘thing’ in experience, i.e., when the latter is redefined to mean ‘possible object of experience in general’. The only implication of this thesis is that we know the intended ‘thing’ only as ‘it appears to us’, not as it is ‘*in-itself*’. The other thesis, on the other hand, is that in knowing the ‘thing’ as it only appears to us, *we do not know it at all*. (di Giovanni 2000, 6)

Di Giovanni then argues – in my view correctly – that these two theses cannot both be maintained at the same time.

For the [second] thesis implies that the world of appearances is somehow illusory – which is precisely what the skeptics held. It implies that sensations are purely private, subjective events [...] But if this is all that sensations were, how could Kant ever expect to find *given* in them the very objects that we represent *a priori* through the universalizing intentions of thought? (di Giovanni 2000, 6)

Di Giovanni argues that Kant is faced with an impossible choice:

either he granted that sensations are not altogether 'blind'; that they include, even *qua* sensations, a reference to the object of cognition. If he made this move, however, he would have to concede, because of the special existential character of sensations, that we do have some knowledge of the 'thing-in-itself'. Kant would have to reject, in other words, his second thesis. Or he granted that strictly speaking thought-intentions are never resolved in sensations, but only in the synthesis that the imagination specially constructs for thought, in accordance with its rule, out of raw sense data. This is the line of argument that Kant officially followed. Its obvious implication, however, was that the spatio-temporal objects that constitute the content of experience are only imaginary entities – that strictly speaking we have no *direct* intuition of them as 'objects'. (di Giovanni 2000, 6)

Following di Giovanni's line of thought we can say that if the objects of knowledge were ultimately to be understood as things-in-themselves then there was no escape from the following disturbing puzzle. Either we *know* things-in-themselves *through their appearances*, a claim which flatly contradicts Kant's claims to have knowledge of appearances only; or we admit that through appearances we gain no knowledge at all of the objects from which they allegedly originate and treat appearances as mere cognitive states (which might not refer to any actual object), but then Kant's transcendental idealism seems to be reduced to a form of subjective idealism. As long as, in the final account, we regard the thing-in-itself as the true object of cognition, then we must admit one of two equally unacceptable alternatives: either dogmatic realism or subjective idealism.

Supporters of the two-aspect view attempt to avoid this dilemma by arguing that there are simply 'objects', which can be considered either as they are in-themselves or as they appear. Thus, they are committed to the view that we know *objects* as they appear to us but not as they, objects, are in-themselves. On the question "what do we know through appearances?" they would answer simply – objects, without further qualifications, rather than things-in-themselves. This formulation has the apparent advantage of allowing two-aspect authors to avoid the dilemma I raised above, which derives from the implicit contradiction that the in-itself, non-relational, character can be expressed in relational terms. We must, however, first admit that if we regard appearances and things as they are in themselves as the aspects, then, as noted by Graham Bird (2006, 41), we must postulate a "mysterious third thing, itself neither appearance nor a thing in itself, these might be aspect or features of." These are indeed, unwelcome and needless questions, which are nevertheless unavoidable from such a two-aspect view. This line of thought can be pressed further. However appealing, the question remains what do we mean by this allegedly neutral term 'objects' and, more specifically, what allows us to refer

to them *as such*? What allows us to refer to them *as more than mere representations*? Since this neutral term ‘object’ is that which allegedly appears to us then it must be more than a mere appearance/representation! One cannot account for the independence of this neutral term ‘object’ by pointing to the claim that the same ‘object’ also has an in-itself mode of being. This would be a step towards admitting that the alleged neutral term ‘object’ is in fact a thing-in-itself, which would throw us back to the starting point. It is indeed natural to regard the objects that appear to us as ontologically independent and yet as something that can appear to us. However, if we pay close attention to the latter formulation we shall recognize that the in-itself character is no longer regarded as an aspect. It seems to me that supporters of the two-aspect view implicitly presuppose that the object is a thing-in-itself, which appears to us. The leading thread behind most two-aspect interpretations, as well as behind those two-world views designed to avoid postulating too deep a gap between appearances and things in themselves (for example Walker 2010, 821–843), is that while the object of knowledge is indeed a thing, which exists in itself, we know this ontologically independent thing, not as it is in-itself, but merely as it – this ontologically independent thing – appears to us. If we remain by the abstract term ‘thing’ – rather than ‘an ontologically independent thing’ – the entire view becomes utterly unintelligible. In short, supporters of the two-aspect view cannot account for the independence of the allegedly neutral term ‘object’ without referring to it as a thing-*in-itself*, a view, which brings us back to my initial puzzle.

I do not think that the two-aspect view can avoid the inherent difficulties resulting from the very notion of a thing, as it is *in-itself*, as we have discussed above regarding the two-world view.⁹⁸ In order to see this, it would be helpful to further analyze some difficulties with the very notion of ‘an in-itself aspect’ within the context of both the epistemological and the ontological two-aspect view.

The epistemological two-aspect view speaks of two ways of consideration or of two points of view on one and the same thing.⁹⁹ However, the in-itself feature is not a way of consideration or a point of view. Rather, it indicates the thing to which we can refer in various ways or from different points of view. Adopting the aspect language we can say that human beings can refer to a thing only under some sensible and intelligible conditions. Other knowing subjects, who may have other forms of sensibility, other kinds of categories or even other cognitive functions

⁹⁸ In line with the above, Walker argues that the two-aspect view can at best re-describe the relevant issues but it cannot avoid the inherent difficulties, which concern both the two-world and the two-aspect view, resulting from the very inclusion of things-in-themselves in Kant’s theory of cognition (Walker 2010, 831).

⁹⁹ On the two-aspect view, in its epistemological formulation, appearances and things-in-themselves are not two distinct fields of being but only two ways of referring to one and the same thing. We refer to the object as a phenomenon when we view it under the formal conditions of experience; we refer to the same thing as it is in itself when we abstract from these very conditions. Things, on this view, can either be viewed as they are in-themselves or as they appear to knowing subjects. The distinction is an epistemological rather than an ontological one.

altogether, may, on this line of thought, refer to the same thing in different ways or from different points of view. However, the thing *in-itself* is precisely that which is not a point of view, but that to which all points of view refer. It follows that as long as we only speak of aspects or points of view, we do not speak of things-in-themselves at all. Even intellectual intuition (for which we can also think up many different sub-kinds) is just one such alternative point of view and so is even God's view. No point of view can be a view of things as they are in themselves for the very notion of a thing *in-itself* negates the notion of an aspect or a point of view! On this doctrine it follows – or at the very least it should follow – that the thing beyond any point of view is quite incomprehensible. It must be admitted that on this view the thing-in-itself remains outside the picture. This result is, in fact, implicit in the analysis of some two-aspect authors.¹⁰⁰ The attempt to argue that God's knowledge of things is not a point of view or a different way to consider things, or that, in other words, God knows things without relying on any sensible or intelligible form seems unintelligible to me. Either God is regarded as a special knowing subject and then he must have some cognitive forms or he is not regarded as a knowing subject but then I fail to see how the notion of God is relevant to any possible theory of knowledge.¹⁰¹

If the epistemological two-aspect view is not, at the end of the day, a view of things as they are in-themselves, it must be equally recognized that the ontological two-aspect view is in fact not really a two-aspect doctrine. The ontological two-aspect view, for example on the model associated with Rae Langton (1998), is the view that objects in the world have both intrinsic, non-relational, properties, which remain hidden from us, and extrinsic, relational, properties, a subset of which is revealed to us. Objects appear differently to different kinds of knowing subjects depending on the set of extrinsic-relational properties that different kinds of knowing subjects are able to perceive. Things may, therefore, appear to human beings as spatio-temporal but they will appear totally different to other kinds of knowing subjects. Worth noting is that on this view the intrinsic, non-relational, properties are in some way responsible for the fact that these things can appear

¹⁰⁰ H. E. Matthews (1969, 209, 217) thus argues that since any description of the world is made from within some point of view it follows that the world itself, to which all such points of view refer, is “*ex hypothesi* indescribable, and in a sense, unthinkable”. This view is criticized by Walker (2010, 827) and Ameriks (2003, 73f.) specifically because it loses sight of the thing, as it is in-itself.

¹⁰¹ God's representation of the thing-in-itself can be said to involve no forms or be from no point of view in one of two ways. Either God's representation brings the thing itself into being or God's representation is somehow said to be immediately identical with the thing itself. On the former alternative the thing is no longer a thing *in-itself* for its existence is, by definition, dependent on God's representation. The latter alternative is quite incomprehensible. We cannot understand how a knowing subject can represent a thing without employing some forms and without his view being indeed a point of view from some perspective. Moreover, regarding the latter alternative we can add that if God's representation is identical with the thing itself then the converse is also true – the thing itself is identical with God's representation. However, what is identical with a representation cannot be a thing *in-itself*!

differently to different kinds of knowing subjects. The intrinsic properties therefore have a certain priority over the extrinsic properties. It must, thus, be admitted that the in-itself or intrinsic, non-relational, character is not on par with the various modes of its appearance to various kinds of subjects. On this model it should be admitted that the thing, which appears differently to different kinds of knowing subjects is a thing-in-itself, rather than a merely neutral notion of a 'thing'. On this view, it would seem quite natural to say that things-in-themselves are the objects of knowledge, that they are that which appears to us in one way and to other alleged subjects in other ways. The various ways by which things (in-themselves) appear to various kinds of knowing subjects can be referred to in terms of aspects but not the in-itself mode of being. The appeal of various ontological two-aspect authors to an analogy with the empirical distinction between primary and secondary properties supports my conclusion. Primary properties allegedly express the nature of the thing itself, while the secondary properties express how it subjectively appears to some individual. The secondary properties may be a matter of a point of view but not the primary properties.¹⁰²

It thus seems that the ontological two-aspect view comes very close to the two-world view. The only remaining issue between the two doctrines is how close appearances are to things-as-they-are-in-themselves and how we can know that through the appearances we indeed know *them*. The closer appearances are to things-in-themselves, or the narrower we regard the gap between them, the easier it becomes to say that through the appearance we indeed know these ontologically independent things. The wider the gap, the more difficult it becomes to say that through appearances we indeed know some ontologically independent things rather than merely our own, mind-dependent, representations.¹⁰³ If our appearances are

¹⁰² I, of course, object to the use of this analogy. The empirical distinction between a representation and an object (corresponding to the distinction between secondary and primary properties) cannot be applied to an alleged distinction between the entire phenomenal world and some alternative. In the above paragraph I merely try to expose an inherent difficulty within the ontological two-aspect view and I set aside my criticism of the appeal to the primary-secondary properties distinction. Another author who objects to the applicability of the primary-secondary properties distinction to the appearance – thing-in-itself distinction is Manfred Kuehn. I agree with Kuehn (2011, 226) that “for the perspectival talk to be even possible one needs to be able to identify the different sides as perspectives [...] which would presuppose knowing something about both the appearance and the thing in itself”. Note that the primary-secondary properties distinction is a distinction that is borrowed from the empirical context. For example, we say that the primary property of wavelength is revealed to the human eye in terms of the secondary property known as color. However, in line with Kuehn’s remark, it should be noted that in the empirical context we have epistemic access both to what is regarded as the secondary and to what is regarded as the primary property. The latter are in some sense observable, even if only through the mediation of supporting instruments. This is, *by-definition*, not the case with the in-itself, intrinsic, properties, even according to Langton herself (1998, 50).

¹⁰³ In considering these difficulties we set aside, of course, the highly problematic claim that according to Kant we aim at knowledge of things-in-themselves and that *the very question* whether appearances and things-in-themselves are similar or different (and to what degree), is a question that makes sense at all.

inevitably spatio-temporal and things, as they are in-themselves, are totally independent of these conditions, then how can one say that through appearances we know these things at all? In other words, how can we say that the contents of which we are aware in sensible intuition can properly be regarded *as appearances of things*? This is an even more pressing concern when these things are regarded as also having an intrinsic, ontologically independent, character. Either we allow continuity between the appearances and the in-itself character of those objects that allegedly appear to us but then it would imply that our knowledge of these objects covers, or partially covers, their in-itself character; or we deny this continuity but then it is not clear that what we perceive has anything to do with those alleged objects that aside from appearing to us have an in-itself character. The sensible contents we perceive could, for all we know, have nothing to do with ontologically independent objects! The difficulty may be avoided if one argues, as does for example Paul Guyer (1987, 282), that the ontologically independent objects of knowledge are themselves in space and time and so are our representations of them (on Guyer's view, there is hardly any gap between the two sides of the equation). It now becomes easy to understand how through our representations or appearances we indeed know these ontologically independent things. Guyer admits, however, that he retains Kant's theory of experience while dismissing Kant's transcendental idealism. In any case, the above consideration concerns both the ontological two-aspect view and the two-world view, and the distinction between the latter two doctrines, properly construed, seems to be no more than a matter of emphasis.¹⁰⁴

The result of the above analysis of the epistemological and the ontological two-aspect view is that a two-aspect view, which includes things as they are in themselves is impossible. Either we recognize that cognition of objects inevitably presupposes some point of view and we further admit that the alleged talk about objects in abstraction from any point of view is an empty talk; or we insist that some talk about ontologically independent objects is allowed (setting aside for the moment my objections against this very claim) but then we at least have to admit that this view is not a multi-aspect view.

Aside from the difficulties with the very idea of an 'in-itself aspect', as noted above, there are two main problems with the various forms of the two-aspect view. First, they are no less fundamental and dogmatic than the two-world view; second, they are no less committed to the undesirable result that, on the background of the ultimate reality of things-in-themselves, empirical reality is viewed as a degraded form of reality.

Both the two-world view and the two-aspect view are fundamental. According to the two-world view the object must ultimately be a thing-in-itself. According to the two-aspect view the object must at least have an aspect whereby it is ultimately considered as a thing-in-itself. According to both the two-world and the two-aspect view, the thing-in-itself – whether as a distinct entity or as a distinct aspect – is

¹⁰⁴ This is conceded by Walker (2010, 827f., 831).

required to refute idealism. Both doctrines committed to the applicability of various categories to things-in-themselves and to various, even if minimal, knowledge claims about them. This is most clear in the case of the two-world view. However, the two-aspect view is no less committed to the view that things-in-themselves exist (even more boldly on the ontological variation) and that they are what appears to us in the appearance. According to both forms of the two-aspect view the existence of things-in-themselves is a requisite of Kant's theoretical philosophy.¹⁰⁵ The two-aspect view does not explain the phenomenal world as an effect of the world of things-in-themselves for both are the two sides of the same coin. However, most versions of the two-aspect view still hold to some form of a transcendental affection. Even if we set aside the issue of the application of the category of causality to things-in-themselves we are still left with the application of the categories of substance and existence to them. However, if we really know nothing about things-in-themselves, how then can we know that they exist, that they affect us, that they are that which appears to us, or that they ground appearances? How do we know that phenomenal objects have an additional in-itself mode of existence? Yaron Senderowicz (2005, 7ff.) rightly claims that even Henry E. Allison's rather moderate two-aspect view (to be discussed in the next section) violates Kant's principle of signification. If the sensible epistemic conditions are indeed necessary to represent an object, one wonders how we can abstract from these very conditions when we consider an object as it is in itself. Similar claims served as the basis for Strawson's critique of Kant himself (Strawson 1966, 254f.). Senderowicz (2005, 159) further claims that the consideration of the object as it is in-itself, à la Allison, violates Kant's principle of individuation, which depends on space and time: "The identity of empirical substances and things in themselves is in principle unknowable". Manfred Kuehn (2011, 232n5) claims that "since we can only perceive things in space and time, there can be nothing left that would be both non-spatial and identifiable or describable as an object". Ralph C.S. Walker similarly argues that it is impossible to talk about the identity of appearances and things in themselves,

¹⁰⁵ Two authors who hold a different view are Graham Bird and Robert Hanna. Hanna argues that only phenomenal objects can be said to exist, and that things in themselves are no more than possible concepts, which alleged existence could neither be affirmed nor denied. "We must remain *consistently agnostic* about them, and *methodologically eliminate* them for the purposes of objectively valid metaphysics and epistemology" (Hanna 2006, 425). He adds that on this form of manifest realism we can say that "cognitively and ontologically speaking, *nothing is hidden* in the material world that is the object of true empirical scientific cognition" (Hanna 2006, 199). Similarly, Bird stresses time and again that "Kant is not committed to the existence of things-in-themselves but only to their conceivability" (Bird 2006, 17), and that this conceivability has a role merely in the Dialectic of the first *Critique* and in the other Critiques but not in relation to Kant's theory of experience. Even in those contexts where this concept does have a role to play, "we are not strictly entitled to speak of a hypostatized, or personalized, 'thing' corresponding to such Ideal" (Bird 2006, 579). Bird explicitly denies the claim that appearances are *of* things-in-themselves, or that the theory of experience requires some form of transcendental causality. He equally rejects any role for the notion of things-in-themselves in Kant's various refutations of idealism (Bird 2006, 553–585).

since the former are individuated under the conditions of time and space of which the latter are supposed to be free and he makes this issue his major objection against the two-aspect view (Walker 2010, 824ff.). In addition to the specific issue of identity, Walker generally admits that “in saying that there are things in themselves, and that they ground appearances, Kant seems to be claiming knowledge to which by his own rules he is not entitled”. Walker nevertheless dismisses these concerns since “they are problems on either [two-world or two-aspect] interpretation” (Walker 2010, 831). As is clear from Walker's off-hand dismissal of Paul Abela's view (2002), according to which things-in-themselves play a role only within Kant's practical philosophy (Walker 2010, 828), Walker obviously does not take seriously any view, which does not assign to things in themselves a central role in Kant's view of the objective world. Additionally, Walker is further explicit that “there is no point in talking about an underlying reality unless one can specify with some precision what its function is” (Walker 2010, 842) and it is amazing to see how much Walker in fact knows about that, which he himself admits is unknowable!

Above all, the various versions of the two-aspect view – no less than the two-world view – threaten to ruin what I referred to as the basic principle of Kant's critical idealism – that of the subjective conditions of objectivity. On all alternatives of the two-aspect view it is assumed that we can refer to objects regardless of the subjective conditions, within which alone something can be an object for us. The formal conditions of experience thus become *merely* subjective and not truly objective. As long as we regard the thing considered as it is in itself as the ultimate form of reality, although unknown to us, then the phenomenal world is inevitably regarded as a lesser kind or a lesser degree of reality. This view obviously undermines Kant's defense of empirical realism. Despite its good intentions, the two-aspect view cannot escape the basic difficulties inherent in the very reference to things, as they are in-themselves.¹⁰⁶ Kant, I believe, draws these very conclusions in §27 of the B Deduction. There, Kant considers the alleged consequences of the assumption that the categories were not the a-priori conditions for the cognition of objects but merely the a-priori conditions of our own, allegedly objective, representations with which actual objects were to agree merely on behalf of some form of a pre-established harmony guaranteed by God (*KrV*, B167f.). In

¹⁰⁶ In referring to H. E. Matthews' version of the two-aspect view (Matthews 1969) Karl Ameriks argues that “if there is some one privileged view [of objects as things in themselves], then there would be grounds for suspecting that Kant's talk about our view as dealing merely with phenomena is not as realistic in a commonsense way as Matthews believes” (Ameriks 2003, 74). Similar considerations are also the reason why Paul Guyer is not able to accept either the two-world or the two-aspect view as philosophically plausible. According to Guyer (1987, 335) “Kant does not need to postulate a second set of objects beyond the one we ordinarily refer to”. In any case “he does something just as unpleasant – namely, *degrade* ordinary objects to mere representations of themselves, or *identify* objects possessing spatial and temporal properties with mere mental entities”. My own solution to this issue is of course very different from that of Guyer's but I do agree with him that both the two-world and the two-aspect view involve the negative result he identifies.

such a case the categories could not be said to be *objectively* necessary but merely *subjectively* so, and this result is precisely what motivates the skeptical doubt. The same worry can be viewed by addressing the status of the objects to which the categories may or may not apply. If objects were ultimately considered as things-in-themselves (whether on the two-world or the two-aspect view) and the so-called phenomenal objects, on their own behalf, were nothing but appearances (of things-in-themselves) organized in certain ways by the categories then not only the categories, but also the objects constructed by their application to appearances, would be merely subjective and this is precisely what the skeptic holds. Note that things-in-themselves do not owe their structure to the synthesis of the apperception in the categories. Unlike sensible intuitions, the structure of things-in-themselves (as far as we can discuss it at all) is not based on a synthesis that must be performed by a spontaneous act of our own understanding, but rather inheres in the inner nature of these allegedly fundamental beings. This is noted by Kant in §26 of the B Deduction (*KrV*, B164). It follows that if objects were ultimately considered as things-in-themselves we would find ourselves in the exact same situation as described by Kant whereby the categories could not be considered as the absolutely necessary conditions *of objects* (in the full sense of the latter). We can only avoid this unpleasant result if we consider phenomenal objects as the only possible kind of objects, and if we construe things-in-themselves as merely possible concepts rather than possible objects. It would then follow that these phenomenal objects are not less real than anything else and the categories, which are their inevitable preconditions, are truly objectively necessary. Even the more moderate forms of the two-aspect view (not to speak of more ontological ones) seem to me to be opposed to the inner structure and deepest nature of Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories. This is so since the categories can only be shown to be objectively, rather than merely subjectively, real, if objects, to which they are applied, are understood as objects-in-appearance.

My above arguments were all directed at the notion of a thing-in-itself as a fundamental entity, the very concept of which is defined as independent of any cognitive form whatsoever. Alternatively, the thing-in-itself could be understood as a noumenon, defined from the very beginning as an alleged object thought through pure understanding. As such, the noumenon is understood, *per definition*, as a thing abstracted from time and space but not from the categories. However, it can at least be questioned whether according to Kant it is indeed possible to think *actual objects* (rather than mere Ideas of Pure Reason) through pure, unschematized, categories, in total abstraction from both the content and the form of sensibility. Authors – mainly from the two-aspect camp – employ the Kantian distinction between thinking and cognizing to explain how the categories can be used to think things-in-themselves without overstepping Kant's restrictions on their legitimate use. Although the latter view has become very widespread it is not beyond criticism and I dedicate the following two sections to the detailed analysis of this issue. More important for our current discussion is the question whether such an intelligible object, allegedly thought through pure categories, is what we truly mean by a thing *in-itself*. If by the latter we mean something, which inheres entirely in itself (regarding both its

properties and its existence) then by being subsumed under the categories (if *its* essence or *its* existence can be captured by some cognitive forms of some knowing subject) it is no longer independent of any relation to any cognitive subject; therefore, it is not a thing *in-itself*. What can be thought through the understanding, though not capable of being represented by the senses (in Kant's terminology the Ideas of Pure Reason), is a mere thought-entity, having at best logical possibility but denied real possibility and reference to an actual object. However, it makes no sense to refer to a merely thought-entity as the object that appears to us and as that, which affects the senses. What is required is an actual object independent of all cognitive forms whatsoever.

12.2.1.2 The Anthropocentric Interpretation

In contrast to both the two-world and the two-aspect view, we can imagine an interpretation that is non-fundamental. According to this view, that which opposes representations is the phenomenal object. The objective character of the latter does not rely on the transcendent existence of the thing-in-itself in any way. This view is based, on the one hand, on the complete irrelevance of the thing-in-itself, at least for the positive part of Kant's theoretical philosophy (the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Transcendental Analytic), and, on the other hand, on the distinction made within experience between the subjective and the objective aspects of appearances (or between appearance and phenomena).¹⁰⁷ In the former respect appearances are indeed nothing more than representations. In the latter respect they are regarded as an object, (epistemologically) distinct from our representations and as that to which representations must correspond.

According to this non-fundamental view, since the thing-*in-itself*, the truly transcendent entity, is not included in either sensible or intelligible representations and is not conditioned by the forms of either sensibility or the understanding, whether human or otherwise, the very questions whether it is singular or plural, whether its qualities are similar or different from appearances, whether it is considered as a substance and a cause of something else, and whether or not it can be said to exist, are not only questions for which we have no answer. These questions are devoid of any possible answer and what is meaningful about them is only their nominal definition. These questions are inevitably framed in terms of the

¹⁰⁷ Unlike other authors who emphasize the importance of the appearance-phenomena distinction (for example Bader 2012), I do not think that phenomena need to be grounded in things-in-themselves in order to be considered truly objective. Rather, I build on the inherent structure of phenomena as subjected to universal empirical laws, without any reference to an object beyond experience. Aside from the dogmatism involved, I believe that a main disadvantage of views such as Bader's is that it cannot explain how we distinguish objective from subjective events within experience. Since we have no epistemic access to things-in-themselves, the mere faith-based assurance that they ground our empirical form of reality cannot explain how we distinguish the actual from the illusory within experience (this is conceded by Bader 2012, 58n9).

categories and yet these categories are inapplicable to the thing-in-itself. The very question whether we can know things-in-themselves is self-contradictory. Although the terms making out these questions may be meaningful, their combination is not. This is so since in order to know something we would have to bring it under our forms of sensibility and understanding and yet the thing-in-itself is by definition beyond both faculties of (any) cognition. The statement that we do not know things-in-themselves – in the sense of wholly transcendent entities – is therefore analytic and gives no new information. One, therefore, does not lack knowledge of things-in-themselves. Accordingly the phenomenal object's mode of existence is no less real than anything else. What can possibly exist are only phenomenal objects. It has to be borne in mind that I do not offer this view as a theory about the ontological nature of Being or of the character of The Real as such. Rather, it is offered as an epistemological explanation of what we mean by 'being' or what functions as the real for human cognition.

This view does not cancel the humble character of Kant's transcendental idealism. First, we still have to admit our inability to know anything about mere Ideas such as God, Freedom or the immortal Soul. These Ideas designate possible thoughts but not possible objects. The Ideas of Pure Reason are merely logically possible concepts, for which no object could possibly be given. Nevertheless, as possible thoughts, of which we cannot have knowledge, they perform important roles within Kant's Dialectic of Pure Reason and for his Practical Philosophy. Second, within experience we also have to admit that our empirical knowledge of the world is forever incomplete since this world extends indefinitely in a spatio-temporal, causal, field. Not only can we always ask for further causes, even the causal relations we have already established are forever open to re-evaluation based on pre-existing or newly obtained evidence. Nevertheless, we do not lack knowledge of a different kind of object (the two-world view) nor do we lack knowledge of a different aspect of objects (the two-aspect view). If such alternatives can be entertained at all, they are no more than a play on empty words, which may have at best nominal meaning but no reference whatsoever. In contrast to Strawson's reading of Kant's transcendental idealism according to which "reality is supersensible and we cannot have any knowledge of it" (Strawson 1966, 38), I say: reality, in its one and only sense, is sensible and we can have knowledge of it, although this knowledge is forever incomplete and open to re-evaluation. This view is compatible with Kant's following statements:

If the complaints '**That we have no insight into the inner in things**' are to mean that we do not understand through pure reason what the things that appear to us might be in themselves, then they are entirely improper and irrational [. . .] Observation and the analysis of the appearances penetrate into what is inner in nature, and one cannot know how far this will go in time. (*KrV*, A277f./B333f.)

What the things may be in themselves I do not know, and also do not need to know, since a thing can never come before me except in appearance. (*KrV*, A276f./B332f.)

A distinction, that may help to see the point, is that between humility (*Demut*, *Bescheidenheit*) and humiliation (*Demütigung*). It is one thing to be humble about what can be known empirically, as I explained above, and it is quite another thing to

postulate an alleged ultimate, fundamental, reality, in light of which we then refer to empirical reality as a sort of diminished reality. Any view, according to which the unknowability of things-in-themselves means that we lack some form of reality that forever evades us, commits the latter fallacy. The trick to acknowledge humility without humiliating our empirically known reality is by recognizing that things-*in-themselves* (as allegedly transcendent entities) are, *by definition*, unknowable, and that, therefore, we lack nothing by not knowing them. Moreover, that which can be thought but not known – the Ideas of Pure Reason, modeled under the general notion of a negative noumenon – are not possible objects but merely possible thoughts, about which the most that can be said is that they are devoid of internal contradiction. The latter do not stand for a special kind of reality but rather for a special kind of ideal thoughts, which may serve some practical and even theoretical purposes but they do not stand for some kind of ultimate reality that can overshadow the empirically known reality.

Compare Kant's above-cited statements and anthropocentric view I defend here with Thomas Kuhn's view of the aims of science. Admittedly, Kuhn's statements are to be found within his discussion of scientific revolutions, a process in which some (if not all) of the functions that make up Kant's a-priori apparatus are replaced with new ones. On Kuhn's model, the basic structures that make the notion of empirical reality possible can, and do, undergo historical development, a process that Kant could scarcely have imagined. Nevertheless, one main aspect of Kuhn's approach is still applicable to Kant's more limited notion of empirical reality. Kuhn opposes the view that scientific progress brings us closer and closer to the (absolute) truth or to what nature is "really like".

One often hears that successive theories grow ever closer to, or approximate more and more closely to, the truth. Apparently generalizations like that refer not to the puzzle solutions and the concrete predictions derived from a theory but rather to its ontology, to the match, that is, between the entities with which the theory populates nature and what is "really there". (Kuhn 1996, 206)

Against this view Kuhn argues:

There is, I think, no theory-independent way to reconstruct phrases like 'really there'; the notion of a match between the ontology of a theory and its "real" counterpart in nature now seems to me illusive in principle. (Kuhn 1996, 206)

Similarly to the way in which I defend Kant's notion of empirical reality, Kuhn argues that science does not aim at the knowledge of nature as it allegedly is independently of any scientific paradigm. Rather, science aims at furthering our understanding of empirically observed reality, one in which our own forms of thought are inevitably embedded. To the charge that this view is relativistic Kuhn answers as follows:

Though the temptation to describe that position relativistic is understandable, the description seems to me wrong [since Kuhn does recognize the explanatory advantages of new theories over older ones]. Conversely, if the position be relativism, I cannot see that the relativist loses anything needed to account for the nature and development of the sciences. (Kuhn 1996, 207)

Kuhn appeals to the analogy with Darwin's theory of evolution and suggests that scientific progress, like the evolution of natural species, is a process that moves "from primitive beginnings but *toward* no goal" (Kuhn 1996, 172). He, thus, urges us to "learn to substitute evolution-from-what-we-do-know for evolution-toward-what-we-wish-to-know" (Kuhn 1996, 171). Instead of appealing to a form of knowledge we can never have, we should learn to be content with improving the empirical knowledge we can, and do, have. Insofar as the notion of a goal is still applicable, it is a notion that points back to the process itself. It is not a transcendent but rather an immanent goal, set or posited by scientific activity itself, and which denotes nothing other than the further improvement of the ability of scientific theories to explain observed phenomena.

A view similar to mine was expressed by Ralf Meerbote (1972, 418). He argued that "the doctrine of the unknowability of things-in-themselves cannot be equated with the claim that we can never know things as they really are." Meerbote appeals to Kant's empirical distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves, and to the fact that we can and do distinguish mere appearances from actual objects *within* experience. He concludes that the unknowability of things-in-themselves "means no more and no less than that objects, in order to be knowable, must be subsumable under particular a priori conditions which make knowledge of such objects possible [. . .] to say only this much is not to advocate any kind of skepticism." (Meerbote 1972, 418). Meerbote understands the notion of appearances by reference to the a-priori conditions of knowledge rather than by contrasting appearances with some form of ultimate reality that is denied us and thus without regarding appearances as a lesser kind or degree of reality.¹⁰⁸

According to the anthropocentric view I wish to advance, the representation–thing-in-itself dichotomy is irrelevant for Kant's theory of objective relation, although *such a distinction is important for Kant simply in order to contrast his new critical view with the classical metaphysics of his predecessors.*¹⁰⁹ The only mode of existence that is relevant to us is that of a phenomenal object. A phenomenal object is neither a mere representation nor is it a thing-in-itself. This reading is the only one that is truly consistent with Kant's principle of the subjective conditions of objectivity. I term this view 'anthropocentric' for it is centered on the human standpoint.¹¹⁰ It strives to explain how, or on the basis of which functions, our cognition can make a distinction between subjective and objective state of affairs, especially in science. It aspires to understand how this distinction is fruitful

¹⁰⁸ This is also J. S. Beck's way of explaining the notion of appearances (Chap. 4).

¹⁰⁹ This explains why Kant so frequently contrasts appearances with things-in-themselves in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* and why he insists that time and space are applicable to the former only. If such statements are understood as aimed at rejecting the very notion of objects as things-in-themselves (rather than merely rejecting the view of spatial objects as things-in-themselves) then empirical objects are no longer seen as a form of diminished reality. On this issue cf. also Sect. 12.2.5.1.

¹¹⁰ I take this term from my teacher Michael Strauss.

and is not a make-believe, albeit the fact that cognition can rely on nothing other than its own inherent tools.

Arthur Melnick's understanding of the doctrine of transcendental idealism in his *Kant's Analogies of Experience* is perhaps the closest view to the one I sketched above. Melnick first notes that

the notion of an object is itself, for Kant, a notion that makes sense only vis-à-vis judgment [...] The point is that the very concept of an object only makes sense if we bring in the notion of judgment or the idea of how we intellectually relate to the world. (Melnick 1973, 141)

In contrast to this understanding of the very notion of an object, Melnick proposes

that the notion of a thing in itself be interpreted as a notion of a non-epistemic concept of what it is to be an object. It is an alternative conception of what is involved in being an object; the idea, namely, of a concept of an object that would have sense apart from any reference to how the experience of a subject hooks up epistemically to his intellectual (judgmental) structure. (Melnick 1973, 152)

"A thing in itself", therefore, "is not a different kind of thing, nor even a concept of a different kind of thing, but rather a different kind of concept of a thing." (Melnick 1973, 154). Melnick's understanding of the concept of the thing in itself is summarized as follows:

According to the epistemic notion of an object, nothing could be an object *in itself* (apart from bringing in the idea of a subject), simply because according to this concept what it is for something to be an object involves reference to how a subject relates semantically to his experience. The notion of something being a thing in itself, on the other hand, is just that notion of an object that does not require for the completion of its sense any reference at all to so much of the idea of a subject. (Melnick 1973, 152)

It now follows quite naturally that the thing-in-itself "is not the notion of a kind of object inexorably unknown to us, but rather the notion of a *concept* quite literally incomprehensible to us" (Melnick 1973, 152). In a more recent work Melnick nevertheless concedes that when referring to the thing-in-itself merely as a limiting concept (in the sense of Kant's negative noumenon) one can allow that this concept is not incoherent. However, he argues that the latter limiting concept can only serve to curb the pretensions of sensibility and does not have any cognitive role. It is not, either directly or indirectly, involved in cognition. In particular it does not ground appearances, nor does it play any role in the theory of affection (Melnick 2004, 152).

Regarding the application of the categories, Melnick's original position is that "the categories do not have application or validity with respect to things in themselves" (Melnick 1973, 163). The ground for this is as follows:

The categories themselves are concepts of our cognitive relation to experience, i.e., the categories can be understood, or have content, only in terms of the function they play in setting up a cognitive relation between the subject and his experience. Their very sense depends in this way on reference to a subject and so on the epistemic notion of an object. (Melnick 1973, 163)

In a more recent publication he even adds that

the inapplicability of the categories to things-in-themselves holds for both pure and schematized categories. Pure categories, for us, are nothing more than logical functions. They require (rather than supply) some basis of semantic applicability to bring them to bear upon extra-conceptual reality, or reality that can be given in intuition. (Melnick 2004, 151)

Against the above-presented non-fundamental interpretation, two major objections can be raised. First, it can be argued that by completely eliminating the thing-in-itself we leave Kant's account of experience vulnerable to the charge of idealism. It would seem that the whole account of experience is thus reduced to the immanent circle of consciousness. Second, it can be argued that this account fails to consider Kant's important distinction between knowing an object (*einen Gegenstand erkennen*), and merely thinking an object (*einen Gegenstand denken*). While the knowledge or cognition of an object requires sensible intuition and is therefore related only to objects as appearances in time and space, the thought of an object, through pure, unschematized, categories, is independent of the formal conditions of sensible intuition and is related to things-in-themselves, or perhaps, to things considered as they are in themselves. Moreover, it can be argued that the anthropocentric interpretation directs its attention at a single and even less relevant target. At best it can demonstrate the irrelevance of the thing-in-itself regarded as a wholly transcendent entity, in the sense ridiculed by Fichte, and dismissed by Melnick. However, the objection continues, the thing-in-itself is not used by Kant in this extreme sense but in the more limited, and much less problematic, sense of a thing thought through pure categories (a *noumenon*). It would seem that the latter sense of the thing-in-itself is not only authorized by Kant; moreover, it performs functions for Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy which cannot be eliminated without undermining the very basis of Kant's entire philosophy.

The following sections are designed to address these objections and some related issues. The next two sections discuss the proper interpretation of Kant's distinction between knowing and thinking, as well as the consequences of the latter distinction for the status of the object related to these two cognitive modes.¹¹¹ I conduct this discussion in Sects. 12.2.2 and 12.2.3 through a criticism of Henry E. Allison's and Erich Adickes' versions of the two-aspect view, respectively. Allison, apart from being the most prominent contemporary defender of the two-aspect view, follows the exact path outlined in the above objections. Additionally, his view seems to be sensitive enough to avoid overstepping Kant's warnings and strictures on the use and applicability of the categories, while retaining just as much of the thing-in-itself as is required to perform those minimal functions without which Kant's system

¹¹¹ In Sect. 11.1, I have already raised the question whether Beck's merging of the categories with intuition prevents him from paying attention to the distinction between cognizing and merely thinking an object through pure categories; it could be argued that Beck's misinterpretation of Kant regarding the relation between the understanding and the intuition results in a misunderstanding of the limited sense of the thing-in-itself which is not only authorized by Kant but which also plays an inescapable role for Kant's transcendental idealism. Section 12.2.2 below is the detailed analysis of this objection.

seems, in the eyes of many, to collapse. If the anthropocentric interpretation is to succeed, it must be able to confront Allison's view and show its advantages over this alternative. I intend to show that even Allison's cautious and moderate view faces major obstacles when we consider Kant's restrictions on both the meaningfulness and the applicability of the categories. The case of Adickes – one of the leading Kant scholars of the early twentieth century – presents us with one of the most well grounded attempts to defend the existence of things-in-themselves and of the applicability of the categories to them. Adickes' textual evidence is overwhelming and it confers a seemingly unshakable force on his conclusions. No counter view can therefore succeed without addressing his persistent claims. Following the analysis of Allison's and Adickes' interpretative views, I discuss in Sect. 12.2.4 below, my views regarding Kant's overall response to idealism. My intention is to show why even the radical elimination of the thing-in-itself – as exemplified in Beck's unique interpretation – does not lead to idealism after all.

***12.2.2 The Extension of the Categories Beyond Sensibility and the Status of the Object That Affects the Senses – A Critique of Henry E. Allison's 'Two-Aspect' View*¹¹²**

According to Henry E. Allison's 'two aspect' view we can, and must, consider ordinary empirical objects, first under the sensible conditions by which they appear to us and second as independent of these conditions. These two ways of considering objects correspond to the familiar Kantian distinction between cognition (*erkennen*) and thinking (*denken*). Cognition requires sensible intuitions and therefore it exhibits the objects only under the conditions of their sensible representation. In contrast, pure thinking, through unschematized categories, enables us, according to Allison, to consider the objects, although in analytical judgments only, regardless of their sensible conditions, and therefore as things as they are in themselves.

Allison's view regarding the relation between pure thought and things-in-themselves is on the one hand supported by various passages in which Kant claims that although we cannot cognize things-in-themselves, we nevertheless can, and in some cases must, think them (*KrV*, Bxxvi–xxvii; B307; A254f./B310f.; A256/B312; A288/B344; Kant's marginal note on his own copy of the first edition, AA 23: 34; *KpV*, AA 05: 54; 05: 136). On the other hand there are many passages like the following one in which Kant insists that

¹¹² A previous version of this chapter was published in the *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 92, no. 2 (2010): 176–198 under the title "The Thought of an Object and the Object of Thought: A Critique of Henry E. Allison's 'Two-Aspect' View" (Nitzan 2010).

If by merely intelligible objects we understand those things that are thought¹¹³ through pure categories, without any schema of sensibility, then things of this sort are impossible. For the condition of the objective use of all our concepts of understanding is merely the manner of our sensible intuition, through which objects are given to us, and, if we abstract from the latter, then the former have no relation at all to any sort of object (*KrV*, A286/B342. Cf. also *KrV*, A139/B178, A155ff./B194ff., B288, A239/B298, A243/B301, A245f., A251, A253, B308, A256/B311, A287/B343, B302–3n, *Refl.*, 5554).

Similarly consider the following passage from the B Deduction:

The pure concepts of the understanding are free from this limitation [to our specific forms of intuition] and extend to objects of intuition in general, whether the latter be similar to our own or not, as long as it is sensible and not intellectual. But this further extension of concepts beyond **our** sensible intuition does not get us anywhere. For they are then merely empty concepts of objects, through which we cannot even judge whether the latter are possible or not – mere forms of thought without objective reality – since we have available no intuition to which the synthetic unity of apperception, which they alone contain, could be applied, and that could thus determine an object. **Our** sensible and empirical intuition alone can provide them with sense and significance [Sinn und Bedeutung]. (*KrV*, B148f.)

Given the fact that without intuitions we can neither tell whether the categories have a relation to an actual empirical object nor whether they even could have a relation to a possible empirical object, how can we then say that they have a relation to an object considered as a thing-in-itself? Given the emphasis that Kant puts on the requisiteness of intuitions, it may seem awkward that pure categories, devoid of even the formal aspect of intuition, would suddenly acquire an advantage from this very fact. Kant therefore adds that “what is most important here is that not even a single category could be applied to such a thing” as an “assumed object of a non-sensible intuition” (*KrV*, B149).

Can we reconcile these apparently conflicting Kantian claims and if so what are the consequences for the interpretation of pure thought on the one hand and things-in-themselves on the other? I suggest considering the relation between pure thought and an object within two contexts: that of general logic and that of transcendental logic. I argue that in the former case, thought expresses only the logical possibility of concepts and it completely abstracts from any possible relation to an object. In the latter case, thought relates to the transcendental object, which is merely a presupposition of the understanding. As such, the transcendental object expresses

¹¹³ The term ‘thought’ was altered by Kant in his personal copy of the first edition to ‘cognized by us’ (AA 23: 49). Since in this paragraph Kant argues against the possibility of a relation to objects, the term ‘cognition’ would initially seem better. However, since cognition of objects in abstraction from sensibility is *ipso facto* ruled out, and since this paragraph discusses the alleged relation between pure, unschematized, categories (which obviously pertain to thinking and not to cognizing) and an object, then the term ‘thought’ is more appropriate and this could explain why Kant left this paragraph unaltered in the second edition. It is noteworthy that even Erich Adickes, whose views are very different than my own, nevertheless admits that in this paragraph Kant intends to rule out *any alleged use* of pure, unschematized, categories. In their role as synthetical functions of unity they have no use in abstraction from sensibility, *not even in order to think the undetermined concept of the noumena* (Adickes 1924, 138, 140f.). The next section is dedicated to the analysis of Adickes’ view.

not a mode of considering the object, as it is in-itself independently of cognition, but only a condition for the cognition of phenomenal objects. The analysis of pure thought within these two contexts shall allow us to reconsider Allison's 'two aspect' view.

12.2.2.1 Thought in Its Logical Capacity and the Noumenon in Its Positive and Negative Senses

In general logic, thought operates under the rule of identity and contradiction and is manifested in analytical judgments. General logic is concerned only with relations between concepts and between judgments and is completely indifferent to the question of whether a concept or a judgment has or has not objective validity. In this respect one can think any thought as long as it does not include an internal contradiction. The logical level of consideration cannot support the argument for a relation between pure categories and things considered as they are in themselves. The main reason is that thought in its merely formal-logical capacity abstracts from any relation to an object. It expresses the mere logical possibility of the concept and it completely abstracts from the real possibility of there being an object corresponding to the concept.

In my view, any interpretation of Kant that argues for a relation between pure concepts – taken in their merely logical sense – and an object is an interpretation that, while appealing to the distinction between thinking and cognizing, in effect undermines it. This is so since it pulls us towards a relation of pure understanding to alleged actual object that would thus be the noumenon in its positive sense. It is an attempt to bypass Kant's strict limitation on the legitimate use of the understanding.

Let me make my argument clear: it is impossible to think something *thing* – that is, to *refer to an object* – in complete abstraction from intuition.¹¹⁴ Unless we think something determined, that is, something specific, for which intuition is required, we have not really thought any *thing* at all. "One must either abstract from any object (in logic), or else, if one assumes an object, then one must think it under conditions of sensible intuition" (*KrV*, A279/B335).¹¹⁵ This statement explicitly

¹¹⁴ One author who seems to support this view is Dina Emundts (2010). She argues that "even the categories as forms of thinking only tell us something about objects if we use them in a schematized form – that is, if we treat them as concepts to determine something in time and space". Emundts seems to support an even stronger view regarding not only reference but also meaning. She claims that "We can use concepts meaningfully only if we use them with respect to something that stands under the conditions of time and space." (Emundts 2010, 187). Her exact view on this issue is not clear since she does not explain how she understands the claim that Kant does allow us to think something as a thing in itself (Emundts 2010, 189).

¹¹⁵ Cf. also *KrV*, A245: "But the categories have this peculiar feature, that only in virtue of the general condition of sensibility can they possess a determinate meaning [Bedeutung] and reference to any object. Now when this condition is omitted from the pure category it can contain nothing but the logical function for bringing the manifold under a concept. By means of this function or form of the concept [. . .] we cannot in any way know and distinguish what object comes under it, *since*

rules out Allison's middle option in which thought in its merely logical capacity expresses a unique mode of considering the object. The thought of an actual object requires empirical intuition and similarly the thought of a possible object requires the form of intuition (at least time). In abstraction from both the material and the formal element of intuition there is only the logical function of judgment in general "without any sort of object being able to be thought or determined through them alone" (*KrV*, A248/B305).¹¹⁶ The following paragraph from the A-Deduction is very explicit:

It is entirely contradictory and impossible that a concept should be generated completely *a priori* and be related to an object although it neither belongs itself within the concept of possible experience nor consist of the elements of a possible experience. For it would then have no content, since no intuition would correspond to it. . . an *a priori* concept that was not related to the latter [intuition] would be only the logical form of a concept, but not the concept itself through which something would be thought. (*KrV*, A95)

Since pure thought is devoid of all intuition, whether empirical or pure, it is therefore devoid of content and thus cannot be the thought of something. Only cognition has a relation to an object, which is always determined. Pure thought, of a non-determined object, either expresses a condition for the cognition of objects (to be discussed below under the title of thought in its transcendental capacity) or it stands for the mere form of thought which abstracts from a relation to an object altogether (*KrV*, A250–253).¹¹⁷ This result is even implied in the text in which Kant first makes the distinction between the intellectual and the figurative (schematic) synthesis. He argues that only by combining the form of inner sense with the intellectual synthesis, thereby transforming it into a figurative synthesis, does the category as a mere form of thought acquire a relation to an object which is only a phenomenal one (*KrV*, B150f.). In the chapter on the schematism of the pure concepts of the understanding, Kant is very explicit:

Now if we leave aside a restricting condition, it may seem as if we amplify the previously limited concept; thus the categories in their pure significance, without any condition of

we have abstracted from the sensible condition through which alone objects can come under it." (The English translation of this passage is taken from Bird 2006, 344. The italic emphasis is my own). Since Kant repeatedly argues that the mere category (the unschematized category) is devoid of objective reality, Allison's claim that through pure categories we can still think an object in some sense can be restated as claiming that we can think an object insofar as it is devoid of objective reality.

¹¹⁶ Cf. *KrV*, A289/B346 in which Kant stresses that in abstraction from intuition, thinking is "a merely logical form without content" which nevertheless gives the wrong impression in that it allegedly allows a way of considering the object as it exists in itself regardless of sensibility. Cf. also Kant's letter to J. S. Beck, January 20, 1792 in which he states that pure concepts must be given a manifold a-priori (time and space) otherwise they are concepts for which no corresponding object *could* be given. As such they "would not even be concepts (they would be thoughts through which I think nothing at all)" (AA 11: 316).

¹¹⁷ In *KrV*, A253, Kant explains that we cannot even think an undetermined object and makes the distinction between the noumenon as a supposed *object* of pure understanding and a merely transcendental *condition*.

sensibility, should hold for things in general, **as they are**, instead of their schemata merely representing them **how they appear**, and they would therefore have a significance independent of all schemata and extending far beyond them. In fact, even after abstraction from all sensible condition, significance, but only a logical significance of the pure unity of representations, is left to the pure concepts of the understanding, but no object and thus no significance is given to them that could yield a concept of the object. (*KrV*, A147/B186)¹¹⁸

Henry Allison holds to a different opinion. He argues that we can think things considered as they are in-themselves through pure, unschematized, categories (Allison 2004, 17, 56). Although he admits that this mode of referring to things “fails to provide any information about the nature of things so considered (not even the minimal information that they are substances containing unknowable intrinsic properties, which is thought by Langton to be necessary in order to ground Kantian humility)”, Allison nevertheless argues that “the vacuity of a consideration of things as they are in themselves does not amount to incoherence. That would be the case only if the understanding could not even *think* things apart from the conditions of sensibility, which Kant repeatedly affirms that we can.” (Allison 2004, 56). Allison does not explain in what way it is still meaningful for us to think something whatsoever according to pure understanding while admitting the vacuity of such a consideration. Moreover, if the consideration of *objects* through pure, unschematized, categories is somehow meaningful, then how does it not amount to a transcendental use of the understanding?¹¹⁹ Allison's ambiguity, regarding the meaningfulness of what can be thought through pure categories, is manifested in the fact that in contrast to his claim for the “cognitive vacuity of a consideration of things as they are in themselves”, he still argues that “in spite of what some of Kant's formulations suggest, the thought (by the pure understanding) of things as they are in themselves is not *completely* empty; it has certain content.” (Allison 2004, 17). He argues that this content is “of a merely logical nature, since it is derived from the use of the categories apart from the sensible conditions (schemata) that realize them” (Allison 2004, 17). Here lies exposed Allison's own admission of the inconsistency of his view with Kant's text. But more than

¹¹⁸ Cf. also A139/B178, as well as an important footnote in preface to the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* in which Kant stresses that “there must also be intuitions given *a priori* that contain the conditions required for the application of these pure concepts of the understanding, because *without intuition there can be no object*” (*MAN*, AA 04: 475). It follows that “these concepts are capable of meaning and use in no other relation than to objects of experience” (*MAN*, AA 04: 476). The relation implied by Kant between the lack of an object and the lack of significance, when pure concepts are abstracted from all conditions of sensibility, shall be further elaborated and analyzed below. English translations of the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* are taken from Michael Friedman (Kant 2002).

¹¹⁹ Even if, for the sake of the argument, we grant Allison that this usage is meaningful, there still remains the issue of the application of the categories to things-in-themselves. Allison's reconfiguration of the issue of things-in-themselves in terms of the ‘two aspect’ view cannot escape Kant's strictures in the latter regard.

that, the very idea of “logical content” seems paradoxical, for according to Kant conceptual content can only be drawn from intuition.¹²⁰

The fact that Allison is compelled to argue that thought, by pure understanding, is not completely empty of content, strengthens my claim that thought without content cannot be the thought of a thing. Some authors go even further than Allison, whose struggles at least expose the complexity of the issue. They argue that the noumenon, thought through pure concepts, has its own unique properties, which distinguish it from the empirical object. One example is that the noumenon is constituted by intrinsic rather than extrinsic properties.¹²¹ It is clear that those

¹²⁰ Cf. for example, *KrV*, A239/B298; A95 cited above; *Jäsche Log*, §3 Note 1, AA 09: 92. Consider the following objection: *the noumenon is an object of an intuition, just an intellectual one, and that gives it all the content it needs; it's just that we have no idea of that content. That is, however, a logical possibility and that is enough to make it more than meaningless. My reply is that if you know nothing of such an intuition and of the hypothetical content it could possibly furnish, then how is this helpful in crossing the bridge of content required for a possible relation to an object? This objection attempts to give real possibility (a relation to an object) to the merely logically possible concept of a (negative) noumenon by referring to the merely logically possible concept of an intellectual intuition. The objection concedes that for a relation to an object we need content which for us is only sensible. Yet it tries to get around this obstacle by referring to the idea (itself only logically possible) of an intellectual content. This is a play on empty words. As Kant says, “That which is possible only under conditions that are themselves merely possible, is not possible in all respects.” (*KrV*, A232/B284). In other words – any combination of merely logical possibilities is insufficient to derive conclusions, which have any applicability to the real world. I wish to add another consideration: If we accept Kant's claim that our own cognition is limited in certain ways then we have to remember that even when we consider what is supposedly beyond our capacities, we do that within these very capacities. The latter are therefore inescapable. In his 1770 *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant says regarding the forms of sensible intuition that even if we wanted to imagine other forms of sensible intuition we would have to imagine these other forms using the ones we have – time and space. The latter are therefore unavoidable (*MSI*, AA 02: 404f.).*

¹²¹ Such a view is held by Rae Langton (1998, 50). Langton attempts to account for the fact that the thing-in-itself is nevertheless unknowable by insisting that we cannot determine those intrinsic properties that a thing has as it is in-itself. However, this cannot conceal the fact that her account does amount to a characterization of the thing-in-itself in minimal but nevertheless obvious terms. Allison (2004, 11, 56) too criticizes Langton on this account. We should recognize that if we attribute some properties to noumena (and if these properties are meaningful to us) then we know them, no matter how general these properties might be. In fact all properties are general to some degree and therefore they leave some field of meaning undefined. One can always narrow down any definition by attributing finer or more detailed properties. Thus, one cannot hide and say – noumena have intrinsic properties but since I don't know the specific intrinsic properties this amounts to no knowledge. Furthermore, either the term ‘intrinsic property’ is meaningful and then we should, at the very least, be able to give some examples of hypothetical intrinsic properties in general (regardless of noumena) or we cannot think of any possible example for the term ‘intrinsic property’ in which case the term is a set of empty words. I agree with Kant that a concept for which we cannot even think a possible example is nothing to us. The bottom line is – either we know noumena or we don't. If you attribute a property to them, and if this property is meaningful to us (that is, we can give some possible example of it) then we know them, at least to some degree. If, on the other hand, you do not know how this property *could, in principle*, be instantiated then its attribution is senseless, empty, and irrelevant. This is also the gist of Kant's argument against Leibniz – that his doctrine has brought him no closer to noumena. Without sensible content we are left with empty words, and with sensible content we have concepts, which relate to phenomena only.

supporting this latter view refer to the noumenon as a concrete or specific object, at least to some degree, a view, which amounts to a transcendental use of the understanding.

I believe that an even stronger argument follows from Kant's text. According to my view, Kant's overall claims seem to support the view that pure concepts, when stripped of the forms of intuition, are not only devoid of a reference to an object but even devoid of meaning. This latter claim may seem questionable, even provocative, especially when I claim that it expresses Kant's own intentions. Obviously, a concept for which no object can be given is not necessarily, and for this sole reason, a meaningless concept. This is true from both a systematic and an interpretative point of view. The issue at hand seems to point back to the familiar Fregean distinction between meaning (*Sinn*) and reference (*Bedeutung*). It may be helpful at this stage to contrast my view on the subject with that of Graham Bird who appeals to this very distinction. Bird argues that we should distinguish two aspects in relation to the discussion of pure, unschematized categories: (a) their use or application to an object (their extension or denotation); (b) their meaning (their intension or connotation). He argues that while pure categories lack application or reference to an object (Bird therefore vehemently rejects speaking of things in themselves as existing, or affecting, objects) they nevertheless retain meaning (Bird 2006, 528f.). Bird further argues that the meaningfulness of the categories – despite their lack of reference – is precisely what is required in order to account for the extension of thinking beyond cognition and therefore also to explain how we can entertain the *concept* of things in themselves (such as Ideas within Kant's Dialectic and the postulates of practical reason) but not the existence of actual *objects*. I think that the distinction between meaning and reference is useful to clarify the distinction between my own view and that of both Allison and Bird. Although Allison does not explicitly refer to the distinction between meaning and reference, it nevertheless follows from his line of thought that on his view, pure, unschematized, categories have a reference to a certain aspect of *objects*. Unlike Bird who authorizes the mere *concept* of things in themselves, and uses this view to account for the meaningfulness of Ideas of pure reason and the postulates of practical reason, Allison refers to an aspect of actual objects and applies this view within the analytic part of theoretical reason, moreover, within the theory of the influence of objects on our senses. I think it would be fair to say that in contrast to Bird, Allison holds that pure, unschematized, categories have a reference to objects considered as things in themselves. On the issue of the reference to objects, my view is, therefore, in line with that of Bird and in opposition to that of Allison.

A unique feature of my position comes into view when we consider the further issue of meaning. Although I certainly agree with Bird that Kant authorizes the mere concept of the thing in itself as a negative noumenon,¹²² I nevertheless disagree with his two levels of argumentation. Regarding the meaningfulness of

¹²² The exact meaning of this claim shall be clearer below following the distinction made between the positive and the negative senses of the noumenon.

pure categories, I think that although Kant's theory appeals to the distinction between meaning and use, nevertheless, in the special case of pure categories, devoid of all aspects of intuition, they lack both. I also disagree with Bird's second level of argumentation. I do not think that the extension of thought beyond the limits of cognition can only be accounted for if pure categories are meaningful despite having no reference.

In order to see the relation between the question whether a concept could possibly be given an object and the further question whether a concept is in some way meaningful, we need to distinguish three kinds of concepts for which no object could possibly be given. The first kind pertains to pure concepts entirely devoid of intuitions, whether empirical or pure. As such, pure, unschematized, categories are *entirely devoid of content*. They include only the form or mode of thinking; its "how" without its "what". In the case of pure concepts entirely devoid of content the inability to give an object to them results in their lack of meaning.

For we have seen there [in the deduction of the categories] that concepts are entirely impossible,¹²³ and cannot have any significance [Bedeutung], when an object is not given to them themselves or at least for the elements of which they consist, consequently they cannot pertain to things-in-themselves (without regard to how and whether they may be given to us) at all. (*KrV*, A139/B178)

In this passage, despite the obvious denial of reference to things in themselves, Kant says that *concepts themselves* are entirely impossible unless they can be exemplified in intuition or *at the very least include contents that can be so exemplified*. The important point is that without content altogether there is nothing to be thought. Similarly Kant claims that

as long as intuition is lacking, one does not know whether one thinks an object through the categories, *and whether there can ever be an object that even fits them*; and so it is confirmed that *the categories are not themselves cognitions, but mere forms of thought for making cognitions out of given intuitions*. (*KrV*, B288f. The text in **Bold** is Kant's own emphasis. The *italics* is my emphasis)

Although in the above passage Kant indeed argues that without intuition the pure categories lack a relation to an object, he nevertheless adds that without intuition we do not even know what kind of object *could possibly correspond to them*. This latter addition seems to imply that we in fact do not understand anything by such pure concepts. Support for this view is given in the concluding sentence, in which Kant contrasts cognition with mere forms of thought for making cognition out of given sensible data. Cognition through schematized categories is therefore not contrasted with actual *thought* through pure, unschematized, categories but with mere *forms* of thought.

In the following passage from the appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic Kant says that

¹²³ Altered in Kant's personal copy of the first edition to "are for us without sense [Sinn]" (AA 23: 46).

[...] even the concepts of reality, substance, causality, indeed even necessity in existence, lose all meaning [Bedeutung] and are empty titles for concepts without any content when with them I venture outside the field of sense. (*KrV*, A679/B707)

The appeal to “empty titles for concepts without any content” is obviously an appeal to meaning and this may explain the choice of English terms by the translators of the Cambridge Edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant 1998).¹²⁴

Like Bird, I too think that the following passage is constitutive for the current discussion. Kant says that

For every concept there is requisite, first, the logical form of a concept (of thinking) in general, and then, second, the possibility of giving it an object to which it is to be related. Without the latter it has no sense [Sinn], and is entirely empty of content, even though it may still contain the logical function for making a concept out of whatever data there are. (*KrV*, A239/B298)

The pure categories are therefore *not themselves concepts* but merely make out one element required to make concepts. The categories are the logical forms of thinking in general, required to construct concepts when they are applied to data or content supplied to them from intuition. We can conclude that while pure concepts may abstract from everything empirical in the appearances, they

must always contain the pure *a priori* conditions of a possible experience and of an object of it, for otherwise not only would nothing at all be thought through them, but also without data they would not even be able to arise in thinking at all. (*KrV*, A96)¹²⁵

I agree with Bird that Kant does not put forward a systematic theory of meaning but only appeals to limited argumentation required to support the results he is after (Bird 2006, 346, 524). We should therefore be cautious in putting too much emphasis on Kant's use of the terms ‘Sinn’ and ‘Bedeutung’.¹²⁶ Moreover, there are references in Kant's text to both terms in connection with what pure categories lack. I also concede that Kant's main aim is to discredit the rationalistic assumption

¹²⁴ Bird himself translated ‘Bedeutung’ as ‘meaning’, cf. note 126 below.

¹²⁵ I wish to add that unschematized categories are not annulled when considered in their pure form. The categories still stand for the ultimate conditions of thinking and this is what Kant means when he says that “pure categories, without formal conditions of sensibility, have merely transcendental significance” (*KrV*, A248/B305). Similarly, in *KrV*, A147/B186 Kant argues that “after abstraction from all sensible condition, significance [Bedeutung], but only a logical significance of the mere unity of representations, is left to the pure concepts of the understanding”. The categories have their origin in pure understanding; they are not abstracted from their schematized form. However, as forms or modes of thinking in general they cannot be identified or recognized unless they are exemplified. In complete abstraction from any actual, and more importantly from any possible application, it is impossible to grasp their meaning.

¹²⁶ Bird himself brings the following passages, which even on his own translation, refer to meaning. At B299 Kant says that “these *a priori* principles would mean [bedeuten] nothing were we not able always to present their meaning [Bedeutung] in appearances, that is, in empirical objects”. Regarding the categories, Kant says that “only in virtue of the general condition of sensibility can they possess a determinate meaning [Bedeutung] and relation to an object” (*KrV*, A244f.). The translation of these passages is Bird's (2006, 525). On Kant's implicit appeal to the Sinn-Bedeutung distinction, cf. Bird 2006, 343f.

according to which we can *cognize* things in themselves. Kant indeed argues that although we cannot cognize things in themselves we can nevertheless think them, but since he does not put forward a systematic theory of meaning and since his arguments are mainly directed at discrediting the possible cognition of actual objects through pure understanding, the relation of thought to things in themselves and moreover the relation of pure, unschematized, categories to this mode of thinking remains to some degree ambivalent. Kant nowhere explicitly says that we can think things in themselves through pure, unschematized, categories. Bird's conclusions are deductions from what Kant says to what he does not say. By contrast, Kant seems very clear that without sensible content altogether thought simply cannot arise. Therefore, in the case of pure, unschematized categories, Kant repeatedly connects the impossibility of relating an object to them with their meaninglessness. For example in a draft letter to J. H. Tieftrunk, dated October 13, 1797, Kant stresses that pure categories are "the mere form of thinking, that is, concepts without objects, *concepts that as yet are without any meaning [Bedeutung]*" (AA 13: 463. The emphasis is my own).

In the *Critique* Kant argues regarding pure categories that:

We cannot even give a real definition of a single one of them, i.e., make intelligible the possibility of their object, without immediately descending to the conditions of sensibility... since, if one removes this condition, all significance [Bedeutung], i.e., relation to the object, disappears, and one cannot grasp through an example what sort of thing is really intended by concepts of this sort. (*KrV*, A240f./B300)

Although in the above passage Kant clearly argues against a relation to an object, nevertheless the inability to define the categories implies a difficulty with their meaningfulness. The reference to a *real* definition was added by Kant in the revised version of the second edition. This addition is in line with the text of the first edition, which included a footnote in which Kant explained what is meant by the term 'real definition'. There, Kant says:

I mean here a real definition, which does not merely supply other and more intelligible words for the name of a thing, but rather contains in itself a clear **mark** by means of which the **object** can always be securely cognized, and that makes the concept that is to be explained usable in application. (*KrV*, A241)

First we observe that a real definition is contrasted with the mere replacement of one term or word with yet other words, which equally require explanation. Second, although Kant clearly says that a real definition is intended to give application to a concept (reference) he equally appeals to a concept that needs to be explained (meaning). A real definition is required to supply clear marks, which would allow the concept to be "substantiated through an example" (Kant's note on his own copy of the first edition, AA 23: 47). Indeed Kant claims, "we cannot understand anything except that which has something corresponding to our words in intuition." (A277/B333). Thus if we do not have distinct marks which would enable us to explain what could possibly constitute an example for a concept, we do not really understand the meaning of that concept. This latter requirement can be met either if the concept itself (as a unity of sensible data) can be sensibly represented or at the

very least if the concept includes some intuitive content which can be separately represented to the senses.

Differently put, the definition of the categories is obviously distinguished from mere gibberish. It makes use of words familiar to us. However, these words are only meaningful within a spatio-temporal framework. Without supplementing pure concepts with, at the very least, the condition of time, we do not understand what their definition intends; moreover, we do not even understand what it possibly could intend. Let me further explain with the aid of few examples.

It seems to me that pure categories, abstracted from the conditions of sensibility, are reduced to mere identities and thus not only do they abstract from any possible relation to an object but also their unique meaning dissolves. Take for example the pure concept of causality. In its schematic form, it expresses a unidirectional temporal relation from a cause to an effect. In comparison, when stripped of the temporal relation we end up with no more than a logical relation of ground and consequence, which expresses the identity of the two terms involved. Such is the judgment, which deduces the property of having three sides from the concept of a triangle. However, this bidirectional logical identity, expressed by an analytical judgment, no longer expresses the concept of causality. Without the temporal condition the real relation of causality is replaced with the logical relation of derivation. The distinction between, and irreducibility of, the real ground expressed by the causal relationship in contrast to a merely logical relation of ground and consequence based on the law of identity, was acknowledged by Kant as early as the early-mid seventeen-sixties (*NG*, AA 02: 202ff.; *TG*, AA 02: 370). In a note from the same period Kant argues regarding the concept of causality that without "ideas of time one will find no explanation that does not include a circle, and there seem to be no others" (*Ref*, 3942, AA 17: 357). The attempt to construct analytical judgments about the concept of causality itself yields the same results. Either the concept of causality includes the temporal relation and then the judgment constructed is synthetic or we end up with no more than empty words without a possible relation to an object and indeed without meaning. If we define the concept of a cause as 'a thing whose existence determines the existence of another thing' then we can construct the following analytical judgment: 'whatever is a cause, determines by its own existence the existence of another thing'. However this judgment, like all analytic judgments, is an empty tautology expounding in the predicate what was already understood in the subject. Not only does it not follow that there could actually be such a thing as a cause but more than that, I do not really understand what is meant by this definition. Comprehending an idea requires being able to represent it, which without the conditions of sensibility is impossible. Without persistence in time one neither understands what is meant by the term 'thing' nor by the term 'existence', let alone what is meant by the relation of 'determination' that exists between the cause and its effect.

I now come to consider the second and third kind of concepts for which no objects could possibly be given. The second class refers to concepts, which include sensible intuitions, however, the latter are self-contradictory. In this case there is data to be thought but due to the internal contradiction no thought can arise. The

third kind of concepts for which no objects could be given refers to concepts, which include sensible content, devoid of internal contradiction; however, the contents of these concepts are combined in a way, which fails to comply fully with the a-priori conditions of intuition – time and space. These concepts can therefore be thought (since they have data and since this data complies with the highest principle of thought – the principle of identity and contradiction), although they cannot be sensibly represented and therefore they cannot be cognized and no object can possibly be given to them.

We can conclude that in the case of pure concepts, entirely devoid of intuitions (the first class of concepts considered above), we have only the forms of concepts – forms of thought which are not themselves thoughts. In the second case we have a concept, which allows a nominal definition (since it includes meaningful elements) but which, nevertheless, cannot be thought due to its inherent contradiction. Only in the third case (to be further discussed below) do we have concepts, which can properly be thought but which cannot be cognized.¹²⁷ In reply to Bird I therefore argue that it is through such concepts – in Kantian terms *Ideas* – that thought extends beyond sensibility and not through pure, unschematized, categories. Ideas – and not pure, unschematized, categories – are indeed meaningful despite the lack of reference!

Moreover, even the Ideas of pure reason are not thought through pure categories devoid of any relation to experience and to the a-priori conditions of sensibility. Kant clearly states that we can only think the Ideas *through an analogy with the empirical application of the categories*. Although the Ideas of God, Freedom and

¹²⁷ In the opening pages of the A Deduction (*KrV*, A95f.) Kant makes clear that in order to go from mere conditions for thinking in general to actual thought, the pure categories must be supplemented with sensible data. This can occur a-priori when the categories are applied to time and space. He argues that although “the **elements** for all a-priori cognitions, even for arbitrary and absurd fantasies, cannot indeed be borrowed from experience (for then they would not be a-priori cognitions), but must always contain the pure a-priori conditions of a possible experience [time and space], for otherwise not only nothing at all be thought through them, but also without data they would not be able to arise in thinking at all”. In the immediately preceding passage Kant also distinguishes some cases which fall under the above condition: “Once I have pure concepts of the understanding, I can also think up objects that are perhaps impossible, or that are perhaps possible in themselves but cannot be given in any experience since in the connection of their concepts something may be omitted that yet necessarily belongs to the condition of a possible experience (the concept of Spirit), or perhaps pure concepts of the understanding will be extended further than experience can grasp (the concept of God).” Kant therefore distinguishes several a-priori thoughts, not borrowed from experience, constructed through the application of the categories to time and space (in at least a limited sense). The first kind refers to logically impossible concepts (due to an internal contradiction), the second kind refers to concepts that are possible in thought (since they are free from internal contradiction) but which omit a condition of possible experience and therefore cannot be sensibly represented. The latter class refers to concepts which can be thought (logically possible) but which are devoid of real possibility, the possibility of giving an object to a concept. Kant gives two examples here – the second even more remote than the first – the concept of a Spirit and the concept of God. I think that Kant’s discussion in these paragraphs supports my above classification and explanation of various kinds of concepts for which an object cannot possibly be given.

the immortal Soul are thought of as supersensible, nevertheless they can only be thought in relation to the highest possible unity in experience and *in analogy with relations that exist within appearances*. This supports my claim that such concepts are not thought through pure categories but through an analogy with the schematized categories. Regarding the Ideas, Kant argues that

We are thinking about a Something about which we have no concept at all of how it is in it self, but about which we think a relation to the sum total of appearances, which is analogous to the relations that appearances have to one another. (*KrV*, A674/B702)

Specifically regarding the Idea of God, Kant argues that

we cannot think [it] except in accordance with the analogy of an actual substance that is the cause of all things in accordance with the laws of reason. (*KrV*, A675/B703)

The Dialectic includes numerous references to the requisite of an analogy with the empirical use of the categories (*KrV*, A679/B707). In §59 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant further develops this analogous mode of presentation. First, he repeats his constant claim that in theoretical philosophy, a priori concepts can only obtain objective reality, and therefore reference to objects, if they can be shown to have objects corresponding to them in intuition and this can occur in the case of pure concepts of the understanding only when they are supplemented with schemata. The a priori concepts of reason – the Ideas – are not susceptible to this procedure. The Ideas have, therefore, no reference.¹²⁸ However, Kant argues that we should recognize two modes of presentation through which a relation to intuition, and therefore meaning, is achieved, only one of which includes in addition to meaning also a reference to an object.

All **hyposyopsis** (presentation), as making something sensible, is of one of two kinds: either **schematic**, where to a concept grasped by the understanding the corresponding intuition is given a priori; or **symbolic**, where to a concept which only reason can think, and to which no sensible intuition can be adequate, an intuition is attributed with which the power of judgment proceeds in a way merely analogous to that which it observes in schematization. (*KU*, 05: 351)¹²⁹

“The intuitive”, he argues, “can be divided into the **schematic** and the **symbolic** kinds of representation” (*KU*, 05: 351). The first kind is a direct presentation of the concept through demonstration (and thus also provides a reference to objects), while the latter is indirect presentation “by means of an analogy (for which empirical intuitions are also employed)” (*KU*, 05: 352. Cf. also Kant's footnote

¹²⁸ It is totally beside the point that such Ideas can obtain objective reality within practical reason, cf. note 139 below. However, reference, in comparison with mere meaning, requires a relation to an actual object and this can occur only within the theoretical use of reason, a procedure that requires the schemata.

¹²⁹ The relevance of this passage from the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* was pointed out to me by Toni Kanisto, while discussing a not-yet published essay of his on the subject of the application of pure, unschematized, categories. All English translation of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* was taken from Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Kant 2000).

on the same page). The latter procedure provides meaning, for which some relation to intuition is inevitable, but cannot provide an objective reference.

Finally I want to address Allison's claim that in considering things as they are in themselves we can construct "analytic judgments about the *concept* of things so considered (as substance, cause, and so on)" (Allison 2004, 56). In this regard one must note that analytic judgments can only expose what is included in the content of a concept if the concept includes content to begin with. Without content, thought is not annulled, but remains as a potential capability, which cannot be demonstrated. Even pure logic, although it abstracts from all relation to an actual or even possible object, cannot be realized without some content, which can only be supplied by intuition.¹³⁰

In support of his interpretation, Allison refers to a group of passages in which Kant argues against the use of pure concepts in constructing synthetic judgments about things as they are in themselves. Allison deduces from this that Kant leaves open the possibility of constructing analytical judgments in their regard (Allison 2004, 453n45, 458n10). In my view this is an incorrect conclusion, which does not necessarily follow from Kant's text. Kant only argues against the possibility of cognition of things-in-themselves and therefore against the construction of synthetic judgments in their regard, since it is clear to him that pure, unschematized, categories, as well as mere analytical judgments, have no relation to an object whatsoever.¹³¹ Admitting, as Allison does, that pure understanding allows only the usage of analytical judgments, is equal to admitting that pure understanding has no relation to an object, all the more so a thing-in-itself.¹³²

The discussion above, of both the scope and limitations of thought in its purely logical capacity, shows that it corresponds exactly to Kant's definition of the noumenon in its negative sense. The latter expresses a merely logical possibility and is referred to by Kant not as an object but as a problematic and boundary *concept*.¹³³ This is also the way Kant refers to the regulative Ideas of pure reason.

¹³⁰ This conviction was the basis for Kant's argument for God's existence in *The only possible argument in support of a demonstration of the existence of God*. In this work Kant argues that the very possibility of thought in accordance with the law of identity and contradiction requires there to be some data that can be thought. This data constitutes the material element, of which our concepts are made and which can either be internally consistent or internally self-contradictory. In *The only possible argument* this argument is used to prove the absolutely necessary existence of matter in general, an argument which the critical Kant would renounce, but the dependence of even logical possibility on some data that must first be given, still holds.

¹³¹ Cf. for example Kant's equation of objective with synthetic judgments: "Without concepts of the understanding, however, which must be given objective reality, reason cannot judge at all objectively (synthetically) [. . .]" (*KU*, 05: 401).

¹³² Cf. *KrV*, A258f./B314f., in which Kant discusses the ostensible relation of pure understanding to an object and what can be achieved by merely analytic, in comparison to synthetic judgments, in this regard.

¹³³ We cannot even begin to discuss the real possibility of the noumenon in its negative sense since real possibility can only be ascertained in relation to intuitions, which are here ruled out. Concerning the real possibility, the noumenon, even in its merely negative sense, is not possible and not impossible. The very question regarding its possibility is impossible (*KrV*, A254/B310; A286f./B343).

The latter too are logically possible although no object can be given to them in intuition.

There are two aspects that must be borne in mind regarding concepts, which are merely logically possible. First we must note that they are not devoid of content (sensible content) altogether. As we have discussed above, even logical possibility and analytical judgments require some content, which can only come from intuition. The second issue to be noted is that, although concepts must include at least some aspects of formal intuition, the latter may be manipulated or connected in a way that omits a necessary condition of possible experience. Thus, while such a concept is logically possible it still lacks real possibility, that is, the possibility of demonstrating its object in intuition (*KrV*, A96).¹³⁴ Take for example the concept of causality out of freedom. This concept does make use of some temporal aspects but it fails to comply fully with the condition of time since it claims the possibility of a primary cause, which is not the result of a prior cause.

This analysis enables us to readdress the issue of the extension of the categories beyond sensibility. Since the sole and unique role of the understanding is not to perceive contents but only to synthesize contents sensibly given, then it is within this function of synthesis and within it alone, that we have to look for the extension of the understanding beyond sensibility. This extension, therefore, is not explained as Allison argues, by appealing to an alleged 'logical content' that would allow the understanding to think *something* in complete abstraction from intuition. On the contrary, the extension of the understanding beyond sensibility is explained by acknowledging that the understanding can synthesize sensible representations in ways, which, although not self-contradictory, may nevertheless fail to comply fully with the a-priori forms of intuition. The above corresponds exactly to the borderline status of the noumenon in its merely negative sense, the paradigm of all Ideas of pure reason.

In contrast to the noumenon in its negative sense, which is at least but also at best logically possible, the noumenon in its positive sense is impossible even in the narrow logical sense. Its very concept includes an internal contradiction. The concept of the noumenon in its positive sense includes a contradiction, since it expresses the desire to cognize an actual object of pure understanding, disregarding the fact that cognition requires sensible intuitions, which are here absent. In other words, the noumenon in its positive sense is on the one hand determined (as an *object* of pure understanding) and on the other hand not determined (due to the lack of intuition), (*KrV*, B307).¹³⁵

¹³⁴ These concepts lack real possibility within theoretical reason but they may acquire their real possibility within practical reason.

¹³⁵ The contradictory character of the noumenon in its positive sense is explicitly stated in *KrV*, A279/B335. Note that a contradiction with the conditions of possible experience is not yet a logical contradiction, *but only as long as we do not refer to an actual object*. An object can only appear within experience and it must comply with its conditions. Therefore the talk of an object that is not sensible (the positive noumenon) is a logical contradiction, while the talk of a thing in general (a mere grammatical subject of judgment), which is not an object of sensible intuition (the negative

The noumenon in its negative sense plays a very limited role in Kant's theoretical philosophy. Kant does indeed say that the noumenon in its negative sense is required to limit sensibility. In making reference to a thing that is not an appearance, it emphasizes the fact that our cognition is limited to the realm of appearances only. However, this result is already achieved by the Transcendental Aesthetic without any reference to what is beyond experience (*KrV*, A378, Bxxvi).¹³⁶ The limitation of what can be known to appearances is perfectly explicable from within the bounds of experience by referring to its transcendental conditions.¹³⁷ Why then does Kant come so close to the limits of his own system by alluding to what is "beyond experience"? Why does he risk teetering on the very edges of his critical philosophy? There is only one reason: Kant needs to prepare the field, so to speak, for practical philosophy, in which he intends to make use of the concept of a thing that is not an object of sensible intuition.¹³⁸ If such a concept were self-

noumenon) is not a logical contradiction. Put logically the issue is as follows: let 'O' stand for an object and 'S' for sensible. Since 'O + S' is free of contradiction, so is 'not (O + S)', the negative noumenon. In contrast, 'O + (not S)', the positive noumenon, is self-contradictory. In attempting to distinguish the positive from the negative noumenon, Graham Bird (2006, 532) argues that "the negative conception is that of objects outside our sensory range, covered by the indeterminate thought of something in general." By contrast "the positive conception is that of an object of a specific non-sensory intuition." Although Bird's general view of the issue of things-in-themselves puts much emphasis on the distinction between concept and object, he fails to see that this distinction is at the heart of the distinction between the negative and the positive senses of the noumenon. He refers to both as alleged objects. It seems to me that the most important feature to be highlighted is that the legitimacy of the mere *concept* of a thing in general, (as a grammatical subject of judgment) which is not a sensible object, in contrast to the illegitimacy of a non-sensory *object*. Bird, therefore, fails to show that while the negative noumenon is logically possible, the positive noumenon is self-contradictory.

¹³⁶ In one place this is even recognized by Allison (2004, 6f.).

¹³⁷ The mere fact that whatever is an object for us must appear within the forms of our sensibility, already limits our objective knowledge to appearances. Allison, in contrast, thinks that the contrast with things considered apart from the way in which they appear to us is requisite for considering sensible objects as appearances (Allison 2004, 57). On this issue cf. Beck's view, Chap. 4 above and also Meerbote's view considered in Sect. 12.2.1 above.

¹³⁸ Cf. *KpV*, AA 05: 54 in which Kant stresses the importance of recognizing that it is not on behalf of theoretical reason but only of practical reason, that we are driven to apply the categories to things as they are in themselves. The same reference to practical reason is made by Kant in §27 of the B Deduction in which he addresses the distinction between thinking and cognizing. In a footnote on B166 he concedes that thinking is not restricted by the conditions of intuition but he emphasizes that in that case pure thinking is not directed at determining any kind of object (the task of theoretical reason) but at determining the subject and his/her will (the task of practical reason). It follows from the above references that the extension of thought beyond sensibility and the reference to a thing that is not a sensible object should not be applied to the theory of affection or in order to anchor the phenomenal object in an alleged in-itself aspect but rather merely to legitimate the concepts of practical reason. According to Frederick Beiser's historical reconstruction of the development of Kant's thought (Beiser 1992, 44, 50), Kant's introduction of the intelligible world, since as early as his 1770 *Inaugural Dissertation*, is to be understood in a strictly moral sense. Moreover, Kant's fascination with metaphysics, with its doctrines of God, freedom and immortality, was predominately intended, as early as his first publication in 1746, to save the moral domain from the deterministic mechanism that reigns in natural experience.

contradictory it would be unthinkable and therefore useless even for practical philosophy. We could not believe in the concepts of freedom and God unless these concepts were at least free of contradiction. This is what Kant sets out to establish by showing that the concept of the noumenon in its negative sense is at least logically possible. The role of the thing-in-itself as a merely logically possible concept is thus mainly to act as a link between Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy. Within both fields the role of the merely logically possible concept of a noumenon is only to act as a preliminary condition.¹³⁹ The merely logical possibility of the noumenon in its negative sense also explains how Kant can use the notion of a thing-in-itself within the Transcendental Dialectic without thereby conflicting with the limitations established in the Transcendental Analytic.

My exposition thus enables me to reconcile the internal tension within theoretical philosophy, in which the thing-in-itself seems to be both required and unauthorized, as well as to resolve an apparent inconsistency between reason in its theoretical and practical capacities. Reason in its theoretical capacity does not bypass its own limits for it neither argues for the existence, nor inexistence, of any supersensible object. It leaves as merely logically possible the concept of a thing that is not a sensible object; it includes commitment neither to the essence nor the being of a supersensible object. It is exactly this position on the divide – on the one hand leaving the boundary concept of a noumenon as free of contradiction and on the other hand without objective reality – that allows practical reason to claim the objective reality of God, freedom and the immortality of the soul without conflicting thereby with theoretical reason.

The discussion I have started in the previous section has now come full circle. It is now clear why the concept of a thing-*in-itself*, a concept of a thing which must, *as such*, be understood as a transcendent entity wholly independent of any relation to any kind of cognitive subject, as well as the concept of an object of pure understanding (the positive noumenon), are both strictly impossible even in the mere logical sense. It is also clear how despite the above, the concept of a thing in

¹³⁹ Kant explicitly states that what is required for the real possibility of the concept of freedom within practical reason is first that this concept shall be thinkable, that is, devoid of contradiction and therefore logically possible. Without this, it would be annulled and could not serve any purpose even for practical reason (*KpV*, 05: 56). Although the real possibility of the concept of freedom cannot be asserted or even asked for within theoretical reason (since that would require intuition), the real possibility of the concept of freedom can nevertheless be asserted within practical reason by demonstrating its necessity for the possibility of the moral law. Thus we see that the logical possibility – the ability to think a concept without contradiction – is a preliminary requirement for the real possibility within both theoretical and practical reason (*KpV*, 05: 50–57; cf. also *KrV*, Bxxvi–xxx and Kant's note on Bxxvi). The same arguments are made in general in connection with the concepts of God, immortality and freedom, which for theoretical reason are merely logically possible but gain their real possibility within practical reason (*KpV*, 05: 134–146). Kant also insists that the assertion of the real possibility of these concepts, and with it the expansion of the categories beyond sensibility, within practical reason has no implications whatsoever for theoretical reason which does not gain thereby any expansion of its own field. Cf. also Kant's letter to J. H. Tieftrunk, December 11, 1797 (AA 12: 224). I discuss these issues in further details in Chap. 13.

general, which is not a sensible object (the negative noumenon), is nevertheless free from internal contradiction and is at least logically possible. In other words, it is now clear how we can hold both that the very concept of a thing-in-itself (in the sense of a fundamental entity, independent of any kind of relation to a knowing subject as such) is, aside from its nominal definition, incomprehensible while still allowing a sense in which a thing in general, which is not a sensible object (the negative noumenon) is meaningful and can be used by Kant within his Transcendental Dialectic and within his practical philosophy.

12.2.2.2 Thought in Its Transcendental Capacity and the Transcendental Object

In transcendental logic, thought expresses the necessary conditions of experience. This context offers us another reason why pure concepts cannot be concepts *of objects*. This has to do with their role in the construction of experience. Pure concepts cannot be representations *of something* since their precise role is to account for the way by which representations relate to things in the first place. If pure concepts were, like empirical concepts, representations of objects, then the whole question of how a representation relates to an object would remain open. Not only would we then be unable to account for the relation of empirical concepts to their objects; moreover, the very same question would arise anew regarding pure concepts. The latter too would look like special representations whose relation to an object is a mystery. Pure concepts are therefore not representations of a special kind but the rules governing representations accounting for their ability to stand for an object considered as distinct from them. A logical condition for having representations cannot at the same time be viewed itself as a representation.¹⁴⁰

It is a mistake to think of pure concepts as if they were special concepts in the unique possession of the understanding. The latter view means, at least implicitly, that pure concepts are concepts like any other, but such that are devoid of any intuitive content and are innate to the understanding. This view lends support to the claim that pure concepts have a relation to a pure object to which they correspond. It blurs the distinction between an empirical concept and a pure concept, which is only the form of an empirical concept.¹⁴¹

Pure concepts, then, express the general condition without which representations could not be said to stand for, or relate to, an object. This is what Kant means when he says that pure concepts express a relation to an object in general. The ‘object in

¹⁴⁰ That the categories cannot be regarded as concepts or representations of a special kind was clearly seen by Beck (*EmS*, 140, 177ff., 426).

¹⁴¹ Already in the *Inaugural Dissertation* Kant argued that although pure concepts of the understanding are not abstracted from sensations they nevertheless are not innate concepts. They are abstracted from the laws inherent in the mind and they can only be recognized in application to sensible representations (*MSI*, §8, AA 02: 395).

general' therefore designates a general condition for objectification.¹⁴² This logical or better still transcendental condition, which is the ground of all pure concepts, is no other than the transcendental object. The latter expresses the unity of apperception, the transcendental self. The transcendental object can be said to be the correlate or the projection of the unity of apperception beyond itself, its realization. For this is the role of the unity of apperception: to bring sensible representations to an objective unity, and this is only possible by positing, or in other words presupposing, a reference point to which representations can be attached (*KrV*, A250). It is important to stress that just as a pure concept is not a concept in the regular sense, so the transcendental object is not an object in the regular sense. The transcendental object is neither a specific or determined object nor is it an "undetermined object" transcendent to cognition. Rather, it is "nothing other than the formal unity of consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of representations" (*KrV*, A105).¹⁴³

Since the transcendental object plays a major role in Allison's view, I think that contrasting our views on this matter shall serve well to distinguish our differences. According to Allison the transcendental object has three distinct roles. The first is the role assigned to it in the A-Deduction in which it expresses an internal function of the understanding as I explained above. Allison admits that in this role, the transcendental object, conceived of as a "transcendental pointer", which is no more than a correlate of the unity of apperception, "cannot be identified with the thing as it is in itself without doing violence to the critical nature of Kant's project in the Deduction" (Allison 2004, 61). The second role of the transcendental object, according to Allison, is to serve as a transcendental cause or ground of appearances. In the latter sense the transcendental object is practically identified by Allison with the thing considered as it is in itself. Lastly, Allison argues that the transcendental object has a third role. In this latter sense the transcendental object functions as that which can be considered dually in transcendental reflection, either as it appears or as it is in itself (Allison 2004, 62). Regarding this third role, Allison himself admits that it is "somewhat speculative" and that it is necessitated only by the structure of his own interpretation; moreover, that Kant himself never developed it.

For our purposes, it will be most instructive to consider what Allison calls the second role of the transcendental object. It is the significance given by Allison to the transcendental object in this second role, in contrast to my insistence on the exclusivity of what Allison calls the first role that clearly exposes our

¹⁴² We should note that Kant also uses this term in the sense of an object 'as such' or absolutely and in every relation, which is how traditional metaphysics understood this term. But the latter sense is illegitimate within Kant's critical system, and is mainly used by Kant to express its contrast to his own way of thinking. Cf. also note 161 below.

¹⁴³ For a view similar to mine regarding the transcendental object, cf. Hickey 2001. Hickey (2001, 130), as well, argues that the transcendental object is not "an object 'viewed transcendently'" as Allison would have it, "but rather the mere *form* of an object, i.e., the concept or rule that provides for synthetic unity in a manifold".

differences.¹⁴⁴ Allison pursues the independent source of our sensible data. He indeed rejects an ontologically distinct entity as the source. Nevertheless, he holds that our sensible data must be conceived of as originating from an “in-itself” aspect of that which can also be considered empirically.

If we think of Kant’s transcendental account of the conditions of discursive cognition as a ‘grand narrative’, then the indispensable role of material condition of this cognition must be assigned to something considered as it is in itself, apart from this epistemic relation and, therefore, as a merely transcendental object. (Allison 2004, 68)

Allison’s rejection of the view, that the source of our sensible content, and that which appears, is a mere projection of the unity of apperception,¹⁴⁵ shows that he is seeking an aspect of the object that expresses a mode of existence which is literally *in-itself*, that is, wholly independent of all our cognitive powers (even though, in his view, we can think this mode of existence through pure categories).¹⁴⁶

In order to expose the inherent problem with Allison’s view, we have to see that it contains a *petitio principii*. Allison views Kant’s theory of cognition as “a grand narrative”, which implies that the author stands outside of his presented story. The author tells us about the knowing subject and his representations and since the knowing subject does not produce the content of his representations, these contents must come from something independent of him.¹⁴⁷ But Allison conveniently

¹⁴⁴ A view close to mine regarding the proper understanding of the notion of the transcendental object is given by Bird (2006, 335–338). Bird argues that Kant’s usage of the term ‘transcendental object’ has two solutions, one of which Kant approves and one which he rejects. The former is associated with the *immanent* application of the understanding to intuition and more specifically with the unity and determinacy of objects of experience. The latter refers to a *transcendent* noumena or thing-in-itself, which Bird explicitly distinguishes from the notion of a transcendental object. Compare this with note 142 above.

¹⁴⁵ This is evident by Allison’s insistence on the irreducibility of the second role of the transcendental object, according to which the transcendental object is equated with the thing, considered as it is in-itself.

¹⁴⁶ In another passage Allison is even more explicit that “appearances [should be] understood as mind-independent entities, considered as they appear in virtue of the subjective conditions of human sensibility” (Allison 2004, 67).

¹⁴⁷ Allison is led to this “grand narrative” or “transcendental story” (to use Allison’s own terms), mainly on the basis of Kant’s exposition in the Transcendental Aesthetic in which Kant emphasizes that the object must be “given to” or “affect” the mind. On reading the Transcendental Aesthetic it indeed seems as if this “object” that is “given to” and “affects” the mind must be something wholly independent of the mind and its cognitive faculties. Only when we arrive at the Transcendental Analytic do we understand that all the above terms must be reconsidered in light of the conclusions of the Analytic. Thus, the only sense of an object allowed for in Kant’s system is such as is constituted by the activities of our own cognition. The misleading impression given by the language of the Transcendental Aesthetic results from very understandable difficulties of exposition. Had Kant wanted to avoid such implications he had to read the entire Transcendental Analytic into the Transcendental Aesthetic and that would undoubtedly complicate matters even for very able readers. Kant’s gradual way of exposition has its toll and one must be careful not to be misled by it. The above line of thought was the basis for Beck’s interpretation of Kant’s transcendental idealism. In Sect. 12.2.5 I discuss the possible reasons for Kant’s apparently dogmatic language.

forgets to mention that the author of this narrative is himself within his story. If cognition only has representations to begin with, how can we say that their matter 'originates' from an 'object' considered as distinct from them, all the more so when this 'object' is considered as something in-itself? Moreover, *how can we even frame questions* regarding an 'object' and its 'influence' on us if all we have at our disposal are nothing but contents immanent to our cognition?¹⁴⁸

We now arrive at the question that is at the heart of Kant's theoretical philosophy, namely, the relation of a representation to an object. Kant recognized that what we call an object is not a thing-in-itself but an appearance, which in turn is nothing more than a representation. The object, however, must also be more than a representation in order to act as that to which representations correspond. Nevertheless, all we have are representations. The solution must somehow be found within the realm of representations themselves. The object cannot be distinct from the representations in terms of its content – a distinction, which would make the object an ontologically distinct entity – for the content of the object is derived from the representations out of which it is constructed. The object can only be distinct from representations in a formal-epistemological way.

Appearance, in contradistinction to the representations of apprehension, can thereby only be represented as the object that is distinct from them if it stands under a rule that distinguishes it from every other apprehension, and makes one way of combining the manifold necessary. (*KrV*, A191/B236)¹⁴⁹

What distinguishes an aggregate of appearances and makes them into an object is the fact that we refer to a certain connection of appearances as necessary and we thus make it stand out among other alternative connections conceived of as arbitrary. The ascription of necessity to an aggregate of appearances is made in accordance with a rule imposed by the understanding. Kant therefore concludes that: "that in the appearance which contains the condition of this necessary rule of apprehension is the object." (*KrV*, A191/B236).¹⁵⁰ Kant replaces the content-based criterion of objectivity with a formal one.¹⁵¹ The highest condition of the necessary connection of appearances according to an a-priori rule is the transcendental object. The latter expresses the presupposition according to which beyond the contingent

¹⁴⁸ Beck starts his discussion in the *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt* precisely by noting this issue. Cf. Chap. 5 above.

¹⁴⁹ In the Second Analogy of which the above citation is a part, Kant explains that the term 'appearances' can be used in two senses: first in a subjective sense, according to which appearances are identified with representations and second, in an objective sense, in which case appearances are distinguished from representations and considered as the object to which representations correspond.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. also the discussion in Sect. 12.2.4.4 below. There is still one aspect, which remains open at this stage of the exposition – on what grounds do we refer to a certain connection of representations as an object by ascribing necessity to it? Why this connection of representations and no other? This issue shall be explicitly addressed in Sect. 12.2.4.6 and in Sect. 12.2.6 below.

¹⁵¹ Solomon Maimon (1965, V:377f., IV:217f.) was the one who first recognized that Kant had completely revolutionized the concept of representation and objectivity.

connection of appearances in the apprehension, there is also a necessary connection whereby appearances are combined in the object itself. The ‘object itself’ that is beyond the merely contingent aggregate of appearances by which it appears to the individual consciousness, is neither a distinct entity nor an alternative way of considering the ordinary object. It is a presupposition, a transcendental condition, without which we could not refer to objects at all.¹⁵²

The role of the transcendental object is explained in detail in the A-Deduction and in the A version of the chapter of the distinction between phenomena and noumena. The transcendental object continues to play a major role in the second edition and there is therefore no reason to think that Kant changed his mind about its role in his theory of cognition. The crucial role of the transcendental object justifies citing some paragraphs in full:

And here then it is necessary to make understood what is meant by the expression ‘an object of appearance’. We have said before that appearances themselves are nothing but sensible representations, which must not be regarded in themselves, in the same way, as objects (outside the power of representation). What does it mean, then, if one speaks of an object corresponding to and therefore also distinct from the cognition? It is easy to see that this object must be thought of only as something in general = X, since outside of our cognition we have nothing that we could set over against this cognition as corresponding to it.

We find, however, that our thought of the relation of all cognition to its object carries something of necessity with it, since namely the latter is regarded as that which is opposed to our cognitions being determined at pleasure or arbitrarily rather than being determined *a priori*, since insofar as they are to relate to an object, our cognitions must also necessarily agree with each other in relation to it, i.e., they must have that unity that constitutes the concept of an object.

It is clear, however, that since we have to do only with the manifold of our representations, and that X which corresponds to them (the object), because it should be something distinct from all our representations, is nothing for us, the unity that the object makes necessary can be nothing other than the formal unity of the consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of the representations. Hence we say that we cognize the object if we have effected synthetic unity in the manifold of intuition. (*KrV*, A104f.)

All our representations are in fact related to some object through the understanding, and, since appearances are nothing but representations, the understanding thus relates them to a **something**, as the object of sensible intuition: but this something is to that extent only the transcendental object. This signifies, however, a something = X, of which we know nothing at all nor can know anything in general (in accordance with the current constitution of our understanding), but is rather something that can serve only as a correlate of the unity of

¹⁵² My view is close to Hans Vaihinger’s ‘As-If’ approach to the thing-in-itself (Vaihinger 1935, 74ff.). We should note that admitting the fictitious character of the thing-in-itself (in the sense of the transcendental object as explained above), is not the same as admitting its arbitrariness. There is a big difference between the *willful* postulation of an object for a *specific* representation, that is, acting ‘as-if’ there is an object corresponding to it simply since it is our wish, and acting ‘as-if’ representations *in general* can have objects corresponding to them. While in the former case we beg the question, in the latter case we simply expose a *necessary* universal condition required to explain the possibility of experience. Such an account is therefore admissible within a philosophical account aimed at *explaining* (rather than justifying) how cognition *de-facto* operates. It is highly important to note that the ‘as-if’ character is only revealed in philosophical reflection. In concrete cases of empirical thought we are completely unaware of this character.

apperception for the unity of the manifold in sensible intuition, by means of which the understanding unifies that in the concept of an object. This transcendental object cannot even be separated from the sensible *data*, for then nothing would remain through which it would be thought. It is therefore no object of cognition in itself, but only the representation of appearances under the concept of an object in general, which is determinable through the manifold of those appearances. (*KrV*, A250f.)¹⁵³

Combined with the passages from the Second Analogy it is clear that the transcendental object is the highest principle of the objectifying function of the understanding. It expresses the a-priori assumption according to which appearances can be regarded as the object of our representations when they are considered as necessarily connected to one another according to universal empirical laws.

This conclusion according to which an object as appearance can be distinguished from a mere appearance on account of the objectifying function of consciousness rather than on account of assuming that the phenomenal object has also an in-itself aspect, is supported by the fact that in many passages in the first *Critique*, Kant argues that the thing-in-itself should not be understood in a transcendental sense, as wholly independent of cognition, but only in terms of the transcendental object, that is, as an epistemological condition of experience.¹⁵⁴ The following fragment is a good example:

¹⁵³ Graham Bird explains Kant's aims in the A Deduction along similar lines. He argues that Kant's concept of an object "is that of a stability or agreement in our knowledge" and he connects the concept of a transcendental object to this context (Bird 2006, 288). Bird further claims that Kant's claim that through the understanding we think an object for appearances should not be taken to mean that appearances are appearances of things-in-themselves, which we think through the categories. Against the latter view, Bird argues that "categories are conceived rather as a grid superimposed on, and making determinate, what is presented indeterminately to sensibility so that we can spell out and read what is presented as a genuine, full-blown experience." (Bird 2006, 291. Cf. also 338f., 342–345). Bird's view is compatible with my exposition of Kant's concepts of objectivity and actuality in Sect. 12.2.4 below.

¹⁵⁴ This was first noted by Erich Adickes (1920, 675) and was lately endorsed by Frederick Beiser (2002, 212). Adickes notes a multitude of passages in which Kant narrows down the role of the thing-in-itself to that of the transcendental object, either explicitly or implicitly, cf. *KrV*, B63, B236, B333, B344, B506, B566, B568, B593, B726 and A37, A358, A361, A366, A393. The main theme of Hickey (2001) is also to argue to this effect. Yaron Senderowicz (2005, 162–168) also makes a distinction between the transcendental object as explained in the first edition of the first *Critique*, and a noumenon understood as an alleged true object of an intellectual intuition. Under the second role of the transcendental object, Allison sees very little difference between the thing-in-itself and the transcendental object. But his view is very different than mine. While I interpret the transcendental object as an internal function of the understanding and I read Kant as accepting the thing-in-itself only in this the latter sense, Allison understands the thing-in-itself as a mode of referring to the object as it is independent of the conditions under which it appears and he reads Kant as identifying the transcendental object with the latter. It should be noted that similarly to Allison, Adickes too thinks that limiting the role of the thing-in-itself to that of the transcendental object (as a function of the unity of apperception) is restricted to the context of the transcendental deduction. Adickes nevertheless thinks that the thing-in-itself as a transcendent being has an inevitable role in Kant *theoretical*, not merely practical, philosophy. Beiser (2002, 212) as well argues that Kant "is not denying or doubting the existence of things-in-themselves, but only arguing against transcendental realism that they can have no useful role as an explanation of the

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

It is also apparent from a large group of passages from the *Opus Postumum* that the thing-in-itself is used by Kant to refer to the transcendental object rather than to an object considered as transcendent. There, Kant discusses the thing-in-itself in the context of his account of the objectivity of experience. He speaks of the thing-in-itself as a thought-entity that accounts for the unity of representations according to an a-priori rule of the understanding, that is, the transcendental object. The latter is not identified by name but it is clear from the context that this is exactly what Kant means (*OP*, AA 22: 28f., 31, 32, 33f., 37, 40f., 43f., 413–416).¹⁵⁵ I am therefore in full agreement with Frederick Beiser when he concludes that, for Kant, “the thing-in-itself, interpreted as a transcendent entity that exists apart from and prior to our perception of it, is useless in explaining the objectivity of experience” (Beiser 2002, 212).¹⁵⁶ Allison (1978, 56; 2004, 61) indeed admits that the thing considered as it is in itself is not required in order to explain the relation of empirical concepts to objects and that any attempt to do so would violate the critical nature of Kant’s project. Nevertheless, he still insists that a way of considering the object as it is in itself is not only justifiable but also necessary and therefore his interpretation of Kant’s concept of objectivity does include reference to the thing-in-itself. It should be highlighted that according to Allison the thing-in-itself is required to understand the Transcendental Aesthetic and Analytic, which together form the constitutive part of the first *Critique*. In contrast to Allison, I think that within the constitutive part of the first *Critique*, any commitment to an in-itself aspect is both incompatible and unnecessary. Regarding the constitutive part of Kant’s theoretical philosophy,

possibility of experience.” I go further than the above views. On my own view, Kant’s limitation of the role of the thing-in-itself to that of the transcendental object (as a function of the unity of apperception) is not restricted to the transcendental deduction. I deny that the thing-in-itself as a transcendent entity has *any* role within the positive (analytical) part of Kant’s theoretical philosophy.

¹⁵⁵ My reading is shared by Beiser (2002) and Adickes (1920), cf. note 154 above.

¹⁵⁶ For an opposite view, cf. Michel Meyer (1977, 297). I nevertheless disagree with Beiser when he argues that the thing-in-itself as a transcendent entity is referred to by Kant as a problematic concept which existence is neither denied nor affirmed. One should take care to properly distinguish the various meanings of the thing-in-itself. In its literal meaning, the thing-in-itself stands for the thing, as it is wholly independent of our cognitive faculties. Although as such it should be independent of both sensibility and the understanding (and thus irrepresentable), it was assumed by conventional metaphysics that the understanding could nevertheless present us the object, as it is in-itself. In this sense the thing-in-itself harbors an internal contradiction for it requires that we represent that which is by definition irrepresentable. The thing-in-itself as an object, allegedly determined through pure understanding, is the noumenon in its positive sense, which is impossible even in the logical sense. The thing-in-itself as merely logically possible is the boundary concept of the noumenon in its negative sense. Last, the thing-in-itself as a necessary condition of the relation of a representation to an object is the transcendental object.

my reading relies exclusively on the role of the transcendental object in the construction of objective experience, mostly evident in the A-Deduction.¹⁵⁷

In support of his interpretation, Allison argues that the Kantian theory requires that something affect the mind. Since this something becomes part of the content of human cognition only by being subsumed under the a-priori forms of human sensibility (time and space),

It certainly follows that this something that affects the mind cannot be taken under its empirical description (as a spatio-temporal entity). To do so would involve assigning to an object, considered apart from its relation to human sensibility, precisely those features that, according to the theory, it only possesses in virtue of this relation. Consequently, the thought of such an object is, by its very nature, the thought of something non-sensible and hence "merely intelligible", a thing as it is in itself or a transcendental object, if you will. (Allison 2004, 67)¹⁵⁸

I readily admit that Kant's theory of sensibility as receptivity, including its reference to an affecting object, implies a sense in which the object is more than what it is in the way by which it appears to us. My disagreement with Allison is only on the question of whether this other aspect of the object refers to the object as it is, apart from its sensible conditions, or whether it relates merely to the objectifying function of the understanding. Kant's repeated claim that the thing-in-itself should only be construed in terms of the transcendental object provides strong support for my reading, in comparison to that of Allison.

It is undeniable that in various passages Kant refers to the transcendental object as something outside of us in the transcendental sense and as the cause of appearances (*KrV*, A372, A288/B344 and A494f./B522f., cited by Allison). This raises the general question regarding the application of the categories. A close reading of the texts reveals that Kant does not refer to the transcendental object as the cause of appearances in the regular sense. In A288/B344, in the same sentence in which it is said that the transcendental object is the cause of appearances, Kant adds that the

¹⁵⁷ It must be noted that Allison is fully aware that a proper interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism must beware of treating appearances as a lesser kind or degree of reality (this is very boldly expressed in Allison 2006, 6, 12). In his view this undesirable outcome is the result of the various kinds of metaphysical interpretations and a major advantage of his own view is that it avoids this result. I am in full agreement with Allison that treating appearances as a lesser kind or degree of reality would undermine Kant's critical project and that Kant most definitely did not hold to such a view, either explicitly or implicitly. But I nevertheless think that Allison's approach cannot escape this undesirable result. Even granted that transcendental idealism, like transcendental realism, concerns only the scope of spatiotemporal predicates (Allison 2006), still the mere fact that alongside the consideration of things as appearances, there exists a way to consider the same things as they are in themselves, leaves us with the result that what can be known stands in the shadow of some other kind of knowledge that is denied us. Even on Allison's 'two aspect' view one cannot avoid thinking that reality in its full sense evades us. I have discussed these issues at length in Sect. 12.2.1. It is especially striking that in this theoretical context (rather than the practical one, as for example in the preface to the second edition of the first *Critique*) Kant does not contrast our inability to cognize things-in-themselves with the ability to think them.

¹⁵⁸ There is some similarity between Allison's above argument and Kant's argument in the *Inaugural Dissertation*, (*MSI*, §13, AA 02: 398, discussed in Sect. 2.2.1 above).

transcendental object “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)”. Unless we attribute to Kant such gross inconsistency within the very same sentence, we must look for another reading of his prior claim that the transcendental object is the cause of appearances. A careful reading reveals that Kant views the transcendental object as the cause of appearances, not in a real, pseudo spatio-temporal, sense, but only as a condition of their objective unity. Without the transcendental object we could not refer to appearances in an objective sense, as something that is distinct from our representations and as that, which affects our senses.¹⁵⁹ My reading is different from both the two-world’s account of ontological double-affection and Allison’s epistemological account of double affection. Allison rejects the view that a distinct ontological entity affects the mind. He also emphasizes that what he calls the transcendental account of affection does not mean that the objects, considered as they are in themselves, affects the same objects considered as appearances. Nevertheless, he thinks that there are two ways to understand affection, either empirically or transcendently. In the former sense empirical objects affect the mind, which in this context is also considered empirically; in the latter sense the transcendental object, that is, the object considered as it is in itself, is considered as the cause of appearances in general.¹⁶⁰ Allison reads Kant as referring to the object considered as independent of consciousness, while I read Kant as referring to the objectifying function of the understanding. On my reading, the transcendental account is not analogous to the empirical account of affection. Rather, it is only introduced as an explanation of how the empirical account is possible in the first place. In response to my reading, one may wonder why Kant chose to use the causal terminology in this context. I believe that Kant’s usage of the causal terminology is a concession intended to facilitate the introduction of his radical new perspective to the uninitiated reader.¹⁶¹ This is even apparent from the language he uses in the passage cited by Allison. There, Kant says that “*Meanwhile* we can call the merely intelligible cause of appearances in general the transcendental object, *merely* so that we may have something corresponding to sensibility as receptivity.” (*KrV*, A494/B522. The emphasis is my own).¹⁶² In my

¹⁵⁹ Cf. *KrV*, A358 in which Kant argues that “[. . .] that same Something that grounds our outer appearances and affects our sense so that it receives the representations of space, matter, shape, etc.”, can be “considered as noumenon (or better, transcendental object) [. . .]”. Cf. also Kant references to the transcendental object in *KrV*, A253 as “the object to which I relate appearance in general” and which Kant contrasts with a noumenon. Cf. also *RefI*, 5554, which includes the exact same claim.

¹⁶⁰ Although Allison rejects Erich Adickes’ theory of double affection he is nevertheless not willing to suffice with empirical affection. His own view is a “lighter” version of Adickes’ bolder view of double affection. Adickes’ view is discussed in the next section.

¹⁶¹ Cf. my account of the propaedeutic reasons for Kant’s conservative use of language, Sect. 12.2.5.1 below, and also Cassirer’s acknowledgment of this claim. Allison too seems to notice that Kant’s employment of terms in some cases overlaps the traditional understanding of them (Allison 2006, 5).

¹⁶² Similarly cautious language is apparent in many other such passages.

view, all textual references to the transcendental object, as the transcendental cause or ground of appearances, are perfectly explicable by referring to it as a necessary condition of experience.

Given that the categories only apply to sensible intuitions, what should we then understand by the thought of the transcendental object? It expresses no more than our *self-consciousness* of the spontaneity of the understanding in positing an object for our sensible representations.¹⁶³ Therefore, we do not simply think the transcendental object through pure categories, which would imply that the categories apply to what are not sensible intuitions. Rather, in pure thinking we are conscious of the transcendental conditions of the understanding, which includes the categories and the transcendental object on which the categories are grounded. Note that in the chapter on the Paralogisms of Pure Reason, Kant refers to the "I think" as solely being consciousness of myself as thinking and he refers to the categories as "modes of self-consciousness of myself in thinking" (*KrV*, B406f.). He also explains that the "I think" which grounds pure thinking, does not allow us to have a concept of it but only self-consciousness. Our self-consciousness of the spontaneity of the understanding does not give us a relation to any object. It provides no more than immediate awareness of the capability of the understanding to effect unity by relating representations to an object. The categories do not simply apply to the transcendental object on which they are grounded although as the specific modes of

¹⁶³ The concept of "self-consciousness" (*Selbstbewußtseins*) is a rather slippery concept in Kant's doctrine. The self-consciousness of the transcendental subject, the transcendental object and the categories should clearly be distinguished from the self-knowledge (*Selbsterkenntnis*) of the same, which applies only to appearances and the self as an appearance. Equally the claim that we think the transcendental subject, the transcendental object and the categories must be further qualified since we think only *through* the categories so that thought *of* the categories already presupposes them. Moreover the latter claim implies that the categories apply beyond appearances, a result denied by Kant. Nevertheless, we must have some cognitive access to the transcendental aspects of cognition if we are to include them in a philosophical doctrine about cognition. Since self-consciousness implies non-conceptual, immediate awareness, it is understandable that Fichte identified it with intellectual intuition. However, the latter view cannot be applied to Kant who rejected this doctrine (even in the sense employed by Fichte). Additionally, Fichte's doctrine of intellectual intuition eventually brings self-consciousness very close to self-knowledge, despite the verbal distinction. Against the doctrine of intellectual intuition it should be also argued that self-consciousness does not create or produce the conditions of experience. Non-reflective thought already operates under these conditions, although without being aware of the involvement of these presuppositions (ordinary empirical thought makes use of the concepts of substance and causality without reflecting on them). Rather than creating or producing the transcendental conditions, I believe that self-consciousness should be understood as merely exposing and bringing to awareness the major premises, which are used but not reflected upon in ordinary empirical thought. Admittedly, the latter view is not a solution but, at best, a convenient restatement of the issue at hand. It still remains open how we "bring these conditions to awareness", whether this process is a-priori or a-posteriori in character, etc. I therefore openly recognize that more work is required on the proper interpretation of the concept of self-consciousness in Kant's philosophy.

For the importance of "self-consciousness" for the relation of cognition to pure concepts of the understanding, cf. Kant's rediscovery of Leibniz in the *New Essays*, discussed above in Sect. 2.2.1 above.

synthesis they do express the transcendental object.¹⁶⁴ It is striking that in the earlier article, on which the exposition of this issue in his *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* is based, Allison too referred to Kant's concept of the transcendental self in the Paralogisms (Allison 1978, 75f.). Admittedly, in that article Allison does not emphasize the importance of self-consciousness in the analogy between the transcendental subject and object. Allison argues that in both cases we have only empty concepts of things, thought through mere analytical judgments. Nevertheless, he may have realized that such an analogy is appropriate only if one understands the transcendental object as a correlate of the unity of apperception rather than as an object considered as it is in itself. This may explain why this text was not included in the two editions of his later work.

Pure thought, we can conclude, even in its transcendental and not merely logical sense, expresses a necessary condition for the cognition of phenomenal objects, not an alternative to it. Kant rejects the claim according to which pure thought has a relation to an object on its own behalf, since such a claim amounts to substituting a transcendental condition with a transcendent entity. Pure thought cannot be understood as a "bypass route" to an object devoid of intuitions, all the more so when this "object" is understood in a transcendent sense. Pure thought equally does not stand for a mode of referring to the object as it is, regardless of its subjective conditions. Pure thought at best expresses our self-consciousness of these very conditions themselves, to be exact, those conditions that pertain to the understanding.

12.2.2.3 Conclusion

According to both parts of my above analysis we can conclude that as long as the thing-in-itself is understood as a mode of considering an object as it is, independent of the conditions of its appearing within experience, then the two aspect view must be rejected. However, as long as we interpret the thing-in-itself as a transcendental object, in the sense expounded above, then the two-aspect view is quite correct. We indeed have two ways to refer to the object: either as a phenomenal object, as a thing that appears *within experience* or as a transcendental object, as that which constitutes the *conditions of experience*. The former is the way of empirical, non-reflective thought while the latter is the way of transcendental reflection.

While Allison denies the view that the thing-in-itself is a distinct ontological entity, he still insists that the object, to which we relate as it appears, must also be considered regardless of the conditions under which it appears. In other words, Allison thinks that we can, and must, refer to the object insofar as it is not subject to the epistemic conditions of its appearing within experience, therefore as a *thing-in-*

¹⁶⁴ In *KrV*, B421f., Kant is explicit that the categories cannot be applied to the unity of consciousness of which the transcendental object is an expression. Nor do the categories apply to the noumenon (in both its senses) and definitely not to any transcendent entity. Cf. *KrV*, A253, and also *Refl.*, 5554, AA 18: 230f., in which Kant is very explicit in this regard.

itself. By contrast, I argue that we can, and must, refer to the object, apart from the way by which it appears to us, as exemplifying the very conditions themselves under which it – *the phenomenal object* – appears and is an object for us. The distinction, even when considered epistemologically or maybe especially when considered epistemologically, does not include a mode of referring to the object as *transcendent*, that is, as a *thing-in-itself*, but a mode of referring to the *phenomenal object's transcendental conditions*.¹⁶⁵ While Allison uses the epistemic conditions to go beyond the phenomenal object, or more precisely beyond the object's phenomenal aspect, I argue that these conditions only elucidate how we arrive at the phenomenal object in the first place.

I hold that any philosophical text has more than one legitimate interpretation (although the number of legitimate interpretations is not infinite). A legitimate interpretation has to offer a general picture that is both coherent and plausible. It must also have basis in the original text. Allison's interpretation, despite my criticism, complies with these criteria and is therefore legitimate.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, I certainly understand why Allison's view has a strong initial appeal. His cautious attitude, refraining from referring to the thing-in-itself as a distinct entity, as well as his avoidance from characterizing it in any way, holds the prospect of elegantly demonstrating how the thing-in-itself, which seems inevitable for Kant's theory of the influence of objects on our senses, can be maintained while still complying with Kant's restrictions on its use. In this section I have undertaken to show that despite Allison's best intentions, his attempt, nevertheless, includes an excessive commitment to the role of things-in-themselves in Kant's philosophy. The roles Allison assigns to the thing-in-itself extend beyond those required by Kant for the Transcendental Dialectic and for practical philosophy and thus they come into conflict with the restrictions Kant so meticulously set out for the use of this notion within the Transcendental Analytic. Furthermore, precisely because of the role given by Allison to the thing-in-itself within the constitutive part of Kant's theoretical philosophy (mainly within the account of the influence of objects on our senses),¹⁶⁷ his interpretation brings with it – despite Allison's protests – the unavoidable result

¹⁶⁵ In an essential sense Allison's 'two aspect' view, which does have important advantages over the 'two world' view, commits an even graver violation of Kant's critical principles. For the 'two aspect' view expresses a deeper understanding of Kant's doctrine according to which, whatever is an object for us, must stand in some relation to the subject's cognitive faculties. Yet on the 'two aspect' view, the object *thus understood*, nevertheless must also be considered, as it is in-itself.

¹⁶⁶ Some authors who attempt to surround their exegetical theories with an aura of utmost validity tend to present their view as if it is the only possible interpretation allowed for by the text. Thus, Adickes whose view of the thing-in-itself is even bolder than Allison's argues that "the words are so clear and unequivocal that there can be no dispute regarding their meaning and reference; or in any case there should be no dispute and there would not have been one if the striving for historical truth were the decisive motive [behind all interpretative efforts]" (Adickes 1924, 10). Such a fatalist view shows that Adickes, like many others, was not willing to see the inner reason in competing interpretative views, and therefore did not properly weigh them.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. note 147 above.

that empirical reality stands in the shadow of a much sought after but forever elusive ultimate reality.

The contrast between Allison's and my interpretation reflects two different views of Kant. According to Allison, Kant still holds to conventional metaphysics' assumption according to which, in principle, there is a relation between pure understanding and things-in-themselves but, due to the lack of intuition, the latter cannot be characterized in any way. Allison thinks roughly along the following lines: While in the *Inaugural Dissertation* (*MSI*, §10, AA 02: 396f.) Kant considered intellectual cognition possible, (though not intellectual intuition) in the *Critique* he recognizes that without intuition, no cognition is possible. The *Critique* therefore rejects cognition of things-in-themselves but not the thought of them. While this description is basically correct it is not the whole story and therefore the conclusion drawn may be misleading. In comparison, I emphasize Kant's recognition in the *Critique* of the extensiveness of the dependency of the intelligible on the sensible faculty (and vice versa) (Sect. 2.2.2 above). As a result Kant argues that "Thinking in itself, to be sure, is not a product of the senses, and to this extent it is also not limited by them, but it is not on that account immediately of any independent and pure use, without assistance from sensibility, for it is in that case without an object." (*KrV*, A287/B343). The result of the two main parts of this section is that pure thought is related either to the merely logical possibility of the noumenon in its negative sense (which accounts for the role of the thing-in-itself in the Transcendental Dialectic and in Kant's practical philosophy); or it expresses our self-consciousness of the conditions requisite for the construction of phenomenal objects (which relates to the role of the thing-in-itself as a transcendental object, regarding the Transcendental Aesthetic and Analytic). Only in these two senses does thought extend beyond sensibility, neither of which includes reference to the object considered apart from the conditions of its appearing to us.

I believe that Allison is motivated to insist on the irreducibility of the thing considered as it is in-itself by his conviction that without an 'in-itself' aspect of our ordinary objects, Kant's critical idealism would be reduced to sheer idealism.¹⁶⁸ On the contrary, I think that the true significance of Kant's combination of transcendental idealism and empirical realism is expressed by the renouncement of the presupposition that what we call reality is, or is also, something in-itself. Accordingly for Kant, an object is only that which stands in relation to the knowing subject

¹⁶⁸ Cf. the following paragraph (Allison 2004, 55) in which Allison argues that if appearances were "all that there is to it" then such a position would amount to a "Berkeleyian-style idealism or phenomenalism". In another passage Allison notes that "idealistically oriented followers or 'improvers' of Kant" were the ones that opted to reject the first horn of Jacobi's dilemma and do away with affection by things in themselves (Allison 2004, 65). Cf. also a further passage in which Allison argues against Prauss that sufficing with empirical affection amounts to "the old idealistic claim" (Allison 2004, 66). The assumption that at bottom reality is wholly independent of our cognitive powers and that realism thus requires commitment to a thing *in-itself* also brings Lance Hickey (2001, 124f., 132ff.) to openly admit that his own rejection of both the 'two world' and the 'two aspect' view leaves total idealism as the only remaining alternative.

and no other “object” or aspect of an object is meaningful for us, other than as nominal definition. Moreover, the acknowledgement of the role of the knowing subject in constituting the object does not make it any less objective. This is so precisely because the higher standard of the wholly independent thing-in-itself becomes irrelevant.¹⁶⁹ I therefore do not think my reading commits Kant to radical idealism. My view of Kant's response to idealism shall be addressed in Sect. 12.2.4 below. Here I can only point to the fact that Kant's refutations of idealism in his various critical texts – and even fifteen years prior to the appearance of the first *Critique* – do not rely on the concept of a thing-in-itself but rather on his distinction between mere appearances and objective knowledge, a distinction made entirely within the realm of experience. In the eyes of some, this may still not suffice to vindicate him of the charge of idealism but it at least shows that Kant thought that it does. I think that we should make an honest and patient effort to see how a refutation of idealism, which does not rely on the thing-in-itself is not only possible but is in fact the only consistent way to achieve this goal.

12.2.3 The Extension of the Categories Beyond Sensibility and the Status of the Object That Affects the Senses – A Critique of Erich Adickes' Version of the 'Two-Aspect' View

12.2.3.1 Preliminary Presentation and General Remarks

In this section I would like to highlight and reemphasize the conclusions of the previous section by analyzing Erich Adickes' version of the ‘two-aspect’ view. Adickes was a bold adherent of the thing-in-itself doctrine and one of the most prominent Kant scholars of the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁷⁰ Like Allison, Adickes holds that the thing-in-itself and the appearance are not two distinct entities like a copy and its original prototype, but two distinct aspects of one and the same thing. Like Allison, Adickes too holds that the key to unlocking the paradoxical character of the thing-in-itself which Kant appears to both require and reject, is in making the distinction between thinking and cognizing and in acknowledging that although we cannot know or cognize the qualities or properties (*Beschaffenheit*) of

¹⁶⁹ Cf. note 157 above. As I have stressed above, I do not claim that Kant denies the existence of the thing-in-itself as a transcendent entity, but that the very question is meaningless and irrelevant for Kant.

¹⁷⁰ Adickes' main treatise on the subject is his *Kant und das Ding an sich* (1924). His other publications relating to this issue are *Kants Lehre von der doppelten Affektion unseres Ich als Schlüssel zu seiner Erkenntnistheorie* (1929) and *Kants Opus Postumum* (1920, 650–655, 669–718). Adickes is also well known for his gigantic work in putting back together Kant's *Opus Postumum* and the fragmentary notes Kant left behind. All English translations of Adickes' works are my own.

the thing-in-itself, we can nevertheless think its existence as a transcendent entity. Adickes' interpretative approach, despite its fine distinctions, is a bolder version of the 'two-aspect' view than that of Allison, and since it puts the emphasis on slightly different matters, it gives us another opportunity to examine the interpretative doctrine which attempts to draw a line between pure, unschematized, categories and the thing-in-itself, a doctrine which additionally claims that the thing-in-itself is an inevitable cornerstone of Kant's theoretical philosophy.

The main principles of Adickes' view can be summarized as follows¹⁷¹:

1. The trans-subjective, extra-mental, or even more explicitly, the transcendent existence of a plurality of things-in-themselves, which affect our self, considered in-itself, was self-evident for Kant and expressed his bold realistic tendency. Adickes argues that Kant saw in the a-posteriori content of our appearances the evidence for the existence of an external source of which the a-posteriori content is a manifestation. Similarly, the very concept of appearances requires that things-in-themselves, as actually existing transcendent entities, correspond to them. Adickes claims that, despite some Kantian statements that attest to the contrary, the thing-in-itself was not for Kant a mere limiting concept (*Grenzbegriff*) but an actual existing thing.
2. According to Adickes' reading of Kant, the existence of the thing-in-itself was not considered by Kant as allowing strict proof or knowledge but as a premise from which Kant starts to philosophize. Rather than starting from the appearances and attempting to deduce the existence of things-in-themselves as their cause – an argument which Adickes correctly notes was explicitly discredited by Kant – Adickes argues that the existence of things-in-themselves was a self-evident starting point, a premise or presupposition on which the entire system hangs.¹⁷²
3. The thing-in-itself and the appearance are not two distinct entities but one and the same thing considered first as it appears to us and second as it is in-itself.
4. According to Adickes, Kant used the term 'category' in a double sense. First, as a synthetic function of our transcendental apperception, a capacity through which we unify sense perceptions in the construction of empirical objects. Second, as an a-priori pure concept of the understanding. In the former capacity the categories can obviously be applied to sensible representations only. However, in the latter capacity the categories are not limited by the nature of our sensible intuition and they are thus applicable to objects in general, which Adickes identifies with things-in-themselves.

¹⁷¹ The following account is based mainly on Adickes' own characterization of his view in the introduction and in the summary to *Kant und das Ding an sich* (Adickes 1924, 1ff., 156–159). I have made relatively small adjustments to the order in which the main points are presented.

¹⁷² A similar view is held in contemporary literature by Paul Guyer (1987, 326–329) and Karl Ameriks (2006, 74). Both Guyer and Ameriks regard this alleged assumption as an indication of Kant's serious commitment to realism.

5. Adickes therefore argues that Kant applies the categories, specifically the categories of unity, plurality, reality, causality and existence, to things-in-themselves. Of special importance is, of course, the category of causality through which Kant, according to Adickes, regards the thing-in-itself as the ultimate cause of our representations; as such, the thing-in-itself is inevitable for Kant's theoretical philosophy.
6. Adickes appeals to Kant's distinction between thinking (*denken*) and cognizing (*erkennen*). While cognizing requires sensible intuitions and is therefore limited to appearances, thinking, through pure, unschematized, categories, allows us to relate to things-in-themselves. Cognizing corresponds to the categories in their sense as synthetic functions of the understanding, while thinking corresponds to their role as a-priori given, pure concepts of the understanding, as detailed in (4) above.
7. Adickes introduces a distinction, he thinks is implicit in Kant's text, between the absolute and the relative inapplicability (*Bedeutungslosigkeit* or *Unanwendbarkeit*) of the categories to things-in-themselves. The absolute inapplicability of the categories to the transcendent expresses the categories in their role as synthetic functions of the understanding. The relative inapplicability of the categories to the transcendent expresses the categories in their role as a-priori given pure concepts. As pure concepts, the categories cannot give us cognition of things-in-themselves and we are denied a determined concept of them. However, pure categories do allow us, according to Adickes' interpretation of Kant, to think things-in-themselves through undetermined concepts. More specifically, Adickes thinks that as part of the cognition of things-in-themselves, which is denied us, we lack knowledge of the *properties* (*Beschaffenheit* or *so-sein*) of things-in-themselves but that we can nevertheless think the *existence* (*Dasein*) of things-in-themselves. Even regarding the existence of things-in-themselves, Adickes emphasizes, we must concede that we cannot strictly prove this existence for that would require cognition or knowledge of them. However, we can, and must, believe in their existence.
8. Adickes connects the belief in the existence of things-in-themselves not merely to Kant the person and Kant the moral philosopher but also to what Adickes calls Kant the metaphysicist. Adickes considers Kant's alleged belief in the existence of things-in-themselves as testimony for Kant's realistic tendency, which grounds both his practical and theoretical philosophy, as well as identifies him as a person.

Before I embark on a detailed discussion of Adickes' view, I would like to make some general comments which would allow us to locate this view within the larger context of the Kantian interpretations sketched in Sect. 12.2.1 above.

It is immediately clear that Adickes thinks that Kant's realism – and any realism for that matter – is dependent on the existence of things-in-themselves (Adickes 1924, 118f.). This reveals that Adickes, like many other authors, both before and after his time, subscribes to the immanence-transcendence dichotomy. As I have already mentioned, this tendency towards a fundamental interpretation is motivated

by the desire to *justify* the reality of the external world. The attempt at justification inevitably pulls us towards absolutes. Justification – if it is not circular – seeks an absolute point, whether immanent or transcendent.

Adickes' view, which concedes that the existence of things-in-themselves cannot be proven, but serves as a premise for Kant's theoretical philosophy, presents next to Kant the epistemologist (Kant als Erkenntnistheoretiker), also Kant the metaphysicist.¹⁷³ Adickes' fundamental interpretation turns Kant's theory of cognition into an ontology, which basically presupposes that which, according to Adickes, is in need of proof. It is a form of ontology, which assumes the existence of an absolute or transcendent entity as a starting point.¹⁷⁴ One must wonder whether this form of dogmatism suffices to justify the reality of the external world, even assuming that this is indeed the task we must accomplish. Moreover, even if its existence is granted, the thing-in-itself is completely irrelevant for *understanding* the possibility of experience. This is even conceded by Adickes himself who accepts that the transcendent thing-in-itself has no place in the transcendental deduction and in the explanation of the objectivity of experience (Adickes 1924, 100). As Solomon Maimon has taught us, the notion of the thing-in-itself does not help us to distinguish reality from illusion, which is, after all, the real issue in question.¹⁷⁵ What should we ask ourselves when we are not sure whether or not a concrete object is actual? Should we ask whether this alleged object is the result of the influence (as Adickes tells us) of the thing-in-itself on the self-in-itself or whether it is rather the product of the sheer spontaneity of the self-in-itself!? The latter question is unanswerable, even according to Adickes, and cannot serve as a criterion for distinguishing reality from illusion in any concrete case. What, then, is the notion of the thing-in-itself good for after all? Is it only good to reassure our conscience that in the final account what we call phenomenal objects are the result

¹⁷³ Adickes concedes that “when Kant speaks as a pure cognitive theorist (rein Erkenntnistheoretiker), who wishes to thoroughly follow the radical premises of his transcendental philosophy, then he must completely put aside not only the *properties* (Beschaffenheit) of the thing-in-itself but even its *existence*; he must then confess that we cannot say more than that our mind necessarily produces the concept of the thing-in-itself but that concerning the issue of whether a trans-subjective being corresponds to this concept and how it is constituted, absolutely nothing certain can be stated.” (Adickes 1924, 120). Nevertheless, Adickes adds that “next to those radical premises, the transcendental philosophy also includes other premises which are favorable of things-in-themselves; first of all, the view of the categories as a-priori given, pure-concepts-of-the-understanding of objects in general.” (Adickes 1924, 121). He continues to say that on his view, next to Kant the pure cognitive theorist, we also find Kant as a moral philosopher who believed he can lift the veil which conceals the thing-in-itself within his theoretical philosophy, Kant the person who regarded appearances as an immediate evidence for the existence of things-in-themselves and Kant the metaphysicist who held a long list of private insights into the properties of things-in-themselves.

¹⁷⁴ By contrast Kant argues that “it always remains a bold presumption to assume an object outside the sum total of all possible intuitions, which cannot be given in any possible perception” (*KrV*, A451/B479).

¹⁷⁵ Even J. G. H. Feder, in his criticism of Kant (Feder 1788, 83) agrees that things-in-themselves are irrelevant for that matter.

of the influence of things-in-themselves on our sensible apparatus even though the existence of such transcendent entities cannot be proven but is merely presupposed!¹⁷⁶

I am in complete agreement with Graham Bird, who in a recent criticism of Adickes regards the claim that the existence of things in themselves was for Kant a self-evident premise as flawed from various perspectives (Bird 2006, 576f.). First, it is strange to argue that Kant held to such a premise (from a theoretical point of view) and yet denied that we can have any knowledge of its truth. Moreover, if Kant can admit the existence of things-in-themselves as a self-evident premise, then it is unclear why he should not also allow a self-evident premise regarding their properties. Second, Kant's method is not an attempt to deduce his detailed views from a unique self-evident principle (as for example Reinhold or Fichte). Moreover, the proper use and role of the concept of things in themselves is fully revealed only at the end of the *Analytic*, in the chapter on the distinction between Phenomena and Noumena and later in the *Dialectic*. The proper role and legitimate conception of things in themselves in Kant's system is, therefore, not a premise but a *conclusion* of Kant's discussion. What can more properly be regarded as Kant's "self-evident starting point" is not the existence of transcendent things in themselves, but the familiar character of experience (especially the scientific view of experience), whose presuppositions, or a priori conditions, are extracted, displayed, and explained as part of a *descriptive* epistemology, rather than a *normative, justificatory*, metaphysics. The acceptance of experience and with it the reality of external objects, as a given starting point does not function as a first building block in a rational proof. As such it would beg the question. Similarly, it does not function as a commonsensical, and as such naïve, "refutation" of idealism and it is also not presented as an evidence for the existence of things in themselves as their cause, a view, which Kant explicitly rejects in the Fourth Paralogism of the first edition of the first *Critique*. It is taken as a given starting point merely since it is the object of the philosophical discussion, its subject matter. It is that which is in need of explanation, rather than justification.¹⁷⁷ I am also in full agreement with Bird's conclusion that the existence of things in themselves (viewed as Ideas in Kant's *Dialectic*) is not a self-evident premise but rather an illusion, which, despite the natural inclination of reason, should be brought to attention and be warned against.

¹⁷⁶ Take the following passage from the first *Critique*: "What the things may be in themselves I do not know, and also do not need to know, since a thing can never come before me except in appearance." (*KrV*, A276f./B332f.). Adickes completely ignores the intention of the above citation to emphasize the irrelevance of things-in-themselves for the world in which we live. Since Kant speaks of knowledge of things-in-themselves, Adickes claims that Kant only intends to denounce *knowledge*, that is, *cognition*, of things-in-themselves and that Kant, nevertheless, affirms the *existence* of things-in-themselves (Adickes 1924, 129f.). This kind of inference from what Kant says to what he does not say is in my view very shaky. This is especially so since Adickes ignores the basic intention of this passage, which goes against his reading.

¹⁷⁷ As far as I know, Bird is the only author who shares my view that Kant's philosophy aims at the explanation, rather than justification, of experience, and draws the proper conclusions out of this position. I have already appealed to this central issue in the Introduction to this book.

To regard things in themselves as existing is a hypostatization. It is to treat that which is only a *legitimate concept* free of internal contradiction, as if it were an actual *existing object*.

Furthermore, Adickes' view presents Kant as accepting the general immanence-transcendence dichotomy and proposing a middle alternative. According to Adickes' view, in the final account we must speak of things-in-themselves affecting the self as it is in-itself, bringing about representation, which are thereafter synthesized, by this self-in-itself, into what are called phenomenal objects (Adickes 1924, 12, 13, 36). Although it is a 'two-aspect' view rather than the more dogmatic 'two-world' view, nevertheless Adickes' view, with his theory of double affection, is a bolder version than that of Henry E. Allison. According to Adickes' view, we can truly say that the phenomenal world "hovers" between the two extreme poles of immanent consciousness and transcendent things-in-themselves. It follows from Adickes' view, even more so than from Allison's view, that the reality of phenomenal objects is certainly diminished in relation to that of the ultimate object, the thing-in-itself. Obviously, as Allison admits, this is a non-desirable result. Another non-desirable result of this view is that the object of the Aesthetics is not the same as the object of the Analytic of the first *Critique*. While the former must be the thing-in-itself the latter can only be the phenomenal object. Although it is true that according to the 'two-aspect' view the thing-in-itself and the phenomenal object are not two distinct entities but two ways of referring to one and the same thing, nevertheless there remains a discrepancy between the two parts of the same treatise.

The more specific difficulties I find with Adickes' view concern his account of the thing-in-itself, first as a negative noumenon and second as a transcendental object.

12.2.3.2 The Negative Noumenon as a Thing-in-Itself

In the context of the negative noumenon, with which Adickes explicitly identifies the thing-in-itself (Adickes 1924, 106, 112, 114), the difficulty I have with Adickes is that his account blurs the distinction, so crucial for Kant, between the logical possibility of a concept, devoid of internal contradiction, and real possibility expressed by the ability of giving an object to a concept. We must first note, as I have already discussed in greater details in the previous section, that one cannot even ask whether a concept (a thought) is or is not self-contradictory if the concept is entirely empty of content. We must therefore acknowledge that when we speak of 'thinking' in contrast to 'cognizing' we are not abstracting from all sensible content whether empirical or pure. Some content must always be present for thought to occur.¹⁷⁸ This is, however, only a preliminary note. The argument I wish to make is

¹⁷⁸ In the above context at least, the term 'content' can only refer sensible data, which for us humans is the only content we can have. An appeal to alleged intellectual intuition or intellectual content is irrelevant. For the current discussion it is enough that for us there is no content but a sensible one for the issue at hand is what we can or cannot think. Cf. also Sect. 12.2.2, note 120. Adickes finds many references in Kant's texts in which Kant argues that it is impossible to

that logical possibility – the lack of self-contradiction – expresses only the internal possibility of thought *as such*; it completely abstracts from the real possibility of a string of thought, that is, the possibility of giving an object to a thought or concept free of internal contradiction. Adickes finds a wealth of references in the Kantian texts in which Kant argues that although real possibility is denied to the concept of the thing-in-itself, the concept is nevertheless logically possible.¹⁷⁹ Since real possibility is the possibility of giving the concept an object in sensible intuition (demonstrating that the relevant concept has a possible object in experience), Adickes concludes that the logical possibility of the concept stands for the possibility of giving the concept an object in a non-sensible sense, that is, an intellectual object or a thing-in-itself.¹⁸⁰ It may seem that to say that a concept is possible – even in a merely logical sense – is to say that the existence of the thing to which the concept refers is at least logically possible. However, this argument runs counter to the very idea behind Kant's distinction between logical and real possibility, that is, between the possibility of a concept, *qua thought*, and the possibility of giving an object to this thought.¹⁸¹ As Kant says, "I can **think** whatever I like, as long as I do not contradict myself, i.e., as long as my concept is a possible thought" (*KrV*,

think without the categories. However, it does not follow from this that one can think through mere categories.

¹⁷⁹ More accurately, real possibility cannot even be asked for since the thing-in-itself is by-definition incapable of being given an object in intuition. "The concept of a noumenon is problematic, i.e., the representation of a thing of which we can say neither that it is possible nor that it is impossible" (*KrV*, A286/B243). Adickes himself concedes that in this citation Kant refers to real possibility (Adickes 1924, 135n2, 140).

¹⁸⁰ The following is just one example: "This restriction to objects of empirical intuition, does not exclude the possibility of thinking through the categories things-in-themselves in an undetermined way, and thus to relate them [the categories] to the latter [things-in-themselves], that is, to relate them to objects after all. The lack of objective validity of the transcendent use of the categories in a determined sense (of empirical realism), can very well go hand in hand with the relation of the categories to things-in-themselves in order to think them in an undetermined way." (Adickes 1924, 84).

¹⁸¹ The distinction between logical and real possibility may seem slippery or even superficial. It may seem to a contemporary philosopher that "everything is at the very least possible". This feeling may be reinforced by the major revolutions in science during the twentieth century, which turned impossibilities into realities. However, the distinction between logical and real possibility is an important one and it is just as relevant today as it was in Kant's period. The distinction appeals to the contrast between the avoidance of a grammatical contradiction and compatibility with the conditions of physical reality (other forms of reality can also be considered). Although the conditions of physical reality can undergo changes following a scientific revolution (unlike what Kant thought), nevertheless at any given time there are some such recognized conditions in relation to which real possibility is determined. Suppose we take Einstein's theory of relativity as the prevailing scientific theory and we ask whether it is possible for an object to move faster than the speed of light. We should answer that although the latter case is a logical possibility it is nevertheless not a real possibility. The distinction is thus important. Without it anything indeed seems to be possible and we cannot distinguish mere games of thought from things, which are possible in what we consider to be the real world. Regarding the above example we should therefore say that *regarding the real world*, it is impossible for an object to move faster than the speed of light. When we are discussing what is possible in the world, the mere logical possibility is simply irrelevant.

Bxxvi). However, the inner possibility of thought entails nothing at all about the possibility of giving an object to such a thought, about which the best that can be said is that it is free of internal contradiction (*KrV*, A244/B302; B302–3n).

According to Kant, only real possibility expresses a possible object and its criterion is compatibility with the forms of sensible intuition, time and space. The logical possibility of a concept does not express the relation of that concept to a “logically possible object”. The latter expression is an aberration. Logical possibility only expresses the inner possibility of thought itself. A relation to a possible object is real possibility and it cannot be interjected into the logical possibility of a concept by any wordplay. One cannot say – an object is possible in experience only when it is compatible with the forms of our sensible intuition but in pure thinking an object may be logically possible regardless of these conditions. This is like saying that the logical possibility of a concept, free from internal contradiction, also includes a possible relation to an object – an alleged “logically-possible relation to an object”. Once again, the latter expression is an aberration. The above argument explains why the term “non-sensible object” is self-contradictory (since the term ‘object’ refers to a thing that *can possibly* be observed in sensible perception) and also why the logical possibility of the thought of a thing in general (a mere grammatical subject of judgment) which is not a sensible object (the negative noumenon), expresses no relation to an object whatsoever.¹⁸²

Adickes admits that the thing-in-itself is nothing more than the problematic concept of the negative noumenon (Adickes 1924, 3), however, he still thinks of the noumenon, even in the merely negative sense, as a (logically) possible object or thing. He does not recognize that as a negative noumenon, in the sense used by Kant, the thing-in-itself is at best a possible thought without any possible relation to an object; the latter is in fact Kant’s constant claim. In a manner, which repeats itself in other contexts, Adickes acknowledges Kant’s distinctions and restrictions but nevertheless translates it in a way, which robs it of its very essence.¹⁸³ Indeed,

¹⁸² In *KrV*, A279/B335 Kant says that “the representation of an object as a thing in general is not merely **insufficient** but rather, without sensible determinations of it and independent of an empirical condition, **contradictory** in itself”. In contrast in *KrV*, A254/B310 Kant says regarding the noumenon in its negative sense that it “contains no contradiction”. Adickes thus concludes that Kant contradicts himself (Adickes 1924, 131, 131n1). On the contrary, I think that there is no contradiction between Kant’s above-cited texts. In the former passage Kant refers to the alleged non-sensible *object* (the positive noumenon), which is indeed impossible since an object is only possible in sensible intuition. In the latter passage Kant refers to the *concept* of a thing in general, *as a mere grammatical subject*, which is not a sensible object. The latter has no pretention of a relation to an object and is therefore logically possible in thought. It is striking that in referring to the above-cited passage from *KrV*, A279/B335 Adickes insists that the contradiction concerns only the cognition of the properties of the noumenon and not the existence of the noumenon (Adickes 1924, 131). It follows from Adickes’ claims that the positive noumenon, which concept according to Kant is self-contradictory, nevertheless expresses an existing thing!

¹⁸³ Note how Adickes attempts to bypass the distinction between logical and real possibility and leave the door open to view the noumenon in its negative sense as something existing: “In both cases [of a problematic concept in general and of the negative noumenon in particular], the concern is not with existence or inexistence of the objects which fall under the problematic

Kant contrasts the cognition of an object, which, due to the inevitable reliance of the act of cognizing on sensible intuition, can only be a phenomenal object, with the thought of the thing-in-itself in the sense of a negative noumenon. However, this is not a contrast between the cognition of a *phenomenal object* and the thought of a *transcendent thing* existing independently of our thoughts of it, but rather a contrast between the cognition of an *object* and a legitimate *thought* which, qua a string of thought, is possible merely since it carries no internal contradiction. Adickes turns the distinction between thought and being into a distinction between two kinds or modes of being!

There are many examples of the manner in which Adickes blurs the distinction between a possible thought and a possible thought *of an object*. Kant says that:

The principle that realities (as mere affirmations) never logically oppose each other is an entirely true proposition about the relations of concepts, but signifies nothing at all in regard to nature nor overall in regard to anything in-itself (of this we have no concept). (*KrV*, A272f./B328f.)

In my humble opinion, Kant intends, once again, to distinguish mere relations between concepts in thought from the applicability of such relations to objects. He stresses that logical possibility entails nothing, either in regard to a phenomenal object in nature or in regard to an alleged thing-in-itself. Moreover, he adds that regarding the latter we have in fact no concept (Cf. also *KrV*, A286/B342). Kant means that although the concept of the thing-in-itself is a possible thought, nevertheless since it has no possible relation to an object but is possible merely qua thought, then properly speaking we have no concept of it. Adickes is concerned by the text and he construes it by saying that the term 'concept' – in the statement which says that we have no concept of the thing-in-itself – should be read as referring to a "determined cognition secured in a concept" (Adickes 1924, 129). Adickes' reading is intended to leave open the possibility of thought – in contrast to cognition – of things-in-themselves, through undetermined, rather than determined, concepts. However, it was Kant's intention to distinguish the inner possibility of thought and the possibility of relating a concept, as a string of thought, to an object. Adickes reinserts a relation to an object into a merely possible thought and therefore undermines Kant's very distinction. Adickes cites another passage in which Kant says that "Without an intuition to ground it, the category alone cannot yield any concept of an object." (*KrV*, A399). In the face of all these Kantian texts, Adickes

concept, but only with our *cognition* of their objective reality, and with our *insight* into their real possibility." (Adickes 1924, 115). Adickes fails to mention that the recognition of the existence of a thing can only be obtained in cognition, in contrast to pure thinking, and that one cannot even ask whether a thing exists or not if it is denied real possibility and objective reality. In another passage Adickes converts the distinction between logical and real possibility into a distinction between an existential claim which can, and an existential claim which cannot, be strictly proven in the theoretical sense (Adickes 1924, 148n1). However, the mere inner possibility of thought completely abstracts from the possibility of giving an object to this thought and it certainly has nothing to do with the alleged existence of anything, whether the existential claim can or cannot be theoretically proven.

argues that “although the cognition of things-in-themselves is indeed denied, their existence is nevertheless spoken of as self-evident: he [Kant] places them as having equal rights *next* to nature and both are contrasted with mere conceptual-relations.” (Adickes 1924, 129). I fail to see how Adickes can read a distinction between the cognition of things-in-themselves and the thought of their existence into the text. Moreover, Kant does not place the alleged domain of things-in-themselves on equal grounds next to nature in a way, which bestows legitimacy on things-in-themselves. Rather, Kant merely contrasts mere conceptual relations and a relation between objects, be the latter in whatever domain. This does not bestow any legitimacy on the concept of things-in-themselves as if this concept has some alleged relation to a special kind of object.

In more than a few passages Adickes suggests adding clarifying words to the original text, which in fact alter the text and bring it closer to Adickes’ view. For example, when in *KrV*, A246/B303 Kant boldly restricts the application of the categories to sensible intuitions Adickes innocently suggests adding the limiting auxiliary words “when they should secure cognition” (Adickes 1924, 86). Adickes’ addition is designed to leave open the possibility of using the categories in pure thought – in contrast to cognition – in relation to things-in-themselves. Adickes is correct to note that in the following paragraphs Kant argues against the possibility of constructing synthetic judgments and obtaining cognition of things-in-themselves. However, it is also worth noting that in this context Kant does not contrast the possibility of constructing *synthetic* judgments and obtaining *cognition* of things-in-themselves with the possibility of the *thought* of things-in-themselves. The reason is that the issue here is *a possible relation to an object*. The inner possibility of thought, as such, is in this context irrelevant. Kant explains this in his own words in the paragraph immediately preceding the one Adickes cites: “For the deception of substituting the logical possibility of the **concept** (since it does not contradict itself) for the transcendental possibility of **things** (where an object corresponds to the concept) can deceive and satisfy only the inexperienced.” (*KrV*, A244/B302).¹⁸⁴

Note how Adickes reads the following passage, closely following the one cited above. This is Kant’s text:

Now through a pure category, in which abstraction is made from any condition of sensible intuition as the only one possible for us, no object is determined, rather only the thought of an object in general is expressed in accordance with different *modi*. (*KrV*, A247/B304)

And this is how Adickes interprets the above passage:

Here, the thought of things-in-themselves through categories is authorized only thereby no object can be determined. (Adickes 1924, 86)

Adickes correctly notes that in this case Kant himself added the words “hence nothing is cognized” (AA 23: 48) on his personal copy of the first edition immediately following the cited text. However, Kant only argues against the possibility

¹⁸⁴ Cf. also the footnote which Kant appended to this very sentence (*KrV*, B302–3n).

of determining an object and of having cognition of it since in pure thought there is no relation to an object whatsoever. The categories are indeed the forms of thought of an object in general. However, the "object in general" is not an object at all, and it is definitely not a thing-in-itself as Adickes reads the text; it is, rather, the general objectifying function of the understanding. Similarly, the "thought" of an object in general is not a thought of some object in abstraction from sensibility altogether. Rather, it refers our awareness of the general objectifying function of the understanding – expressed in different modes by the various categories, which, *when applied to sensible intuitions*, bestows unity, necessary connection and therefore objectivity, to them. Adickes distinguishes between the categories in their role as synthetic functions of unity and the categories as a-priori given concepts. In their latter role they allegedly apply to things-in-themselves (Adickes 1924, 58). In contrast to Adickes I do not think that Kant intends to distinguish two separate roles of the categories. Kant constantly reminds us that the only way to demonstrate the possibility of pure concepts is to recognize their role as synthetic functions of unity, which make experience possible. This is the only basis for the transcendental deduction of the categories. Adickes ignores some of Kant's explicit statements in this regard in which Kant additionally explains how the categories, *as nothing more than synthetic functions of unity*, can nevertheless extend beyond sensibility (Cf. for example *KrV*, A95f.; A287/B343).¹⁸⁵

Look at the next example, which shows how Adickes recognizes only those parts of Kant's text, which are compatible with his view. This is the relevant original text:

The mere transcendental use of the categories is thus in fact no use at all, and has no determinate or even, as far as its form is concerned, determinable object. (*KrV*, A247/B304)

Adickes tries to get around Kant's claim that the transcendental use of the categories is in fact no use at all, by putting the emphasis on the concluding words, which refer to a determinate or determinable object. Thus, Adickes argues that "although there is no determined object, nevertheless the *thought* of an *undetermined* object is not excluded" (Adickes 1924, 87). However, had Adickes acknowledged the entire passage, he would have had to consider that according to the original text the alleged use of the categories in relation to an "undetermined object" is in fact no use at all. It is worth noting that Kant only says, in a negative manner, that in pure thinking we can determine no object or that through pure categories no object is determinable. Kant does not say, in a positive manner, that we can think an undetermined *object*; when he speaks in a positive manner he merely says that through pure categories, we can at best think an undetermined *concept*. The distinction between concept and object is exactly the issue here.

Adickes cites many passages from Kant's texts in which Kant argues that without intuition we can form no cognition and can have no determined concept of any object. Adickes therefore concludes that with pure categories, we can think

¹⁸⁵ The extension of the categories beyond sensibility is addressed in more details later in this section.

things-in-themselves through undetermined concepts. This inference from what Kant says to what Kant does not say is reminiscent of Allison's inference from texts in which Kant argues that without intuition we cannot form synthetic judgments regarding things-in-themselves, to the conclusion that with pure, unschematized, categories we can, nevertheless, form analytical judgments regarding things-in-themselves. As I argued against Allison, on my view, Kant only argues against the possibility of forming synthetic judgments and against having cognition of determined objects, since it is clear to him that a relation to an object is only included in synthetic judgments, in cognition, and when we have a concept that is determined at least to some degree. An entirely non-determined concept is an empty concept. It is a concept without content, a mere form, through which we cannot think *anything*, indeed we cannot even think at all.

Armed with his interpretative tools regarding the distinction he makes between the cognition of the properties and the thought of the bare existence of things-in-themselves and equally the distinction between the categories as synthetic functions of unity and the categories as a-priori given concepts, Adickes has no problem to address even the toughest of passages and interpret them as complying with his view. Take the following example:

If by merely intelligible objects we understand those things that are thought through pure categories, without any schema of sensibility, then things of this sort are impossible. For the condition of the objective use of all our concepts of understanding is merely the manner of our sensible intuition, through which objects are given to us, and, if we abstract from the latter, then the former have no relation at all to any sort of object. (*KrV*, A286/B342)

Adickes first argues that in spite the fact that the ending of the above-cited paragraph refers to "any sort of object" we should, nevertheless, read here an object given to the senses so that a relation to a thing-in-itself is not ruled out (Adickes 1924, 134n2). As a second level of argumentation, Adickes suggests that Kant may have written this passage having in mind the categories as mere synthetic functions of the understanding. According to Adickes, *in the latter role* pure categories indeed require intuitions without which they cannot be applied to any object, not even for the mere thought of an undetermined noumena (Adickes 1924, 138).¹⁸⁶ In a third and final level of argumentation, Adickes says that most probably Kant intended to use the term 'cognized' instead of 'thought' in the first sentence of the above citation. Adickes finds support in the fact that Kant had made this exact note

¹⁸⁶ Note also how Adickes attempts to restrict Kant's general claims regarding the application of the categories to what Adickes regards as their single role as synthetic functions of the understanding. When Kant says that "our categories are certainly not valid" regarding objects of a non-sensible intuition (*KrV*, A286/B342) Adickes inserts after the word 'categories' the limiting addition "as mere synthetic functions of unity" (Adickes 1924, 135). I fail to see what authorizes altering the text simply in order to bring it closer to Adickes' view. Immediately following the above passage Kant emphasizes that "we cannot thereby positively expand the fields of objects of our thinking beyond the conditions of sensibility, and assume beyond appearances objects of pure thinking, i.e., *noumena*, since those do not have any significance that can be given." (*KrV*, A287/B343).

on his personal copy of the first edition (AA 23: 49).¹⁸⁷ Adickes concludes that Kant only intended to argue against the alleged cognition of the thing-in-itself as a positive noumenon and that the above citation should not be read as denouncing the existence of the thing-in-itself as a noumenon in its merely negative sense (Adickes 1924, 138f.). I fully agree with Adickes that the above passage refers to the impossibility of the noumenon in its positive sense. However, Adickes ignores the implications of the manner in which Kant denounces the positive noumenon. The latter is indeed impossible since, as Adickes himself notes, it is supposed to be an actual object of pure understanding while a relation to an object requires sensible intuition. The last sentence of the above passage stresses unequivocally that in abstraction from sensible intuition there is no relation *to any sort of object* and Adickes' attempt to alter the text is very misleading.¹⁸⁸ The negative noumenon is admittedly not negated, however, the negative noumenon is not an object of some sort to which we can ascribe existence but a mere concept, possible merely as a piece of thought free of internal contradiction.

Adickes' argumentative manner, contra the original text, is also apparent in the following example. This is Kant's text in question:

The pure categories, without formal conditions of sensibility, have merely transcendental significance, but are not of any transcendental use, since this is impossible in itself, for they are lacking all conditions of any use (in judgments), namely the formal conditions of the subsumption of *any sort of supposed object* under these concepts. Thus since (as merely pure categories) they are not supposed to have empirical use, and cannot have transcendental use, they are not to have any use at all if they are separated from all sensibility, i.e., they cannot be applied to *any supposed object at all*; rather they are merely the pure forms of the employment of the understanding in regard to objects in general and of thinking, yet without any object being able to be thought or determined through them alone. (*KrV*, A248/B305. The *italics* are my own)

This citation is a very clear statement against the supposed relation of the categories as pure concepts to *any sort of object*. Adickes is especially concerned about the fact that Kant rules out even the thought of an object through pure categories and he thus claims that most probably Kant made a mistake and used the term 'thought' instead of 'cognized' (Adickes 1924, 87). I regard any claim by an interpreter that the original text is mistaken, as an admission of the inability of the interpreter himself to expose the intentions of his author. This is just another example – of which there are many others – in which Adickes changes the text to suit his agenda. However, according to my view there is no need to argue against the text. Since the categories are only the *forms* of thought, they only express the different *modes* or *manners* of thought, that is, they express *how* thought operates, *when it operates*. As the different modes or 'how' of thinking they can only be used

¹⁸⁷ On the proper reading of this passage in connection with Kant's personal note, cf. Sect. 12.2.2, note 113.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. also: "without the data of sensibility they [the categories] would be merely subjective forms of the unity of the understanding, but without any object", and also "without assistance from sensibility" the categories are "without an object" (*KrV*, A287/B343).

if some content is given to them, otherwise they are indeed as Kant says useless even for pure thinking.

It is especially striking that Adickes applies his view to the Ideal of God (Adickes 1924, 65, 89–93, 143). Adickes completely disregards Kant’s repeated emphasis that the Ideal of God – as well as all other Ideas – is devoid of any possible object and that none of the categories is applicable to it. Adickes only hears Kant ruling out the possibility of cognition through determined concepts and he therefore deduces that the way remains open for thought of its bare existence through undetermined concepts. Adickes’ reference to the Ideal of God as an example of his view of the thing-in-itself and its existence is especially illuminating since on my reading of Kant all of the Ideas are nothing but mere logical possibilities without any possible object, and one can in no way ascribe existence to them (*KrV*, A592ff./B620ff.).

Look also at another example. Adickes cites the following passage:

If we now cast our glance over the transcendental object of our idea, then we see that we cannot presuppose its actuality in accordance with the concepts or reality, substance, causality, etc., in itself, because these concepts have not the least application to something that it entirely different from the world of sense. (*KrV*, A679/B707)

Adickes claims that although these words “almost force the thought of the *absolute* inapplicability of the categories, nevertheless they should be understood, in light of the above, in the sense of a *relative* inapplicability.” (Adickes 1924, 90). It is impressive to see how Adickes turns Kant’s *regulative postulate* of God into an *actually existing being* (Adickes 1924, 91). Adickes acknowledges that Kant speaks of God as merely ‘an object in the idea’ in contrast to ‘an object in reality’ but he insists that this is no reason to doubt God’s existence but rather merely to admit that we cannot know (cognize) its properties (Adickes applies the same view to all three postulates of practical reason (Adickes 1924, 116, 153)). Adickes’ insistence on clinging to his view despite of Kant’s repeated claims to the contrary shows how strong the presuppositions are, with which we interpreters approach the text. On my view, the distinction Kant intends to make is not between so-sein and Dasein but one between a mere Idea, which is a possible thought merely since it includes no internal contradiction, and an empirical concept which is, or at least can be, demonstrated in experience.

Since in thought we always objectify that about which we think, we need to pause to explain how there could be a thought for which no object *could possibly* be given. It is indeed hard to understand how there could be a thought, which is not a thought of, or about, something. I refer to the distinction I have made in the previous section between three cases of thought without a possible object. The third case I discussed there is the proper answer to our question – it pertains to thought with sensible contents, which are not self-contradictory but which, nevertheless, do not comply fully with the conditions of possible experience (time and space). I have argued that the Ideas of pure reason are the model case for this class of thoughts. Adickes rightly wonders how the categories can extend beyond sensibility, or, differently put, how thought can extend beyond cognition, as Kant indeed argues.

Adickes assumes that in pure thought the categories must relate, even in a very slim manner, to an object beyond sensibility and therefore to a thing-in-itself. For this purpose he employs his distinction between the categories as synthetic functions of the understanding and the categories as pure concepts which allow us, at the very least, to think the existence of things-in-themselves in complete abstraction from sensibility. I answer to this claim, first, by noting that in complete abstraction from sensible intuition, thought cannot occur at all. Second, there is no problem to understand the extension of the categories beyond sensibility or the extension of thought beyond cognition, even on the assumption that the categories are merely synthetic functions of the understanding, which can only be applied to sensible intuitions. As I argued in the previous section, the extension of the categories beyond sensibility is explained in strictly formal terms, in relation to the synthetic function of the categories. The categories indeed do not originate in the senses and they stand for modes of synthesis of whatever content is given to them, in whatever forms, as long as these contents are not intelligible but sensible. However, precisely due to their separate origin, the categories allow us to combine sensible contents in ways which may not be fully compatible with the forms of our sensible intuition. In this case thought is not annulled since there are contents to be thought, contents which are additionally free of internal contradiction. However, since the synthesis of sensible contents cannot be represented by the senses, this is a legitimate thought without any possible object. This analysis shows how the categories, *even in their role as synthetic functions of the understanding*, do nevertheless extend beyond sensibility and why this extension does not imply any object, all the more so, a thing-in-itself.

Finally, I emphasize against Adickes that even though Kant refers to the categories as pure concepts of the understanding he *always* means by this nothing other than synthetic functions which can be applied to nothing but sensible intuitions.¹⁸⁹ Adickes himself admits that in many cases Kant uses very strict language and argues for what Adickes calls the absolute inapplicability of the categories to

¹⁸⁹ In *KrV*, A409/B435 Kant explains that “reason really cannot generate any concept at all, but can at most only **free a concept of the understanding** from the *unavoidable limitations of a possible experience*, and thus seek to extend it beyond the bounds of the empirical, though still in connection with it”, a procedure which creates the dialectic delusions of pure reason. Through such delusions we are led to believe that *a merely possible idea* has a relation to *an actual non-sensible object*. The bold emphasis is in the original; the italics are my own. Cf. also *KrV*, B195: “The possibility of experience is, then, what gives objective reality to all our a-priori modes of knowledge”; *KrV*, A489/B517: “It is possible experience alone that can give our concepts reality; without it, every concept is only an idea, without truth and reference to an object”. My claim that pure concepts refer only to objects of possible experience is supported by Michael N. Forster’s historical reconstruction of Kant’s development of his critical philosophy. He argues that Kant replaced traditional metaphysics’ doctrine of the a-priori as that through which we can think super-sensuous objects. In contrast, “Kant understands his ‘metaphysics of nature’ to be a-priori *but not super-sensuous*, a-priori *but nonetheless concerned with objects of possible experience*” (Forster 2008, 36).

the thing-in-itself (Adickes 1924, 84, 88, 90, 93, 95, 112).¹⁹⁰ These texts threaten to overturn Adickes' interpretation and he therefore attempts to counter this result by arguing that in those paragraphs Kant speaks of the categories, merely in their role as synthetic functions which applicability is by definition limited to sensible intuition. However, Adickes admits that in the texts in question Kant does not make any such limiting statements. The texts seem to restrict the application categories, as such, and without any further distinctions regarding their supposed double role. Adickes addresses this difficulty by arguing that Kant uses, what is in Adickes' view an overly strong language, simply in order to counter the old metaphysical school whose adherents believed that through pure understanding we can actually cognize things-in-themselves and determine their properties (Adickes 1924, 92f.).¹⁹¹ In Adickes' view, Kant in his attempt to silence his opponents went too far and used language that did not properly express the finer details of his true view. I must say in response to Adickes' above argument that the form of his argument is not significantly different from the form of Beck's and Fichte's argument that for propaedeutic reasons, Kant made concessions to the old metaphysical school and left references to things in themselves, references that were not strictly appropriate to express his radical new view.¹⁹² In various passages Adickes dismisses off hand Beck's and Fichte's propaedeutic argument (Adickes 1924, 2f., 10) but his own view, which like other views must address some textual difficulties, is of a similar formal character. Moreover, while Beck's propaedeutic argument needs to address only very few passages which, depending on their interpretation, may cause some concern for his view, Adickes himself admits that most paragraphs – and Adickes brings a wealth of them – argue unequivocally against his view and for what he refers to as the absolute inapplicability of the categories to things-in-themselves (Adickes 1924, 75–84). There are, I believe, good arguments to explain, why, assuming that Beck's argument is correct, Kant could not reveal the full meaning of the term object, right at the beginning of the first *Critique* (mainly in the Aesthetic), and why he left the door open to regard the object which affects the senses as a thing-in-itself (see Sect. 12.2.5 below). However, I see no reason why, even assuming the correctness of Adickes' view of the thing-in-itself, Kant could not explain, what according to this view, were his true

¹⁹⁰ Moreover, Adickes concedes that from a purely theoretical point of view, we must indeed refrain from saying anything regarding both the properties and the existence of things-in-themselves. Adickes, nevertheless, sees the purely theoretical point of view as expressing only one aspect of Kant's general outlook. Cf. note 173 above.

¹⁹¹ In contrast to Adickes, I agree with J. S. Beck who claimed that even the classical metaphysicians didn't claim to have actual cognition of things-in-themselves (or of God) and to know their specific properties, but rather sufficed with claiming their bare existence. I therefore cannot accept the view that Kant's objection against the classical metaphysics is exhausted by negating the possibility of having cognition of things-in-themselves while affirming their existence. In light of these considerations, Adickes' own doctrine does not seem to be very different from the views of the members of old metaphysical school.

¹⁹² This position is also supported by Ernst Cassirer. The issue shall be discussed in Sect. 12.2.5 below.

intentions. On Adickes' view, Kant had a decisive argument against the dogmatism of the old metaphysical school while still retaining what Adickes regards as a clear realistic tendency. Why should Kant not explain exactly how dogmatism could be overturned while still avoiding the perils of idealism? Why should he take a view, which, if Adickes were correct, would seem to mitigate his realistic tendency and lead some to think that his doctrine must inevitably end in idealism? Why should Kant take such a path when, according to Adickes, he had the perfect answer to fend off the attacks of dogmatists and idealists alike? I think that Adickes cannot let go of his doctrine regarding the categories as pure concepts which have, on their own behalf, a relation to things-in-themselves, and he is therefore obliged to find excuses to explain Kant's claims to the contrary, since he thinks that without a special role for the categories their extension beyond sensibility cannot be accounted for. However, I have shown above that this is not the case.¹⁹³

12.2.3.3 The Transcendental Object as a Thing-in-Itself

I think we can understand how Adickes finds textual support for his interpretative view of the thing-in-itself if we recognize that he reads a transcendent thing-in-itself into passages in which Kant speaks, either implicitly or explicitly, of the transcendental object.¹⁹⁴ Two of the characteristics, which Adickes assigns to the thing-in-itself, are applicable, with some qualifications, to the transcendental object. These include Adickes' view of the thing-in-itself as a premise or presupposition and his claim that the thing-in-itself is inevitably implied by the very concept of appearances. Two other characteristics, which Adickes assigns to the thing-in-itself, are not properly assignable to the transcendental object; however, one can understand how on the background of the role Kant does assign to the

¹⁹³ Adickes argues that "had it also been completely denied us, to get hold of the in-itself, be it even through undetermined thinking, had the categories truly been nothing other than mere concepts of synthetic functions, then the transcendent would have been nothing less than impossible, yes!" (Adickes 1924, 93). In contrast to Adickes I think that although the categories are nothing other than synthetic functions, it is nevertheless possible to see how the *concept* of the thing-in-itself as a mere *negative noumenon*, that is, as a mere *grammatical subject*, is still logically possible. It is the *logical possibility* of such a *concept*, rather than an alleged bare *existence* of a *thing-in-itself*, which functions as a link between the Analytic and the Dialectic parts of Kant's theoretical philosophy, and equally between Kant's theoretical and practical philosophies.

¹⁹⁴ I do not think that Adickes arrived at his view regarding the role of the thing-in-itself in Kant's theoretical philosophy, because his reading mistakenly replaces the transcendental object with the transcendent thing-in-itself. On the contrary, I think Adickes comes to the text with a predisposition, expecting to find the thing-in-itself in it and *therefore* he is inclined to read certain references to the transcendental object as in fact referring to a transcendent entity. Adickes himself concedes that only when we view the thing-in-itself as a transcendent being affecting our faculties, can we properly construe the many passages in which Kant refers to it (Adickes 1924, 4). Adickes comes with the predisposition "required" for his conclusions since in his mind there is no other way to read Kant as a realist.

transcendental object Adickes found support for his view, which he then transferred to the transcendent thing-in-itself. The latter characteristics include Adickes' attribution of existence to the thing-in-itself and his view of the thing-in-itself as the ultimate cause of appearances.

It should be noted that Adickes does recognize the role of the transcendental object as a mere synthetic function of the apperception as detailed by Kant mainly in the A-Deduction (Adickes 1924, 97–102). Adickes explicitly acknowledges that *in this role* the transcendental object should be strictly distinguished from the transcendent thing-in-itself (Adickes 1924, 100).¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, Adickes thinks that in other contexts the transcendental object is not used in the sense of an internal function of the understanding but rather in the sense of an object, or thing, in-itself. On my own view, Kant uses the term 'transcendental object' in but one sense – the sense he explains in details in the A-Deduction. I hold that Adickes' views on the issue of the thing-in-itself can be better understood if we recognize that he took some of Kant's references to the transcendental object as an internal function of the understanding to mean the actual existence of a transcendent thing-in-itself. In fact, if we adopt Adickes' basic premises we can understand why he should read some references to the transcendental object as referring to an internal function of the understanding while reading other references as referring to a transcendent thing-in-itself. Within the transcendental deduction, the issue is to understand how the understanding constitutes the phenomenal object out of given sensible intuitions. Clearly, as Adickes recognizes, there is here no place for any transcendent element. Moreover, in this context, there is no incentive to do so either. By contrast, in paragraphs in which Kant speaks of the transcendental object as an unknown X which grounds appearances, then, *for those who operate with the immanence-transcendence dichotomy in mind*, there is a very strong incentive to read the transcendental object as a transcendent thing-in-itself. If one assumes beforehand, that there are ultimately only two, completely opposed, modes of existence – either existence as a representation immanent to cognition or existence as a thing-in-itself wholly independent of cognition – then that which is more than an appearance can only be a thing-in-itself. However, it is important to recognize that this inclination to read a transcendent thing-in-itself into the text is the result of a certain, non-stipulated, but yet highly consequential, assumption! It remains questionable – at least to me – why Kant, on Adickes' view, should use the same term to refer to such different meanings.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ This view is shared by Allison, (Sect. 12.2.2 above).

¹⁹⁶ The answer to this perplexing question may lie in Adickes' view that although the transcendental object (in its role as an internal function of unity) should be strictly distinguished from the thing-in-itself, the former can nevertheless be regarded as the latter's scheme if only we uproot the transcendent feature from the spirit of the thing-in-itself (Adickes 1924, 102). I must note that the very idea to regard the transcendental as a scheme of the transcendent seems completely distorted to me. In some passages Adickes literally identifies the transcendental with the transcendent (for example, Adickes 1924, 66n1).

Adickes' insistence that the thing-in-itself is a *prerequisite* of Kant's theoretical philosophy, that even though its existence cannot be proven, it nevertheless serves as an *inevitable premise* without which Kant's system would collapse (Adickes 1924, 9, 17), shows that he misunderstood Kant's references to the transcendental object as pointing to a thing-in-itself, that is, he mistook a *presupposition* for an *actual object*. Indeed, the transcendental object is a precondition supporting Kant's doctrine. However, this is no real object but a presupposition, a projection of the unity of apperception. It is not an ontological presupposition of a transcendent object as Adickes explicitly argues. Rather, it is merely an epistemological presupposition according to which beyond the contingent, subjectively valid, connection of representations there is also a necessary, and therefore objectively valid, connection. More precisely, it is – as Hans Vaihinger, Adickes' foremost opponent, claimed – a fiction. Nevertheless, it is a fiction without which we couldn't distinguish an objective connection of representations from a subjective one.¹⁹⁷ The very concept of appearances indeed presupposes an object distinct from them. However, the latter is not an alleged transcendent entity. The object is considered as distinct from appearances merely on behalf of regarding the connection of appearances of which it is constructed as necessary. Adickes' subtle assumption of the immanence-transcendence dichotomy pulls him towards viewing the object, in its final account, as a thing-in-itself. Adickes' interpretation thus turns the distinction between appearances and an object into a distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves.¹⁹⁸ The transcendental object – which role is best presented in the A-Deduction – is the Object = X, or the object in general. However, the latter is only the general assumption of objectivity, not the assumption of an “object *in-itself*” as a transcendent being. Although replacing the thing-in-itself as a transcendent being with the notion of the transcendental object still leaves Adickes' view problematic – as I argue one cannot apply the categories to the transcendental object and therefore one cannot say that it exists – I think it is clear how Adickes got to his view and were he got wrong. For one who thinks through the immanence-transcendence dichotomy it would be natural to read the assumption of objectivity as referring instead to a thing, which exists in itself. Adickes' constant claim that the thing-in-itself was for Kant self-evident (*selbstverständlich*) indicates to us where he got wrong. As I argued in the previous section, we can obviously not know/cognize (*erkennen*) the transcendental conditions of our cognition, since

¹⁹⁷ If one wonders how a mere assumption or fiction can nevertheless serve to distinguish reality from illusion, this issue shall be discussed in the following section which deals with my reconstruction of Kant's response to idealism.

¹⁹⁸ Adickes argues that “we experience in every appearance its grounding thing-in-itself and its influence on us; the appearance points to the thing-in-itself as its necessary correlate and presupposes it as its self-evident counterpart, of which the appearance is the manifestation”. (Adickes 1924, 125). Adickes presents us with a metaphysical view which assumes a bird's-eye or God-like perspective. On such perspective, indeed, that which corresponds to the appearance must be completely independent of cognition (in a similar way Adickes thinks that the “I think” of the pure apperception guarantees the existence of myself as it is in-itself” (Adickes 1924, 126)).

cognition already presupposes these conditions. On my view, we cannot think them either for thought requires some sensible data, which is here missing. So it becomes pressing to ask – how we become acquainted with these conditions, how they are present to us. I argued that Kant used the term self-consciousness (*Selbstbewusstseins*) for this purpose. We are self-conscious of the transcendental conditions including the transcendental object. My appeal to the term ‘self-consciousness’ (*Selbstbewusstseins*) which is actually found in Kant’s texts bears some similarity to Adickes’ appeal to the term ‘self-evidence’ (*selbstverständlich*) which is not used by Kant. Obviously, the term ‘self-consciousness’ bears an epistemological connotation, while the term ‘self-evidence’ bears an ontological connotation. One can nevertheless see how Adickes took Kant’s reference to the transcendental object as an internal presupposition of which we become aware in self-consciousness and read into it a transcendent being, which existence is self-evident.

This may be a good place to address the issue of existence, which Adickes attributes to the thing-in-itself.¹⁹⁹ Although, on my interpretative view, we can neither attribute existence to the transcendental object, nor to anything which is devoid of *empirical* intuitions, nevertheless, it is easy to see how Adickes understood Kant’s references to the transcendental object or to the object itself, as implying existence. The transcendental object is the assumption of objectivity. It is that on behalf of which the object – the object as appearance – can be considered as more than an appearance. The appearance has indeed two sides: on the one hand it stands for the way things initially appear to us and on the other hand it is regarded as the way the object itself is constructed. The object itself, as I have already argued, is not a transcendent being but appearances considered as necessarily connected. In considering a certain connection of appearances as necessarily connected we employ the general assumption of such a necessary, and therefore objective, connection. This general assumption is the transcendental object. The transcendental object is therefore the object within the object; it is the inevitable ground of appearances and it is understandable that Adickes will therefore regard it as existing.²⁰⁰ However, had Adickes recognized that the transcendental object is

¹⁹⁹ The boldness of Adickes’ claim is impressive: “the words [in the various citations Adickes brings] do not merely proclaim the necessity of the *concept* of the thing-in-itself as an inevitable product of thought, as a mere *ens-rationis*, but rather the self-evidence and actuality of the real *existence* of the thing-in-itself as an actual trans-subjective being.” (Adickes 1924, 10). This is just one example of such explicit claims. It is noteworthy that Adickes thinks the existence of the thing-in-itself is required not only for Kant’s practical philosophy but also for securing the realism of his theoretical philosophy (Adickes 1924, 60).

²⁰⁰ Look at the following example in which Kant argues that the appearance “always has two sides, one where the object is considered in itself (without regard to the way in which it is to be intuited, the constitution of which however must for that very reason always remain problematic), the other where the form of the intuition of this object is considered, which must not be sought in the object in itself but in the subject to which it appears” (*KrV*, A38/B55). Adickes concludes that in the above text, “the trans-subjective existence of things-in-themselves is here, as well, self-evident. It is given with appearance without further ado as its counterpart [. . .] the necessity of its existence is thus already implicitly included in the concept of the appearance.” (Adickes 1924, 8). It seems to

not an actual thing but a bare assumption of unity he may have also recognized that we cannot properly say that it exists. Existence, according to Kant, requires *empirical* intuitions, not merely pure intuitions, and certainly not pure categories! Without *empirical* intuitions we are left only with the pure category of existence, which signifies nothing but the logical possibility of a string of thought free of internal contradiction.²⁰¹

On the background of the role of the transcendental object in the construction of an objective world, we can understand Kant's claims that the transcendental object is the ground of appearances and that the very idea of an appearance implies the transcendental object as an inevitable premise. The latter claims are the exact same reasons Adickes gives as basis for his conclusion that the thing-in-itself is inevitably implied in the very concept of appearances.

Let's look at one passage from Kant's text, which Adickes regards as a principal example favoring his view of the thing-in-itself. The example is taken from the first edition's version of the chapter on phenomena and noumena. I first give the extract cited by Adickes:

Sensibility and its field, namely that of appearances, are themselves limited by the understanding, in that they do not pertain to things-in-themselves, but only to the way in which, on account of our subjective constitution, things appear to us. This was the result of the entire Transcendental Aesthetic, and it also follows naturally from the concept of an appearance in general that something must correspond to it which is not in itself appearance, for appearance can be nothing for itself and outside of our kind of representation; thus if there is not to be a constant circle, the word 'appearance' must already indicate a relation to something the immediate representation of which is, to be sure, sensible, but which in itself, without this constitution of our sensibility (on which the form of our intuition is grounded), must be something, i.e., an object independent of sensibility. (*KrV*, A251f.)

Adickes concludes from this "the complete self-evidence regarding the *existence* of that which is in-itself". Furthermore, "the concept of appearance would be

me that the "object considered in itself" in the above context is not a trans-subjective thing-in-itself but merely the transcendental object, that is, the bare assumption of objectivity, which when taken in abstraction from the sensible intuitions to which it is applied is a bare something = X.

²⁰¹ "If, on the contrary, we tried to think existence through the pure category alone, then it is no wonder that we cannot assign any mark distinguishing it from [logical] possibility" (*KrV*, A601/B629). The recognition of the existence of a thing can only occur in cognition, in contrast to mere thinking, and it always requires *empirical* intuition. Consider the following passage: "The postulate for cognizing the actuality of things requires perception, thus sensation of which one is conscious [. . .]" (*KrV*, A225/B272). Similarly in the same section, Kant contrasts the mere logical possibility of concepts free from internal contradiction and the real possibility of objects and argues that "As far as reality is concerned, it is evidently intrinsically forbidden to think it *in concreto* without getting help from experience, because it can only pertain to sensation, as the matter of experience, and does not concern the form of the relation that one can always play with in fiction" (*KrV*, A223/B270). According to the view I advanced in Sect. 2.2.1 above, supported by both Ernst Cassirer's and Frederick Beiser's historical reconstruction of Kant's thought, even as early as Kant's *Inaugural Dissertation*, things-in-themselves should not be understood as referring to existing entities (Sect. 2.2.1). From the very first time Kant used the concept of noumena and things-in-themselves he did so in a strictly epistemological sense merely in order to determine the limits and conditions of reason.

completely senseless if a thing-in-itself did not correspond to it” (Adickes 1924, 5). Contra Adickes, I wish to stress the following: (a) a different reading is at least legitimate; and (b) on a careful examination of the text cited and the context in which it is embedded, a different reading is not only legitimate but in fact much more reasonable.

Note, first, that Kant does not say that despite the fact that sensibility does not pertain to things-in-themselves it, nevertheless, does pertain to the way in which *things-in-themselves appear to us*, as Adickes’ reading implies. Rather, Kant is careful to merely say that sensibility does not pertain to things-in-themselves, but rather to the way in which *things* appear to us. This distinction is highly important and relates to the role of the transcendental object as the function of objectivity on behalf of which the object – *the phenomenal object* – is indeed more than an appearance. Kant indeed says that it follows from the very concept of an appearance that an “object, independent of sensibility” must correspond to it. However, this “object” need not be a transcendent thing-in-itself. Kant appeals to the fact that an object is considered as something more than a mere appearance, as that which stands over-against the appearance or as that to which the appearance corresponds. The distinction is therefore one between an appearance and an object, two factors which indeed act as counterparts. As I explained above it is precisely the role of the transcendental object to account for the added status of a certain connection of appearances, which we consider objective.²⁰² This conclusion is reinforced if we look at the paragraphs immediately surrounding the one Adickes cites. The above-cited paragraph starts with the following statements:

All our representations are in fact related to some object through the understanding, and, since appearances are nothing but representations, the understanding thus relates them to a **something**, as the object of sensible intuition: but this something is to that extent only the transcendental object. This signifies, however a something = X, of which we know nothing at all nor can know anything in general (in accordance with the current constitution of our understanding), but is rather something that can serve only as a correlate of the unity of apperception for the unity of the manifold in sensible intuition, by means of which the understanding unifies that in the concept of an object. (*KrV*, A250)

I think that in this passage Kant expresses himself *very* clearly, especially when the above text is considered on the added background of the account of the transcendental object in the A-Deduction (*KrV*, A103–A110). The issue is to understand how appearances can relate to an object distinct from them which is nevertheless not a thing-in-itself and Kant’s solution is to recognize the role of the understanding in assuming an object beyond appearances. This added factor of

²⁰² This account of the transcendental object helps dissolve many other examples referred to by Adickes, such as the following: “I call **intelligible** that in an object of sense which is not itself appearance.” (*KrV*, A538/B566). Adickes sees this citation as supporting his view that the thing-in-itself is another aspect of that to which we also refer as a phenomenal object. However, the intelligible factor appealed to by Kant is not a transcendent thing-in-itself but the function of unity contributed by the understanding, on behalf of which we can posit a certain connection of sensible intuitions as necessary and therefore as objective.

objectivity is, as Kant explains, nothing more than the projection of the unity of apperception. This “something” to which representations correspond is therefore not a thing-in-itself but the transcendental object, understood as an internal function of the understanding. Adickes cites a small passage without its surrounding context and translates it in a way which follows from his own expectations and reasoning but which is not the intention of the original text.

The passage below the one cited by Adickes is also illuminating:

The object to which I relate appearances in general is the transcendental object, i.e., the entirely undetermined thought of something in general. This cannot be called a **noumenon**; for I do not know anything about what it is in itself, and have no concept of it except merely that of the object of sensible intuition in general, which is therefore the same for all appearances. I cannot think it through any categories; for these hold of empirical intuition, in order to bring it under a concept of the object in general. To be sure, a pure use of the category is possible, i.e., without contradiction, but it has no objective validity, since it pertains to no intuition that would thereby acquire unity of the object; for the category is a mere function of thinking, through which no object is given to me, but rather only that through which what may be given in intuition is thought. (*KrV*, A253)

The above passage clearly states that the transcendental object is not an alleged actual object, which would thus be a (positive) noumenon. Rather, it is as Kant has explained before, a mere projection of the unity of apperception, a function of the understanding, which bestows unity on the connection of sensible intuitions. Moreover, the above passage clearly argues against any alleged application of the categories to the transcendental object and more generally to anything that is not sensible intuition. I can hardly see how Adickes can use this case as a prime example of his view of the inevitable existence of transcendent things-in-themselves and of the application of the categories to them.

The following cited text is just another example of how Adickes takes an explicit reference to the transcendental object to mean a transcendent thing-in-itself:

[...] appearances, because they are not things-in-themselves, must be grounded in a transcendental object determining them as mere representations [...]. (*KrV*, A538/B566)

The above text is perfectly explicable in terms of the transcendental object as an internal function of the understanding and I see no reason – other than conformity with Adickes' pre-established expectations – to replace the transcendental with the transcendent.

On the above background we can also understand Adickes' view of the thing-in-itself as the ultimate cause of appearances. Adickes himself admits that Kant uses either the term 'cause' or the term 'ground' to refer to the role of the transcendental object in relation to appearances (Adickes 1924, 28). As I have argued in the previous section, I think that it is in this latter sense of 'ground' that we must understand the relation between the transcendental object and appearances rather than as Adickes does in the sense of an alleged non-spatio-temporal causal relation between the things-in-themselves and the self-in-itself, a causal relation which brings about representations in the self.

Especially illuminating is Adickes' handling of a passage from the first *Critique* in which after referring to the transcendental object as the cause of appearances,

Kant is very explicit that none of the categories can apply to anything but sensible intuitions and that therefore none of the categories is applicable to the transcendental object. Here is the passage in question:

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 appearances (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) [. . .] if I wanted 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 [. . .] (*KrV*, A288/B344f.)

The above citation makes clear that by the object in itself Kant does not mean a noumenon as an actual object of the understanding but merely a transcendental object. The cited text is, nevertheless, puzzling since it opens with the claim that the understanding can think the transcendental object, furthermore, that the understanding can think it through the category of causality, while it ends with the claim that none of the categories can be applied to the transcendental object since it is devoid of sensible data. On my view, the apparent contradiction disappears if we recognize the role of the transcendental object as the logical *ground* or transcendental *condition* of appearances (Sect. 12.2.2). Adickes addresses the difficulty in a different way. First, he argues that “in this context, the concept of the transcendental object is not to be taken in the sense of the transcendental deduction of the categories (*KrV*, A103–110) and the model dependent on it in the section regarding phenomena and noumena (*KrV*, A250ff.) [. . .]” (Adickes 1924, 144). In the above-cited paragraph, Adickes understands the term ‘transcendental object’ as the object-in-itself (*Gegenstand* as *sich selbst*) or a thing in general (*Etwas überhaupt*), terms, which are identical, according to Adickes, with the thing-in-itself. Adickes still has to confront the obstacle posed by the text regarding the application of the categories and more specifically the category of causality to things-in-themselves and whether we can or cannot think them. Adickes claims that the category of causality should be taken in a different sense than those of magnitude, reality, and substance. He argues, regarding the above-cited paragraph, that while the categories of magnitude, reality, and substance should be taken in their schematized form, the category of causality has to be taken in its pure form. Accordingly he argues that Kant had better used the term cognition rather than thinking in relation to the categories of magnitude, reality, and substance.

Only according to this interpretation, by which Kant has in mind in the category of ‘causality’ a mere undetermined thinking through the pure category, while, in contrast, in the categories of ‘magnitude’, ‘reality’, and ‘substance’ [he has in mind] the determined cognition through the schematized categories on the basis of sensible intuition, can one do justice to the [above] citation and free Kant from the blame that in one and the same breath he appears to have answered both in the affirmative and in the negative the question regarding the applicability of the categories to objects in themselves. (Adickes 1924, 145)

Just like Adickes' distinction between the absolute and the relative inapplicability of the categories to things-in-themselves – which he admits is not made by Kant – so in this context Adickes literally changes the text to match his own expectations. It seems to me that when Kant says that the transcendental object “cannot be thought of either as magnitude or as reality, or as substance, *etc.*”, he means *all* the categories, even those not specifically enumerated. Note the addition “*etc.*” and also the end of the cited text, which explicitly states that “we cannot apply *any of our concepts of the understanding* to it [the transcendental object]”.²⁰³ There is equally no support in the text to distinguish the schematized sense of the categories of magnitude, reality, and substance from the pure, unschematized sense of the category of causality.²⁰⁴ Finally, Adickes wants us to literally change the text and replace the term ‘thinking’ with ‘cognizing’ simply because the given text poses an obstacle for his own interpretation.

12.2.3.4 Few Remaining Considerations

One other factor that is at work in Adickes' doctrine is related to Kant's moral and religious philosophy and to Adickes' own religious commitments. Adickes was a devoted believer and it was important to him to conclude that Kant held to the existence of God (as a special case of the existence of things-in-themselves). Adickes therefore aimed at showing that the meeting point of Kant the theoretical philosopher, Kant the moral and religious philosopher, and Kant the person, is the belief in the existence of God and in the existence of things-in-themselves in general. This is, on my view, a mistake, which is triggered by not properly distinguishing the possibility of thought and the possibility of being. Existence is a term, which pertains exclusively to theoretical philosophy and no existential question can even arise – let alone be settled – where *empirical* intuitions are absent. As I argued in the previous section, practical reason does not require theoretical reason to acknowledge the existence of any special kind of object. Rather, practical reason merely requires that theoretical reason admit that the *concept* or *thought* of a thing in general which is not a sensible object (the negative noumenon) is at least logically possible, that is, that the latter concept is at least free from internal contradiction. This admission on behalf of theoretical reason makes the *concept* of a thing in general which is not a sensible object a legitimate concept which practical reason can use for its own purposes. Practical reason can then show how such concepts, which from a theoretical perspective are merely logically

²⁰³ In *KrV*, A253, cited above, Kant is also explicit that none of the categories can be applied to the transcendental object.

²⁰⁴ Moreover, Adickes argues that in application to things-in-themselves the category of causality has to be taken in a non spatio-temporal sense (cf. also Adickes 1924, 50). Adickes ignores the fact that Kant repeats time and again that the category of causality (as well as all the other categories) is entirely devoid of meaning when stripped of the spatio-temporal relation (this issue was discussed in the previous section).

possible, gain objective reality *within practical reason* since they function as inevitable conditions for the moral domain. I shall address the issue of moral philosophy and its alleged appeal to things-in-themselves in Chap. 13 below. For the current discussion I only wish to stress that the meeting point of Kant's theoretical and practical philosophies is not the bare existence of the thing-in-itself as a transcendent being but merely the logical possibility of the concept of such a thing (more precisely, the concept of a thing in general which is not a sensible object).

There is yet another, formal, weakness in Adickes' attitude. Adickes is so sure that his own approach expresses the correct view on the matter of the thing-in-itself that he expects each and every researcher, with eyes in his head, to embrace it. Adickes does not recognize the difference between the view one holds to be true and a range of alternatives, which one may reject, but which are nevertheless held to be legitimate. Not only is the content of Adickes' view fundamentalist, but also its form is fundamentalist. I think it is a mark of dogmatism, to ignore the fact that the text allows other interpretations. This is especially true when, on reading Adickes, one sees the extent of argumentation he needs to employ in order to counter the numerous passages in Kant's text, that pose an obstacle for his view. How can one deny the possibility of other interpretations, which are at the very least legitimate? Could it be that had Adickes recognized that some rival interpretations are at least not groundless, he would have been more open to re-evaluate his own view?

12.2.4 The Anthropocentric Interpretation and the Refutation of Idealism²⁰⁵

Kant's arguments for the refutation of idealism may seem technical.²⁰⁶ Moreover, for many critics, from Kant's time till our own, it seems that the sophisticated language only masks the inability of his solution to answer the skeptical doubts. The reason for this predicament lies in the fact, too often ignored or not given its due significance, that Kant's argument is not intended as a solution to the skeptical doubt in its traditional form. In his characteristic way Kant shows that the question itself is misconstrued. Thus, if the worry refers to the existence of objects viewed as things-in-themselves then the question is not only insolvable, it is irrelevant and

²⁰⁵ A version of this section was published in the *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 94, no. 2 (2012): 147–177 under the title “Externality, Reality, Objectivity, Actuality – Kant's Fourfold Response to Idealism” (Nitzan 2012).

²⁰⁶ I use the term ‘refutation of idealism’ to refer to any part of Kant's arguments against idealism in his various works, and I use the term ‘Refutation of Idealism’ to refer specifically to Kant's argument in the dedicated chapter of the second edition of the first *Critique* on this subject.

insignificant.²⁰⁷ According to Kant the doubt can only refer to objects as appearances in which case the doubt is both relevant and solvable. However, thus formulated, Kant's response seems to trivialize the entire discussion. Since Kant argues that appearances are nothing but representations, it follows that his so-called refutation of idealism merely proves the reality of our own representation, a "reality" which no one doubts. Nevertheless, I think that Kant's position can be defended and is far from trivial.

The crucial point is to acknowledge that Kant's transcendental idealism, and even philosophy at large, is not an attempt to justify the appeal of empirical, non-reflective thought to an object wholly independent of cognition, an attempt that must either end in dogmatism or in radical skepticism. Rather, it is to be understood as an attempt to explain how the criterion actually used by empirical thinking – especially by science – to distinguish reality from illusion can succeed despite the fact that all that stands at our disposal are sensible representations and functions of our own understanding. The question Kant asks, and in my view the only question that it is relevant to ask, is not whether or not there are independently existing external objects, but how do we distinguish cases to which we refer as objective from those we dismiss as merely subjective, all of which are within the realm of sensible representations. *Not if*, but *how*, are external objects possible? (Rickert 1928, 8).²⁰⁸ Further appeal to things, or an aspect of things, wholly independent of cognition, turns out to be misconstrued and misleading. The concept of such things-in-themselves is, at best, a thought that is free from internal contradiction, but it is a concept, which has no object, and which *cannot possibly* have an object. It is the thought of such an Idea (to use another one of Kant's technical terms), a mere fiction, which serves as the ultimate goal of realism and as the tool used by skeptics and idealists to drive us to despair, a predicament Kant called "the scandal of philosophy". This scandal can be said to have two aspects. On the one hand, the only relevant question – regarding objects as appearances – is treated as trivial and irrelevant, and on the other hand, the truly irrelevant question – regarding things-in-themselves – is treated as the only one that is relevant. A scandal indeed!²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ I agree with Graham Bird's (2006, 347) following observation. "Kant", Bird argues, "rejects a transcendent conception of an 'independent' reality, and consequently rejects as idle a skepticism which derives from our inability to access it."

²⁰⁸ Rickert recognizes that knowledge (of objects) must be presupposed by the *theory* of knowledge; otherwise the latter is devoid of a subject matter. The question we must ask is therefore not if we have knowledge but how and what we can know. A similar emphasis is made by Graham Bird (2006, 320), who argues that Kant's project is "not attempt to *guarantee* our experience against traditional skepticism. More specifically it is not directed at traditional skepticism about external objects or persons but at a more general objectivity concerning the transcendental conditions under which we can express judgments evaluable as true or false. Such an evaluation would be required for our conception of an immanent, not absolute, reality."

²⁰⁹ It is instructive to see, for example, how Ameriks' defense of Kant's realism against Van Cleve's idealistic reading turns precisely on the question whether Kant does or does not have a commitment to the existence of things-in-themselves (Ameriks 2006, 77ff.).

In order to locate the Kantian position within the wider discussion of philosophical skepticism, we need to clarify the main issue in question. Formulations aimed merely at the ‘existence of external objects’ or at the ‘existence of objects in space’ miss the point. The skeptic could easily grant that there are external objects or that there are objects in space but claim that these do not exist independently of the knowing subject but only as part of his or her representations. The main issue is how to account for this independence.²¹⁰ For dogmatists the independent status of the object is a non-accountable premise. Idealists deny it altogether. On my view, Kant’s argument performs two tasks: (a) it shows that the appeal to an object, or an aspect of an object, wholly independent of cognition (a thing as it is in-itself) is not merely beyond our reach; it is an entirely irrelevant, despite its inevitably tempting, appeal. Therefore, we do not lack anything by not being able to satisfy this standard; (b) it shows that even within the realm of representations, we can nevertheless account for a sense of independence (that I would call epistemological rather than ontological), which explains how we can distinguish objects as appearances from mere appearances.

The recognition of this dual aim of the Kantian refutation is precisely what is missing in many attempts to explain Kant’s response to skepticism, such as Barry Stroud’s *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism*. Since Stroud does not recognize that Kant aims at disqualifying *the very relevance* of the standard of objects wholly independent of cognition, he complains that Kant’s solution is too subjectivist. Stroud equally fails to explain in what sense Kant does recognize the independence of the object within the realm of appearances. This is the reason why Stroud claims that Kant’s transcendental idealism fails to explain experience and equally that it is unable to remove the skeptical doubt and is compelled to reinstate it on a so-called, and quite obscure, transcendental level (Stroud 1984, 166–9, 2000, 30, 40ff., 195ff.).²¹¹ The recognition of the dual aim of Kant’s doctrine is most clearly present in the work of Arthur Melnick. He argues that although from a transcendental point of view we must admit that the very notion of an object is such that it makes sense only insofar as it is understood in relation to the judgmental apparatus of a knowing subject (and, therefore, that the very notion of a thing-in-itself, which abstracts from any relation to a knowing subject, is completely incomprehensible), nevertheless, this does not contradict the empirical standpoint according to which judgments correspond to objects and not vice-versa (Melnick 1973, 160–163). My discussion in this section of the notions of objectivity and actuality shall make these claims clear.

My own view of Kant’s refutation of idealism bears important similarities to the recent account of Luigi Caranti in his *Kant and the Scandal of Philosophy*. I agree with Caranti that the interpretation of Kant’s refutation of idealism presupposes an

²¹⁰ The emphasis on this precise point is made by Rickert (1928, 15–22).

²¹¹ For a similar, much more detailed criticism of Stroud, cf. Bird (2006, 242–248, 349–356). As Bird shows, Stroud’s skepticism results precisely from aiming at an absolute sense of reality and since no criterion can satisfy this standard he sees skepticism as the only possible conclusion.

understanding of his transcendental distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves. I further agree with Caranti that Kant's account of appearances should be clearly distinguished from subjectivism or "phenomenalism" and that even the Fourth Paralogism of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, whose role I also emphasize, should not be viewed in this light. However, my own view of Kant's transcendental distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves is very different from that of Caranti (2007, 37), who, following Allison, regards things-in-themselves as the same objects to which we also refer as phenomenal, but viewed in abstraction from the forms of our sensibility. According to Caranti (2007, 42ff.), the in-itself aspect of things is required to ensure that appearances are regarded as genuine, mind-independent objects, rather than mere mental entities. Caranti's approach suffers from all the weaknesses of the two-aspect view addressed in Sect. 12.2.1 above. First of all, it cannot avoid the dogmatism involved in any commitment to things-in-themselves. If, as Kant tells us, our knowledge of objects is indeed restricted by our epistemic conditions, then how can Kant (according to Caranti) know that objects indeed have an in-itself aspect? The two-aspect view may sound very convincing but it is told from a bird's-eye, metaphysical, perspective that Caranti himself would like to avoid. Second, despite his best intentions, Caranti's approach cannot escape demoting phenomenal objects to a lesser kind or degree of reality. Even though on the two-aspect view the thing-in-itself is not regarded as an entity ontologically distinct from phenomenal objects, nevertheless, as long as the in-itself aspect plays a role in our overall view of the natural world, then this hypothetical ultimate knowledge that is denied us shall continue to cast a shadow of doubt on the only kind of knowledge available to us. On such a doctrine, there is no way to avoid the view of appearances as overly subjective diminished reality. It seems to me that only by showing why the thing-in-itself, or the in-itself aspect, is entirely irrelevant for our view of the objective world can Kant's proof of the reality of objects as appearances succeed.

On my own reading, we can only refer to an *object* under the formal conditions of sensibility. In abstraction from the latter, we can speak of either (a) a *concept or thought* free from internal contradiction for which no object can possibly be given or even be asked for (this is Kant's view of the Ideas of pure reason); or (b) a general *condition* of the objectifying function of our own understanding. Kant's technical term for this condition is the transcendental object. It is this objectifying cognitive function, which accounts for the independence of the object (its distinction from a mere representation), rather than a dogmatically held, ontological assumption. My own position, according to which the object that affects the senses is only an object in appearance can be said to be circular. Obviously, so the objection goes, the object, which influences our senses, cannot be taken under those precise conditions, which delimit the representations arising in us as a result of this very influence.²¹² I readily admit the circularity involved. However, a circular argument is considered *vicious* only in case the argument is designed to *justify* its own premises. In the

²¹² Such an argument was raised by Allison (Sect. 12.2.2 above).

latter case, the argument is indeed question begging. However, an argument designed to explain, rather than justify, can be circular and yet possess an explanatory value since it establishes a coherent systematic link between the elements that require explanation.²¹³ We shall return to the important distinction between justification and explanation as our discussion advances.

12.2.4.1 The Setup of the Problem

Already in the early-mid 1770s Kant conceded that “the question whether body is something real outside of me is answered thus: bodies are not bodies outside of my sensibility (*phenomena*), and thus they exist only in the representational power of sensing beings.” (*Refl*, 4536, AA 17: 586).²¹⁴ Statements of this sort may, in the eyes of many, lead to an explicit admission of subjective idealism. Kant nevertheless thinks that this recognition is the only consistent and defensible way to refute idealism.²¹⁵ The critical Kant reaffirmed his important insights from the 1760s according to which the existence of a thing – anything – cannot be proven by reason alone (Sect. 2.1.3 above). Therefore, it goes without saying that reason cannot prove the existence of objects as things-in-themselves. Moreover, the attempt to refute idealism by resorting to the existence of things-in-themselves, is not only inconsistent with Kant’s conclusions regarding the limits of reason, it is also self-defeating. The skeptical idealist understands in the term ‘object’ a thing, as it is in itself, that is, a thing wholly independent of the knowing subject and his representations. The skeptical idealist therefore faces a difficulty in justifying the claim that our representations, which are all that stands at the disposal of our cognition, nevertheless relate to an object thus understood (*KrV*, A367ff., A378, B276, *Refl*, 6311).²¹⁶ The attempt to argue from representations as effects to the existence of external objects as their cause is to no avail since inferences from effects to their

²¹³ The harmless, non-vicious, circularity in Kant’s transcendental argument can be seen from the very beginning. Kant’s intention in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is to prove the existence and reference of synthetic a-priori concepts and principles in experience. In doing so he takes for granted that experience is real and he merely attempts to expose its inevitable preconditions. Cf. Introduction, note 4, above.

²¹⁴ From a historical perspective this section continues and concludes the systematic-historical discussion began in Chap. 2.

²¹⁵ This oddity whereby what seems like an explicit admission of idealism is considered by Kant to be an answer to idealism, should serve as a signal of caution for any subjectivist interpretation of Kant. Even though Kant could still be blamed for an unintentional, though inevitable, support of idealism, still any serious interpretation must make an effort to understand how Kant could think that this argument is not an admission but a refutation of idealism. I believe that without an honest attempt to understand a philosophical text from within its own internal structure, one cannot advance a criticism of it. Otherwise, there is a danger of criticizing a theory that may have been misunderstood to begin with.

²¹⁶ The issue is also discussed in *KrV*, A190/B235 although without regard for skeptical idealism.

causes are always uncertain.²¹⁷ As we all know our representations could just as much be an effect of an external object as they could be caused by the internal power of our imagination, resulting in the skeptical doubt of the idealist in the reality of the external world.²¹⁸

Kant's solution, given in the Fourth Paralogism of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is that since external objects are not things-in-themselves but appearances that, in turn, are nothing more than representations, their reality is given with their representation and need not at all be inferred. In other words, since bodies are only external if they are represented in space and since, additionally, space is only a form of our sensible representation then merely being conscious of having perceptions filling space is good enough proof of the reality of an external object (*KrV*, A370f.).²¹⁹ However, this line of argument may only seem to reinforce the idealist conclusion. Kant may have proven the reality of our own representations, but this is not at all in question. The skeptic does not doubt the reality of merely having representations but that our representations correspond to an independent world. Kant, so the argument goes, succeeds in proving the reality of external objects only by transforming all external objects, indeed the reality of the entire external world, into mere representations within the knowing subject. Thus, it has been widely concluded by Kant's contemporaries that his transcendental idealism is hardly distinguishable from the idealism of Berkeley, and that his theory of appearances is eventually reduced to a theory of illusion and dream. The first edition Fourth Paralogism's version of the refutation of idealism is still held by

²¹⁷ The uncertainty of the inference from an effect to its cause can be viewed from two aspects. First, unlike the inference from the cause to the effect, which is necessary (assuming the validity of the causal relation in the specific case) the opposite inference from an effect to its cause is always contingent since the same effect can be the result of two different causes (*Metaphysik L_I*, AA 28: 206f.). Second, as Kant had recognized as early as the 1760s, the causal relation is a real rather than a logical relation. Thus its validity in any specific case can only be given by experience and is therefore never apodictic. By the rejection of the causal argument (as an argument for the refutation of idealism) Kant is in fact renouncing his stronger refutation of idealism of the *Inaugural Dissertation* where he argued from appearances as effects to the existence of objects as their cause (*MSI*, §11, AA 02: 397). This move leaves us as the only defensible strategy for refuting idealism, the one that is based on the internal order and coherence of the phenomenal world, which immediately follows the 'stronger' refutation in §11 of the dissertation. Cf. the discussion of the dissertation in Sect. 2.2.1 above. For a detailed historical reconstruction of Kant's appeal to, and rejection of, the causal argument, cf. Caranti 2007 (10–35). Caranti also argues – in a way, which reinforces my reading – that Kant slowly came to regard phenomena as not merely mind-dependent, mental entities but as actual objects, whose reality, rather than the reality of things-in-themselves, serves to refute idealism.

²¹⁸ Kant, therefore, argues that the empirical idealist is the one who initially plays the role of the transcendental realist. The latter maintains that the ordinary objects of our cognition are things-in-themselves and this higher standard of a wholly independent reality which cannot be satisfied, is precisely what brings him later on to his skeptical doubt and, therefore, to empirical idealism (*KrV*, A369).

²¹⁹ Cf. also *Refl*, 5400, as well as *Refl*, 6313 (AA 18: 614f.). Caranti (2007, 82–88) has a very elegant and illuminating argument, which shows how the very placement of the refutation of idealism of the first edition in the Paralogism chapter is itself an argument for the immediacy of external as well as internal objects.

the majority of modern interpreters to be an admission, even if unintentional, of subjective idealism (Turbayne 1955, 225–44; Kemp-Smith 1962, 304f., 313; Strawson 1966, 256–263; Lou Agosta 1981, 391; Guyer 1983, 330f., 1987, 280f.; Van Cleve 1999, 3–14). It is sometimes argued that its subjectivist language is the reason that Kant chose to remove this text from the second edition and compose the new section entitled the Refutation of Idealism in its place. It is striking that the same authors who interpret the first edition's version of the refutation of idealism as overly subjective also tend to read the second edition's version as overly objective, that is, as arguing even if only implicitly for the existence of objects as things-in-themselves rather than objects as appearances.²²⁰

In my view the difference between the two versions is far less dramatic. The real innovation of the second edition has to do with the relation between inner and outer senses. However, in spite of the difference in language,²²¹ there is absolutely no

²²⁰ The most notable of these is Paul Guyer (1987, 282, 288; 1998, 311). Those who continue to think of objectivity as diametrically opposed to subjectivity tend to think that only by proving the existence of objects as things-in-themselves can we properly refute the skeptical idealist. Indeed, on the assumption of the absolute dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity, any other proof, in accordance with the law of the excluded middle, would amount merely to a proof of the reality of representations within us, which no one doubts. Other authors who also read the second edition's Refutation of Idealism as referring to objects as things-in-themselves are Béatrice Longuenesse (2008, 29) and Christian Klotz (1993, 50, 67). Guyer and Klotz go as far as claiming that in the second edition Kant changed his entire view of things-in-themselves. The view that by a "thing outside me" of the second edition's Refutation of Idealism Kant intends the thing-in-itself is criticized by Dina Emundts in a recent paper. She argues that the "thing outside me" is no other than the empirical object in space, understood as something "determined by thoroughgoing causal laws" (Emundts 2010, 181f.). Emundts does not make the distinction between reality, objectivity and actuality as I do but she does emphasize that the concept of objectivity viewed in terms of a thoroughgoing lawful connection is sufficient to refute idealism (Emundts 2010, 187ff.). Emundts nevertheless claims, as does Guyer (1987, 290ff.), that in the Reflexionen of the late 1780s and early 1790s "Kant obviously tries to argue against idealism by introducing the thing in itself" (Emundts 2010, 182n25). Another author who puts the emphasis objectivity in terms of a necessary connection of representations according to laws is Paul Abela (2002, 190–194).

²²¹ This issue is discussed by Hans Vaihinger (1884, 128–134). Although Vaihinger is explicit that in his view Kant's argument in the second edition does not refer to things in themselves, he nevertheless thinks that Kant's text includes an inherent contradiction. Vaihinger cites the paragraph from the first edition's Fourth Paralogism in which Kant argues that "external objects (bodies) are merely appearances, hence also nothing other than a species of my representations, whose objects are something only through these representations, but are nothing separated from them" (*KrV*, A370). He then cites the following paragraph from the second edition's chapter on the Refutation of Idealism in which Kant argues that "the perception of this persistent thing is possible only through a **thing** outside me and not through the mere **representation** of a thing outside of me" (*KrV*, B275). Vaihinger then argues that "these two positions relate to one another as yes and no; as a positive and negative; as A to Not-A. They were, are, and remain, irreconcilable." (Vaihinger 1884, 132). He even goes on to say that "no artificial interpretation will ever be in a position to argue-away" this inherent opposition between the two editions (Vaihinger 1884, 131). I dare to challenge Vaihinger's claims. As the text from the first edition emphasizes, an object in Kant's transcendental philosophy is always an object in appearance; it is therefore an object only through our representations. Nevertheless, as the text cited from the second edition emphasizes, transcendental philosophy allows us to distinguish an object from a representation, *within the realm of representations*. In other words, transcendental philosophy allows us to distinguish the

difference in the status of the object whose reality is at issue. In both versions, it is no other than the phenomenal object.²²² Kant's response to the objection that his new form of idealism reduces the whole of reality into mere illusion is based on two related, yet distinct levels of argumentation. First, the claim that within the realm of representations/appearances, and only within this realm, can we meaningfully speak of external, real and, in some sense, independent objects. Second, the claim that within the realm of representations/appearances, and only within this realm, can we meaningfully distinguish actual from illusory objects. The former issue regards the immediacy of (a) the *externality*, (b) the *reality*, and (c) the *objectivity*, of the *entire* phenomenal world, while the latter issue regards the *actuality* of *specific* objective judgments *within* the phenomenal world. It is no coincidence that the terms in which I reconstruct Kant's response to idealism correspond exactly to the four headings of Kant's table of a-priori concepts and principles. In contrast to Paul Guyer (1987, 279f.) who thinks that Kant's refutation of idealism is required to support his argument in the Transcendental Deduction regarding the validity of a-priori concepts in relation to actual objects, I agree with Paul Abela (2002, 186, 191) who defends an opposite dependence relation, according to which Kant's refutation of idealism builds on the tools already established in the Transcendental Analytic, and more specifically in the Analogies. My overall reconstruction is therefore supported by citations from Kant's various formulations of the refutation of idealism as well as from his main text in the Transcendental Analytic.²²³

representation of an object from the object of a representation. This claim will become clearer towards the end of this section.

²²² This should be our verdict if we are to rely on Kant's own testimony in the preface to the second edition of the *Critique* (footnote on Bxxxix) in which he claims that the changes made in the refutation concern no more than the manner of proof. Additionally, note that in *Refl.* 6314 Kant repeats the argument of the second edition regarding the connection between the determination of my own existence in time and the existence of outer things and he makes it explicitly clear that by the latter he means objects "only as appearances, yet as actual things" (AA 18: 616). Similar emphasis is made in *Refl.* 6313 (AA 18: 614f.). It is quite clear that Kant's whole argument in the second edition's Refutation of Idealism would be scarcely plausible if it attempted to prove the reality of objects as things-in-themselves. This is acknowledged by various authors such as Beiser (2002, 114f.) and Allison (2004, 300f.). Karl Ameriks (2006, 74) whose position otherwise does emphasize the crucial role of representation-independent things-in-themselves for Kant, also recognizes that in both the A and in the B versions of the refutation of idealism Kant's argument is directed merely at empirically-external objects. Even Guyer (1987, 282) concedes that the Refutation of Idealism is not directed at the thing-in-itself, which is understood as an entity to which the forms of space and time do not apply. Guyer, nevertheless, argues that the Refutation of Idealism is directed at an ontologically independent thing, which exists in space and time.

²²³ My below exposition is composed of Kant's arguments for the refutation of idealism, from the first and the second editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the *Prolegomena* and from Kant's personal notes. I do not put much emphasis on the specific argument of the second edition's dedicated chapter on the Refutation of Idealism since it is my intention to show that even without that added argument, which aims at reversing the priorities between inner and outer senses, Kant's arguments succeed in providing a sufficient response to the skeptical doubt. Furthermore, I agree with Luigi Caranti (2007, 150f.) that the specific argument of the second edition provides only part of the entire picture and it needs to be put in the wider context of arguments found mainly in the Fourth Paralogism of the first edition.

12.2.4.2 Externality

The argument about externality can be broken into two steps, the first of which refers to externality in general, the second to space as the human form of externality. On the first level, Kant argues that we cannot delude ourselves about *our general ability* to perceive external objects for without such an *external* sense, we would have no representations of *external* objects at all, whether in what we refer to as reality or in dreams.

In a footnote to Note 1 on the second edition's Refutation of Idealism Kant says:

But it is clear that in order for us even to imagine something as external, i.e., to exhibit it to sense in intuition, we must already have an outer sense, and by this means immediately distinguish the mere receptivity of an outer intuition from the spontaneity that characterizes every imagining. (footnote on *KrV*, B276f.)

Kant's personal notes provide further clarification:

Thus, that we have an outer **sense** and that even imagination can impress images on us only in relation to this, that is the proof of *dualism*. (*Refl*, 5653, AA 18: 309)

And

If there were not an external sense, that is, a capacity to become immediately conscious (without an inference of reason) of *something* as outside us and of ourselves, on the contrary, in relation [to it], then the representation of outer things as such, space itself, would not even possibly belong to intuition. For inner sense can contain nothing but the temporal relation of our representations. (*Refl*, 5654, AA 18: 313f.)²²⁴

He who lacks a sense of a certain kind cannot even have imagined or invented representations pertaining to that sense.²²⁵ Thus, from the mere fact that we indeed have representations of *external* objects it follows that external objects *in general*

²²⁴ *Refl*, 5653 and 5654 seem to have been written as comments or reflections on the second edition Refutation of Idealism and are estimated to late 1788 or early 1789.

²²⁵ A man born blind cannot imagine colors any more than we can imagine having sensations pertaining to a kind of sense we do not have. Take for example the radar-like sense of bats or the sonar-like sense of dolphins. It is impossible for us to imagine what it would be like to have such senses for we have no experience on which to base the thought of such assumed senses. Alternatively, we can only imagine senses, which we do not have by an analogy with senses we do have. However, this only strengthens the point that we cannot imagine the unique features of these senses, which after all is what the issue is all about. Cf. *Refl*, 6315 (AA 18: 618f.) as well as *Refl*, 6316, item 4 (AA 18: 622). Cf. also *Leningrad Fragment I* in which Kant says that "if we had no outer sense we would also have no concept of it". Leningrad Fragment I, also known by the name "Vom innern Sinn", is a note that came into the possession of the public library in Leningrad (then and now St. Petersburg) in 1850 from the collection of Friedrich Wilhelm Schubert, the editor of the first collection of Kant's works. The note itself, including details of its discovery and a commentary, has been published in Brandt (1987, 1–30). The English translation is taken from Curtis Bowman, Paul Guyer and Frederick Rauscher in Kant 2005 (364–366).

are not mere illusions.²²⁶ There are two crucial points here. The first lies in distinguishing the possibility of error in particular cases from the impossibility of deluding ourselves about outer sense in general. The second point is in avoiding any ontological implications even in the general case. It is very tempting to read these passages as implying that since even delusions and dreams are possible only on the assumption of an outer sense, in respect to which we are passive, then there must really be (at least some) ontologically independent external objects affecting us from without.²²⁷ The latter, however, is a metaphysical claim based precisely on the causal argument explicitly rejected by Kant both in the Fourth Paralogism of the first edition and the second edition's Refutation of Idealism as well as in later formulations (*Refl*, 5653, 5654, 5709, 6311). I propose that these passages be read as merely stressing the inevitable character of outer – in contrast to inner – sense without any ontological implications, whether in particular cases or in general. The point is that we cannot delude ourselves about the general character of outer sense: in outer sense we represent objects as external and in respect to which we are experience ourselves as passive. This consciousness is immediate and requires no inference. Kant's argument about externality is thus only meant to *dismiss mistrust regarding the external character of outer sense in general*. It leaves open as legitimate (and undamaging for the current argument) the possibility of error regarding the *actuality* of *specific* outer objects and it does not include any ontological commitments. Thus formulated the argument may seem to have little force but I hope to show that it plays an important part in Kant's modest attempt to explain, rather than justify, experience.

The second stage of the argument is based on the claim that, for us humans, externality and spatiality are identical. Since space is our only mode of external intuition, to be external can only mean to occupy a different space. Moreover, to

²²⁶ Henry Allison (2004, 294) dismisses this argument. It seems to me that Allison's dismissal of this argument is based on not properly distinguishing the case of *individual* delusions about external objects (the issue of actuality) from the case of a delusion about external objects *in general*. It is the essential character of outer sense in general that it pertains to external objects in relation to which we experience ourselves as receptive. Although particular cases may turn out to be illusory this cannot be the case of the entire faculty of outer sense. It is also worth noting that Allison considers this aspect in the context of his consideration of the objectivity (the distinction of an object from a mere representation) of outer experience rather than its externality.

²²⁷ This is Paul Guyer's reading. Guyer (1987, 317–323) claims that although the argument is not directed at *particular* causal inferences from the existence of ontologically independent objects, nevertheless it does attempt "to give a causal explanation of the *general* fact that we possess the *spatial* form of sensibility at all" (Guyer 1987, 319f.). Guyer admits that this kind of argument is metaphysical and appears to go beyond the legitimate bounds of critical philosophy. Since Guyer understands the outer objects, which reality is at issue, as ontologically independent things he finds difficulty in explaining how according to Kant a relation of our representation to such objects can be explained and grounded. He claims that this relation can neither be immediate nor inferential (although he finds evidence in Kant's texts for both). Guyer's solution (1987, 326–329) is to regard the existence of these ontologically independent objects as a presupposition (compare with Adickes' view discussed in the previous section).

occupy a different space inevitably means to be external.²²⁸ Space, Kant explains, cannot but be a relation to a thing external to me.

Time can no more be intuited externally than space can be intuited as something in us. (*KrV*, A23/B37)

Space proves to be a representation that is not related to the subject as object; for otherwise it would be the representation of time. Now that it is not related as existing to the subject, but immediately to something distinct from the subject, that is the consciousness of the object as a thing outside me. (*Refl*, 5653, AA 18: 309)

The consideration of externality – as the discussion of reality and objectivity below – is not intended to provide a criterion to distinguish reality from illusion. Rather, the argument attempts to show that externality, as being in a different space, is an inevitable feature common to both reality and illusion. The crucial point is that one cannot argue against Kant that his claim that space is merely a form of our own sensible representation should force him to admit that objects in space are not really external. Outer sense *in its entirety* cannot be a mere illusion. Although specific spatial-external representations can turn out not to have actual objects (this shall be discussed under the title of actuality), the entire spatial realm cannot be regarded as mere illusion or dream since (a) he who lacks an external sense cannot even frame questions about such external objects whether illusive or real; (b) space as our unique form of externality cannot be regarded as mere illusion since the alternative would have to pertain to an object as external without being located in a different space while we can represent externality only as the being of a thing in a distinct space.

12.2.4.3 Reality

For Kant, reality is the awareness of sense perceptions filling time and space. In the Fourth Paralogism of the first edition Kant tells us that

This material or real, however, this something that is to be intuited in space, necessarily presupposes perception, and it cannot be invented by any power of imagination or produced independently of perception, which indicates the reality of something in space. (*KrV*, A373)²²⁹

It is likewise sufficient to refute empirical idealism that without perception even fictions and dreams are not possible, so our outer senses, as regards the *data* from which experience can arise, have actual corresponding objects in space. (*KrV*, A377)

²²⁸ In this section I refer to externality as being in space. The other aspect that can be associated with externality – independence from cognition – shall be addressed under the titles of objectivity and actuality.

²²⁹ Note that Guyer and Wood's translation for the Cambridge edition refers to "This material or real *entity* [...]" , an addition that is not to be found in the German original and is in my view misleading. Similar formulations to the above-cited text can be found in the second edition's chapter on the Refutation of Idealism and in Kant's notes throughout the years (*KrV*, B278; *Refl*, 5653, 6313).

The first step in the current argument expresses the conviction that since any form of consciousness requires some sensible data, without which nothing can be represented at all, it follows that even illusions would be inexplicable without sensible content. The second step adds that such sensible data itself cannot be divided into the illusive and real because sense perceptions themselves cannot be invented. Almost all commentators dismiss this argument as unsatisfactory. Kant seems to argue, in a rather simplistic manner, that illusion presupposes genuine sense perception, which then testifies to the reality of external objects. Thus formulated, it presupposes that which is in need of proof, for clearly, the imagination can deceive us into thinking that we perceive a genuine object even if it is in fact, illusive. It seems to me that the misunderstanding of Kant's argument derives from a failure to distinguish reality from actuality.²³⁰ The reality of all objects – internal as well as external – is indeed given with their representation and its criterion is sense perception. The actuality of an object concerns not merely the fact that we perceive sensible content as filling time and space, but the *connection of specific perceptions* in the construction of an object.²³¹ The aim of Kant's current argument is not to prove that *each and every external object*, which supposedly affects us, is necessarily *actual*. Rather the aim is to dismiss as illegitimate the

²³⁰ The category of reality is the positive aspect of quality, within the second group of categories in Kant's table. The category of actuality/existence is a modal category listed under the fourth group of categories in Kant's table. On account of the difference between reality and existence we can say that unicorns may be real (their concept is not devoid of empirical content) but that they do not exist. Surprisingly, Paul Guyer (1992, 134) thinks otherwise. He argues that "There are obvious problems with the list of categories. What is the difference, for instance, between 'reality' as a category of 'quality' and 'existence' as a category of 'modality'?" In ordinary use, these are surely coextensive if not synonymous." (cf. also Guyer 2006, 78). Another important distinction between reality and existence is that reality has degrees but existence does not. Reality expresses the degree to which a sensation fills up time and space. It is the intensive magnitude of perceptions. Existence as opposed to non-existence is not, according to Kant, a matter of degrees. Either a thing exists or it doesn't (Paton 1936, 357n1). An instructive lesson can be extracted from an exchange of views between R. M. Chisholm, Charles Thomas Powell and Wolfgang Schwarz, regarding "degrees of reality". Chisholm (1978, 19) attributes to Kant the claim that "Different things [...] may have different *degrees of reality* [...] He [Kant] was clear that existence is not a predicate. Yet he thought that some things could have *more* existence than others." Powell attempts to defend Kant against Chisholm's misunderstanding but he too fails to make the distinction between reality and existence. Powell (1990, 123) suggests making a distinction between 'degrees of reality' and 'degrees of realness'. The entire confusion is clarified by Schwarz (1987, 344f.), who argues: "The paradox in the words of Kant's defender: 'the real has degrees, but not degrees of reality' must be changed to: 'The real has degree, and there is degree of reality, but not degree of existence'. To our interpreter [Powell], 'reality' here obviously meant actuality or existence, a signification, however, that has no foundation in Kant, who just does not operate with an ambiguous term 'reality'." Schwarz's article was written in response to an earlier article by Powell (1985, 199–217) in which he expresses the same views.

²³¹ Caranti (2007, 89f.) argues, in my view mistakenly, that perception involves judgment despite its being immediate. Perception indeed involves the application of the understanding; however, this involvement is not judgment, but the mere synthesis of apprehension prior to the construction of concepts through judgments. If perception included judgment, it would not be immediate and Kant could not argue that perception itself is neither true nor false (note 235 below).

radical doubt pertaining to the *reality* of the *entire* phenomenal world and replace it with a benign doubt about the *actuality* of *specific* objects, a kind of doubt that no realist would ever deny.

In a similar fashion to the externality argument – where an idealistic conclusion has been drawn from the characterization of space as a mere form of external sense – the following argument may be constructed in the context of sense perception. Radical doubt regarding the illusory character of the *entire phenomenal world* can be raised on grounds that according to Kant, the objects of this world consist merely in sensible representations. Kant’s counter-argument is intended to show that this radical doubt is baseless, because without sense representations we would have no presence of meaningful content in consciousness, and without the latter we could not even frame questions and formulate doubts. For us humans, there is no other criterion for reality other than that of sensation filling time and space. There can be no presence of meaningful content in sense perception without being real, for the presence of some content in sense perception *is* the real.²³² In this sense, the opposite of reality is not illusion but nothingness (*KrV*, A143/B182). Either we perceive some sensible data or we don’t. The role of Kant’s argument is, therefore, to show that the distinction between genuine and fictive objects can only be made *within* the realm of sensible objects and not between the entire sensible realm and an alleged alternative realm. If it abstracts from sensible content altogether the alternative is utterly impossible to contemplate. The further claim that perceptions themselves cannot be invented, is likewise, not intended to imply that the content of our consciousness necessarily originates from an actual rather than a fictive object.²³³ Rather, it is intended to locate the exact level on which illusions may arise in the first place. Although the distinction between genuine and fictive objects arises only within the realm of sensible objects, nevertheless, it has nothing to do with perceptions themselves. What can be invented are not the *contents* of perception, its *qualitative character*, but the *formal connection* of various perceptions in an objective judgment.²³⁴ This is the reason why perceptions themselves (regarding their qualitative content) are neither true nor false. We only run the risk of error when we make objective judgments.²³⁵ Perceptions of redness and roundness

²³² “Every outer perception therefore immediately proves something real in space, or rather is itself the real” (*KrV*, A375).

²³³ In the Fourth Paralogism, Kant repeatedly distinguishes the claim that without the passivity of sense perception we could have no illusions either (for consciousness would be empty of content) from the further recognition that in dreams we have representations for which no actual object can be found (*KrV*, A374, 376. Cf. also *Refl*, 5653).

²³⁴ This claim regarding the sensible contents – rather than their supposed objects – does not seem problematic to me. Although, as Hume conceded, we can imagine certain color-shades, with which we have not been previously acquainted, when the latter pertain to colors which are already familiar to us, we can nevertheless neither invent colors we have never seen before, nor imagine senses we do not possess. Karl Ameriks (2000, 116f.) for example, recognizes that the sensible content itself cannot be invented but fails to see how this proves anything against the idealist.

²³⁵ “In the senses there is neither truth nor error, for they do not judge at all, hence all appearances are to that extent free of possible error and are no illusion.” (*Refl*, 5642, AA 18: 281). The issue of

cannot be mistaken. However, when I connect the latter in an objective judgment, for example, 'the ball is red' then, and only then, do I run the risk of error. The crucial point is to notice the difference between the issue of the *reality of the entire world of objects as appearances*, which, according to Kant's argument, is immediately given with the representations of these objects, and the further question regarding the *actuality of a specific objective judgment* which can turn out to be false, though not illusive for that reason. Although the *objects*, which we regard as the origin of our perceptions, can turn out to be illusory, the *sensible content* itself cannot be mistrusted. If the sensible content itself could be invented, we would have to make an initial distinction between actual and illusive sensations in order to make sure we do not construct objects on the basis of illusive data. Since the sensible content itself cannot be invented this worry can be dismissed. For us there is simply an awareness of sensible content, which we perceive as originating from without and regarding which, we experience ourselves as passive. The admission of the relation to the knowing subject makes no difference. Since this mechanism is the only way for us to obtain raw data, without which no form of consciousness can arise, and since within this raw material, regarding its quality, no distinction between actual and illusive can be made, then there is no basis to mistrust such raw data. There is thus no ground for the radical doubt regarding the entire phenomenal world simply due to its sensible character. The non-illusory character of sense perception, nevertheless, leaves open, the issue of the actuality of the object, which we regard as the origin of perception in any particular case. Any such objective claim can be mistaken. However, the issue of the *actuality of specific objects* has no implication on the *general* characterization of *perception* (within which alone actuality issues relating to objects can arise) as *real* and indubitable.

error and its possible origins are discussed in detail in the opening pages of the Transcendental Dialectic. There, Kant argues that "truth and illusion are not in the object, insofar as it is intuited, but in the judgment about it insofar as it is thought. Thus it is correctly said that the senses do not err; yet not because they always judge correctly, but because they do not judge at all." (*KrV*, A293/B350). Kant concludes that "in a representation of sense (because it contains no judgment at all) there is no error." (*KrV*, A294/B350. Cf. also *Prol*, AA 04: 290–293). In *Refl*, 6315 (AA 18: 621) Kant repeats that as far as their content, imagination and wakeful sense perception cannot be distinguished. The identification of a possible error (that no object corresponds to a representation) is only a matter of the power of judgment and is wholly unrecognizable in the representation itself. This line of thought is repeated in *Refl*, 6316, item 4, in which Kant argues that "we do not distinguish this [sense perception of an actual object] from imagination merely through sensation alone, but through a certain inference". By inference Kant refers to the power of judgment. Cf. also in the *Leningrad Fragment I*: "In order for me to become conscious of the existence of a particular there is required an inference from few representations determined in space, but that in general something outside me exists is proved by the intuition of space itself, which cannot arise from the form of outer sense nor from imagination, and the possibility of which is consequently grounded on an actual outer sense." (Kant 2005, 366. For the details of the Leningrad Fragment I, cf. note 225 above). My interpretative claim that for Kant only judgments, rather than bare sensible contents, are capable of being true or false is repeatedly emphasized by Paul Abela (2002, 192, 194, 195f., 198, 204).

We have, therefore, replaced the radical doubt regarding the entire sensible world, with a benign doubt regarding specific objects within this sensible world.²³⁶

12.2.4.4 Objectivity

For a thing to be objective it must be conceived of as independent of the will and indeed an object for Kant is a *necessary* connection of representations as opposed to an arbitrary or will-based connection. Objectivity stands in contrast to subjectivity and in Kantian terms it is the contrast between an arbitrary or contingent connection of representations, that is, as a thing appears to the individual consciousness and a necessary connection of representations according to rules of the understanding. This issue is discussed by Kant under the Second Analogy of Experience. There, Kant asks how appearances, which are “nothing more than a sum of these representations” can nevertheless be considered as their object. He replies that

appearance, in contradistinction to the representations of apprehension, can thereby only be represented as the object that is distinct from them if it stands under a rule that distinguishes it from every other apprehension, and makes one way of combining the manifold necessary. (*KrV*, A191/B236)

And

If we investigate what new characteristic is given to our representations by the **relation to an object**, and what is the dignity that they thereby receive, we find that it does nothing beyond making the combination of representations necessary in a certain way, and subjecting them to a rule. (*KrV*, A197/B242)

What distinguishes an aggregate of appearances and makes it into an object is the necessary connection of these appearances according to a rule imposed by the understanding. Kant, therefore, concludes that “that in the appearance which contains the condition of this necessary rule of apprehension is the object” (*KrV*, A191/B236). There are two deeply connected and inseparable aspects to this issue: the necessary connection of representations and the positing of these representations as an object. The necessity of the connection expresses the relation of representations to one another *in the object*, rather than their merely contingent relation in the individual mind. Similarly, the relation of representations to an object, that is, positing them as an object, is only achieved by referring to their connection as a necessary one. Thus, Kant replaces the content-based criterion of

²³⁶ In a highly illuminating remark, Caranti (2007, 195n27) shows how the illegitimacy of the extrapolation from uncontroversial doubts regarding specific objects to the radical doubt regarding the entire phenomenal world parallels the paradigmatic fallacy at the core of the Antinomies. Caranti, however, does not appeal to this discussion in order to shed light on the distinction between the reality of perception and the actuality of objects (in some passages, he even seems to identify the two dimensions and think that one bears on the other (Caranti 2007, 54, 96f.)). He also shares the widespread dismissal of Kant’s argument regarding the reality of perception (Caranti 2007, 99f.). On Caranti’s recognition of the illegitimacy of the radical skeptic doubt, cf. also note 266 below.

objectivity with a formal one.²³⁷ Objectivity does not derive from the content of our representations. As our discussion has already shown, we cannot distinguish the objective status of one set of representations from another based on their content. Objectivity, on the contrary, is exclusively derived from a formal criterion regarding the necessary connection of representations according to a rule of the understanding.²³⁸ We should distinguish two aspects of necessary – a general and a specific or concrete aspect. The former aspect refers to the general assumption according to which we can distinguish a necessary connection of representations from other, merely arbitrary, connections. The latter aspect concerns the criterion for the ascription of necessity in any concrete case.²³⁹ Regarding the general aspect, we must admit that such a general condition of necessity cannot be derived a-posteriori from any collection of experiences. It must therefore express *an a-priori presupposition* of the understanding, which conditions the possibility of objective experience. The highest expression of the necessary connection of appearances according to an a-priori rule is the transcendental object. The latter expresses the *presupposition* according to which beyond the contingent connection of appearances in the apprehension, there is also a necessary connection according to which appearances are combined in the object itself. The ‘object itself’, as we have already discussed in previous sections, is neither a distinct ontological entity, nor an in-itself aspect of ordinary objects, but rather a presupposition, a transcendental condition, one that is nevertheless inevitable for the constitution of experience.²⁴⁰

One may object that a distinction must be made between the judgment about an object – which may comply with Kant's model – and the being of the object itself, which is independent of the judgments about it. Such a distinction seems to presuppose that which needs to be explained. The entire issue is to explain how an object obtains its independence from the representation or judgment about it, and Kant's claim is that this is achieved through a certain form of judgment. The distinction between an object and the representation of an object is not a premise but a result of the analysis of the function of judgments. Talk of an object (or an aspect thereof) that is ontologically independent of the judgment about it is

²³⁷ The reconfiguration of the concept of objectivity in turn affects the definition of actuality and truth. This shall become evident as I discuss below Kant's account of actuality in terms of the formal coherence of appearances.

²³⁸ Cf. §19 of the *Prolegomena* where Kant says that “objective validity and necessary universal validity (for everyone) are therefore interchangeable concepts, and although we do not know the object in itself, nevertheless, if we regard a judgment as universally valid and hence necessary, objective validity is understood to be included.” (*Prol*, AA 04: 298).

²³⁹ I shall address the criterion for the concrete application of necessity within the discussion of actuality.

²⁴⁰ Caranti (2007, 118f.), who does not discuss the role of the transcendental object for Kant's theory of objectivity, has to find ways around passages in which Kant refers to an unknown X which grounds or underlies appearances.

dogmatic.²⁴¹ The unease regarding the independent status of the object can be explained as follows. Non-reflective, empirical thinking inevitably refers to the object as independent of cognition. However, in empirical thinking we are unaware of the fact that the object obtains its independent status only because cognition confers this status on it by referring to a certain connection of representations as necessary and thus objective. Only in philosophical reflection do we recognize the contribution of cognition and then it appears that the conclusions of the philosophical reflection contradict the evidence of our everyday thought. Nevertheless, the contradiction is only apparent. First, empirical thinking has no alternative. To think inevitably means to posit that about which we think as an object. This is true whether the object is later upheld as actual or dismissed as fictive. Second, the fact that the independent status of the object results from an inevitable cognitive function does not annul our ability to distinguish the actual from the fictive as the discussion of actuality below will show. Third and most important, the conclusions of the philosophical reflection do not contradict those of our empirical non-reflective thought since the former is only intended to *explain how* the latter can distinguish reality from illusion, rather than the per-impossible task of *justifying that* what we refer to as an object is wholly independent of cognition.²⁴² It follows then that we should not be alarmed by Kant's frequent identification of appearances with representations. From a transcendental, reflective, point of view, when the contrast is between mind-dependent representations and mind-(wholly)independent things-in-themselves, we must admit that both inner and outer senses have to do with representations only. However, from an empirical point of view, we inevitably and immediately (without inference) refer to an object, which we regard as

²⁴¹ This is the difficulty I find with Guyer's position (1987, 337). I agree with Guyer's criticism of Allison when he argues that Allison's appeal to analytical judgments regarding things-in-themselves "confuses claims about a *concept* with claims about *things*". However, Guyer thinks of the concept-thing, or the representation-object, distinction is in terms of the epistemology-ontology distinction. Guyer, thus, argues that Kant holds to the existence of objects ontologically independent of the self (and calls this Kant's realism), while admitting epistemologically that we can only know these objects as they appear to us. He concludes that "Kant of 1787 advocates epistemological subjectivism but ontological realism." (Guyer 1987, 282). On the contrary I think that according to Kant we cannot refer to objects (or things) whose essence (so-sein) or being (Dasein) is considered in total abstraction from our power of representation and that therefore "the proud name of an ontology [...] must give way to the modest one of a mere analytic of the pure understanding." (*KrV*, A247/B303). Renouncing ontology and objects considered as ontologically independent of the self and its representations does not amount to annulling the distinction that can and should be made between an object and mere representations, a distinction, which is entirely epistemological.

²⁴² Graham Bird (2006, 10, 15) uniquely argues that Kant's philosophy should be understood as merely *descriptive* rather than *normative* metaphysics. Similar recognition is found in the work of Ralf Meerbote (1972, 420). "Transcendental inquiry", Meerbote argues, "is not so much concerned with *disputing* the truth value of judgments entered by the empirical understanding, or with *disputing* the ordinary distinction between truth and appearance, but with discovering and *explaining how* the entering, challenging, and justifying of such judgments proceed". Jacob Sigmund Beck was also one of the few to recognize this character of the relation between transcendental and empirical thought (*EmS*, 156, 172f.).

independent of cognition.²⁴³ This feature applies to both actual and imaginary objects. When I say that a Pegasus has wings, I implicitly assume that the creature Pegasus, that I refer to as having wings, is at least a tentative being. I do not attribute the property of having wings to the representation 'Pegasus' but to the Pegasus. The representation 'Pegasus' is a thought in my mind, which may have many properties, but it may not have wings. A thought may have wings only in analogy with an actual creature but this only strengthens the point. Spinoza's example in §33 of the *Treatise on the Improvement of the Understanding* may be helpful here. The circle, he says, has a center and a circumference, but not the idea of a circle. In much the same way, I mean that I attribute the property of 'having wings' to the Pegasus, not to its representation or concept.

Although the issue of objectivity is central to Kant's transcendental idealism, it might be overlooked in the arguments of both the first and the second edition's version of the refutation. In both cases the core of the argument is to prove against the skeptic that not only inner but also outer *objects* are given immediately to our consciousness and need not be inferred. The emphasis in the first edition's Fourth Paralogism on the transcendental distinction between the illegitimate consideration of objects as if they were things-in-themselves in contrast to the only legitimate consideration of objects as appearances coupled with Kant's repeated claim that appearances, transcendently considered, are nothing but representations may cause us to overlook the fact that the refutation is directed at objects, not at mere representations. As I endeavored to show above, the empirical object is distinguishable from a mere representation despite the fact that it is only an object through these representations. This consideration is more apparent in the second edition's dedicated chapter on the Refutation of Idealism. There, Kant makes clearer that "the proof that is demanded must therefore establish that we have **experience** and not merely **imagination** of outer things" (*KrV*, B275).²⁴⁴ By the term 'experience' Kant means a thoroughgoing connection of representations according to universal, empirical, causal laws. The lawful connection of representations, which constitutes experience, mirrors the distinction I have drawn above between an *object* of a representation and a *representation* of an object.²⁴⁵ This is reflected in Kant's

²⁴³ In Sect. 12.2.1 we saw how the idealist-realist dispute arises out of the idealist identification with the point of view of philosophical reflection and the realist identification with the empirical, non-reflective, point of view. We now see with more clarity why the idealist-realist dispute arises from a failure to recognize that philosophical reflection and the empirical, non-reflective point of view do not contradict each other.

²⁴⁴ The same emphasis is present in Kant's claim that the proof shows that inner *experience* presupposes outer *experience* (*KrV*, B275, B277).

²⁴⁵ It is fascinating to see that precisely the notion of 'an object of experience', and the distinction this notion carries between the *representation* of an object and an *object* of a representation is rejected by Schopenhauer. In his criticism of Kant in the appendix to the first book of *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer (1993, 589) says that Kant's 'object of experience', the true object of the categories, is neither an intuitive representation nor an abstract concept. It is different from the two and yet it combines them both and is "utterly a non-thing". He adds that although the object of the categories is not the thing-in-itself, it is nevertheless the latter's next of kin – the object-in-itself (Schopenhauer 1993, 589). The 'object-in-itself' is according to Schopenhauer an

insistence in the second edition's Refutation of Idealism that his proof aims at things rather than mere representations of things. Although things or objects are not ontologically independent of representations (this is highlighted by the transcendental level of consideration) they are nevertheless distinguishable from mere representations on behalf of the necessary connection of representations for which they stand and on behalf of which they can be regarded as items in experience (this is highlighted by the empirical level of consideration). Equally worth noting is the fact that in both editions Kant stresses that his proof is not weakened by the fact that some objects of experience may be declared on further consideration not to be actual ones (*KrV*, A376; Note 3 to the Refutation of Idealism, *KrV*, B278f.). The aim of the proof is merely to show that external objects *in general* are given immediately to our consciousness and need not be inferred. Kant freely admits that this leaves open the further question whether *any specific object* is or is not actual.²⁴⁶ The reference to objects and to experience (and equally

object that does not require a knowing subject; it is a singular thing but yet not in time and space; it is the object of thought yet not an abstract concept. Schopenhauer argues that Kant makes a threefold distinction: (1) the representation; (2) the object of the representation; (3) the thing-in-itself. The first refers to sensible intuition and includes sensations as well as space and time. The second is that which is constructed by the categories and is added in thought to the former. The third lies wholly beyond cognition (*jenseits aller Erkennbarkeit*). Schopenhauer explicitly rejects the second element as out of place. The object of the representation, distinguished from representations, and yet not a thing-in-itself, has no place in Kant's doctrine, as Schopenhauer understands it. The object of experience, constituted by the categories, must either be reduced to a representation (this is Schopenhauer's view) or to a thing-in-itself, for at bottom there are ultimately only two modes of existence – that of a representation and that of a thing-in-itself wholly independent of all representations (Schopenhauer 1993, 598f.). It is remarkable that Schopenhauer recognizes Kant's central notion of an object and yet rejects it. This is one of the boldest examples of an author, who reads Kant, while holding to the assumption of the absolute dichotomy between a representation and a thing-in-itself and, thus, loses sight of the core of Kant's doctrine. Schopenhauer practically dismisses the Transcendental Analytic in favor of the Transcendental Aesthetic. He thinks that the faculty of intuition is objective on its own behalf, without relying on the understanding and he dismisses all the categories as redundant except that of causality.

²⁴⁶ This is recognized by various authors but nevertheless invokes concern about the validity of Kant refutation (cf. for example Allison 2004, 293ff., referred to in note 226 above). The issue is also discussed by Paul Abela (2002, 186) who raises the concern that "empirical realism may appear to involve the untenable view that belief is inherently veridical by nature. Conversely, if the possibility of error is interpreted in terms of referential failure, then Kant's attack on the pre-critical epistemic paradigm loses much of its force." Abela suggests solving this issue by recognizing that "all judgments, true or false, operate within a truth-constraint context." (Abela 2002, 195). I would express this issue in my terms by emphasizing that all judgments are objective and are therefore *capable* of being either true or false. That some judgments are declared on further consideration to be false does not weaken their essential *appeal to objectivity* due to their inherent structure. I share much of Abela's Priority-of-Judgment interpretation and its application to the question of the refutation. Abela presents Kant's position as a renunciation of the Cartesian epistemic model. According to the theory of ideas of Descartes and the English empiricists bare sensations are capable of representing an object considered as the ontologically independent cause of these sensations. Kant rejects both sides of the equation. According to the Kantian model sense perception can only represent an object when it is subsumed under concepts in judgments, through which a relation to an object is constituted. Thus, the relation to an object is not an essential – and quite mysterious – inherent feature of bare sensible content, nor is the object considered as a thing-in-itself, whose existence is inferred from its cause.

to knowledge) should therefore be distinguished from mere representations on the one hand and from any appeal to the actuality/existence of these objects on the other hand.

The issue of objectivity is explicitly referred to by Kant in his repeated attempts to improve and reformulate his second edition's Refutation of Idealism during the late 1780s and early 1790s. There, Kant emphasizes that an object cannot be an illusion "in us" because for a thing to be objective, it must be conceived of as independent of us.

Now here it should be noticed that every object signifies something distinct from the representation, but which is only in the understanding, hence even inner sense, which makes oneself into the object of our representations, signifies something distinct from oneself (as transcendental object of apperception). Thus if we did not relate the representations to something distinct from ourselves, they would never yield knowledge of objects; for as far as inner sense is concerned, it consists only in the relation of representations, whether they signify something or nothing, to the subject. (*Refl.*, 5654, AA 18: 312)²⁴⁷

This line of argument is an extension to, and it appears within Kant's notes in conjunction with, the discussion of his argument from the second edition's chapter on the Refutation of Idealism which is designed to reverse the priorities between our inner and outer senses and show that the representation of a thing as outside me in space, is presupposed by the representation of the self in time. In the text cited above Kant reemphasizes – in continuation to his distinction in the second edition between a thing in space and a mere representation of a such a thing – that it is not merely space that is presupposed but *something* persisting in space to which we refer as independent of us.²⁴⁸ That 'thinghood', which accounts for the persistence as well as for the distinction of external objects from the self, is not an empirical spatial representation but a presupposition of the understanding. Thus "the

²⁴⁷ In this paragraph Kant is explicit that what makes the object distinct from a representation is an addition of the understanding. In other notes he refers to this element as something that must be intellectually presupposed (*Refl.*, 5653, AA 18: 306, cited below). In the currently cited paragraph Kant explicitly identifies this presupposition of the understanding as the transcendental object. Cf. also note 249 below. One should be careful not to confuse the objectifying function of the understanding with an alleged intelligible object.

²⁴⁸ An object is, therefore, something to which we inevitably refer as independent of our representations. This does not mean that the object exists (ontologically) independently of us, but only that we inevitably confer an (epistemologically) independent status to it. In contrast to my view, Paul Guyer (1987, 290ff.) argues that in these Reflexionen, even more so than in the second edition Refutation of Idealism, Kant intends to prove the existence of an ontologically – not merely phenomenologically – independent object. Not only does the textual evidence given as support for this claim seem to me to be very thin, moreover, the fact that this view is hardly reconcilable with Kant's transcendental idealism (this is admitted by Guyer) and requires Guyer to claim that Kant has changed such a fundamental part of his theory between the first and second editions of the first *Critique* makes Guyer's position very implausible to me. Guyer even brings as evidence the above-cited text from *Refl.*, 5654 and argues that it demonstrates "Kant's lack of clear terminology for the difference between thought and its intended object" (Guyer 1987, 291). Rather than Kant's lack of terminology, it is, I believe, Guyer's criticism that exposes his own lack of satisfaction with the distinction Kant does make between a representation and its object.

consciousness of other things outside of me [...] must also be intellectually presupposed and is to that extent not a representation of them in space, but can be called intellectual intuition, through which we have no cognition of things” (*Refl*, 5653, AA 18: 306).²⁴⁹ The persistence and independence of external objects cannot be merely imagined for otherwise we could not even have mere representations of objects outside of us. Accordingly, Kant argues that “this representation [of that which persists] also cannot be grounded on the mere imagination of something that endures outside us, for it is impossible to imagine something for which no corresponding object can be given” (*Refl*, 5709, AA 18: 332).²⁵⁰ Once again, we should remind ourselves that Kant refers to a characteristic of *objects in general* and this leaves open the possibility that *specific* objects can nevertheless be declared non-existent.

12.2.4.5 Partial Conclusions

The discussion of externality, reality, and objectivity was intended to show that we can only represent an external object as (a) occupying a space other than the one we occupy, (b) through the content of sense perception, and (c) as a thing on which we confer an independent status. In other words, the characters of externality, reality and objectivity are given *immediately* with the awareness of *each and every* external object.²⁵¹ None of the above three levels of consideration was

²⁴⁹ By “intellectual intuition” Kant clearly does not mean the cognition of objects through pure understanding (which Kant’s critical idealism completely rules out) as he himself notes. Rather, he means the intellectual presupposition of the transcendental object, which indeed does not amount to cognition on its own behalf. The allusion to the transcendental object is repeated in *Refl*, 6312 where Kant argues that “that which is persistent must lie only in that which is simultaneous, or in the intelligible, which contains the ground of appearances” (AA 18: 612). Kant also argues that the possibility of simultaneity “must lie in the relation of representations to something outside us, and indeed to something that is not itself in turn mere inner representation, i.e., form of appearance, hence which is something in itself”. (AA 18: 612). Once more, that which is “something in itself” is not a transcendent entity but the transcendental object which functions as an epistemological (rather than ontological) presupposition of the understanding.

²⁵⁰ The emphasis should be placed on the fact that we cannot imagine something for which no object *could be* given. Even the imagination – as a form of representing – cannot refer to something without positing it as an object (at least within the limited context of that imagination). Cf. also *Refl*, 5654, in which Kant argues that nothing can be an object for us (even tentatively) without referring to it as distinct from us. In *Refl*, 6312 Kant argues that “In order for something to seem to be outside us, there must really be something outside us... for the representation of something outside us could otherwise never come into our thoughts...” (AA 18: 613). We should not, however, read here a dogmatic assumption of an ontological entity. Kant only means that the reference to a distinct object outside us is not an illusion but the result of an inevitable cognitive function without which nothing can be represented at all.

²⁵¹ Kant’s immediacy argument in the Fourth Paralogism, a shorter version of which is repeated in the second edition’s sixth section of the Antinomies, is intended to rule out the alleged need to rely on an inference *between two domains* – the domain of representations and the domain of things-in-themselves. Although the actuality of any specific objective representation does rely on an

intended to supply a criterion to distinguish reality from illusion. On the contrary, the claim is that all three characteristics inevitably apply to both reality and illusion and that, therefore, any distinction between reality and illusion must be made under these conditions and not beyond them. Although each of the above three considerations includes a relation to the knowing subject, this admission cannot be used as an argument that would compel Kant to admit that he has no response to skepticism. The alternative to the above admission of a relation to the knowing subject would have to be an object that is external, but not in space or, more generally put, it would have to be external without referring to an external sense, it would have to be representable, though not through the data of sense-perception, and it should have an independent status not on behalf of cognition conferring this status on it. According to Kant, such an *object* cannot be represented. The concept, in Kant's terms the Idea, and simply stated, the *mere thought* of such a thing in general, as a mere grammatical subject of judgment, may be free from internal contradiction but it cannot be referred to as an object. We understand the terms making out the definition of such a concept but we do not understand what it could possibly refer to.

The distinction, which should be made, is the one between a *possible thought* and a *possible object*. It corresponds to Kant's distinction between logical and real possibility and it belongs to the wider context of the philosophical distinction between meaning and reference (Sects. 12.2.2 and 12.2.3). This distinction is not merely technical; for example, non-philosophical language is familiar with the distinction between a unicorn, which is merely possible, and a horse, which is an actual object. However, a unicorn is not merely a concept free from internal contradiction (Kant's logical possibility); it is also a possible object since it complies with the preconditions of externality, reality, and objectivity (Kant's real possibility). By contrast, if we define a concept, which completely abstracts from spatiality, sense perception and the objectifying function of our cognition, we are left with a concept, which, although free from internal contradiction, *could not possibly* have an object. Despite the fact that such a concept is legitimate as a mere thought, *the very question* whether such a thought could possibly have an object is itself impossible.²⁵² However, the fact that such a thought is free from internal contradiction and, therefore, legitimate as a mere thought is not at all the issue, since the skeptical doubt is based on the possibility of such an object which if it were possible would stand in contrast to the phenomenal object, the only one we can represent. Kant, therefore, argues that:

inference, nevertheless, *this* inference is not between two domains but rather entirely *within the domain of appearances/representations* themselves and therefore it does not reinstate the skeptical doubt.

²⁵² Thus, both the two-world and the two-aspect view are ruled out. Both doctrines assume that the concept of a thing-in-itself has a reference to an object (or that the concept of the thing as it is in-itself refers to an aspect of the one and only kind of object).

The deception of substituting the logical possibility of the **concept** (since it does not contradict itself) for the transcendental possibility of **things** (where an object corresponds to the concept) can deceive and satisfy only the inexperienced. (*KrV*, A244/B302)

In a word, all of these concepts could not be vouched for and their real possibility thereby established, if all sensible intuition (the only one we have) were taken away, and there remained only logical possibility, i.e., that the concept (thought) is possible is not the issue; the issue is rather whether it relates to an object and therefore signifies anything. (*KrV*, B302–3n. This note is appended to the text cited above)

The discussions of externality, reality, and objectivity have, therefore, established that an object can only be represented under these conditions and that any distinction between a representation, which has, and one which has not, an actual object, must be made *within the realm of appearances*. In other words, the transcendental-reflective analysis undertaken thus far, above all the discussion of the notion of objectivity, expresses the recognition that the very concept of an object is dependent on a certain function of judgments. However, this general recognition does not annul the empirical standpoint according to which the actuality or truth of any specific objective judgment is not dependent on the judgment itself but rather on the object and its place in experience.²⁵³ The following discussion of the notion of actuality is intended to clarify this rather perplexing statement.

12.2.4.6 Actuality

The issue of objectivity and the issue of actuality (*Existenz/Wirklichkeit*) are distinct, but there is a connection between them. The issue of objectivity, as we have discussed above, is the issue of constituting an object out of the data of sensibility by applying to it the rules of the understanding, thereby making one way of connecting representations stand out as necessary. By conceiving of the connection of representations as necessary, they are posited as an object distinct from the knowing subject and his/her representations. The issue of the actuality of specific objects or the truth of specific objective judgments derives from the above-discussed character of objectivity. Since anything to which we attribute properties is inevitably posited as an object distinct from us, and since this feature applies equally to things that may turn out to be either existent or imaginary, it is clear that a separate cognitive aspect is required to distinguish the former from the latter. The issue of actuality or truth, therefore, concerns the question of whether the tentative objectivity or independence that is included in the construction of an object can be

²⁵³ Arthur Melnick (1973, 160) accordingly argued that “Kant’s point is that empirical judgment presupposes contribution on the part of the subject and that this does not destroy the notion of an object; on the contrary, it establishes the only positive conception of an object. The reference to the judgmental apparatus of the subject in the very notion of an object is not, for the transcendental idealist, incompatible with the idea that what an object is like does not depend on what the subject judges or thinks it to be like. Recognizing this, and recognizing that we can have empirical knowledge (we can judge) of objects in this sense, he does not degrade what our empirical judgments are of, to mere illusion as does the empirical realist”.

maintained on further reflection. Actuality and truth stand for a re-confirmation of the objective status and, therefore, their criterion must recall the formal criterion of objectivity. Since objectivity is understood not as a matter of correlation between representations and things-in-themselves, but in terms of conformity to rules, then it is no coincidence that Kant also defines actuality as concerning a connection with perception according to empirical laws. Accordingly Kant explicitly states that “since the agreement of cognition with the object is truth, only the formal conditions of empirical truth can be inquired after here” (*KrV*, A191/B236).²⁵⁴ Both the issue of objectivity and the issue of actuality concern the formal connection of representations according to rules. However, within the process of constituting the content of the object by synthesizing sensible representations, the focus is not on the formal connection of representations but on the sensible contents that are being synthesized. In contrast, the ascription of a truth-value or modal status is the process, which focuses specifically on the formal aspect involved in objectivity.

The issue of actuality, that is, the question regarding the existence or inexistence of a specific object, requires that we address the question regarding the criterion for the ascription of necessity in any concrete case. In this respect, Kant's argument for a formal criterion of objectivity may seem circular. On the one hand, objectivity derives from the necessary connection of representations as opposed to a willful or arbitrary connection. On the other hand, we admit that it is the knowing subject himself who attributes this necessary connection to one way of connecting representations. Therefore, it seems unclear what authorizes the ascription of necessity to one and no other connection of representations. I argue that although Kant's transcendental idealism relies merely on the inherent powers of the knowing subject, nevertheless, the ascription of necessity to any specific connection of representations, which makes it stand out amongst alternative connections of representations, is not arbitrary.²⁵⁵ The signaling out of a certain connection of representations is made on the background of the assumption of one unified experience governed by universal empirical laws. The connection conceived of as necessary is the one that seems to better fit as a necessary part within the whole of experience. In other words, the connection conceived of as necessary (and therefore objective) is the one that seems to better cohere with other objective judgments governed by universal empirical laws. During the construction of an object its objective status is only tentative. This is so because at this stage, we focus on the content of the object in question and the larger context of experience recedes to the background of consciousness and receives only limited attention. Thus within the modal evaluation – when we already have a tentative object in mind – we specifically examine whether the tentative object, previously constructed, can

²⁵⁴ Cf. also *KrV*, A376 in which Kant states that the criterion of actuality is “only a question of the form of experience”.

²⁵⁵ Ralph C. S. Walker (2010, 840f.) thinks that if the combination of the given data is not determined in some way by the level of things-in-themselves then it is completely arbitrary making Kant's transcendental idealism identical to the idealism of Fichte (which Walker takes to be sheer idealism).

indeed fit as a necessary counterpart within a unified and orderly whole of experience.²⁵⁶

Therefore, Kant recognizes that the criterion of actuality and truth is not based on a supposed correspondence between the content of our representations and things as they are in themselves. The criterion of actuality and truth is formal, rather than material, moreover, it concerns the coherence of our representations among themselves and their taking part in the unity of experience governed by universal empirical laws.²⁵⁷ This statement may sound controversial and I would, therefore, like to pause to expand on this issue.

The emphasis on the role of coherence among representations governed by universal empirical laws and, with it, the distinction that can and must be made within transcendental philosophy between the representation of an object and the

²⁵⁶ Take, for example, the following case. I see something in front of me and I make an objective judgment: “This is a horse”. Unless there is a reason to doubt the validity of this judgment, my attention shall be focused on the contents of this objective judgment (the qualities of being a horse) and not on the validity of the judgment. This judgment is nevertheless given at least tentative (and in regular cases unconscious) validity, that is, we refer to the horse as an actual object. We must note that it is impossible to make a judgment without objectifying the content of the judgment. As I have discussed above, objectivity – the positing of a certain connection of representations as distinct from the knowing subject – equally applies to objects, which on further examination, are declared to be existent and to those objects, which on further examination, are declared to be inexistent. Thus, when I am asked whether I am sure that this is an actual horse or similarly when some doubts arise about the validity of the above judgment (this is when modality comes into play), I focus my attention particularly on the validity of my previous judgment and for that purpose I may try to obtain more observations (I can look again; from different directions; I may ask the opinion of other people around me, etc.) and I shall additionally ask myself whether what I allegedly see is compatible with my knowledge of the laws of nature (suppose the horse is observed in an extremely cold environment where I know horses cannot survive). This example demonstrates that we operate under the assumption that if a specific judgment is true (if its object is actual) then it must not be contradicted by other judgments, all governed by universal empirical laws of nature. My intention in this note is to explain why a further process is required to re-evaluate the initial objective status and decide whether it can be upheld on further reflection. The former process is the initial construction of an object. The latter process is the ascription of modal status. Kant explicitly distinguishes the construction of the content of the object through the application of the first three groups of categories from the ascription of a modal status. According to Kant (*KrV*, A74ff./B99ff., A598–601/B624–629), the modal categories add no new predicate (content) to the object. The ascription of a modal status assumes that the content of the object has already been secured through the synthesis of sensible representations according to principles pertaining to the first three groups of categories.

²⁵⁷ On this point, my own view is also supported by Caranti (2007, 98). Compare Abela (2002, 193): “The determination of true and false belief in experience is thus connected to the coherence of our representations”. Cf. also (Abela 2002, 193–199). Abela further emphasizes, as I do, that the difference between truth and error is not to be found in sensation itself but only in the connection of sensible contents in judgments (he, therefore, distinguishes the *content* from the *context*). It should be stressed that Kant’s coherence model of actuality and truth is in no quarrel with the employment of actuality in empirical thinking. On the contrary, Kant’s entire philosophy is intended to expose the criterions and methods already in use by empirical (mainly scientific) thinking. The quarrel between coherence and correspondence models is on the philosophical reflective level, which attempts to explain how empirical reasoning operates.

object of a representation is much more explicit in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and in the *Prolegomena* than in the Fourth Paralogism of the first edition, but it is already present in the first edition and even prior to it in Kant's notes and lectures from the 1770s. In the Fourth Paralogism of the first edition, Kant argues that despite the fact that external objects in general are immediately perceived as real, it still remains open whether a specific representation corresponds to its object. The latter issue concerns not the object's reality, but its existence (actuality) and is based on a formal criterion regarding whether a representation is consistent with other representations under the rule of universal empirical laws. Kant cites here the criterion that is the criterion of the modal category of existence: "Whatever is connected with a perception according to empirical laws, is actual." (*KrV*, A376). Compare this with the criterion of actuality in the chapter on The Postulates of Empirical Thinking in General: "That which is connected with the material conditions of experience (of sensation) is **actual**". (*KrV*, A218/B265f.). Within the latter chapter, Kant specifically stresses that although actuality requires perception, this is, nevertheless, "not immediate perception of the object itself the existence of which is to be cognized, but still its connection with some actual perception in accordance with the analogies of experience, which exhibit all real connection in an experience in general" (*KrV*, A225/B272).²⁵⁸ This important remark clarifies that actuality is not merely material, but is about the formal connection of the material element of experience. The criterion of existence is indeed defined by Kant as material, but only in the sense that it involves a relation to sensation as the matter of our representations, rather than a mere relation to the forms of intuition and thought which stands for the criterion of possibility. The criterion of existence is nevertheless formal in the sense that it does not require that the matter of the representation be confirmed against the content of a thing independent of our representations, but it requires that the representation be consistent with other representations all governed by empirical laws. In Note 3 to the second edition's Refutation of Idealism Kant writes: "Whether this or that putative experience is not mere imagination must be ascertained according to its particular determinations and through its coherence with the criteria of all actual experience." (*KrV*, B279). In section six of the Antinomies chapter – in which Kant repeats many of the views originally contained in the Fourth Paralogism of the first edition – Kant repeats this empirical criterion of actuality and truth time and again. "In time and space, however, the empirical truth of appearances is satisfactorily secured, and sufficiently distinguished from its kinship with dreams, if both are correctly and thoroughly connected up according to empirical laws in one experience." (*KrV*, A493/B520f.). And few passages later he says: "For everything is actual that stands in one context with a perception in accordance with the laws of the empirical progression." (*KrV*, A493/B521). Further along he argues that sensible representations "in so far as they are connected and determinable in these relations (in space

²⁵⁸ Compare *KrV*, A601/B629 where Kant defines existence as "the connection with some perception of mine in accordance with empirical laws".

and time) according to laws of the unity of experience, are called **objects**” (*KrV*, A494/B522). Similarly in *Refl*, 4285, Kant emphasizes that “we conceive of appearances as corresponding to things [...] if they are in conformity to logical form” (AA 17: 496). In *Refl*, 4536, after stressing that external objects “exist only in the representational power of sensing beings”, he then adds that “whether something outside me corresponds to these their appearances is a question about the cause of this appearance and not about the existence of that which appears itself. This existence as an object is the representation of interconnection with all appearances in accordance with laws” (AA 17: 586). In this note, Kant explicitly distinguishes the question regarding the correspondence of a representation to its cause (the issue at the center of the skeptical idealist’s doubt, where the existence of a thing-in-itself is supposed to be inferred from the reality of our representations as its effect) from the question regarding the existence of an object. See also *Refl*, 5400, in which Kant states that “dreams are in analogy with wakefulness. Except for wakeful representations that are consistent with those of other people I have no other marks for the **object** outside me; thus a *phenomenon* outside me is that which can be cognized in accordance with rules of the understanding” (AA 18: 172). He even goes on to say that the further worry “whether there are really external *phenomena*” – by which Kant means whether phenomena corresponds to objects wholly independent of our representations – is misleading. Since we only have representations at our disposal – whether in dreams or in wakefulness – these representations themselves are neither true nor false. Only their interconnection can serve as the criterion for their correspondence with an object. See also *Refl*, 5636:

Since the objects of our senses are not things-in-themselves, but are only appearances, i.e., representations whose objective reality consists only in the constancy and unity of the interconnection of their manifold, the objects do not yield the concepts, but the concepts make it such that in them we have objects of cognition. (AA 18: 268)

In reply to the objection that the representation should be compared with something that is completely independent of our representations he adds explicitly that “an object outside us [in the sense required by the objection] is transcendent, i.e., entirely unknown to us and useless as a criterion of truth” (*Refl*, 5642, AA 18: 281). In his lectures from the mid 1770s Kant similarly argued that “were the dreams only orderly, so that one would always begin to dream where one left off, then one could always maintain that one was in the other world” (AA 28: 206). The same rationale is repeated in the *Prolegomena* §13, Note III:

The difference between truth and dream, however, is not decided through the quality of the representations that are referred to objects, for they are the same in both, but through their connection according to the rules that determine the combination of representations in the concept of an object, and how far they can or cannot stand together in one experience. (*Prol*, AA 04: 290)

Kant adds that error does not reside in the senses but only in the objective judgment of the understanding (cf. the above, within the discussion of reality).

In a passage from the first *Critique*, Kant defines nature as “the connection of appearances necessarily determining one another in accordance with universal laws” and associates this criterion with “the mark of empirical truth which distinguishes experience from dreaming” (*KrV*, A451/B479). Further, in the chapter on the refutation of the ontological proof of God's existence Kant explains that existence is the thought of an object “as contained in the context of the entirety of experience” (*KrV*, A600f./B629f.).

The following note summarizes the above argument very succinctly:

Until now we have only had to deal with appearances, in whose exposition, principles, and use there is only truth, and here there was no idealism. For truth consists merely in the thoroughgoing interconnection of representations in accordance with the laws of the understanding. In that consists all difference from dreams. Not in the fact that the images exist for themselves in separation from the mind. (*Refl*, 5642, AA 18: 280. Cf. also *Refl*, 5461)

Appearances themselves are neither true nor false. They merely express immediate observations. If I only report what the senses tell me I do not run the risk of error, which can only happen when I pass judgment and give objective validity to the initial data of the senses. When I see a spoon as broken in a glass of water or when I see the heavens rotate at night, there is no error in expressing how things appear to me. It is only when I take things at face value and infer an objective state of affairs from the initial data of the senses that I run the risk of error.²⁵⁹ The truth or falsehood of our judgments does not reside in the origin of representations included in them or in their qualities, but depends on the question of whether the connection of representations in these judgments is compatible with other judgments so that they can all make out one coherent experience.²⁶⁰ For example, a new astronomical claim must be evaluated by asking whether it accords with all known observational data and established theories in astronomy and physics, etc. Kant, as I have said, replaces the correspondence theory of truth with that of coherence.²⁶¹ Truth does

²⁵⁹ Cf. note 235 above. “It follows that error is effected only through the unnoticed influence of sensibility on understanding, through which it happens that the subjective grounds of the judgment join with the objective ones, and make the latter deviate from their destination” (*KrV*, A294/B350f.). In a footnote to this very text, Kant adds: “Sensibility, subordinated to the understanding, as the object to which the latter applies its function, is the source of real cognition. But this same sensibility, insofar as it influences the action of the understanding and determines it to judgments, is the ground of error.”

²⁶⁰ Kant here builds on his long-standing convictions (already visible in his works from the 1760s) that experience – the theoretical cognition of nature – is made of empirical observations governed by universal laws. This view of Kant's received a very bold expression in the *Inaugural Dissertation*.

²⁶¹ According to Kant, whose aim is to explain how cognition operates, we can still speak of the correlation between our representations and their objects, but we must qualify this by recognizing that it is not a correlation between a representation immanent to cognition and a thing-in-itself wholly independent of it (which is how the issue appears to non-reflective, empirical cognition), but a correspondence between a specific connection of representations and a wider context of representations governed by universal laws (which is how the issue is seen from the transcendental

not reside in the correspondence between a representation immanent to cognition and a thing-in-itself wholly transcendent of it but in the internal coherence of the experiential world. The restriction of knowledge to appearances thus does not annul the distinction between truth and falsehood and the criterion for this distinction has nothing to do with things-in-themselves.²⁶² Kant's formal criterion of coherence is in my view the only consistent and defensible way to uphold the distinction between truth and falsehood. Any attempt to revert back to a correlation model of truth shall have to confront the objections of skeptical idealism.

12.2.4.7 Radical Skepticism and Transcendental Realism

Nevertheless Kant's troubles are not yet over. For the skeptic might still insist that – even granted that the realm of appearances is internally consistent and is governed by universal laws – it is still an open question whether this world of appearances conforms to a wholly independent reality. As long as this issue remains open, the argument continues, Kant has not yet ruled out the possibility that we live in an internally consistent world of dream within our own consciousness.²⁶³ The response to this objection follows, in fact, from the discussions we have already conducted above. We should begin by recognizing that the objection is aimed at an alleged object, whose essence and being is entirely independent of any kind of relation to any kind of knowing subject. Only such a wholly transcendent entity would truly be a thing *in-itself*, which alone could satisfy the demand made by the above objection. However, the notion of a thing-in-itself in the sense of *an object entirely independent of any knowing subject and his or her forms of representation and judgment* is entirely meaningless for us, other than as a nominal definition. This result was already analyzed and discussed in the Sect. 12.2.1 above and it also follows from the inevitable dependence of the notion of an object on our forms of representation and judgment as the discussion of externality, reality, and objectivity has shown. Kant therefore argues that the thing-in-itself “is nothing for us” (*Refl*, 4634, AA 17: 618).²⁶⁴ Arthur Melnick, whose views I have already discussed in

– reflective point of view). Solomon Maimon (1965, V:377f., IV:217f.) thus argued that according to Kant we could still speak of a correspondence between a representation as a part and experience as a whole.

²⁶² The irrelevance of the thing-in-itself to the issue of objectivity and actuality is strengthened by Kant's discussion of the difference between an empirical and transcendental distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves (*KrV*, A45/B62, A257/B312f.).

²⁶³ This criticism was already raised by some of Kant's early critics as Feder, Weishaupt and Pistorius (Chap. 3 above).

²⁶⁴ Cf. *KrV*, A276f./B332f.: “what the things may be in themselves I do not know, and also do not need to know, since a thing can never come before me except in appearance”. Cf. also *KrV*, A375f.: “Thus the strictest idealist cannot demand that one prove that the object outside us (in the strict sense [that is, outside us in the transcendental sense]) corresponds to our perception. For if there were such a thing, then it still could not be represented and intuited outside us, because this would presuppose space; and reality in space, as a mere representation, is nothing other than

Sect. 12.2.1, is one of the few who clearly captured this result and it is worth citing his view at some length:

The transcendental realist is working with the concept of a thing in itself. For the transcendental realist the notion of an object cannot involve as part of its sense any reference to a subject. [...] The transcendental realist fallaciously concludes from the correct point that what an object is like is independent of how we think or judge of it [we have analyzed how this is possible under the discussion of the notion of actuality], to the idea that the abstract notion of an object must make sense independently of any reference to our judgmental apparatus [we have ruled this out in the discussion of the notion of objectivity]. We can give no content to this latter notion of an object. If we abstract from the cognitive relation between the subject and his experience we are left without any positive idea of an object. It is the transcendental realist who thus becomes the empirical idealist, in that for him what we know empirically are not objects because empirical knowledge gives us objects only in the epistemic sense, which, for him, is to say it does not give us objects at all. (Melnick 1973, 160)

The transcendental realist objection we are now discussing turns out to be motivated by nothing other than confusion about what it means to be an object. While it is true that we are here analyzing the meaning of the notion of an object *for us*, it does not follow that there could be a different kind of notion of an object for a different kind of knowing subject, which could vitalize the transcendental realist objection. This is so since the entire discussion about the notion of an object, whether for us or for some other rational being, is a discussion conducted by us within the framework of what is meaningful to us. It follows that even the consideration of an alleged ultimate object for an alleged ultimate observer cannot free itself from the frameworks of a meaningful discussion for us. Moreover, the notion of an ultimate subject and of an intellectual intuition cannot help us here. Aside from the fact that these notions are as empty as the notion of the thing-in-itself, which they are designed to support, we must also recognize that the notion of a thing *in-itself* is supposed to rule out *any* relation to *any* knowing subject. If such a thing is supposedly known by some subject, ultimate or not, or is related to some kind of intuition, of whatever kind, then it is no longer a thing *in-itself* and thus cannot serve the purposes of the objection from which we started.²⁶⁵

As a second line of argument it should be added that the fact that the mere thought of a 'thing in general, a thing which is not a sensible-object' (Kant's negative noumenon) is a thought free of internal contradiction is of no use for the skeptical doubt. Unless it can be shown that the skeptical worry has a possible reference (a relation to a possible *object*), rather than expressing a mere possible concept or thought, it cannot and should not cast a shadow of doubt on the reality of empirical objects. Moreover, the Ideas of pure reason, which are modeled on the notion of such merely logically possible concepts, do not stand for ultimate reality and they are far from being independent of us as knowing subjects. They are, after

perception itself." Cf. also *Refl.*, 5642 in which Kant is explicit that a transcendent entity is irrelevant and useless as a criterion of truth.

²⁶⁵ The above-mentioned considerations are recognized by (Melnick 1973, 154). I have addressed these issues in more detail in Sect. 12.2.1 above.

all, products of our own thought and they perform functions for us. Rather than standing for ultimate reality, they in fact stand for sheer ideality! Despite the fact that these Ideas can perform various regulative functions for theoretical reason and various constitutive functions for practical reason, they remain, one and all, mere thought-constructions, devoid of any relation to a possible object.

The same can be expressed by the claim that the phenomenal world cannot be regarded as mere systematic hallucination since, as we have shown, even hallucination regarding an external object can only occur under the conditions of externality, reality and objectivity which delimit the realm of appearances. Moreover, the discussion of actuality has shown that the distinction between hallucination and genuine experience can only be made *within the domain of appearances*, on the basis of a relation between a specific objective representation and the wider context of the phenomenal world. The attempt to generalize the actuality issue of specific cases to a radical doubt whether the entire phenomenal world may be a mere hallucination, is a question that cannot even arise since it assumes a supra-context, against which the actuality of the entire phenomenal world can be evaluated. Similarly, the very question of whether the cause of the entire phenomenal world is within or without us, is itself senseless. As Kant argues in his discussion of the Antinomies, the world in its entirety is not an object of knowledge, about which we can formulate questions. Moreover, the category of causality can only be applied to objects if these objects are phenomenal. In abstraction from all conditions of formal intuition, the category of causality (like all other categories) has at best nominal meaning, but it is devoid of application to any kind of object (Sect. 12.2.2). The crucial point is that *the very question* regarding things-in-themselves or things, as they are in themselves, is a question, which may be nominally meaningful, but it is a question that is directed at nothing.²⁶⁶ The skeptic objection turns out to be no more than a restatement of the familiar craving for the thing-in-itself as the standard of knowledge. It fails to comprehend that only a coherence model of objectivity and

²⁶⁶The first author to recognize this was Jacob Sigismund Beck (*EmS*, 146f.). Beck, as we discussed above, made a distinction between an *unanswerable* question and a question, which *aims at nothing*. The former can, in principle, be answered but we are in no position to provide it. The latter is, *in principle*, unanswerable; although it may not be meaningless, it is nevertheless without reference. Notably, this result seems to be accepted by Caranti (2007, 101). He elegantly shows that within the framework of Kant's transcendental idealism the skeptical doubt whether our *entire* experience is mere systematic hallucination, is an "illegitimate concern", "a vain inquiry into the nature of the thing in itself" and even "absurd". Caranti further emphasizes that Kant would not "simply say we know nothing about this realm [of things in themselves]. It is rather that he would dismiss the question itself as illegitimate, exceeding the set of questions we can raise." (Caranti 2007, 105). Nevertheless, Caranti weakens these bold, and in my view correct, claims by saying that "it is quite possible that the cause of the affection that provides all the material of my experience is some sort of transcendent Ego endowed with an unknown (super)imagination." (Caranti 2007, 102). Therefore, it remains unclear whether such questions and doubts can or cannot be raised and whether they are in some sense relevant after all. What is missing is a clear statement that this possibility is no more than a logical one, in which case it is not the possibility of an object or an aspect thereof. Such questions include no internal contradiction, but they have no referent and thus aim at nothing.

truth is available to us whereby the standard of the thing-in-itself becomes completely irrelevant. Kant, therefore, said that "idealism denies more than one knows; realism assumes more than what is at issue" (*Refl*, 5461 AA 18: 189).

An argument, parallel to the one discussed above, regarding the question whether the entire phenomenal world conforms to a wholly transcendent world, is the argument regarding the origin of the empirical manifold. According to this objection, the empirical content of sense perception cannot be said to originate from the phenomenal object – as I argue with J. S. Beck – because it is precisely the origin of phenomena that is in question. My reply to this latter question mirrors the one I have given above to the former objection and it comprises two steps. First, I argue from within the doctrine of transcendental idealism. I claim that the objection assumes an illegitimate metaphysical standpoint. The objection is made from a bird's-eye or a God-like perspective, external to both the subject and the object of knowledge. On such a view it seems that the empirical manifold is either produced by the subject (in-itself) or originate from the object (in-itself). The assumption of the immanence-transcendence dichotomy is clearly evident here. However, according to transcendental idealism questions can only be framed from within the point of view of the knowing subject. If we stay within the legitimate standpoint it becomes clear that an object to which we can appeal is only one that is constituted by the objectifying function of our own cognition. Similarly, we can only frame causal questions within experience. We can ask for the cause of one event within experience and expect to find it again only in another event within experience. It is completely senseless to ask for the causes of experience as a whole! When we inquire about the cause of the entire phenomenal world we extrapolate from the phenomenal domain, in which the causal principle is applicable, to an alleged domain beyond experience, in which this principle is inapplicable. The objection assumes that we have phenomenal objects and we now ask for the origin of their empirical content. However, the very notion of 'an object' and the notion of 'origin' or 'a cause' already points back to the objectifying function of our own cognition. Unless we presupposed that a distinction could be made between how things subjectively appear to us and how they objectively are, we could not even raise the questions referred to by the skeptic objection. Only because non-reflective empirical thought is unaware of the contribution of our own cognition to the very notion of an 'object' and of 'a cause' does it seem that we can ask these questions and propose answers to them in complete abstraction from the contribution of our own cognition. Second, I appeal to an argument external to transcendental idealism. I defend transcendental idealism by claiming that the role of philosophical reflection is not to justify non-reflective, empirical thought but merely to explain how it operates. I readily admit that my own view, according to which the object that affects the senses is no other than the phenomenal object, is circular. However, this admitted circularity is not a vicious one since according to my view Kant's intention is merely to explain what we mean by an affecting object and in what consists the distinction between an object as its appearance, rather than to supply the per-impossible proof that what we mean by an object is indeed wholly

independent of the knowing subject.²⁶⁷ Thus, I do not leave the question regarding the origin of the empirical manifold unanswered. Rather, I attempt to show that questions of this sort make sense only regarding specific empirical events within experience – in which case there is a good, non-circular, answer – and that the further question regarding experience as a whole is both senseless and irrelevant. I have also discussed this issue as part of the comparison of Beck’s views with those of Fichte in Sect. 12.1.2.

Acknowledging the subjective conditions of objectivity requires a radical conversion of our point of view. The presupposition of the absolute dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity, according to which for a thing to be objective it must be wholly independent of our representations of it, is so embedded in our minds that it is extremely difficult to free ourselves of its grasp. And yet it is exactly this presupposition, which prevents Kant’s epistemology from being understood. Moreover, the requirement to let go of this presupposition may itself seem as an admission of idealism. Looking back at this issue – both historically and systematically – it seems that due to the incompatibility of such a basic feature there is little hope of ever being able to communicate the Kantian revolution to those who insist on maintaining only two dichotomized modes of existence. As I endeavored to show along this work, if one does not recognize that Kant completely renounces this presupposition and that consequently an object is only such as is conditioned by subjective forms then one’s understanding of Kant will inevitably lead to a maze of contradictions and paradoxes and the core of his philosophical system will remain concealed and impenetrable.²⁶⁸ Sadly it is not only the understanding of Kant’s

²⁶⁷ My view only seems viciously circular when we mistakenly conflate two distinct levels of consideration. On the empirical level there is no circularity in saying – as does any scientific explanation – that the object, *spatially* external to us, affects our sensible organs and brings about sensation in us. The transcendental level does not contradict the empirical one. Quite the contrary! Transcendental reflection, as I see it, *explains* in what consists the notion of objectivity within the phenomenal world and it additionally shows that any alleged reference to a domain beyond experience is both theoretically empty and irrelevant for the explanation of the possibility of experience. Transcendental reflection, thus, supports, rather than undermines, the empirical level of consideration. Contradiction and circularity (in a vicious, negative, sense) only arises when we expect the transcendental consideration to *justify* the empirical one.

²⁶⁸ I am reminded of Fichte’s remark in the second introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre* on the common dogmatic interpretation of Kant: “This [the dogmatic reliance on the thing-in-itself in the common interpretation of Kant] is undoubtedly because they did not begin their study of Kant’s writings in an unprejudiced manner, but also brought along, as their criterion for evaluating any explanation, their own dogmatism. This dogmatism, which they consider to be the only correct system, is so deeply woven into their innermost being that they believe an intelligent person like Kant must surely have subscribed to it. Consequently, they never sought any instruction from Kant on this topic, but only sought confirmation of their own dogmatism.” (SW, I:487). This well put observation of Fichte’s can be extended not only to the dogmatic assumption of the thing-in-itself but to the more general assumption according to which there are only two modes of existence – immanent and transcendent existence (this will cover my criticism of Fichte himself). For the sake of honesty I must admit that no philosophical text can be approached without presupposing some conceptual framework. We therefore always read or attempt to understand a text by placing it within our own pre-existing assumptions. The difficulty arises when the pre-existing assumptions

critical philosophy that suffers a bitter fate but also epistemology at large. Since many of Kant's critics, from his own time till our own, accept the inevitable role of subjective forms in our cognition, the rejection of the Kantian solution results sooner or later in the rejection of the conclusions that systematic reflection confronts us with and is manifested in a Jacobean "leap of faith", the dogmatic adoption of non-reflective views regarding the relation of cognition with the world, whether these views do or do not accord with reflective objections.

12.2.4.8 Conclusion

My entire reconstruction of Kant's refutation of idealism can be summarized as follows. Kant's claim that external objects are nothing but appearances entails neither idealism nor skepticism, but realism regarding the status of the external world. This is so for the following reasons: (a) The only *objects* we can meaningfully speak about are objects as appearances. The alternative of a thing-in-itself is either completely incomprehensible (other than its nominal definition), when it is understood as a transcendent entity independent of any relation to any knowing subject as such; or, when understood in terms of a negative noumenon, it is a legitimate thought free from internal contradiction but it *cannot possibly* signify any *object*. (b) Any appearance we perceive within outer experience is *immediately* represented as external (spatial), real and, most importantly, independent of us. No inference is required for any of these features. Although not mentioned by Kant, it can be added that, ironically, it is the awareness of representations that is far from being immediate. In non-reflective, empirical thought we always refer to objects. We speak of trees, houses (and even Pegasus) and their properties, not of the representations thereof. Therefore, the very distinction between a representation and an object is a product of reflection and is not immediate. (c) The distinction between a genuine object and a fictive one is possible within, *and only within*, the phenomenal world. (d) No contradiction exists between the empirical and the transcendental levels of consideration. Non-reflective, empirical *cognition* and the philosophical, reflective, *theory of cognition* have two different objects. The object of cognition is the natural world. The object of the *theory of cognition* is – as its name already indicates – cognition itself (its forms, its modes and in general how it functions). It follows that the conclusions of the theory of cognition cannot, in principle, contradict those of cognition for each has a different object. When philosophical reflection distinguishes between a representation and an object and when reflection exposes the contribution of cognition itself to the constitution of an object, this does not annul the fact that cognition inevitably refers to whatever it represents as an independent object. The task of reflection is not to justify its subject matter, which, in this case, refers to empirical cognition including the latter's appeal

of the interpreter deviate markedly from those assumed by the author of the original text. In this case the interpreter's presuppositions become prejudices. The interpreter can no longer make any sense of the original text and the interpretative task turns very often into sarcastic criticism.

to an independent natural object but to explain how it operates.²⁶⁹ To the degree that this latter task has been achieved we should be content with our philosophical analysis.

12.2.5 Accounting for the Textual Obstacles for the Anthropocentric Interpretation

In light of the discussions above I argue that all of Kant's implicit and explicit references to the thing-in-itself, in its various guises, can be accounted for without appealing to a transcendent entity or a transcendent aspect of regular objects. The discussions in Sects. 12.2.2 to 12.2.4 showed that within his theoretical philosophy, Kant uses the term 'thing-in-itself' in two legitimate contexts: (a) in the sense of a negative noumenon, a merely logically possible *concept*, free of internal contradiction. Despite the fact that some such a priori concepts of reason – in general the Ideas of pure reason and more specifically the Ideal of God – are necessary concepts which perform an inevitable function in relation to the total systematic unity of experience, nevertheless, Kant stresses that they are *not actual existing objects* but mere *regulative concepts devoid of objective reality*; (b) in the sense of the transcendental object, which is nothing more than *a projection of the unity of apperception, a presupposition*, which conditions our ability to distinguish between subjective and objective state of affairs within experience.

The thing-in-itself in the sense of a negative noumenon features in the Transcendental Dialectic of Kant's theoretical philosophy in the form of the Ideas of pure reason and similarly in Kant's practical philosophy in the form of the postulates of practical reason. The thing-in-itself in the sense of a transcendental object functions mainly within the Transcendental Analytic of Kant's theoretical philosophy and is central for the understanding of the relation of a representation to an object. Neither of these two legitimate roles of the thing-in-itself has anything to do with an alleged theory of transcendental affection. On my understanding, Kant's Transcendental Idealism allows nothing but empirical affection. Accordingly we are now equipped with interpretative tools to handle a large variety of passages in the Kantian corpus which would otherwise seem to require the concept of a thing-

²⁶⁹ Similarly the task of empirical cognition, as in the sciences, is not to justify the natural object but to explain its lawfulness. Modern science does not say that nature makes mistakes or that nature directs its products towards a good or useful goal. These Aristotelian forms of thinking have been banished from our post-renaissance science. The latter has to explain how a calf can be born with two heads (according to Aristo 'a mistake' of nature) just as much as it has to explain how a calf is born with just one head (when nature acts 'correctly'). Characterizations such as 'mistaken' and 'correct' are irrelevant. This non-judgmental approach towards the subject matter should be applied to the relation between philosophical reflection and empirical thought.

in-itself as a transcendent entity (an alleged actual object beyond all cognitive powers) or as a positive noumenon (an actual object of pure understanding).²⁷⁰

In addition to some passages already discussed in the previous sections, I would like to demonstrate my claims by analyzing few of the most frequently appealed to examples regarding things-in-themselves. The first example is taken from the second edition chapter on the distinction between phenomena and noumena:

Nevertheless, if we call certain objects, as appearances, being of sense (*phenomena*), because we distinguish the way in which we intuit them from their constitution in itself, then it already follows from our concept that to these we as it were oppose, as objects thought merely through the understanding, either other objects conceived in accordance with the latter constitution, even though we do not intuit it in them, or else other possible things, which are not objects of our senses at all, and call these beings of understanding (*noumena*). (*KrV*, B306)

In this text the appeal to things-in-themselves as objects of pure understanding is brought up only hypothetically and in order to expose the misleading temptation of extending the application of the categories beyond sensibility and to regard two distinct realms of objects. Following the above text Kant highlights the distinction between “the entirely **undetermined** concept of a being of understanding” and “a **determinable** concept of a being that we could cognize through the understanding in some way” (*KrV*, B307). The former is the merely logically possible concept of a noumenon in its negative sense while the latter is the entirely impossible concept of a noumenon in its positive sense. Only the former is relevant for Kant's doctrine: “Now the doctrine of sensibility is at the same time the doctrine of the noumenon in the negative sense, i.e., of things that the understanding must think without this relation to our kind of intuition, thus not merely as appearances but as things-in-themselves [...]” (*KrV*, B307). The task of the entire chapter on the ground of the distinction between phenomena and noumena is to expose the temptation to use the concept of things-in-themselves in the positive sense and to show that only the negative sense is in fact allowed for.

A similar case of what appears like an explicit recognition of things-in-themselves is found in the *Prolegomena*. There, Kant argues as follows:

In fact, if we view objects of the senses as appearances, as is fitting, then we thereby admit at the very same time that a thing-in-itself underlies them, although we are not acquainted with this thing as it may be constituted in itself, but only with its appearance, i.e., by the way in which our senses are affected by this unknown something. Therefore the

²⁷⁰ We can distinguish four distinct senses of the thing-in-itself, two of which are legitimate and two are not. The legitimate senses are those of the transcendental object and the Ideal of God (a negative noumenon). The illegitimate senses are those of a positive noumenon (an alleged actual object of pure understanding) and a wholly transcendent entity (independent of all cognitive powers of any possible knowing subject, whether human or otherwise). Although the latter and strongest sense hardly makes an appearance in Kant's Critiques, nevertheless, it is implicitly assumed in the common philosophical use of the term and it is also implied when applying the concept of the thing-in-itself to the theory of affection. We have already seen how Fichte and Reinhold totally rejected this transcendent entity as not only irrepresentable but also inconceivable.

understanding, just by the fact that it accepts appearances, also admits to the existence of things-in-themselves, and to that extent we can say that the representation of such beings as underlie the appearances, hence of mere intelligible beings, is not merely permitted but also unavoidable. (*Prol*, 04: 314f.)

Prima facie, this paragraph seems surprisingly explicit about the role of things-in-themselves as the unknown objects that affect the senses. However, if we look at the preceding and succeeding paragraphs we can see that, here as well, the argument for the positive role of things-in-themselves is brought up only in order to expose its misleading character.²⁷¹

Thus, §32, of which the above paragraph is a part, starts with the following statement:

Already from the earliest days of philosophy, apart from the sensible beings or appearances (*phenomena*) that constitute the sensible world, investigators of pure reason have thought of special intelligible beings (*noumena*), which were supposed to form an intelligible world; and they have granted reality to the intelligible beings alone, because they took appearances and illusion to be one and the same thing (which may well be excused in an as yet uncultivated age). (*Prol*, 04: 314)

On the background of this opening statement it becomes clear that what follows (the text in question), is not Kant's own opinion, but rather the claim, whose misleading character Kant intends to expose.

And indeed in the closing paragraph of §32, which follows immediately after the text in question, Kant argues:

Our critical deduction in no way excludes things of such kind (*noumena*), but rather restricts the principles of aesthetics in such a way that they are not supposed to extend to all things, whereby everything would be transformed into mere appearance, but are to be valid only for objects of possible experience. Hence intelligible beings are therefore allowed only with the enforcement of this rule, which brooks no exception whatsoever: that we do not know and cannot know anything determinate about these intelligible beings at all, because our pure concepts of the understanding as well as our pure intuitions refer to nothing but objects of possible experience, hence to mere beings of sense, and that as soon as one departs from the latter, not the least significance remains for those concepts. (*Prol*, 04: 315)

In this paragraph Kant argues, similarly to his above-cited argument from the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, that his doctrine does not exclude noumena. In the *Critique* Kant makes finer distinctions and he explains that noumena, *in the negative sense*, are indeed allowed. The logical possibility of noumena is granted since its concept does not include a contradiction.²⁷² However, in the above-cited text, as in the *Critique*, Kant stresses that this narrow sense of

²⁷¹ Bird (2006, 562), who similarly emphasizes the context of the above passage, also points out that in this passage Kant merely accepts the legitimacy and necessity of *the representation of things-in-themselves*, rather than the actual existence of a special kind of object.

²⁷² As I have argued in Sect. 12.2.2 the real possibility of noumena, even in their merely negative sense, cannot be asked for. Since real possibility requires sensible intuitions, which are here, by definition, absent, then no question regarding real possibility can even be formulated.

possibility should not be confused with a relation of pure understanding to an actual determined object (which would be the noumenon in its positive sense). Therefore, in contrast to what appears to follow when one abstracts a single paragraph from its context, the critical doctrine does not allow, nor does it require, a positive concept of a thing-in-itself.

Another group of passages, which apparently imply an object beyond sensibility, do not in fact pertain to Kant's theoretical but rather to his practical philosophy. At this stage of our exposition, we have not yet addressed the proper interpretation of the appeal to the thing-in-itself within Kant's practical philosophy. This issue shall be dealt with in Chap. 13 below. However, I do want to address the apparent implication that these texts may have on the role of the thing-in-itself within Kant's theoretical philosophy.

For example, in the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, we find the following statement:

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

The last sentence refers to the argument, discussed at length above, according to which the very concept of appearance requires the corresponding concept of things-in-themselves for otherwise there would be nothing that appears. As discussed in the previous sections, the above sentence appeals to the thing-in-itself in the sense and role of a transcendental object. That which appears in the appearance is the appearance considered as an object (Phenomena) and this requires the concept of the transcendental object.²⁷³

The first sentence of the above citation, and the footnote appended to that very sentence, pertain to the link between theoretical and practical philosophy. This is clear from the text of the note:

To **cognize** an object, it is required that I be able to prove its possibility (whether by the testimony of experience from its actuality or *a priori* through reason). But I can **think** whatever I like, as long as I do not contradict myself, i.e., as long as my concept is a possible thought, even if I cannot give any assurance whether or not there is a corresponding object somewhere within the sum total of all possibilities. But in order to ascribe objective validity to such a concept (real possibility, for the first sort of possibility was merely logical) something more is required. This "more", however, need not be sought in the theoretical sources of cognition; it may also lie in practical ones. (*KrV*, Bxxvi footnote)

²⁷³ Graham Bird (2006, 559–562) arrives at similar conclusions regarding this passage, and in general regarding the reference to "that which appears". In the analysis of the above passage from the B preface Bird does not explicitly refer to the transcendental object but he does say that considered empirically "that which appears" are appearances coupled with conceptual rules (or in one word *phenomena*). Transcendentally considered, says Bird, Kant's argument requires only the *conceivability* of things-in-themselves and not the existence of a kind of object. Cf. also Bird's explicit reference to the transcendental object in this regard (2006, 564f.).

It is therefore clear that the ability to think things-in-themselves pertains to the preliminary requirement that a concept be a possible thought, that is, a concept free of internal contradiction, which signifies its mere logical possibility. The real possibility of that concept can either be decided according to the principles of theoretical philosophy or according to the principles of practical philosophy and Kant alludes in the above-cited footnote towards the latter alternative. The entire passage is part of Kant's reply to the pantheism dispute between Mendelssohn and Jacobi and similar argumentation appear in Kant's tract, which was his official contribution to that dispute.²⁷⁴ The core of the argument is that Kant's theoretical distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves left the concept of the latter as logically possible and therefore left the door open to the use of the *concept – not object* – of the thing-in-itself in his practical philosophy.

The same conclusion is obtained from paragraphs extracted from the *Critique of Practical Reason* in which after discussing the ability to think things-in-themselves by applying the categories – especially the category of causality – to them, Kant adds the following explicit statement:

In order now to discover this condition of the application of the concept in question [causality] to noumena, we need only recall *why we were not satisfied with its application to objects of experience* but would like to use it of things in themselves as well. For then it soon becomes apparent that it is not a theoretical but a practical purpose that makes this necessary for us. (*KpV*, AA 04: 54. All English translations of the *Critique of Practical Reason* are taken from Mary J. Gregor (Kant 1996a))

It is therefore clear that the appeal to noumenal causality is only required, and is only authorized, within practical philosophy; it should not be extended to theoretical philosophy as part of an alleged doctrine of transcendental affection.

Consider another example from the context of practical philosophy which, when taken in abstraction from its context, seems to be an explicit admission of the role of things-in-themselves “behind” appearances within the field of theoretical philosophy. The example is taken from the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*:

[...] we must admit and assume *behind appearances* something else that is not appearances, namely things-in-themselves, although, since we can never become acquainted with them but only with *how they affect us*, we resign ourselves to being unable to come any closer to them or ever to know what they are in themselves. (*GMS*, AA 04: 451. The emphasis is my own)

What can be more explicit than the following statement? However, the sentence immediately following the above passage may already discourage such a simplistic reading. There, Kant says that “This must yield a distinction, although a crude one, between a *world of sense* and the *world of understanding*.” Clearly, Kant thinks that the straightforward reading of the above passage may lead us to a crude distinction between *two worlds*, that is, two domains of *objects*. The text immediately preceding the above citation may also dictate caution:

²⁷⁴ On the dispute itself, cf. Beiser (2002, Ch. 2–4). Kant's official contribution to the dispute was his *What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking*, published in 1786.

No subtle reflection is required to make the following remark, and one may assume that the commonest understanding can make it, though in its own way, by an obscure discrimination of judgment which it calls feeling: that all representations which come to us involuntarily (as do those of the sense) enable us to cognize objects only as they affect us and we remain ignorant of what they may be in themselves so that, as regards representations of this kind, even with the most strenuous attentiveness and distinctness that the understanding can ever bring to them we can achieve only cognition of *appearances*, never of *things in themselves*. As soon as this distinction is made [...] then it follows of itself that we must admit [...] (here comes the above text in question) (*GMS*, AA 04: 450f.)

The above passages seem similar to the passages from the first and second versions of the chapter of phenomena and noumena from the first *Critique*. In all of these examples Kant combats the simplistic assumption that the very distinction between phenomena and noumena results in the recognition of two worlds of objects, a result, which Kant obviously rejects. This conclusion is strengthened by the text following the above text in question:

A reflective human being must come to a conclusion of this kind about all the things that present themselves to him; presumably it is also to be found even in the most common understanding, which, as is well known is very much inclined to expect behind the objects of the senses something else invisible and active of itself – but it spoils this again by quickly making this invisible something sensible in turn, that is, wanting to make it an object of intuition, so that it does not thereby become any the wiser. (*GMS*, AA 04: 451f.)

It is clear from the above paragraph that Kant rejects the simplistic assumption that things-in-themselves affect our sensible faculty and thereby bring about representations in us. Kant is willing to accept the *concept* of things in themselves. One sense of the latter plays an inevitable role in the Transcendental Deduction. The latter is the transcendental object, which accounts for the fact that the object as appearance is regarded as more than an appearance and can thus be considered as that which appears. A second sense of the thing-in-itself, as a negative noumenon, plays a role in the Dialectic (see an example below) and here within the context of practical philosophy. Indeed, the continuation of Kant's argument shows that the introduction of the intelligible world in the above context is not at all intended for theoretical purposes. The idea of an intelligible world is introduced in the above context *exclusively* for the purpose of practical philosophy. Accordingly, the real possibility of the concept of freedom – which is the issue of the text from which the above citations are taken – is proved by insisting on the strict separation between the sensible realm accounted for by theoretical philosophy and the moral realm accounted for by Kant's practical philosophy. Kant indeed defends an intelligible realm beyond the sensible one, but not within the context of theoretical philosophy and therefore not as objects. The troublesome text from which we started (*GMS*, AA 04: 451) is only intended to remind us that despite the limitation of knowledge to appearances the Idea of freedom cannot be declared logically impossible. Although we can say with certainty that within experience there is no place for freedom, nevertheless, theoretical reason cannot rule out the logical possibility of such a *concept*. It thus remains within the prerogative of practical reason to uphold this Idea, and others, if it can be shown, from the standpoint of practical reason, that

they are requisite as synthetic-a-priori conditions of the possibility of the moral law. Such practical recognition has, however, no implications for the possibility of experience. Only the crude “commonest understanding” can fail to distinguish the logical possibility of the noumenon in its negative sense, which is afterwards accorded real possibility within practical philosophy and an alleged positive noumenon used in the theoretical context of the influence of objects on our senses.²⁷⁵

Finally, consider an example of a passage, which seems at first to be a clear admission of the existence things in themselves. The text is taken from Kant’s *On a discovery whereby any new Critique of Pure Reason is to be made superfluous by an older one*, his polemical work against the attacks of August Eberhard:

Having raised the question (p. 275): “who (what) gives sensibility its matter, namely sensations?” he believes himself to have proclaimed against the *Critique* when he says (p. 276): “We may choose what we will – we nevertheless arrive at *things-in-themselves*.” Now that, of course, is the constant contention of the *Critique*; save that it posits this ground of the matter of sensory representations not once again in things, as objects of the senses, but in something super-sensible, which *grounds* the latter, and of which we can have no cognition. It says that the objects as things-in-themselves *give* the matter to empirical intuition (they contain the ground by which to determine the faculty of representation in accordance with its sensibility), but they *are* not the matter thereof. (*ÜE*, AA: 08: 215)

It seems to follow quite inescapably from this passage that things-in-themselves, as things wholly independent of our cognition, affect our sensibility and give us the matter that fills the forms of time and space. However, when this passage is considered within both its immediate and wider context, it can be recognized that another reading is not only legitimate but also more plausible.²⁷⁶

A few pages before the above-cited paragraph Kant says the following:

The conclusion that Mr. Eberhard draws from the above demonstration, especially the latter (p. 262), is this: “Thus, the truth that space and time have both subjective and objective grounds. . .has been proven fully apodictically. It was demonstrated that their *ultimate objective grounds* are things-in-themselves.” Now any reader of the *Critique* will admit that these are exactly my own assertions. [. . .] But that these objective grounds, namely, things-in-themselves, are not to be sought in space and time, but, rather, in what the *Critique* calls their extra or super-sensible substrate (noumenon) – that was a claim of mine, of which Mr. Eberhard wanted to prove the opposite [. . .] Mr. Eberhard says (p. 258):

²⁷⁵ For a reading of the above paragraphs similar to mine, cf. Timmermann 2007 (134ff.). Timmermann argues that in the troublesome paragraph at issue, Kant “refers to the naïve belief in some hidden dimension that grounds empirically observable things, and a human soul that does not belong to the material world. He attributes to ‘the commonest understanding’ (*GMS*, AA 04: 450.37) the proto-critical belief that knowledge is confined to ‘appearances’ that are grounded in unknowable ‘things in themselves’ (*GMS*, AA 04: 451.7–8), then – following up on that – an admittedly ‘raw distinction between a world of sense and a world of understanding’ (*GMS*, AA 04: 451.18).” (Timmermann 2007, 134). Timmermann (2007, 135) goes on to explain that what is required is merely to acknowledge that freedom is an Idea devoid of internal contradiction and therefore one that can be upheld by practical reason “as long as it does not claim to possess cognition of corresponding objects”.

²⁷⁶ In addressing this passage I rely, at least in part, on the analysis of this issue by Bird (2006, 568–573). Bird arrives at the same conclusions as I do.

“Besides the subjective, space and time also have *objective grounds*, and these objective grounds are not appearances, but true, cognizable things”; “their *ultimate grounds* are things-in-themselves,” all of which the *Critique* likewise literally and repeatedly asserts. How, then, did it come about that Mr. Eberhard, who otherwise looks keenly enough to his advantage, on this occasion did not see what tells against him? We are dealing with a clever man who does not see something because he does not want it to be seen. He actually did not want the reader to see that his objective *grounds*, which are not to be appearances but things-in-themselves, are merely *parts* (simple) of appearances; for the unsuitability of such a manner of explanation would then have been noticed immediately. He therefore makes use of the word ‘grounds’, because parts, after all, are also grounds of the possibility of a composite, and there he is at one with the *Critique* in speaking of ultimate grounds, which are not appearances. But had he spoken candidly of parts of appearances, which are nevertheless not themselves appearances, of a sensible, whose parts, however, are nonsensible, the absurdity would have been readily apparent (even if one were to grant the presupposition of simple parts). But the word ‘ground’ masks all of this; for the unwary reader, believing to understand thereby something which is entirely different from intuitions, as does the *Critique*, is persuaded that proof has been given for a capacity of cognition of the super-sensible by the understanding, even in objects of the senses. (*ÜE*, AA: 08: 207f.)

The above long citation was required to bring out the context. Both passages appear within a sub-chapter, whose title is “The method of ascending from the sensible to the nonsensible according to Mr. Eberhard”. Eberhard, a Leibnizian-Wolffian rationalist, wishes to achieve two goals at the same time. On the one hand, he wishes to ground appearances or phenomena in things-in-themselves (as noumenal objects of pure understanding), and on the other hand, he wishes to retain the cognizability of the latter, precisely that which the *Critique* denied. This is in line with the Leibnizian view which anchors appearances in simple noumenal monads and at the same time regards the difference between phenomena and noumena as a matter of degree; the former being confused, the latter clear, representations of things-in-themselves. The Leibnizian view, followed by Eberhard, therefore allows, ascending from the sensible to the nonsensible.

Against this view Kant allows that appearances have an ultimate, nonsensible, ground, as long as the latter is not within experience but “beyond” it; in other words, as long as this ultimate ground is not accessible to science, which has to suffice with objects of experience. Therefore, no ascending from the sensible to the non-sensible is possible. So far it would seem that my explanation admits that Kant anchors appearances in things-in-themselves, which despite their unknowability are nevertheless regarded as the ultimate ground of appearances. The next stage is therefore to recognize how Kant uses the term ‘ultimate ground’.

In Sect. 12.2.2, I have already noted how the transcendental object can be viewed as the ground of appearances. Here, it is important to note that there is another context in which Kant refers to things in themselves as the ground of, as presupposed by, or as underlying, appearances. This is the context of the Dialectic where Kant speaks of the Ideal of God as the *ultimate* ground of experience as a whole, and as that, which must be presupposed as the matter for all possible objects of sense. This is the outline of Kant's argument, which leads us to see the thing-in-itself, in this case the Ideal of God, as the material ground of all appearances,

precisely as Kant argues in the above-cited passages from his polemic against Eberhard. “Every **thing**” Kant argues, “as to its possibility, further stands under the principle of **thoroughgoing determinability**” (*KrV*, A571/B599). “Everything existing is thoroughly determined” (*KrV*, A573/B601) and this principle presuppose the “idea of the **sum total of all possibility**, insofar as it grounds every thing as the condition of its thoroughgoing determination” (*KrV*, A573/B601). “Thus if the thoroughgoing determination in our reason is grounded on a transcendental substratum, which contains as it were the entire storehouse of material from which all possible predicates of things can be taken, then this substratum is nothing other than the idea of an All of reality (*omnitudo realitatis*).” (*KrV*, A575f./B603f.). “Through this possession of all reality, however, there is also represented the concept of a **thing in itself** which is thoroughly determined, and the concept of an *ens realissimum* is the concept of an individual being, because of all possible predicates, one, namely that which belongs absolutely to being, is encountered in its determinations. Thus it is a transcendental Ideal, which is the ground of the thorough determination that is necessarily encountered in everything existing, and which constitutes the supreme and complete material condition of its possibility, to which all thinking of objects in general must, as regards the content of that thinking, be traced back.” (*KrV*, A576/B604). Kant continues to define this Ideal as “original being”, “the highest being” and “the being of all being” (*KrV*, A578/B606) which is the ground (and not merely sum or aggregate) of all possible things “to which our whole sensibility, including all reality in appearance, would then belong”. (*KrV*, A579/B607).

However, against the natural temptation of reason to see here a commitment to the existence of actual objects as things in themselves, Kant is explicit that we are committed only to the *conceivability* of such things as opposed to the *existence* of *actual objects*.

It is self-evident that with this aim – namely, solely that of representing the necessary thoroughgoing determination of things – reason does not presuppose the existence of a being conforming to the Ideal, but only the Idea of such a being, in order to derive from an unconditioned totality of thoroughgoing determination the conditioned totality, i.e., that of the limited. (*KrV*, A577f./B605f.)

The Ideas (and the one and only Ideal of God) are special cases of the noumenon in its negative sense, which, as I explained above, is legitimate only as a concept but not as an object. Even though Kant insists that the Ideal of God is required within his theoretical philosophy to give complete systematic unity to experience, and is therefore a necessary and unavoidable concept, he nevertheless repeats time and again that this Ideal is legitimate only as a regulative concept and that referring to it as an existing object is an illegitimate hypostatization (despite the natural inclination of reason to do so).

This Ideal of the supremely real being, even though it is a mere representation, is first **realized**, i.e., made into an object, then **hypostatized**, and finally, as we will presently allege, through a natural process of reason in the completion of unity, it is even **personified**. (*KrV*, A583/B611, Footnote)

Thus, even in this context, the thing in itself, as an Ideal which must be presupposed as the ultimate material ground of experience, should not be seen as an actually existing object affecting our sensibility and bringing about the matter of sensibility in the sense of Jacobi's famous objection, which is also the straightforward and out-of-context reading of the passages from Kant's work against Eberhard.

It might still be argued against the anthropocentric interpretation as a whole, that it remains unaccounted for, why Kant, assuming that the preferable interpretation of his transcendental idealism is the one provided by the anthropocentric view, had not made his intentions absolutely clear. In other words, a legitimate question can be raised, why Kant left the issue of the role of things-in-themselves in his transcendental philosophy in such a state, which allows such drastically opposed interpretations. Part of the answer is that Kant made every possible effort to explain his position given the tools allowed for within his system. The fact that these explanations were misconstrued is due more to the presuppositions with which Kant's critics and interpreters approaches the text than with the text itself. But this cannot be the entire answer. Obviously Kant could have been more specific and avoid ambiguities. This objection is especially pressing since Kant was constantly attacked, by all parties, precisely on this issue. This objection compels anyone who holds to the anthropocentric interpretation to attempt to account both for what Kant does and for what he does not say. I therefore propose a twofold account of these overt and covert textual difficulties, the first of which is also shared by J. S. Beck.

12.2.5.1 Methodological, Propaedeutic Considerations

According to J. S. Beck, Kant leads his reader who comes from a fundamentalist point of view, slowly into his system. He reveals the full extent of his system only gradually (*EmS*, 138f., 174, 345, 402, 424). Due to methodological considerations he is obliged to rephrase himself in a simple way, especially in the beginning of the first *Critique*. When this preliminary account is taken plainly and in abstraction from the structural foundations of the entire system, it can lead to dire misunderstandings. It is only after we have been introduced to the full scope of the system that we can and should look back at some of the phrases in the beginning of the exposition and reevaluate them against our better understanding of the presuppositions of the critical philosophy. According to Beck, we only understand the full scope of the *Critique's* main question when we understand its solution to the question of the relation between a representation and its object. Moreover, it turns out that the proper understanding of the question (possible only at a later stage of the exposition) *is* the solution. The changes in perspective required by Kant's critical philosophy are so profound that had he attempted to expose the full scope and meaning of his new system all at once, and without comparing it with the traditional way of thinking, it would have been extremely complicated to penetrate or it would have surely been misunderstood. He cannot but start from what is

familiar to his reader and then slowly move him into his system (*EmS*, 30f.). This methodological or propaedeutic consideration is mostly evident in the Transcendental Aesthetic. I would like to demonstrate Beck's arguments in the following contexts: First, regarding Kant's repeated reference in the Transcendental Aesthetic to the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves; Second, regarding Kant's definition of sensibility as the capacity to be affected by an object and the implicit reference to the thing-in-itself as the affecting object.

The reader – or at least a reader who is not an idealist – assumes that there are things wholly independent of our cognition to which cognition relates. This is for him the meaning of objective reality. Objectivity is understood as fundamental, wholly opposed to subjectivity. When explaining the transcendental ideality and at the same time empirical reality of time and space, Kant cannot simply ignore the fundamental presupposition of his reader; for then his claim that time and space, despite being subjective forms of our own sensibility, are nevertheless also objective, would be misunderstood. Obviously (at least as long as we attempt to avoid dogmatic assumptions) the forms of our own intuition cannot function as objective conditions when objectivity is understood as a form of reality wholly independent of cognition. In this light we should understand Kant's repeated distinctions of appearances from things as they are in themselves in the Transcendental Aesthetic. In attempting to distinguish his new doctrine from the common metaphysics of his time he cannot avoid reinforcing the main presuppositions of the former metaphysics. This is so since insisting on the distinction would seem to imply that reality is indeed expressed in terms of things-in-themselves and that we have to suffice with their appearances. It apparently follows that we *merely* know appearances, which stand for a somewhat deficient reality. But this is only a result of the necessity of contrasting the new theory of objectivity as conditioned by subjective forms with the traditional view of objectivity as an absolute form of reality. The supposed limitation of knowledge to *mere* appearances in contrast to things-in-themselves, which alone express ultimate reality, is simply a result of the demands of exposition. In one passage Kant explicitly says that the limitation of knowledge to appearances derives internally from acknowledging the subjective nature of time and space and does not require an external contrast with things-in-themselves. "But these a priori sources of cognition [time and space] determine their own boundaries by that very fact (that they are merely conditions of sensibility), namely that they apply to objects only so far as they are considered as appearances, and do not present things-in-themselves." (*KrV*, A39/B56). We can therefore conclude that the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves, frequently appealed to by Kant in the Transcendental Aesthetic, is required from propaedeutic reasons alone; it is required only in order to lead into the Kantian system those who have not yet released themselves from their former fundamentalist view of objectivity.

In this light we should also understand Kant's definition of sensibility as the ability of the subject to be affected by the presence of an object which, when taken without further qualifications, implies that this affecting object is the thing-in-

itself.²⁷⁷ Within the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant cannot but accept the implied assumption that the affecting object is a thing-in-itself for otherwise he would be compelled to draw the entire Transcendental Analytic into the discussion of the Transcendental Aesthetic in order to explain the exact meaning of the term 'object' in his system. Only after going through the Transcendental Analytic can the reader understand that a relation to an object is only the result of the application of the understanding to sensible intuitions. Consequently, the affecting object of the Transcendental Aesthetic is nothing other than the object constituted by the understanding by objectifying sensible representations as explained in the Transcendental Analytic. In other words, precisely as Beck constantly argues, the phenomenal object is the object that affects the senses and which brings about sensible representations in us.

Beck's argument that in the *Critique* Kant makes concessions to the conventional reader and, mainly for propaedeutic reasons, only gradually introduces the full scope of his radical new perspective, is supported by Ernst Cassirer. In a similar manner to Beck, Cassirer (1981, 141f.) writes that Kant made use of terminology that was no longer strictly fitting to his own thinking, simply in order to aid his readers, gradually leading them into his system. "Precisely where Kant has descended to the standpoint of his age", Cassirer adds, "he has failed to raise the age to his level" (Cassirer 1981, 142). Reminiscent of Beck, Cassirer further argues that the *Critique* continually evolves its particular concepts and that what was thought to be done with and established is repeatedly reopened, reconsidered and redefined. "Anyone who does not keep this tension in mind, anyone who believes that the meaning of a specific fundamental concept is exhausted with its initial definition and who tries to hold to this meaning as something unchangeable, unaffected by the progress of thought, will go astray in his understanding of it." (Cassirer 1981, 142).²⁷⁸ This argument supports Beck's view that the affecting object, which in the Transcendental Aesthetic is implicitly assumed to be a thing-in-itself, turns out, after the further considerations of the Transcendental Analytic, to be nothing more than a phenomenal object. Kant's text in his letter to Beck dated January 20, 1792, seems to corroborate this view of Beck and Cassirer. In his reply to Beck's objection that the exposition of the critical philosophy should commence with the categories, Kant remarks: "In short, since this whole analysis only aims to show that experience is only possible with certain a-priori principles, and this thesis cannot be made truly comprehensible until those principles are actually exhibited, I think it prudent to keep the work as brief as possible before these principles are presented." (AA 11: 315).

²⁷⁷ Cf. the troublesome texts cited in Sect. 3.1.

²⁷⁸ By this Cassirer repeats, almost to the word, his own description of Beck's important insight (Cassirer 1999, IV:67).

12.2.5.2 Religious and Political Considerations

Kant may not have wanted to dispel the clouds of fog surrounding his usage of the term ‘thing-in-itself’ for the implications this might have had on the reception of his doctrines of morality and religion. The constant danger of a subjectivist interpretation of Kant’s philosophy was just as present in relation to Kant’s practical philosophy as it was regarding his theoretical philosophy. On Jacobi’s view, Kant’s theory of practical reason was indeed too “subjectivist”. Since Kant denies knowledge of things-in-themselves what remains of his practical reason is only the claim that we must postulate certain Ideas of reason in order to explain how freedom of the will, God and the immortal soul are possible. We must act *as-if* these Ideas of reason are true but we do not thereby learn anything new about reality. Kant’s practical reason, on this view, only tells us something about ourselves. It tells us that it is necessary for us to believe in something but it does not touch on the independent reality of the moral law itself or on the existence of God. Thomas Wizenmann – who is known for his involvement in the pantheism dispute between Mendelssohn and Jacobi – indeed argued that Kant cannot infer the existence of God from a mere need to postulate a harmony between nature and freedom. All he can infer is that we ought to think and act *as if* God exists. In other words, Wizenmann argued that the need of reason justifies only a regulative, but not a constitutive, principle (on Wizenmann’s objections to Kant, cf. Chap. 3 above). Kant I believe has an acute response to this objection. First, we must acknowledge that practical reason demands that there be an actual, rather than merely a hypothetical, harmony between freedom and nature. Practical reason, therefore, cannot suffice with a mere regulative notion but requires a constitutive Ideal of God, which secures this harmony. Second, practical reason is also authorized to deduce a constitutive Idea since the “need” in question is not a concrete voluntary need but a general condition for the possibility of morality. In Kant’s words, we have to distinguish a need based on a subjective inclination and an objective need of reason. The latter is an absolutely necessary precondition for the possibility of morality in general and we are therefore authorized in postulating its reality (*KpV*, AA 05: 143).²⁷⁹ It follows that while for theoretical reason God is a mere regulative Idea (*KrV*, A669–704/B697–732), for practical reason it is a constitutive Idea (*KpV*, AA 05: 122ff., 134–146). We must acknowledge that although from a theoretical point of view, the Ideal of God has no objective reality, it is nevertheless not valueless for philosophy.²⁸⁰ The subtlety of these considerations and the counter-arguments they

²⁷⁹ Note especially Kant’s footnote on that page, in which Kant refers to Wizenmann by name.

²⁸⁰ The Idea of God is required for both theoretical and practical reason. Within theoretical reason this Idea serves the regulative purpose of accounting for the extensive systematic unity found in experience. Thus Kant argues that we should philosophize about nature as if God existed, if we want to judge about a first cause, and the apparent teleology observed in nature. From a practical point of view the Idea of God is constitutive since it is required for the very possibility of morality. This is so since according to morality we have a duty to promote the highest good and we must therefore presuppose its possibility. The highest good is only possible under the condition of the

invite, suggest that an open recognition by Kant that from a theoretical perspective, the thing-in-itself is at best a regulative Idea, whose objective reality cannot be asserted and cannot even be asked for (Sects. 12.2.2 and 12.2.3), could easily be interpreted by some critics as proof that his moral and religious theory, based on such an Idea, are indeed merely subjective and therefore ungrounded. In order to appreciate the risks harbored in the discussion of the theoretical and the practical validity of God as a thing-in-itself, and its possible, if not probable, consequences for Kant's personal career, we may remind ourselves of the unfolding of the so-called 'atheism controversy', the series of events which eventually led to the end of Fichte's Jena period.²⁸¹ In the spring of 1798 a colleague of Fichte's in Jena, Friedrich Karl Forberg published an essay in the *Philosophisches Journal einer Gesellschaft Teutscher Gelehrten* (a journal whose co-editor was Fichte himself), titled "Development of the Concept of Religion" (Forberg 1798). In this essay Forberg presented an interpretation of the concept of God as a mere regulative Idea of reason. Forberg argued that religious belief amounts to nothing more than a purely practical faith in a moral order, a faith, which justifies no theoretical knowledge about the existence of a supreme being. Regardless of any theoretical considerations, we must act *as-if* God, and a purely moral world, exist.²⁸² Fichte was alarmed by the skeptical tone of Forberg's essay and by the possibility that his own view of religion will be understood to be identical with Forberg's view. Fichte therefore quickly composed an essay of his own on the same topic, an essay that was published in the same issue of the *Philosophisches Journal* as Forberg's essay.

existence of God, who as the cause of all nature can ensure the correspondence between the actions undertaken to promote the highest good and the laws of nature. It follows that from a practical point of view the Idea of God is constitutive. The clue to understanding Kant's unique position regarding theoretical reason on the one hand and practical reason on the other hand, lies, in my view, in the recognition that Kant does not attempt to justify morality in the sense of proving its actuality from a self-evident principle (as Fichte saw the issue). Rather, in the practical realm, as in the theoretical realm, Kant merely attempts to explain how morality is possible by exposing its major premises. Anyone who expects Kant to provide an independent proof of the reality of freedom as the highest condition of morality, as well as a proof of the immortality of the soul and the existence of God, which likewise function as constitutive principles of morality, will be disappointed. Kant deduces the postulates of practical reason from their character as necessary preconditions for the possibility of morality. Afterwards he grounds morality on these very conditions, the reality of which is grounded in the possibility of morality itself. The whole argument would appear to be circular. However, this circularity is only a problem if we set out to justify moral faith rather than merely to expose its major presuppositions in which case the circularity involved is not an obstacle at all. For further discussion, cf. Chap. 13 below.

²⁸¹ The following is a brief account of the events. For a more detailed account cf. Breazeale 1988, 40–43.

²⁸² According to Forberg there is no duty to believe in the existence of a moral world-government or to believe in God as a moral world-ruler. Rather, our duty is to act *as-if* we believed it. Accordingly Forberg asks: "Can an atheist possess religion?" and he answers: "Certainly. We can say of a virtuous atheist that in his heart he recognizes the very same God whom he denies with his tongue. On the one hand practical belief and theoretical unbelief, on the other, theoretical belief (which then becomes superstition) and practical unbelief, can very well exist together" (Forberg 1798, 43f.).

Shortly after the publication of Fichte's and Forberg's essays there appeared an anonymous tract titled "A father's letter to his son, studying at the university, concerning the atheism of Fichte and Forberg" which accused both authors of disseminating in their classrooms the most shameless sort of atheism. On November 26, 1798 the administrative council acting in the name of the Prince-Elector of Saxony issued a decree confiscating all copies of the issue of the *Philosophisches Journal*, which contained both essays and threatening to bar Saxon citizens from attending the University of Jena (located in the neighboring Duchy of Saxe-Weimar) unless the accused authors were properly punished. Tension continued to rise as ever more pamphlets, decrees and petitions appeared on the issue and its religious-political implications. As a result of Fichte's miscalculation of his own position, he threatened to resign from his university post if the authorities found him in the least blameworthy and if any form of censorship were to be imposed on him. On March 29, 1799 the Duke of Saxe-Weimar informed Fichte that his resignation was accepted. Efforts by Fichte and others to repair the damage were to no avail and Fichte was eventually forced to resign from his post at the University of Jena. I believe that both the historical and the systematic aspects of this story have an important lesson to teach us. First, we should be aware that a possible interpretation, not merely of Fichte's, but also of Kant's theory of religion could easily lead to the conclusion that (at least from a theoretical point of view) God is merely a regulative Idea. In fact this was exactly the claim made by Hans Vaihinger (1935, 277–280), a claim that I too support.²⁸³ Second, we should pay attention to the practical consequences that such an interpretative conclusion could have had on Kant's personal career, as Fichte's case clearly demonstrates. Kant may not have wanted to clarify the true consequences of his theory regarding the thing-in-itself for fear that it would be understood as shaking the foundations of morality and religion. One must recall the threatening warnings that Kant received from the administration of Friedrich Wilhelm II on behalf of his critical theory of religious faith. There is no need for acute observation to sense the "polite" and yet threatening tone of the letter (Friedrich Wilhelm II to Kant, October 1, 1794) in which Kant is encouraged to immediately cease all actions which "disparage many of the cardinal and foundational teachings of the Holy Scriptures and of Christianity [. . .] Failing this, you must expect unpleasant measures for your continuing obstinacy." (AA 11: 525). Kant took these threats seriously and he did not lecture nor publish essays on religious issues until the death of Friedrich Wilhelm II. In light of the above, I think it is quite understandable why Kant, assuming that he is to be read according to the interpretation suggested by Beck and which I also advocate in this work, did not wish to make his intentions clear.

²⁸³ Vaihinger argues (1935, 320f., 327) that Forberg's as-if view of religion expresses the true intentions of Kant himself. For a translation of the main arguments of Forberg's essay, cf. Vaihinger 1935 (319–327). Although I also think that Forberg's view is a bold, but proper, understanding of Kant's own view, I nevertheless, do not think that it shakes the foundations of Kant's moral and religious philosophy. I do, however, recognize that it could very well be seen in this light and the unfolding of the events in Fichte's case demonstrates that.

12.2.6 *Beck's Standpunktslehre and the Anthropocentric Interpretation*

Beck's interpretation of Kant's Transcendental Idealism regarding the relation between a representation and its object and the role of the thing-in-itself in Kant's theoretical philosophy is consistent with what I called the anthropocentric view of Kant's doctrine. The uniqueness of Beck's *Standpunktslehre* is based on two aspects: (a) the recognition that an object is regarded as distinct from a representation only on behalf of the objectifying function of our own cognition; (b) the claim that this recognition of the role of cognition in the very notion of an object does not amount to an admission of idealism. Beck's reading therefore eliminates the thing-in-itself from Kant's theoretical philosophy and he thinks that this elimination, rather than leading to idealism, is the cornerstone of the defense of realism. These features make Beck's doctrine a unique example of an anthropocentric interpretation.

Despite its anthropocentric character, Beck's view nevertheless leaves out some important features of Kant's refutation of idealism. Beck's *Standpunktslehre* centers almost entirely on the issue of objectivity. He disregards Kant's important arguments regarding externality and reality, which makes out most of the Fourth Paralogism of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Equally, he does not refer to Kant's argument regarding the interrelation between inner and outer senses, which makes out Kant's argument in the second edition. All these omissions are to some degree excusable since Beck's focus is precisely the act of positing through which a representation acquires its relation to an object. However, even within this aspect there is an important omission, which may have posed obstacles for the acceptance of his view.

As we have already discussed, Kant's concept of objectivity is based on two related aspects – the ascription of necessity to a certain connection of representations and the positing of that connection of representations as an object. The relation between these two aspects is highly important since the positing of a certain connection of representations as an object can only be achieved by ascribing necessity to it. In Sect. 12.2.4 we have also discussed the general and concrete aspects of the ascription of necessity to a certain connection of representations. I argue that Beck fails to take into account the general role of necessity for Kant's concept of objectivity and therefore he also lacks the means to explain the basis for positing a specific connection of representations (this and no other) as an object in any concrete case. This is how Beck explains this issue:

For instance, if we are asked why it is that in the original representing the representation produced happens to be just so and not otherwise, so that we obtain through it the determinate representation of *such* a quantity, *such* a shape, *such* a determinate reality, etc., even though it is the understanding that performs the original synthesis, we shall answer in unison with common sense (since we are on its turf) that our determinate representation conforms to its determinate object. For instance, that the representation of the table that I see in front of me now differs from the representation of the chair, which is equally in front of me, is due to the fact that the first object is a table and the second is a

chair, and that the two affect me in different ways. Were we referring here to the existence of things-in-themselves and have we attributed causality to them? Not at all. (*EmS*, 163)

In my view, Beck is absolutely correct regarding the general nature of the act of positing, although he completely ignores the role of necessity within this act. Amongst his contemporaries, Beck alone understood the subjective and yet at the same time objective character of Kant's Transcendental Idealism. The object is indeed not a thing-in-itself and it does not rely for its objectivity on any aspect of the thing-in-itself; nor does the object need to have an 'in-itself' aspect, as claimed by supporters of the two-aspect view. Rather, it relies merely on the objectifying function of the understanding. Beck alone understood that the object does not become any less objective due to the recognition of the role of cognition in positing a certain connection of representations as an object, distinct from the representations through which we refer to it. From a general perspective, the recognition of the role of cognition in the act of positing – including the circularity of this account – is not an obstacle since cognition has no alternative. Cognition has only representations to begin with and it can only refer to an object by distinguishing some representations from others based on a rule of cognition itself. However, on the concrete level there are of course alternatives. We can connect some representations and posit them as an object or we can posit other representations and regard their connection as objective. In order to explain how cognition operates one must explain why we posit this and no other set of representations as an object. To say as Beck does, that I posit a table and not a chair since the object in front of me is a table, is no answer at all.²⁸⁴ Here we see the implications of Beck's failure to address the role of necessity within the *general* account of objectivity and its consequences for his ability to explain the *concrete* criterion of the act of positing. Beck misses Kant's solution since he entirely misses the role of necessity in the positing of an object²⁸⁵; he therefore also misses the criterion for ascribing

²⁸⁴ In his answer, Beck intends to emphasize that the object in front of us, the object, which we regard as the cause of our representations, is not a thing-in-itself but a phenomenal object. However, specifically because the phenomenal object is regarded as an object on behalf of being posited as such by an act of our own cognition, the answer to the question why, for example, we posit a table and not a chair as the object in front of us, must be settled by referring to some aspect of the act of positing and not by saying as Beck does that the object in front of us is a table and not a chair and that the two affect us differently. In order to satisfactorily answer the above question one must show how the act of positing allows us to distinguish between alternatives and this is missing in Beck's account. Beck's failure to account for this distinction by referring to a function of cognition itself could even be seen by some readers as an implicit, unconscious relapse into viewing the object as something in-itself.

²⁸⁵ There is nevertheless one indication that Beck was aware of the role of necessity in positing an object. In his letter to Kant dated November 10, 1792 he acknowledges that "[...] the dignity that representations acquire in referring to objects consists in the fact that thereby the synthesis of the manifold is thought as necessary. This determination of thought is, however, the same as the function in a judgment. In this way the contribution of the categories has become clear to me, in that the investigation has made me see that they are the concepts through which the manifold of a sensuous intuition is presented as necessarily (valid for everyone) grasped together. Certain summarizers, as I see it, have expressed themselves incorrectly on this matter. They say 'To

necessity in any concrete case. Kant discusses the general role of necessity for the concept of objectivity within the Second Analogy of Experience and Beck commentary on the relevant paragraphs reveals his omission. Beck cites the following paragraph from the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

What do I understand by the question, how the manifold may be combined in the appearance itself (which is yet nothing in itself)? Here that which lies in the successive apprehension is considered as representation, but the appearance that is given to me, in spite of the fact that it is nothing more than a sum of these representations, is considered as their object, with which my concept, which I draw from the representations of apprehension, is to agree. (*KrV*, A191/B236)

Here Kant explicitly raises a major issue – if not *the* major issue – of his theoretical philosophy: how can an appearance which is not a thing-in-itself, and which as Kant previously argued is nothing but a representation, be considered as the object with which the representation is supposed to agree? Beck comments on the above cited paragraph as follows:

In that synthetic-objective unity of consciousness lies the meaningfulness of my concept of an object in general. This is that, which at this point the reader must keep before his eyes; for when he leaves this standpoint, the most vulgar idealism will appear to him. (*EmS*, 482)
(The English translation is my own)

Beck reiterates his, by now familiar, claim that the meaningfulness and the validity of our concepts lies in being traceable back to the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness. In other words, Beck understands the problem with which Kant is occupied in the above-cited paragraph as involving the relation between discursive representing and original representing, rather than as pertaining to the issue of positing. Furthermore, for Beck the issue belongs to what he calls original representing while for Kant the issue involves the use of concepts in judgments and the ascription of necessity to the connection of sensible representations. As remembered, Beck views the use of concepts in judgments as belonging exclusively to discursive, derived representing. Beck's whole transcendental account of experience, conducted within the context of original representing, therefore completely ignores the use of concepts in judgments and the role of necessity within the use of judgments (Sect. 11.2 above). On the contrary, for Kant, objectivity is precisely the result of judgment and the application of concepts (which function as rules) to sensible intuitions thereby imposing necessity on their

judge is to connect objective representations.' It is quite another thing when the *Critique* tells us: To judge is to bring representations to an objective unity of consciousness, through which the activity of synthesis, represented as necessary, is expressed." (AA 11: 384f.). In light of this explicit recognition, in 1792, of the role of the notions of necessity and judgment, it is surprising to find no mention of this recognition in his subsequent *Standpunctslehre*. Nevertheless, in 1792 Beck's view of original representing has not yet been formulated. The first signs of this new doctrine appear only in Beck's letter to Kant dated June 17, 1794 as well as in Beck's 1795 review-articles in Jacob's *Annalen*. We can only assume that within his newly developed *Standpunctslehre* the role of necessity and of judgment became less central since it was regarded as part of discursive, derived representation in contrast to the original mode of representing.

connection. Beck thus completely misses the point of Kant's discussion. Rather than explicating the act of positing an object as the product of judgment, as the application of concepts to intuitions and as the ascription of necessity to a certain connection of sensible representations, Beck refers to the requirement to trace our concepts back to the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness.

It is striking that Beck fails to cite Kant's answer to the above question and his next commentated paragraph is taken from a different chapter of the *Critique*. Viewed from Beck's perspective, the problem – as he understands the issue, raised by Kant – is immediately solved by pointing to the connection between concepts as derived representations and the original-synthetic objective-unity of consciousness.²⁸⁶ From Kant's perspective the above-cited paragraph from the *Critique* is merely the posing of an important problem, which still requires an answer. I shall bring Kant's solution in its entirety:

One quickly sees that, since the agreement of cognition with the object is truth, only the formal conditions of empirical truth can be inquired after here, and appearance, in contradistinction to the representations of the apprehension, can thereby only be represented as the object that is distinct from them if it stands under a rule that distinguishes it from every other apprehension, and makes one way of combining the manifold necessary. That in the appearance, which contains the condition of this necessary rule of apprehension, is the object. (*KrV*, A191/B236. The issue is discussed in Sect. 12.2.4.4 above)

On the background of Kant's solution we can see that Beck completely misses out the role of necessity in distinguishing an objective state of affairs from mere subjective apprehension.²⁸⁷ For Beck objectivity is expressed by the tracing back of

²⁸⁶ It is possible that Beck was tempted to read the above-cited paragraph from the *Critique* as equivalent with his commentary since Kant argues that the *concept, drawn from the representations of apprehension*, is to agree with the appearance considered as the object. It may have sounded to Beck that Kant speaks of a concept drawn from the original representing, with which the concept must agree. However, for Kant the concept is not simply drawn from sensible apprehension. Rather, the concept as a rule is applied to sensible representations thereby imposing a necessary connection on them and positing them as an object. Since the concept of an object is not simply drawn from sensible or original representation, the reverse is also not simply a matter of tracing a concept back to the original representing. The above text cited from the *Critique* is therefore not yet the solution, as it may have appeared to Beck, but merely the posing of the question.

²⁸⁷ Beck's failure to observe the role of necessity in the positing of a certain connection of representations as an object is also apparent in his failure to elaborate on the role of the transcendental object. Although in one place Beck does mention the transcendental object in a way, which suggests that he distinguishes it from the thing-in-itself (*EmS*, 31), nevertheless, he nowhere dedicates an explicit discussion to the important role and proper interpretation of this technical term. For example within Kant's argument in the Second Analogy, referred to above, we find the following statement: "Now, however, as soon as I raise my concept of an object to transcendental significance, the house is not a thing-in-itself at all but only an appearance, i.e., a representation, the transcendental object of which is unknown" (*KrV*, A190f./B235f.) Here, as elsewhere, the transcendental object functions – as discussed above – as the assumption, according to which beyond the contingent connection of representations in the apprehension of the individual mind there is also a necessary connection which expresses how representations are connected in the object itself. As a bare reference point (which is nothing in-itself but rather a formal condition

our concepts, *regarding their content*, to the original synthetic unity of consciousness (which is Beck's term for pre-conceptual sense perception). Rather than recognizing that objectivity is a function of ascribing necessity to a certain connection of representations, Beck recognizes a certain connection of representations as an object when we are able to trace back this connection of representations to the original synthetic unity of consciousness. Beck therefore misses out on the formal criterion of objectivity! This omission, of course, prevents him from even raising the question regarding the application of this formal criterion in any concrete case.

Beck's content-based criterion of objectivity, rather than Kant's formal criterion, is also evident in his exposition of the category of actuality which, as we have discussed above, points back to the formal criterion of objectivity since it functions as the affirmation of the objective status (Sect. 12.2.4.6). Beck defines actuality as follows: "Actuality is the original representing upon which the concept of an object directly follows." (*EmS*, 166). Beck further explains that "the body that fills space is actual (it exists), for I obtain its concept from the original representing itself." (*EmS*, 166). In other words, the issue of actuality is merely an issue of tracing our concepts back to the original representing itself, or better as Beck states on other passages, tracing our concepts back to the original synthetic unity of consciousness.²⁸⁸ In any case the role of necessity is completely missing and the formal criterion is replaced with a content-based criterion. This omission results in an incomplete account of the basis for positing a specific connection of representations as an object in any concrete case.

In spite of the above I must note that Beck's emphasis on the requirement to trace our concepts back to the original representing, which in Kantian terms is equivalent to a demand that there be some correspondence between concepts and sensible intuition, has one advantage. As I have explained above Kant's formal criterion plays a role within two related cognitive stages: first, within the initial constitution of the object whereby a certain connection of representations is posited as an object distinct from the knowing subject and his representations; second, within the ascription of a modal status. In the first stage the objective status is merely tentative and mostly unconscious while in the second stage it is the focus of attention.²⁸⁹ I think that on the merely formal Kantian model it is hard to explain the basis for the tentative objective status given to a specific connection of

of the understanding) added by the understanding to mere representations in order to posit them as an object, the transcendental object is indeed unknown. For it is that which must be presupposed in order to attribute any characteristic to a thing considered as distinct from the representations through which we refer to it. Beck comments on this paragraph of Kant: "This insight into the nature of the category is expressed by the formula, that the objects of our cognition are appearances and not things-in-themselves, and that the transcendental object is unknown to us" (*EmS*, 481. The English translation is my own). Beck is quite correct, however, he recites Kant's reference to the transcendental object as if this term requires no further explanation. Had he been aware of its full scope, I think he would have elaborated on the use of this highly important term.

²⁸⁸ Cf. Chap. 8 under the discussion of the category of actuality.

²⁸⁹ Cf. Sect. 12.2.4.6, especially note 256.

representations on the background of other alternatives. Since the formal criterion regarding the coherence of a specific objective judgment with other objective judgments properly pertains to the modal re-evaluation of the objective status, it remains unclear what authorizes the positing of one and no other connection of representations as an object within the initial process of making an objective judgment. Let me make my argument clearer with an example: I look out of my window and I say ‘there is my friend John’. This is an objective judgment. Then I might remember that my friend John is out of the country at the moment. So now I have doubt whether my initial objective judgment was correct. I may look out of the window again or I may leave the house to get a closer look. Then I may either say ‘Oh, I made a mistake, this is not John’ or I may say ‘Oh, this is John, he must have not gone after all or arrived back earlier, etc.’ The example shows that we first make an objective judgment and then, usually when prompted by other events or new pieces of information, we are triggered to reconsider our initial objective judgment. We then compare the initial judgment against other observations and known empirical laws (for example, that no person can be at two places at one time and the approximate time it would take to arrive from one place to the other given today’s means of transportation). The issue with which I am concerned now is the basis for the initial ascription of objectivity (when, in the above example, I say ‘there is John’). Since the formal criterion of coherence only comes into play in the modal re-evaluation of the objective judgment, it remains unaccounted for on what basis we make the initial objective judgment. It is on this issue that Beck’s doctrine holds an interesting promise. As I have already argued,²⁹⁰ it follows from Beck’s doctrine of original representing that sense perception includes some forms of synthesis imbedded in sense-perception itself. Beck’s doctrine can therefore explain the initial positing of an object on the basis of the forms of organization imbedded in immediate sense perception. In the above example, I make the objective judgment ‘this is John’ based on visual gestalts pertaining to the face of the man I see, his body shape, or his bodily movements, etc. The modal consideration re-evaluates the initial objective judgment that was based on observational patterns, according to the requirement for coherence with other objective judgments and known laws of nature. The bottom line is that while Beck’s doctrine lacks recognition of Kant’s formal criterion and the role of necessity for the concept of objectivity, it nevertheless includes other principles, which are lacking in Kant’s epistemological theory.

12.2.7 Kant’s Response to Beck’s Interpretation

The sources out of which Kant’s response to Beck’s *Standpunktslehre* can be extracted are mainly the few letters exchanged between the two men in June

²⁹⁰ Cf. Sect. 11.4 above.

1797, following the publication of the third volume of Beck's explanatory abstracts, the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*, and its more concise companion, the *Grundriß der kritischen Philosophie*. Unfortunately, Kant's letter to Beck, which contained the core of his reaction to Beck's *Standpunctslehre* is not extant. However, Beck's letters to Kant, one dated June 20, and the other dated June 24, 1797, written in response to Kant's not extant letter, are available to us and they reveal both the personal as well as the systematic issues involved in Kant's response. Also available to us is the exchange of letters between Kant and Johann Heinrich Tieftrunk, a Kantian professor in Halle, who was a friend of both Beck and Kant and who acted as a non-formal mediator between Beck and Kant when their relationship was wrecked. Some further idea of Kant's view of Beck's work can also be extracted from his personal notes of the same time and from scattered remarks in the *Opus Postumum*.

In both letters to Kant mentioned above, Beck replies passionately to charges made against him by Johann Schultz. The latter was Kant's friend and colleague for many years.²⁹¹ Schultz was especially close to Kant in his final years and he was named by Kant as his favorite expositor.²⁹²

Beck's reply to Kant, as well as the subsequent letters exchanged between Kant and Tieftrunk, makes it clear that prior to compiling his reply, Kant discussed Beck's work with Schultz. In light of Beck's and Tieftrunk's letters, we can reasonably assume that Kant's not-extant letter included explicit reference to Schultz's criticism of Beck. From Beck's letter of June 20, 1797 it becomes clear that Schultz expressed the view that Beck has completely misrepresented Kant's philosophy in his *Grundriß der kritischen Philosophie*. From Beck's counter arguments, we can identify two related lines of criticism attributed to Schultz: first, that Beck's doctrine annuls sensibility; second, that according to Beck the understanding creates the object. These two lines of criticism correspond to the two aspects of Beck's *Standpunctslehre* between which I distinguished in this work. The first regards the relation between the understanding and sensibility and the second regards the relation between a representation and an object.

Against the objection that he annuls sensibility, Beck replies:

What Herr Schultz blames me for never even occurred to me. It never occurred to me to construct an exegesis that would explain away sensibility. (Beck's letter to Kant, June 20, 1797, AA 12: 167)

²⁹¹ Kant's friendship with Johann Schultz started after the latter published a review of the *Inaugural Dissertation* in the *Königsberger gelehrte und politische Anzeigen* on November 22 and November 25, 1771. Johann Schultz (1739–1805) served as pastor at Löwenhagen near Königsberg and was appointed Court Chaplain in 1775. Kant helped him to gain his position as Professor of mathematics at the University of Königsberg in 1786. In 1784 Schultz published the *Erläuterung des Herrn Prof. Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Later he published the *Prüfung der kantischen Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, the first volume of which appeared in 1789 and the second in 1792. Schultz was also a friend of Fichte who appreciated his views (*SW*, I:473).

²⁹² Cf. below the description of the Schlettwein affair.

I am certainly convinced that the division of the cognitive faculties – viz., into sensibility, as the subjective faculty (the capacity of being affected by objects) and understanding, the power of thinking objects (of relating the subjective element to an object) – can only be grasped with the requisite clarity after one has a proper perspective of the category, as an original activity of the understanding. (AA: 12: 165)

Further along the same letter he makes his intentions clearer by claiming:

No one, of all the friends of the critical philosophy, has stressed the distinction between sensibility and understanding more than I have. I do it under the expression: a concept has sense and meaning only to the extent that the original activity of the understanding in the categories lies at its basis – which in fact is the same as your contention that the categories have application only to what is directly experienced [...] (AA 12: 169)

As I have already discussed in Sect. 11.1 above, it is easy to misconstrue Beck's *Standpunctslehre* as the annulment of sensibility in favor of the understanding, although the opposite is closer to the truth. Beck attempts to adhere to Kant's terminology and he therefore regards the categories as the original-employment of *the understanding*. In spite of the potentially misleading terminology, he understands the categories as embedded in sense perception. Rather than annulling sensibility it would be more correct to say that Beck annuls the intelligible character of the categories. He ignores their role as logical preconditions and he reconstructs them in a sensible-perceptual form as his constant appeal to the example of the geometer clearly demonstrates. As Beck himself explicitly says in the above-cited paragraph, he reconstructs the distinction between understanding and sensibility in terms of the distinction between original and discursive-conceptual representing. His emphasis on the central role of the original representing is his way of defending the central role of sensibility. These considerations may seem to leave the main question open – regardless of terminology – what is the relation between Kant's distinction of understanding and sensibility and Beck's distinction of original and conceptual representing? I have addressed this precise issue in Sect. 11.3 above. I argued that Kant's distinction between understanding and sensibility is a distinction between the synthesis and the manifold accordingly. In contrast, Beck views sense perception as having an embedded form of synthesis and organization exemplified by the categories in the original sense whereby they are unified with time and space. "As I said, I could not close my eyes to the light I glimpsed when the idea came to me, to start from the standpoint of the categories and to connect what you are especially concerned with in your *Transcendental Aesthetic* (space and time) with the categories." (Beck's letter to Kant, June 20, 1797, AA: 12: 167. The emphasis is my own). Beck views conceptual representing as the reconstruction of the original synthesis (or organization) of sense perception in terms of general properties attributed to a reference point. The bottom line is that Beck certainly does make a distinction between sensibility and understanding although for him it is not a distinction between the principle of synthesis and the manifold to which the synthesis is applied but rather between two modes of organization. Even if we conclude that on Beck's view the distinction between the two faculties is diminished it would be wiser to say that he merges the understanding into sensibility rather than the other way around. Beck may be blamed for over empiricism rather

than for intellectualism. Unfortunately this was not recognized by Schultz and apparently not by Kant either.

Against the second charge apparently made against him by Schultz, Beck argues:

It never entered my mind to say that the understanding creates the object: a piece of naked nonsense! How can Herr Schultz be so unfriendly as to charge me with this. (Beck's letter to Kant, June 20, 1797, AA: 12: 168)

Beck explains that he only wanted to stress the inevitable role of cognition in the construction of an object and that no object is meaningful to us other than an object constructed by cognition itself.

As I said, I wanted not a whit more than to lead people to this point: that we cannot objectively unify anything [...] that the understanding has not previously unified and that herein lies the objective relation. I wanted to lead people to this by the nose. How can one fail to see by this light! The object that affects me, that stirs my senses, is called appearance and not a thing-in-itself; of the latter I can only construct a negative concept, a thing to which predicates belong absolutely (entirely apart from this original activity of the understanding) – an Idea, and also the Idea of an intuitive understanding, which we get by negating the characteristic of our own understanding. My intention was to bar the concept of the thing-in-itself from theoretical philosophy. Only in the moral consciousness am I led to this unique mode of reality. (Beck's letter to Kant, June 20, 1797, AA: 12: 168)

In a mixture of systematic argumentation and personal confrontation Beck writes that: "if I wanted to get a little bit angry with Herr Schultz, I would say that I have more right to accuse him of thinking he has intellectual intuition that he has to make this accusation against me" (AA: 12: 165f.).²⁹³ In Beck's view – which I support wholeheartedly – it is only when we fail to acknowledge the inevitable role of cognition in the construction of objects that we run the risk of referring to objects as things-in-themselves. Beck has not intellectualized sensibility and his insistence that no object is meaningful to us other than an object posited by cognition, proves that he, less than anyone else, is guilty of a 'thing-in-itself intellectualism'. In Sect. 12.1.2, within the comparison of Beck's *Standpunctslehre* and Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, I explained why Beck's epistemological recognition of the role of cognition in constructing objects should not be equated the claim that cognition creates its objects in a metaphysical sense.

In a letter to Kant dated June 24, 1797, Beck tries to defend himself against the association of his views with those of Fichte. As with the previous letter, Beck

²⁹³ In his early review of Kant's *Inaugural Dissertation*, Schultz indeed argued in favor of the possibility of intellectual intuition (Sect. 2.2.2). While the latter objection was made prior to the appearance of the first *Critique*, it is noteworthy that in his anonymous review of J. A. H. Ulrich's *Institutiones logicae et metaphysicae*, Johann Schultz (1785, 297ff.) declares himself in agreement with some of the author's doubts regarding the deduction of the categories, especially concerning the limitation on the use of the categories, merely to objects of possible experience. Kant knew the identity of the reviewer. According to the testimony of Hamann in his letter to Jacobi of April 9, 1786, Kant was upset by Schultz's review and called a meeting with him to discuss it (Hamann 1955, VI:349).

argues against Schultz's accusations rather than against any supposed objections by Kant.

And Schultz also quotes me as saying that "the understanding produces objects". I infer from this that you [Kant] and Herr Schultz have been discussing Herr Fichte's strange invention, since these expressions I quoted sound completely Fichtean to me [. . .] I assure you, as I am an honest man, that my views are infinitely removed from this Fichtean nonsense. (AA: 12: 174)

Beck adds in a rather personal tone that:

Court Chaplain Schultz, of whom I am ever fond and whose knowledge and sincerity I respect, has really been unfair to me, and I am depressed that this fine man could believe that I hold such absurd views as that the understanding creates the object. He would not have been able to think such things of me before, when he cherished me as his attentive student in mathematics. (AA: 12: 175)²⁹⁴

Beck goes on to report of his own visit to Jena and of a meeting with Fichte. Beck reports that Fichte tried to recruit him to his camp:

He really did try to ensnare me [. . .] He actually started the conversation by saying, "I know it, you agree with me that the understanding creates the object". (AA: 12: 175)

Beck denies any association with Fichte in this regard. Beck refers to his previously published criticism of Fichte and of more reviews he plans to publish in the future, in order to clarify the dissention between Fichte's and Beck's own views.²⁹⁵ Unfortunately, in his letters, aside from general statements rejecting the view that according to his doctrine the understanding or even cognition in general creates the object, Beck does not engage in systematic discussion of this issue. Nor does he attempt a more thorough comparison of his views with those of Fichte.

On the background of Schultz's negative report of Beck's work, Kant's was obviously aggravated by the subtitle of Beck's *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt*, which like all three volumes of his work, included the text "Explanatory abstract from the critical writings of Prof. Kant, prepared in consultation with the same".²⁹⁶ The wording of this subtitle implies that Kant had approved the book. Beck explains that this text was supposed to appear only on the first two volumes, which were indeed an abstract or commentary of Kant's work, and which also received Kant's blessing, but not on the third volume which stood for Beck's own contribution. Beck offers to correct the potential misunderstanding by publishing an open declaration clarifying the mishap. However, he fears that such a public statement could be used by "enemies of the critical philosophy" as an acknowledgement of quarrel and dissension between Kant's disciples and that therefore such an open declaration

²⁹⁴ In the letter of June 20th, Beck speculates that Schultz's unkindness towards him may be the result of despondency over the death of his wife.

²⁹⁵ To the best of my knowledge, no such further reviews have appeared.

²⁹⁶ Reading Beck's June 20, 1797 reply to Kant's not-extant letter, we can assume that in that not-extant letter, Kant expressed his dissatisfaction from the use of his name on the subtitle of Beck's work. Cf. also Kant's draft letter to Tieftrunk, October 13, 1797 (AA 13: 463).

would be detrimental to Kant's cause. Beck mentions that he has asked Prof. Tieftrunk to write to Kant on his behalf, in order to corroborate his claim to be loyal to Kant's philosophy (Beck's letter to Kant, June 20, 1797, AA 12: 170). The personal dimension, both in Beck's response to Schultz and in his declared loyalty to Kant, is clearly evident.

Kant never replied to Beck directly and their relationship has practically come to an end. Beck was obviously disappointed from Kant's response. Regardless of what we might nowadays think of the legitimacy of Beck's views as an interpretation of Kant, Beck always saw his own work as an exposition of Kant's true intentions. Furthermore, Beck never criticized Kant and he never imagined that his work could cause Kant any sort of embarrassment. In his letters he frequently appeals to Kant's own judgment. He hopes that Kant will see his point and subsequently vindicate him from Schultz's criticism.

Beck's last known letter to Kant dates from September 9, 1797 (AA 12: 199f.). It is a short letter in which Beck expresses his firm conviction that had an opportunity been given to him, he would have been able to convince Kant that, despite Schultz's claims, there are in fact no contradictions between his *Standpunctslehre* and Kant's original doctrine. Beck is willing to put everything he owns on the balance. Beck says his heart is free of any bitterness against Schultz. Nevertheless, he adds, had Schultz put himself in Beck's position he would have realized the insulting tone of his accusations.

Subsequent to the short exchange of letters between Beck and Kant, there followed an exchange of letters between Tieftrunk and Kant from which we can further learn about both the personal and the systematic issues involved in Kant's response to Beck.²⁹⁷

On June 20, 1797, Tieftrunk sent a letter to Kant in which he reports that Beck has showed him, in strictest confidence, Kant recent letter to him. This is the not-extant letter "concerning the relation of his [Beck's] *standpoint* to the *Critique of Pure Reason*" (AA 12: 171). Tieftrunk writes to Kant that "I have enjoyed learning from your letter the opinion of worthy Court Chaplain Schultz, and thereby also your opinion, of Herr Beck's work concerning the *Critique*" (AA 12: 171). Tieftrunk's mode of expression supports the view that in his letter to Beck, Kant forwarded Schultz's own criticism of Beck's work and probably added a general endorsement of it. It sounds as if the objections themselves were Schultz's and not Kant's.²⁹⁸

Tieftrunk reports of his own allegiance to the *Critique* and of his intensive discussions with Beck regarding the latter's unique standpoint. Tieftrunk states

²⁹⁷ A concise description of Tieftrunk's correspondence with Kant regarding Beck's *Standpunctslehre*, with special emphasis on the issue of the status of the affecting object from which the content of sensibility is supposed to originate can be found in Kemp-Smith 1962 (628–631).

²⁹⁸ Cf. also L. H. Jacob's letter to Kant, September 8, 1797 (AA 12: 197). Jacob tells Kant that Beck has shared with him the events, which followed from Schultz's report to Kant regarding Beck's *Standpunctslehre*.

that he respects but disagrees with Beck on few important issues. He proposes to present his own views regarding the relationship between Beck's *Standpunctslehre* and the *Critique*. For this purpose he has written an informal essay, appended to his letter, regarding the deduction of the categories.²⁹⁹ Tiefertunk tells Kant that in the appended paper he first presents the issue as in Kant's *Critique*, then as it is understood by Beck and finally in the last part he raises certain doubts about Beck's approach. Tiefertunk addresses his short work (to the best of my knowledge not extant) to both Kant and Schultz. This further strengthens the feeling of the intensive involvement of Schultz in these affairs.

In his reply of July 12, 1797, Kant expresses his satisfaction from Beck's intended public announcement declaring that his *Standpunctslehre* represents his own view and not Kant's. He also expresses his hope that Beck would be convinced by the correctness of Tiefertunk's short work and would subsequently alter his standpoint accordingly. However, Kant says, if Beck cannot bring himself to do so, then it would be best to let the matter rest and publish no public announcements. Otherwise, Kant says, critics of the critical philosophy might use this disagreement as an excuse for an attack.³⁰⁰ Kant says that neither his own affection for Beck nor that of Court Chaplain Schultz should be diminished by this affair although "Herr Schultz noticed a certain alienating tone of bitterness in the letter from Herr Beck that I showed him" (Kant's letter to Tiefertunk dated July 12, 1797, AA 12: 183f.). Kant closes his short letter with a request from Tiefertunk to give Beck his friendly greetings.

In a draft of a letter to Tiefertunk, Kant once again expresses content with Beck's decision to announce that his *Standpoint* is his own work and not Kant's.³⁰¹ Then he says the following:

Let me only remark on this point that when he proposes to start with the categories he is busying himself with the mere form of thinking, that is, concepts without objects, concepts that as yet are without any meaning. (AA 13: 463)

This statement – apart from the fact that on other occasions Kant argued differently³⁰² – makes it clear that Kant had not understood Beck. Indeed according to Kant, pure, unschematized, categories are mere forms of thought without signification and meaning (Sect. 12.2.2 above) and Beck would have definitely agreed with this claim. However, the categories from which Beck proposes to start are not mere forms of thought but original modes of representing, which in Beck's doctrine are equivalent to Kant's schematized categories, that is, pure categories unified with

²⁹⁹ We learn from Kant's reply to Tiefertunk dated July 12, 1797 that this short work was titled "Brief presentation of an essential point in the Transcendental Aesthetic and Logic" (AA 12: 183).

³⁰⁰ Kant mentions J. A. Schlettwein as one of the prospect critics prone for such an attack. Cf. below on the involvement of Schlettwein.

³⁰¹ In this draft Kant also says: "I prefer that the Beck business be resolved not only in a friendly manner but with unanimity in our thinking, even though our approaches are different." (AA 13: 463).

³⁰² Kant's letter to Beck, December 11, 1797, AA 12: 223 as well as *Refl.* 6353 and 6358.

time and space as the forms of intuition. Beck can rightfully be accused of merging the categories of the understanding with formal and even empirical intuition but not of starting his exposition from mere forms of thought.

In a further letter to Kant, of which only a fragment has survived, dated November 5, 1797, Tiefrunk presents his understanding of the systematic issues under controversy and suggests his own way out of the difficulty. Tiefrunk's solution shows evidence of an obvious Fichtean influence. It is beyond the scope of my current research to analyze the details of this historically important letter. I shall focus on the issues that bear on the understanding of the relation between Kant's *Critique* and Beck's *Standpunctslehre* and the main issue of Beck's work – the status of the objects that affects the senses. In the fragment available to us, Tiefrunk emphasizes the distinction between the activity of synthesis in the categories and the sensible matter, given to this synthesis. "The greatest difficulty" he argues "appears in connection with the category of quality, for it takes the most subtle thinking to distinguish the pure from the empirical here" (Tiefrunk's letter to Kant, November 5, 1797, AA 12: 212). He then contrasts the available views on this matter, as he understands them:

Some people suppose that sensation and [the category of] reality are the same thing and therefore believe that all [objects of] sensation, for example, even air and light, could be deduced a priori. Fichte does that. Other people hold these things to be wholly empirical, so that the category of reality is just the same thing as the production of the empirical. Herr Beck is an example. (AA 12: 212f.)³⁰³

Tiefrunk argues that his own view, as well as what he regards as the proper interpretation of the *Critique*, differs from both of the above alternatives. He argues in a manner that could apply to both Beck and Fichte, that:

All existence is therefore based on this original positing, and existence is actually nothing else then this being-positing. Without the original, pure act of spontaneity (of apperception), nothing *is* or exists. (AA 12: 214)³⁰⁴

He then poses the main problem, which is yet to be addressed:

³⁰³ This way of presenting the views of Fichte and Beck is of course simplistic. As we have discussed, despite some such statements, Fichte does not think that sensations can simply be deduced a priori. Similarly, Beck does not annul the distinction between sensation and its principle of synthesis (the category of reality), although he does reject the separation of these two elements. Nevertheless, Tiefrunk's above presentation does capture the general tendencies implied in the views of both Fichte and Beck. While Fichte inclines toward the intellectual faculty, Beck is more inclined towards the sensible faculty. In my view, Tiefrunk's text captures Beck's general intentions better than Kant's above cited statement. This may be due to the fact that Tiefrunk had the opportunity to discuss Beck's views at length and in person with Beck himself, while Kant, at best, relied on Beck's written text and at worse on the indirect reports of his friend Johann Schultz.

³⁰⁴ In this letter, Tiefrunk connects, and even identifies completely, the contribution of the apperception in the category of reality with the act of positing representations as an object. This is a mistake. According to Kant – and according to Beck as well – positing is achieved by the categories of relation rather than in the category of reality, the positive aspect of the categories of quality.

But whence comes the manifold of sensation, *the merely empirical* aspect of sensation? [...] Whence the material? Out of sensibility. But whence did sensibility obtain it? From the objects that affect it? But what are the objects that affect sensibility? Are they things-in-themselves or—? (AA 12: 214ff.)³⁰⁵

Tieftrunk obviously felt that this issue was not clearly settled by Kant himself and has not yet received a proper explication by either Fichte, or Beck. Tieftrunk therefore attempts to provide his own solution. He argues that the ultimate ground of sensibility, a ground that is independent of apperception is “nothing more than a thought with negative meaning, that is, a thought without any corresponding object” (AA 12: 217). Tieftrunk’s solution is very Fichtean. It is reminiscent of Fichte’s doctrine of the noumenon, an idea posited by reason alone. Tieftrunk further argues, along Fichtean lines, that “practical reason can offer grounds for admitting the reality (though only from a practical point of view) of such ideas.” (AA 12: 217).³⁰⁶ He recognizes that “we cannot say of things-in-themselves (of which we have only a negative idea) that they affect us, since the concept of affection asserts a real relation between knowable entities” (AA 12: 217). Tieftrunk further concedes that “it is also impossible to say that things-in-themselves transfer representations from themselves into the mind, since the problematic concept of ‘things-in-themselves’ is itself only a point of reference for representations in the mind, a figment of thought.” (AA 12: 217). It is strange that given the limitations that Tieftrunk correctly imposes on the use of the noumenon, he still thinks that it solves the problem of affection. In any case, Tieftrunk believes that this doctrine of the noumenon in its negative sense is the true intention of Kant himself, and he refers the reader to the *Critique*’s chapter on phenomena and noumena. Tieftrunk’s solution was obviously influenced by Fichte’s work, notwithstanding its partial form.³⁰⁷ Tieftrunk’s emphasis on the inevitable role of a negative concept of a thing-in-itself for Kant’s theory of the influence of objects on our senses bears some lines of similarity to the modern approach of Henry E. Allison discussed in Sect. 12.2.2 above. I shall not here repeat my discussion and criticism of this doctrine.

Kant replied to Tieftrunk on December 11, 1797. Unfortunately Kant’s response focuses on a different issue of Tieftrunk’s letter, not included in the fragment available to us. This is an issue, which deals with the application of the categories to experience and the role of the schematism in this regard.³⁰⁸ Kant repeats his

³⁰⁵ Later in the same letter he asks: “What is it that affects the mind?” and he answers in a Fichtean manner “It affects itself since it is both receptivity and spontaneity.” (AA 12: 216).

³⁰⁶ It is implied in Tieftrunk’s arguments that practical reason can secure the reality of the noumenon, which is required for the theoretical reason to complete the account of experience.

³⁰⁷ We have seen how Fichte insists that the thing-in-itself cannot be a mere noumenon, an idea posited by reason itself.

³⁰⁸ In *Refl.* 6359, probably written between November 5, 1797 (the date of Tieftrunk’s letter to Kant) and December 11, 1797 (the date of Kant reply to Tieftrunk), Kant notes regarding the schematism, that is, the issue regarding the application of pure concepts to intuitions, that “Even Herr Beck cannot find his way about it.” (AA 18: 686). Beck is indeed not concerned with the

familiar doctrine according to which the categories are based on the concept of the manifold in general and that without a manifold given a-priori (time and space) the categories remain senseless and without an object. In this context he remarks that:

Herr Beck (to whom I beg you to send my regards) could thus also quite correctly develop his 'standpoint' on this basis, passing from the categories to appearances (as a priori intuitions). (Kant's letter to Tieftrunk, December 11, 1797, AA 12: 223)

Consistently, Kant continues to regard the categories as "mere forms of composition (of the synthetic unity of the manifold in general) and they belong to thinking rather than to intuition" (AA 12: 223). As his constant argument in the *Critique*, Kant stresses, in unequivocal terms, that without the forms of intuition the categories remain senseless! Beck can therefore start with the category, as long as he remembers that without the a-priori forms of intuition "we do not know whether any object corresponds to it" (AA 12: 223). As in the *Critique*, Kant insists that synthetic a-priori propositions based on the categories are possible only on the condition that the categories are applied to the a-priori forms of intuition, space and time, and under no circumstances independently of them.

But how are such propositions possible? The answer is not that these forms of composition present the object in intuition as that object is in itself. For I cannot use my concept of an object [the category] to reach out a priori beyond the concept of that object [the object of intuition]. (AA 12: 223)

The result is that despite the fact that the categories belong to thinking rather than to intuition, they can only be used and they can only have meaning in application to intuitions. Otherwise, they are without an object and without meaning.³⁰⁹ It follows that:

This is the foundation of that profound proposition: We can never know objects of sense (of outer and of inner sense) except as they appear to us, not as they are in themselves. Similarly, supersensible objects are not objects of theoretical knowledge for us. But since it is unavoidable that we regard the idea of such supersensible objects as at least problematic, an open question (since otherwise the sensible would lack a non-sensible counterpart, and this would indicate a logical defect in our classification), the idea belongs to pure practical cognition, which is detached from all empirical conditions. The sphere of non-sensible objects is thus not quite empty, though from the point of view of theoretical knowledge such objects must be viewed as transcendent. (AA 12: 224)

Admittedly, this paragraph can be interpreted in more than one way. It may sound to some as if Kant is recognizing precisely the negative concept of the noumenon, as both permissible and inevitable. Accordingly, despite the fact that we cannot know objects as things-in-themselves it is unavoidable to think them as such. One can even read Fichte's doctrine of the primacy of practical reason into

schematism since for him the categories are not mere forms of thought devoid of objective reality but schematic forms which combine what Kant calls the intellectual synthesis of pure categories with the manifold supplied by intuition (whether pure or empirical intuition). Cf. the discussions in Sect. 11.1.

³⁰⁹ "Forms of intuition can be supplied for the forms of thought, thus giving sense and meaning to the latter". (AA 12: 223).

this paragraph. I argue, first of all, that a reading along the anthropocentric interpretation, as discussed above sections is at the very least also legitimate and allowed for by the text. Second, I argue, that on a closer reading, and given the larger context of the *Critique*, the anthropocentric reading, compatible with Beck's *Standpunctslehre*, is not only legitimate but also preferable. For doesn't Kant argue that for theoretical reason the only relevant object is the sensible object? Doesn't Kant argue that the categories cannot be used to go beyond experience and that in abstraction from the forms of intuition they are useless and even meaningless? His reference to the problematic concept of the noumenon matches exactly my presentation of this concept in Sect. 12.2.2 above. Since the concept of a sensible-object is obviously not self-contradictory then it logically follows that the concept of a thing that is not a sensible-object is also not self-contradictory (if x is logically possible than so is $\text{not-}x$). The noumenon in its mere negative sense is therefore logically possible. However, this mere 'Idea', to use Kant's specific terms, belongs to practical reason. The Idea of the noumenon is not a "gift" of practical reason to theoretical reason, without which the theoretical account of experience remains lacking (as argued by Fichte). Rather, this Idea is strictly for practical use. From theoretical point of view it is merely logically possible and at the same time useless for any positive view of the objective world. In the above paragraph Kant nowhere says that this Idea is requisite for the theoretical defense of the reality of experience. Rather, he says that for theoretical purposes this Idea is transcendent! Unfortunately, Kant does not refer directly to the question of the status of the object that affects the senses and which brings about the material element of sensibility and therefore the issue remains, at least to some degree, open for conflicting interpretations. Some authors reject my interpretation regarding the limits on the use and meaningfulness of the categories, despite Kant's explicit and repeated claims, since they think that my reading prevents Kant from accounting for the object that affects the senses and thus his whole account of experience remains ungrounded. These authors reject Beck's claim that the object that influences our senses is the phenomenal object since they expect the final account to justify the appeal to an object, which at least to some degree is wholly independent of cognition. Section 12.2.4 above was intended to answer precisely such concerns.

A letter written by Beck to Karl Ludwig Pörschke³¹⁰ on March 30, 1800 offers us one final opportunity to observe the state of the Kant-Beck relationship.³¹¹ In this letter Beck mentions Pörschke's previous letter to him in which Pörschke informed Beck on the bad mood in which Kant was found and his tendency to judge all those around him disapprovingly and thus push them away from him. Beck replies by saying that despite all attentiveness, poison can nevertheless creep into the soul of even the most virtuous of men. Beck states that he does not think ill of Kant for

³¹⁰ Karl Ludwig Pörschke (1751–1812) was a professor of poetry in Königsberg. Pörschke was also a colleague and a friend of Kant's.

³¹¹ Beck's letter is cited in a footnote within a letter of Reinhold, which is reprinted in Dorow 1841 (152f.).

mentioning Beck's name in his declaration against Fichte (on this declaration see below). Beck was obviously hurt by the way his friendship with Kant ended and the inclusion of his name in Kant's open declaration against Fichte only worsened the situation. However, Beck refrains from criticizing Kant even in such a private letter to Pörschke. Beck attempts to account for the inclusion of his name in Kant's declaration against Fichte by suggesting that in reading his doctrine, Kant noticed Beck's repeated emphasis that "the thing-in-itself expresses something too crass" (Dorow 1841, 153n). "My intention was to oppose Reinhold's tasteless chatter, and I thereby lost eyesight of the concept of the intelligible. In such a difficult inquiry, this failure was quite excusable and a friendly reprimand from Kant would have handled this issue more appropriately than did the brainless accusations of Schultz which Kant had endorsed." (Dorow 1841, 153n). Admittedly, in the *Grundriß* and in the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*, Beck does not explain the role that the concept or Idea of the thing-in-itself plays in the context of the Transcendental Dialectic and in Kant's practical philosophy, as I have indicated in Sect. 12.2.2 above.³¹² Equally in the above-mentioned letter, Beck does not explain the role, which the "concept of the intelligible" has, from his own point of view, in Kant's doctrine. By way of comparison with Beck's letter to Kant of June 20, 1797, in which Beck stated that he only intended "to bar the concept of the thing-in-itself from theoretical philosophy" (Beck's letter to Kant, June 20, 1797, AA: 12: 168), we can surmise that by the "concept of the intelligible" Beck intended the use of such a concept – rather than an object – in the context of practical philosophy. It is clear from the tone and overall structure of Beck's claims in both these letters that he does not think this omission affects the core of his theory; especially it has no implications on Beck's characteristic rejection of the thing-in-itself as irrelevant for the analytical part of Kant's theoretical philosophy. In the letter to Pörschke, Beck adds that his judgment of Fichte, of which Beck has heard nothing new, has not changed. According to Beck, Fichte is a fool whose dishonest behavior makes Beck uninterested in understanding him. Beck says that Reinhold despises him and attacks him at every opportunity. "I do not pay attention to that fool" (Dorow 1841, 153n).

How can we summarize Kant's response to Beck given what we know of his direct correspondence with Beck and what we learn from the indirect evidence of Kant's subsequent correspondence with Tieftrunk?

We have discussed Kant's apparently negative response to Beck, regarding both the content of Beck's work and the use of Kant's name in the subtitle of his *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*. Regarding the criticism of the content of Beck's work, Beck's letters to Kant as well as the Kant-Tieftrunk correspondence, make it quite clear that this criticism was mainly, if not entirely, the work of Johann

³¹²The avoidance from discussing the role of the idea of the thing-in-itself for the Transcendental Dialectic and for practical philosophy is noted by Cassirer (1999, IV:77) as an omission in Beck's account.

Schultz.³¹³ In his June 20th and June 24th 1797 letters to Kant, Beck refers repeatedly to Schultz's criticism against him and he appeals to Kant in an attempt to convince him that Schultz's criticism is unjustified. "The question", Beck writes to Kant, "must be *yours*, sir, when he [Schultz] asks [. . .]" (Beck's letter to Kant, June 24, 1797, AA 12: 173). Tieftrunk's letter of June 20th supports the impression that the criticism of Beck was Schultz's when he writes to Kant: "I enjoyed learning from your letter the opinion of worthy Court Chaplain Schultz, and thereby also your opinion, of Herr Beck's work concerning the *Critique*" (AA 12: 171). It is therefore clear that the criticism that was included in Kant's not-extant letter to Beck was Schultz's criticism, probably as a result of reading Beck's *Grundriß der kritischen Philosophie*. We can surmise that Kant had in some way endorsed Schultz's criticism. I am even willing to say more than that. Given Kant's advanced age and his known progressing mental fatigue; given Kant's constant claim that he had no time to devote to the work of others, even the works of his friends and followers, since he was obsessed with completing his own life-work before it was too late; given all that – there is at least room for doubt whether Kant had read Beck's work first-hand.³¹⁴ Kant reported to Beck, on more than few occasions (Kant's letter to Beck, September 27, 1791, AA 11: 291; Kant's letter to Beck, November 2, 1791, AA 11: 304; Kant's letter to Beck, July 1, 1794, AA 11: 515), that he had trouble penetrating Reinhold's thinking. We know that Kant didn't read Fichte's work first-hand and that he received information about it indirectly, probably from Reinhold's review of Fichte's work in the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung*.³¹⁵ The fact that the criticism included in his letter was the work of Johann Schultz, casts further doubt on the assumption that he read Beck's work first-hand. If Kant did not read Beck's work first-hand and relied on Schultz's opinion and second-hand report of it, then we should be cautious in deriving what could be hasty conclusions regarding Kant's view of Beck's work. There are additional factors that

³¹³ This conclusion is supported by another source. Johann Friedrich Abegg (1765–1840) a theologian, travelled through Germany during 1798 documenting his encounters with various contemporary figures. As part of his visit to Königsberg, he reports of a meeting he held on June 13, 1798, with Prof. Pörschke, a friend and colleague of Kant (Abegg 1976, 183). Pörschke is reported as saying that Kant was not content with Beck's commentary (the reference is quite obviously to the *Einzig möglicher Standpunct*, rather than the two previous volumes of Beck's explanatory abstracts). Obviously, Pörschke notes, there are stricter Kantians than Beck and one of them, which he presumes was Hofprediger Schultz, have brought it to Kant's attention that Beck has explicated his system in a perverse way and thus triggered Kant's attack on Beck. Pörschke adds that he himself thinks that Beck did in fact understand Kant.

³¹⁴ Dilthey (1889, 647) as well surmises that Kant had not read Beck firsthand but merely relied on the report of his trusted friend Johann Schulz.

³¹⁵ In his letter to Tieftrunk of April 5, 1798, Kant reveals that he indeed did not read Fichte's work first hand: "What do you think of Herr Fichte's *allgemeine Wissenschaftslehre*? He sent it to me long ago, but I put it aside, finding the book too long-winded and not wanting to interrupt my own work with it. All I know of it is what the review in the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung* said." (AA 12: 241). The review Kant refers to is Reinhold's 1798 review of Fichte's works, published in few installments in the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung* no. 5, 6, 7, 8.

may help explain why Kant authorized Schultz's criticism. We must, once again, consider the academic atmosphere at the time. While the second half of the 1780s and the first half of the 1790s were marked by the flood of external criticism of Kant's philosophy, the second half of the 1790s was marked by internal dissent and criticism of Kant's work from within his own circle. Kant's closest disciples – Reinhold and Fichte – gradually moved away from his position and eventually openly criticized his views. This is the background for Kant's much quoted reference to his “hypercritical friends Fichte and Reinhold” in his October 13, 1797 letter to Tieftrunk (AA 12: 207).³¹⁶ After a decade of battles against external critics and attempts to convince the German academic scene that his novel philosophy could indeed present a middle-path between the perils of dogmatism and idealism, that it was properly grounded and could save both theoretical and practical philosophy from skeptic attacks, Kant now had to deal with criticism originating from those who were closely identified with his own school.

The tense atmosphere was further intensified by the nasty attack on Kant by Johann August Schlettwein. It all started with an open letter addressed to Kant by Schlettwein, a prominent German Physiocrat.³¹⁷ Schlettwein's letter was incredibly insulting, accusing Kant of contempt for his great predecessors and contemporaries, of pride, self-love and self-seeking, the arrogant claim of infallibility and originality, etc. Schlettwein claimed to be in possession of a ready refutation of Kant but his letter includes no concrete arguments. Schlettwein calls it a scandal that the so-called critical philosophers argue amongst themselves over the correct meaning of Kant's works and he calls upon Kant to say which one of his disciples – whether Reinhold, Fichte, Beck, or someone else – has understood him correctly. Schlettwein claims that Beck has identified various difficulties with the *Critique*.³¹⁸ Kant's reply dated May 29, 1797 (AA 12: 367f.)³¹⁹ names “the worthy Court Chaplain Schultz” as the disciple who properly understood his system and “whose book on the critical system, entitled *Prüfung* etc. (Schultz 1789–1792), should be examined by Herr Schlettwein” (AA 12: 367). The Schlettwein episode, which took place only weeks prior to the breakdown of the Kant-Beck relationship, had an obvious influence on the unfolding of events.

It is no coincidence that both Beck and Tieftrunk refer in their letters to Schlettwein's accusations against Kant (Beck's letter to Kant June 20, 1797, AA 12: 170; Tieftrunk's letter to Kant June 20, 1797, AA 12: 172f.). It can be

³¹⁶ Cf. also in Kant's unsent draft of this letter (AA 13: 463). Note that Beck is not mentioned as one of those “hypercritical friends”.

³¹⁷ Cf. Schlettwein's letter to Kant, May 11, 1797 (AA 12: 362–366). Schlettwein's letter was published in the *Berlinische Blätter* no. 2 (1797): 146–153.

³¹⁸ Schlettwein may not have understood that the so-called “difficulties” Beck finds with the *Critique* are on Beck's own view only apparent. They disappear as soon as one properly understands this work.

³¹⁹ Kant's reply was subsequently published in the *Intelligenzblatt der Allgemeinen Literatur Zeitung* no. 74 (1797): 616. Schlettwein responded with another letter dated June 4, 1797 (AA 12: 368–70), which alludes to a letter of Kant dated May 19, 1797, not extant.

understood why on this background Kant chose Johann Schultz as his favorite expositor. Indeed Schultz was no “yes-man”.³²⁰ However, the few concerns he had regarding Kant’s critical philosophy were moderately presented and he was generally considered to be conservative in his exposition of Kant’s philosophy. It is understandable that due to his unwillingness to devote the time and attention required for a detailed analysis of others’ views, Kant would rely on Schultz’s opinion of Beck’s work.³²¹ The general academic atmosphere caused Kant to become very sensitive to any internal criticism. It is therefore also understandable why he adopted Schultz’s criticism of Beck and why he was so concerned with the use of his name in the subtitle of Beck’s work. In the same light one should also view Kant’s open declaration against Fichte, of August 7, 1799 in which Beck’s standpoint is also alluded to as not representing Kant’s own views.³²²

³²⁰ During his career Johann Schultz voiced few concerns about some of Kant’s views (Cf. his remarks to Kant’s *Inaugural Dissertation*, discussed in Sect. 2.2.2. above; cf. also his concerns regarding the deduction of the categories in his review of Ulrich’s *Institutiones logicae et metaphysicae* (Schultz 1785)).

³²¹ Already in July 1, 1794 Kant writes to Beck regarding Beck’s report of the upcoming third volume of his abstract project (the *Einzig möglicher Standpunkt*): “Such overly refined hairsplitting is no longer for me; I cannot even get an adequate grasp of Professor Reinhold’s thinking.” (AA 11: 515).

³²² “I must remark here that the assumption that I intended to publish only a *propaedeutic* to transcendental philosophy and not the actual system of this philosophy is incomprehensible to me. Such an intention could never have occurred to me, since I took the completeness of pure philosophy within the *Critique of Pure Reason* to be the best indication of the truth of that work. Since the reviewer finally maintains that the *Critique* is not to be taken *literally* in what it says about sensibility and that anyone who wants to understand the *Critique* must first master the requisite *standpoint* (of Beck or Fichte), because Kant’s precise words, like Aristotle’s, will destroy the spirit, I therefore declare again that the *Critique* is to be understood by considering exactly what it says and that it requires only the common standpoint that any mind sufficiently cultivated in such abstract investigations will bring to it.” Declaration concerning Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, August 7, 1799 (AA 12: 370f.). Kant’s assertive attitude may be misleading. The aggressive tone could be explained in light of the growing dissention and criticism within his own camp as well as the influence of his friend Johann Schultz. Kant’s claim that the *Critique* should not be taken as a propaedeutic to transcendental philosophy is contradicted by various passages in the first *Critique* itself and in the *Opus Postumum* (cf. also Bird 2006, 83). The claim that Kant’s declaration against Fichte should not be taken at face value is supported by Arnulf Zweig (1999, 32), as well as Eckart Förster (1990, 159f.) Förster convincingly argues that Kant’s strong – indeed too strong – tone in the declaration against Fichte was intended to encourage his friend Johann Schultz to continue to defend Kant’s cause. Such “encouragement” was required since, following Kant’s declaration against Schlettwein, Schultz felt discouraged by being labeled a literalist (Buchstäbler), as opposed to the other members of the Kantian school (predominantly Fichte and Beck) who gave preference to the spirit of critical philosophy over its letter (Förster 1990, 161f.). For a different view taking the declaration against Fichte, and with it the negative reference to Beck, in a straightforward manner, cf. di Giovanni (2000, 36). Di Giovanni’s claim that “Beck too was to be included in the list of those false disciples whom the master publicly rejected”, seems much too simplistic to me, both in regard to the context of the declaration itself and even more so when the larger context of Kant’s response to Beck is taken into account.

Our conclusions regarding Kant's response to Beck must therefore be cautious. We must refrain from taking things at face value. In my view, when the clouds of smoke are cleared we can make the following statements. Regarding the relation between sensibility and understanding Kant had consistently rejected Beck's view. Throughout their 1791–1792 correspondence Kant repeats his long held view regarding the distinction between the sensible manifold and the intellectual activity of synthesis. His comments regarding Beck's method of starting from the categories in his October 13, 1797 draft letter to Tieftrunk and his apparently conflicting remark in his December 11, 1797, letter to Tieftrunk testify to the same effect. There is in fact no contradiction between the two comments. According to Kant the pure categories are nothing but forms of thinking and without a manifold given to them a-priori (time and space) they are devoid of an object and also devoid of meaning. Insofar as we think of Beck as attempting to derive real consequences from pure categories, his method should be rejected as Kant says in his October 13, 1797 letter. However, if he recognizes the inevitable role of a-priori intuition for any possible application of the categories, then Beck can indeed start from the categories, and this is the meaning of Kant's comment in his December 11, 1797, letter to Tieftrunk. This reading of Kant is supported by his personal notes from the same time. In Reflexion 6353, which probably dates back to the second half of 1797, Kant writes:

What if Herr Beck begins with the categories, which have no significance for themselves, then progresses to a priori intuitions that correspond to them, and thus arrives at space and time, and reality [?] (*Ref.*, 6353, AA 18: 679)

And in Reflexion 6358, dated November–December 1797, he writes:

I do not see why one should not begin, with Herr Beck, with the categories, although at the same time conceding that these pure concepts of the understanding can produce no cognition at all without subordinating sensibility to them as *material circa quam*.³²³ [...] Here Herr Beck would only remark that these categories lack objective reality, namely one does not see whether something is possible or not. Now he would apply the latter to appearances in general in space and time as intuitions and thus follow the synthetic method, which approach would yet have in itself another standpoint. (*Ref.*, 6358, AA 18: 683)

It is obvious that Kant considers Beck's suggestion to start from the categories within Kant's own point of view, which separates the pure categories from the manifold given to them a priori in time and space. In the case that Kant understood Beck's idea to view the categories as originally identified with time and space, he did not approve of it. For Kant, despite the interdependence of the categories on the forms of intuition, nevertheless, the former are logical preconditions and as such must be strictly distinguished from the forms of intuition. What is even more striking is that in the above-cited 1797 texts Kant considers Beck's suggestion to start from the categories only in the context of the relation between sensibility and

³²³ The Latin expression means "as it were their material". The English translation is taken from Curtis Bowman, Paul Guyer and Frederick Rauscher (Kant 2005, 392).

understanding and not in the context of the relation between a representation and its object which for Beck was the main trigger for his new doctrine.

We are left with the issue regarding the relation of a representation to an object. The systematic question regarding the legitimacy of Beck's interpretation of Kant, in this regard, is the main issue of this entire work and my answer to it is given in Sects. 12.2.1 to 12.2.6 above. The question we are concerned with now is about Kant's personal response to Beck's interpretation. Unfortunately, when we set aside the criticism, which was most probably Schultz's criticism and not Kant's, we are left with little evidence to rely on. Nevertheless, there are some indications that Kant was sympathetic to Beck's way of thinking. In 1791–1792, when a very fruitful correspondence ensued between the two men, and when Kant was more able to go deeper into the involved matters, Beck challenged him with the following concern:

Allow me to ask whether in what follows I have understood you correctly. . . . The *Critique* calls "intuition" a representation that relates immediately to an object. But in fact, a representation does not become objective until it is subsumed under the categories. Since intuition similarly acquires its objective character only by means of the application of the categories to it, I am in favor of leaving out that definition of "intuition" that refers to it as a representation relating to objects. (Beck's letter to Kant, November 11, 1791, AA 11: 311)

Kant's reply to this argument in a letter to Beck dated January 20, 1792, is instructive:

I have already made plans for a system of metaphysics to handle this difficulty and to begin with the categories, in their proper order [. . .] and I would demonstrate, at the conclusion of the exposition of each category [. . .] that no experience of objects of the sense is possible except in so far as I presuppose a priori that every such object must be *thought* of as magnitude, and similarly with all the other categories. (Kant's letter to Beck, January 20, 1792, AA 11: 313f.)

It seems to me that when Kant was mentally more able to engage in a detailed analysis; when internal dissensions and public criticisms from within his own school have not yet narrowed down his willingness to reconsider aspects of his own doctrine (even its mere manner of presentation); and finally, when the desires of a close friend to become the famous aging professor's most favourite intellectual son did not affect his views, Kant showed a positive attitude towards Beck's interpretation regarding the relation between a representation and an object.³²⁴ It therefore follows both from

³²⁴ A group of passages from Kant's *Opus postumum* also supports the claim that Kant viewed Beck's work approvingly, or at least more approvingly than might be suggested by his private correspondence with Beck and his public declarations. In a short passage Kant writes: "That we have insight into nothing except what we can make ourselves. First, however, we must make ourselves. Beck's original representing." (*OP*, AA 22: 353). It is important to note that the first sentence represents nothing new about Kant's own views. Cf. for example, Kant's letter to Beck July 1, 1794: "But we can only understand and communicate to others what we ourselves can produce [. . .]" (AA 11 515). And *Refl*, 2398: "we grasp only what we ourselves can produce." (AA 16: 345). The idea behind these statements is already contained in the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: "Reason has insight only into what it itself produces according to its own design" (*KrV*, Bxiii). I agree with Eckart Förster (1990, 164ff.) that the second

a systematic analysis of the *Critique* and from a review of Kant's personal response to Beck that the object referred to in the Transcendental Aesthetic is no other than the object which according to the Transcendental Analytic is constituted by the understanding. Nevertheless, since Kant never states unequivocally the status of the object that affects the senses and he never explicitly rejected the role of things-in-themselves for his account of theoretical philosophy, Beck doctrine in this regard remains legitimate alongside other opposing but also legitimate interpretations.³²⁵

sentence of the above cited paragraph from the *Opus postumum* does not express a Fichtean influence but must be understood from within Kant's own structure of thought in the *Opus postumum*, which alludes to Beck's ideas (as Kant himself indicates by personally naming Beck). Aside from the above direct – and seemingly positive – reference to Beck, there are various passages in the *Opus postumum*, which bear remarkable similarity to Beck's ideas. This is noted by Förster who posits some such paragraphs from Beck and Kant side by side to demonstrate the ideational closeness.

³²⁵ A view different from mine is held by Heller (1993). Heller makes a distinction between two questions. The first asks whether the concept of sensible cognition can be upheld in complete abstraction from spontaneity while the second asks whether intuition on its own behalf can be regarded as related to an object. According to Heller, Kant answers the first question – in unison with Beck – in the negative, while he leaves the second question – which Heller thinks Beck sees as one and the same as the first question – open (Heller 1993, 75). Heller thinks that in advancing the investigation of the second issue Beck went beyond Kant (Heller 1993, 78). I find this view rather feeble. After all, cognition (*Erkenntnis*) signifies for Kant a possible relation to an object. Therefore, if sensible cognition, in complete abstraction from the functions of the understanding, is impossible, then so is a relation to an object.

Chapter 13

The Thing-in-Itself and Practical Philosophy

We have discussed above the legitimacy of Beck's elimination of the thing-in-itself from Kant's theoretical philosophy. I have mentioned Beck's claim that despite his dismissive view of the thing-in-itself in the context of theoretical philosophy, in the context of practical philosophy we are inevitably led to this unique concept (Beck's letter to Kant, June 20, 1797, AA: 12: 168). Notably, Beck's exposition of Kant's practical philosophy, discussed in Chap. 10 above, does not appeal to a special kind of object but to a unique mode of *relating to* objects. While the theoretical account is concerned with what is, the practical account is concerned with what ought to be done about what is. According to Beck's view there is no need for two domains of objects but for two modes of relating to objects, or in Beck's terms, two modes of original representing. The question I want to discuss now is whether this interpretation of Kant's practical philosophy, an interpretation, which does not appeal to things-in-themselves as a special kind of objects, is legitimate. I think that the basis for such an evaluation has already been laid down in Sect. 12.2.2 above.¹ There I showed that Kant's practical philosophy does not require a positive sense of a thing-in-itself or noumenon. Rather, it merely requires that the concept of a thing in general, a concept of a thing, which is not a sensible object, be at least logically possible. Practical reason does not appeal to a distinct domain of objects. If that were the case then practical reason would conflict with theoretical reason, which tells us that only sensible objects are real. The distinction that should be noticed here is between the noumenon in its *positive* sense, which is a supposed non-sensible *object*, and the noumenon in its *negative* sense, which is merely a *concept* of a thing that is not a sensible object. Practical reason merely requires that the concept, or better the Idea, of the noumenon in its negative sense be at least devoid of contradiction. The theoretical and practical fields coexist independently

¹ Kant discusses the role of supersensible objects within practical philosophy and the relation between theoretical and practical philosophy in this regard in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (*KpV*, AA 50–57, 120–146) and also in his short work *What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?* (*WDO*, AA 08: 133–146).

of one another. Neither field borrows anything from, nor implies anything for, the other field. The coexistence is secured by the fact that theoretical reason concerns only sensible objects (no other sense of an *object* is possible) but at the same time leaves the *concept* of things that are not sensible-objects as free of internal contradiction and therefore legitimate as a mere string of thought. From the other side, the employment of the concept of freedom by practical reason has no consequences and is irrelevant from a theoretical point of view. This is so since practical reason does not require the reality of any non-sensible *object*. Theoretical reason allows practical reason to refer to all kinds of concepts and as long as there is no implication for the reality of objects (the latter can only be construed in sensible terms) then no contradiction arises between theoretical and practical reason. Similar ideas are expressed by Timmermann (2007, 135) and Matthews (1969, 209–214). On my view, there is for Kant only one kind of object – the phenomenal one – to which we can refer in two different ways. In the theoretical context we are concerned with the question *what this object is*. In the practical context we are concerned with the question *what should be done about it*. Accordingly, Kant argues that

The idea of a moral world thus has objective reality, not as if it pertained to an object of intelligible intuition (for we cannot even think of such a thing), but as pertaining to the sensible world, although as an object of pure reason in its practical use [. . .]. (*KrV*, A808/B836)

Graham Bird (2006, 360) cites the above passage and adds that “Kant’s primary interest, even in morality, is in the ‘fruitful bathos’ of immanent experience and not in the ‘windy metaphysics’ of a supposed absolute, transcendent reality.” (cf. also Bird 2011). Practical reason presupposes that the *concept* – but not object – of a free agent is at the very least logically possible and this concept obtains its objective reality, *in a merely practical sense*, through its role as an inevitable presupposition for human moral life.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that practical reason requires more than the mere preliminary warrant from theoretical reason to think a non-determined concept without contradicting itself. Practical reason actually bestows objective reality on the concepts of Freedom, God and the immortal Soul (*KpV*, AA 05: 50). How then can a contradiction with theoretical reason be avoided? The answer is mainly given by the recognition of the mutual independence of theoretical and practical reason. Indeed, as Kant argues, theoretical reason is compelled to accept as legitimate the objective reality bestowed by practical reason upon certain concepts, which from a theoretical point of view are foreign, transcendent and at best logically possible (*KpV*, AA 05: 120f.). In this consists the primacy of practical reason according to Kant. However, Kant emphasizes repeatedly that the objective reality given to these concepts by practical reason has no consequences whatsoever for theoretical reason and it does not imply an intelligible object when considered from a theoretical point of view.²

² In fact the objective reality bestowed on the postulates of practical reason by the latter does not imply an intelligible object even when considered from within the context of practical reason itself. This shall soon be made clear.

But is our cognition really extended in this way by pure practical reason, and is what was *transcendent* for speculative reason *immanent* in practical reason? Certainly, but only *for practical purposes*. For we thereby cognize neither the nature of our souls, nor the intelligible world, nor the supreme being as to what they are in themselves, but have merely unified the concepts of them in the *practical* concept of the *highest good* as the object of our will, and we have done so [...] moreover, only in reference to it, with respect to the object it commands. But how freedom is even possible and how this kind of causality has to be represented theoretically and positively is not thereby seen; that there is such a causality is only postulated by the moral law and for the sake of it. It is the same with the remaining ideas, the possibility of which no human understanding will ever fathom although no sophistry will ever convince the most common human being that they are not true concepts. (*KpV*, AA 05: 133f. Similar statements are repeated by Kant time and again, cf. *KpV*, AA 05: 55ff., 121, 132–135)

In this [through their role for practical reason] they [the three postulates] become *immanent* and *constitutive* in as much as they are grounds for the possibility of *making real the necessary object* of pure practical reason (the highest good), whereas apart from this they are *transcendent* and merely *regulative* principles of speculative reason, which do not require it to assume a new object beyond experience but only to bring its use in experience nearer to completeness. (*KpV*, AA 05: 135)

But this objective reality of a pure concept of the understanding in the field of the supersensible, once introduced, gives all the other categories objective reality as well, though only insofar as they stand in necessary connection with the determining ground of the pure will (the moral law) – an objective reality which is, however, of only practical applicability and has not the least influence on the theoretical cognition of these objects (*KpV*, AA 05: 56) [...] and so by this application to the supersensible but only for practical purposes, pure theoretical reason is not given the least encouragement to fly into the transcendent. (*KpV*, AA 05: 57. Cf. also *KpV*, AA 05: 136)³

When we consider the question of whether we are or are not free, we must keep in mind that there is no ‘truth of the matter’. At the heart of Kant’s doctrine lies the recognition of a given datum – we humans are citizens of two ‘worlds’. Since the sensible world of nature is only explicable on the assumption of a thoroughgoing causality, we must regard the empirical notion of ourselves as not free. However, since we inevitably regard ourselves – in contrast to all other objects – as beings subjected to moral obligations, and since the latter notion would be inexplicable without the assumption of freedom, we must regard ourselves in the practical context as free (*GMS*, AA 04: 453). The contradiction only arises when one insists on reducing these two standpoints into one.

³ Kant answers those of his critics who accuse him of subscribing to dialectic within his theoretical reason, that is, that he crosses the bounds he has himself set for speculation, by arguing that they read their own mistakes into his text: “Similarly [the *Critique*] finds a *dialectic* in the critical investigations, whereas the aim is to resolve and forever eliminate the unavoidable dialectic in which pure reason becomes involved and entangled when it is employed dogmatically everywhere. The Neoplatonists, who called themselves ‘eclectics’ because they knew how to find their own conceits all over the place in other authors – if they had previously put them in there – proceeded in just this way; hence nothing new happens under the sun.” (Kant’s footnote in *WDO*, AA 08: 140). English translation of texts from Kant’s *What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?* Are taken from Allen W. Wood (Kant 1996b).

There is yet another reason why the reality which practical reason bestows upon the concepts of Freedom, God and the immortal Soul does not imply any special kind of object and therefore does not conflict with theoretical reason. It should be noticed, that even within theoretical reason, the concept of objective reality is used in two different contexts. Objective reality properly pertains to specific objects *within* experience like trees, houses, etc. However, Kant also asks whether the categories have objective reality. Obviously, the categories cannot be real in the same sense that a tree or a house is real. While we can observe trees and houses in experience, we do not expect to find substances, causes, qualities or quantities – in their pure abstract sense – wandering about in nature. The categories are objectively real – and this is the basis for their transcendental deduction – since they are found to be the ultimate preconditions for the possibility of all objects (as trees and houses) that can be found within experience. The concept of freedom (or the concept of a free agent) – as well as the rest of the postulates of practical reason – are objectively real in the same sense as the categories are, and not in the sense of an object that we would expect to find within experience or within an alleged intelligible domain. The objective reality of the concept of freedom within practical philosophy – aside from the fact that, as Kant repeatedly argues, it has no implications for theoretical philosophy – is not the reality of a special kind of object, which exists in some hypothetical intelligible realm, but a reality secured by the fact that freedom is an ultimate precondition for the possibility of morality.

In some paragraphs Kant indeed speaks as if the postulates of practical reason have objects in a special sense.

Those concepts [the three postulates of practical reason], otherwise problematic (merely thinkable) for it [for theoretical reason], are now declared assertorically to be concepts to which real objects belong, because practical reason unavoidably requires the existence of them for the possibility of its object, the highest good [. . .] (*KpV*, AA 05: 134)

A closer reading of this paragraph shows that the concepts of Freedom, God and the Soul do not have objects in the regular sense. They are regarded as objectively real since they function as necessary preconditions of the highest good, the object of morality. This qualification is further supported by the continuation of the text.

The above three ideas of speculative reason are in themselves still not cognitions; nevertheless they are (transcendent) *thoughts* in which there is nothing impossible.⁴ Now they receive objective reality through an apodictic practical law, as necessary conditions of the possibility of what it commands to us *to make an object*, that is, we are instructed by it *that they have objects*, although we are not able to show how their concept refers to an object, and this is not yet cognition *of these objects*. (*KpV*, AA 05: 135)

According to Kant there are two distinct ways of bestowing objective reality upon pure concepts free of internal contradiction (the avoidance of logical contradiction is a precondition for all uses of reason, whether theoretical or practical): either within theoretical reason, by demonstrating their necessary role in relation to

⁴By this Kant refers to the preliminary requirement regarding the mere *logical possibility* of these ideas, discussed above.

experience or within practical reason by demonstrating their necessary role in relation to the pure will (*KpV*, AA 05: 50–57; 134–142). These two ways coexist independently without contradiction since they express two complementary, yet distinct, aspects of our human existence.⁵

I think that what complicates the understanding of the mutual compatibility of theoretical and practical philosophy according to Kant is the appeal to a justification of practical philosophy. We have already discussed how the insistence on a rational justification in the context of theoretical philosophy leads to inescapable paradoxes. The same difficulty exists in the practical context. A rational justification requires that we first prove the reality of freedom in order to deduce from it the validity of morality. However, reality and rational justification are concepts taken from theoretical reason. It therefore follows that in order to ground practical philosophy we need to prove the reality of non-sensible objects. In other words, we need to demonstrate the reality of the noumenon in its positive sense. This line of thinking inevitably puts practical reason in conflict with theoretical reason. The whole difficulty disappears once we recognize that Kant follows a different line of thought altogether. Rather than starting from an independent proof of the reality of freedom in order to ground the possibility of morality, Kant's adopts the opposite route. He deduces the reality of freedom from its role as an ultimate precondition of morality (*KpV*, AA 05: 55ff.). This may seem circular. Morality is said to be possible only on the assumption of freedom and freedom gains its reality from being a condition for the possibility of morality. The same circularity can be exposed within theoretical

⁵ Kant expressed his views on this matter even prior to the second *Critique*, in his short work *What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?* There he writes that when “there can be no intuition of objects [...] and hence [no way to] secure a real possibility for them, then there is nothing left for us to do except first to examine the concept with which we would venture beyond all possible experience to see if it is free of contradiction” (*WDO*, AA 08: 136). The second stage is to check whether any need of reason – either in its theoretical or practical capacity – requires that we hold to this concept. He acknowledges that “Many supersensible things may be thought”, that is, be free of internal contradiction, “to which, however, reason feels no need to extend itself, much less to assume their existence” (*WDO*, AA 08: 137). Of such nature are the concepts of spiritual beings (by this Kant reaffirms his early views on spirits expressed in *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, discussed in Sect. 2.1.2 above). Kant argues regarding the Ideal of God – which is the focus of his short work – that within theoretical (speculative) reason this need is merely conditioned, that is, the Ideal of God functions merely as a regulative principle. However, within practical reason this Ideal is unconditioned and therefore constitutive: “But one can regard the need of reason as twofold: first in its theoretical, second in its practical use. The first need I have just mentioned; but one sees very well that it is only conditioned, i.e., we must assume the existence of God if we want to judge about the first causes of everything contingent, chiefly in the order of ends which is actually present in the world. Far more important is the need of reason in its practical use, because it is unconditioned, and we are necessitated to presuppose the existence of God not only if we want to judge, but because we have to judge.” (*WDO*, AA 08: 139). In *What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?* Kant argues against Mendelssohn that he failed to see that the concept of God cannot be given objective reality within theoretical reason and yet can be, and actually is, given objective reality within practical reason. While we indeed have no knowledge of God, in the theoretical sense, we are nevertheless entitled to presuppose God's existence due to a necessary need of practical reason. (*WDO*, AA 08: 141). Compare this with Forberg's view of God, discussed in Sect. 12.2.5.2.

reason where the possibility of experience is dependent on the categories and yet the categories gain validity from their role as preconditions of the possibility of experience. As I have already argued, this circularity is only a cause for concern if we expect the transcendental reflective account to justify or to provide an absolute proof, of the reality of experience in the theoretical context, and of the reality of morality in the practical context. However, if Kant's entire project is understood in terms of a more modest attempt to expose the major premises of experience on the one hand and of morality on the other hand, then this circularity is not a flaw in the argument.⁶ Kant starts from the recognition of the basic aspects of human life. First, we refer to an objective world regulated by universal empirical laws. This is most notable in science. Second, we view ourselves as subjected to non-voluntary moral laws. In both realms we appeal to something not merely subjective but objective although we only have our own representations and our own feelings to begin with. Both the theoretical and the practical fields pose an interesting question for our reflective thinking: how is it possible for us to refer to something as objective when all that stands at our disposal are sensible data (sensations in the theoretical context and feelings in the practical context) and the tools of our own understanding? The reality of experience within theoretical philosophy and similarly the reality of our moral law in the context of practical philosophy, is a fact.⁷ The recognition of this

⁶In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (AA 04: 450) Kant seems to argue that this circularity is, nevertheless, a flaw in the argument. "It must be freely admitted that a kind of circle comes to light here from which, as it seems, there is no way to escape. We take ourselves as free in the order of efficient causes in order to think ourselves under moral laws in the order of ends; and we afterwards think ourselves as subject to these laws because we have ascribed to ourselves freedom of will." However, Kant rejects this circle only in case it is understood as an attempt to prove the reality of freedom by an analytic argument. "For, freedom and the will's lawgiving are both autonomy and hence reciprocal concepts, and for this very reason one cannot be used to explain the other" (GMS, AA 04: 450). Kant argues that freedom cannot be proved by analytically deriving it from the concept of morality (the pure will's lawgiving). Such an alleged proof is nothing but a mere tautology and amounts to nothing at all. However, Kant proves the real possibility of freedom from a transcendental argument which shows that freedom is an inevitable condition for the possibility of a rational-moral world-order: "As a rational being, and thus as a being belonging to the intelligible world, the human being can never think of the causality of his own will otherwise than under the idea of freedom" (GMS, AA 04: 452). The demonstration that freedom is an inevitable condition for the possibility of morality is sufficient for Kant to prove the real possibility of the idea of freedom (just as the demonstration that the categories are inevitable conditions for the possibility of experience is good enough proof for their real possibility). We can conclude that according to Kant, the circularity in question is only a flaw in the argument as long as it is used as part of an analytical proof but not when it is used in a transcendental proof aimed at exposing the preconditions of an indisputable aspect of human life such as morality. Compare also Timmermann 2007 (134ff.). Timmermann does not appeal to the distinction I make between explanation and justification; however, he does argue that in the above referred to passage from the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant rejects the involved circularity when used in an analytical proof but accepts the argument when regarded as establishing a synthetic-a-priori principle within the context of practical philosophy.

⁷"The objective reality of a pure will [...] is given a priori in the moral law, as it were by a fact" (KpV, AA 05: 55). And also: "But if pure reason of itself can be and really is practical, as the

“fact” is not a justification or a proof of anything; rather, it merely poses the question, which requires explanation. By exposing the major premises of each field (the theoretical and the practical) we have accomplished the task of *explaining how* experience, on the one hand, and the moral law, on the other hand, are possible. *We have justified nothing but we gained a better understanding of our own existence and of the structure of our own cognition that makes this possible.* The fact that Kant’s account of practical philosophy does not progress from an independent proof of the reality of freedom to the justification of morality but, on the contrary, proves the reality of freedom and the other postulates of practical reason from their role as inevitable preconditions for morality, shows that he is to be understood along the lines prescribed above. If the role of transcendental philosophy is indeed merely to expose the major premises of theoretical and of practical thinking respectively, then it follows that the conclusions of the transcendental inquiry regarding the preconditions of practical philosophy should not have any implications on the transcendental inquiry regarding the theoretical mode of thinking. Viewed epistemologically as a cognitive relation, there is no contradiction in admitting that we have two distinct ways of relating to objects. A contradiction only arises when we view things ontologically and attribute two opposing characteristics to objects themselves. The recognition of the distinction between an attempt at justification and an attempt at explanation makes it easier to see that the defense of practical reason does not require an independent proof of the reality of freedom nor does it appeal to an intelligible object in the ontological sense.⁸

The results of the above-discussion are as follows: (a) practical reason does not require (as a preliminary warrant from theoretical reason) a positive concept a thing-in-itself but merely the logical possibility of few Ideas, the paradigm of which is the concept of the noumenon in its merely negative sense; (b) the objective reality which practical reason bestows upon its postulates – in analogy to the objective reality that theoretical reason bestows upon the categories – is not the objective

consciousness of the moral law proves it to be [. . .]” (*KpV*, AA 05: 121). In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* Kant is explicit that freedom is a fact of human experience: “But what is quite remarkable, there is even one Idea of reason (which is in itself incapable of any presentation in intuition, thus incapable of theoretical proof of its possibility) among the facts, and that is the Idea of **freedom**, the reality of which, as a particular kind of causality (the concept of which would be excessive from a theoretical point of view) can be established through practical laws of pure reason, and, in accordance with these, in real actions, and thus in experience. – It is the only one among all the Ideas of pure reason, whose object is a fact and which must be counted among the *scibilia* [things that can be known]” (*KU*, AA 05: 468). In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant makes finer distinctions and argues that although freedom and the consciousness of an unconditional moral law are interchangeable concepts, we are immediately aware of the latter and not the former (*KpV*, AA 05: 29–32). This does not undermine my argument. On the contrary, the entire passage makes clear that Kant only attempts to extract the inevitable preconditions of our awareness of the moral law rather than to provide an independent proof of freedom and to derive the possibility of the moral law from it.

⁸I admit that Kant does not refer to the distinction between justification and explanation. I nevertheless think that it is a legitimate interpretative tool supported by Kant’s line of argument within both theoretical and practical philosophy.

reality of a specific object but rather the objective reality accorded to a precondition or a major premise of one inevitable aspect of reason. Furthermore, due to the mutual independence of theoretical and practical reason, the objective reality ascribed to these concepts within practical reason has no implications whatsoever for theoretical reason. It follows that we can indeed consider the self in two senses. The self can be considered first, as a phenomenal object – a phenomenal self subjected to natural causality; and second as an intelligible self to which we ascribe freedom of the will. However, the latter is not an alleged intelligible object but rather an Idea, which is initially regarded as merely logically possible and which acquires its objective reality by being a necessary precondition of morality. It now seems that we have arrived exactly at Beck's interpretation of the relation between theoretical and practical reason, an interpretation, which does not appeal to the self as thing-in-itself. This interpretation does not require two kinds of objects but rather two ways of relating to objects.⁹

In order to clarify this reading of Kant's practical philosophy and its relation to his theoretical philosophy, I would like to contrast Beck's view of Kant's practical philosophy with Fichte's view of practical philosophy. In Sect. 12.1.2, we have discussed the implications of the removal of the thing-in-itself on both Beck's and Fichte's views of theoretical philosophy. Contrary to our prior expectations we saw how Fichte was forced to reintroduce the thing-in-itself into his system, although in a new dress. It is even more surprising to see, as I shall demonstrate below, that regarding practical philosophy as well, it is Beck's view of Kant's transcendental philosophy which truly dispenses with the thing-in-itself and Fichte, contrary to the common view, is once again required to reintroduce it.

Regarding Kant, it is commonly argued that even if we concede that he truly dispenses with the thing-in-itself within his theoretical philosophy, he nevertheless reintroduces it in his practical philosophy. This is so since according to Kant the empirical self is conditioned by natural causality and freedom can only be upheld by assigning it to the self as a thing-in-itself. The common view of Fichte is diametrically opposed to the view of Kant. It is argued that Fichte saves freedom precisely by eliminating the self as it is in-itself and that contrary to Kant he locates freedom within an immanent view of the self. Let us look more carefully at these matters.

Both Kant and Fichte understand that freedom is opposed to deterministic-mechanistic causality. The deterministic worldview rules out the possibility of a free agent whose actions are not predetermined by prior events.¹⁰ Kant ascribes the mechanistic-deterministic worldview to the realm of appearances and he therefore assigned freedom to the self, considered as independent of the conditions of the

⁹ I am reminded of Kant's bold words, as early as 1763, in *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, that morality is anchored in the human spirit and it does not rely on any alleged world beyond the one in which we, as humans, live (Sect. 2.1.5 above).

¹⁰ The modern-day theory of compatibilism is irrelevant within our current context. In any case, I think that the notion of compatibilism is in no way a solution to the above problem. Rather, it is based on ignoring the difficulties involved.

sensible world. However, according to Beck and the discussion above, freedom is not assigned by Kant to an intelligible object in the positive sense, a view, which would require two distinct domains of objects. Rather, freedom merely requires the logical possibility of the Idea of self as thing that is not a sensible-object. Freedom merely requires that *the thought* of the self as something that is not a sensible object be free of internal contradiction and it does not imply any special kind of object. What are required for the mutual compatibility of theoretical and practical philosophy are not two domains of objects but two distinct modes of thought. One mode – the theoretical – can be transformed into cognition of objects; the other – the practical – cannot. The latter is nevertheless real for us since it is an essential aspect of our reason, clearly manifested in human moral life. If morality had no part in our reason then we would not even understand what the term ‘ought’ means. Fichte, on the contrary, presents the issue in a different way from the very beginning. Fichte ascribes the mechanistic-deterministic, worldview to the realm of objects as things-in-themselves. In contrast to the determinism of things-in-themselves he locates freedom in the immanent realm of the subject. The determinism-freedom contrast is expressed in Fichte’s thought by the contrast between object and subject. So far Fichte’s defense of freedom indeed involves the elimination of the thing-in-itself. However, at this point Fichte needs the natural world as that which restricts our freedom and as the domain in which our free actions are realized. In order to fulfill these roles, the natural world cannot be an immanent realm. Fichte is therefore forced to postulate the reality of objects as things-in-themselves for the very possibility of practical philosophy (although of course not quite so explicitly).¹¹ It follows that contrary to the common view, it is Fichte and not Kant whose practical philosophy requires the thing-in-itself.

¹¹ Kant, as well, needs a natural world in which morality is realized. However, for Kant this is the world of appearances.

Part V
Epilogue

Chapter 14

Epilogue

The more I think about Kant's critical philosophy, the more convinced I become, that Kant's philosophical revolution, like Copernicus' astronomical revolution, which Kant saw as a model for his own revolution, cannot be properly understood without appealing to a background wider than its immediate philosophical context. Just as Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* – despite its mathematical-technical language – was much more than a revolution in astronomy so is Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* – despite its reliance on dense philosophical argumentation – much more than a mere philosophical revolution. Although this analogy, as any analogy, can easily be pushed too far, it does go a long way. Copernicus' revolution is rightly regarded as a defining moment not merely for astronomy but for modern science as a whole and even for the social, political and religious values of the modern western mind. In the same manner, Kant's philosophy signifies a constitutive event not merely for the history of philosophy but also for the very way we post-renaissance men think of nature, of science and of the character of moral obligations. The wide context within which these revolutions were set and the extent of the implications that both these revolutions harbor, point to another important feature that characterizes both revolutions. Precisely because of the extent of the implications that both theories carry, their acceptance had to confront objections that went far beyond their immediate astronomical and philosophical context. Both theories had to confront objections that were rooted in *the value system* of the societies within which they grew. It is obviously much easier to recognize the implications of a foreign value system on its ideational products than it is to expose the similar role of values and other presuppositions that inevitably restrict our own theoretical horizon. In the case of the Copernican Revolution, anyone concerned with the history of science and philosophy will immediately draw attention to the religious orientation, which both cognitively and physically obstructed the further acceptance of the idea of a planetary earth. It is a natural tendency, which also serves a purpose in the establishment of new theories in science, to regard the values and assumptions of previous generations as absurd or simply mistaken. It is of course true that astronomy and science in the Middle Ages were overshadowed by the authority of the church, which reinforced both

religious conceptions of the world and Aristotelian cosmology and physics. The rejection of the external authority of both church and state regarding matters of scientific and philosophical argumentation marks one of the characteristics of our modern academic life. However, it may mislead us into thinking that we moderns approach theoretical issues without the distorting effect of any external authority and that the products of our age are simply the result of pure rational argumentation. In this case we are wholly mistaken. There is no scientific theory, which does not rest on some metaphysical assumptions and there is no philosophy unaffected by some social values. The generally secular character of contemporary academic life may deceive us into thinking that unlike previous generations, whose notion of transcendence was rooted in the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, our commitment to the notion of the object of knowledge as a transcendent entity, a thing as it is in-itself, is grounded on mere rational arguments. However, as a quick survey of interpretative approaches to Kant may show, most authors admit that they view Kant's commitment to the existence of things-in-themselves as an unproved, and even unprovable, assumption. While the object of thought is – as I myself have argued – inevitably regarded as independent of the thought of the object, it is not necessarily regarded as ontologically independent of thought. Aside from the obvious implications of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, the latter ontological tendency has to do with a basic character, or rather a basic value, of our modern, post-renaissance approach. It derives mainly from the way we define the question for which our philosophical reflection is expected to supply the answer. This question is known as ‘the problem of knowledge’. Knowledge, we should remember, was not always a problem. It would have never occurred to an ancient thinker to ask whether the external world exists or whether knowledge is at all possible. Ancient thinkers took it for granted that the world exists and is accessible to our minds. For them the question that required explanation was not how we can possibly proclaim true judgments about the world but why we sometimes err. “That people subsequently came to consider knowledge a problem implies that they have been led to accept certain different beliefs about the nature of man and about the things which he tries to understand.” (Burt 2003, 16). In an attempt to distance ourselves from ancient science and cosmology, for which the reality of the external world and its intelligibility to the human mind was never a problem, we have adopted a method of extreme caution and doubt. However, we may have gone too far. While a healthy sense of doubt is indeed conducive to sound research, the radical doubt, best expressed in the words of Descartes, may commit us to an impossible task and make all our efforts redundant. Descartes doubted not only that some of our judgments might be wrong or even that many or all of our judgments may similarly be mistaken. His philosophy is based on a much more radical doubt according to which none of our judgments *could possibly* be true or that we *could not possibly* know anything about a reality independent of our own representations. Such radical doubt is rooted in the immanence-transcendence dichotomy, much referred to in this book. Similarly to the mind-body problem, the very way in which the problem is defined, annuls the possibility that a rational solution can ever be given. Once modern tradition defined body and soul in such opposing terms, which

make the Aristotelian notion of a ‘nourishing soul’ – so basic for the ancient mind – inherently contradictory, the very possibility of reconnecting the two elements became practically impossible. Similarly, once we assume the strict dichotomy between representations immanent to our minds and objects wholly transcendent to them, the very possibility of explaining how the former can relate to the latter is ruled out in advance. As I argued throughout this book, a corollary to the immanence-transcendence dichotomy is the contrast between the context of justification and the context of explanation. We should distinguish an attempt to *justify that* there is knowledge of independently existing external objects and a more modest attempt to *explain how* the object of knowledge can function as a criterion of knowledge despite the fact that upon reflection we must admit that its very notion inevitably depends on a certain kind of cognitive function.

In this book I defended the view that Kant rejected more than Descartes’ theory of ideas and his proof of the existence of God, to name just a few central issues. He rejected the entire tradition that goes back to Descartes and expresses one of the main defining moments of our modern mind. It is a tradition based on the assumption of the immanence-transcendence dichotomy and the resulting demand that philosophical reflection justify the appeal of empirical thought to a mind-independent object. It is a tradition that strangely starts to philosophize by doubting whether it has an object to philosophize about.

The Kantian interpretation I presented in this book, based on the historical view of Jacob Sigismund Beck, requires that we redefine the goals of our philosophical reflection. Since this goal is part of a core value system and a large-scale cultural context this requirement is obviously difficult. However, our ability to understand the true meaning of the Kantian philosophical revolution depends on such a reformulation of the very question we ask. Returning once again to the analogy with Copernicus, consider the following passage from Thomas Kuhn’s account of the latter’s revolution. Kuhn attempts to explain why Copernicus would introduce a new astronomical system that was contrary to the evidence of the senses, contrary to a cosmological and astronomical tradition over 15 centuries old and which was no simpler and no more accurate than its predecessor.

For him [Copernicus], mathematical and celestial detail came first; *he wore blinders* that kept his gaze focused upon the mathematical harmonies of the heavens. To anyone who did not share his specialty Copernicus’ view of the universe was narrow and his sense of values distorted. But an excessive concern with the heavens and *a distorted sense of values may be essential characteristics of the man who inaugurated the revolution in astronomy and cosmology*. The blinders that restricted Copernicus’ gaze to the heavens may have been functional. They made him so perturbed by discrepancies of a few degrees in astronomical prediction that in an attempt to resolve them he could embrace a cosmological heresy, the earth’s motion. (Kuhn 1985, 184. The emphasis is mine).

Kant, I believe, also wore blinders, which made him focus on *understanding how*, not if, experience was possible. Since experience, or knowledge, is only possible if it is governed by universal, necessary, a priori rules, Kant’s main problem was to explain how we could know such a priori rules about objects supposedly independent of us.

Up to now it had been assumed that all our cognition has to conform to the objects; but all attempts to find something about them *a priori* through concepts that would extend our cognition have, on this presupposition come to nothing. Hence let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the object must conform to our cognition, which would agree better with the requested possibility of an *a priori* cognition of them, which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us. This would be just like the first thoughts of Copernicus, who, when he did not make good progress in the explanation of the celestial motions if he assumed that the entire celestial host revolved around the observer, tried to see if he might not have greater success if he made the observer revolve and left the stars at rest. (*KrV*, B xvi).

Kant was willing to risk an even greater heresy than that of the moving earth. In suggesting that objects conform to cognition rather than the other way around, he risked the destruction of the structure that held intact the very notion of nature and of external objects he was out to save. Aside from the obvious heresy connected with undermining the view of God as a transcendent entity, he risked being treated as someone, who, by the very way he posed the question proved that he could not, in principle, supply any acceptable answer. Kant, like Copernicus, was so absorbed within his focused view, secured by the special blinders he was wearing, that he was willing to risk such a heresy only in order to put forward a theory that, although unable, but also unintended, to justify experience or knowledge did nevertheless possess a much better ability to explain how it functioned.

Despite the similarities that I have pointed out above, there is an important difference between Copernicus' and Kant's heresy and their respective deviation from the scientific and philosophical tradition within which they grew. In order to recognize this difference we have to look again at some features of the scientific revolution that connect the two authors. It seems to me that we can identify two levels of that revolution, an empirical-scientific and a philosophical-reflective level. On the empirical-scientific level the revolution expressed itself by a transition from a man-centered worldview, whereby nature was explained according to teleological principles to a nature-centered worldview, whereby both nature and man within it were explained according to mechanistic-deterministic principles. The significance of this transition was succinctly put into words in the following extract from one excellent account of the metaphysical foundations of modern science:

In any case, speculation has clearly been moving in this direction: *just as it was thoroughly natural for medieval thinkers to view nature as subservient to man's knowledge, purpose and destiny; so it has become natural to view her as existing and operating in her own self-contained independence, and so far as man's ultimate relation to her is clear at all, to consider his knowledge and purpose somehow produced by her, and his destiny wholly dependent on her.* (Burt 2003, 24).

On the philosophical-reflective level, the same revolution took a quite opposite and more complex direction. On this level the fact that knowledge became a problem meant that philosophical reflection had to start from, and focus on, the knowing subject and serious doubts were cast on the very ability to say anything about a mind-independent world. In other words, while on the scientific-empirical level, the revolution meant that mankind lost its central place in favor of nature, on the philosophical-reflective level, man and his forms or conditions of knowledge took the center stage at the expense of nature. Ironically or not, both the scientific-

empirical and the philosophical-reflective levels are exemplified in the work of Descartes. His philosophy also shows the convoluted character of the philosophical revolution. He starts to philosophize by retreating ever deeply into his inner self, to the extent that he first adopted an idealistic view, which doubts the existence of external bodies. Then he shifted to a solipsistic view, which additionally doubts the existence of other mental entities, and finally he even attempted such a radical doubt according to which his own mental existence was called into question. However, despite the initial emphasis on the knowing subject, the very same treatise – the *Meditations of First Philosophy* – ends with a fierce defense of the existence of the external material world. The philosophical revolution was schizophrenic-like. Although its main significance was a focus on the human mind, or better, on cognition and its conditions, few philosophers were able to maintain the required epoché, to borrow a term from Husserl, another major proponent of the same tradition, and refrain from switching the focus back to reality as it supposedly is, regardless of the knowing subject.

Based on the above background, we can reconsider both Copernicus' and Kant's position and the nature of their respective revolutions. Copernicus, I believe, is a typical exponent of the scientific revolution as can be seen both in the immediate astronomical implications of his theory and in its much wider implications on science and society at large. Although his views were to a very large degree rooted in the old Aristotelian tradition (Kuhn 1985, 155), Copernicus' suggestion that the world does not rotate around the observer but rather the other way around is an excellent example of the direction undertaken by the scientific revolution. Despite the one and a half centuries it took for his theory to be widely accepted, it was a constitutive event in a transition from the old to the new, a transition that eventually could be postponed no longer. The circumstances surrounding the emergence of Kant's critical philosophy are far more complex. On the one hand, Kant's transcendental idealism was a major milestone in the subject-oriented philosophical revolution. On the other hand, the philosophical revolution had from the very beginning a double-sided face and along with its subject-oriented character harbored a strong objective-oriented tendency. Moreover, if we understand Kant's revolution as a rebellion against the radical setting of the 'problem of knowledge' as discussed above, then his new philosophy should be seen as going against, rather than with, the currents of his time. Whether we view the philosophical revolution, that accompanied the scientific revolution, as subjective or objective in character, or better still, as a certain combination of both, it would certainly be correct to say that it was characterized by the extreme tension between the immanent existence of representation in the mind and the alleged transcendent existence of external objects independent of the mind. The latter setting can be used to house both the subjective and the objective tendencies of the philosophical revolution, including the tension between the two. Viewed in this way, the interpretation of Kant upheld in this book suggests that his view stands in opposition to the main current of the philosophical revolution begun in the seventeenth century and extending to the current day. The reason for the latter statement resides in the fact that I have presented Kant as rejecting the immanence-transcendence dichotomy, which

gives rise to the radical setting of 'the problem of knowledge', on which the new philosophy is based. Thus, unlike Copernicus, who, at first stood solitary at the front of a new campaign, but was, as time went by, jointed by others in a revolution that steadily gained momentum, Kant is seen as going against the core assumption of the philosophical revolution begun just a century before him and which was just as well steadily gaining momentum. While Copernicus is seen to rebel against the old, Kant is seen to rebel against the new! On this background it may be easier to understand why Kant's view was, and still is, so hard to accept.

I have made my best efforts to communicate what I see as Kant's and Beck's great contribution to the theory of knowledge. Whether and to what degree I succeeded is a judgment only my readers can pass.

Chapter 15

A Short Biography of J. S. Beck

No comprehensive biography of Jacob Sigismund Beck has ever been written. Most details about Beck's life are contained within several short accounts tucked between discussions of his philosophical contribution. It is not uncommon for authors mentioning Beck to have either misspelled his name or to have distorted various facts about his life.¹

Jacob Sigismund Beck was born on August 6th, 1761, either in or by the town of Marienburg, near Danzig, in West Prussia. A question could be raised regarding Beck's exact birthplace. Although most authors indicate Marienburg as the birthplace, some authors point to the town of Lissau.² Since the two towns are very close to one another – apparently few hours walk on foot – I agree with Thomas Ludolf Meyer that it is relatively unimportant whether Beck was born in Marienburg itself or in Lissau, where his father served as the local pastor (Meyer 1991, 191).³

There is hardly anything known about the early years of Beck's life. The first known fact is his registration with the University of Königsberg on October 8th, 1783 (Meyer 1991, 192). Aside from being one of Kant's most hard-working and talented students (Brüssow 1842, 925), Beck most probably has heard lectures on Mathematics by Johann Schultz and on various other issues by J. C. Kraus. Beck maintained a friendship with both men.⁴ In the summer of 1789, following the successful completion of his university studies, Beck went to Leipzig, with the intention of obtaining a Magister title in the field of Mathematics. Although both

¹ Some such examples are cited by Meyer (1991, 190). Probably the only attempt to bring some sort of order to the available details about Beck's life was undertaken by Meyer (1991, 190–198) on whose work this chapter is based.

² The following authors give Marienburg as the birthplace: Brüssow (1842, 925); Stieda (1939, 17–34); (Dilthey 1889, 609); von Prantl (1875, 214); Hanslmeier (1971, 702). The following authors give Lissau as the birthplace: Erdmann (1848, 537); Krug (1832, 297). According to Dilthey (1889, 609n17) Kuno Fischer has also referred to Lissau as Beck's birthplace.

³ Some authors claim that Beck's father was the pastor in Marienburg and this item is also of little importance.

⁴ Cf. Beck's correspondence with Kant.

Kant and Kraus have provided Beck with recommendations, Beck did not find his place in the Leipzig academic circle. In a letter to Kant, dated August 1st, 1789 (AA 11: 69f.) he reports of his disappointment from the academic life in Leipzig and of his lack of success in finding a suitable side-job that would allow him to support himself financially. Beck then went to Berlin but since his plans did not materialize there either, he made his way to Halle. In Halle he met with L. H. Jacob who may have helped him to a school-teaching position which he held for about a year. He then left Halle for unknown reasons and went to Prussia once more, only to return to Halle for a second time shortly thereafter (Kant's letter to Beck dated 9 May, 1791).⁵ In a letter to Kant dated 19 April 1791, Beck reports of obtaining the Magister degree in Halle, allowing him to become a Privatdozent (private teacher) and offer courses for students' fees (AA 11: 252). As students were few, and their fees small, the earnings from holding lectures were meager; Beck was therefore obliged to complete his financial requirements by working as a teacher at a local school. Both jobs still provided him with only basic living conditions and he was therefore happy for the extra income provided to him by the work on the explanatory abstracts from Kant's critical writings, which Kant's publisher Hartknoch had offered him.⁶ Beck's financial difficulties are reflected in the various loans he received from J. C. Kraus; further evidence is reflected by Kant's insistence on paying for the postage on Beck's letters to him.⁷ By 1795 Beck's financial situation had finally improved. He started working on book-reviews he compiled for L. H. Jacob's newly established journal, the *Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophischen Geistes von einer Gesellschaft gelehrter Männer*. In a letter to Kant dated 17 June, 1795 he reports of having been freed from the obligation to teach at the local school and of paying a rather large loan of 100 Thalers he previously received from Count Keyserling (AA 12: 25).⁸

There is some evidence that at about 1796 Beck's name was mentioned in connection with a permanent university position. In a letter to Beck, dated 19 November, 1796 (AA 12: 120) Kant reports of a piece of information that has been brought to his attention concerning a position that was allegedly offered to Beck in a new university that was to be established in the Duchy of Curland in the city of Mitau.⁹ This was probably an unfounded rumor since no further evidence of

⁵ Beck's whereabouts in Prussia at that time are not specified in the letter.

⁶ On the birth of Beck's explanatory abstracts project, cf. Chap. 4 above.

⁷ Cf. the Kant-Beck correspondence throughout 1791–1792.

⁸ Kant himself was a friend of the Keyserling family. In his early years he served as a tutor for the sons of Count Johann Gebhardt von Keyserling. Kant's relationship (the exact nature of which has given rise to speculation) with Countess Karoline Charlotte Amalie von Keyserling, the third wife of Count Johann Gebhardt, is also well documented. The Count Keyserling who lent money to Beck was obviously not Count Johann Gebhardt since the latter died as early as 1761.

⁹ The issue is also discussed by Stieda (1939, 20). Curland (the latter spelling appears in Kant's original letter. Cf. also Courland or Kurland), is a region situated in western Latvia. The area was known since the middle of the sixteenth century as the Duchy of Courland. It was turned over to Russia at about 1795 prior to the events described above.

it can be found. In September 1797 Beck himself reports of his plan to move back to Leipzig and to apply for a stipend offered by a local college (Beck's letter to Kant 9 September, 1797, AA 12: 200). The latter plan did not materialize either. Nevertheless, the opportunity did present itself when in 1799 Beck was offered the position of a Professor of Metaphysics in the University of Rostock, an offer accepted by Beck. In 1799 Beck also published his next major work, the *Propädeutik zu jedem wissenschaftlichen Studio* (Halle: Renger, 1799). The only two pieces of evidence available to us concerning Beck's early years in Rostock are two letters – one addressed to Friedrich Bouterwek¹⁰ the other addressed to Karl Ludwig Pörschke¹¹ – from which we learn very little about Beck's life. We learn from another source that Beck was a gentle and friendly man who quickly became a much-loved professor and colleague (Brüssow 1842, 926). He taught courses on various subjects such as logics, mathematics, physics, metaphysics, general practical philosophy, ethics, and philosophy of law (Brüssow 1842, 926). Throughout his life, Beck published philosophical works on most of these subjects. Beck must have earned credit for his academic work for in 1802 he was offered a position in Berlin as a professor of philosophy for the Royal Cadet School. Beck refused the offer and chose to stay in Rostock, a decision for which he was rewarded by the University of Rostock with an increase of 100 Thalers to his salary (Brüssow 1842, 927).

On February 4th, 1803, J. S. Beck married Marie Konradine Dorothea Friedrich, the daughter of the Mecklenburger Court Chaplain Johann Gottlieb Friedrich. Marie later gave birth to a daughter named Louise (Brüssow 1842, 927). We have no information of other offspring.

During his lifetime Beck served several times as the dean of the philosophical faculty and he was chosen on more than one occasion to serve as the university's Rector (Brüssow 1842, 926). He was described as a much-appreciated and respected citizen of the city of Rostock and as a proficient scholar, devoted to the life of the sciences which he valued above all other aspects of life (Brüssow 1842, 925). Jacob Sigismund Beck died on August 29th 1840, following a brief illness, shortly after beginning his 80th year.

¹⁰ On Friedrich Bouterwek, cf. Chap. 1, note 13. The letter is reproduced in Stieda (1939) (33f.).

¹¹ On Karl Ludwig Pörschke, cf. Sect. 12.2.7, note 310. The letter is reproduced in Dorow (1841) (152f.).

Bibliography of Works by Jacob Sigismund Beck (in chronological order)

- Dissertatio de Theoremate Tayloriano, sive de lege generali, secundum quam functionis mutetur, mutatis a quibus pendent variabilibus* (Halle, 1791).
- Erläuternder Auszug aus den kritischen Schriften des Herrn Prof. Kant, auf Anrathen desselben/ Erster Band, welcher die Kritik der Reinen Vernunft und die Kritik der practischen Vernunft enthält* (Riga: Hartknoch, 1793). Reprinted in *Aetas Kantiana* (Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1968).
- Erläuternder Auszug aus den kritischen Schriften des Herrn Prof. Kant, auf Anrathen desselben/ Zweyter Band, welcher die Kritik der Reinen Vernunft und die Kritik der practischen Vernunft enthält* (Riga: Hartknoch, 1794). Reprinted in *Aetas Kantiana* (Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1968).
- Review of J.C.C. Visbeck's *Die Hauptmomente der Reinholdischen Elementar-Philosophie, in Beziehung auf die Einwendung des Aenesidemus untersucht* (Leipzig, 1794). Anonymously published in *Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophisches Geistes*, edited and published by L.H. Jacob, Vol. 1, 11 Stück, January 25, 1795, 84–88. [The ascription of this essay to J.S. Beck is based on Thomas Ludolf Meyer, 1991].
- Review of J.G. Fichte's *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* (Weimar, 1794) and *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre, als Handschrift für seine Zuhörer* (Leipzig, 1794). Anonymously published in *Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophisches Geistes*, edited and published by L.H. Jacob, Vol. 1, 16 Stück, February 6, 1795, 121–124; 17 Stück, February 9, 1795, 129–136; 18 Stück, February 11, 1795, 137–144. [The ascription of this essay to J.S. Beck is based on Beck's own testimony; see Beck's letter to Kant, June 26, 1797 as well as L.H. Jacob's letter to Kant, June 22, 1795].
- Review of C.L. Reinhold's *Beiträge zur Berichtigung der Mißverständnisse der Philosophen*, Vol. 2 (Jena, 1794). Anonymously published in *Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophisches Geistes*, edited and published by L.H. Jacob, Vol. 1, 54 Stück, May 6, 1795, 427–432; 55 Stück, May 8, 1795, 440; 56 Stück, May 11, 1795, 441–443; 59 Stück, May 18, 1795, 467–472. [The ascription of this essay to J.S. Beck is based on the editor of the 13th volume of Kant's Akademie Ausgabe – cf. AA 13: 396].
- Review of J.H. Abicht's *Hermias, oder Auflösung der die gültige Elementar-Philosophie betreffenden Aenesidemischen Zweifel* (Erlangen, 1795). Anonymously published in *Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophisches Geistes*, edited and published by L.H. Jacob, Vol. 1, 70 Stück, June 12, 1795, 553–560. [The ascription of this essay to J.S. Beck is based on the editor of the 13th volume of Kant's Akademie Ausgabe – cf. AA 13: 396].
- Erläuternder Auszug aus den kritischen Schriften des Herrn Prof. Kant, auf Anrathen desselben/ Dritter Band, welcher den Standpunct darstellt, aus welchem die critische Philosophie zu beurtheilen ist/Einzig möglicher Standpunct aus welchem die critische Philosophie beurteilt*

- werden muss* (Riga: Hartknoch, 1796). Reprinted in *Aetas Kantiana* (Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1968).
- Review of J.G. Fichte's *Grundlage des Naturrecht, nach Principien der Wissenschaftslehre* (Jena and Leipzig, 1796). Anonymously published in *Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophisches Geistes*, edited and published by L.H. Jacob, Vol. 2, September 30, 1796, 401–425. [The ascription of this essay to J.S. Beck is based on Erich Adickes, *German Kantian Bibliography*, Nr. 1033, 175].
- Grundriß der kritischen Philosophie* (Halle: Renger, 1796). Reprinted in *Aetas Kantiana* (Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1970). This book was also translated into English as *The Principles of Critical Philosophy, selected from the works of Emmanuel Kant. . . and expounded by James Sigismund Beck/Translated from German by an Auditor of the latter* (London: J. Johnson & W. Richardson; Edinburgh: P. Hill, Manner & Miller; Hamburg: B.G. Hoffmann, 1797). [The mistake in Beck's first name is in the original. The anonymous translator was J. Richardson. The ascription of this translation to J. Richardson is acknowledged in a letter from L.H. Jacob to Kant, September 8, 1797].
- “Über den Zustand der Philosophie in unsern Tagen, und ob die durch Kant bewirkte Revolution derselben auch wohl von der Nachwelt mehr gewürdigt werden dürfe, als bloß in der Geschichte dieser Wissenschaft aufbehalten zu werden.” In *Der Kosmopolit/Eine Monatschrift zur Beförderung wahrer und allgemeiner Humanität*, Vol 2, 10 Stück, III, 311–329 (Halle, 1797). [This article is signed ‘K’ but is attributed to “Herr Prof. Beck” in the index. This article was first found by Rudolf Malter].
- Commentar über Kants Metaphysik der Sitten/Erster Teil, welcher die metaphysischen Principien des Naturrechts enthält* (Halle: Renger, 1798). Reprinted in *Aetas Kantiana* (Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1970).
- Propädeutik zu jedem wissenschaftlichen Studio* (Halle: Renger, 1799).
- Grundsätze der Gesetzgebung* (Leipzig: Hartknoch 1806).
- Bestimmungen einiger der Logik angehörige Begriffe* (Rostock: Adler, 1808–1809). 3 Volumes.
- Von der Formen der Staatsverfassung* (Rostock: Stiller, 1816–1817). 3 Volumes.
- Über die moralische Natur des menschlichem Willen* (Rostock: Adler, 1817–1818). 3 Volumes.
- Lehrbuch des Naturrechts* (Jena: Cröker, 1820).
- Lehrbuch des Logik* (Rostock und Schwerin: Stiller, 1820).
- Über die Staatseinkünfte* (Rostock: Adler, 1821).
- Über die Metaphysik der Sitten/Einladungsschrift zur Feier des Osterfestes/von J.S. Beck als diesjährigem Rektor der Universität* (Rostock: Adlers Erben, 1822).
- Von der metaphysischen Tugendlehre/Einladungsschrift zur Feier des Osterfestes/von J.S. Beck als diesjährigem Rektor der Universität* (Rostock: Adlers Erben, 1822).
- Prolegomena zur allgemein Metaphysik* (Rostock: Adler, 1823–1824). 3 Volumes.

Bibliography

- Abegg, Johann Friedrich. 1976. *Reisetagebuch von 1798*. Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag.
- Abela, Paul. 2002. *Kant's empirical realism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Abicht, J.H. 1795. *Hermias, oder Auflösung der die gültige Elementar-Philosophie betreffenden Aenesidemischen Zweifel*. Erlangen: Walther.
- Adickes, Erich. 1920. *Kants Opus Postumum: Dargestellt und beurteilt*, Kantstudien Ergänzungshefte 50. Berlin: Reuther & Reichard.
- Adickes, Erich. 1924. *Kant und das Ding an sich*. Berlin: R. Heise.
- Adickes, Erich. 1929. *Kants Lehre von der doppelten Affektion unseres Ich als Schlüssel zu seiner Erkenntnistheorie*, ed. Franz Adickes. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr.
- Adickes, Erich. 1970. *German Kantian bibliography*. New York: Burt Franklin.
- Agosta, Lou. 1981. Kant's problem of the existence of the external world. In *Akten des fünften internationalen Kant-Kongresses*, ed. G. Funke and M. Kleinschneider, 387–393. Bonn: Bouvier.
- Allison, Henry E. 1973. *The Kant-Eberhard controversy: An English translation, together with supplementary materials and a historical-analytic introduction of Immanuel Kant's on a discovery according to which any new critique of pure reason has been made superfluous by an earlier one*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Allison, Henry E. 1978. Things in themselves, noumena, and the transcendental object. *Dialectica* 32(1): 41–76.
- Allison, Henry E. 1983. *Kant's transcendental idealism: An interpretation and defense*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Allison, Henry E. 2004. *Kant's transcendental idealism: An interpretation and defense*. Rev. and enl. ed. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Allison, Henry E. 2006. Transcendental realism, empirical realism and transcendental idealism. *Kantian Review* 11: 1–28.
- Ameriks, Karl. 2000. *Kant's theory of mind: An analysis of the paralogisms of pure reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ameriks, Karl. 2003. Recent work on Kant's theoretical philosophy. In *Interpreting Kant's critiques*, 67–97. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Ameriks, Karl. 2006. *Kant and the historical turn: Philosophy as critical interpretation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bader, Ralf M. 2012. The role of Kant's refutation of idealism. *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 94(1): 53–73.
- Beck, Jacob Sigismund. 1793. *Erläuternder Auszug aus den kritischen Schriften des Herrn Prof. Kant, auf Anrathen desselben/Erster Band, welcher die Kritik der Reinen Vernunft und die Kritik der practischen Vernunft enthält*. Riga: Hartknoch. Reprinted in *Aetas Kantiana*. Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1968.

- Beck, Jacob Sigismund. 1794. *Erläuternder Auszug aus den kritischen Schriften des Herrn Prof. Kant, auf Anrathen desselben/Zweyter Band, welcher die Kritik der Reinen Vernunft und die Kritik der practischen Vernunft enthält*. Riga: Hartknoch. Reprinted in *Aetas Kantiana*. Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1968.
- Beck, Jacob Sigismund. 1795a. Review of *Die Hauptmomente der Reinholdischen Elementar-Philosophie, in Beziehung auf die Einwendung des Aenesidemus untersucht*, by J. C. C. Visbeck. *Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophisches Geistes* 1(11): 84–88.
- Beck, Jacob Sigismund. 1795b. Review of *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre and Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre, als Handschrift für seine Zuhörer*, by J. G. Fichte. *Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophisches Geistes* 1(16): 121–124; 1(17): 129–136; 1(18): 137–144.
- Beck, Jacob Sigismund. 1795c. Review of *Beyträge zur Berichtigung der Mißverständnisse der Philosophen*, vol. 2., by C. L. Reinhold. *Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophisches Geistes* 1(54): 427–432; 1(55): 440; 1(56): 441–443; 1(59): 467–472.
- Beck, Jacob Sigismund. 1795d. Review of *Hermias, oder Auflösung der die gültige Elementar-Philosophie betreffenden Aenesidemischen Zweifel*, by J. H. Abicht. *Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophisches Geistes* 1(70): 553–560.
- Beck, Jacob Sigismund. 1796a. *Erläuternder Auszug aus den kritischen Schriften des Herrn Prof. Kant, auf Anrathen desselben/Dritter Band, welcher den Standpunct darstellt, aus welchem die critische Philosophie zu beurtheilen ist/Einzig möglicher Standpunct aus welchem die critische Philosophie beurteilt werden muss*. Riga: Hartknoch. Reprinted in *Aetas Kantiana*. Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1968.
- Beck, Jacob Sigismund. 1796b. *Grundriß der critischen Philosophie*. Halle: Renger. Reprinted in *Aetas Kantiana*. Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1970.
- Beck, Jacob Sigismund. 1796c. Review of *Grundlage des Naturrecht, nach Principien der Wissenschaftslehre*, by J. G. Fichte. *Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophisches Geistes* 2: 401–425.
- Beck, Lewis White. 1967. German philosophy. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 3: 301.
- Beck, Lewis White. 1969. *Early German philosophy: Kant and his predecessors*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Beck, Lewis White. 1978. *Essays on Kant and Hume*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Beiser, Frederick C. 1987. *The fate of reason: German philosophy from Kant to Fichte*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Beiser, Frederick C. 1992. Kant's intellectual development: 1746–1781. In *The Cambridge companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer, 26–61. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beiser, Frederick C. 2002. *German idealism: The struggle against subjectivism, 1781–1801*. Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press.
- Bennett, Jonathan Francis. 1974. *Kant's dialectic*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Bergman, Samuel Hugo. 1967. *The philosophy of Solomon Maimon*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press/Hebrew University.
- Bird, Graham. 2006. *The revolutionary Kant: A commentary on the critique of pure reason*. Chicago: Open Court.
- Bird, Graham. 2011. Replies to my critics. *Kantian Review* 16(2): 257–282.
- Brandt, Reinhard. 1987. Eine neu aufgefundene Reflexion Kants 'Vom inneren Sinne' (Loses Blatt Leningrad 1). In *Neue Autographen und Dokumente zu Kants Leben, Schriften und Vorlesungen*, ed. R. Brandt and W. Stark, 1–30. Hamburg: Felix Meiner.
- Breazeale, Daniel. 1988. *Fichte, Early Philosophical Writings*. Trans and ed. Daniel Breazeale. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.
- Breazeale, Daniel. 1994. *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings (1797–1800)*. Trans and ed. Daniel Breazeale. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Brüssow, Friedrich. 1842. Dr. Jakob Sigismund Beck. In *Neuer Nekrolog der Deutschen*, ed. Bernhard Friedrich Voigt, vol. 18(II), 925–928. Weimar: Voigt.

- Burt, E.A. 2003. *The metaphysical foundations of modern science*. Mineola/New York: Dover Publications.
- Caranti, Luigi. 2007. *Kant and the scandal of philosophy: The Kantian critique of Cartesian scepticism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Cassirer, Ernst. 1957. *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. Trans. Ralph Manheim. New Haven/London: Yale University Press.
- Cassirer, Ernst. 1981. *Kant's Life and Thought*. Trans. James Haden. New Haven/London: Yale University Press.
- Cassirer, Ernst. 1999. *Gesammelte Werke*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.
- Chisholm, Roderick M. 1978. Coming into being and passing away: Can the metaphysician help? In *Language, metaphysics, and death*, ed. John Donnelly, 13–24. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Collingwood, R.G. 1984. *An essay on metaphysics*. Lanham: University Press of America.
- de Vleeschauwer, Herman Jean. 1962. *The development of Kantian thought: The history of a doctrine*. London: T. Nelson.
- di Giovanni, George. 2000. The facts of consciousness. In *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, Trans. and ed. George di Giovanni and H. S. Harris. Revised ed., 2–50. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.
- di Giovanni, George, and H.S. Harris. 2000. *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*. Trans. George Di Giovanni and H. S. Harris. Revised ed. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Dilthey, Wilhelm. 1889. Die Rostocker Kanthandschriften. *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 2: 592–650.
- Dorow, Wilhelm. 1841. *Denkschriften und Briefe zur Charakteristik der Welt und Literatur*, vol. 5. Berlin: Alexander Duncker.
- Eberhard, Johann August. 1788. Ueber die Schranken der menschlichen Erkenntnis. *Philosophisches Magazin* 1(1): 9–29.
- Emundts, Dina. 2010. The refutation of idealism and the distinction between phenomena and noumena. In *The Cambridge companion to Kant's critique of pure reason*, ed. Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Erdmann, Johann Eduard. 1848. *Versuch einer wissenschaftlichen Darstellung der Geschichte der neuern Philosophie*. vol. 3, Part 1, *Die Entwicklung der deutschen Spekulation seit Kant*. Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel.
- Erhard, Johann Benjamin. 1796. Review of *Erläuternder Auszug aus den kritischen Schriften des Herrn Prof. Kant, auf Anrathen desselben, erster, zweiter und dritter Band*, by Jacob Sigismund Beck. *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung* 371: 505–512.
- Falkenstein, Lorne. 1995. The great light of 1769 – A Humean awakening? *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 77: 63–79.
- Feder, Johann Georg Heinrich. 1788. *Ueber Raum und Caussalitat: Zur Prüfung der Kantischen Philosophie*. Frankfurt: Dietrich.
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. 1794a. *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*. Weimar: Industrie-Comtoir.
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. 1794b. *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre, als Handschrift für seine Zuhörer*. Jena and Leipzig: Gabler.
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. 1796. *Grundlage des Naturrecht, nach Principien der Wissenschaftslehre*. Jena and Leipzig: Gabler.
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. 1845–46. *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte. Berlin: Veit und Comp.
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. 1962–2012. *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*. Stuttgart: F. Frommann.
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. 1982. *The Science of Knowledge*. Trans. and ed. Peter Heath and John Lachs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Flatt, J.G. 1792. *Beiträge zur christlichen Dogmatik und Moral*. Tübingen: Cotta.

- Forberg, Friedrich Karl. 1798. Entwicklung des Begriffs der Religion. *Philosophisches Journal einer Gesellschaft Teutscher Gelehrten* 8: 21–46.
- Förster, Eckart. 1989. *Kant's transcendental deductions: The three critiques and the Opus Postumum*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Förster, Eckart. 1990. Fichte, Beck and Schelling in Kant's *Opus Postumum*. In *Kant and his influence*, ed. George MacDonald Ross and Tony McWalter, 146–169. Bristol: Thoemmes.
- Forster, Michael N. 2008. *Kant and skepticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Garve, Christian. 1783. Kritik der reinen Vernunft, von Immanuel Kant. *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* 37–52(Supplement): 838–862.
- Gawlick, Gunter, and Lothar Kreimendahl. 1987. *Hume in der deutschen Aufklärung: Unrisse einer Rezeptionsgeschichte*. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog.
- Guyer, Paul. 1983. Kant's intentions in the refutation of idealism. *Philosophical Review* 92: 329–383.
- Guyer, Paul. 1987. *Kant and the claims of knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Guyer, Paul. 1992. The transcendental deduction of the categories. In *The Cambridge companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer, 123–160. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Guyer, Paul. 1998. The postulates of empirical thinking in general and the refutation of idealism. In *Immanuel Kant: Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. Georg Mohr and Marcus Willaschek, 297–324. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Guyer, Paul. 2006. *Kant*. London: Routledge.
- Hamann, Johann Georg. 1955. *Briefwechsel*, ed. Walther Zieseemer and Arthur Henkel. Wiesbaden: Insel.
- Hanna, Robert. 2006. *Kant, science, and human nature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hanslmeier, Josef. 1971. Jacob Sigismund Beck. In *Neue deutsche Biographie*, vol. 1. Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt.
- Heller, Edmund. 1993. Kant und J. S. Beck über Anschauung und Begriff. *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 100: 72–95.
- Henrich, Dieter. 2003. *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German idealism*, ed. David S. Pacini. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Herz, Marcus. 1990. *Betrachtungen aus der spekulativen Weltweisheit*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.
- Hickey, Lance. 2001. Kant's concept of the transcendental object. *Manuscripto* 24(1): 103–139.
- Jacobi, Friedrich Heinrich. 1787. *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus: Ein Gespräch*. Breslau: Loewe.
- Kanizsa, Gaetano. 1979. *Organization in vision: Essays on Gestalt perception*. New York: Praeger.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1951. *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können*, 5th ed, ed. Karl Vorländer. Hamburg: F. Meiner.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1992. *Theoretical Philosophy 1755–1770*. Trans. D. Walford and R. Meerbote. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1996a. *Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1996b. *Religion and Rational Theology*. Trans. and ed. A. W. Wood and G. di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1997. *Lectures on Metaphysics*. Trans. K. Ameriks and S. Naragon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1998. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1999. *Correspondence*. Trans. A. Zweig. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 2000. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Kant, Immanuel. 2002. *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*. Trans. G. Hartfield, M. Friedman, H. Allison, and P. Heath. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 2005. *Notes and Fragments*. Trans. C. Bowman, P. Guyer, and F. Rauscher. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kemp-Smith, Norman. 1962. *A commentary to Kant's critique of pure reason*, 2nd, rev and enl. ed. New York: Humanities Press.
- Klotz, Christian. 1993. *Kants Widerlegung des problematischen Idealismus*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Klotz, Christian. 2002. *Selbstbewußtsein und praktische Identität: Eine Untersuchung über Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre Nova Methodo*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Kroner, Richard. 1961. *Von Kant bis Hegel*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr.
- Krönig-Buchheister, Gretchen. 1927. *Das Problem des Selbstsetzung in seiner Entwicklung von Kant bis Fichte mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von J.S. Beck*. Ph.D. dissertation, Hamburg University.
- Krug, Wilhelm Traugott. 1832. *Allgemeines Handwörterbuch der philosophischen Wissenschaften neben ihrer Literatur und Geschichte*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus.
- Kuehn, Manfred. 1983. Kant's conception of Hume's problem. *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 21: 176–193.
- Kuehn, Manfred. 2001. *Kant: A biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kuehn, Manfred. 2011. How, or why, do we come to think of a world of things in themselves? *Kantian Review* 16(2): 221–233.
- Kuhn, Thomas. 1985. *The Copernican revolution: Planetary astronomy in the development of western thought*. Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press.
- Kuhn, Thomas. 1996. *The structure of scientific revolutions*, 3rd ed. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Landau, Albert. 1991. *Rezensionen zur Kantischen Philosophie 1781–87*. Bebra: Landau.
- Langton, Rae. 1998. *Kantian humility: Our ignorance of things in themselves*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Laywine, Alison. 1993. *Kant's early metaphysics and the origins of the critical philosophy*. Atascadero: Ridgeview Publishing Company.
- Lewis, Clarence Irving. 1956. *Mind and the world-order: Outline of a theory of knowledge*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Lodovici, Elisa. 1932. *L'Idealismo Critico di Jacopo Sigismundo Beck*. Ph.D. dissertation, Genova University.
- Longuenesse, Béatrice. 1998. *Kant and the capacity to judge: Sensibility and discursivity in the transcendental analytic of the critique of pure reason*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Longuenesse, Béatrice. 2008. Kant's I think versus Descartes' I am a thing that thinks. In *Kant and the early moderns*, ed. Daniel Garber and Béatrice Longuenesse, 9–31. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Maimon, Salomon. 1965. *Gesammelte Werke*. Hildesheim: Olms.
- Matthews, H.E. 1969. Strawson on transcendental idealism. *Philosophical Quarterly* 19(76): 204–220.
- Mayer, Max Ernest. 1896. *Das Verhältnis des Sigismundo Beck zu Kant*. Ph.D. dissertation, Heidelberg University.
- Meerbote, Ralf. 1972. The unknowability of things in themselves. In *Proceedings of the 3rd international Kant Congress*, ed. Lewis White Beck, 415–423. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Melnick, Arthur. 1973. *Kant's analogies of experience*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Melnick, Arthur. 2004. *Themes in Kant's metaphysics and ethics*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press.
- Mendelssohn, Moses. 1758. Philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful. *Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften und der freyen Künste* 3(2): 290–320.
- Meyer, Michel. 1977. Le Paradoxe De l'Object Chez Kant. *Kant-Studien* 68(3): 290–304.

- Meyer, Thomas Ludolf. 1991. *Das Problem eines höchsten Grundsatzes der Philosophie bei Jacob Sigismund Beck*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Michotte, Albert. 1963. *The Perception of Causality*. Trans. T. R. Miles and E. Miles. London: Methuen.
- Michotte, Albert. 1991. *Michotte's experimental phenomenology of perception. Resources for ecological psychology*, ed. Georges Thines, Alan Costall, and George Butterworth. Hillsdale: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Nelson, Leonard. 1971. *Progress and Regress in Philosophy: From Hume and Kant to Hegel and Fries*. Trans. Humphrey Palmer, ed. Julius Kraft, vol. 2. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Nitzan, Lior. 2010. The thought of an object and the object of thought: A critique of Henry E. Allison's 'Two-Aspect' view. *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 92(2): 176–198.
- Nitzan, Lior. 2012. Externality, reality, objectivity, actuality – Kant's fourfold response to idealism. *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 94(2): 147–177.
- Noack, Ludwig. 1853. *Geschichte der Philosophie in gedrängter Übersicht*. Weimar: Landes-Industrie-Comptoir.
- Nuzzo, Angelica. 2007. Fichte's early theory of space. In *Kant und der Frühidealismus*, ed. Jürgen Stolzenberg, 152–174. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.
- Paton, H.J. 1936. *Kant's metaphysic of experience: A commentary on the first half of the 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft'*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Pfau, Thomas. 1994. *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory: Three Essays by F.W.J. Schelling*. Trans. and ed. Thomas Pfau. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Pistorius, Hermann Andreas. 1784. Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können, von Immanuel Kant. *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* 59 (2): 322–356.
- Pistorius, Hermann Andreas. 1786. Erläuterungen über des Herrn Professor Kant Critik der reinen Vernunft, von Joh. Schultze, Königl. Preußischem Hofprediger. *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* 66(1): 92–123.
- Pistorius, Hermann Andreas. 1788. Critik der reinen Vernunft von Immanuel Kant, Prof. in Königsberg. Der Königl. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Berlin Mitgled. Zweite Auflage. *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* 81(2): 343–354.
- Poincare, Henri. 1952. *Science and hypothesis*. New York: Dover.
- Pötschel, Walter. 1910. *J. S. Beck Und Kant*. Ph.D. dissertation, Breslau University.
- Powell, Charles Thomas. 1985. Kant elanguescence, and degrees of reality. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 46: 199–217.
- Powell, Charles Thomas. 1990. *Kant's theory of self-consciousness*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Reinhold, Karl Leonhard. 1789. *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens*. Prag/Jena: Widtmann/Mauke.
- Reinhold, Karl Leonhard. 1790. *Beyträge zur Berichtigung der Mißverständnisse der Philosophen*, vol. 1. Jena: Mauke.
- Reinhold, Karl Leonhard. 1794. *Beyträge zur Berichtigung der Mißverständnisse der Philosophen*, vol. 2. Jena: Mauke.
- Reinhold, Karl Leonhard. 1797. *Auswahl vermischter Schriften*, vol. 2. Jena: J. M. Mauke.
- Reinhold, Ernst Christian Gottlieb. 1839. *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*, 2nd ed. Jena: F. Mauke.
- Reinhold, Karl Leonhard. 1923. *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie*, ed. Raymund Schmidt. Leipzig: Reclam.
- Reinhold, Karl Leonhard. 2005. *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*. Trans. James Hebbeler and ed. Karl Ameriks. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Reiser, Josef. 1934. *Zur Erkenntnislehre J.S. Beck*. Ph.D. dissertation, München University.
- Rickert, Heinrich. 1928. *Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis: Einführung in die Transzendentalphilosophie*, 6th ed. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr.
- Röttgers, Kurt. 1975. *Kritik und Praxis: Zur Geschichte der Kritikbegriffs von Kant bis Marx*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

- Sassen, Brigitte. 2000. *Kant's early critics: The empiricist critique of the theoretical philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schaumann, Johann Christian Gottlieb. 1789. *Über die Transcendentale Aesthetik: Ein kritischer Versuch*. Leipzig: Weidmann.
- Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. 1856. Abhandlungen zur Erläuterung des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre. In *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 1, ed. K.F.A. Schelling, 343–473. Stuttgart: Cotta.
- Schmucker-Hartmann, Josef. 1976. *Der Widerspruch von Vorstellung und Gegenstand/Zum Kantverständnis von Jacob Sigismund Beck*. Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain. Also published as *Das ursprüngliche Vorstellen bei Jakob Sigismund Beck. Versuch einer kritischen Darstellung*. Ph.D. dissertation, Universität Mainz, 1976.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur. 1993. *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 1, ed. Wolfgang Freiherr von Löhneysen. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Schultz, Johann. 1784. *Erläuterung des Herrn Prof. Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Königsberg: Dengel.
- Schultz, Johann. 1785. Review of *Institutiones logicae et metaphysicae*, by J. A. H. Ulrich. *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung* 295: 297–299.
- Schultz, Johann. 1789–1792. *Prüfung der Kantischen Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Königsberg: Nicolovius.
- Schulze, Gottlob Ernst. 1792. *Aenesidemus oder über die Fundamente der von dem Herrn Professor Reinhold in Jena gelieferten Elementar-Philosophie nebst einer Verteidigung des Skeptizismus gegen die Anmassungen der Vernunftkritik*. No publisher or place. Reprinted in *Aetas Kantiana*. Brussels: Culture et Civilisation, 1969.
- Schwab, Johann Christoph. 1796. *Preisschrift über die Frage: Welche Fortschritte die Metaphysik seit Leibnizens und Wolffs Zeiten in Deutschland gemacht hat?* Berlin: Maurer.
- Schwarz, Wolfgang. 1987. Kant's categories of reality and existence. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 48: 343–346.
- Senderowicz, Yaron M. 2005. *The coherence of Kant's transcendental idealism*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Sieda, Wilhelm. 1939. Alt-Rostocker Professoren. *Mecklenburgische Jahrbücher* 103: 17–34.
- Strauss, Michael. 1977. *Meaning and the carriers of meaning: A typology of expression, symbolization and signification*. Haifa: Ha'poalim Publishing House and Haifa University Press (in Hebrew).
- Strauss, Michael. 1984. *Empfindung, Intention und Zeichen: Typologie des Sinntragens*. Freiburg: K. Alber.
- Strawson, Peter Frederick. 1966. *The bounds of sense: An essay of Kant's 'critique of pure reason'*. London: Methuen.
- Stroud, Barry. 1984. *The significance of philosophical scepticism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Stroud, Barry. 2000. *The quest for reality: Subjectivism and the metaphysics of colour*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Thandeka. 1995. *The embodied self: Friedrich Schleiermacher's solution to Kant's problem of the empirical self*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Timmermann, Jens. 2007. *Kant's groundwork of the metaphysics of morals: A commentary*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Toulmin, Stephen Edelston. 1961. *Foresight and understanding: An enquiry into the aims of science*. London: Hutchinson.
- Turbayne, Colin Murray. 1955. Kant's refutation of dogmatic idealism. *Philosophical Quarterly* 5: 225–236.
- Ueberweg, Friedrich. 1866. *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie der Neuzeit*. Berlin: E. S. Mittler und Sohn.
- Unger, Rudolf. 1925. *Hamann und die Aufklärung: Studien zur Vorgeschichte des romantischen Geistes im 18. Jahrhundert*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. Halle: Niemeyer.

- Vaihinger, Hans. 1884. Zu Kants Widerlegung des Idealismus. In *Strassburger Abhandlungen zur Philosophie, Eduard Zeller zu seinem siebenzigsten geburtstage*, ed. Eduard Zeller, 88–164. Freiburg: Mohr.
- Vaihinger, Hans. 1935. *The Philosophy of 'as if': A System of the Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind*. Trans. C.K. Ogden. 2nd ed. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Van Cleve, James. 1999. *Problems from Kant*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Visbeck, J.C.C. 1794. *Die Hauptmomente der Reinholdischen Elementar-Philosophie, in Beziehung auf die Einwendung des Aenesidemus untersucht*. Leipzig: Göschen.
- von Prantl, Carl. 1875. Jakob Sigismund Beck. In *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie*, vol. 2. Leipzig: Duncker & Humboldt.
- Walker, Ralph C.S. 2010. Kant on the number of worlds. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 18(5): 821–843.
- Wallner, Ingrid M. 1979. *J.S. Beck's phenomenological transformation of Kant's critical philosophy*. Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University.
- Wallner, Ingrid M. 1984. A new look at J. S. Beck's 'Doctrine of the Standpoint'. *Kant-Studien* 75: 294–316.
- Wallner, Ingrid M. 1985. J.S. Beck and Husserl: The new episteme in the Kantian tradition. *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 23(2): 195–220.
- Weishaupt, Adam. 1788. *Ueber die Gründe und Gewissheit der menschlichen Erkenntnis: Zur Prüfung der Kantischen Critik der reinen Vernunft*. Nürnberg: Gratenau.
- Wilkerson, T.E. 1976. *Kant's critique of pure reason: A commentary for students*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Windelband, Wilhelm. 1922. *Die Geschichte der neueren Philosophie in ihrem Zusammenhange mit der allgemeinen Kultur und den besonderen Wissenschaften*, 7/8th ed. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel.
- Wizenmann, Thomas. 1786. *Der Resultate Jacobi'schen und Mendelssohn'schen Philosophie kritisch untersucht von einem Freywilligen*. Leipzig: Göschen.
- Wizenmann, Thomas. 1787. An den Herrn Professor Kant von dem Verfasser der Resultate Jakobischer und Mendelssohnscher Philosophie kritisch untersucht von einem Freywilligen. *Deutsches Museum* 1: 116–156.
- Zweig, Arnulf. 1999. Introduction to *Correspondence*, by Immanuel Kant, 1–42. Trans. A. Zweig. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Index

A

- Abela, Paul, 227, 296, 297, 303, 308, 314
Adickes, Erich, 11, 23, 81, 84, 122, 149, 192,
194, 197, 234–236, 257, 258, 260, 263,
265–290
Affecting object/influencing object/the objects
that affects/influences the senses, 47,
57, 62, 63, 85, 86, 91, 99, 105, 189, 191,
192, 214, 217, 241, 259, 321, 334,
335, 349
Allison, Henry E., 23, 63, 192, 193, 200, 218,
226, 234–265, 270, 276, 282, 293, 297,
299, 306, 308, 352
Ameriks, Karl, 6, 35, 223, 227, 266, 291,
297, 302

B

- Beck, Lewis White, 12, 40
Beiser, Frederick C., 35, 40, 42, 43, 56, 66, 68,
72, 120, 179, 198–200, 204, 250, 257,
258, 285, 297, 328
Bennett, Jonathan Francis, 219
Berkeley, George, 11, 35, 48, 66, 68, 79, 80, 93,
99, 129, 295
Bird, Graham, 6, 217, 221, 226, 238, 241–244,
246, 250, 254, 257, 269, 291, 292, 306,
326, 327, 330, 358, 364
Breazeale, Daniel, 87, 197, 199, 201, 203, 208,
211, 212, 215, 337

C

- Caranti, Luigi, 46, 292, 293, 295, 297, 301,
304, 305, 314, 320

- Cassirer, Ernst, 6, 11, 40, 42, 44, 81, 115, 120,
160, 280, 285, 335, 355
Coherence, 17, 28, 29, 34, 36–39, 47, 48, 49,
153, 185, 195, 295, 305, 314, 315, 317,
318, 320, 344
Critique of Practical Reason, 72, 81, 328,
363, 369
Critique of Pure Reason, 6, 17, 19, 28, 29, 34,
35, 36, 38, 46, 49–59, 63, 69, 81, 119,
130, 138, 192, 212, 214, 217, 243, 293,
294, 295, 297, 315, 326, 327, 330, 339,
341, 349, 358, 360, 375
Critique of the Power of Judgment, 81, 247, 369

D

- De Vleeschauwer, Herman Jean, 12, 43
Di Giovanni, George, 5, 15, 16, 81, 89, 91, 95,
111, 119, 126, 127, 132, 149, 154, 157,
220, 221, 358
Dilthey, Wilhelm, 11, 12, 76, 84, 122, 197,
356, 381

E

- Eberhard, Johann August, 69, 79, 212, 330–333
Einzig möglicher Standpunct (Beck), 5, 10, 16,
19, 21, 75–91, 95, 99, 112, 117, 125,
127, 130, 131, 147, 149, 150, 153, 160,
162, 176, 187, 194, 196, 255, 345, 348,
355, 356, 358
Emundts, Dina, 237, 296
Erdmann, Johann Eduard, 12, 81, 381
Existence, 5, 29, 62, 79, 92, 98, 124, 150, 180,
366, 376

F

- Falkenstein, Lorne, 56
 Feder, Johann Georg Heinrich, 12, 63, 67–68, 179, 268, 318
 Fichte, Johann Gottlieb, 6, 10–16, 21, 61, 75, 84, 87–89, 111, 127, 131, 149, 175, 191, 192, 193, 196–216, 234, 261, 269, 313, 322, 325, 337, 338, 345, 347, 348, 351, 352, 354, 355, 357, 358, 370, 371
 Fischer, Kuno, 381
 Förster, Eckart, 16, 358, 360
 Forster, Michael N., 6, 33, 56, 279
 Freedom, 4, 7, 43, 71, 72, 88, 142, 194, 204, 208, 230, 246, 249, 250, 251, 329, 330, 336, 364–371

G

- Garve, Christian, 68, 79, 345
 Given/Givenness, 3, 30, 62, 77, 93, 102, 109, 119, 154, 182, 364, 379, 382
 God, 4, 5, 7, 30, 31, 37, 38, 44, 47, 71, 72, 190, 211, 223, 227, 230, 246, 247, 248, 250, 251, 278, 280, 283, 289, 317, 321, 324, 325, 331, 332, 336–338, 364, 366, 367, 377, 378
Grundriß der kritischen Philosophie (Beck), 10, 90, 196, 345
 Guyer, Paul, 34, 36, 57, 171, 225, 227, 247, 266, 296–301, 306, 309, 359

H

- Hamann, Johann Georg, 56, 347
 Hanna, Robert, 226
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 12
 Heller, Edmund, 16, 122, 149, 151, 361
 Henrich, Dieter, 202, 205
 Herz, Marcus, 51, 53, 55, 56, 58
 Hume, David, 56, 64, 164

I

- Illusion, 7, 14, 24, 48, 49, 66, 68, 70, 102, 128, 130, 168, 169, 268, 269, 283, 291, 295, 297, 299–303, 306, 309–312, 326
 Immanence, 41, 55, 64, 65, 69, 175, 186, 192, 201
Inaugural Dissertation (Kant), 17, 18, 28, 29, 31, 32, 39–59, 70, 162, 165, 166, 240, 250, 252, 259, 264, 285, 295, 317, 345, 347, 358
 Innate, 42, 97, 106, 160, 252

J

- Jacobi, Friedrich Heinrich, 18, 64, 65, 71, 86, 175, 212, 328, 336, 347
 Judgment, 5, 33, 77, 99, 113, 117, 135, 152, 194, 369, 376

K

- Kant, Immanuel, 6, 31, 32, 34, 36, 41, 42, 45, 63, 64, 66, 71, 77, 80, 238, 247, 298, 303, 328, 359, 364, 265
 Kemp-Smith, Norman, 296, 349
 Klotz, Christian, 112, 205, 296
 Kroner, Richard, 11, 12
 Kuehn, Manfred, 40, 56, 164, 224, 226

L

- Langton, Rae, 223, 224, 239, 240
 Laywine, Alison, 28, 34
 Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, 31, 40, 41, 47, 111, 120, 164
 Longuenesse, Béatrice, 296

M

- Maimon, Salomon, 15, 111, 126, 175, 213, 255, 268, 318
 Melnick, Arthur, 233, 234, 292, 312, 318, 319
 Metaphysics, 4, 5, 17, 27, 29, 30, 33–34, 36, 39–49, 54, 56, 62, 71, 77, 202, 220, 226, 232, 250, 253, 258, 264, 269, 279, 280, 306, 328, 334, 360, 364, 368, 378, 383
 Meyer, Thomas Ludolf, 14, 15, 81, 84, 87, 88, 179, 185, 190, 197, 198, 381
 Morality, 7, 39, 43, 71, 72, 141, 164, 205, 336–338, 364, 366–371

N

- Noumena/Noumenon
 negative noumena, 23, 227
 positive noumena, 131, 249, 250, 251, 272, 277, 287, 325

O

- Object
 empirical/phenomenal/phenomenon, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 19, 22, 47, 48, 52, 63, 125, 128, 142, 217, 226–230, 232, 235, 236, 240, 243, 250, 257, 260, 262, 263, 266,

- 268–270, 273, 282, 286, 293, 296, 297,
307, 311, 319, 321, 335, 340, 370
transcendental, 4, 23, 24, 64, 99, 180, 181,
201, 205, 236, 252–262, 264, 270, 278,
281–289, 293, 305, 309, 310, 324, 325,
327, 329, 331, 342, 343
- Objective conditions, 189
- Objectivity, 7, 9, 15–18, 22–25, 27, 29–59, 61,
63, 67, 68, 77, 80, 85, 118, 122, 151,
152, 153, 164, 185, 186, 195, 201, 204,
210, 227, 232, 255, 257, 258, 268, 275,
283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 290–292, 296,
297, 299, 300, 304–314, 318–320, 322,
334, 339–344
- Original representing, 13, 16, 20, 78, 82, 88,
89, 93, 110–115, 117–133, 136–138,
141–143, 145, 148–152, 154, 157–159,
162, 164, 167, 172, 177, 182, 187, 190,
193, 195, 196, 198, 206, 207, 339,
341–344, 346, 360, 363
- P**
- Paralogism (Fourth Paralogism), 35, 44, 52,
64, 70, 92, 162, 214, 261, 269, 293,
295, 296, 297, 299, 300, 302, 307, 310,
315, 339
- Pistorius, Hermann Andreas, 68, 71, 318
- Positing, 87, 113, 122–130, 132, 133, 141,
142, 151, 152, 158, 163, 166, 203, 204,
210, 215, 253, 261, 304, 310, 314,
339–344, 351
- Possibility
logical, 30, 32, 132, 157, 229, 236, 237,
240, 249, 251, 264, 270–274, 281, 290,
311, 312, 326, 328–330, 366, 369, 371
real, 132, 173, 229, 237, 240, 246, 248, 249,
251, 270, 271–273, 285, 311, 312, 326,
330, 367, 368
- Prauss, Gerold, 16, 264
- Prolegomena* (Kant), 30, 48, 62, 66, 122, 152,
207, 297, 305, 315, 316, 325
- R**
- Realism, 8, 21, 22, 35, 37, 39, 64, 66, 68, 97,
121, 129, 146, 175, 186, 199, 200, 201,
204, 209, 205, 209, 212, 215–217, 221,
226, 227, 257, 259, 264, 266, 267, 271,
284, 291, 306, 308, 318–323, 339
- Refutation of idealism, 6, 35, 69, 93, 184, 214,
265, 269, 290–324, 339
- Reinhold, Karl Leonard, 6, 10, 11, 15, 16, 21,
61, 75–77, 81, 84–87, 89
- Religion, 5, 43, 336–338
- Rickert, Heinrich, 291, 292
- S**
- Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph, 11, 12,
16, 87, 149, 188, 189, 194, 195, 206,
207, 210
- Schopenhauer, Arthur, 12, 307, 308
- Schultz, Johann, 53, 150, 212, 345, 347–351,
355, 356–358, 381
- Schulze, Gottlob Ernst, 18, 65, 66
- Senderowicz, Yaron M., 226, 257
- Sense perception, 18, 28, 61–66, 97, 103, 114,
115, 149, 150, 151, 152, 158, 159, 162,
163, 168, 169, 171–173, 181, 196, 206,
215, 217, 266, 300–303, 308, 310, 312,
321, 343, 344, 346
- Skepticism, 6, 33, 44, 291, 292, 311, 318–323
- Strawson, Peter Frederick, 218, 219, 226,
230, 296
- Stroud, Barry, 292
- Subject
empirical, 78, 168, 321, 324
transcendental, 259, 260
- Subjective conditions of objectivity, 9, 15–18,
25, 27, 29–61, 186, 227, 332
- Subjective idealism, 11, 18, 28, 66–70, 126,
127, 128, 190, 198, 205, 209, 210, 217,
221, 294, 296
- Subjectivity/Subjectivism, 9, 55, 59, 63, 66,
68, 186, 292, 293, 294, 296, 304, 306,
322, 334
- T**
- Thing in itself/Things in themselves, 27–72,
363–371
- Timmermann, Jens, 330, 364, 368
- Transcendence, 55, 64, 65, 69, 175, 186,
201, 376
- Transcendental/critical idealism, 64, 66, 79,
92, 97, 98, 102, 130, 169, 186, 190, 199,
204, 205, 207, 216, 227, 264, 310
- Transcendental deduction, 6, 148, 228, 257,
258, 268, 275, 282, 288, 297, 329, 366

Two-aspect view, 4, 22, 23, 46, 216–290, 293,
311, 340
Two-world view, 4, 46, 216–235, 263

V

Vaihinger, Hans, 163, 169, 210, 256, 283,
296, 338
Van Cleve, James, 296

W

Walker, Ralph C.S., 222, 223, 225,
226, 313
Wallner, Ingrid M., 11, 13–16, 119, 126, 128,
137, 145, 150
Weishaupt, Adam, 68, 318
Windelband, Wilhelm, 179
Wizenmann, Thomas, 71, 72, 336