

Can Mental Content Externalism Prove Realism?¹

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Recently, Kenneth Westphal has presented a highly interesting and innovative reading of Kant's critical philosophy.² This reading continues a tradition of Kant-scholarship of which, e.g., Paul Guyer's work is representative, and in which the anti-idealistic potential of Kant's critical philosophy is pitted against its idealistic self-understanding. Much of the work in this tradition leaves matters at observing the tensions this introduces in Kant's work. But Westphal's proposed interpretation goes farther. Its attractiveness derives for the most part from the promise that it permits an *internal* critique of Kant's transcendental idealism (TI), that is, a critique that is based on the very resources of Kantian transcendental philosophy.³ In contrast to these resources, which currently seem to go through a sort of revival in an enormous array of fields, TI is notorious for dismaying even sympathetic interpreters. How attractive and needed such an *internal* critique of TI would be becomes all the more patent when we place such a promise in the context of some of the contemporary discussions about TI after Allison's famous defense of it. Before directly engaging with Westphal's interpretation, I would therefore like to quickly sketch on what background it acquires its force (I). After characterizing the main features of Westphal's view (II), and supporting it in more detail by an account of Kant's theory of cognitive significance (III), I then want to review the extent of its success to present Kant as issuing an anti-skeptical argument (IV.1), or semantic views that are incompatible with TI (IV.2), or a 'proof of *not merely empirical* realism' (IV.3). I agree that purely idealist readings of Kant are mistaken. Westphal's

¹ This paper derives from the comments I made on Westphal's abbreviated presentation of the paper "How Does Kant Prove that We Perceive, and not Merely Imagine, Physical Objects?" (*Review of Metaphysics* 59 (June 2006): 781-806) at the Meeting of the Central Division of the APA, 04-29-2006. I very much thank Kenneth Westphal and the organizer of the session for the opportunity for this discussion, and also for their encouragement. With regard to the latter, and criticism, I also thank Tom McCarthy, Cristina Lafont, as well as Juliet Floyd for advice.

² This reading is developed in detail in his book *Kant's Transcendental Proof of Realism* (Cambridge/London: CUP, 2004). Further illuminating and relevant material can be found in his articles "Kant, Wittgenstein, and Transcendental Chaos", *Inquiry* 28:4 (Oct. 2005): 303-23, "Can Pragmatic Realists Argue Transcendentally?", in Shook, J.R. (ed.) *Pragmatic Naturalism and Realism*, Amherst NY: Prometheus, 2003, 151-75, as well as in his "Epistemic Reflection and Cognitive Significance in Kant's Transcendental Response to Skepticism", *Kant-Studien* 94 (2003), 135-171.

³ Westphal 2004

arguments have done more than many others to make that point stick. But I hesitate on all three counts mentioned in IV. I don't see Kant's semantic views –on which the main weight in Westphal's proofs rests—as actually allowing the proof of a form of realism in excess of empirical realism (ER), or as excluding TI, or as providing a stringent anti-skeptical argument. These discussions will display the deep interest in clarifying these points about Kant that goes far beyond exegetical aims, for two reasons. Firstly, Westphal's view is representative of a certain way of accessing Kant's *Critique*, and my attempt at clarifying this view's scope, merits and liabilities is intended to assess, at the same time, the tasks of this *kind* of interpretation. Secondly, such clarification requires a general philosophical standpoint with regard to the relations between semantic externalism, realism and anti-skepticism. It is really these relations that my following considerations are after, for which end the task of commenting on Kant and some of his interpreters merely serves as a means.

I. Background

The feature of Kant's TI that most contemporary commentators found difficult to accommodate is his claim that, since the specification of objects of experience is dependent on the structure of the human cognitive apparatus, there is no clear sense in which the objects of experience as such could not be taken to be so dependent, since in saying what such objects might be we either specify them in human ways or, if we don't, cannot claim to have referred to objects at all, let alone objects of experience. Whatever of these 'human ways' has to be in place to speak of objects at all therefore constitutes a set of inevitable conditions that are presupposed throughout experience. It is obvious that this is a leading idea running through many of Kant's main achievements, like his Copernican turn, his analysis of space and time as forms of experience rather than independent entities, and his insistence that experience properly speaking is always of objects as they appear in the human cognitive apparatus and not of things in themselves. Because it is such a basic idea, and because there is a straightforward constructivist reading of the intuition in the sense that the objects of experience are *mind-dependent* or 'made up by the mind', TI, as opposed to Kant's methodological insights, has seemed

repulsive to many who, correctly, require a conception of empirical knowledge to incorporate a robust conception of objectivity, one in which the cognitive achievement of experience consists in portraying the environs as they actually are, no matter how we think they are. If this is a legitimate requirement on conceptions of experiential knowledge, however, it obviously conflicts with Kant's basic idea because it precisely appears to require that experience achieves knowledge of what Kant calls 'things in themselves'. Kant thus seems quite straightforwardly to confuse features of objects of experience with features of our ways of accessing and specifying them. In reaction to the then prevalent custom of merely scoffing at TI, Allison's work has been able to show ways of easing the dismay by re-interpreting many of the core distinctions of Kant's TI in a deflationary way, in particular, by refurbishing the Kantian distinction between things in themselves and appearances into a (methodological or epistemic) distinction between two modes of presentation of the same, presumably commonsense-objects.⁴ This helps to dispel 'readings' or endorsements of Kant's TI that reject things in themselves and retain only appearances, and do so on the sole reason that, according to Kant's own TI, the latter are the only epistemically accessible 'things'. By effectively removing the things themselves from Kant's epistemological picture, these readings also forego any resources to distinguish Kant from those whom he claimed to be in a position to criticize. In contrast, an Allisonian defense of TI avoids this embarrassment. However, not only are there some serious worries about the ultimate coherence of the view that one 'aspect' of objects of experience (essentially 'mind-dependent' appearances) is that they are things in themselves (i.e., by definition 'mind-independent'),⁵ and other worries about the strategy of portraying a difference as merely epistemic that Kant clearly meant to characterize objective properties of things.⁶ Even if the view can be worked out as a consistent view, one clear drawback of the gain of deflationist interpretations is that they encourage re-

⁴ Allison, Henry E., *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven: Yale UP 1983), who builds on previous work by Prauss (Prauss, Gerold, *Kant und das Problem der Dinge an sich*, Bonn: Bouvier 1974), Bird (Bird, Graham *Kant's Theory of Knowledge*, New York: Humanities Press, 2nd ed. 1973 (orig. 1962)) and others. Howell's *Kant's Transcendental Deduction* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992) contains a scathing criticism of the very strategy.

⁵ Van Cleeve's *Problems From Kant* (New York/Oxford: OUP, 1999) offers a sustained argument against any sort of one-world-and-two-aspects theory in ch.9.

⁶ See, e.g., Van Cleeve, *Problems From Kant*, Appendix, as well as Wood, Allan, *Kant* (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2005), ch.10.

constructing TI itself as not actually any, or at least as a merely innocuous form of idealism. After all, according to the view, appearances are to be, in some contexts, 'considered as' *mind-independent*; and if so considering them is *correct*, the entities in question have that property.⁷ Calling *that* 'defending idealism' (as opposed to subverting it) surely is somewhat misleading. Worse still for a presumed defense of *Kant's* idealism, this deflation of idealist commitments is at odds with Kant's contention that TI is *the very reason why* his arguments –among others, the *anti-skeptical* ones—can be formulated and issue truth-evaluable conclusions,⁸ precisely because it enables us to think, via the Copernican Revolution, the constitutive dependency of objects of experience on the structure of our cognitive apparatus. Only given this inverse correspondence can we, according to Kant, hope to make informative *a priori* assertions that are truth-apt (where truth is correspondence⁹) and hope to be able to use *our* cognitive apparatus to issue true assertions about its limitations *and* universal applicability to all the objects beings like us can hope to access. Given this possibility of truth-evaluable assertions regarding the *actual* epistemological and metaphysical import of our cognitive apparatus, we can hope to point to *facts* that rebut the skeptic (or, for that matter, the rationalist metaphysician) without claiming ourselves knowledge of reality itself, and thus the ability to compare how things are with the world and with us, in order to show that the skeptic and the metaphysician both got their facts wrong –an evidently impermissible move in this dialectical context. That is, Kant claims that without the *idealist strategy* in TI, his epistemological insights could not take the form of cognitive claims. Removing, deflating or downplaying the idealist element, therefore, *prima facie* appears to jettison Kant's own overall project of explaining how cognizers with a contingently conditioned subjectivity

⁷ I am not pursuing the other possibility that so considering them is '*merely* a matter of description', merely appearance or even incorrect, that is, the option of converting things-in-themselves themselves into mere constructs. That move would make the envisaged 'defense' of TI collapse into positions it criticizes, which *eliminate* things in themselves.

⁸ See Kant, Immanuel: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (transl. by Paul Carus, reprinted in Logan, Beryl (ed.): *Immanuel Kant's Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics in Focus*, London: Routledge 1996), sec. 36, Appendix, 130-1. *CPR comment on the Antinomies* The quotes in the text from Kant's CPR follow the translation provided by Werner S. Pluhar (*Critique of Pure Reason*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996) and the standard A/B pagination of the original. Citations of the *Prolegomena* are to the edition here mentioned. The quotes from other works follow the Akademie-Ausgabe, which is cited as 'AA', with volume number and page directly appended. Where necessary, I provide or amend translations of original passages.

⁹ See Kant, Immanuel: *Critique of Pure Reason* (henceforth cited as CPR), A58/B82-3, A820/B848, *Logic*, AAIX, 50.

could still, as such subjects, rationally claim that some of their judgments (those expressive of 'experience') are genuine cognitive achievements of objectivity, i.e. such that they can not only meet the standards of the tribunal of a world that is the same for everyone, no matter what they think, but also stand safe against skeptical subversions and free of metaphysical fantasies. By either deflating or eliminating Kant's idealism, both Allison's defense (which assimilates appearances and things in themselves and epistemicizes both) and the criticisms of TI it reacts to (which eliminate things in themselves) have thus to remain *external* to important aspects of Kant's critical philosophy.¹⁰

That deflationist readings of TI alone might not suffice to deflect all criticisms because some of them point to a fundamental problem (as opposed to being expressions of an Anglophone anti-idealist bias) becomes clear when we ask with Paul Guyer:¹¹ how could Kant be as successful as he seems in refuting Hume's skepticism regarding general empirical knowledge and causality (in the Analogies), as well as Cartesian external-world skepticism (in the Refutation) by showing that, in some sense, we cannot but believe in objects other than representations, but at the same time defend the substantive metaphysical reductionism of TI, including its views that all objects of experience are *nothing but appearances* and these, in turn, *mere representations*, and that we cannot know anything of things in themselves, that is, representation-independent entities? It is at this point where Kant's anti-idealism, expressed in his substantive commitment to the *existence* of things in themselves, begins to appear itself as incoherent or, at least, quite disconnected from his theory of empirical knowledge, and therefore detachable from the latter. But then, after all, Kant comes out again, as far as his theory of knowledge is concerned, as a *full blown* idealist, but with a metaphysical realist's faith in a non-subjective basis of empirical knowledge.¹² What an *internal* critique of Kant's TI would

¹⁰ Recently, Lucy Allais very usefully explained the constraints for a successful reconstruction of Kant's TI. See her "Kant's One World: Interpreting 'Transcendental Idealism'", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 12(4) (2004), 655-84, as well as "Kant's Transcendental Idealism and Contemporary Anti-Realism", *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 11(4), 2003, 369-92. My discussion of these topics has benefited much from her trenchant work.

¹¹ Cf. Guyer, Paul, *Kant*, London: Routledge, 2006, 117.

¹² The third classical possibility to react to Guyer's question is Kemp Smith's option to see the lesson of TI as discovering the co-originality of subjectivity and objectivity as inevitably simultaneous aspects of the objects of experience (and space and time). See Gardner, Sebastian, "Introduction" to Kemp Smith, N.: *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, with a new introduction by Sebastian Gardner*,

therefore have to do is to show both (1) that Kant's commitment to things in themselves is *not merely* an act of faith but a systematic and indispensable part of his very theory of empirical knowledge, and (2) that it therefore commits his theory of cognition (as opposed to detachable metaphysical attachments) to *non-mental entities*. This is precisely what Westphal's interpretation claims to do, namely to adduce a 'proof for (not from)' realism from the standpoint of and on the basis of the instruments of Kant's transcendental theory of cognition. Its bottom line is that self-conscious cognition(s) themselves are not possible unless the cognizers are in cognitive contact or interaction with (spatio-temporal) extra-mental particulars. Westphal takes the sting in Guyer's question to heart, which presents us with an uneasy choice: either accept (or 'defend') Kant's TI, but then accept also that his insights don't and can't go all the way against the skeptics,¹³ or –which is the more popular line—take Kant's insights all the way, but then sink TI together with the idealisms inspiring the skeptics.¹⁴

II. Exegesis

Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003 (orig. 1918), xviii-xix. However, in the face of Guyer's question, merely observing this has to seem rather as a restatement of the problem than as a satisfactory solution to it.

¹³ Wilkerson, T.E., *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. A Commentary for Students*, Bristol: Thoemmes, 1998, 30, 180-200.

¹⁴ The interpreters who have chosen this option are too numerous to warrant selecting only a few. Famously, Strawson (1959, 1966) takes this view (see Strawson, Peter *The Bounds of Sense*, London, N.Y.: Routledge, 1999 (orig. 1966)*), and after him all the work on Kant inspired by him, like, for example, Gareth Evans (see Evans, Gareth *The Varieties of Reference*, Oxford:Oxford UP 1982,*). Interestingly, neither option seems to bother taking Kant's faith (as prominently expressed, e.g., in sec. 36 and the Appendix of the *Prolegomena*, as well as the Preface to the B-edition of the CPR) seriously that TI is *the very reason why* his arguments and insights against the skeptics can be formulated and issue truth-evaluable conclusions. It is my impression that this might be another fruitful point of departure: suppose that this is true, and that things as such, not merely representations are part and parcel of the conditions of our cognitive achievements: what does this tell us about the very conceptions of 'thing in itself' and 'appearance'? For example, it might be that, as Arthur Collins suggests, Kant's expression "things in themselves" is not best seen as always designating noumena (i.e. things *merely* thought), and that his expression "appearance" most of the time *also* designates a mind-independent, spatio-temporal particular (see Collins, Arthur, *Possible Experience*, Berkeley:University of California Press 1999, ch.8). It seems to me that this line of thought would be congenial with Westphal's general line of interpretation, although if so, his main claims about the relations of Kant's theory of cognition to his TI would have to be recast. Although I will make use of some such ideas in the following, I cannot claim to present more than hints.

Westphal sides with the second option. He calls TI outright "false", concurs with Strawson, Stroud and many others in finding it "repulsive",¹⁵ and "aim[s] to dispense with" it.¹⁶ Moreover, he supports Guyer's view that Kant's most important insights do not depend on and are separable from TI.¹⁷ Although Westphal leaves the details of his conception of TI largely open, he clearly means to capture what –also encouraged by Kant's often misleading (or misled?) presentation of it in his *Prolegomena*—has come to be the received view of TI, which rests on two basic assumptions: (a) In saying that objects of experience are nothing but 'appearances', Kant could not be understood to have said anything other than that all objects of experience *are* nothing but a kind of *mental*, or at least mind-dependent entity that consists of nothing but (inner, private) representations.¹⁸ (b) Therefore, Kant's Copernican revolution, in saying that determining the conditions of empirical knowledge could only proceed by determining the structure of our cognitive equipment and identifying whatever its proper function requires as traits of what is known, could not be understood to have said anything other than that all *transcendental conditions* of empirical knowledge are, insofar as determinable at all, *subjective, mind-dependent* or even created (or contributed) by the subject of knowledge.¹⁹ Taking 'idealism' to refer to the thesis that there is, among the basic

¹⁵ Westphal ***

¹⁶ "Kant, Wittgenstein, and Transcendental Chaos", 321, fn37.

¹⁷ "Epistemic Reflection and Cognitive Reference", 157 fn45.

¹⁸ It is astonishing how such a reading could have taken such a foothold in the face of Kant's sustained and untiring efforts in arguing against idealist-induced sorts of skepticism. For, according to this reading, what Kant says is exactly what the cited skeptics (and Berkeley, the third of those seen by Kant as idealist *detractors* of empirical knowledge) say themselves. Nonetheless, there are important exceptions to this common assumption. Graham Bird, for example, notes exactly the same astonishment (see Bird, Graham, *The Revolutionary Kant*, Chicago: Open Court, 2006, *). Marcus Willaschek registers the same bafflement and quaintly but effectively points to Kant's systematic distinctions between 'mere appearance' and 'appearance', as well as, more importantly, between veridical appearance and illusion –the awareness of which also is entertaining a kind of representation (see Willaschek, Marcus, "Phaenomena/Noumena und die Amphibolie der Reflexionsbegriffe", in Mohr, G./Willaschek, M. (eds.): *Immanuel Kant: Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1998, 325-52). Both present insurmountable obstacles for a view that identifies appearance and representation, and construes the latter as mental entities. The problem, differently put, is that Kant was adamant that his conception of appearances as objects of experience rebuts empirical idealism. But if the domain of appearances is taken to coincide with that of mental representations, there patently is no room for such distance. The mentalist interpretation needs to assume that Kant himself would not have noticed, or that he would have been unable to solve this relatively unobvious problem and therefore remained with a view discouraged by his most important achievements. The latter, exculpatory position seems to be more widespread (Guyer, for instance, seems to tend to this strategy).

¹⁹ That this is Westphal's view of TI becomes clearest in his "Kant, Wittgenstein, and Transcendental Chaos", *Inquiry* 28:4 (Oct. 2005): 303-23, 321-2.

denizens of the world known to us, nothing other than mental entities, we could call this, following Collins (1999), the *idealist reading* of TI.²⁰ It is this idealist understanding of TI and its 'mentalization' of objects to which we are related in experience²¹ that Westphal regards as untenable, dispensable and at odds with Kant's externalist conception of mental content (while probably one of Kant's own (mis-)understandings of TI).

At the same time, Westphal claims, first, that proper attention to the method and claims of Kant's analysis of the conditions of empirical cognition reveals (at least) three major "transcendental proofs for (not 'from') realism"²² that are operative in Kant's overall argument. Along similar lines as, e.g., Bird (1962), Westphal's interpretation in effect attributes to Kant the pursuit of two projects that pull in opposite directions: on the one hand, Kant develops an original, new and realist-tending theory of human cognition and representation, and on the other, he embeds this 'theory of experience' into a philosophical superstructure that is declaredly idealist. According to Westphal, Kant's own best and most important insights against Cartesian and Humean skepticisms derive from the realism of Kant's theory of cognition, which, however, directly undermines the very repulsive doctrine of TI that Kant himself held as partly responsible for the success of his arguments. Westphal says: "Kant proves that we perceive rather than merely imagine physical objects in space and time. (...) [But] Kant's proof succeeds in ways, and to an extent, that even Kant did not appreciate. (...) Indeed, parts of Kant's proof refute his key arguments for transcendental idealism."²³ Westphal's second claim is that the

²⁰ In Graham Bird's fitting term, this interpretive tendency can be described as ascribing a "traditionalist" project to Kant, particularly *including* his TI, as opposed to the "revolutionary" one that commentators like Guyer, Bird, Collins see Kant as pursuing (see Bird, Graham, *The Revolutionary Kant*, Chicago: Open Court, 2006, 15-18). As will become clear, I side with the latter, against Westphal's bifurcation between ascribing a revolutionary strategy to Kant's theory of cognition, and a 'traditionalist' tendency to his metatheory, TI.

²¹ Allais uses the term 'mentalization' in this apt way in her "Kant's One World" to describe an idealist understanding of the objects of experience, i.e. *appearances*, which she rejects. Westphal, however, would say that the illicitness of mentalizing the objects we are related to in experience, hence via sensation, shows that they are not (merely) appearances but (also?) things in themselves (where Westphal assumes the standard, 'mentalized' reading of 'appearance'). This is why I needed the awkward formulation in the text. Both would agree that 'mentalizing' the objects involved in experience is illicit because of the role of extra-mental elements in cognition and thought. For a decidedly externalist interpretation of 'appearance', see Collins, Arthur, *Possible Experience*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1999.

²² Westphal, Kenneth R., "How Does Kant Prove?", 785/806.

²³ Westphal, Kenneth R., "How Does Kant Prove?", 782. He puts the point more strongly in his "Can Pragmatic Realists": "A sound version of the standard objection to Kant's arguments for transcendental idealism (...) *can be deduced from* Kant's own principles and analysis in the first *Critique*." (160)

realism underlying much of Kant's theory of human cognition provides in itself compelling grounds to believe what the conclusion of Kant's famous and notoriously difficult 'Refutation of Idealism' asserts, viz. that we could not count ourselves as self-conscious thinkers unless we were not at the same time subjects of experience with genuinely extra-mental particulars.²⁴ In short, Kant's critical reconstruction of cognition by itself already successfully constitutes, or at least supports, an anti-skeptical position.²⁵ Westphal's third claim is that the kind of realism contained in most important parts of Kant's analysis of cognition is strictly incompatible with TI and empirical realism (ER) as both positions need to be construed by Kant.²⁶

In the following, I want to support and enhance Westphal's first claim, namely that Kant's actual analysis of the conditions of human cognition –particularly Kant's semantics of cognitive representation, his "Mental Content Externalism" (MCE) — displays and requires a form of commonsense-realism regarding extra-mental particulars.²⁷ For this purpose, I will present further arguments that suggest that we should take MCE and its realist implications as established and intended by Kant's theory of representation. On this basis, I will raise two related questions, one epistemological, and one metaphysical. The epistemological question is whether and to what extent Kant's

²⁴ Westphal, "How Does Kant Prove?", 805, asserts that the realist underpinnings of Kant's theory of cognition provide the means for "a genuinely transcendental proof of the conclusion of Kant's Refutation of Idealism", and that "this proof is strongly reinforced by Kant's two transcendental proofs of mental content externalism."

²⁵ This has two related consequences. Firstly, the insertion of the 'Refutation of Idealism' (and the attendant material in the preface and other related parts) into the 2nd edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* could almost be seen as an exercise of emphasis or 'making it explicit' for those hard at hearing, and the success of Kant's criticism of skeptically idealist positions would not depend on the success of this contentious argument alone. Secondly, and more closely related to Westphal's rejection of TI, the third claim is meant to illustrate that Kant's contention that we need TI to account for the success of his anti-skeptical arguments (the 'Refutation' included) is mistaken. Kant, as it were, misidentified the place in his own theory that has this anti-skeptical potential.

²⁶ Westphal, "How Does Kant Prove", 802, speaks of an "unqualified realism about molar objects in our environs (...) not some transcendently qualified, merely 'empirical' realism."

²⁷ I take this to refer to a relatively unsophisticated view of objects of experience and their relation to subjects of experience, along the lines spelled out, e.g., by Peter Strawson in his "Perception and its Objects" (in Dancy, Jonathan (ed.): *Perceptual Knowledge*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988, 92-112), where he terms the view "our pre-theoretical scheme" (102) and ascribes to us (the subjects of experience) the ability to normally distinguish between experiences of seeing (etc.) objects and the objects themselves, between the way our impressions represent the objects we experience and the way the objects actually are, and the ability to be, in the case of actual perception, immediately aware of the objects (where the latter does not entail, in our pre-theoretical scheme, any claim as to the infallibility of our attributions of properties to that which we are immediately aware of).

analysis of the conditions of cognition, if it really encourages realist commitments, can actually count as a stringent anti-skeptical argument. I am less convinced than Westphal that Kant actually can give a proof "for (not from)" anti-skepticism *precisely when* he gives a proof "for (not from)" mental content-externalism.²⁸ The second, metaphysical question concerns the relationship of MCE to TI and ER, respectively. Clearly, the realism induced from MCE conflicts with Kant's TI only insofar as the latter *has to be* read as entailing that the subject-matter of experience –what Kant famously terms 'appearance'—is mental or mind-dependent. However, several recent studies show²⁹ that this 'mentalizing of appearances' is not the only, not the uniquely faithful, and certainly not the most fruitful interpretation of Kant's distinction between appearances and things. While I agree with Westphal that the prevalent, idealist reading of TI is incompatible with the upshot of Kant's views on the conditions of cognitive representation, I will argue that the sort of realism required by this analysis naturally encourages a more reasonable methodological construal of the main attitudes and distinctions that are characteristic of TI. So, Kant's realism needn't be seen as conflicting with *certain versions of* TI.³⁰ It will also turn out that, *contra* Westphal, the central parts of Westphal's own proof do not require more than a correspondingly adjusted ER. What, then, are the main parts of the proof?

Westphal offers three nested arguments in favor of reading Kant's theory of cognition and its objects as putting forward or supporting a form of realism. Following

²⁸ In a way, this seems to vindicate Kant's TI in a different way: if what is said in the text is correct, then Kant's realism itself *is* embedded in a concern with human knowledge *from a certain perspective*, and insofar 'dependent on' taking some –albeit non-skeptical—human perspective on knowledge and its objects.

²⁹ I am mainly thinking of the works I already mentioned by Allais and Collins, but also of the picture developed throughout John McDowell's influential reflection on Kant's idea that experience is a product of the cooperation of spontaneity and receptivity in *Mind and World*, especially Lectures I-III (see McDowell, John, *Mind and World*, 2nd ed, Cambridge MA: Harvard UP 1996, 1-65).

³⁰ In this, I side with Guyer, who suggests that Kant merely needed to "drop" (Guyer, Paul, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, Cambridge:Cambridge UP 1987, 414) the assumption denoted as "(a)" in the text, to be in a position to accept realism about extra-mental entities, and by doing so *also* gain a way "to reconcile the conclusion of the refutation with some versions of Kant's transcendental idealism" (*Claims of Knowledge*, 282), from which he concludes that "there is (...) no reason to reinterpret the conclusion of the refutation in order to accommodate transcendental idealism." (*Claims of Knowledge*, 283) To be fair, I believe Westphal himself would reject the attribution of *any* kind of mentalism to Kant, whose post-Cartesianism he so much stresses. My argument can therefore be seen as underscoring the effects of the insight into Kant's deep-seated anti-mentalism for interpreting his TI. It obliges us to reject Kant's subjectivist formulations of TI's *point* (as opposed to its distinction between appearances and things in themselves, the thesis that we don't have knowledge of the latter, and its claim that the subject matter of cognition cannot be characterized representation-independently) as an undigested left-over of mentalism.

Westphal's coinages, I will refer to them, respectively, as (i) the argument from cognitive reference, (ii) the argument from affinity, and (iii) the argument from spatiotemporal causality.

(i) The *argument from cognitive reference*³¹ (or from MCE) proceeds from the observation that Kant's theory of content—epitomized in the famous slogan that concepts without intuitions are empty, while intuitions without concepts are blind—essentially requires that the subjects entertaining representations be in cognitive contact to extra-mental particulars for representations to be determinable in content and to be differentiable according to relations of content, like sameness and difference of content. As Westphal points out, this follows from Kant's account of the referential properties (or 'semantics') of intuitions (particularly empirical intuitions, i.e. perceptions) and their pervasive cognitive functions together with Kant's insistence—which has been playing an increasingly central role in much of recent commentary—that intuitions are means of *direct* reference to environmental particulars. Here is the chain of reasoning in brief: differences in cognitive content, according to Kant, can be retraced to possible differences in the subject matter of judgment, and differences in the subject matter of judgments require ultimately differences in intuition-based or referential relations to extra-mental particulars, which are established by analogues of demonstrative or other indexical means that involve sensations, or at least adequate spatio-temporal positions of the thinker to the objects of reference. Such sensations, in turn, can only occur, and such relations only in fact obtain in function of actual contacts between cognizers and extra-mental environs. Thus, the externalism in Kant's theory of cognition does not follow from intuitions (means of singular reference) *per se*, but from the combined theses that our capacity for intuitions is essentially receptive and that their particular subject matter has to come, as Westphal puts it, *ab extra*. Kant's theory of cognition thus becomes externalism by linking a basically semantic doctrine—that *all* differences in *content* (not 'meaning') are to be traced back to differences in referential relations of representations to particulars other than themselves—to a doctrine of cognitive contact between cognizers and extra-mental particulars (which Westphal terms Kant's "sensationism"³²), which

³¹ "How Does Kant Prove", 783-85, continued for concepts at 797-99.

³² Following George, Rolf, "Kant's Sensationism", *Synthese* 47/2 (1981), 229-55.

specifies the kind of entities that empirical intuitions refer to. According to MCE, there are no differences in cognitive content (not even among the categories, i.e. *a priori* concepts) without differences in some relation of representations to extra-mental particulars. While this merely describes the semantic model on which Kant's analysis of cognition is based, it is equally important for the success of Westphal's argument that this semantic point of view also has a *fundamental role* in Kant's transcendental account of *experience* and consciousness, since otherwise it would not follow from the existence of semantic views with realist assumptions in Kant's work that Kant's very account of *experience* has such realist import. Thus, in a second move, the semantics just outlined have to be linked to Kant's conception of the necessary conditions for a being to count as a thinker capable of self-conscious experience and cognition. This second step is, however, quite straightforward. Since without differences in content, no mental state could count as a differentiable representation, and without such differences of representational value among mental states, there'd be no synthetic activity of cognition, and without such synthetic activity of cognition, there'd be no self-consciousness,³³ the conditions of cognitive differentiability according to content among mental states (MCE) are conditions of self-conscious cognition, hence of experience, and therefore enjoy transcendental status.³⁴ As MCE requires cognitive contact to extra-mental particulars and is a transcendental condition, it is a consequence of Kant's theory of cognitive representation that (a) there are not only mental entities, that (b) we are in cognitive contact to some of the extra-mental particulars, and that (c) not all transcendental conditions are purely formal, or purely mind-contributed elements of cognition. Realism about extra-mental particulars is thereby transcendentially vindicated.

(ii) The *argument from affinity*³⁵ supplements (i) by demonstrating that the manifold offered to the understanding by sensibility needs to have a certain structure *over and*

³³ With regard to the dependency of self-consciousness on differences in content, cf. CPR: "only because I can combine a manifold of given presentations *in one consciousness* is it possible for me to present the identity itself of the consciousness *in these presentations*" (B133). With regard to the dependency of self-consciousness on the extra-mental conditions of differences in content, cf. CPR: "I distinguish my own existence, as that of a thinking being, from other things outside me —this is likewise an analytic proposition. (...) But from this I do not in any way know whether this consciousness of myself is possible without things outside me whereby presentations are given to me, and hence whether I can exist *merely a thinking being* (i.e. *without being human*)." (B409, emphasis added)

³⁴ "How Does Kant Prove", 794-96.

³⁵ "How Does Kant Prove", 785-88.

above the spatio-temporal order imposed on it by the forms of intuition in order for parts of it to be adequately captured by concepts. In short, unless the manifold displayed some order in virtue of which rules and generalizations are satisfied in it, no concept would apply more correctly than others to arrays of (representations of) particulars supplied by sensibility. What is meant by saying that the sensorily enriched manifold of intuition must be "affine" for any determinate cognition (e.g. judgment, i.e. truth-evaluable combination of concepts and intuitions) to take place at all is, as Westphal puts it, that its parts have to be "associable" according to the requirements of the respective concepts. Here is the backbone of the argument: Cognizers can only be truly said to be conscious of objects when these are identifiable and distinguishable from others, and doing the latter is only possible by forming judgments. Judgments, however, require applying concepts to the manifold offered by sensibility (i.e. perceptions) in such a way that the results are capable of truth or falsity, hence to (at least possibly) apply the concepts *correctly*, i.e. as true of the manifold and the objects presented in it. Thus, the manifold not only must be connected in the right cognitive ways to extra-mental particulars, but the manifold also must be connected in the right way to the resources of understanding (concepts), hence display a minimal kind- or similarity-structure. Westphal says: "Transcendental affinity of the sensory manifold (...) is a minimal condition for our understanding (...) to (...) use concepts at all."³⁶ The qualification of this argument's result as a transcendental condition is analogous to the first and even more straightforward: obviously, without the ability to use concepts, the understanding, our capacity to think, would not function,³⁷ hence no occasion for the employment of *I think* occur.³⁸

³⁶ "How Does Kant Prove", 795.

³⁷ See "How Does Kant Prove", 796.

³⁸ What is noteworthy about (i) and (ii) is that they expose general conditions of self-conscious experience that concern the *matter* of experience and therefore are not straightforwardly derivable from the *form* of our cognitive apparatus, but only from the subject matter that apparatus deals with. It needn't come as a big surprise that Kant would turn up such conditions, because his investigations are after *non-trivial* knowledge *a priori*, after all. But turning up such conditions puts pressure on the assumptions (a) that there are no transcendental conditions that are not contributed by the form and requirements of our cognitive and representational apparatus, and (b) that the characterization of transcendental conditions, to be such, must not make reference to any element of the *matter* of thought on pain of introducing an *a posteriori* (hence empirical, non-transcendental) element. I believe both of these difficulties can be satisfactorily dealt with, but leave this question to one side. However, the discovery of such conditions is in outright contradiction to the exclusion of mind-independent, material transcendental conditions. This exclusion of informal or material conditions of cognition is what many (including Kant) have inferred from (or short-circuited with) the assumption that transcendental conditions have to be contributed by the form and requirements of our

(iii) The *argument from spatiotemporal causality*³⁹ is based on the three Analogies of Experience. It aims at demonstrating that the basic time-relations obtaining among mental states, simultaneity and succession, which determine how a cognizer's mental life is experienced by her, cannot be determined by her unless she takes herself as interacting with an environment of spatio-temporal entities and events that are bearers of properties, causally related and simultaneously acting on one another. I will analyze this proof in more detail in IV.3., so that I leave it at this hint here.

I basically agree with the gist of Westphal's proofs, and I also agree with his contention that proving, or vindicating MCE establishes something that is incompatible with a Berkleyan idealism that holds that all there is are spirits and their ideas. I think Westphal agrees that we can go even a bit further than that: if Kant's (or any) MCE is right, then not only would Berkeleyans hold a false *metaphysical* contention, namely that there is only one sort of thing, where in reality, there is that sort of thing and other things. The damage inflicted on a Berkleyan position by MCE is worse, since if mental contents (or their possession) actually require more than mental contents, then Berkeley could not clearly say what it is that he claims as existing when he remains faithful to his own

cognitive and representational apparatus, namely that they 'therefore' have to be fully characterizable as constituted, created or contributed by the subject alone (as 'subjective conditions'), world-independently. It is not unimportant to note that it is not forced on us by the fact that the conditions in question, to count as transcendental, have to be contributed by the requirements of our representational apparatus (or, as Kant puts it, 'the way in which we cognize objects') to accept the subjectivity of these conditions. It could very well be the case that our representational apparatus, as described from the perspective of its users (*us*), requires that its users are placed under some material (non-subjective) conditions in order for it to function properly (consider the workings of demonstrative pronouns, for example). Kant's theory of content, the distinctions he draws within it, and the irreducibility claims he defends make precisely this point (more of this below). In general, that a condition cannot be characterized subject-independently clearly does not imply that the condition so characterized cannot contain non-subjective elements (every characterization of a situation is like that when it is given by the person in that situation). We could call the view that excludes mind-independent transcendental conditions a *subjectivist view* view of transcendental conditions; it is of a piece with the mentalist reading of 'appearance' required in idealist interpretations of TI. Consequently, Westphal's basic conception of Kant's TI and his criticism of it turn on emphasizing Kant's references to the subjectivist view. The existence and even frequency of the latter in Kant's work is almost as undeniable as their disproportionate effect in the reception of Kant's work. It seems to me that it is much less by a lingering commitment to mentalist representationalism than through the subjectivist conception of the *a priori* –which, by definitional transitivity, infects his conception of the transcendental— that the mentalism Kant tried to combat unwittingly enters his work. Notoriously, Kant has several non-overlapping conceptions of apriority at work in the *CPR* (subjectivity, transcendental status, universality and necessity, to name the most salient). What is more often neglected in taking note of this fact but crucial at this point is that these conceptions are also partly mutually *incompatible*.

³⁹ "How Does Kant Prove", 790-94.

ontology. After all, if MCE is true, there need to be at least two kinds of thing for the kind of thing to exist whose exclusive existence Berkeley claims, and *any* content whatever, i.e. also any contentful *part* of a given content, would require there to be things other than mental contents related to it. So even a fall-back position that would attempt to isolate a 'narrow content' component in externalistically individuated and differentiated contents does not seem to be a coherent possibility if *any* mental content requires *some* relation of it (or one of its necessary conditions) to environing conditions that do not depend on the particular mental content itself (or any others).

In the following section (III), I want to show in more detail why we ought to attribute MCE to Kant, and how exactly it prepares the ground for a strongly anti-Berkeleyan standpoint. However, Westphal takes the consequences of MCE to reach farther. He claims that it provides also an antiskeptical argument and a proof of a kind of realism that conflicts with Kant's TI and is stronger than ER. I certainly agree that MCE has damaging consequences for Kant's own TI under one influential reading that develops Kant's relevant remarks into full-fledged Berkeleyan idealism or, to take up Westphal's suffix: *idealism sans phrase*. I also agree with Westphal that, insofar as Kant subscribed to this doctrine, we need to save him from himself. But nonetheless, I find difficulties in both of Westphal's more ambitious claims. This will be the subject of the remaining sections (IV.1.-IV.3.). But perhaps I have not yet asked the most obvious question at this point: if Kant *did* subscribe to TI, and it is, in some way, incompatible with MCE, is it then plausible to ascribe MCE to him at all? I believe the answer to this question is clearly 'yes', but this will take quite some explaining.

III. Semantics

Although Westphal has already sketched some transcendental proofs for MCE, I would like to make some remarks to remind us of Kant's most fundamental semantic views regarding concepts. On the one hand, this will enable me to distinguish the externalism Westphal is after from certain unintended verificationist views⁴⁰. On the

⁴⁰ Westphal clearly wishes to distinguish the results of his analysis from attributions of verificationism to Kant, as he clarifies in "Epistemic Reflection and Cognitive Reference", 157.

other hand, it will allow me to sketch in outline the extremely unorthodox and interesting semantic picture Kant is after, which will even strengthen the case for attributing a non-internalist conception of cognitive content to Kant. I think that Westphal's point about Kant's commitment to MCE is fully borne out by Kant's explicit semantic views.

To begin this discussion, it is useful to have a rough and ready characterization of what 'content' is supposed to capture here, and what 'externalism' is supposed to mean. I will take a *content* to be something that a competent speaker/thinker can understand, and that either is or contributes in a determinate way to what can be true or false. A content is thus a distinct bit of *information*, taking the latter term in a generic sense. In Kantian language, bearers of contents are representations, and generic parts of representations of truth-evaluable contents would be concepts and intuitions (for matters general and particular, respectively), while 'judgment' can mean the bearer of a truth-evaluable content or such a content itself. As is well known, Kant's theory of representation only admits four general types of representations (i.e. items capable of standing for something other than themselves or fulfilling an irreducible role for such a semantic capability):⁴¹ intuitions, concepts, judgments, and --in a somewhat abnormal position between concepts, intuitions and judgments⁴²-- the "I think". These representations are the means or 'vehicles' of cognition, where cognition itself "consists in determinate reference of given presentations to an object."⁴³ A theory of content is *externalist*, on the other hand, if the content of mental states or representations depends partly or wholly on features of circumstances or entities external to the thinker, or, to put it differently, if the possession of a representation with a given content by a thinker requires access to extra-mental circumstances or entities.⁴⁴

⁴¹ For the inventory, cf. A68/B93, as well as the chart at A320/B376-7 (which leaves out judgments).

⁴² Cf. the various assignations of the "I think" to representation classes at B399-B406, A 351-A356, A 381-382, B406-413, according to which it can be a proposition, a judgment, a concept, an anaphoric function of judgment, a simple designation, and the assignation is alright "if one prefers" (B399), as Kant unusually lackadaisically says.

⁴³ B137.

⁴⁴ For a similar clarification of 'externalism' in terms of the notion of individuation dependence, see Rowlands, Mark, *Externalism*, Chesham, Acumen 2003, 106-8. Rowlands distinguishes usefully between a location claim and a possession claim in externalism, where the latter is that "the possession of at least some mental phenomena by a subject *S* depends on features that are external to the boundaries of *S*." (218) This is the sense of externalism I suppose, leaving open the question whether mental phenomena are best described as located inside of *S* or not. As Westphal is mainly occupied with the conditions of determinacy for contents, establishing that these are partly constituted by entities outside *S*'s boundaries at least

With these preliminaries in place, I now want to give a little more detailed evidence for the thesis that Kant's semantic views suggest ascribing to him a certain type of mental content externalism. My discussion will have four parts. After reciting some uncontroversial generalities regarding the role of intuitions for Kant's semantics, I will first distinguish a verificationist from a referentialist understanding of this role (III.1.) and argue that only the latter is incompatible with semantic internalism. I will then show, in reviewing Kant's considerations about semantic failure, that Kant makes a semantically relevant tripartite distinction between word, content and reference (III.2.) and on this basis review Kant's referentialist account of singular reference (III.3.). This will enable me to portray Kant's account of conceptual content as making essential use of referentialist and therefore externalist elements (III.4.). Since there are no other elementary representations than intuitions and concepts, this displays Kant's entire theory of representational content as externalist.

Here, then, are the generalities that no reader of Kant doubts. According to Kant's *semantics* for concepts, unless there is some connection to empirical intuition, that is, unless "the sequence of appearances would offer us [something] (...) corresponding to the concept (...), this concept would then be quite empty, null, and without signification."⁴⁵ Kant's famous first step in developing his conception of content is to say that concepts as such, be it taken one by one or all of them together (e.g. in the form of a conceptual system), remain meaningless or 'empty'. In order to become determinate contentful cognitive items, they need, according to this quote, something else corresponding to them within the realm of cognition. In this context, where Kant talks about concepts in general, the only possible candidates for such a completion must come from the manifold of intuitions, i.e. from representations for particulars capable of falling under concepts. This is explicitly intended as a semantic view (i.e. one about the relation of words/representation-types and things), as Kant underscores: "we cannot *understand* anything except what carries with it, *in intuition*, something corresponding to our

establishes that mental *contents* are, as Putnam famously put it, *not in the head*. Whether mental states that are the carriers of contents can be individuated without reference to their content, and thus, in one way, internally individuated can then be left to one side. Kant, for that matter, clearly thinks this to be possible; in abstraction from their contents, representations occurring in the mind are, as he says, mere 'modifications of our soul'.

⁴⁵ B123/A91.

words."⁴⁶ So, the applicability of concepts required for their intelligibility somehow importantly rests on *objects* given in intuition (as opposed to the forms of intuition or pure intuitions, or other forms of representation) that correspond to the words expressing the concepts. This becomes explicit in passages like the following: "Every concept requires (...) the possibility of our giving to it an object to which to refer. Without an object the concept has *no sense* and is *completely empty of content*."⁴⁷ Thus, as a first approximation to the semantic bottom line of this, we gather that the meaningfulness and, perhaps, the particular sense or content, of 'anything' somehow systematically depends on this anything's being applicable to something else given in intuition. Westphal therefore correctly writes: "Kant's semantics affords genuine cognitive significance only when concepts are 'connected' or referred to particular objects via singular sensory presentation".⁴⁸

III.1. Non-Verificationism

Now, this first approximation is open to several misunderstandings, in particular, to verificationist readings. Verificationism about concepts says that knowing the meaning of a word is the same as knowing its content, and the latter consists in knowing a definite method for when to apply it to perceptual conditions and when not. Representations can thus only be meaningful when they encode a rule that determines when to apply them to perceptually given objects by giving enough conditions to 'define the object', a rule that, as such a determinative rule, can be given independent of contact to these objects themselves. The only sense in which contact to the so determined objects of reference would be necessary for concepts is for these not to have a null extension. But even without extension, verificationistically construed meanings are autonomously intelligible criteria of application and rationally determinate cognitive units as long as they present certain perceptions as necessary conditions for application. This contrasts with the referentialist view that the content of concepts (their capacity of contributing to the truth-conditions of assertions), remains underdetermined unless the rules for the application of

⁴⁶ A277/B333.

⁴⁷ A239/B298.

⁴⁸ "How Does Kant Prove", 799.

the words expressing them make use of reference to particular objects. It is important to pierce these two interpretations of the role of intuitions apart because on the verificationist construal of concepts, there could be a perfectly contentful, though empirically unsatisfactory mental activity independent of contact to extra-mental particulars. Thus, if Kant were to hold this view, his semantics would *not* commit him to any form of externalism. If it does, it therefore has to be *referentialist*. Conversely, on a verificationist construal, there could not be meaningful concepts without definite application to perceptual particulars. But then Kant's elaborate discussion of metaphysical doctrines that, on his own account, do not achieve such reference, would be self-undermining because he would have to see himself as engaging with unintelligible barrages of representations. If he doesn't so see himself, his semantics therefore has to be *more sophisticated*. The inability of verificationist construals to do justice to both, Kant's externalism and Kant's metaphysical earnest is rooted in the identification of discursive meaningfulness with the contentfulness of concepts. But this is not Kant's semantic view. Kant argues both, that words without verification-conditions in perception can be discursively meaningful⁴⁹ (but not thereby determinate in content) and that contents cannot be determinate without information regarding objects of reference (hence not be given as determinative rules or 'meanings' in the verificationist sense). Hence, a word's discursive meaning is not the same as its conceptual content and moreover, it underdetermines the latter. In the following, I want to illustrate that Kant, when he says that "without an object the concept has no sense and is completely empty of *content*",⁵⁰ does not make the verificationist point that, without reference to sensible intuitions, the *word* expressing the concept becomes directly *unintelligible*. Instead, Kant's point is that 'without reference to the object' it becomes indeterminate what, if any, the contribution of that word in a truth-evaluable judgment (its *content*) would be, in the sense that it is indeterminate to what sort of objects the word would correctly refer, that it would cease

⁴⁹ For example, his famous dictum about concepts without intuitions being empty only warrants the thesis regarding conceptual content and meaning that we cannot have meaningful concepts in general and yet regard most of them (or the most important ones) as not clearly applicable to anything given in intuition. Contrary to verificationism, this allows for occurrences of words that have meaning in virtue of being part of a system that as a whole is referable to extra-systemic particulars while not being themselves equipped with determinate rules of application in this instance or context of use.

⁵⁰ A239/B298.

to encode rules that determine to a sufficient degree when the word applies to objects.⁵¹ In order to make these points stick, I first want to sketch and dismiss the verificationist construal, and then demonstrate the thorough referentialism of Kant's theory of conceptual content.

One naïve construal of Kant's semantics along the lines sketched in Westphal's remark might, then, run like this:

(VER) all words that express concepts that we can understand must have a referential connection to some intuitively accessed particular to which they apply.⁵²

This verificationist proposal is an obviously false claim about our actual abilities of understanding (consider 'unicorn'). While this does not prevent attributing it to Kant, such an attribution is complicated by the fact that the proposal also would immediately engender severe problems for Kant's critical enterprise. Suppose for the moment that Kant were to claim, in accordance with (VER), that a-referential *words* cannot go proxy for intelligible concepts, or at least perform some task in judgments in which they are used as words that normally go proxy for concepts that *are* connectable referentially to intuitively available particulars. Now observe that such are exactly the words used in traditional rationalist metaphysics: words that stand for concepts in "transcendental use", i.e. concepts that merely relate to other concepts (but not to anything else) in agreement with unschematized categories of the understanding and thus form formally correct judgments,⁵³ as well as pure concepts that enable, without particular intuitive or sensible

⁵¹ Thus, he says: "Not even one of the categories can we define really (...) without immediately descending to the conditions of sensibility (...) if we take away the mentioned condition, then all signification, i.e., *reference to the object*, is gone; and through no example can we then make comprehensible to ourselves just *what sort of thing is in fact meant* by such a concept." (A241/B300)

⁵² This is the substance of the 'principle of significance' attributed to Kant by Strawson in his *The Bounds of Sense*, 16.

⁵³ If the 'transcendental use' of concepts is to be any use of concepts at all, they need to be used in judgments, and as such be brought to one consciousness, which in turn means that they have to be used in combinations that satisfy the formal demands that the categories make on representations in order to count as a judgment. For this reason, concepts in the transcendental use cannot be (*pace* Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 152, and Beck) used "without categorical determination", while they also cannot be used with schematized categories, because the latter are as such inevitably relatable to the sensory manifold, i.e. apt for empirical use.

ingredients, the framing of "ideas or concepts of reason".⁵⁴ However, if Kant's repudiation of traditional metaphysics were to rest on this principle of significance, then it would follow from his own decision about what to regard as meaningful and what as gibberish, and so would simply be begging all questions at issue.⁵⁵ If his critical project with regard to rationalist metaphysics is to have any bite at all, then, it better *unmask* grammatically and linguistically unobjectionable and intelligible constructions used by such philosophers as failing conditions for conceptual content (e.g. contributing determinately to the truth or falsity of judgments) that rest on assumptions that also are likely to be acceptable to his adversary.

A second group of considerations against attributing (VER) to Kant stems from Kant's constructive enterprise. He simply cannot reject *words* as *unintelligible* only because they have no direct or indirect connection to *empirical* particulars because this is *also* true of the categories, which are, when schematized and considered merely *a priori*, only applicable to and satisfied by pure intuitions, and acquire "content" only insofar as they are satisfied by *whatever* empirical particulars. Additionally, the categories by themselves without schemata are not considered by Kant as applicable to the sensory manifold at all, and yet distinguishable as different in meaning as well as correctly systematizable in some ways but not others. This means conversely that Kant does consider the categories intelligible without the schemata in spite of thus not being connected to perceptual particulars. Indeed, as Westphal repeatedly points out, Kant insists that the categories, as all concepts, have a logical as well as a transcendental significance owed to the role that the words they express have in a logically structured conceptual system. This allows us both, as Kant puts it, to form judgment-like mental representations by putting words for concepts together according to the propositional forms offered by the categories to 'think what we want',⁵⁶ but also to abstract away from our particular intuitive faculty (sensibility) and use the concepts according to principles

⁵⁴ A320/B377.

⁵⁵ That Kant himself cannot possibly be blamed for this mistake is clear because he regards the ideas as differentiable enough in meaning to distinguish three metaphysical disciplines after them. Thus, when concepts of the understanding can be employed in constructing *various* and distinct concepts of reason or 'ideas', the former must themselves have *some* significance to effect such semantic differences, e.g., by being differently combined. Since ideas of reason are formed exclusively by pure concepts and in abstraction from any application to particulars, there is no other source of these differences in significance.

⁵⁶ Bxxxvi, fn.

of "coherence with other concepts", and even to negatively specify things in themselves "under the name of an unknown something",⁵⁷ i.e. to engage in criticism of metaphysics. In all these activities, thought stands under rules of assertion (like the law of non-contradiction), i.e., we are to employ some but not other mental representations at given points. This means that these representations are *rationally* related to one another and thus at least have an assignable relative significance. That is, a priori concepts are, contrary to verificationism, not meaningful only in virtue of being referred to any perceptual particulars rather than others, be they available through pure or empirical intuition. In short: Kant's semantics cannot *reduce* meaningfulness to reference to *empirical* particulars for the sake of both, his critical and his constructive projects.⁵⁸ It has to be construed as *sophisticated* enough to distinguish between discursive meaningfulness (i.e. usability in pure thought) and conceptual content (truth-conditional contribution and thus determinate relation to objects) so that for a representation to be meaningful does not entail its being contentful, or having determinate content.

A third group of problems against attributing (VER) to Kant stems from Kant's anti-mentalist agenda. The mentalist tradition of thought about representational content assumes that we are not only in unproblematic rapport with the mental states we undergo when entertaining a given representation, but also in command of the content of these representations. Since the representing states (content-bearers) are in the head, the contents are supposed to be so, too. This is how, even in philosophers (like Descartes) who defend a non-mentalist ontology, there is an idealistic pull towards seeing the extra-mental as only tenuously connected with rational processes of thought, since thought could –contents, truth and inferences included—proceed very well without any relation to extra-mental entities. Berkeley's strategy to do away with the idea of extra-mental referents altogether is then almost a minor amendment; given Cartesian content-internalism and skepticism, we might as well be better off postulating only that which we unproblematically access semantically. Now, if Kant were to stop short at (VER), he would indeed amend traditional semantics by requiring –in consequence of his conception of judgment as proposition-functional—some reference-induced conditions

⁵⁷ A256/B312.

⁵⁸ This point is pressed in Allais' studies.

for conceptual content and determinacy. But for all this, he would still be open to a Berkleyan answer. A Berkleyan could say that it may be true that most of our concepts need something corresponding to them in appearance, some relation to referents of intuitions (i.e. particulars), but that *mere* appearances, i.e. mental items, could do this job just fine. After all, (VER) only says that concepts are contentful or meaningful if intuition gives objects of *some* nature *or other* for their application, and these might just be *other mental states*. Kant's semantics would then still be compatible with a broadly idealist view of the items that underlie our judgments and constrain our concepts. In order to forestall this countermove, Kant can no longer merely move on the level of formal analysis of the conditions of determinate conceptual content and his distinction between means of direct reference to particulars (intuitions) and general means of reference (concepts). He also has to anchor his semantics in a *material* condition by specifying that the referents in question are non-mental entities. It is only this second, substantive commitment that decisively breaks with idealism. In opposition to this pull, Kant supplements his semantics or theory of mental content with an account of reference for intuitions that builds the extra-mental character of the referents of intuitions *into* the conditions of representation. It is because of this addition to the semantics that we have to speak of mental content *externalism* in Kant.

So, if Kant is a Mental Content Externalist and if it is his semantics that provides the means for this externalism, then his semantics must be construed as *sophisticated* and as *non-verificationist*, i.e. reference-based. I now want to show that Kant's semantic views bear the weight of this double requirement.

III.2. Sophistication: Semantic Failure

A good entry point for a better appreciation of the achievements and *sophistication* of Kant's semantics is by considering his judgments of 'emptiness' and 'unintelligibility', or of semantic failure. Often, these considerations have served to saddle Kant with a proto-verificationist criterion of significance that excludes all those representations that don't have explicitly formulable rules of application to perceptual particulars as unintelligible. On inspection, however, Kant's reflections suggest quite the

opposite: Kant does not conflate meaning and verifiability for representations but rather exhibits meaning as insufficient for truth-evaluability or 'objective validity'. For the purpose of making good sense of Kant's remarks on semantic failure and success, the latter is much better construed 'objectively' as truth-conditionality, i.e. determination of circumstances representations are true *of*, than epistemically as verifiability, i.e. determination of circumstances of *recognizing* truth-values.⁵⁹ Let me first comment on the idea that Kant's considerations about concepts' being 'empty' or 'having no sense' encourage attributing verificationist semantics to him.

Kant considers a variety of employments of words for concepts in empirical and philosophical discourse, and averts to the fact that some words can, under the circumstances envisioned in certain uses, lose some or all of their significance. All of his considerations take place on the background of his view that full-fledged cognition has propositional structure or, as he puts it, can only be found in judgment. Famously, Kant defines judgments as the union of concepts and intuitions and models this union on the grammar of predication.⁶⁰ If and insofar as such a union is in place, we have a content, something that is determinate enough to be either true or false of objects and thus can be a candidate for objective knowledge.⁶¹ We may thus suppose that, according to Kant's combination-and-union doctrine of judgment, the content of a judgment is the product of the contents of its parts. Contrariwise, when a given propositional representation fails to express a judgment or truth-evaluable cognition, then this failure is presumably owed to the lack of content of one of its parts, in the sense that the contribution of the respective words/representations to the significance of the propositionally structured representation in such cases is not a content. Given this account of the composition of contents in judgments, Kant could count as a verificationist in the sense of (VER) if he were to claim that semantic failure obtains in the case of judgment in which a representation occurs that does not have itself a connection to perceptually accessible particulars, and that such

⁵⁹ Thus, Kant writes in the *Logic*: "Mere manifoldness without unity cannot satisfy us. Therefore truth is the leading among all perfections, because it is the basis of unity, through referring our cognition to the object." (AA IX, 39).

⁶⁰ Beatrice Longuenesse aptly speaks of the "priority of predication" (**Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, 104).

⁶¹ "In us, *understanding* and *sensibility* can determine objects *only in combination*. If we separate them, then we have intuitions without concepts, or concepts without intuitions; but in either case we have presentations that we cannot refer to any determinate object." (A258/B314)

semantic failure entails meaninglessness in the sense that we cannot understand the corresponding judgment or component of it.

But, appearances to the contrary, Kant claims none of this. To be sure, his account of *empirically* empty (and therefore perceptually inapplicable) judgments, or representations "through mere play of imagination"⁶² like 'unicorn' implies that such words are intelligible only in a derived way since they stand for constructs from empirically non-empty concepts (say, 'horse', 'horn'), constructs that are contingently unsatisfied in the empirical world (helped by further concepts (like 'one') that are, according to Kant, not possibly empty but non-empirical). This leaves no doubt that, while there may be words expressing decoy-empirical concepts that are not interpreted by and applied to intuitively available particulars (like 'unicorn'), or occurrences of words expressing empirical concepts that are not, at the time they occur, satisfied by a given object (as in hallucination), such words or intuition-tokens are not ultimately intelligible by themselves.⁶³ The cognitive meaningfulness of such words is parasitic on the fact that they have logical connections to other concepts that allow constructing their *putative* referents, at least *some* of which have referential connections to intuitively available particulars.⁶⁴ In this way, such concepts receive a regular connection to intuition and perception, even though such perceptions might never occur as a matter of contingent fact. Such empirically unsatisfied constructed concepts, thus, still have *some* connection to perceptually available particulars. Kant might even think that they owe their significance and cognitive import entirely to this fact. When he says that "without perception even inventing and dreaming are not possible",⁶⁵ and pervasively dubs judgments and concepts without 'reference to an object' 'empty', it seems irresistible to conclude that he has (VER) in mind.

It is already a departure from the letter of this view that, when Kant claims that certain words are 'empty', he does *not* exclude that they might be intelligibly employed in rational cognition and judgments by anyone who masters the concepts required for their

⁶² A376-7.

⁶³ A376-7.

⁶⁴ A69/B94, B278-9

⁶⁵ A377.

construction.⁶⁶ By his admission that words that go proxy for putative concepts (or that determine referents that are 'fictional' or *mere appearance*) are not intelligible independent of other, not merely putative concepts, Kant acknowledges the rationalist insight that the meaning of concepts is in part shaped by their playing a certain role in a conceptual system; this endows them with what we could call *discursive intelligibility*. According to Kant, on account of this conceptual role, it is possible to acquire "a multitude of cognitions", albeit, of course, not reference to objects.⁶⁷ It also does *not* exclude that the words/representations retain enough significance to allow for deductive inferences, transformations and other, partly semantic operations, like substitutions of expressions that are defined through each other and comparisons among concept-titles regarding their meaning.⁶⁸ So, saying that certain words are not meaningful when taken in isolation is not equivalent with their meaninglessness, because sentences composed with the help of such words are not ungrammatical or unintelligible in the sense that they would have no "cognitive" significance. What Kant does say is that, in such cases, the words expressing concepts retain enough significance to be employed in intelligible ways in sentences, but not enough for these sentences to express determinate truth claims or 'judgments'. In Kant's terminology, such sentences lack 'objective validity', in contemporary semantic terminology, they lack truth-evaluability, so that we can say that the judgment in which they occur is not or cannot express a full judgmental content. At this point, it is important to note that Kant speaks in such connection always *not* about concepts, but about *words* (or 'titles for concepts'). This allows him to draw a distinction between words with meaning and the same words with this given meaning *and* (in

⁶⁶ "Thinking an object and *cognizing* an object are (...) not the same. (...) if no intuition corresponding to the concept could be given at all, then in terms of its form the concept would indeed be a thought" (CPR, §22)

⁶⁷ A5-6/B9.

⁶⁸ "Concepts can be compared logically without worrying about where their objects belong" (A269/B325). This analytic endeavor need not be limited to merely a formal or syntactic activities, we can also "reflect merely logically (...) [and] only compare our concepts among one another in the understanding, as to whether both of two concepts have the *same content*, whether or not they contradict each other, whether something is contained in the concept intrinsically or added to it, and which of the two is given and which is to count only as a way of thinking the given one." (A279/B335) According to this, Kant regarded many of the reflections about the *semantics* of general terms as capable of such analysis; since the reflective insights he mentions are, on the one hand, 'cognitions' but on the other arrived at 'only in the understanding', i.e. without reference to object and therefore relation to *content*, we can conclude that Kant indeed distinguished among *semantically* relevant features of words when he distinguishes between meaning and content, as suggested in the text.

addition) *a way (rule) of determining reference to objects*. Now, the 'words' that fail in cases where no determinate judgment about objects emerges in spite of the intelligibility of the sentences in which they occur are such that they go proxy, if for anything, then for concepts. In cases of semantic failure for judgments, i.e. cases of a lack of content, according to Kant's compositional view of content, we have to blame the lack of content on words for concepts. Thus, according to Kant's semantic views, words standing for concepts have, on the one hand, a given meaning that has to do with the conceptual role they play, and on the other *content*, which determines or at least constrains their objectual reference. 'Concept-titles' fail in the case where words occur as 'empty' because they then *do not stand for concepts* because they do not 'make comprehensible to ourselves just what sort of thing is in fact meant'.⁶⁹ Kant argues that statements that formally or grammatically are of propositional form and intelligible can *fail semantically* because concept-titles occurring in them, though carrying the meaning that accrues from their conceptual role, do not express a conceptual content, whereby the whole propositionally structured representation fails to express truth-conditions. Such grammatical wholes can only count as *pretense-judgments*, as illusions of objectively valid judgments. Accordingly, similar to verificationism, no full-fledged concept without *content* but, against verificationism, words may retain meaning even though they lose content.

The pull of the idea that intelligibility for 'empty' words derives from the empirical significance of the parts they are constructed from vanishes completely when we consider the categories, Kant's next case. It is only a short step from meaningful but empirically empty words with an at best tenuous and derivative conceptual import *qua* lack of applicability to and connection with intuitively available particulars to words with *no* such import. In contrast with merely empirically empty terms, such terms would not have an even tenuous connection to intuitively available particulars. As Kant puts it, they have 'no sense' and are 'nil'.⁷⁰ But the case now is different: If in the previous case, we were still left with empirically empty words that nonetheless encode, by the components they can be analyzed into, *some* conceptual content, we are now potentially left with *mere words*. The prime example for circumstances in which this happens is, according to Kant,

⁶⁹ A 241/B300.

⁷⁰ As, to give only one example, in the (futile) attempt to further describe the ground of the order of appearances by way of categories, cf. A696/B724.

the attempt to use such words like "cause" under conditions without the spatio-temporal structure of intuition. Of such attempts Kant says that they force the concept-titles to have transcendental significance but no transcendental use.⁷¹ Words in the transcendental use are words that, under normal circumstances, in their empirical use, *can* express concepts because they not only minimally constrain conditions under which a judgment containing them (as opposed to other words of the same system) would be true on account of their conceptual role, but also acquire rules of application once they are embedded in the constraints accruing from objects given through sensibility. In the transcendental use, however, they are employed under conditions in which applying *the same words* with the conceptual import they have *cannot* yield truth or falsity because the latter, additional information is missing. Now, as I said before, Kant cannot claim that words expressing concepts that do not in any way directly apply to intuitively available particulars are *per se* nonsense, since this would affect the categories in their unschematized form as well.⁷² Kant grants this: "Outside this realm [of application to objects of possible experience] they are mere titles for concepts –titles which may indeed be admitted but through which, on the other hand, nothing can be understood".⁷³ However, the categories *acquire* full-fledged conceptual status precisely and only by the fact that they are 'necessarily' applicable to intuitions, once they are adequately schematized *and actually employed in experience*, i.e. put under further constraints that govern their use under the conditions of human intuition. This is what distinguishes the categories from pseudo-concepts, that is, collections of constraints associated with the use of, sometimes, the same words (e.g. 'ground', 'consequence', 'substance', etc.) in rationalist metaphysics. What Kant does claim is that collections of constraints that cannot or systematically do not apply under the conditions of human intuition may be made intelligible, or elucidated *by contrast with* functioning concepts, but that for precisely this reason, the tenuous concepts have to be the *exception*. A paradigm case of a concept of this type I will come back to (§IV.3.) is Kant's own concept "thing in itself", which he successively elucidates throughout the CPR by assembling (mostly negative) constraints, but which, by definition, is not determined in its application to things as we know them. Kant is successful in this

⁷¹ A 248/B 305.

⁷² **Hanna, Allais

⁷³ A696/B724.

precisely because in most cases of pointing out a constraint on how "thing in itself" would have to be applied if it were possible at all for us (which it isn't), he can exploit contrast-concepts that *are* empirically applicable.

We can sum up the central claim that emerges from these considerations on semantic failure that was oversimplifyingly misconstrued in (VER) as follows. If most of our words were to encode no more and nothing but constraints for which the intuitional applicability is left open or even precluded, and we would have to regard this case, i.e. the case in which general terms are to be considered irrespective of their application within the bounds of spatio-temporally contextualized human intuition, as exemplifying the nature of our concepts, then 'concepts' in general would lose all their capacity to determinately organize cognition. With meanings alone but no relation to reference, we would no longer have *concepts* at all. An instantiating corollary of this that forms the backdrop of Kant's attitude towards metaphysical discussions is the following contextualist thesis:⁷⁴ the same words that make determinate contributions to the truth conditions of assertions (i.e. have a certain *content*) as long as they are used under normal conditions can remain discursively intelligible but cease to convey determinate contents for circumstances of application that are too dissimilar to their standard contexts of use. We will see this corollary severally at work in §IV. More generally, this survey shows that, whatever semantics Kant may be said to have, it needs to reflect and connect at least three dimensions of meaningfulness:⁷⁵ discursive intelligibility and role within a system of logically interrelated concept-titles, truth-conditionally relevant content, and referentiality or truth-value.⁷⁶ Using Kant's technical terms for this tripartite distinction,⁷⁷

⁷⁴ An excellent explanation and defense of deep-reaching connections between referentialist and contextualist semantics is offered by Recanati, Francois *Literal Meaning*, Cambridge MA: CUP, 2004.

⁷⁵ Here, I depart from Westphal's analysis, which attributes only two components of conceptual meaning to Kant's semantics (*Kant's Proof*, 43).

⁷⁶ The second insight from these considerations is slightly more subtle: Kant repeatedly insists that it is *the same words* in different *uses* that produce differences in content (like that between allowing truth-evaluation in one use, but not the other). Thus, whatever semantics Kant may have, it needs to be one in which pragmatics is in some sense prior to merely formal systems of correlating words and things. As this will not play any role in the following, I'll put it to one side.

⁷⁷ One obvious indication that this is indeed the kind of semantic hierarchy of contentfulness that Kant had in mind is his threefold distinction between the intelligibility or meaningfulness, the objective validity and the objective reality of representations in general (Hanna 2001, 2006, Howell 1992). A more subtle indication is that Kant, wherever he needs to describe situations or ways in which concept-expressions lose their standard significance or content in the context of judgment-shaped representations, he makes the tripartite distinction between (intelligible) words, concepts (conceptual content), and reference or

any representation (with the exception, may be, of the 'I think') can be merely meaningful (e.g. as part of wholes that have the *form* of judgments⁷⁸), objectively valid (i.e. referred by rules to objects of possible experience) or objectively real (i.e. referred to objects of actual experience, or true of them).⁷⁹ I will now try to characterize how this sophisticated general semantic outlook is in fact converted into a full fledged *externalism* regarding mental *content* by systematically building *referentialist* elements into the constitution of determinate content.

III.3. Referentialism I: Singular Reference

How deeply anti-internalist Kant's semantics is, and how much it differs from verificationism can already be gathered from his description of the functioning and role of intuitions, the means of reference to particulars. However, surprisingly, similar considerations also apply to Kant's theory of content for concepts, the general means of

comprehensions (or extensions). A somewhat surprising third indication is that Kant considers it as possible, legitimate and even desirable that words expressing empirical concepts, can be *merely designative* of their instances, i.e., that their significance can be dominated by their referential relations to objects (A 728/B756). This means that the referential dimension can appear autonomously even in the case of representations that apply to things in a generalizing way; in fact, Kant rejects the idea generally that non-arbitrary concepts could be defined or "securely bounded" by the "characteristics attaching to the word", and regards those descriptive conditions associated with the use of a general term that does allow cognition of objects as "alleged definitions (...) [as] nothing but a determining of the word" (A728/B756). That is, when it comes to determining the contribution of general terms to cognition, the descriptive conditions of application associated with the *words* on several occasions of use do *not* determine their *content*, i.e. contribution to the truth-conditions of judgments in which they occur. Kant's semantics for conceptual content crucially requires that, apart from the presence of connections with other concepts, the words standing for concepts be actually connected to objects of reference. Their application or non application in given cases needs to be judged *also* (even *primarily*) with regard to the properties of their objects of reference—which are, since not determined via descriptions, intuitionally accessed but not cognized in all the determinations that would properly apply to them—as such, and not the satisfaction of descriptive conditions associated with the word. Such descriptions that we may have are sufficient but not necessary conditions for the correctness of applying the words in a given case, and only sufficient in certain ranges of cases, but not others. (a) the reference of the word can remain the same in spite of differences in the associated descriptions: "we can never be sure whether by the word designating the same object we do not sometimes think more and sometimes fewer of the object's characteristics (...) We employ certain characteristics only as long as they are sufficient for distinguishing; new recognitions (...) remove some characteristics and add others" (A727/B755) and (b) is *prior to* descriptive specifications of their conditions of applications (c) is to be determined in interaction with contextually or experimentally given objects rather than descriptions "when we talk, e.g., about water and its properties, we shall not linger upon what we think by the word *water*, but shall proceed to experiments" (A728/B756) but (d) determines the word's *content*.

⁷⁸ Wolff*?

⁷⁹ For an excellent survey of the semantic import of these Kantian distinctions, cf. Hanna (2006).

reference. As means of reference, concepts, too, *contain* an intuitional element without which their content remains too undetermined for them to make one rather than another contribution to possible judgments. For Kant, reference just *is* reference to environmental particulars established via intuitions that have form *and content*,⁸⁰ so that concepts, as means of reference to objects, also have to be analysed as making and requiring such reference as a matter of their *conceptual* nature and content. In terms of his threefold distinction between words ('concept titles'), concepts and reference (comprehension), a word cannot become a concept unless its use is regulated with regard to acts of referring to particulars with their help. Since this feature of Kant's theory of cognition is often overlooked and not always fully realized, and because so far, investigations of referential elements in Kant's semantics have concentrated on his analysis of intuitional reference,⁸¹ I here want to develop Kant's semantics of *concepts* –i.e. generalizing means of reference—in relation to his account of intuitional reference. It will turn out that, as Kant does not admit further types of elementary, autonomously significant representations than intuitions and concepts, and concepts remain too indeterminate to make fixed contributions to truth-evaluable judgments without intuitional elements, Kant's whole semantics (not only his account of intuitional reference) is thoroughly anti-internalist.

First, let me review the cornerstones of Kant's analysis of reference to particulars. Intuitions are, as Hanna has convincingly argued and Westphal agrees⁸², best construed as means of direct reference, i.e. as means that enable *in a spatiotemporally structured context* picking out and referring to particulars on the background of an activity of judgment.⁸³ Intuitions in this sense are essentially singular representations that refer to their objects directly, given a spatio-temporal structure of which the thinker entertaining

⁸⁰ E.g.: "All our cognition still refers ultimately to possible intuitions; for through these alone is an object given. (...) Now of all intuition none is given a priori except the mere form of appearances (...) But the matter of appearances, through which *things* are given to us in space and time can be presented only in perception (...) The only concept that presents this *empirical content* of appearances a priori is the concept of *thing as such*; (...) but [it] can never supply (...) the intuition of the *real* object, because this intuition must necessarily be empirical." (A 719-20/B747-8)

⁸¹ Thompson 1972, Howell 1973, Hanna 2001, 2006, Westphal 2004,.

⁸² "Kant's Transcendental Response to Skepticism", 157-9.

⁸³ Hanna, Robert, *Kant and the Foundations of Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford, OUP, 2001), 197; cf. also the generality of Kant's definition in the CPR: "intuition is that by which *a cognition* refers to objects directly, and at which *all thought* aims as a means." (A19/B33, emphasis added).

the intuitive representation and the object are equally part; as such, they are opposed to representations that require general means of reference to objects, such as concepts and definite descriptions, which indirectly refer by being satisfied by the objects' features.⁸⁴ Kant's further construal of the semantics of intuitions anticipates in a quite detailed way much of the semantic structures that have recently been explored in the analysis of indexicals. That this has been overlooked for such a long time is probably due to the fact that Kantian intuitions are *not* construed on the model of separate linguistic expressions or types of representation that would be the carriers of directly referential functions in contrast to other expressions. In fact, apart from the beginnings of a semantic analysis of the use of "I",⁸⁵ Kant hardly ever makes serious efforts to describe the use of demonstratives or indexicals. As will turn out below, in the context of Kant's analysis of conceptual content, this decoupling of semantic *function* (referentiality) and

⁸⁴ The first to explicitly make the case that intuitions have this semantic structure was Manley Thompson in his "Singular Terms and Intuitions in Kant's Epistemology", *Review of Metaphysics* 26 (1972-3), 314-43. In discussion of Hintikka's and Parsons' earlier treatments of intuition, he crucially shifts attention away from Kant's philosophy of mathematics to his theory of experiential knowledge as the anchoring point of Kant's theory of intuitive representation (320-23). A further crucial insight of his work is to distinguish between, on the one hand, singularity and immediacy, both of which are the semantically essential features of intuitions, and, on the other, uniqueness, which Thompson correctly identifies as derived from general ways of accessing objects and therefore rather conceptual in nature (328-33). A third important insight in Thompson's treatment is that, while demonstrative pronouns in many ways are good linguistic correlates for intuitions, Kant's theory of representation does not tie its semantic category of intuition to any particular linguistic category (333).

⁸⁵ In the CPR, Kant does not quite succeed in classifying the "I think" in his framework of representation-types. Thus, he says at the beginning of the Paralogisms, "We now come to a concept that was not entered in the (...) general list of transcendental concepts [i.e. the list of categories laid out in the metaphysical deduction at A 80/B 106], and that must yet be classed with them (...) This is the concept –or, if one prefers, the judgment, *I think*. (...) It serves only to introduce all thought as belonging to consciousness." (A341/B399-400) After this qualification of the expression's function as anchoring representations in consciousness indexically and thereby converting them into thoughts, he speaks of "the single proposition *I think*" (A342/B400), only to continue by deflating the expression's purely semantic import when he explains the content of the 'I' away by way of a performative analysis: "the simple, and by itself quite empty presentation *I*, of which we cannot even say that it is a concept (...) through this I or he or it that thinks, nothing more is presented than a transcendental subject of thoughts=x. This subject is cognized only through thoughts that are its predicates, and apart from them we can never have the least concept of it." (A346/B404) In later remarks, he speaks of "the formal proposition of apperception *I think*" (A354) or even the "universal proposition *I think*" (A 398) that is "of course, not an experience, but is the form of apperception" (A 354), where apperception is roughly synonymous with 'self-ascription', so that the 'I think' ultimately is "only the formal condition –viz. the logical unity of any thought" (A398). These passages make clear that the "I", or the "I think" do not fit in with any of the classifications of representations that Kant's theory of cognition offers: according to everything Kant says, it is neither a concept (but is like one in some ways), nor an intuition (but is like one in some ways), nor a proposition (but is like some in some ways) or judgment. Although many passages like these can be shown to exhibit a coherent representation of the functioning of the "I think", Kant's exposition of the *semantics* of the indexical "I" surely is not fully worked out.

representational realization (indexical, demonstrative, ...) is actually a virtue of Kant's account, because it permits him the construal of intuitional elements in the content of representations in a way that does not require the presence of particular expressions that can only stand for singular objects in the thoughts where such reference actually occurs as a matter of contextual fact. One of Kant's central claims in his analysis of conceptual content will be precisely that means of general reference (concepts), as means of *reference to objects*, also have to be means of possible reference to particulars.⁸⁶ But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

The decisive points in Kant's analysis of intuitional reference are (a) that reference to particulars by intuitions is not and cannot be descriptively determined, i.e. does not depend on identifying descriptions supplied by concepts, and (b) that reference by such means is dependent on adequate contextual, particularly *spatio-temporal* relations between representation and referent. (a) entails that intuitional reference is *irreducible* to conceptual identification,⁸⁷ and (b) entails that intuitional reference has *spatio-temporal* circumstances of use for the corresponding representations as enabling conditions.⁸⁸

In order to develop my view of Kant's referentialist understanding of conceptual content, I now want to present these two core insights in a slightly different way than it is usually done in the literature. I will take my starting point from Kant's critique of the idea that it might be possible, from the point of view of a fully complete, conceptually articulated but intuition-free, absolute representation of the world (i.e. a representation

⁸⁶ E.g., A139-40/B178-9.

⁸⁷ "Intuition and concepts (...) constitute the elements of all our cognition. Let us give the name sensibility to our mind's (...) capacity to receive presentations insofar as it is affected in some manner. (...) Understanding, on the other hand, is our ability to *think* the object of sensible intuition. (...) this capacity and this ability cannot exchange their functions. The understanding cannot intuit anything, and the senses cannot think anything." (A50-1/B74-5)

⁸⁸ This follows from Kant's nested system of definitions. "The capacity (...) to acquire presentations as a result of the way in which we are affected by objects is called sensibility. (...) by means of sensibility objects are given to us, and *it alone* supplies us with intuitions. (...) The effect of an object (...) is *sensation*. Intuition that refers to the object through sensation is called *empirical* intuition. The undetermined object of an empirical intuition is called *appearance*. Whatever in an appearance corresponds to sensation I call its *matter* (...) although the matter of all appearance is given to us only a posteriori, the form of all appearance must (...) lie ready for the sensations a priori" (A19-20/B33-4) This system of definitions entails two irreducibility-theses: (a) the function of intuitions is irreducible to that of concepts, and (b) the matter of representational content is irreducible to its form. That the matter of content requires *spatio-temporal* enabling conditions becomes clear in the following remarks: "of all intuition none is given a priori except the mere form of appearances (...) But the matter of appearances, through which *things* are given to us in space and time, can be presented only in perception and hence a posteriori." (A720/B748)

that could be what it is and mean what it does irrespective of whether and how we ever might have contact with extra-representational objects), to individuate anything as a distinct, particular referent. This starting point recommends itself because if this idea can be shown to be flawed, then any *less* perfect, intuition-free description will not be eligible as supplying a means of successful individual reference either. According to Kant's criticism, the mentioned idea rests on illicitly attributing properties of things, namely being 'thoroughgoingly determined',⁸⁹ to mental representations. Kant aims to show that if referential access to particulars, i.e. thoroughgoingly determined *objects*, is nonetheless possible, then it must be *irreducible* to intuition-free descriptive conditions because the idea of an a-intuitional thoroughgoingly determinative representation does not cohere with what concepts can do (generalize, not select).

The clearest statement of this irreducibility of referential access to particulars to attributive reference can be found in §§11-15 of Kant's *Logic*. Here, Kant argues that (1) any description that in fact applies only to one thing can apply to more than one thing in other possible circumstances, due to the fact that concepts are essentially general means of reference, and (2) any object that is specified by some description and in fact, under some circumstances, sufficiently individuated by this description, may no longer be sufficiently individuated by this same description when other features become relevant that apply to more objects than the described one; therefore, descriptive individuation (and reference to particulars derived from it) is arbitrarily expandable and never 'complete'. For both reasons, referring to individuals is only possible by means of *direct*, i.e. not conceptually mediated means of reference. According to Kant, it is "only things that are thoroughgoingly determined" (§15), not concepts, because "a lowest concept (...) is impossible to determine" (§11), such that "even when we have a concept that we apply to individuals *immediately*, it is still possible that with regard to it [the individual] there remain specific differences that we either do not notice or leave aside. It is only comparatively (...) that there are lowest concepts that, as it were, have acquired this meaning by *convention*." (ibid.) Therefore, "there are only thoroughgoingly determined cognitions as *intuitions*, but not as *concepts*; regarding the latter, logical determination

⁸⁹ Kant classifies this assumption as a transcendental material presupposition "of the matter for all possibility (...) that is to contain the data for the particular possibility of every thing." (A573/B601)

can never be considered accomplished." (§15) These remarks are extremely consequential.

For once, since it is only *things* and all *existing things*,⁹⁰ but not concepts or conceptual cognitions that are thoroughly determined, reference to individuals is importantly *non-epistemic*, since no descriptive conditions possessed by a thinker are sufficient for the fact that her representations refer to a given individual. Secondly, the truth-conditions or propositions expressed in truth-evaluable judgments about individuals cannot be specified without the things themselves. In first-order language, this means that, similar to the views of Kaplan or Perry, for a judgment to be correctly considered to be about particulars, the things referred to, not identifying descriptions thereof, have to be part of what is expressed in the judgment, or of its *content*. The semantic value of the corresponding representation-types (intuitions) is therefore the object of reference accessed in their tokenings. This means, in turn, that judgments about them, which are specific ways of representing and therefore appearances, *contain the intuitional referents themselves*. Accordingly, at least these appearances (propositions) are *not mental entities* but composite entities consisting of mind-related and non-epistemic, extra-mental components.⁹¹ Kant calls the latter the *matter* of appearance and speaks of it as "the real *in appearance* (what corresponds to sensation)", which "must be given, for without being given it could in no way even be thought, and hence its possibility *could not be presented*."⁹² If we put this together with what was said before, it becomes clearer that

⁹⁰ A573/B601.

⁹¹ In putting things like this, I side, as Westphal (*Kant's Transcendental Proof*, 60fn42), with what Howell (following Prichard and Barker) has characterized as an 'appearing theory' of appearances (Howell, R.: *Kant's Transcendental Deduction*, Dordrecht:Kluwer, 1992, 36-40; 347fn18, 347fn19). In §IV, however, I will disagree with Howell's contention (ibid., 41) that appearing theories require a 'two-realms' view of appearances and things in themselves. Kant's commitment to the composite nature of appearances has been noted in Brandt, R. "Transzendente Ästhetik, §§1-3" (in Mohr, G./Willaschek, M. (eds.): *Immanuel Kant: Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1998, 81-106), 85.

⁹² A581/B609. On account of his semantics, Kant affirms here generally that appearances, insofar as they are contentful representations, are not mental entities. Kant reaffirms this later: "*in appearance*, through which all objects are given to us, there are two components: the form of intuition (space and time) (...) and the matter (*the physical*) or content, which signifies a something *encountered in space and time* and hence a something containing an existence and corresponding to sensation" (A723/B751, emphasis added) One of the few commentators to have fully acknowledged this is Collins, Arthur, *Possible Experience*, 143-52, esp. 144. Melnick, Arthur, *Themes in Kant's Metaphysics*, considers it as part of Kant's theory of representation that we might find reason not to think of representations as purely mental affairs with no spatially distal components (149). Similar ideas have been put forward, though not in interpreting Kant, by John McDowell. I will come back to this complex below, in §IV.

Kant's reason for the irreducibility of directly referential means to descriptive conditions is not merely a matter of his definitions of intuitions and concepts, but has a systematic semantic underpinning: suppose we are given an identifying description, 'the FGH', which, as a matter of fact, is satisfied by only one entity, *a*, in the actual world. Since the description consists of concepts that, taken each in isolation, could apply to many different things, referring with the description to objects requires applying its constituent concepts, 'F', 'G', 'H' to objects in general, so that the resulting representation has the form of a true assertion ('*a* is FGH'). In this way, the descriptive condition is used predicatively (or attributively) such that it is *true of* whatever it is applied to. *Ex hypothesi*, it happens to be true of only one thing in the actual world, but this is not necessarily so, and the same description could be true of other things in other circumstances. The truth-conditional contribution of description and directly referring intuitions is thus, according to Kant's semantics, different, which comes to the fore when contexts embedding them are considered in varying circumstances (e.g., when we designate the same actual raindrop as 'this raindrop' or 'the raindrop left of the tree', the latter can be said to possibly not have been anywhere while the former not)⁹³. Another decisive point of Kant's remarks is that what is needed for the range of conditions of satisfaction for the description to be specified is some sort of individual constant ('*a*') to pick out objects it is applied to. That is, as Kant suggests, being able to so much as *represent* a certain individual in some circumstance of application as satisfying a description *presupposes* accessing (i.e. referring to) this very individual by description-independent means.⁹⁴ Therefore, successfully referring to individuals (i.e. throughgoingly determined objects) is possible *prior* to conceptualizing them.⁹⁵ As Kant said, *there are* 'thoroughgoingly determined *cognitions*', namely intuitions. But successful intuitional reference cannot depend on having available a conceptual, or in any other way epistemic means of identifying the individual, thoroughgoingly or not. In fact, and this will be important

⁹³ For this example, cf. A372/B328.

⁹⁴ Metalinguistically, Kant's point can be summarized by saying that characterizing the range of reference of the description through possible worlds requires referential access to the individuals in these possible worlds first, to see then, second, whether or not the satisfier in a possible world *w* is the same thing as satisfier in world *w'*. In still other terms: in order to trace lines of trans-world-identity, we need standard naming devices that refer to the same thing across possible worlds, no matter what description they satisfy in these worlds, respectively.

⁹⁵ B132.

when we consider the relations of MCE and TI, Kant's semantics nowhere mentions objects we don't have *access* to. This makes it *Mental Content* Externalism as opposed to other forms of realism: the objects on which the individuation of contents depends are, precisely for this dependency, *involved* in the contents. But accessing these thoroughly determined things *ab extra* (e.g. by referring to them or sensation) is not equated with an ability to wholly determining them to be what they are.

Now, Kant only recognizes two elementary types of representations, intuitions and concepts, and the determinacy of intuitional reference cannot be secured by intuition-free conceptual means. If, therefore, the truth-conditions of representations about particular things are to be determinate, then this cannot be a consequence of any merely conceptual circumstance. It can also not be a consequence of the mere occurrence of an intuitive representation in mind, because such occurrences do not necessarily refer.⁹⁶ The best alternative left open is thus that successful intuitional reference depends on and is distinguished by the representers' *being in the right kind of position towards the real in appearance*, i.e. by her being in spatio-temporally adequate conditions for the things to play a role in what she judges to be the case.

III.4. Referentialism II: Conceptual Content

As I said, Kant's externalist account of singular reference has by now been noted in the literature. What has been less noted is that Kant also defends the view that the contribution of intuitively achieved reference to particulars is indispensable for determining the contributions of truth-conditions of judgments in *two* ways, one fairly common, the other quite extraordinary and mostly neglected. The commonly noted case is that of predication, where intuitional reference of some form or other is required to give particular objects for the concepts in judgments to apply to when concepts occur in the predicate position. The extraordinary and mostly overlooked way in which Kant claims a referential element in the determination of truth-conditions for judgments is that the very *content of concepts* (i.e. possible predicates) remains indeterminate unless it encompasses actual intuitional references to objects the words expressing them refer to

⁹⁶ B219, B278, A253/B309.

(i.e. of parts of their 'extension'). Here are some passages that can count as programmatic of this second way, but are seldom so taken: "the object cannot be given to a concept otherwise than in intuition; and if a pure intuition is possible (...) still this pure intuition itself also can acquire its object (...) only through *empirical* intuition, whose mere form [as opposed to matter] the *pure* intuition is. Therefore *all concepts*, however possible they may be a priori, refer nonetheless to empirical intuitions, i.e. to *data for possible experience*. Without this reference, they (...) are mere play".⁹⁷ Now, as is well known, 'data for possible experience' are, for Kant, the "undetermined objects of an empirical intuition",⁹⁸ i.e. whatever corresponds to sensation and is responsible for the occurrence of a perception. This suggests the following reasoning: no content without some relation to data for possible experience, which in turn are not determined by our mode of cognition or any other fact about our cognition alone. On the contrary, Kant says "our kind of intuition is dependent on the existence of the object, and hence is possible only by the object's affecting the subject's capacity to present."⁹⁹ In all, these passages seem to allow the following, referentialist counter-thesis to (VER):

(REF) not only do we not possess no content *without* data for possible experience, but what contents we have *depends on* these data, which are in turn contingent on 'objects we encounter' or (as Westphal says with Allison) objects *ab extra*.

This is also meant to say that what contribution a given concept can make to, or what constraints it can impose on the conditions under which a judgment containing it is true depends *also* on intuitionally (i.e. by way of contextual, real relations between representation and extra-mental particulars) picked out objects that fall under it on other occasions of use.¹⁰⁰ It is the view of the semantics of conceptual activity suggested by

⁹⁷ A239/B298.

⁹⁸ A20/B34.

⁹⁹ B72.

¹⁰⁰ It should be clear that things so accessed needn't be *perceptually recognized* to play the roles for content described in the text. That is one, and a most important way of cognitive contact. But according to Kant, cognitive contact to particulars can also be given and constrain features of content when direct perception fails, as in the case of things too small to see –cf. Kant's reference to magnetism at A226/B273—or, within the practice of construction, of mathematical constructs (A713/B741-A717-745), through the circumstances of that contact or the various existence claims involved in that construction.

(REF) that effectively *excludes* that we could know what we think by using concepts in a purely discursive way, in the total absence of contact to environing particulars. (REF) thereby expresses a basis for both, Kant's anti-metaphysical view that conceptual activity yields meaningful insights only in the context of experience *and* his anti-mentalist mental content externalism. To explain the type of object-dependency Kant has in mind, and to display that and how Kant's view of conceptual content indeed makes essential use of referentialist ideas, I now want to take a closer look at the two ways in which Kant elucidates the importance of intuitional reference for conceptual content: (1) by contrasting the function of concepts in the predicate- and in the subject-position, and (2) by considering how the conditions of application for the words expressing them are determined.

(1) In the predicative case, general terms or concepts are means of a doubly *indirect* reference because they refer to the object given in intuition only by connecting to the intuition in the subject position¹⁰¹ *and* do so 'by certain characteristics',¹⁰² 'universal and sufficient marks'¹⁰³ and the schemata associated with them, as Kant says. They determine the judgment as true only insofar as the object supplied by intuition satisfies the marks associated with the predicate. What predicates in judgments, concepts, do when an assertoric categorical judgment is true is, then, to refer, as it were, secondarily to the same objects that are primarily referred to or 'given by' intuition. Thus, a judgment is true iff the predicate as specified in terms of marks and schemata is true of what the subject refers to. In this case, the subject-term, the predicate and the judgment are one and all 'objectively real'.¹⁰⁴ That is, according to Kant concepts are *also* means of reference, but they refer indirectly to the same thing that the intuition in the subject position directly refers to. This is the standard account of the case of subsuming a particular object under a general rule. Most commentators seem to take it for granted that Kant's semantic analyses stop at this point and thus represent a semantics for concepts according to which their extensions are *a priori* determined by necessary and sufficient conditions for their

¹⁰¹ A68/B93.

¹⁰² A19/B33.

¹⁰³ A136/B175.

¹⁰⁴ A155/B194-5. Cf. also Hanna 2001, 2006, Longuenesse 1998.

application in the way of 'definitions of objects'. However, this is a serious and consequential mistake, as Kant's own reflections on the consequences of the understanding of judgments as functions for subsuming particulars under concepts (which is akin to contemporary views of predicates as propositional functions) for the logic and semantics of predication make clear. Here is why.

Consider a judgment that consists of two general terms ("tigers are striped", "(all) bodies are divisible"). For the truth-conditions of this statement to be determinate enough for it to be apt as a judgment, according to the model of subsumption just outlined, we need at least one of the two general terms to perform the function of supplying objects for the other to apply to. Thus, the concept that plays the role of logical subject needs to supply the object that the predicate (i.e. the concept-term that contributes the 'function of possible judgments' or propositional function) is to be true of. In this case, the subject term can *not* refer to an object given by an intuition that is separately *encoded or represented in the surface structure of the judgment* since the judgment only contains concept-expressions, i.e. general means of reference. *If* such judgments are therefore capable of truth-value, *then* the subject concept itself must *contain* intuitionally accessed objects for it to contribute the objects for predication to the judgment.¹⁰⁵ In this way, Kant can resolve the question of the truth conditions for this type of judgment only by assuming that the *content* of concepts, that is, their contribution to the truth-conditions of judgments, is at least partially determined by *intuitive* elements. Accordingly, Kant explains the semantic underpinnings of conceptual functions in truth-evaluable judgments as follows: "E.g. in the judgment *All bodies are divisible*, the concept of the divisible refers to various other concepts; but, among these, it is here specifically referred to the concept of body, and the concept of body is referred in turn to certain appearances [corrected to "intuitions" in his working copy of edition A!] that we encounter. Hence these objects are represented indirectly through the concept of divisibility. (...) Now, since all acts of the understanding can be reduced to judgments, the *understanding* as such can be presented as a *power of judgment*. (...) and concepts, as predicates of possible judgments, refer to some presentation of an as yet undetermined object. Thus the

¹⁰⁵ That Kant is driven to this way of speaking is clear at several points. For example, he says that mathematical concepts *contain* pure intuitions (A719/B747).

concept of body signifies something (...) that can be cognized through that concept. Hence it is a concept *only because* there are contained under it other presentations by means of which it can refer to objects."¹⁰⁶ Now, while this gives some reason to think that for Kant, determining the content of a concept like "body" requires reference to bodies, or other extra-conceptual entities, it does not exclude other possibilities that evade this externalist commitment. The 'other presentations' might, like in many descriptivist semantics, be construed as definite descriptions that individuate intended objects of reference, so that the content of concepts could be specified by a sort of 'definition of the object', and their reference in terms of objects satisfying this descriptive condition. Another semantic standpoint from which one might feel unimpressed by this way of arguing for referential components in the content of general terms is a widely held strand of contemporary formal semantic analysis.¹⁰⁷ On it, the 'other presentations' might be construed as variables, the concepts as sentential functions, and the referential function of the variables as being 'executed' by quantifiers binding the variables and ranging over given universes of entities, such that being referred to in a judgment is being the value of a variable, i.e. being an element of the universe in which the sentence (in case of open sentences like 'F(x)', properly quantified or prefixed by adequate operators) is true. This is a fully general form of representation that abstracts away from all apparent singular reference by individual terms in the surface-structure of judgments by construing the semantics of individual terms with the aid of variables, quantifiers and operators—all of which are governed by general rules—with the purpose of characterizing both, what semantic value these expressions must have on any particular occasion of use, and what cognitive content they carry. Because of its *generality*, this representation of truth-conditions claims to give the true *logico-semantic form* for a system of representations (as opposed to how expressions are contingently taken to refer). Reference to individuals is then, hopefully, derivable from the system of truth-conditions for sentences in a system of representation. On this model, Kant's application-of-concepts-to-objects-model, his requirement of contextually achieved reference to particulars prior to predication, etc.,

¹⁰⁶ A68-9/B93-4, last emphasis added.

¹⁰⁷ Representative of this strand is, e.g., Larson, R./Segal, G.: *Knowledge of Meaning*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1995, the most elaborate version of a quantifier-cum-operator representation of the semantics of means of singular reference is King, Jeffrey S., *Complex Demonstratives*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2001.

would just be mistaking elements of surface structure and merely pragmatic conditions of use of presentations for logical forms, where the actual semantic structure of judgments does not warrant any of this.

That Kant is –like many contemporary semanticists of contextualist or indexicalist stripes—after something (namely, an intentional, object-directed cognitive dimension *in* meaning) that can neither be simulated in descriptivist semantics for singular reference nor adequately captured in standard analyses that employ quantifier phrases to model referential elements in the surface structure in logical form can be appreciated in several ways.¹⁰⁸ The general gist of Kant's analysis is that the truth conditional contributions of expressions containing means of singular reference, intuitions, are different from, and therefore not substitutable by or derivable from those of the same expressions containing only general means of reference, be they, as in the quantifier-phrase case, truth conditions for predications with variables or, as in descriptivist semantics, descriptions. For starters, we saw before that Kant considers referents as 'things that are thoroughgoingly determined', but things, therefore referents for concepts on occasions of use, are *not* thoroughgoingly determined when the spatio-temporal conditions under which representations are employed, like location and impenetrability (=non-co-existence of two things at the same time at the same place), are undetermined. As a simple illustration, Kant mentions the example of two raindrops (or two volumes of one cubic foot) that are exhaustively described regarding their intrinsic properties and yet differentiable by their location. Kant says: "when what matters is not the logical form of the concepts but their content –i.e. (...) whether the things themselves [as possible referents of the concepts] are the same or different (...) [this] cannot be established immediately from the concepts themselves by mere comparison"¹⁰⁹ because, for example, "however much everything regarding these concepts may be the same, yet the difference in locations at the same time is a sufficient basis for the *numerical difference* of the object (of the senses) itself."¹¹⁰ His

¹⁰⁸ If the latter is taken, by definition, as the 'real' semantic level, while the referentiality of surface elements is a matter of 'pragmatics', we could even see Kant as a precursor of the thesis that determining the semantics of certain expressions, in the sense of their systematic contribution to the truth conditions of sentences, cannot be successfully accomplished without acknowledging their pragmatics.

¹⁰⁹ A362/B318.

¹¹⁰ A263/B319.

most famous examples of this irreducibility of spatio-temporal, demonstrative object-individuation to descriptive-conceptual indistinguishability are incongruent counterparts and, less controversially, the two raindrops at different locations: "if I am acquainted with a drop of water (...) in terms of all its intrinsic determinations, then I can accept no drop of water as being different from another if the entire concept of *this* drop is the same as *the* drop. But if the drop (...) has its location not merely in the understanding (i.e. among concepts), but in sensible intuition (i.e. in space) (...) [then] the difference of locations (...) makes the [plurality and] distinction of objects (...) not only possible but also necessary."¹¹¹ This leaves no doubt that, according to Kant, the truth-conditions of presentations for identifying descriptions and demonstrative indications of objects are importantly different.¹¹² It also makes clear that Kant defends the irreducibility of space and the spatial relations between the thinker's body and her environs to any descriptive proxy for these relations on the basis of concepts that only refer to other presentations and the time of their occurrence (like, say, in the substitution of "the place that you were at yesterday" by "the place designated by the n-th presentation back, seen from today, and accompanied by such-and-such sensations").

The generality of these points is borne out in the formalism of the classical, non-quantum-mechanical theory of physical objects as such since Newton (with the details of which Kant was, needless to say, thoroughly acquainted).¹¹³ In the example, Kant argues that we are unable to distinguish things that are otherwise, regarding their intrinsic properties, identical (which yields the description of '*the* drop', i.e. a single drop), unless we are able to point out at least one of them demonstratively as *this* drop, and to thus *fix* the location of at least one element in the manifold of drops. Relative to this 'origin' or standard, we can then identify others by descriptions, albeit by ones that refer to this standard and relate the respective objects to *it*. In general, systems of reference simply do not become systems that allow unique identification and co-ordination of locations (or

¹¹¹ A 372/B328, emphasis added.

¹¹² Cf. also A282/B338.

¹¹³ A very clear discussion of these matters can be found in Mittelstaedt, Peter: "Der Objektbegriff bei Kant und in der gegenwärtigen Physik", in Heidemann, D./Engenlhard, K. (eds.): *Warum Kant heute?*, Berlin: De Gruyter 2003, 207-30, esp. 221-2.

times) without some demonstrative reference that fixes an origin or standard object.¹¹⁴ Once fixed, it is *the demonstrated object as such* relative to which we can determine other locations,¹¹⁵ and distinguish location-time pairs for objects.¹¹⁶ Were we to substitute a description for it that can apply to other objects and not fix another origin, the system as a whole would leave the locations of objects indeterminate. The same is true, of course, for a system of representation that determines only the truth conditions of predications with *variables* (i.e. expressions that can denote *any whatever object*).¹¹⁷ Therefore, intuition-free descriptions cannot single out things, i.e. objects of reference, such as Kant's subsumption model requires to be given on occasions of applying concepts. Now, one might object that descriptions specifying the application of *general* means of reference, concepts, need not single out any objects at all, but merely generally characterize the type of thing to be counted as an instance of the term. However, in Kant's view, such merely general characteristics are not sufficient to determine whether or not a concept applies in a given case. The reason for this is that Kant construes conceptual

¹¹⁴ It is not unimportant to note the quantifier distribution in this requirement of a demonstrative or indexical element in effective systems of object-co-ordination. It only requires that some object or other be distinguished demonstratively, which does 1) not mean that there is one privileged system of co-ordination among all those that are admissible on account of a given geometry-cum-physical-theory *but* 2) nonetheless means that the cognitive function of indexical reference is irreducible to general conditions, hence 3) that for all determinate cognition of objects of possible perception/measurement, there is an irreducible *intentional*, standpoint-related element. Confusion of 1) and 2), and the mis-interpretation of 3) as subjective (in spite of its *object*-relatedness) dominated the neo-Kantian attempts to subsume all contributions of intuition, via the assimilation of forms of intuition to conceptually constituted theoretical systems, to invariance-properties of theoretical descriptions, as expressed e.g., in Cassirer's dictum in the *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* that "the ultimate stratum of objectivity" lies in "the invariance of (...) relations and not in the existence of any particular entities" (552). An excellent discussion of these matters, to which I owe this quote and many insights in spite of its very different focus and conclusions, is Ryckman, Thomas: *The Reign of Relativity* (Oxford:OUP, 2005), esp. 28-46.

¹¹⁵ This explains why Kant can, as he frequently does, slide from, e.g., speaking of 'space' to speaking of 'the representation of space': because the latter needs to contain elements *in* space as constituents for it to constitute a representation *of* space, i.e. a co-ordinative system of locations. This solves an otherwise severe problem noted in Brandt, R. "Transzendente Ästhetik, §§1-3" (in Mohr, G./Willaschek, M. (eds.): *Immanuel Kant: Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1998, 81-106), 105.

¹¹⁶ The indispensability of demonstrative or, as he says, "token-reflexive" reference for the transformation of geometrical or other structures into locating, co-ordinative systems of reference, as well as the consequence that thereby the standard objects themselves become (as 'real elements', 'standard bodies' or 'points of reference') part of the conditions under which concepts can be determined to apply was already noted by Reichenbach with regard to spatial measures in his *Philosophy of Space and Time* (New York:Dover, 1958), §4, 14, §5, 22, and with respect to one-dimensional systems of time-determinations in his *Elements of Symbolic Logic* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), §51, 284ff .

¹¹⁷ This is, essentially, the point driven home by model-theoretic arguments like Quine's or Putnam's that show that fixing the truth-conditions for all sentences of a language leaves the reference of their constituent expressions to spatio-temporal particulars largely indeterminate.

activity on the model of subsumption, so that applying a general term requires judging by a *rule* whether the term applies in a particular *case*, or in a certain sort of *situation* that is characterized by actual entities and their spatio-temporal relationships. In Kant's view, the assembly of a set of things gathered in actual application is the necessary *basis* upon which we can judge whether a given analysis, or attribution of a logical form to a word, is adequate for the semantics of the concept (see below, (2)). In determining the application of a word, in turn, we cannot be helped by an intuition-free description because using it for the identification of a case of application for the concept would require judging the applicability of the description itself to the case, and therefore require another judgment of application according to the rules encoded in the concepts of the description, and so on. Kant points this out when he says: "If understanding is (...) our power of rules, then the power of judgment is the ability to subsume under rules, i.e. to distinguish whether something does or does not fall under a given rule".¹¹⁸ This means that conceptual determinacy requires *also* that it be clear and definite, in any given case, whether or not a thing given by intuition falls under the rule. Otherwise, synthetic judgments and the concept-titles occurring therein remain empty because "if a cognition is to have objective reality, i.e. if it is to refer to an object (...) the object must be capable of being given in some way."¹¹⁹ Thus, it is a mistake to construe Kant's frequent remarks about concepts and their reference to objects as 'indirect' or through marks and characters to be saying that the reference of concepts in general could be determined *purely descriptively*, without contextual or intuitional elements. *No* reference, also not that of concepts on occasions of use, can be so determined, according to Kant. Referring to particulars just is the business of intuitions, and its success is retraceable to the presence of empirical intuitions, which, as we saw before, have 'the real in appearance' as their content and semantic value. This is the *core* of Kant's semantic externalism. Hence, if concepts are means of reference *at all*, it *cannot* be on account of anything else than intuitional, i.e. directly referential elements *within* conceptual content itself. The role of this referentialist element in Kant's theory of conceptual content becomes even clearer in Kant's second type of consideration regarding conceptual content, his rejection of real definitions.

¹¹⁸ A132/B171.

¹¹⁹ A155/B194

(2) That Kant regards the cognitive function of concepts as fundamentally rooted in their capacity to serve as means of reference is obvious from the fact that Kant considers it as possible, legitimate and even desirable that words expressing empirical concepts can be *merely designative* of their instances, i.e., that their significance can be dominated by their referential relations to objects. Kant says: "What, indeed, would be the point of defining an empirical concept? (...) when we talk about, e.g. water (...) the word (...) is to amount merely to a designation of the thing, not a concept of it".¹²⁰ This clearly states that there is a referential dimension that can appear autonomously even in the case of representations that apply to things in a generalizing way. Moreover, whether or not a thing is to be counted as part of the concept's reference cannot depend on the presence of a conceptual condition or definition if, as Kant suggests, the *word* is a *mere* designation of the thing. Rather, it is the other way around: whether or not a descriptive or 'definitional' condition is adequate depends on the intuitionally accessed things (in contemporary post-Fregean parlance, this means that reference co-determines sense). The same idea is also echoed in Kant's observations about the semantics of the categories: "only by means of the universal *sensible condition* can they have significance and reference to some object; (...) [as long as] this condition has been omitted from the pure category, (...) the category can contain nothing but the logical function for bringing the manifold under a concept. But from this function alone, i.e. from the form of the concept, (...) we can cognize and distinguish nothing as to what object belongs under the category. (...) without the condition of sensible intuition (...) the categories have no reference whatever to any determinate object, and *hence* cannot define any such object."¹²¹ That is: no definition or descriptive condition of application without reference to determinate objects (which is, as we saw, what only referents of intuitions are). In fact, in these passages that are reminiscent of contemporary referentialist accounts of general empirical terms developed by Putnam, Kripke and others,¹²² Kant rejects the idea that

¹²⁰ A 728/B756.

¹²¹ A245-6, emphasis added.

¹²² Putnam acknowledges the import of these passages as similar to his own views by exclaiming "Ah, Kant keeps stealing my ideas!" (in Putnam, Hilary, "Comments and Replies" (in: Clark, P./Hale, B. (eds.) *Reading Putnam*, London:Routledge, 1994, 242-95), 282). An excellent earlier treatment of the passages as anticipating some Kripkean points is Kroon, F./Nola, R., "Kant, Kripke and Gold", *Kant-Studien* 78, 1987,

non-arbitrary concepts could be defined or "securely bounded" by the "characteristics attaching to the word" in general. He regards those descriptive conditions associated with the use of a general term that does allow cognition of objects as no more than "alleged definitions (...) [as] nothing but a determining of the word",¹²³ i.e. as cues guiding the use of a word that do not necessarily belong to every recognition of objects as its referents. In particular, the reference of the word can remain the same in spite of differences in the associated descriptions: "we can never be sure whether by the word designating the same object we do not sometimes think more and sometimes fewer of the object's characteristics (...) We employ certain characteristics only as long as they are sufficient for distinguishing; new recognitions (...) remove some characteristics and add others".¹²⁴ Consequently, Kant states categorically: "Neither concepts given empirically nor concepts given a priori can be defined (...) no concepts suitable for definition [remain] except those that contain an arbitrary synthesis capable of being constructed a priori."¹²⁵ Kant explicitly rejects the idea that conceptual content is a formal affair that could be settled before and independent of contact with mind-independent objects of reference for concepts. On the other hand, the intuitional reference required for the determination of conceptual content is *prior to* descriptive specifications of the conditions of application: "I can never be sure that the distinct presentation of a concept given to me (...) has been developed comprehensively, unless I know that it is adequate to the object".¹²⁶ Thirdly, the conceptual content of a word, in the sense of general information about the kind of things the word applies to, is to be unfolded and developed in interaction with contextually or experimentally given objects rather than descriptions: "when we talk, e.g., about water and its properties, we shall not linger upon what we

442-58. Hanna, R., "A Kantian Critique of Scientific Essentialism" (*Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 58(3), 1998: 497-528) criticizes the so-called Kripke-Putnam view of empirical concepts mainly on account of the essentialism allegedly required by the postulate of *a posteriori* necessities, i.e. on account of mistaken *metaphysical* views. In passing, he does mention the referentialist, contextualist element of the *semantics* in this model (506) that I concentrate on, but without wishing to analyze it further, and, correctly, I believe, considering it as detachable from deep metaphysical commitments (508-9)—hence, presumably, compatible with a Kantian epistemology and metaphysics. The only other study relating Kant's semantics of conceptual content and this contemporary strand of semantics I am aware of is Anderson, Erik, "Kant, Natural Kind Terms, and Scientific Essentialism" (*History of Philosophy Quarterly*; 11(4), Oct. 1994: 355-373), who also concentrates on metaphysical questions.

¹²³ A728/B756.

¹²⁴ A727/B755.

¹²⁵ A729/B757.

¹²⁶ A728/B756.

think by the word *water*, but shall proceed to experiments";¹²⁷ the same applies in the case of a priori concepts, the content of which can only be specified by reference to "multifarious *fitting* examples".¹²⁸

The dependency of conceptual content on intuitional reference outlined in these passages for all but the constructed concepts of mathematics (i.e. for all the concepts insofar as they are capable of carrying information about particular objects of experience) is only surprising if one overlooks the fact that Kant's semantics pivots entirely on the question of representations' being *referentially successful*.¹²⁹ Thus, when it comes to determining the contribution of general terms to cognition, the descriptive conditions of application associated with the *words* by way of connecting them to other concepts do *not* determine their *content* (i.e. contribution to the truth-conditions of judgments in which they occur), for the same reasons that descriptions do not determine the truth-conditional contributions of intuitions: that intuitional reference cannot be substituted by conceptual activity.

At this point, some readers of Kant will object: But what can intuitional reference have to do with conceptual content *precisely if* Kant sharply *separates* concepts and intuitions as different kinds of cognitions or representations? Now, it is true that Kant distinguishes sharply between concepts and intuitions as types of representation (no representation that is an intuition can simultaneously be a concept and vice versa) and that he regards their

¹²⁷ A728/B756.

¹²⁸ A728-9/B756-7. In the context of Kant's overall conception of things, this is an obvious consequence from the fact that the only general cognitive conditions that *necessarily* have to accompany the recognition of a type of object falling under a particular concept are those governed by the particular laws of nature that are true of these things, which, being empirical and therefore known only a posteriori and possibly only incompletely at any given point in time, cannot be *required* to merely *find ourselves in contact with* the objects governed by these laws. Indeed, in order to find out which particular laws are characteristic of the objects designated by a given empirical concept, we erstwhile have to actually relate to some of these objects we are to investigate.

¹²⁹ Kant writes that "in us, understanding and sensibility can determine objects *only in combination* (...) if we separate them, (...) we have presentations that we cannot refer to any determinate object" (A258/B314). This implies that, if the contentfulness of concepts depends on their determinate reference to objects, then the contentfulness of concepts depends on some sort of combination of intuitions and concepts. It is only when we are fixated on the idea that Kant could not have meant anything else here than verifying instances of concept application in the context of predications (in which both elements are separately encoded and neatly separable) that we come to the idea that concepts extracted from such propositional contexts remain significant means of reference, but now (since separated from the intuitional reference encoded in the surface structure of the judgment) irrespective of information about referential connections to objects they are supposed to apply to. That is exactly the idea Kant's semantics discourages.

cognitive functions as heterogeneous (concepts cannot refer, intuitions cannot think¹³⁰). But that obviously does not mean that he would have to separate the contributions of achievements afforded by each type of representation (i.e. *results* of their operation) in cognition to the *content* of the other.¹³¹ It is Kant's *semantics*, his account of conceptual *content* (not his classification of types of cognitions, his protosyntactic inventory) that affirms that the words standing for concepts acquire determinate content (a distinct information-value, we might say) only by being actually connected to objects of reference (the properties of which even are what constrains which descriptive conditions of use may be adequate), in addition to being connected to other concepts, schemata and descriptive conditions or 'characteristics'. This means that the words' application or non-application in given cases needs to be judged *also* (even *primarily*) with regard to the properties of their objects of reference as such, and not only by the satisfaction of descriptive conditions associated with the word. The referents thus required, in turn, are not picked out via descriptions but intuitionally accessed, which implies that referring to particulars does not depend on recognizing all the determinations that may properly apply to them.¹³² Such descriptions that we may have, in turn, may be sufficient but not

¹³⁰ Each considered in purity, that is, which does not exclude that such pure cases might be uncommon. In fact, only *formal* representations are, according to Kant, pure in this sense: the forms of intuition, space and time, and mathematical concepts, i.e. constructs that *only* depend on our will.

¹³¹ Indeed, if he had *so* wished to separate the deliverances of both, it would also be mysterious how concepts could 'refer to' intuitionally accessed objects at all, or how the latter could be 'thought in' predicates of possible judgments, i.e., it would then be doubtful whether judgment, or generally *synthesis* as described by Kant is actually possible. Clearly, *Kant*, in deliberately characterizing judgment and synthesis as he does, cannot have seriously considered this to be something said by his classification of representations and cognitive functions. *Kant-readers* who want to construe this as a *reductio ad absurdum* of Kant's semantics, on the other hand, would need to show, not merely assume on account of other preconceived semantics, the incoherence in the distinction between properties of representation-types and cognitive functions (which may be heterogeneous), on the one hand, and properties of their deliverances (which may be integrated in semantic contents and insofar 'homogeneous'), on the other. After all, that 'this', 'red', 'carriage' are different representation-types (4-, 3-, and 8-lettered words) with distinct logical functions (demonstrative pronoun, adjective, substantive; individual constant, predicate) and different and arguably heterogeneous cognitive functions (picking out, expressing phenomenal properties, classifying), does not prevent that their deliverances allow me to convey one integrated piece of information by, e.g., speaking or thinking about *this red carriage*.

¹³² That certain objects but not others so accessed qualify as candidates for applying the word, or part of the comprehension of the concept, in turn, can be seen as a consequence of the 'schemata' associated with concepts, which are, roughly, prototypical patterns of recognition acquired by the words in their application to intuitionally accessed objects regarded as referents. Kant requires that, in order to warrant subsumption under a concept, "the presentation of the object must be homogeneous with the concept" (A137/B176), which he explains as given when there is some feature that can be thought in a given concept to be applied to an object that can, at the same time, be intuited. Kant describes schemata correspondingly as a "universal procedure of the imagination for providing a concept with its image" that offers "a rule for the synthesis of

necessary conditions for the correctness of applying the words in a given case, and may only be sufficient in certain ranges of cases but not others.

In sum: according to Kant, 'predicates of possible judgments' or 'concept-titles' in mind only present fully determinate conceptual contents when they are linked to (1) logical functions of judgments, (2) other concepts that express marks and characteristics of potential objects of reference, (3) schemata that qualitatively or phenomenally characterize the type of intuition that counts as indicating objects of reference, (4) occasions on which they actually designate intuitionally available particulars. Intuitional, direct reference to 'objects we encounter' under spatio-temporally adequate conditions plays, then, an essential role in the determination of conceptual content (that is, in the characterization of conditions under which a judgment containing the concept is true). Considered irrespective of (2) or (3), predicates of possible judgments are, cognitively speaking, *words*, not 'strictly bounded concepts'. However, semantically speaking, they are not empty ('designations') and therefore non-arbitrary cognitive instruments to the extent that their employment and operation is constrained by the designated objects. On the other hand, as we saw in the considerations on semantic failure, considered in abstraction from (4) or (3), they are *mere* words, empty and therefore, though part of a system of representation and possibly discursively usable, cognitively arbitrary. Kant's theory of conceptual content, just as his theory of intuitional content, is therefore externalist. As there are no other elementary representations than intuitions and concepts in Kant's semantic theory of representation, the result of these considerations is that attributing MCE to Kant is entirely justified.

IV. Consequences of Externalism

Now that MCE is in place, I would like to raise first a group of epistemological questions. Afterwards, I will argue against Westphal's contention regarding the

imagination (...) determining our intuition in accordance with such and such a general concept" (A141/B180). What he seems to have in mind are general qualitative features that are phenomenally given on the occasion of a perception of, or of cognitive contact with an object. Because they are token-independent features of the perception, they are capable of conceptual articulation, while *not constituted by* or accessed in virtue of possessing these articulating concepts themselves, because they are not available in the same form independent of the fact that *some* contact *or other* with the object in question takes place.

underlying metaphysics that Kant's MCE commits to a realism that is both, incompatible with TI and stronger than ER.

IV.1. Anti-Skepticism

To approach the epistemological questions, we might best begin by asking the normative question about the relationship between MCE and what we can know or must believe. This question concerns the work that MCE can do in Kant's conception of objectivity. So: What is the point that Kant needs from MCE that he wouldn't have otherwise, or, in Kantian terms, that we could not be conscious of, unless we accept MCE?

There is a tempting, grand answer to the first question, and there is a less grand, methodological one. Let me begin with the latter, one that touches on our idea of objectivity.¹³³ Kant's semantics allows that *in* experiential (i.e. sensation-involving) judgments (to which, according to this semantics, there are no exceptions), we can and do make the difference between it appearing to us that p (i.e. our being in the mental state 'p') and it [not] being the case that p; that is, we can without contradiction (or having to come to believe the contrary) think that what we believe might not be the way things are (objectively). The semantics permits this because it allows (even requires) cognitive access to and contact with extra-mental particulars without our having to be able to determine them fully, or our predications on this occasion having to be true of them, so that we can entertain a mental representation that is meaningful, even one that has a determinate content, but yet does not represent the things it refers to as they actually are.¹³⁴ On the other hand, if full mental contents were available to thought without reference to things that are what they are no matter what we think (i.e. mind-independently), attending to differences among mental states like the judgment 'p' and its contraries would only reveal differences between world-independent thoughts occurring to us at various times, where the fact that we have one rather than the other at a time cannot be construed as one being an objectively better representation than the other, i.e.

¹³³ The following features of objectivity agree largely with those ascribed to Strawson in form of an 'objectivity thesis' by Van Cleeve, James, *Problems From Kant* (New York/Oxford: OUP, 1999), 99.

¹³⁴ A376.

one that we *ought to* hold. The differences between being aware of a representation at a time, things appearing to us to be a certain way (content) and their actually being the way they are represented as being (objective reality, truth) give Kant the foundation for all distinctions between subjectively valid and objectively valid representations, and thus constitute a fundamental condition of the possibility of *experience* (where this is opposed to undergoing mental alterations).¹³⁵ The fundamental role of these differences explains why we (and Kant) should be reluctant to sacrifice MCE (even at the cost of TI).

Now for the tempting grand answer, which Westphal gives. Given that MCE commits human beings who think they are able to represent things other than their mental states, and able to make content-related differences in their inner lives to access and reference to extra-mental particulars, it seems that one big gain of MCE for Kant would be to clarify the difference between his own TI and Berkeley's idealism in a certain way. In particular, it now seems as if Kant could support his own short shrift answer to Berkeley that mentions the absurdity of speaking of appearances without anything that

¹³⁵ These differences are of crucial importance for Kant's epistemology, particularly for the argument in the transcendental deduction in the B-edition of the CPR from §19 (B140) onward. This argument culminates in §§21-22 in drawing the distinctions mentioned in the text. Kant here argues that our "understanding by itself cognizes nothing whatsoever, but only combines and orders the material for cognition" and therefore "*Thinking* an object and *cognizing* an object are (...) not the same. (...) if no intuition corresponding to the concept could be given at all, then in terms of its form the concept would indeed be a thought (...) [but] in us, thinking an object (...) by means of a (...) concept can become cognition only insofar as this concept is referred to objects of the senses." Kant then argues, with regard to mathematical concepts, that merely coming to entertain a thought about formally possible objects (i.e. a determinate content) does not amount to having a thought consisting of the same representations, but as a consequence of being aware of things referred to and the way they have to be presented. In other words, the former might be true under conditions where the latter—which presents things as they actually are—is false (I quote the passage leaving out all the qualifications that are inessential in our context): "By determining pure intuition we can (...) acquire (...) cognition of objects (...), but only in terms of their form; that, however, still leaves unestablished whether there can be things that *must be* intuited in this form. (...) But things in space and time are given only insofar as they are perceptions (i.e., presentations accompanied by sensation), and hence are given only through empirical presentation. (...) Consequently (...) concepts (...) provide cognition only insofar as [they] can be applied to empirical intuitions. (...) [They] serve only for the possibility of *empirical cognition*. Such cognition, however, is called *experience*." (B146-7, emphasis added) Thus, the referential access via sensation to things that must be represented one way or another contained in Kant's semantic framework is here identified as the source of making the difference between entertaining representations in mind, even of a fully judgmental form and content, and achieving cognition. The externalist point of these passages is that the conditions of our being in the position to make the difference in a given case between the way we present things as being and the way things are include facts about our relation to the environment. The element through which this point becomes operative in Kant's epistemology, in turn, is his account of the content of our representations, and the latter's connection to reference to extra-mental particulars in the sensation-component of empirical intuitions. In short: Kant's MCE is essential for Kant's ability to draw the epistemological distinction between representation and objective cognition in a non-skeptical way.

appears¹³⁶ with an articulated semantic theory. It might seem that our account of MCE in §III would help to spell out the extent to which Kant's semantics supports this grand answer. After all, we saw that Kant's semantics regards concepts as not characterizable in a purely formal way because the determination of their contribution to the truth-conditions of judgments itself requires referential, i.e. material relations to extra-mental entities. Clearly, with this requirement, Kant's semantics acts as an instrument against idealism-based global forms of skepticism that play on our alleged inability to distinguish factual from fictional systems of representation, which inability is thought to soften us up to the idea that what we take to be our everyday factual assumptions can be suspected as being the product of a dream. Kant's semantics *blocks* this move at a fundamental level by pointing out that for this kind of skeptical argument to work, the intelligibility conditions for concepts in general would have to be different from what they actually are. For, it would have to be the case that human beings in general can so much as understand and take their mental states as representations –and at that, as internally differentiated by their content, so that differences in inner states would indicate differences in representational content—even if *none* of these representations were related to anything extra-mental or other than itself. According to Kant's semantics, our representations exclude precisely this possibility. They do so not because it would be impossible that some of our representations *locally* sometimes fail to relate to anything extra-mental even though it appears to us that they don't so fail. We also saw that Kant is not a semantic infallibilist with regard to any type of representations he reckons with (intuitions, concepts, and judgments).¹³⁷ Our representations exclude the Cartesian scenario of unnoticed *global* semantic failure rather because, according to MCE, we wouldn't be able to differentiate mental states at all according to relations of content –e.g. as one being incompatible with another, or as one saying a different thing than another about something—if *none* of these mental states had any connection to something outside itself. Such mental states would, for their indeterminacy (which we presumably would notice in

¹³⁶ Bxxvii, A251-2.

¹³⁷ B219, B278.

the course of attempting to *use* them systematically, by dint of the incoherencies we incur in the resulting system), not be eligible to count as *representations*.¹³⁸

So it seems that MCE would allow Kant to *argue* against two of the most pervasive forms of global external-world skepticism, namely phenomenalism and Cartesian mentalism. Against the former, he might adduce the insight from his referentialist account of singular reference that precisely *if* appearances *are* representations but representing requires reference to extra-mental particulars, then the concept of *appearance* itself is only true of entities that have at least some non-mental parts (cf. §III.3.). Hence Berkeley's total mentalizing of appearances is incorrect. MCE should, then, *prove* (not assume) Kant's contention that declaring all objects of experience to be appearances *cannot* mean regarding all our apparent object-references as *mere* appearance, i.e. *illusions*.¹³⁹ Similarly, MCE would, by the insight into the referentialist elements in the determinacy of conceptual content (§III.4.), independently prove (not assume) against Cartesian mentalism the conclusion of the 'Refutation of idealism', that our consciousness of our inner states as differentiable contents, and hence

¹³⁸ The 'argument' against Cartesian skepticism is then quite straightforward: in Descartes' scenario there would be no representations, hence no mis-representations. There would be *only* mental states and an unrelated external reality, but an external reality that mental states as described could *never* be reasonably supposed to *represent* at all. On the other hand, this scenario has little in common with our cognitive situation in which we *do* treat and cannot do other than treating the mental states we undergo as *at the same time* often representative of something else, but at least different in content. But a situation with representations and one without representations are not sufficiently similar for allowing an inference from traits of the representation-free situation to the representation-containing situation. Therefore Cartesian skepticism is not a threat *for us*. I put 'argument' in scare quotes because, of course, this reasoning is *not* a refutation of Cartesian skepticism because it begs the question at the decisive point, the question whether mental states can count as representations and mutually differentiated under conditions of a generalized disconnect between psychology and enviroing conditions. Kant clearly thinks that representations can only be differentiated when they can be brought to the unity of consciousness, which means that they can be brought under categories, *and* when at least some representations within the consciousness in which the representations in question occur are referentially related to particulars given in empirical intuition. The former are the conditions of synthesis of the intuitive manifold in one representation (as opposed to another) in the same consciousness that distinguishes this representation from others and itself, the latter are the conditions without which the manifold itself would not present to this consciousness anything that would require drawing differences one way rather than another. For both reasons, Kant's epistemology *starts out* anti-Cartesian. I agree in this with Westphal, as well as with Floyd, Juliet, "The fact of Judgment: The Kantian Response to the Humean Predicament" (in Malpas, Jeff (ed.): *From Kant to Davidson. Philosophy and the Idea of the Transcendental*, London: Routledge 2003) who regards Kant's sort of anti-skepticism in general as less a refutative, propositional project than as the large-scale creation of an alternative that does not produce the skeptical perplexities in the first place. In the last instance, and with regard to the question of Kant's anti-skepticism, I tend to side rather with Floyd than with Westphal, while I agree with the latter that Kant's alternative *does* commit itself (and us, if we accept it) *also* to more substantive claims.

¹³⁹ B69.

of our doubts, presupposes our consciousness of things outside our mind. As tempting as this looks, I am not convinced that MCE actually enables a very strong non-circular anti-skeptical *argument*, the establishment of *conclusions* that are independent evidence against skepticism, or anything of the sort. Here are my reasons.

Westphal's view is that certain realist commitments are required for the very contentfulness of representations, and that, given this cognitive semantics,

(A) certain forms of skepticism or skeptical hypotheses cannot coherently be asserted, *by which*

(B) certain anti-skeptical conclusions like that of Kant's Refutation can be established.

As he writes, Kant's semantics provides the means for "a genuinely transcendental proof of the conclusion of Kant's Refutation of idealism", and "this proof is strongly reinforced by Kant's (...) proofs of mental content externalism".¹⁴⁰ As ought to be clear by now, I agree that Kant indeed has proved (in the relevant sense of 'transcendental proof'¹⁴¹) MCE, and thereby exhibited successfully that we, insofar as we are capable of self-consciously differentiating any contents whatsoever, need to be interacting with extra-mental, environmentally available particulars. But due to the fundamental level at which Kant's commitment to extra-mental particulars as *conditiones sine quas non* of content is located in such an anti-idealistic reading of Kant's CPR, it is no longer clear whether we ought to expect any effective anti-skeptical argument regarding the external world from Kant at all. This is actually exemplified in Westphal's own anti-skeptical moves. For example, if, as Westphal correctly says, "Kant's formal idealism requires that the matter of experience be given to us *ab extra*",¹⁴² (that is, if our sensibility is "receptive") then the question whether there is a world 'extra', or whether we perceive rather than imagine physical objects, is closed unless one were prepared to deny any informal (= 'material') differences among representations, which not even die-hard idealists should be prepared to do. But this response to skepticism is achieved mainly as an effect of drawing Kant's distinction of form and matter, and of interpreting the latter as necessarily accruing via

¹⁴⁰ Westphal, "How Does Kant Prove", 805.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Baum 1986, Westphal 2004, ch.1.

¹⁴² "How Does Kant Prove", 785.

given external sources in the way Kant's theory of content does.¹⁴³ Similarly, Westphal writes, explaining the gist of his argument from affinity: "If the matter of sensation is given us *ab extra* (this too *defines* Kant's Transcendental Idealism), then *ex hypothesi* we cannot generate its content. Consequently, we also can neither generate nor otherwise insure the regularities (...) within that content (...) Any world in which we can be self-conscious is one that has a natural structure (...) that provides us with a minimum necessary degree of regularity".¹⁴⁴ According to this argument, *ex hypothesi*, entertaining skeptical thoughts of *any* kind, by virtue of their being contentful thoughts at all, presupposes access to sources given *ab extra*. But again, a skeptic should be understood to have challenged precisely the 'hypothesis' or one of *its* presuppositions (namely, the existence or epistemic influence of an outer world), which vitiates Westphal's move as begging the question. More generally, if it follows from one's theory of meaningful or at least truth-evaluable thought, like from Kant's MCE, that external objects necessarily participate in the determination of its contents, then it is a foregone conclusion that whatever scenarios external-world skeptics may come up with, they will either be false according to some of the skeptic's own standards (since affirming the contrary of the external-world thesis is at least making a truth-evaluable claim) or else cognitively meaningless (if the external-world thesis is taken as false but the content externalist thesis as true, no truth-evaluable claim gets off the ground). To put the same point differently, I sense a gap, or even a tension between (A) and (B). Briefly, if (A) is correct, then (B) can't work. The reason is that the conclusions to be established would, per anti-skeptical, presumably have to be denials of skeptical hypotheses, while we have declared these skeptical hypotheses, per (A), as non-assertions, hence also as non-deniabiles.

Certainly, I also think that accepting or proposing such externalist semantics as Kant or Westphal comes close to *adopting a non-skeptical position with consequences* that are incompatible with assumptions needed for skeptical scenarios (like the assumption that representations could be as differentiated in content as they seem in the absence of cognitive access to extra-mental particulars). But even if, *when we take Kant's theory of content on board*, certain kinds of skepticism are ruled out, I think that the

¹⁴³ Even though Westphal's statement is by no means *analytic* and states, in this sense, a contingent fact, it is, in M. Williams' sense, question begging because it is heavily 'theory-dependent'.

¹⁴⁴ "Kant, Wittgenstein and Transcendental Chaos", 322, emphasis added.

bearing of Kant's theory of content is not and, in the explained sense, cannot be that of having genuinely *disproved* or otherwise demonstrated the untenability of any skeptic assertion. Kant's theory of knowledge is not a successful *propositional* anti-skepticism, when viewed like this, because on the standards of what refutation and demonstration require, its strategy and content is too close to begging all questions at issue.¹⁴⁵

I think it can be generally observed that the strategy of anti-skeptical 'arguments' or 'proofs' on the basis of externalist semantics tends to be that of exhibiting consequences of the adopted position rather than enabling a non-circular 'refutation' of skeptical propositions that are incompatible with them. Likewise Kant, in offering us a comprehensively different and decidedly non-mentalist way of looking at empirical knowledge that avoids the most obvious and well-known pitfalls, allows us to put cognitive achievements in a perspective from which skepticism, by contrast, appears as a sterile exercise of reasoning-mechanisms, one that has to create its own contexts of asking questions and seeking answers, and has to count as artificial because it is relevantly so dissimilar with the cognitive processes of actual human beings. In contrast to many of Westphal's suggestions, I think that Kant would rather tend to accept the charge of trivializing external-world skepticism than to sacrifice his MCE. This seems to me one of the points of his famous quip that his "new philosophy", in asking *how* (objectively real) experience is possible, *of course* takes for granted *that* it is *actual* (and thereby plays sour-grapes with certain dialectical habits among epistemologists, leaving little room for being worried enough by skeptical doubts to develop an anti-skeptical agenda.).¹⁴⁶ In short, even if MCE entails a certain kind of realism and even if this kind

¹⁴⁵ Suppose we took the wide standard of being the only explanation of an uncontroversial fact. The demonstration of the necessity of cognitively accessible extra-mental particulars (that are representable as structured by employing human conceptual systems) afforded by MCE could then, according to this standard, only achieve a non-question-begging 'proof' of the external world (and its causal and other orders) if we were lacking any reasonable alternatives for explaining truth-evaluable and materially differentiated thought to Kant's (3-dimensional externalist) semantics of cognitive judgment. But, of course, there are reasonable alternative semantics in the field (from truth-conditional to verificationist approaches, etc.). This shows at least that, for all we know, MCE-based demonstrations of cognitively accessible extra-mental particulars willy-nilly have to count as theory-dependent.

¹⁴⁶ For an interpretation of Kant's transcendental strategy with a similar tenor, cf. Floyd (1999). The function of Kant's appeal to a 'new philosophy' as legitimizing evasion on skepticism has been noted by Pihlstrom, Sami *Naturalizing the Transcendental* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2003), ch.2. The most sophisticated approach to Kant's anti-skepticism that consistently associates it with "modesty" can be found in Bird's *The Revolutionary Kant*, ch. 11, where we can find powerful arguments for the view that Kant's

of realism can be understood as required by most of Kant's more important epistemological tenets, it is still unclear whether the resulting view allows for a cogent anti-skeptical argument.

For all that, I still think that the objectivity-distinction allowed by MCE and the attendant realism are worthwhile, and much in line with Kant's actual concerns. However, and this brings me to the metaphysical question: given that Kant had these semantic views, and given that he also confessed TI (he *invented* it, after all!), does one of them have to go, and if so, which?

To address this question, I now want to explain the extent to which, and the interpretation of TI under which the establishment of MCE undermines Kant's own TI (IV.2.1.). Westphal argues that the force of MCE and his arguments (ii) and (iii) for realism is to virtually preclude substantive versions of TI.¹⁴⁷ In spite of these apparently high stakes, I believe there is a reading of TI that is compatible with MCE (IV.3.).

IV.2. Externalism and TI (ER)

Westphal says that his exhibition of two sources of a commitment in Kant to MCE ought to be understood as sustaining a certain form of realism "even against Kant's transcendental idealism". Westphal also claims that the kind of realism that the mental content externalism Kant is committed to is not a *merely* "empirical realism", but one *sans phrase*;¹⁴⁸ in a somewhat different vein, he also calls it "ordinary realism".¹⁴⁹ Although these indications seem to me to point in different and even opposite directions, I will take it that the intended realism is to be *stronger than* ER a la Kant in some sense. Since Kant identifies TI and ER, Westphal's claim seems to be that Kant's MCE is in fact strictly incompatible with his TI, no matter how we put it. I now want to consider both of

aim on this issue was to merely show ways open to us which enable "that we do not *have* to accept the (...) premises which generate the skeptical conclusions" (252).

¹⁴⁷ *Kant's Transcendental Proof*, 121-2.

¹⁴⁸ Westphal uses this phrase in his "Can Pragmatic Realists argue Transcendentally?", as well as in his *Kant's Transcendental Proof*.

¹⁴⁹ "Kant, Wittgenstein", 322. According to a reference in Pihlstroem (2003), Westphal even regards it as "minimal realism", with a *strong* side in its capability of transcendental proof, and a *weak* side opposed to, e.g., a Lewisian metaphysical realism that purportedly predetermines 'elite classes' as an inventory of metaphysically possible natural kinds, in that it does not prejudge how much and what sorts of order reality has to have to be susceptible to experiential recognition (273,fn 91).

Westphal's claims: that MCE is incompatible with TI, and that MCE requires a realism that is stronger than Kant's ER. For both inquiries, I first need to circumscribe a minimal understanding of TI in this context, sufficient for the purpose of examining Westphal's claims.¹⁵⁰

I think it is useful to begin by (1) distinguishing, as announced at the outset, in a rough and ready way between two families of interpretations of TI: a) *idealist* interpretations, and b) *methodological* interpretations.¹⁵¹ In order to see with somewhat more precision whether or not the realism required by MCE is compatible with TI, it will also be useful to have (2) some constraints on what it takes for a proposed position to count as TI.

(1a) The *idealist* way of reading TI could also be called the *constructivist* or mentalizing reading. According to it, what the objects of experience can be and *are* is, in some way, fully determined by (and therefore dependent on) the exercise and structure of our cognitive abilities. Experience accesses and is *of* nothing but these constructs.

(1b) The *methodological* reading of TI could also be called the *Copernican* or de-ontologized reading. According to it, we can only get to know *general* structural features of the world from the most rational reconstruction of the basic traits of the operations of our cognitive faculties that issue in empirical knowledge. Just as we may infer lawful behavior of empirical objects from the hypothetical truth of the laws of an empirical theory, so we may, if our best empirical knowledge commits us to certain general features, take the statements expressing them as also simply true of the world.¹⁵² But trying to say what the world is like "anyway" or "from the view from nowhere", i.e. irrespective of *any* experience, fails to generate any (further) truth claims at all. It is important to note that this reading is *non-subjectivist*, since it is open to the possibility that some of the conditions of knowledge might, though asserting them requires

¹⁵⁰ I hasten to add that, of course, the following remarks are not in the least to be read as a 'definition' or 'list of criteria' for TI in any exegetical sense.

¹⁵¹ By 'methodological', I do not necessarily mean interpretations that are *reductively* methodological and aimed at explaining the distinctions away that Kant draws in TI.

¹⁵² This reading is inspired by Kant's famous description of his method as similar to the hypothetico-deductive procedures of the empirical sciences at Bxix, fn.

reflection on requirements of our cognitive apparatus, be of a *factual*, mind-independent nature. Excluding this would require confusing the epistemic conditions of arriving at an assertion with the ontological status of what is thus asserted.

As to (2), I will follow here a proposal developed in recent scholarship¹⁵³ and require that a position, in order to count as a minimally faithful version of TI, has to contain (a) the *distinction* between appearances and things in themselves, (b) Kant's *humility* or 'critical agnosticism'¹⁵⁴ (that we can't know things as they are in themselves), (c) a minimal *idealism* (that appearances cannot be characterized entirely mind-independently). In addition, I would add (cf. §IV.1.) that the position needs to display what might be called *constraints of representational objectivity*: (d) the distinction within the realm of experience between mere appearances, appearances, and things as they are, and (e) the distinction between representation and represented.¹⁵⁵ It is constraints (d) and (e), *not* his adherence to things in themselves, that Kant uses and needs in order to do both, distance his position from (empirical) idealists¹⁵⁶ and identify it as a kind of (empirical) realism.¹⁵⁷ With these criteria and distinctions in place, I first want to explain to what extent MCE and TI are incompatible.

IV.2.1. Against *idealist readings* of TI

What Westphal wishes to exclude by stressing the 'sans phrase' in realism is first and foremost the misunderstanding that, since ER does not allow any interesting *absolute* mind-independence claims, the objects of knowledge claims are "mere" or "nothing but appearances" (an idealist rendering of 2a) that are wholly dependent on and determined by conditions essentially dependent on the structure of mind (an idealist rendering of

¹⁵³ Allais, Lucy, "Kant's One World: Interpreting 'Transcendental Idealism'" (*British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 12(4) (2004), 655-84), 656/667, as well as her "Kant's Transcendental Idealism and Contemporary Anti-Realism" (*International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 11(4), 2003, 369-92), 369-70.

¹⁵⁴ I take the former term from Allais' article; the latter is Allison's (*Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, New Haven: Yale UP 1983, 241).

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Kant's remarks on the "Absurdity of an appearance without anything that appears".

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Kant's objection to Berkeley that talk about 'appearances' does not entail a commitment to their being "mere appearance" in the sense of illusions.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Kant's frequent explication of objects of experience or the subject matter of judgments of experience as things that are what they are "no matter what the subject thinks".

2c).¹⁵⁸ This reading becomes more radical when a claim about a certain human incapacity (2b) is added, viz. that whatever we can possibly access are nothing but appearances. All this together is then taken to yield (1a), that objects of knowledge are only appearances, and as such wholly determined by and dependent on the mind and themselves *mere* representations. Evidently, this reading of ER is the one associated with the constructivist reading of TI, to which I now turn. I believe that MCE is indeed as incompatible with the idealist reading of TI or ER as it is with Berkeleyian idealism (which is already suggested by the tensions of it with (2d) and (2e)). I also believe, contrary to Westphal, that saying that a certain condition is mind-independent does not preclude saying that this condition is partly characterized by the ways of our cognition. After all, if the ways in which we use, e.g. demonstrative or indexical means of direct reference were different, then the requirements of MCE, and hence the content of the transcendental conditions elicited by it, would also have to vary. While this, of course, does not imply, as Westphal fittingly puts it, that the *satisfaction* of these conditions thereby becomes mind-dependent, it still means that such conditions are compatible with the limitations mentioned in methodological TI (which helps to maintain (2c)).

To begin with, the constructivist reading of TI indeed runs afoul of what Westphal points out as the conflation of "*ratio essendi* and *ratio cognoscendi*".¹⁵⁹ It infers from the uncontroversial epistemological claim that the totality of our *knowledge claims* about objects can be and is limited by what access is allowed by the structure of our cognitive abilities --which circumscribes the limits of our knowledge of objects and transcendental conditions (*ratio cognoscendi*)— the controversial ontological claim that what and how the objects and conditions *are* that our claims are *about* is dependent on the structure of

¹⁵⁸As Westphal clearly points out in his discussion of TI in *Kant's Transcendental Proof*, §§24-27, this kind of reading of TI rests on a conflation of the transcendental conditions for experience of objects with their subjectivity. I entirely agree with his analysis on this point, and also with his claim (§23) that Kant himself committed this erroneous identification. A different way of making the same point might be to say that Kant operated with at least four different conceptions of apriority, one of which says that a cognition is *a priori* iff it is entirely contributed by the subject, another iff universal and necessary, another iff it concerns items unconnected to the matter of cognition or is merely formal, and a still other iff without the fact described in it, no cognition is possible. Kant's MCE is then a way of seeing that the first and the fourth conception are not only conceptually different, but not even co-extensional: according to MCE, there are some necessary conditions of knowledge that are not contributed by the subject. Contrary to Westphal, I believe that saying this is compatible with saying that they are also not characterizable without regard to our cognitive apparatus.

¹⁵⁹ "How Does Kant Prove", 803.

our cognitive abilities. In this way, the limits of our cognitive abilities become the *ratio essendi* of properties and relations of the objects of empirical knowledge. However, according to MCE we only access but *not thereby determine* things and their properties. As Kant poignantly put it, it is *things*, not our cognitions of them that are 'thoroughgoingly determined' (cf. 2e). Similarly, while we might have to analyze our cognitive apparatus to assert what conditions it requires to be in place, what makes knowledge possible for us is, precisely then, not the subject-dependent origin of the assertions, but the *actual existence* of the conditions asserted.¹⁶⁰

Westphal's insistence on the failure of such an argument seems to me to correctly raise the question how a reading of TI that rests on such a blatant conflation (not always excluded by Kant himself) could have remained some sort of standard reading of Kant's *Critique*. But the idealist reading not only attributes a considerable blunder in the work of an otherwise meticulous thinker like Kant. More importantly, the idealist reading of TI introduces a severe problem into Kant's epistemology when taken together with one of its most fundamental assumptions, namely his explanation of sensations and intuitional receptivity. After all, Kant does not tire to insist that it is one structural trait of our cognitive abilities that the matter of sensation cannot be generated by any part of our cognition, that our sensations are passive, detective of things other than ourselves which, as we access them intuitively, are to count as 'appearances', but precisely as such (cf. §III.3.) also contain "undetermined objects of an empirical intuition",¹⁶¹ which are the real determinables in empirical cognition, and *not* what we or our equipment determines. Now, if we apply the constructivist reading to this fundamental assumption, we are faced with the claim that what objects of experience are is fully determined by (and therefore dependent on), among other things, the fact (about our cognitive abilities) that whatever is responsible for our sensations (i.e. objects of experience) is indeterminate, cannot be generated by us, and exists independent of us. We are offered an equivocation on 'objects of experience' as a putative explanation of what 'objects we encounter' are. In this case, even the declaration of the blunder as legitimate would help little in determining what in

¹⁶⁰ The fallacy of inferring from the fact that we can only recognize conditions as transcendental to the alleged circumstance that the conditions so recognized themselves are subjective is illuminatingly pointed out by Westphal in *Kant's Transcendental Proof*, 120-123.

¹⁶¹ A20/B34.

the world the objects of experience can be and are.¹⁶² If one of the properties that characterizes the structure of cognition is that its objects are determinable and given to it *ab extra*, then what these objects in question can be and are ought to be, according to the constructivist reading of TI itself, precisely *indeterminate* and hence *not* determined in any particular way. Thus, the acknowledgement of the non-spontaneous origin of the matter of sensation—from which, according to Kant's MCE, not only *all* empirical content, but also, in function of this, *all* conceptual (and therefore also *categorical*) determinacy derives—is strictly incompatible with the constructivist understanding of TI. This alone should give pause to any enthusiasm for idealist readings of TI. After all, without an account of conceptual determinacy, the prospects for Kant's transcendental deduction, for an explanation of the constructive role of the categories in the system of science, for an explanation of judgment and therefore self-conscious thought, in short, for the great majority of Kant's crucial aims would look extremely bleak.

Secondly, Kant explicitly rejects the Cartesian idea that mental states are intrinsically content-bearing and self-interpreting, or at least given *as interpreted*. But in the absence of mental entities with these properties, a reading of TI that does not leave other than *mental* entities as cognitively accessible things we experience and uses these as referents of intuitions to specify the application of our concepts would lead, in combination with the demands of Kant's semantics, to a generalized semantic skepticism. For, according to Kant's semantics, mental states, even if they are in logical and temporal relations, just don't become bearers of determinate content without information about extra-mental, also spatial particulars; hence if the latter type of entity isn't directly cognitively accessible, none of our mental states is a bearer of determinate content. Unsurprisingly, Kant's insistence on the *ab extra* character of the matter of sensation and therefore the objects underlying perception does most of the work in Westphal's proofs of content externalism. It is also essential to his rejection of all the arguments he sees at work in favor of an idealist version of TI in Kant himself. As Westphal brilliantly formulated it, "all these arguments are invalid. The reason is the same in each case: If the matter of sensation is given us *ab extra* (this too defines Kant's transcendental idealism), then *ex hypothesi* we

¹⁶² In particular, it would not at all afford the assurance that Kant designed his TI to give, viz., that the structure of cognition as we actually have to conduct it necessarily matches the structure of its objects and thus can have objective validity in spite of resting on spontaneity and other a priori elements.

cannot generate its content."¹⁶³ Now, we clearly get the *ab extra* insight from MCE. Hence, first, MCE and *idealist readings* of TI are indeed incompatible. But secondly, since, as we saw in §IV.1., MCE enables the crucial difference between things as represented in occurrent mental states and things as they are under crucial employment of the *ab extra* insight, MCE might indeed confer *all* the realist assumptions needed to resist idealist readings of TI. This, in turn, raises the questions (a) whether there is a formulation of TI that does not conflict with MCE and (b) whether MCE requires more realism than the ER following from such a MCE-compatible version of TI. I believe the non-subjectivist methodological interpretation of TI (1a) allows a positive answer to both questions.¹⁶⁴ I now want to develop this alternative reading. I begin by addressing the question whether MCE requires more than ER, so construed (IV.2.2.). Afterwards, in a reflection on various types of realism, I will argue that the only obvious candidate for a stronger, more metaphysical realism conflicts with MCE itself (IV.3.1.) and finally argue that both of Westphal's alleged 'proofs of a stronger realism' only work when the realism in question is at most as strong as methodological ER (IV.3.2.). My contention is that MCE gives us reason to accept a realism at least as strong as ER, and that Westphal's proofs give us reason to believe that the realism in MCE is at most as strong as methodological ER. The result is that Kant's semantics is incompatible with idealist readings of TI because it is a form of MCE, which in turn requires a methodological ER that is incompatible with any strong form of idealism.

IV.2.2. Methodological ER and Externalism

If we correlate Kant's ER to the *methodological* reading of TI, it comes to a thesis *about the methodological constraints* that the functioning of our concepts imposes on *metaphysical* discussions. In this regard, Kant's semantic views, far from undermining methodological ER, are actually extremely helpful to develop the position. As we saw in

¹⁶³ Westphal, "Kant, Wittgenstein", 321-2.

¹⁶⁴ Westphal apparently neglects this alternative because he assumes, by following the authors he criticizes (Kant in some passages, Allison) in their illicit identification of transcendental conditions with subjective conditions, that such identification is constitutive of TI. However, this overemphasis and mentalizing of (2c) needn't be accepted, as (2a)-(2e) exhibit. (2c) might merely require of whatever objective transcendental conditions there may be that they not be characterizable without reference to properties of our cognitive apparatus.

§III.2., Kant thinks that once we leave the realm in which our concepts (particularly the concepts in which we can also philosophically describe reality as a whole) have *some* application or *some* connection or constraint by empirical intuition, we can no longer be sure that in combining them in grammatical sentences, we actually accomplish making truth-evaluable claims. We are then engaging in what Kant calls the "transcendental use" of concepts.¹⁶⁵ Kant excludes the possibility that a merely transcendental use, without conditions of application to intuition or subsumption of sensible particulars under concepts, could result in either empirical or synthetic *a priori* claims, the reason being that the *words* for the concepts, under these impoverished circumstances, do not contribute *full blown conceptual content* but merely logico-semantic structure to the judgment-form in which they occur. As we saw in §III.3. and §III.4., Kant's MCE does not only deny, like verificationism, that the words do not have determinate extensions (or, as he says "comprehensions") without information about added sensible conditions of application, but makes clear that without such information, they do not even have determinate *content*, i.e. a rule that would help determine, e.g., when this rather than another category applies, or when this category applies and when not. Under these impoverished circumstances, according to Kant, the same words that under information about and embedding in certain sensible conditions are capable of expressing concepts perfectly well become too indeterminate for use in truth-evaluable judgments.

Let me illustrate this point by one of Kant's examples (B334ff.).¹⁶⁶ According to Kant, it is one thing to say that 'we cannot know the intrinsic character of nature', when we describe the state of ignorance in our empirical knowledge about hidden features of the objects of experience in anticipation of future scientific progress. In this connection, we mean that, if scientific research ('observation and dissection of appearances', as Kant puts it) progresses, it will turn up many new insights we don't yet possess, and therefore we cannot say now that we already know all there is to know about non-obvious traits of these empirical objects. This would be a use of 'intrinsic nature' in a methodological consideration about empirical knowledge and its limits. For a methodological empirical

¹⁶⁵ QUOTE

¹⁶⁶ This example also seems to me to undermine the metaphysical, Lockean interpretation of Kant's difference between 'things in themselves' and appearances in terms of 'intrinsic natures of things' vs. 'things as presented in space and time', as it underlies, e.g., Van Cleve's and Allais' explanations.

realist, saying that 'we cannot know the intrinsic character of nature' means that, given what we know, there is an open-ended class of things that we might not know regarding the same object of knowledge that we are already acquainted with and have *some* knowledge about. In this methodological perspective, Kant's distinction between appearances and things in themselves marks the contrast between the objects of experience that we access in perception or other circumstances of intuitional reference, insofar as we (already) know them and these same objects of experience insofar as we do not (yet) know them.¹⁶⁷ Affirming the existence of things in themselves here comes to no more than making the assumptions that (A) whenever we have empirical knowledge regarding certain objects, we cannot, by the fact that we know what we know, assert that we know all there is to know and (B) that we cannot exclude, by the fact that we have knowledge of some objects, that there are more objects in the humanly accessible universe that we do not know. Assumption (A) could be called the assumption of the *cognitive inexhaustibility* of empirically real objects, and assumption (B) could be called the assumption of the *indefinite cardinality* of empirical reality as such.¹⁶⁸ Let me now examine to what extent these assumptions satisfy the criteria (2a)-(2e) for TI laid out in §IV.2.

Both of the mentioned assumptions in combination go smoothly with many of the things Kant says about things in themselves, in particular, his claims that "we can never know things in themselves", and that 'the categories don't apply to them'.¹⁶⁹ If those things that are empirically real are in fact cognitively inexhaustible, then, whatever the traits of them we don't know yet, we can never claim to know them *merely* in virtue of what we know the objects to be. (2b) is satisfied. On the other hand, those things that we do not yet

¹⁶⁷ This is motivated by Kant's way of drawing the distinction in the methodological part of the B-Preface, where he describes his hypothesis, TI, as that "the unconditioned is not to be met with in things insofar as we are acquainted with them (i.e. insofar as they are given to us), but is to be met with *in them* only insofar as we are not acquainted with them." (Bxx)

¹⁶⁸ With this proposal, I side with what Melnick has called the "sheer limiting account" of things in themselves, who also considers it to be exactly what Copernicanism (i.e. the methodological view I recommend) requires. Cf. Melnick, Arthur "On Things in Themselves" (in Melnick, Arthur: *Themes in Kant's Metaphysics and Ethics*, Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004, 147-63), 162.

¹⁶⁹ These are two of the three tenets to be met by any account of things in themselves according to Melnick, Arthur "On Things in Themselves" (in Melnick, Arthur: *Themes in Kant's Metaphysics and Ethics*, Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004, 147-63), the third being that they are not in space and time. I say more about the third below.

know according to (B), we cannot know to exist, and things and sets of things insofar as we don't know them according to (A), we cannot *know* to fall under the categories and behave according to general laws of nature merely because we know them to do so in respects that we know of them. For both reasons, we cannot directly apply the categories to things as we don't know them. At the same time, (A) satisfies a constraint Kant imposes of *empirical* objects, namely that *they* be accessible intuitionally and knowable in the sense that they are, in principle, conceptually determinable to an arbitrary degree of complexity. Thus, cognitively inexhaustible objects in a universe of unknown cardinality qualify as (components of) *appearances*. But this doesn't make them subject-dependent. On the contrary, as Kant says, it is *things*, 'the real *in* appearance' that are 'thoroughgoingly determined' even when our cognition of them isn't. Cognitive inexhaustibility entails that, whatever a full account of the objects of knowledge may be, indeed, whether there be such an account or not, the properties of objects that we do not yet know *cannot* depend on our minds. Hence the objects of experience are such that what they are is not constituted or fully determined by the actual properties of our minds. Therefore, the objects of experience are mind-independent not only in their existence, but also with regard to their properties.¹⁷⁰ (2e) is satisfied. Further, if things are the real *in* appearance and appearances composite items, then things in themselves and appearances cannot be identical. (2a) is satisfied. On the other hand, (A) and (B) also satisfy the idealism-constraint (2c), since appearances, i.e. things as we (can) know them to be, and the contrast between appearances and things in themselves are both mind-related because the distinction recurs to contingent facts about us. Firstly, the content of the distinction varies with how much, what and in what way we know these things, and what determinations of the real *in* appearance we attempt to add successively to our existing knowledge depends *also* on what questions we ask. (2c) is sustained. Secondly, which of

¹⁷⁰ For those prepared to protest that *appearances* cannot be considered mind-independent in any way, here is a quote from Kant to the contrary: "from the concept of appearance as such, too, it follows naturally that there must correspond something that is not in itself appearance. For appearance cannot be anything by itself (...) the word appearance already indicates a reference to something the direct presentation of which is indeed sensible, but which is in itself—even without the character of our sensibility (...)—must be something, i.e., *an object independent of sensibility*." (A251-2, emphasis added) Kant does not (always) make the mistake to conclude from the fact that appearances, objects of experience, cannot be *characterized* independent of our representational resources that the objects so characterized cannot *be* mind-independent. On the contrary, in this passage, Kant makes the fundamental *semantic* distinction between sign and reference, as well as the independence of one from the other as clear as we can wish.

the things in the universe of unknown cardinality we happen to encounter and to be able to intuitionally access depends on contextual features like our own location and the expansion of sensitivities we are able to devise. With both these contingencies on features of our cognitive situation, (1a) is satisfied. Finally, (A) and (B) also satisfy the other objectivity constraint, since what determinations we can *successfully* add depends on which judgments are true of these things, not on whether any of us would like the object to be so determined. (2d) is satisfied. In sum, if we regard the 'objects we encounter' as denizens in a universe with unknown cardinality that are actually accessed in contexts of intuitionally achieved direct reference and successively though never exhaustively conceptually determined, then what objects turn out to be like, whether they exist, and whether our classifications as we have them so far actually capture important commonalities among these denizens does not depend on mental entities alone. In fact, it resembles a commonsense-realist conception of the world of experience pretty closely (give or take a little). I would therefore regard this conception of the world of 'objects we encounter' as a defensible version of ER. At the same time, it is able to perform one of the important functions that TI has in Kant's critical philosophy. That methodological ER allows the critical use Kant makes of the notion 'thing in itself' by rejecting truth claims composed of categories and things as such –i.e. as we merely think them ('noumena in the positive sense')—should already be clear enough from the treatment of the example. Methodological ER therefore not only satisfies all constraints on TI but also appears to have another desirable feature.

However, in a contested area like interpreting Kant's difference between things in themselves and appearances, things don't come that easy. An objection that my considerations so far might invite is that I have used the difference between appearances and things as they are only in the '*empirical* sense'. But, so the objection might start, Kant clearly states that "the pure categories, without formal conditions of sensibility, have merely transcendental signification".¹⁷¹ The objection would then be that, contrary to the 'merely empirical' difference I indicated in (A) and (B), the main claims of Kant's TI crucially depend on 'the transcendental sense' of the distinction, and *this* distinction is formulable independent of the empirical one. The line of objection I am considering will

¹⁷¹ A248/B305.

take as an indication of this that methodological ER sits ill with all the passages in the CPR that positively qualify things in themselves or 'noumena' as 'outside space and time', 'not knowable to a sensibility like ours but merely thought' and the like.¹⁷² Similarly, it will find fault in MCE. After all, objects such that there can be no context in which we would at least be in the right kind of position to intuitionally directly refer to them are, according to MCE, not semantically accessible as particular referents. At a similar juncture in her argument, Lucy Allais responds tentatively that she thinks that we can only acquire the cognitive abilities to use the difference in the transcendental sense by first employing it empirically.¹⁷³ What she presumably wants to say is that empirically drawing the difference is *prior* to transcendentially drawing it. However, the line of objection at issue would immediately retort that this is merely a pedagogical observation but not a response to the semantic point that 'thing in itself' and 'appearance' have different meanings, one empirical and one transcendental. If there is a 'transcendental signification', and if understanding of Kant's TI depends on it, then presenting TI adequately would have to be a matter of heeding that meaning, not of how we acquire it. Here, then, is a *semantic* point that shows what in Allais' tentative proposal is right, and why it is right. The line of objection presently at issue assumes without further argument that Kant's use of the difference between 'thing' and 'appearance' conceals an *ambiguity*, so that there would be two senses to be spelled out, which could be done separately. However, this is a mistake. The presupposition of Allais' proposal is that it is *the same difference* under different conditions of employment that yields the empirical and transcendental senses, respectively. This seems to me to capture the main point of Kant's discussion in the section on "Phenomena and Noumena", and it is borne out by Kant's MCE. According to MCE, it is a condition on the determinacy of the *contents* expressed in assertions even in the case of very abstract and philosophical notions, like 'thing' and 'appearance', that there be some context or other in which these terms are exemplified under spatio-temporal, real-world circumstances to distinguish their semantic import

¹⁷² Howell, Robert, *Kant's Transcendental Deduction*, 56-7, 331 is an example. He writes that Kant "cannot consistently deny that we can know objects as they exist in themselves while at the same time he presents a picture of our knowledge (...) that contains detailed claims (...) about the affection of our minds by objects as they so exist." (331)

¹⁷³ Allais

from that of other terms.¹⁷⁴ Absent any such a context, *the same words* cease to encode determinate contents. Kant correspondingly continues the quote just mentioned by saying that the categories "have no transcendental use", and adds "the merely transcendental use of the categories is in fact not a use at all".¹⁷⁵ In application to our case, it is under the conditions of transcendental considerations that the same difference, for ceasing to have a use, no longer fixes any particular content. Kant's semantics as articulated in MCE explains this with the aid of its tripartite semantic distinction as a case of concept-titles with a given meaning that, in abstraction from circumstances of application, underdetermines what the content of these words is and indeed, whether the same words with the meanings they have retain any of the content from the normal, empirical contexts at all under certain circumstances. MCE therefore does not support an ambiguity-interpretation of Kant's various considerations regarding the distinction between things in themselves and appearances but instead recommends a contextualist construal.

If that is accepted, however, we have to strengthen Allais' tentative position. If the foregoing is correct, then there actually is not only no extra domain of things in themselves,¹⁷⁶ and it is not merely the case that we couldn't learn to apply the distinction unless we first acquire its empirical application. According to the contextualist construal, there is, in the first place, no separate 'meaning' of the terms 'thing as it is in itself' and 'appearance' in the context of philosophical discussions that consider situations in abstraction from sensible conditions of knowledge. The differences in *significance*, i.e. philosophical import and content, that Kant severally indicates stem entirely from the difference in the circumstances in which the terms, meaning what they do, are to be applied. To be compelling, the objection based on the ambiguity-interpretation would therefore have to adduce a semantics that renders Kant's theory of representations and that entails that he uses the terms of the distinction between things in themselves and appearances ambiguously. However, we already saw in §III.1. that several current semantic models (verificationism, descriptonalism, formal semantics) don't fit with many

¹⁷⁴ Kant writes: "we have no intuition –indeed, not even the concept of a possible intuition—through which (...) the understanding can be used *assertorically* beyond sensibility".A255/B310.

¹⁷⁵ A247-8/B304.

¹⁷⁶ A255-6/B310-11.

of the things Kant says, while MCE renders most of Kant's considerations on conceptual significance and semantic failure coherent. It seems to me that no such account of Kant's semantics is around the corner. Pending such an explanation of the distinction of a separable transcendental sense of the distinction that is independent of considerations about its empirical realization, I take it that it is the commonsense distinction between things as they are (in themselves) and as they appear (what appearances they are part of) that Kant analyzes in its cognitive role for empirical cognition, and the semantic collapse—i.e., cessation of making determinate contribution to truth-evaluable judgments—of which in extra-empirical circumstances MCE explains as a special case of the more general conditions of conceptual content and semantic failure. Portraying the application of the difference to intuitionally deprived or inaccessible circumstances as a case of semantic failure, in turn, serves Kant as the basis for his critique of traditional metaphysics.

In sum, it seems to me that, if MCE requires access to mind-independent particulars for the sake of determinate mental contents, then empirical objects understood along the lines of (A) and (B)—that is: empirically determinable objects *satisfying the distinction between appearances and things in themselves*—would be the right kind of entity to satisfy the demands of MCE. Therefore, methodological ER gives MCE all it needs. But then, contrary to what Westphal claims, MCE and the methodological distinctions characterizing TI are *not* incompatible (not even separable) since, as we just saw, methodological ER is a form of TI.¹⁷⁷ Neither would Kant, contrary to Westphal's

¹⁷⁷ At this point, the question ought to arise *for the sake of what* it would be desirable at all to have Kant's semantics and his TI cohere. Could we not just dispense with TI, no further questions asked? Why did Kant himself hold onto it, after all, when his MCE so nicely distinguished his epistemology and metaphysics from Berkeleyanism and Cartesianism? The key to the answer to this question lies in the distinction between appearances and things in themselves that is operative in TI. In fact, in light of my discussion, it seems odd to hold, as Westphal, that the very *distinction* between things in themselves and appearances, while characteristic of TI, is separable from MCE and a problematic part of TI (cf. "Kant, Wittgenstein and Transcendental Chaos", 320, §4). For MCE *trivially* entails the distinction *among appearances* between things as they appear to us and things as they *are* only if it is strong enough to model a distinction like that between things insofar as they are known to us (i.e. accessed, conceptualized and described in predications), things insofar as they are in fact semantically accessed by us in intuition but not (yet) known to us or epistemically determined ('thoroughly determined in a system of science') and things ignored by us (not yet referred to for contextual reasons). Only on this semantic basis can we give content to the distinction between merely subjectively valid and objectively valid representations. The latter, however, is fundamental to Kant's entire project. So, while it is true that, as outlined in §III., MCE *already* allows these distinctions, it must be acknowledged that these *distinctions* are exactly the ones characteristic of TI. What *does* seem separable from MCE and objectionable in certain versions of TI is thus not the distinction as

second claim, appear to need anything over and above methodological ER for his MCE. But before I present Kant's analysis of the same statement in the context of a transcendently intended exchange, I need some stage-setting to adequately embed this analysis in the discussion of realism.

IV.3. Strong Realism

The claim at issue now is whether there is a sort of realist commitment that exceeds the demands of ER. Methodological ER as outlined so far conceives of the entities that we intuitively directly refer to as 'objects we encounter' or that 'are to be met with'¹⁷⁸ in ordinary spatio-temporal contexts or situations. At the same time, it construes them as satisfying the demands of MCE and the objectivity constraints (2d) and (2e) of Kant's TI. Thus, via (A) and (B), and the insights buttressing the irreducibility of intuitional reference to descriptive identification laid out in §III.3., it recognizes these entities as the things of which Kant says that they are 'thoroughgoingly determined' even though in our access to them, we acquire them, since perception cannot judge, primarily as "undetermined objects of an empirical intuition",¹⁷⁹ which is, since it is not what things are as such, at the same time 'merely' how things in perception appear before our conceptual and investigative activities unravel some of the determinations that these things permit. Things we encounter can thus be understood as epistemically underdetermined and hence 'unknown as what they have to count as in perfected science, apart from all contingencies of human learning', but squarely situated 'in' empirical knowledge and representing via their semantic role as referents of intuitions. Now, as a form of TI, ER can be formulated as the view that there are no extra things except those that can become (part of, 'the real in') appearances (if we regard the totality of appearances as nature, this comes to the same as the rejection of supernatural entities as subject matters for truth-evaluable judgments). I now want to see what stronger realism

such, but rather a peculiar subjectivist interpretation of what it is to be an appearance, and of what it is for a condition to be transcendental ('contributed *entirely* by the subject'). It seems to me that it is rather this subjectivism that Westphal rightly deplores, and I regard *it* as separable from the substantive core of TI (which requires only *some* notion of apriority, possibly one that breaks with Kant's conflation of subject-dependent or world-independent and transcendental conditions).

¹⁷⁸ A496/B524.

¹⁷⁹ A20/B34.

than this might be required by MCE. My discussion will begin by knocking down a straw-man, transcendental realism (TR) about things in themselves in the positive sense, which Westphal himself understandably rejects. One of Westphal's reasons for this rejection of TR is that this choice is only foisted upon one as an inescapable alternative to idealism when one accepts the classificatory machinery of Kant's defense of TI. Another, better reason his account is entitled to is that TR contradicts MCE. This is the line I want to develop. However, TR is at least a clear candidate for a realism stronger than (methodological) ER. The remainder of my discussion will show that it is, at least as far as Westphal's proofs permit, the only such candidate. The upshot is that MCE can only be shown to need methodological ER.

IV.3.1. Transcendental Realism and Externalism

It is a well-known tenet of Kant's objections to rationalist metaphysics and its commitment to things in themselves that, when we say, echoing Locke, 'we cannot know the intrinsic character of nature' and add 'independent of all distortions by our perceptual and conceptual apparatus', we land ourselves not in deeper or more general truths about knowledge (as such) and its limits, but in intractable muddles. This criticism of rationalist metaphysics is one of the prime motives for Kant's double insistence on appearances as the only objects of experience, and on the requirement that truth-evaluability requires connection to sensorily accessible particulars (which is at the heart of MCE). In conformity with this, ER as just formulated says that there are no extra things other than appearances. A realism stronger than ER as evoked by Westphal's remarks might perhaps be taken to be one that is committed to the existence of things other than appearances, or to things in themselves in some sense that does not count them merely as components in appearance. But this does not work.

As is well known, Kant makes out a positive and a negative sense of the distinction between things in themselves and appearances in the section on 'Phenomena and Noumena'.¹⁸⁰ Regarding the negative sense, he says that the assumption of things in

¹⁸⁰ For the purposes of my discussion, I gloss over the subtleties regarding distinguishing also between, on the one hand, phenomena and appearances and, on the other, noumena and things in themselves.

themselves is, in a certain sense, a natural consequence of '*calling* an object merely phenomenon' or 'appearance'.¹⁸¹ What I take this to mean is that, according to Kant, the normal use of 'appearance' and 'thing in itself' forms a contrast-pair or even that both terms pertain to a conceptual system (the 'transcendental', reflective or 'meta-linguistic' system of concepts to describe the relation of representation and reality?), so that using one of them inevitably evokes the other as a background condition, allowing us to say things like: it appears that x is F, but may be x is not really F, i.e.: x's appearance is as an F, but may be x itself is not an F. This has been called the semantic interpretation of the relation of things in themselves and appearances, and has provoked some objections by Henry Allison. Discussing these objections may help clarifying issues, even though his objections do not seem compelling. For once, it is misleading to say that Kant's espousal of a semantic difference between things in themselves and appearances would put the terms and/or their extensions 'in a relation of logical implication'.¹⁸² First, for the contrast to do its work, saying of x that it is so and so in itself precisely is not supposed to imply that x appears so and so (and vice versa). Second, the terms 'thing in itself' and 'appearance' are not even possibly co-extensional as long as we accept that there can be things in themselves we never know of. So, while it is correct that it is true to say of a given x that it is an appearance *only if* it is true to say of x that it is a thing (in itself), the relationship indicated by 'only if' is not one of 'logical implication'. The co-variance of truth-conditions for both kinds of propositions is rather rooted in *facts* about our cognitive equipment (that it only produces representations of objects for truth-evaluable judgments if it is in contact with exterior objects) and about its objects (that there is an open-ended class of determinations by concepts we are able to form that they permit). Kant explains: "certain objects as appearances are called by us beings of sense (phenomena), because we *distinguish* the way in which we intuit them from the character that they have in themselves. (...) our concept of being of sense already implies that these objects are regarded in that character (even if we do not intuit them in that character)."¹⁸³ I will exploit this quote more fully later. But first I want to attend to another of Allison's objections: that, under the semantic reading of the distinction, Kant's introduction of the

¹⁸¹ A252, B306-7.

¹⁸² Allison, Henry E., *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 240.

¹⁸³ B 306.

concepts would suggest it as natural to expect the terms to have different referents on all occasions of use, where most of the textual and systematic evidence indicates the contrary.¹⁸⁴ As the second quote clearly illustrates, this is also misleading.¹⁸⁵ For the contrast to work in many (but not all) straightforward cases as Kant requires, it precisely needs to be the case that, while 'x appears to be F' is true, 'x is not F' is true, which requires 'x' to have the same reference in both sentences. This is, apart from formal stipulations, also reasonable: Given that being F is how x appears, *not being F* in fact is how x does not appear. Given that it is true that x is not F, that is how x is, and this is (logically) independent of how it appears. Relative to the alternative of our either truly attributing 'F' to x or nothing this informs us indirectly of x without qualification 'in itself'. This is because the contrast-stating sentence is true in a situation in which x is not F but in which x is such that it appears so. If that is the situation we are asked to consider, it is one in which whatever else may be true of x is not being said while 'x' still refers. If we want to spell out the truth-maker for our sentence 'x is not F but appears so' under the restriction on our meta-language that it not employ any further, contrast-setting predicates (like in 'x is not F but rather G'), it is natural to say that what we do then is to refer to x, *Punkt* ('no matter our information or lack thereof', i.e. our way of knowing x otherwise). This is a way of understanding 'in itself' in consequence of the demands of semantics on applying the contrast in this conceptually impoverished circumstance. But that is exactly the circumstance brought up by Kant's rationalistic interlocutors and by Kant's 'negative sense' of 'things in themselves', namely the circumstance construed by someone who asks us to spell out the truth-conditions of *only* some one sentence about something of which we only know that it is not to satisfy any of the conditions brought into the situation on account of our cognitive apparatus ('what if nothing we think things to be were true of a given x?'). If we view the intent of Kant's distinction in this light, it is natural for him to explain the contrast-term to appearance as "what amounts to the thing itself (*in* appearance) –viz. the real",¹⁸⁶ and to claim that the concept of a thing in itself is not only permissible but also unavoidable, while this concept does not refer to a special,

¹⁸⁴ Allison, Henry E., *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 240.

¹⁸⁵ In fact, it is peculiar for Allison to raise both objections here discussed at the same time: how could it be *one* reading at all that portrays one claim as logically implied by another when it also presents the first and the second as not even having the same truth-conditions?

¹⁸⁶ A581/B609, emphasis added.

intelligible type of object.¹⁸⁷ The first two characterizations display all of actual appearance as somehow containing things in themselves, while the third excludes that 'things in themselves' refers, in sentences like the one about the import of the first characterization I just wrote ('actual appearance contains things in themselves'), to entities over and above the real in appearance. Thus, we can interpret the foregoing as saying no more and no less than that in the realm of phenomena, there are many occasions to apply the contrast in asking questions, proposing hypotheses, issuing doubts and unmasking errors of perception or conception, enabling us to put to one side the way we represent things to be as *mere* appearance when we do run into problems, or, when we don't, to retain it as the way things appear and, for all we know, in fact are. The next step in Kant's explanation is to give the negative sense of 'thing in itself' as "a thing insofar as it is not an object of our sensible intuition."¹⁸⁸

Now, according to methodological ER, the generic concept of things in themselves is that of things insofar as we don't know them. Things in themselves according to the negative sense explained by Kant, as "boundary concept", and analyzed via MCE as above satisfy, as we just saw, that generic concept of the distinction in ER. The analysis also makes clear that referring to things in themselves in the negative sense does not allow us access to things other than appearances because it is only of appearances (i.e. entities intuitionally directly referred to) that we can contentfully speak as things in themselves in the negative sense. This vindicates Kant's claim that "the doctrine of sensibility is simultaneously the doctrine of noumena in the negative meaning of the term",¹⁸⁹ which in turn shows that things in themselves in the negative sense are fully accommodated in ER.

My purpose in this section is to find out whether Westphal's 'realism *sans phrase*' that is stronger than ER could be interpreted as a form of TR, i.e. realism about things other than appearances. I just argued that realism about things in themselves in the

¹⁸⁷ A256/B311.

¹⁸⁸ B307.

¹⁸⁹ B307.

negative sense is actually not a form of TR, not stronger than ER and does not oblige a commitment to things other than appearances. It thus is not the intended sort of realism. So, I now want to see whether such a 'realism sans phrase' can mean a commitment to things in themselves in the problematic or 'positive' sense, i.e. full-blooded TR.¹⁹⁰ Kant explains the positive sense of 'thing in itself' as follows: "if by noumenon we mean an object of a nonsensible intuition and hence assume a special kind of intuition—which, however, is not ours and into the possibility of which we have no insight—then that would be the noumenon in the positive meaning of the term."¹⁹¹ The kind of intuition that offers the only alternative to a sensible one like ours is, according to Kant, an intellectual kind of direct access to objects, such that he also characterizes the objects of such an intuition as "objects that we merely think".¹⁹²

While Kant regards the 'boundary concept' of things in themselves in the negative sense as inevitable and even welcome, he consistently rejects the cognitive significance of considerations that entail positing things in themselves in the positive sense. Indeed, one of the main strategies of his criticism of traditional rationalist metaphysics is to first prove that the criticized position is forced to accept these posits, and then to infer from this that the claims made by these positions cannot count as truth-evaluable assertions. On this background, the implausibility of the proposal that MCE requires TR can be gauged even before going into the details by considering the consequences. If Kant actually holds MCE (which I take as established), and if MCE requires TR, then MCE would not only force us to abandon TI, but in the same move, oblige us to dismiss not only Kant's pervasive rejections of TR, but also the whole criticism of traditional rationalistic metaphysical realism that lies at the basis of the Transcendental Dialectic, because if the referents averted in MCE were to be things in themselves in the positive sense, we would have to be in cognitive rapport with objects of a nonsensible intuition that we merely think. Rather than an internal criticism, we would have found two good reasons to leave Kant behind: because his theory of representation and his substantive philosophical claims are hopelessly incoherent and because his resistance to TR is confused. In the contrary case, Kant's MCE would *not* commit him to believe in things in

¹⁹⁰ QUOTE

¹⁹¹ B307.

¹⁹² Bxixfn.

themselves in the problematic sense, while it *would* commit him to mind-independent objects of experience, and hence to the applicability of the contrast between things in themselves and appearances to objects of experience *without* leaving the confines of ER. Most of the critical results achieved on the basis of MCE and ER would thus remain intact. Fortunately, MCE *cannot* compel acceptance of TR. Seeing why finally brings us to Kant's critical assessment of a putative "transcendental use" of the same sample statement that we reviewed before in its application under empirical circumstances—'we cannot know the intrinsic character of nature'.

Kant says about philosophers who attempt to put the concept of 'intrinsic nature' to the task of answering questions about the character of things in total abstraction from anything we know about them (and hence from any of the conditions under which we cognitively access them): "they then want us to be able to cognize things (...) [but] to have a cognitive power wholly different from the human one (...) [hence] to be beings about whom we cannot even state whether they are so much as possible, much less what their character is."¹⁹³ Note that in this case, it is *not* the reality of these beings that is at issue, but the application conditions for concepts like "cognize" that get hazy once 'intrinsic' is transplanted in this context. Once again, the contextualist analysis afforded by Kant's MCE is the key to understanding these passages. To repeat, MCE warrants the claim that, in application to merely logically but otherwise unspecified circumstances and posits in metaphysical discussions, even our most abstract concepts don't yield judgments that would be clear enough to expect them to be either true or false.¹⁹⁴ Kant's complaint in the quoted passage is precisely that the circumstances under consideration are so underspecified and dissimilar to empirical cases that they do not allow us to expect that the term 'cognize', with the content it has under normal conditions as a joint result of the term's meaning and the circumstances of application, applies to them. Moreover, the considered circumstances also are alleged to contain 'things', and the same worry applies to this term, too. So, the decisive extra-logical vocabulary in the sentence under discussion remains semantically indeterminate. This clarifies that it is in a very different

¹⁹³ A277/B333.

¹⁹⁴ "Not even one of the categories can we define really (...) without immediately descending to conditions of sensibility (...) if we take away the mentioned condition, then all signification (...) is gone; and through no example can we then make comprehensible to ourselves just what sort of thing is in fact meant by such a concept." (A240-1/B300)

sense that 'we cannot know' *these* purported things as they are 'in themselves', i.e. as presented in this scenario: rather than being presented, as is supposed in many attempts of interpreting Kant, with a special sort of metaphysical ignorance, we don't even get the words (*our* words) to make determinate claims in the first place. For example, things in themselves in the context of considering transcendental realities cannot be cognitively exhaustible because they are not semantically accessible in the first place.¹⁹⁵ This is the reason why the contrast between appearances and things in themselves in the context of its transcendental application yields entirely different results (and supports the limitation of knowledge claims to appearances, which are at least semantically accessible although, as seen above, not thereby alone totally mind-dependent in any interesting sense). More generally, if Kant's MCE were to require a realism regarding things in themselves as characterized in the transcendental use of the term, it would make the paradoxical demand that being equipped for semantically determinate mental contents requires access to mind-independent entities that are *semantically inaccessible*. I believe that this amply illustrates that MCE and TR are not cotenable.

I have already argued that I do not see any strong incompatibility of MCE with methodological ER. It now turned out, unsurprisingly, that Westphal's 'realism sans phrase' cannot mean any form of TR if MCE is to hold. What, then, are we to make of his claim that the 'realism sans phrase' required by MCE is stronger than and incompatible with ER, to which, according to the Kantian chart of metaphysics, TR would seem to be the most natural contrary? May be the chart is at fault and Westphal's particular way of making a case for MCE and its conditions provides another understanding of 'realism sans phrase' that does not collapse into ER. As proof (i) established the referentialist core of MCE, it is not at issue in this context. I therefore now want to examine whether the adumbrated possibility is substantiated by proofs (ii) and (iii). If it isn't, methodological ER (and TI) remain standing as fitting background theories for MCE.

IV.3.2. Methodological ER and Transcendental Proofs

¹⁹⁵ "we have (...) not even the concept of a possible intuition through which (...) the understanding can be used *assertorically* beyond sensibility." (B310)

IV.3.2.1. ER and Transcendental Order

One of Westphal's main arguments for the conclusion that Kant is committed to the existence of mind-independent objects in space via his MCE is his proof (ii), the argument from affinity. As a reminder, in this proof Westphal argues on account of Kant's defense of the law of genera (i.e. the amenability of sensory experience to systematic presentation in terms of nested kind-structures) that the associability or affinity of the sensible manifold or, inversely, the absence of real chaos is a material transcendental condition of self-conscious experience. Westphal takes this circumstance to constitute a 'transcendental proof of' the assumption that nature has a natural-kind structure and thereby, in spite of Kant, of 'realism sans phrase'. To anticipate my conclusion, I think that Westphal's proof works only if we were to allow the transcendental application of methodological terms like 'order in nature'. However, as we saw, on Kant's mature development of his own semantics as laid out in the section on "Phenomena and Noumena", such employment cannot generate truth-evaluable claims, and therefore fails to describe actual conditions of our experience. On behalf of the insights from his analysis of the conditions of contentful representation, Kant himself indicates his qualms over a possible naïve-realist reading of the upshot of his affinity-considerations in the A-deduction in the section on the 'Regulative Use of Ideas', where he concludes his discussion of the transcendental import of the unifying effects of the law of genera and its cognates with the famous admonition that "the systematic unity (...) is nothing more than a *projected* unity, which (...) must be regarded not as given but only as a problem."¹⁹⁶ I believe that, in spite of the subjectivist atmosphere¹⁹⁷ emanating from this quote, the *methodological* qualms Kant formulates here are not an expression of a particularly idealist version of TI. Such qualms are, instead, squarely based on his theory about the semantic limitations of the transcendental employment of concepts that are perfectly acceptable in the context of empirical belief formation, like "order in nature", which we needn't repeat here. Westphal himself repeatedly bases his criticisms of

¹⁹⁶ A647/B675. Following the Marburg neo-Kantians, Einstein celebrates this as Kant's greatest insight. Einstein, A., "Reply to Criticisms" (in Paul A. Schilpp (ed.), *Albert Einstein Philosopher-Scientist*.. Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1949, 663–688), 680.

¹⁹⁷ This is Arthur Collins' apt term for this type of passage in the CPR.

skeptical positions on them. However, ironically, these limitations cause a serious problem for his own argument from affinity. In proof (ii), we are asked to consider a 'world of transcendental chaos' and to conclude from its incompatibility with the transcendental structure and object-dependence of the affinity of the sensory manifold that the world on which the affine manifold depends is not/cannot be chaotic. I think this might be a case in which, after a little thought, we are not sure whether any genuine possibility has been raised, and thus whether, in stating the contrary, anything important has been cognized. In other words, I do not believe that Kant's considerations about the affinity of the sensory manifold and Westphal's exploitation thereof can actually carry the weight of having to prove the conclusion Westphal envisages.

In fact, Kant considers this world –the world of transcendental chaos—at another often commented place in the CPR not mentioned by Westphal:

"I suppose appearances might possibly be of such a character that the understanding would not find them to conform *at all* to the conditions of its unity. Everything might then be so confused that, e.g., the sequence of appearances would offer us *nothing* (...) corresponding to the concept of cause and effect, so that this concept would then be quite empty, null and without signification."
(A90/B123)

Now, if it is true that in such a world, the (*our*) concept of cause would be without signification because it could not possibly apply, then our concept of cause can also not refer to the totality of objects in this world to present it to us, as, for example '*causally disordered*'. For example, to take the most salient understanding of what it might mean to say that circumstances are '*causally disordered*', there are no degrees for more or less causal order where there is *nothing* for the word 'cause' to describe (hence no more or less). But then the term 'transcendental chaos' remains unexplained. If so, it is neither clear what the proof of its denial amounts to. What do we learn (about ourselves and/or the world) when we are told that the world is not transcendently chaotic, but transcendently orderly?

I thus think that there are significant disanalogies, at least if we follow Kant's semantics, between the case that Westphal refers to, the conditions of success for applying the law of genera in generating empirical knowledge of nature, and the case Westphal wishes to transfer the lessons from his case to, the case of one of the material transcendental conditions of human self-consciousness as such, the transcendental affinity of the sensory

manifold and its immediately given objects. In particular, I believe that Kant's semantic views may allow an understanding of the idea of a 'chaos' in the case of the law of genera (where the term is applied *empirically*), but, *pace* Kant's A-deduction, I am less sure whether they would lead us to expect this concept to remain content-conferring on propositions in the case where we have to decide whether the world we experience as a whole is or is not a world of transcendental chaos (where the same term is employed transcendentially). Let me try to explain why.

In the case of the law of genera, it is easy to sense an implicit domain restriction: it might be the case that in some area of empirical knowledge it turns out that there is no, or much less order than we expected and formerly believed, and that we do not yet know how to collate all the data in a comprehensible way. This area would be, compared to areas where we have order, 'chaotic'. According to what I said before about the contrast between things as we already know them and things in themselves, we could even say that, since the actual order escapes us in spite of the fact that we know some things about the objects in question, we can *know that* there is much less order than our conceptual systems would require while not knowing at all what a better conceptual scheme—or intelligible 'order'—would look like. In this sense, we can further say that, if there is to be *any* order at all in such a domain, it would have to be not one among appearances (objects as we know them), but among things in themselves (the same objects as we don't yet know them). This would simply mean that we would have to assume any order whatsoever among the apparently disordered things we are acquainted with to be a matter of, e.g., that domain's satisfying a theory we don't yet have, but that is in line with theories as we know them. In other words, we can apply the term 'chaos' fruitfully because we have at least paradigms (although no 'definition') of order elsewhere. In other words: because *not all* appearances are like the case under consideration.

Now one could try to reach the transcendental use of the term 'transcendental chaos' by simply expanding the area from one sort of chaotic case to more encompassing domains, until we reach the domain of nature as such. What if, e.g. there are no stable chemical compounds, but only quantum states? Obviously, the same sort of reasons as before would certify the applicability of 'chaos' vs. 'order'. But this series of expansions at most can land us at the sum total of all objects as we know them (with all the presumable

chaos) at a given time, under given circumstances and existing means of understanding, perhaps supplemented by a domain of objects we currently can imagine to get to know. It does *not* land us in the domain Westphal's (or Kant's) *transcendental* argument would need, the domain of *all* possible objects of experience and their affinity (or lack thereof). The point here is that although we can expand the empirical use quite far (though not arbitrarily far), an informative transcendental use would be a different matter, because we'd be missing *any* order to contrast the purported chaos with. Since the determinacy of content for concepts depends, according to Kant's semantics, on their application to objects of experience (at least *in general* or *as such*), our concepts cannot *describe* determinately cases where *synthesis* fails, that is, given what our concepts are known by us to do, we cannot rationally decide whether the term 'chaos' applies to a case where, *ex hypothesi*, synthesis fails.¹⁹⁸ As I discussed before regarding the distinction between things in themselves and appearances (§IV.2.2.), Kant's semantics recommends a contextualist construal of the impasses of transcendental considerations that suggests that the very same words, meaning what they do, can suffer semantic change and collapse in virtue of the impoverished nature of the circumstances considered for their application in such contexts. Hence, we cannot confidently regard a statement in which the term 'order' occurs in application to such circumstances as a truth-evaluable assertion only because, in reflections on empirical research, our assertions succeed in making the relevant distinctions. Taking what is said in such discursive contexts realistically *sans phrase*, as a description of actual reality is, at the very least, more naïve than Kant's semantics allows.¹⁹⁹ Under such impoverished circumstances, the risk of semantic failure looms large. It might turn out that, on reflection, our affirmation of the absence or presence of

¹⁹⁸ Arthur Collins puts this point nicely in his discussion of the same passages that Westphal uses for his proof: "Kant cannot really *describe* inputs that can be worked up into experience or describe contrasting inputs that are too chaotic to yield experience. Describability is conditioned by the success of synthesis. Therefore *success* shows that a reality does exist that is sufficiently orderly to make its representation as nature feasible. The law-governed structure of nature [i.e. the world insofar as presented in knowledge] then represents that objective orderliness of reality." (*Possible Experience*, 149, emphasis added). An earlier version of a similar point is Bird, Graham *Kant's Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Humanities Press, 1973), 128-9.

¹⁹⁹ Arthur Collins issues the same warning against directly extracting realist assertions from the very passages that Westphal bases his proof on in *Possible Experience*, 146-9.

'transcendental chaos' is "less than a dream"²⁰⁰ because in these circumstances, we lack the information that is required to recognize the designative function of the same word as similar to the one it normally has. If so, the affirmation and 'defense' of "transcendental order" in the context of a transcendental argument would not only fail to state a fact about reality but even leave what is said by it largely open. We might, if we so wish, regard such a defense at most as a 'grammatical' comment on the use of concepts in empirical circumstances: when we can state truths with taxonomies, lawlike statements and the like, we *thereby* assert order and features of generality in what is described.²⁰¹ Thus, either talk of '*transcendental* chaos' relies on a generalizing *empirical* use of 'chaos' and raises possibilities that indicate limitations in generalizing descriptions of nature or it does not raise any genuine possibilities at all. Taking the affinity-postulates nonetheless realistically, as theoretical insights offering us a grip on actual *order* and necessary structures of the world (i.e., general laws of nature) would then be analogous to Kant's naïve attempt in the A-edition of the CPR to rebut the skeptic about the external world by pointing to the reality of outer sense and its direct grip on what is *outside* us.²⁰²

All this doesn't mean that we have to say that an orderly universe of discourse for representations is *not* a material condition of transcendental status. It only means that the way in which a condition like this might be elucidated has to be different; instead of a transcendental proof, we might be helped to insight in this condition better by *pragmatic* considerations.²⁰³ As for Kant himself, he is clearly unwilling to regard the *principle of affinity* (or homogeneity) as a constitutive principle of the objects of experience (i.e. as a general law of nature), insight into which would yield us a definite cognition of structures

²⁰⁰ This is Kant's semantic term for occasions in which the concept-titles (i.e. words standing for concepts) of categories are applied without any regard to sensible conditions of cognition.

²⁰¹ As Kant succinctly puts it, then "the metaphysics of corporeal nature is called *physics*." (A846/B874).

²⁰² This is *my* suspicion about possible reasons that moved Kant to demote the affinity-speculations to a secondary plane in the argument of the B-deduction. It is plausible that they grew out of the same growing awareness of consequences of his own semantic insights that moved him to insert the 'Refutation' in order to emphasize the more sophisticated strands in the CPR stemming from MCE (in particular, the insight that spatiality and extra-mentality need to be argued in different steps, where the latter accrues directly from MCE) against the naïve and counterproductive attempt at a first-order rebuttal of the Cartesian skeptic in the A-edition (for a succinct account of the logic in these moves, cf. Guyer, *Kant*, 116-22). He simply became aware that both of these 'arguments' are too naïve to be compelling. Obviously, Westphal has a different view (cf. *Kant's Transcendental Proof*, 98-9).

²⁰³ Cf. Kant's remark in the preface that what of substantial conditions of knowledge cannot be proved theoretically may still be amenable to *practical* elucidation.

of the world.²⁰⁴ Kant is only prepared to regard various knowledge-claims regarding sets of individuals falling under certain empirical concepts but not others as objective whenever so classifying them is successful, i.e. does not engender large conflicts within the rest of our knowledge claims. That is, not the principle as such, but only *successful classification*, i.e. collection of individuals under concepts in the process of inquiry can yield actual knowledge claims. Now, one might ask, does this not *entail* a commitment to the principle of associability, since if individuals are collected successfully, then affinities are exploited, and then *they must exist as such*, hence the principle that there are affinities be true? There are two things to be said in response to this type of question, both of which show that the very strategy of the argument from affinity cannot work to establish either skepticism or realism of a stronger-than-empirical sort. The first thing is that, as an advertisement of a defense of realism, the supposition of the question is *question-begging*. The second thing is that the suggestion that, in order to classify successfully, there has to be a super-ordinate law of nature cooperating with such activity is a *non-sequitur*.

As to the first: what is to be proved is supposedly that reality as such contains structures that our classificatory activities merely discover. At the same time, it is admitted that our access to reality is through the success of our classificatory activities alone. According to the latter, whatever structures there may be in reality will be displayed in those classifications of ours that are successful. According to the former, however, we would have to be able to postulate structures or 'affinities' *independent of* successful classifications in order to *explain* the success of our classifications, presumably in contrast to the *possibility that the same classificatory activity could have failed*. The only clout of such an advertisement therefore can stem from the fact that the real structures presumably displayed supply an explanation of success that we couldn't have had without knowing the real structures. However, in order for this defense of real structures to work, there would have to be access to these real structures that is independent of successful classificatory activity, which is precisely what the assumption under consideration denies. Saying that success 'would not have been possible/explicable without the real existence

²⁰⁴ Hoeffe, Otfried, *Kant's Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Muenchen: C.H. Beck, 2003, 268-72; Wood, Allan *Kant*, Malden MA: Blackwell, 2005, 80-3.

of affinities' thus either is empty because the alleged affinities are accessed by *other* empirical means (or not at all) or it is question-begging, since the success of the classification is at the same time the *only* indication of the existence of the alleged real structures themselves (and therefore *already* empirically accessed). In either case, the argument from affinity is unable to provide a foundation for a realism that is *stronger than empirical*.²⁰⁵

As to the second: The answer to this is that successfully classifying in a particular way does not commit one to saying that there is something in common to cases of successful classification, e.g. 'affinities', that would explain, ground or otherwise secure their legitimacy. If I truly classify some things but not others as bears, then the reasons for counting things so are bear-related, not affinity-related reasons, and if I classify other things truly as bees, then the reasons for not counting them as bears are bear-and-bee-related. We needn't postulate an extra-resource ('affinities') over and above bears and bees and how *they* are that would allow me to classify as I do when the bears and bees perhaps wouldn't. Once such a classification is in place, and the cooperation of cognitive apparatus and objects of experience has achieved a certain organization, we can apply some common measure of similarity on the members of various classes (e.g. how many features regarded as relevant by us they share) and order standard perceptions of them according to their degree of 'affinity' or 'associability'. But then the concepts of 'affinity', 'order' and 'chaos' are applied in reflection on an ongoing classificatory practice, are applied empirically, with regard to particular cases, and on the background of existing successful classifications of objects of experience. It is therefore legitimate to accept the objective informativeness of successful natural classifications and laws, but to reject the direct objective informativeness of a principle of associability. That is exactly what Kant recommends. He regards it simply as misleading to treat cases of successful classification as *instances* of, informative of or even as grounded in a general law of uniformity in nature (or of homogeneity in perceptual manifolds). According to Kant, expecting this sort of information would be confusing (regulative) pragmatic precepts issued by reason with the empirical import of (constitutive) theoretical presuppositions required for the use

²⁰⁵ For a similar line of argument against the ascription of this sort of antiskeptical move to Kant, see Bird, *The Revolutionary Kant*, ch.11, sec.4 (249-50).

of the understanding. According to Kant, even though we cannot help classifying, no classification as such is, *imposed on us*, or even only rationally to be expected to be met with the cooperation of pre-existing orders. This, however, does not exclude that *successfully* classifying is informative of particular structures in reality, structures that obtain no matter what we think (i.e. yield descriptions that are correct 'mind-independently'). But the fact that certain classifications are satisfied in the world as it is does not require or allow any informative overarching hypothesis²⁰⁶ about the general orderliness of the universe. In his lengthy discussion of these matters in the chapter on the 'Regulative Use of the Ideas of Reason', Kant stresses that the affinities we find in the manifold of intuition, just as those we find in the manifold of empirical classifications are *interest-relative* and rather expressive of ways of conceiving nature than of ways nature would force us to judge. For this reason, disputes about the question whether there is more or less order in nature *as such and in general* ('*überhaupt*') cannot be resolved by an insight into the fact that one of the disputants has hit upon and the other not, but only by realizing that at this level of generality, the question concerns the *practical* concern with research programs and the assessment of their success:²⁰⁷

"Thus in *one* reasoning person the interest of *manifoldness* (according to the principle of specification), but in *another* the interest of *unity* (according to the principle of aggregation [i.e. the one collating manifolds in concepts and thereby regarding them as affine in some respect, A.M.]) may be stronger. Each of them believes that he has acquired his judgment from insight into the object, and is yet basing it solely on his greater or lesser attachment to one of the principles.

²⁰⁶ Westphal's proof underscores that his proofs aim at non-analytic conclusions. Of course, there are any number of occasions for *analytic* claims by existential instantiation. Take any established, non-empty taxonomy that assigns individuals to non-overlapping classes, say, F, G, H. Take your universe U to consist of a, b, c. Suppose you have statements of the kind F(a), G(c), H(b). Then define 'order' as 'system of general terms satisfied in a given universe X' and instantiate 'X' by U. Then, since 'F', 'G' and 'H' (a) exist, (b) are satisfied in U and (c) are systematically related (e.g. non-overlapping), '[FGH] is a system of general terms satisfied in U' is true. This *logically implies* that 'Ex (x is a system of general terms satisfied in U)' is true. Substitute 'is a system' by 'order' according to your definition and obtain 'Ex (x is order in U)' q.e.d. But, as I said, it would be highly disingenuous to present the substance of Westphal's contentions about natural order and transcendental chaos in this way. My worry is that the salient other ways preclude anything like a 'proof'.

²⁰⁷ A penetrating analysis on the ways in which principles like the one under discussion might be said to acquire *objective* significance is offered in Kitcher, Philip "Projecting the Order of Nature", in Kitcher, Patricia (ed.) *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. Critical Essays*, Lanham MD: Rowman&Littlefield, 1998, 219-38.

Neither of these principles rests on objective bases, but they rest on the interest of reason; hence they might better be called maxims rather than principles."²⁰⁸

I think it is safe to conclude that Westphal's affinity-argument fails to establish any trait of reality that could exceed the confines of ER. Either the argument is taken as employing 'chaos' in the empirical sense. Then the proof that there are to be some identifiable regularities (in the objects of experience) only establishes that the world as we know it might be, in particular respects accessible to experience, more or less orderly than we take it to be. Or the argument is taken as employing 'chaos' in the transcendental sense, but then (for precisely the reasons spelled out in the semantic theory Westphal approves of, viz.: Kant's MCE) it cannot characterize an *actual* case, much less an extant alternative, defending the non-obtaining of which would provide reason to believe (and a synthetic judgment a priori to the effect that) the world *must be* ordered.

I have now attempted in three ways to illuminate the claim that the realism required by Kant's MCE is incompatible with ER because it is stronger. In my discussion of the requirements of MCE (IV.2.2.), I argued that MCE does not require more than methodological ER. In my subsequent discussion of TR (IV.3.1.), which might be a candidate for a realistic view that is incompatible with and stronger than ER, I showed that TR and MCE are actually incompatible, hence, that the claim cannot be meant as invoking TR. In the last considerations (IV.3.2.1.), I showed that at least one of Westphal's proofs, the argument from affinity, could only succeed in affirming and characterizing a condition beyond those captured in ER when the decisive concepts are employed transcendently, which, according to MCE itself, leads to the semantic collapse of these same concepts. Hence, the claimed realism can also not be understood as attempting (*per impossibile*, if we accept Kant's own MCE) to exploit the transcendental use of concepts like 'order', 'chaos', 'lawlikeness', and the like.²⁰⁹ Apart from these three ways, I see no promising candidates to spell out what 'unqualified realism' could mean over and above a commitment to objects that admit the application

²⁰⁸ A666-7/B694-5.

²⁰⁹ Westphal frequently invokes precisely the limitations of conceptual determinacy exploited in my argument to argue against idealist or verificationist readings of TI **. Applying these standards to his own attempts to distinguish a realist reading of MCE that exceeds ER and thus debunks TI could therefore be taken as a friendly amendment of his position.

of the appearance-thing in itself contrast, hence are not entirely mind-determined. But this commitment is compatible with ER, as I have shown.

IV.3.2.2. ER and the Spatio-temporality of Causality

I therefore do not think that either Westphal's 'unqualified realism' or his proofs leave the domain of the empirical in the *methodological* sense. This becomes clearest in his third argument, the argument from spatiotemporal causality. The argument's aim is, basically, to show that in order to count as being conscious of various and differentiable mental contents/beliefs, a minimal condition beliefs have to satisfy is that they occur in a temporal *order* (the existence of time is not enough), but our primary access to *any* order in time is our access to the structure of simultaneity and irreversibility that underlies the causal structure of the realm of *objective* judgments. Thus, our primary concept of time *order* is that which we can only derive from the structure of our judgments about causally related interacting substances. Since we would not be able to be conscious of our mental episodes as temporally ordered and individuated unless we found them to satisfy constraints on temporal order, and we cannot derive these without reference to a causally, lawfully organized world of objects that are located elsewhere than our mental episodes, counting as being conscious of various and differentiable beliefs/contents (i.e. possessing mental contents) presupposes the existence of a causally organized world 'distal' from our mental states, such that we access it in perception. This is what the argument *ought* to look like to be a proof for (*not* from) realism.

However, Westphal's presentation of the proof has shortcomings for this aim. It seems to me that Westphal is very much occupied with the conditions of identifying *outer* objects in order to prepare the domain of the outer as a domain of properly individuated referents for mental representations. He seems to view Kant's proof as intended at showing that, without adequate means of identifying outer objects, we could not determinately ascribe referents to our representations because we could not identify them in the first place. Since only the application of the categories to a domain of spatio-temporal entities allows such identification, we cannot avoid using the categories for the purpose of supplying referents to mental representations. Once we *do* properly individuate entities *posited as extra-mental* thanks to the categories, we can "distinguish

the subjective order of apprehension from the objective order of events." (ibid.) and it is on the basis of this distinction that we acquire sufficient reason to postulate the inner as distinct from the outer, where our reference to the outer in the application of the categories *is prior to* the discovery and disclosure of the inner and its structure.

I think this is a very counterproductive presentation of Kant's proof as one *for* (not from) realism about external objects, since the proof makes the *assumption* that representations only acquire identity and distinguishability by being ascribed entities distinct from them and structured according to the categories. But then the relation of a consciousness consisting in representations to an external reality becomes a matter of the operative notion of 'representation', not a consequence of transcendental conditions that could be otherwise. This becomes clear from Westphal's reference to Kant's dictum about the "blind play of representations", that is: representations that don't represent but merely occur in mind, which would threaten were we to fail to employ these principles *successfully*, i.e. so that they issue ascertainable *truths*.²¹⁰ The truth-conditions of the categories, however, are *defined* only 'regarding spatio-temporal objects'.²¹¹ Thus the proof would argue that *because* the categories are applied *successfully* –that is: are representations that are related to something extra-representational in the right way and refer to spatio-temporal particulars, we can legitimately assume there to be a world of spatio-temporal entities to be ascribed to our representations. But the latter is visibly already a *condition* of the truth of the *premise* of the proof; and that we can distinguish subjectivity from a domain of definitionally extra-representational entities the categories are applied to likewise is a presupposition of our successfully and knowingly asserting a thesis with these truth-conditions. Thus, Westphal's strategy to first establish a world of referents, then to try to 'derive' from it the distinction of inner and outer, and from this the temporal order of the inner by contrast to the temporal order in the outer seems to me vitiated. The first step *already entails* the distinctions between inner and outer and also, via the objective use of the categories required by the fact that what is to be established is a world of extra-representational referents to be ascribed to the inner representations, the

²¹⁰ "How Does Kant Prove", 791.

²¹¹ An extremely illuminating feature of Westphal's exposition is to present the Paralogisms as one of Kant's defenses of the crucial claim that the application conditions of the categories are ill-defined outside the realm of spatio-temporal entities ("How Does Kant Prove", 789-90).

possible divergence in their structure. If this is right, then Westphal's third proof is at most a proof of externalism *from* realism, and certainly not a proof for a realism stronger than ER.

The defect in Westphal's strategy seems to me rooted in the fact that he starts out from the (first order) truth-conditions for statements employing the categories that Kant stipulates, instead of starting, like Kant, from the truth-conditions of statements that self-ascribe a mental life consisting of more than one mental state. It is the latter that Kant discovers to presuppose ascription of states to segments in a temporal structure, and it is the unavailability of this structure on account of temporally unfolding mental processes alone that makes it compelling to postulate a relation to something *other than* mental states to account for the fact that we so much as have awareness of an inner life. Where Westphal's strategy is, as it were, outside-in, Kant's strategy works inside-out.

Kant's own argument for the irreducibility of space to time-relations (which would allow the 'mentalization' of spatial distributions) is not subject to the same criticism. It demonstrates that the crucial condition for truly attributing an awareness of an inner life with determined mental states is to align these states according to some temporal order among successive mental states, and that such an order cannot be supplied by the series of successive states itself. He thereby *eliminates the resources of the inner* as a sufficient basis for the time-order that is presupposed in describing mental life as successive. He infers relations to *something else* as responsible for the perceived time order of the inner. Up to that point, Kant's argument is mainly negative and does not appeal to the categories or their content, i.e. the (first order) truth-conditions of such employment. Neither does it appeal to the concept of representation and its content. But already at this point, Kant has achieved an argument by elimination to an externalist effect, viz. that mental life on its own is insufficient to be recognized as such, and that the very idea of self-ascribable mental states requires more than these states as such.

If we follow Kant's argument so far, however, there is still the possibility that the 'something else' could be of a transcendent nature, as in Descartes' God of representational grace or Leibniz' pre-established harmony. It is the identification of the 'something else' with *spatially* distal environmental denizens that is achieved by his reference to the *employment of* the categories and its conditions. Kant demonstrates that,

other than the series of mental states we undergo, the system of categories at issue in the Analogies is sufficient for the determination of all general time-relations between objects when applied to a given manifold, but that the categories only make sufficiently differentiated distinctions among objects for this purpose (e.g. avoiding mistaking simultaneous properties with successive events) on the background of ascribing also spatial locations to objects. Appeal to transcendent sources of the time-order becomes dispensable because even such sources could only supply time order if they operate according to the categories. Since the categories are the actual source of time-order, and the categories only work properly on the background of a manifold of spatial locations, we cannot get a time order through the categories without accepting a domain of spatially distributed objects. But in contradistinction to mentalists, Kant can welcome this, because thereby the 'something else' needed for the generation of time-determination is captured as inevitably *accessible to* (not, as idealist interpretations of TI would have it, constituted by) human intuition. The realism induced in the argument from spatiotemporal causality by elimination and reflection on alternatives thus remains thoroughly empirical.

In fact, I believe that Westphal's own proof exhibits this at a later decisive turn. Westphal's proof there moves from saying that "we can only use the categories (...) with regard to spatial objects and events" and that "we can identify a temporal order of events only by correctly using the concepts of cause and substance" to "the objective order of events (...) must be a causal order of perceptible spatio-temporal substances."²¹² Obviously, the success of this proof presupposes *that the concepts of cause and substance are only used empirically*, i.e. in application to objects of perception. It is only compelling that the objective order of events 'must be' a causal order of spatio-temporal substances if 'correctly using the concepts of cause and substance' *in fact* is using them 'only' in application to spatio-temporal objects. Thus, if the proof lives up to the requirements of the concepts *cause* and *substance*, then nowhere in it is 'cause' or 'substance' applied to anything but spatio-temporal objects. It is thanks to remaining within the confines of the empirical use that the same terms in the judgment about the "objective order" actually contribute what they ought. In order to show that important traits of mental life rest on extra-mental conditions (even if it is, as in this case, only by

²¹² "How Does Kant Prove", 794.

way of contrasting the external causal order with the experience of mere succession), the 'objective order' must be an *actual* condition (a general trait of reality) that needs to be in place for our consciousness of mental contents to be (and appear) as it is: a temporally ordered succession of distinguishable mental states. Now, an actual condition is precisely an empirical condition, and as such accessible with the equipment of human sensitivity and understanding. Thus, the *realism* expressed in the claim that there has to be a world over and above our mental states that allows to derive a temporal order, since without the latter there would not *be* so much as various mental states, this realism is clearly an instance of *empirical* realism because it is expressed in categories that are applied to nothing but possible objects of experience, and, as transcendental proofs require, to all of them at once.

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