

What Descartes Doubted, Berkeley Denied, and Kant Endorsed*

Kenneth L. Pearce
Trinity College Dublin

Idealism (I mean **material** idealism) is the theory that declares the existence of objects in space outside us to be either merely doubtful and **indemonstrable**, or else false and **impossible**; the former is the **problematic** idealism of Descartes, who declares only one empirical assertion (*assertio*), namely **I am**, to be indubitable; the **latter** is the **dogmatic** idealism of Berkeley, who declares space, together with all the things to which it is attached as an inseparable condition, to be something that is impossible in itself, and who therefore also declares things in space to be merely imaginary. (*Cr* B274)¹

According to Kant, there is some doctrine, which he sometimes calls 'empirical realism,' such that it was doubted by Descartes, denied by Berkeley, and endorsed by Kant himself.² It may be doubted whether there really is such a doctrine or, if there is, whether it takes the form Kant seems to say it does. For instance, if empirical realism is taken as the assertion that familiar objects like tables and chairs exist, then this doctrine was neither seriously doubted by Descartes, nor denied by Berkeley. If empirical realism is the view that such objects are *mind-independent*, then it was clearly denied by

* This is a pre-publication draft circulated by the author for comment. Comments are welcome on the web at http://blog.kennypearce.net/archives/historical_thinkers/immanuel_kant/what_descartes_doubted_berkeley.html, or by email to pearcek@tcd.ie.

1 In-text citations are as follows:

3D George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* in *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne* [*Works*], ed. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1951): 2:167-263

Cr Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

DM George Berkeley, *De Motu*, tr. A. A. Luce in *Works*, 4:11-52

L Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, tr. Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Med René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (with objections and replies) in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, tr. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984): 2:3-397

Prol Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, rev. ed., tr. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

3D is cited by page number; *Cr*, *L*, *Med* and *Prol* are cited by marginal numbers.

2 This framing of the question of the nature of empirical realism is due to Lucy Allais. See her "Kant's Idealism and the Secondary Quality Analogy," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 45 (2007): 461-462 n11 and *Manifest Reality: Kant's Idealism and his Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015): 9, 55-56.

Berkeley, but was neither seriously doubted by Descartes, nor straightforwardly endorsed by Kant. Kant's assertion thus presents us with a puzzle: what might empirical realism be?

The primary aim of this paper will be to reconstruct Kant's own narrative of the historical relationship between Descartes, Berkeley, and himself, in order to identify the doctrine Kant calls 'empirical realism.' Along the way, we will examine Kant's interpretations of Descartes and Berkeley. Although I will not defend the correctness of Kant's interpretations,³ I will show that they can be seen as arising from plausible readings of specific texts to which Kant had access.

On the basis of my reconstruction of Kant's historical narrative, I will argue that Kant understands empirical realism as the doctrine that *the concept of extended substance has legitimate application*. According to Kant, Descartes called the applicability of this concept into question, and Berkeley argued that it was outright incoherent. Defending the legitimacy of such concepts is one of the main aims of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. On the interpretation that emerges, Kant's transcendental idealism is a genuinely idealistic thesis and thus involves genuine points of agreement with Berkeley. In particular, Kant endorses a version of Berkeley's *esse is percipi* thesis. Nevertheless, in conjunction with Kant's theory of experience, his transcendental idealism yields the anti-Berkeleyian thesis of empirical realism, that is, the (empirically) real existence of extended (material) substance.

1. Descartes' Doubt

1.1 Problematic Idealism. Kant's argument against Descartes' 'idealism' was completely re-worked between the first and second editions of the *Critique*. The first edition places the argument in the Fourth Paralogism, and the second in the new Refutation of Idealism. The former defines the idealist as

³ In fact, the footnotes will indicate some places where Kant's interpretation of Berkeley differs from the interpretation I defend in *Language and the Structure of Berkeley's World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

“someone who ... does not admit that it [sc. ‘the existence of external objects of sense’] is cognized through immediate perception and infers from this that we can never be fully certain of their reality from any possible experience” (*Cr* A368-369). Later in the Fourth Paralogism, what is to be doubted is described as “external objects (bodies)” (*Cr* A370), “matter” (*Cr* A371, A377), or “things **that are to be encountered in space**” (*Cr* A373). Similarly, in the Refutation, “the **problematic** idealism of Descartes” is described as “the theory that declares the existence of objects in space outside us to be ... doubtful and **indemonstrable**” (*Cr* B274). This view is ascribed to Descartes on grounds that he “declares only one assertion (*assertio*), namely **I am**, to be indubitable” (*ibid.*). A final passage that should be adduced for Kant's view of Descartes' 'idealism' is his famous footnote in the preface to the second edition: “it always remains a scandal of philosophy and universal human reason that the existence of things outside us ... should have to be assumed merely **on faith**” (*Cr* Bxxxix).

Setting these assertions alongside Descartes' *Meditations*,⁴ a clear picture emerges. Having set out to doubt everything that can be doubted, the meditator quickly discovers one indubitable truth: “*I am, I exist*” (*Med* 25). The view to which Descartes wants to lead the meditator is a substance-mode ontology with two distinct varieties of (finite) substance: thinking substance, and extended substance. In the second meditation, the meditator is allowed to conclude immediately that a thinking thing (himself) exists. Further, he is allowed to examine his idea of extended things (bodies). In the famous

4 There is some question about how familiar Kant was with the *Meditations*, though much less has been written on this subject than on Kant's familiarity with Berkeley (see below). Jean-Marie Beyssade asserts (without argument) that “Kant probably did not read Descartes' writings themselves; in general he only knew Descartes secondhand, mainly from handbooks in the Leibnizian and Wolffian tradition” (Jean-Marie Beysade, “Descartes' 'I Am a Thing that Thinks' versus Kant's 'I Think'” in Daniel Garber and Beatrice Longuenesse, eds., *Kant and the Early Moderns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008): 33). Kant's misplaced criticism of Descartes for (allegedly) deriving 'I exist' from 'I think' by means of a syllogism (*Cr* B422n) suggests that he had not read or did not remember the text from the Second Replies in which Descartes explicitly disavows the very syllogism Kant attributes to him (*Med* 140; see Beatrice Longuenesse, “Kant's 'I Think' versus Descartes' 'I Am a Thing That Thinks'” in Garber and Longuenesse, *Kant and the Early Moderns*, 12-18). However, this need not be taken to mean that Kant was entirely unfamiliar with Descartes' writings. In the text I show that a coherent interpretation of Kant's remarks can be produced by assuming that Kant was quite familiar with the main text of the *Meditations*.

wax passage, the meditator reasons that he has from his senses the ideas of various accidents of a piece of wax, but notices that all of these accidents are subject to change while the wax persists. As a result, he concludes, the idea of the thing that has the accidents (the substance) must be provided only by the pure intellect (*Med* 30-32). However, the meditator here refrains from judging that there is a reality corresponding to this idea: “It is possible that what I see is not really the wax; it is possible that I do not even have eyes with which to see anything” (*Med* 33).

In the *Meditations*, the concept of body, whose application is in question, is an explicitly *geometric* concept: Descartes three times affirms that body is “the subject-matter of pure mathematics” (*Med* 49, 50, 51); that is, of geometry. Kant clearly recognizes this point in the *Prolegomena* where he argues that his view, unlike the views of Descartes and Berkeley, secures the application of geometry to the perceived world (*Prolog* 4:291-294).

Descartes did, of course, attempt to secure the legitimacy of the empirical application of geometry. In the sixth meditation the meditator will finally confidently affirm the existence of bodies, understood as concrete instantiations of geometric natures (*Med* 80-81). However, the argument for the legitimate application of the idea of body depends crucially on the claim that the meditator and the world were created by a non-deceiving God. Thus it is really true, on Descartes's view, that the existence of extended substance must be accepted solely on the basis of trust in God, that is, faith.⁵

This conclusion, which Kant regards as a scandal, was enthusiastically embraced and extended by Malebranche, who writes, “I agree that faith obliges us to believe that there are bodies; but as for evidence, it seems to me that it is incomplete.”⁶ In a later work, after rehearsing Descartes' argument

5 Descartes would not call this 'faith,' since it does not rely on supernatural revelation. (I thank an anonymous referee for this point.) However, insofar as this is a form of trust in God Kant's use of the term 'faith' is defensible.

6 Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search After Truth*, tr. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 573.

for the existence of extended substance from 'natural revelation,' Malebranche, apparently dissatisfied with this 'proof,' writes,

faith teaches me that God has created heaven and earth. It teaches me that Scripture is a divine book. And this book, or its appearance, teaches me clearly and positively that there are thousands and thousands of creatures. Thus, all my appearances are hereby changed into reality. Bodies exist; this is demonstrated in complete rigor, given faith.⁷

Malebranche is quite explicit that the existence of extended substance is proved not by unaided reason but by divine revelation.

Since Kant denies that the existence or attributes of God can be demonstrated,⁸ he regards refutations of skepticism in the Cartesian tradition as inadequate (*Cr* Bxxxix n).⁹ In the Fourth Paralogism in the first (A) edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant simply assumes that the skeptical result of the meditator's reasoning is absurd, and sets out to diagnose the error. In the Refutation of Idealism in the second (B) edition, Kant takes a more ambitious approach and sets out to demonstrate that the meditator's position is absurd. I will discuss each of these arguments in turn.

1.2 The Fourth Paralogism. Kant says that all four paralogisms exhibit the same error, namely, that of equivocating between 'transcendental' and 'empirical' uses of the same category (*Cr* A402). The fallacious argument which, according to Kant, results in Descartes' 'idealism' is as follows:

[1] That whose existence can be inferred only as a cause of a given perception has only a **doubtful existence:**

[2] Now all outer appearances are of this kind ...

Thus, [3] the existence of all objects of outer sense is doubtful (*Cr* A366-A367).

Although Kant says that the paralogisms equivocate on the categories, the equivocation he

7 Nicolas Malebranche, *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion*, tr. David Scott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): sect. 6.8.

8 This is argued at length in *The Ideal of Pure Reason* (*Cr* A567/B595-A704/B732).

9 In Mrongovius' lecture notes, Kant describes Descartes' 'God is not a deceiver' argument and dismisses it as "quite lame, for one can rightly object against it: that we deceive ourselves when we believe what our senses teach us" (*L* 29:928). Similarly, Malebranche argues that we are capable of resisting our natural propensity to believe in bodies and therefore we, and not God, are responsible if we do not resist (*Search*, 574).

identifies in this argument is actually on the term 'outer'.¹⁰ Kant explains that this term has a transcendental sense in which it means “something that, **as a thing in itself**, exists distinct from us,” but also an empirical sense in which it means “something that belongs to outer **appearance**” (*Cr* A373). Premise [2] is only true if it is taken to refer to appearances that are 'outer' in the transcendental sense – i.e., things in themselves.¹¹ However, problematic (skeptical) idealism affirms [3] in the *empirical* sense: that is, it doubts whether there are extended substances.

Because transcendental realism “regards space and time as something given in themselves (independent of our sensibility),” it guarantees that whatever is outer in the empirical sense is also outer in the transcendental sense (*Cr* A369). This is the additional premise needed to render the paralogism valid. It is in this sense that transcendental realism leads to empirical idealism. However, according to transcendental idealism, “it is ... impossible that **in this space** anything **outside us** (in the transcendental sense) should be given, since space itself is nothing apart from our sensibility” (*Cr* A375). Since space is only the form of our intuition and not a feature of reality as it is in itself, the concept of extension, which depends on space, can have no applications to objects as they are independent of our representations (i.e., objects that are 'outer' in the transcendental sense). Hence the extended substances, whose existence is in question, could not possibly be anything other than appearances.

Kant here adopts a Berkeleian strategy for replying to Cartesian 'problematic' idealism. This is clearest in Kant's footnote on A374-375:

One must note well this paradoxical but correct proposition, that nothing is in space except what is represented in it. For space itself is nothing other than representation;

¹⁰ In fact, none of the paralogisms work in quite the way Kant says. See Jill Vance Buroker, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 213-225.

¹¹ “The transcendental realist therefore represents appearances (if their reality is conceded) as things in themselves” (*Cr* A369).

consequently, what is in it must be contained in representation, and nothing at all is in space except insofar as it is really represented in it. A proposition which must of course sound peculiar is that a thing can exist only in the representation of it; but it loses its offensive character here, because the things with which we have to do are not things in themselves but only appearances, i.e., representations.

According to Kant, it follows from the ideality of space and time that the objects in space and time must be mere representations or appearances. Such objects, Kant says, exist only insofar as they are represented. This is just a translation into Kant's terminology and conceptual framework of the Berkeleian view that extension is merely an idea and therefore the being of an extended thing consists in being perceived (its *esse is percipi*).

This, of course, gives rise to the problem of distinguishing real representations from those that are imagined, dreamed, or hallucinated. Here again Kant adopts a Berkeleian strategy: the criterion of truth for judgments about extension – including the judgment that extended substances exist – must rest in our perception.¹² The criterion, according to Kant, is this: **“Whatever is connected with a perception according to empirical laws, is actual”** (*Cr* A376). The Cartesian skeptical argument is utterly irrelevant to the question of whether this criterion is satisfied and so, given transcendental idealism, Descartes has provided no reason for doubting the existence of extended substance.

Kant's adoption of this Berkeleian strategy – a strategy which, I will be arguing, Kant continues to employ in the second edition – sheds important light on the nature of transcendental idealism and the sense in which that doctrine is idealistic. Transcendental idealism claims that “Time and space ... apply to objects only so far as they are considered as appearances, but do not present things in themselves” (A38/B55-A39/B56).¹³ Paul Guyer alleges that, according to this view, “space and time ... cannot

12 Kant, however, argues that Berkeley's version of this strategy fails due to the absence of genuinely necessary empirical laws from Berkeley's system. See below §2.2.

13 Similar remarks apply to the categories: these are “concepts which prescribe laws *a priori* to appearances ... But

genuinely characterize those objects which we experience as in space and time.”¹⁴ This allegation, however, misunderstands the idealistic strategy Kant adopted from Berkeley. As Guyer elsewhere recognizes, it is Kant's view that *appearances*, not things in themselves, are “the ordinary referents of empirical judgments.”¹⁵ However, space and time *do* genuinely characterize appearances. What Kant, like Berkeley, aims to do is to defend the real existence of spatiotemporal objects by arguing that (a subset of) the appearances just are the real things. To insist that questions about how things *really* or *genuinely* are must be questions about things in themselves is just to assume transcendental realism. According to transcendental idealism, questions about things in themselves are irrelevant to the truth of ordinary empirical judgments or the reality of ordinary empirical objects. This is what it means to place the criteria of truth, reality, and actuality *within* our perception or representation.

1.3 The Refutation of Idealism. The Berkeleian character of Kant's response to problematic idealism in the Fourth Paralogism in A has long been recognized¹⁶ and was probably responsible for Christian Garve's impression that Kant's system rested on the same foundation as Berkeley's.¹⁷ For this reason, it is sometimes thought that, despite Kant's protestations to the contrary (*Cr* Bxxxvii-Bxli), the changes to the second edition, where Kant distances himself from Berkeley so emphatically, represent a rejection

appearances are only representations of things that exist without cognition of what they might be in themselves” (B163-164).

14 Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 4; cf. 351, where Guyer implies that Kant denies “that *a priori* knowledge ... characterize[s] things as they really are.”

15 *Ibid.*, 334. Guyer uses this phrase in the course of a discussion of the dispute between 'one world' and 'two world' interpretations. The two views are said to disagree as to whether things in themselves are to be understood as “a second set ... objects in addition to the ordinary referents of empirical judgments.” Guyer is assuming that “the ordinary referents of empirical judgments” are appearances, and the question is whether or not these are numerically distinct from things in themselves.

16 See, e.g., Colin M. Turbayne, “Kant's Refutation of Dogmatic Idealism” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 5 (1955): 225-244 (esp. 229-236); Henry E. Allison, “Kant's Critique of Berkeley” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 11 (1973): 45-49.

17 See “The Göttingen Review” in Hatfield, *Prolegomena*, 202.

of the view taken in the Fourth Paralogism in A.¹⁸ Against this view, I will argue that the Refutation of Idealism represents only a change in strategy. Whereas the Fourth Paralogism in A was designed to show that transcendental idealism undercuts the basis of Cartesian skepticism,¹⁹ the Refutation of Idealism is designed to show that the meditator's position at the end of the second meditation is inconsistent (for reasons having nothing to do with God). Kant will derive this inconsistency from the meditator's willingness to apply the category “Of Inherence and Subsistence” (A80/B106) to inner sense, but not to outer sense.²⁰ The meditator affirms that he is a “thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions” (*Med* 28) – that is, in addition to affirming the existence of doubting, understanding, etc., he affirms the existence of a substance in which all of these inhere. Yet he refrains from affirming that there is a thing (empirically) external to himself that has the attributes he considers in the discussion of the wax. Kant will attempt to derive a contradiction from this behavior by showing that the meditator's ability to think of a persistent substratum of his thoughts presupposes the ascription of a persistent (empirically) external substratum.

The 'theorem' Kant sets out to prove in the Refutation is that **“The mere, but empirically determined, consciousness of my own existence proves the existence of objects in space outside me”** (*Cr* B275). This theorem has been variously interpreted. It would seem that the statement that the objects whose existence are to be proved are 'in space' shows that they are outer only in the empirical sense, since Kant holds that nothing which is outer in the transcendental sense can be in space (*Cr*

18 For a brief history of the debate over the consistency of the Fourth Paralogism with the Refutation of Idealism, see Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, 280-282. Guyer himself takes the Refutation of Idealism to be inconsistent with the Fourth Paralogism. Recent defenses of the consistency of the Fourth Paralogism with the Refutation of Idealism include Ralf M. Bader, “The Role of Kant's Refutation of Idealism,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 94 (2012): 53-73 and Lior Nitzan, “Externality, Reality, Objectivity, Actuality: Kant's Fourfold Response to Idealism,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 94 (2012): 147-177.

19 As Henry Allison points out, a condensed version of the argument is retained at *Cr* A490/B518-A491/B519. See Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, rev. and enl. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004): 494n15.

20 Cf. Edwin McCann, “Skepticism and Kant's B Deduction” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 2 (1985): 71-72.

A26/B42-A28/B44). Paul Guyer has argued, however, that what is meant here is that space is the form of intuition by which we are able to represent objects that are “ontologically independent of ourselves.”²¹ Thus empirically external objects (extended substances) are appearances of objects that are external in the transcendental sense.

Guyer's defense of this claim rests largely on the later *Reflexionen*. In the text of the Refutation of Idealism there is no evidence that Kant has rejected the Berkeleian views of the Fourth Paralogism in A. Further, the attempt to foist this more strongly realistic view on Kant is at odds with central principles of transcendental idealism. The 'theorem' of the Refutation is a theorem about “objects in space” and one of the central conclusions of the Transcendental Aesthetic is that such objects can only be appearances. Here, as in the Fourth Paralogism, Kant's argument is concerned with our ability to regard such things as persisting substances. As Kant explains in a footnote to the B Preface that summarizes the Refutation, “The representation of something **persisting** in existence is not the same as a **persisting representation**” (*Cr Bxli*). Despite the constant flux of our representations, we represent objects in space as persisting. What Kant aims to show is that one cannot coherently call this practice into question. However, there is nothing here to indicate that the persisting substances in space with which we are here concerned are anything but representations that exist only in the representing of them. In fact, although Kant extensively revised the Transcendental Aesthetic for the second edition, he retained its claim “that if we remove our own subject ... then all constitution, all relations of objects in space and time, indeed space and time themselves would disappear, and as appearances they cannot exist in themselves, but only in us” (*Cr A42/B59*).²² Again, objects in space exist only by being

21 Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, 311.

22 Some scholars have attempted to deflate Kant's claim, here and elsewhere, that appearances depend on us for their existence. Against these attempts see James Van Cleve, *Problems from Kant* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Nicholas Stang, “The Non-Identity of Appearances and Things in Themselves,” *Noûs* 47 (2013): 113-117; Allais, *Manifest Reality*, §1.2 and ch. 4.

represented.²³

It may be objected to this weak reading of the conclusion of the Refutation that Kant attempts, in his proof, to establish the following lemma: “the perception of this persistent thing is possible only through a **thing** outside me and not through the mere **representation** of a thing outside me” (*Cr* B275).²⁴ This, however, does not conflict with the proposed interpretation of Kant's conclusion. On the proposed interpretation, the Cartesian skeptic is taken to fall into a contradiction by refusing to apply the category of inherence-subsistence to outer sense. Thus on the skeptic's view, my experience contains (a sensation of) whiteness, but this is not an experience of a white object located in space. Kant is arguing here that I cannot coherently think of myself as a persisting perceiver who earlier perceived some whiteness and now perceives some greenness without regarding myself as experiencing white and green *things* or *objects*. “An **object**, however, is that in the concept of which the manifold of a given intuition is **united**” (*Cr* B137). This 'union' is the result of the synthesis performed by the understanding. As products of the structure of our cognition, these objects are appearances and not things in themselves. Nevertheless, Kant argues (against the empirical idealist), they are genuine *things*.²⁵

23 For extended criticism of Guyer's interpretation, see Dina Emundts, “The Refutation of Idealism and the Distinction between Phenomena and Noumena” in Paul Guyer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 171-184.

24 See Paul Abela, *Kant's Empirical Realism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002): 23-24. Georges Dicker, “Kant's Refutation of Idealism,” *Noûs* 42 (2008): 100-101 also suggests that Kant's talk about 'things in space outside me' in the Refutation is inconsistent with ontological interpretations of transcendental idealism.

25 My interpretation here is similar to that of Hoke Robinson, “Two Perspectives on Kant's Appearances and Things in Themselves,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 32 (1994): 411-441. Robinson argues that in the new and revised passages of the B edition Kant consistently uses ‘appearance’ to refer to the objects that are represented by representations and holds that these objects are constructed from representations. Hence, on Robinson's interpretation, as on mine, there are external objects which can in a sense be distinguished from our representations, but these objects are not ontologically independent in Guyer's sense. Emundts also argues that “The aim of the Refutation of Idealism is to prove the existence of outer objects in the sense of objects of experience” and not in the sense of ontologically independent objects (“The Refutation of Idealism,” 184; cf. Dina Emundts, “Kant's Critique of Berkeley's Concept of Objectivity” in Garber and Longuenesse, *Kant and the Early Moderns*, 124-129). Nicholas Stang, “Transcendental Idealism without Tears,” in Tyron Goldschmidt and Kenneth L. Pearce, eds., *Idealism: New Essays in Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming) interprets transcendental idealism as fundamentally a thesis about what

This interpretation also explains how Kant can here deny that perception involves a “mere **representation** of a thing outside me” while at the same time explicitly defining transcendental idealism as the thesis that “all objects of an experience possible for us are nothing but appearances, i.e., mere representations” (*Cr* A490/B518-A491/B519).²⁶ In the Refutation of Idealism, Kant is arguing that our experience contains genuine things and not mere Cartesian representations (in Descartes’s terms, ideas) that may lack objects. Yet even though the objects of our experience are genuine things or objects, they are nevertheless transcendently ideal: “the objects of experience are **never given in themselves**, but only in experience, and they do not exist at all outside it” (A492/B521). It is in this sense that these objects can be called 'mere representations'.

In the Refutation of Idealism, the premise Kant asks the idealist to grant for *reductio* is “I am conscious of my existence as determined in time” (*Cr* B275).²⁷ Kant had argued in the First Analogy for what Henry Allison has dubbed the ‘backdrop thesis,’²⁸ which is here stated as the claim that “All time-determination presupposes something **persistent** in perception” (*ibid.*). In the second meditation, the meditator asks rhetorically, “Is it not one and the same ‘I’ who is now doubting almost everything ... and is aware of many things which apparently come from the senses?” (*Med* 28). The fleeting representations are set against the persistence of the thinking substance. However, according to Kant, the thinking substance is not “in perception” in the right way to serve as the ‘backdrop’ to change.²⁹ In

it is to be an object.

26 Cf. *Cr* A30/B45: “what we call objects are nothing other than mere representations of our sensibility.”

27 Cf. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 295-296.

28 Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 239. Although the degree of centrality accorded to the First Analogy and, in particular, the backdrop thesis in Allison's reconstruction of the argument of the Refutation (see *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 288-298) is controversial, it is widely agreed that Kant's argument here appeals to that thesis in some way. For discussion of the relevance of the First Analogy, see, e.g., McCann, “Skepticism,” 87-88; Robert Hanna, “The Inner and the Outer: Kant's 'Refutation' Reconstructed” *Ratio* 13 (2000): 153ff.; Abela, *Kant's Empirical Realism*, 188-189; Buroker, *Kant's Critique*, 191; Dicker, “Kant's Refutation of Idealism,” 89ff.; Emundts, “The Refutation of Idealism,” 172-176.

29 Andrew Chignell, “Causal Refutations of Idealism,” *Philosophical Quarterly* 60 (2010): 496-499 argues that Kant does allow cognition of the empirical self as a thinking substance. This causes problems for some reconstructions of the

the second note to the Refutation, Kant states quite clearly that there is only one thing that can serve this purpose, namely, matter (*Cr* B278). Thus, Kant argues, in attributing a determinate time-ordering to the sequence of representations the meditator implicitly (despite his protestations to the contrary) attributes perceived qualities to persisting material objects. This is the sense in which “the game that idealism plays has ... been turned against it” (*Cr* B276): whereas the meditator had supposed that he could come to know the existence of material objects only if he could infer them from his sequence of representations, Kant has argued that the meditator can know that his representations form a sequence only by presupposing material objects.

What Kant attempts in the Refutation is to force the meditator to apply the concept of substance to the representations of outer sense, and so to affirm the reality of matter. This is clearly an anti-Berkeleyian thesis (see below). However, given Kant's own understanding of matter (or extended substance), this thesis is not in conflict with the Berkeleyian aspects of the Fourth Paralogism. On the contrary, there are strong reasons for interpreting the Refutation as retaining these Berkeleyian elements. The first point is that, in the Refutation, Kant slides back and forth between speaking of the existence of objects and speaking of *experience* (as opposed to mere imagination) of objects. However, according to Kant, what makes for experience is “synthesis according to concepts of the object of appearances in general” (A156/B195). In other words, experience is created by the structuring of appearances into objects that obey “general rules of unity” (*Cr* A157/B196). But according to Kant's transcendental idealism, such rules are 'prescribed' by the understanding and hence are not found among things in themselves (*Cr* B163). The second point is that Kant asserts in the second note to the Refutation that the persistence of matter is “presupposed *a priori* as the necessary condition of all time-determination”

argument of the Refutation. If Chignell is right about this, then it is unclear why Kant denies that the empirical self could serve as the “something **persistent** in perception” required for time-determination. Nevertheless, Kant does explicitly deny this.

(*Cr* B278). However, Kant insists that “The **possibility of experience** is ... that which gives all our cognitions *a priori* objective reality” (*Cr* A156/B195). In the B Preface, Kant is even more explicit: “we can cognize of things *a priori* only what we put into them” (*Cr* Bxviii). Thus, again, the persistence of matter must be interpreted as part of the structure imposed by the mind and not as a mind-independent feature of reality we discover. The persistent material substance the Refutation aims to vindicate is a feature of our experience and is not to be found among things in themselves. For Kant, as for Berkeley, the reason our claims about ordinary objects cannot be radically mistaken is that such objects owe their existence to our representing them.

2. Berkeley's Denial

Kant's response to Descartes rests on the Berkeleian thesis that the external objects whose existence is to be vindicated are only appearances whose existence and properties depend on our representing of them (their *esse* is *percipi*). This gives rise to two closely related questions. First, Kant protests vociferously that his view is radically different from Berkeley's. What are we to make of this claim? Second, if Kant's idealism is compatible with empirical realism, why isn't Berkeley's? A radical and provocative answer to these questions was famously given by Colin Turbayne, who argued that Kant did not differ from Berkeley in any important respect, and his protestations to the contrary were based in nothing more than personal animus.³⁰ However, no such extreme answer is necessary. I will argue that Kant's criticism of Berkeley rests on the claim that Berkeley's empiricism leaves him with cognitive resources too sparse for the construction of a genuine world.³¹ Of particular importance are

30 Turbayne, “Kant's Refutation.”

31 A similar interpretation of Kant and Kant's relation to Berkeley has been defended by Gordon Nagel, *The Structure of Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). However, Nagel does not provide a detailed analysis of Kant's remarks on Descartes or Berkeley. Ted Kinnaman, “Epistemology and Ontology in Kant's Critique of Berkeley” *Idealistic Studies* 32 (2002): 203-220 argues that all of Kant's criticisms of Berkeley (with the possible exception of the

space and time as *a priori* forms of intuition, and the *a priori* concept of substance.³² Thus it will turn out that, although Kant endorses a version of the *esse is percipi* thesis, Kant's affirmation of matter (extended substance) is a genuinely anti-Berkeleyian thesis and not a mere verbal difference.

2.1 Dogmatic Idealism. In the Fourth Paralogism, Kant had defined the dogmatic idealist as “one who **denies** the existence of matter ... because he believes he can find contradictions in the possibility of a matter in general” (A377).³³ In Mrongovius' lecture notes from 1782-1783, the period during which Kant was preparing the *Prolegomena*, Kant defines idealism as the view “that outside oneself thinking beings are indeed present, but not bodies” (L 29:928; cf. *Prol* 4:288-289). He goes on to characterize Berkeley³⁴ as eliminating bodies on the basis of Ockham's Razor. Finally, it is said, “Bishop Berkeley in Ireland went even further, for he maintained that bodies are even impossible, because one would always contradict oneself if one assumes them” (L 29:928).

These remarks show an understanding of two distinct dialectical strains to be found in Berkeley's *Three Dialogues*.³⁵ Kant's later remark about the impossibility of body clearly refers to the

Refutation of Idealism) are epistemological and that, for this reason, they fail to answer Garve's assertion that Kant built on the same foundation as Berkeley. (See above, n. 9.) I argue that the epistemological remarks *do* serve as an answer to Garve.

- 32 That the account of space and time is crucial to Kant's differentiation of himself from Berkeley is widely recognized. See, e.g., Margaret D. Wilson, “Kant and 'The Dogmatic Idealism of Berkeley'” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 7 (1971): 461-462 and 470-471; R. C. S. Walker, “Idealism: Kant and Berkeley” in John Foster and Howard Robinson, eds., *Essays on Berkeley: A Tercentennial Celebration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985): 110-112; Vance G. Morgan, “Kant and Dogmatic Idealism: A Defense of Kant's Refutation of Berkeley” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 31 (1993): 217-237; Emundts, “Kant's Critique of Berkeley,” 117-129. However, the importance of the concept of substance has not been adequately appreciated.
- 33 It has been argued that the dogmatic idealist here and throughout the first edition is not Berkeley but Leibniz. See George W. Miller, “Kant's First Edition Refutation of Dogmatic Idealism” *Kant-Studien* 62 (1971): 298-318; G. J. Matthey, “Kant's Conception of Berkeley's Idealism” *Kant-Studien* 74 (1983): 167; and Nagel, *The Structure of Experience*, 244. I will not attempt a direct refutation of this position, but I will argue that we can make good sense of the first edition remarks on the assumption that Berkeley is intended.
- 34 Or rather, “Bishop Cloyd in Ireland” – but this is clearly a copyist's error for “the Bishop of Cloyne.”
- 35 *Three Dialogues* was the primary source for Berkeley's idealism available to Kant. A German translation was published in Rostock in 1756, bundled with Collier's *Clavis Universalis*. The source for the translation was the French edition of 1750, which would also have been accessible to Kant (Turbayne, “Kant's Refutation,” 226). Matthey, “Kant's

main argument of the first two dialogues, where Hylas tries again and again to construct a coherent definition of 'matter' and fails, finally retreating to a sense of the term he characterizes as “obscure, abstracted, and indefinite” (3D 225) before giving up on the notion altogether. The earlier Ockham's Razor remark is likely an allusion to Berkeley's treatment of Malebranche's occasionalism (3D 217-220). At this point in the *Dialogues*, Hylas has agreed with Philonous that matter cannot resemble our perceptions and cannot be a cause of our perceptions. Instead, it is agreed, God causes our perceptions. Hylas then tries out two hypotheses in an attempt to reintroduce matter. The first is that God uses matter as an instrument in causing our perceptions and the second is Malebranche's view that certain configurations of matter serve as 'occasions' for God to give us perceptions. These hypotheses are rejected on grounds that God doesn't need an instrument or occasion to work God's will; both hypotheses involve an unnecessary multiplication of entities. In putting forward these hypotheses, Philonous concludes, Hylas has been “supposing [he] know[s] not what, for no manner of reason, and to no kind of use” (3D 220).

The *Prolegomena* similarly manifests familiarity with the *Dialogues*. After mentioning “the mystical and visionary idealism of Berkeley,” Kant goes on to ask, “if it is an in fact reprehensible idealism to transform actual things (not appearances) into mere representations, with what name shall we christen that idealism which, conversely, makes mere representations into things?” (*Prolog* 4:293). A similar remark appears in both editions of the *Critique*: “The realist, in the transcendental signification, makes these modifications of our sensibility into things subsisting in themselves, and hence makes

Conception,” 164-166 provides a detailed argument for Kant's early familiarity with this translation.

A new German translation of *Three Dialogues* appeared in 1781, the year the first edition of the *Critique* was issued. A copy of this translation was in Kant's personal library at the time of his death. See Matthey, “Kant's Conception,” 163n11 and Kenneth P. Winkler, “Berkeley and Kant” in Garber and Longueness, *Kant and the Early Moderns*, 143. Berkeley's *Principles*, on the other hand, was not translated into any language other than English (which Kant did not read) until 1869 (A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop, “Editors' Introduction” in Berkeley, *Works*, 2:4-5).

mere representations into things in themselves” (*Cr* A491/B519).³⁶ These two passages are a clear echo of Berkeley: “I am not for changing things into ideas, but rather ideas into things” (*3D* 244). The 1756 German translation by Eschenbach had rendered Berkeley's 'idea' sometimes as *Gedanke* and other times as *Vorstellung*.³⁷ In both of these passages Kant uses the latter. This strongly suggests that Kant has Berkeley in mind.

Perhaps most notorious among Kant's remarks about Berkeley is the following:

The thesis of all genuine idealists, from the Eleatic School up to Bishop Berkeley, is contained in this formula: “All cognition through the senses and experience is nothing but sheer illusion, and there is truth only in the ideas of pure understanding and reason” (*Prolog* 4:374).

To our eyes, this assertion is extremely puzzling, for we have all been taught (and with good reason) that Berkeley is an empiricist. In fact, Berkeley's empiricism is one of the key points on which Kant criticizes him.³⁸ Two historical factors help to explain this classification. The first is that many eighteenth century commentators classified Berkeley (much to his chagrin) as a hyper-Malebranchist,³⁹ and Malebranche certainly would have accepted this characterization.⁴⁰ The second factor is that, as Winkler points out, the rationalist/empiricist dichotomy is a relatively recent one. In Kant's day Plato's rather more colorful division of philosophers into 'gods,' who pull everything up into heaven, and 'giants,' who pull everything down to earth, was current.⁴¹ Berkeley certainly belongs among the 'gods'. However, the passage remains troubling, since Berkeley belongs to a tradition concerned to attack the

36 Winkler, “Kant and Berkeley,” 157-158, notices the first of these passages but not the second. He notes that a passage of Garve's review, which was cut out of the Göttingen version by Feder, makes a similar reference. However, since the language appeared in the first edition of the *Critique* it could not have been borrowed from Garve.

37 Winkler, “Kant and Berkeley,” 153. Hence, contrary to Nagel, *The Structure of Experience*, 249n13, the verbal parallel between these remarks of Kant and Berkeley is not 'forced'.

38 See below, and also Kinnaman, “Epistemology and Ontology.”

39 See Bracken, *Early Reception*, 15-22, *et passim*.

40 “your senses beguile you infinitely more than you can imagine ... The imagination is a fool ... Reason must always remain in charge of our discussion” (Malebranche, *Dialogues*, 4).

41 Plato, *Sophist* 246a-c; Winkler, “Berkeley and Kant,” 149-157.

Cartesian conception of a 'pure intellect.'

One explanation that has been proposed is that Kant had *Siris*, rather than the *Dialogues*, in mind here.⁴² As Winkler points out,⁴³ this would help to explain his association of Berkeley with the Eleatic school, since in *Siris* Berkeley himself makes that link. The nature of Berkeley's epistemology in *Siris*, and the relation of *Siris* to Berkeley's earlier doctrines generally, is a vexed question. Regardless of whether Berkeley *does* affirm a Cartesian or Platonic faculty of pure understanding in *Siris*, it is easy to see how Kant might have thought he did.

In fact, however, Kant's remark can be explained without the assumption that he was referring to *Siris*. First, consider the following passage from the *Dialogues*:

Hyl. But what say you to 'pure intellect'? May not abstracted ideas be framed by that faculty?

Phil. Since I cannot frame abstract ideas at all, it is plain, I cannot frame them by the help of 'pure intellect', whatsoever faculty you understand by these words. Besides, not to inquire into the nature of pure intellect and its spiritual objects, as virtue, reason, God, or the like; thus much seems manifest, that sensible things are only to be perceived by sense or represented by the imagination (3*D* 193-194).

It is easy to dismiss this passage. The pure intellect is introduced as an objection to Berkeley's critique of abstraction, and Philonous at first isn't sure what the term means ("whatsoever faculty you

42 Matthey, "Kant's Conception," 172-173. *Siris* was indeed available to Kant, and is in fact the only work of Berkeley explicitly mentioned in Kant's corpus. The reference is a joke at Berkeley's expense, which appears in notes from a lecture given between 1762 and 1764: "Bishop Berkeley, in the treatise *On the Use of Tarwater for Our Body*, doubted whether there are any bodies at all" (L 28:42). However, this joke is followed by an account of Berkeley's idealism that is more likely to have been derived from the *Dialogues* than from *Siris*.

A complete French translation of *Siris* was published in Amsterdam in 1745. See Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne: His Works and His Critics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976): 148 and Matthey, "Kant's Conception," 163. This contradicts A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop, "Editors' Introduction," in Berkeley, *Works*, 5:5, who say that this edition was partial and that the whole was not translated into French until 1920. I have consulted a digital facsimile of the 1745 edition on Google Books to verify that it contains all 368 sections of the original *Siris*. This edition was reprinted in Geneva in 1748 (Keynes, *Bibliography*, 157-158).

German editions containing short extracts from the 'medical' part of the treatise also appeared in 1745 in Amsterdam, Leipzig, and Göttingen (Keynes, *Bibliography*, 151-154). Kant's joke about *Siris* was likely based on one of these extracts. We will see below that the evidence some scholars have adduced for Kant's familiarity with the rest of *Siris* is weak.

43 Winkler, "Berkeley and Kant," 153.

understand by these words”). Philonous rejects the suggestion by pointing out that the discussion is supposed to be about sensible things, and everyone agrees that what can only be apprehended by the pure intellect is not, strictly speaking, sensible. This passage therefore does not provide strong evidence that Berkeley believed in pure intellect (in any sense).

However, this dismissal would be too quick. A similar passage occurs in *De Motu*, where Berkeley asserts that absolute space “escapes the pure intellect. That faculty is concerned only with spiritual and unextended things, such as our minds, their states, passions, virtues, and the like” (*DM* 53, translation modified).⁴⁴ In both of these passages, Berkeley associates the pure intellect with the knowledge of those things that are fundamental to his ontology. In the *Dialogues* this seems to take the form of a concession, but in *De Motu* it is positively asserted. Whatever Berkeley's intention may have been, these two passages, especially when combined with the contextual factors indicated, are surely adequate to explain Kant's remark without appeal to *Siris*.⁴⁵

G. J. Matthey has argued that the appropriateness of an appeal to *Siris* here is further supported by a passage from an earlier draft of the *Prolegomena* that Kant left out of the final version:

Berkeley found nothing constant, and so could find nothing which the understanding conceives according to *a priori* principles. He therefore had to look for another intuition, namely the mystical one of God's ideas, which required a two-fold understanding, one which connected appearances in experience, and another which knew things in themselves.⁴⁶

However, this too can be explained in terms of the *Dialogues*.⁴⁷ In that work, although Berkeley denies a direct 'intuition' of the divine ideas (*3D* 213-214), the divine ideas (or 'archetypes' as Berkeley calls

44 *De Motu* was originally published in Latin (a language Kant read) in London in 1721. It is hard to say how easy or difficult it was to find copies of this text in Prussia in Kant's time, but further evidence for Kant's familiarity with this work will be adduced below.

45 Allison, “Kant's Critique,” 59 comes to a similar conclusion: “This [passage] can be understood on the assumption that Kant was acquainted with the much more accessible *De Motu*, wherein the Platonizing tendencies which became explicit in the *Siris*, are already clearly present.”

46 Matthey, “Kant's Conception,” 170.

47 As Allison had earlier argued (“Kant's Critique,” 61).

them) are apparently introduced to deal with the problem of persistence, and so to help return a world which is “strictly speaking” composed only of fleeting perceptions to the kind of orderly structure posited by common sense and natural science (3D 248).⁴⁸ As I will argue below, the success of this project is precisely what Kant set out to attack.

In the same section of the *Prolegomena*, Kant goes on to describe his similarities and differences with Berkeley with respect to space:

Space and time, together with everything contained in them, are not things (or properties of things) in themselves, but belong instead merely to the appearances of such things; thus far I am of one creed with the previous idealists. But these idealists, and among them especially Berkeley, viewed space as a merely empirical representation, a representation which, just like the appearances in space together with all of the determinations of space, would be known to us only by means of experience or perception (*Prolog* 4:374-375).

This view of space is most likely derived from *De Motu*, though it could be inferred from the *Dialogues*. If Kant read the *New Theory of Vision*, this would have reinforced his interpretation.⁴⁹ In that work, Berkeley describes at length how we acquire the (different) concepts of visible and tangible distance and magnitude from experience. Berkeley explicitly and repeatedly denies that we can have an abstract idea of space in general that is not tied to either touch or vision.⁵⁰

In addition to the characterizations in the Fourth Paralogism in A and the *Prolegomena*, two characterizations of Berkeley were added to the second edition of the *Critique*. The first occurs in the

48 In *Language and Structure*, I defend an interpretation of Berkeley that does not make use of the archetypes in solving the structure problem. In “Berkeley on Unperceived Objects and the Publicity of Language” (manuscript), I show how Berkeley’s talk of archetypes can be interpreted as a sort of expository ‘short cut’ in the *Dialogues*, consistently with the language-based strategy Berkeley employs in other passages of the *Dialogues* and in other works. However, Kant is far from alone in regarding the archetypes as the core of Berkeley’s strategy: this interpretation is suggested, for instance, by Berkeley’s disciple the American Samuel Johnson (Marc A. Hight, ed., *The Correspondence of George Berkeley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 290-291, 310-311). Berkeley’s response to Johnson’s suggestion is notoriously evasive (Hight, *Correspondence of George Berkeley*, 318; see Kenneth P. Winkler, *Berkeley: An Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989): 229-232).

49 It has not previously been noted that the *New Theory of Vision* was available to Kant. Winkler (“Berkeley and Kant,” 231n4) notes that Kant could have read *Alciphron* in French translation, but does not note that the French edition published in La Haye in 1734 contained the *New Theory of Vision* (Keynes, *Bibliography*, 47).

50 George Berkeley, *An Essay Toward a New Theory of Vision* (1709), §§122-123.

additions to the Transcendental Aesthetic:

For if one regards space and time as properties that, as far as their possibility is concerned, must be encountered in things in themselves, and reflects on the absurdities in which one becomes entangled, because two infinite things that are neither substances nor anything really inhering in substances must nevertheless be something existing, indeed the necessary condition of the existence of all things, which also remain even if all existing things are removed; then one cannot well blame the good Berkeley if he demotes bodies to mere illusion (*Cr* B70-71).

The only text where Berkeley explicitly makes this argument is in *De Motu*:

It would be easy to confirm our opinion [i.e., the rejection of absolute space] by arguments drawn, as they say *a posteriori*, by proposing questions about absolute space, such as whether it is a substance or an accident, or whether it is created or uncreated, and showing the absurdities which follow from either answer. But I must be brief (*DM* §57, translation modified).⁵¹

Although Berkeley does not use this argument in the *Dialogues*, and even in *De Motu* says he is omitting the details for brevity, Kant regards this as Berkeley's most important argument, an argument which excuses the absurdity of his other conclusions. Kant even uses Berkeley's argument for the benefit of his own theory (*Cr* A39/B56-A40/B57).

The second added characterization is at the beginning of the Refutation:

Idealism (I mean **material** idealism) is the theory that declares the existence of objects in space outside us to be ... false and **impossible**; ... [this] is the **dogmatic** idealism of Berkeley, who declares space, together with all of the things to which it is attached as an inseparable condition, to be something that is impossible in itself, and who therefore also declares things in space to be merely imaginary. Dogmatic idealism is unavoidable if one regards space as a property that is to pertain to the things in themselves; for then it, along with everything for which it serves as a condition, is a non-entity (*Cr* B274)

This is essentially the same characterization as before. Kant's claim is that Berkeley recognized the absurdities involved in the transcendental realist picture, especially with respect to space and time. Berkeley responds, Kant says, by “declaring the existence of objects in space outside us to be ... false and **impossible**.”

51 Cf. Matthey, “Kant's Conception,” 173.

In the *Dialogues*, Berkeley found absurdities in the concept of matter. In *De Motu*, he found similar absurdities in the concept of (absolute) space. These absurdities were derived from the assumption that matter and space, if they are to exist, must be mind-independent objects made known to us in empirical representations (i.e., in Berkeley's terms, ideas of sense). Kant consistently credits Berkeley for having discovered these genuine absurdities, and even takes over some of Berkeley's arguments as his own: most importantly, the skeptical argument against representative realism, which Kant gives in the Fourth Paralogism, and the dilemmas against absolute space, which Kant employs in the Aesthetic and which provide the argument structure he goes on to deploy in the Antinomies. Furthermore, Kant knows perfectly well that after rejecting the concepts of matter and space Berkeley goes on to attempt to restore the commonsense world by making representations into things, a strategy that very nearly mirrors Kant's own. Nevertheless, Kant argues that Berkeley's position has the effect of “demot[ing] bodies to mere illusion” (*Cr* B71). The reason for this, I will be arguing, is Berkeley's denial of matter. Kant holds that, in turning ideas into things, Berkeley is rejecting the notion of a persisting substratum of perceived qualities and therefore rejecting the existence of *things* or *objects* in space. Thus, on Kant's interpretation, the thesis that Descartes doubted is indeed the same as the thesis that Berkeley denied.

2.2 Kant's Criticism of Dogmatic Idealism. Although it is clear that Kant believes he has refuted Berkeley's position, it is not totally clear where this refutation is supposed to have occurred. In the Fourth Paralogism in A, Kant had said that the “following section of dialectical inferences” (i.e. the antinomies) would “help us out of [the] difficulty” raised by the dogmatic idealist (*Cr* A377). In the Refutation of Idealism in B, Kant said that “the ground for this [dogmatic] idealism ... has been undercut by us in the Transcendental Aesthetic” (B274). Colin Turbayne has argued that Kant resorts to

misdirection; he does not refute Berkeley anywhere, because he cannot refute Berkeley without refuting himself.⁵² However, Turbayne's radical conclusion is, again, unwarranted. First, to 'help us out of the difficulty' is different than to 'undercut the ground.' Second, the Antinomies are intimately related to the Aesthetic since, according to Kant, it is the ideality of space and time (established in the Aesthetic) that solves each antinomy.

A structural overview of Kant's argument against Berkeley, which relies on both the Aesthetic and the Antinomies, is provided in the Appendix to the *Prolegomena*. In that text Kant, fuming over the Göttingen review, sets out to show, once and for all, that Berkeley is badly mistaken and that the *Critique of Pure Reason* proves it. After the previously discussed passage in which Berkeley is characterized as viewing “space as a merely empirical representation,” Kant draws a sharp contrast:

I show, on the contrary, first: that space (and time as well, to which Berkeley gave no attention),⁵³ together with all its determinations, can be cognized in us *a priori*, since space (as well as time) inheres in us before all perception or experience as a pure form of our sensibility and makes possible all intuition from sensibility, and hence all appearances. From this it follows: that, since truth rests upon universal and necessary laws as its criteria, for *Berkeley* experience could have no criteria of truth, because its appearances (according to him) had nothing underlying them *a priori*; from which it then followed that experience is nothing but sheer illusion, whereas for us space and time (in conjunction with the pure concepts of the understanding) prescribe *a priori* their law to all possible experience, which law at the same time provides the sure criterion for distinguishing truth from illusion in experience (*Proleg* 4:375).

Berkeley, like Kant, holds that reality is distinguished from illusion by its connectedness according to laws (*3D* 235; *Cr* A218/B266). However, Hume had shown that necessary connections could not be gleaned from experience alone.⁵⁴ Since laws must be universal and necessary, Berkeley's empiricism

52 Turbayne, “Kant's Refutation,” 240-243.

53 Berkeley discusses time in the *Treatise on the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), §§97-98 and in a letter to Johnson, March 24, 1730, §2. Neither of these texts was available to Kant.

54 David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (1748), §7. Earlier versions of this argument can be found in Malebranche (Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search After Truth*, ed. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 660-661; for discussion see P. J. E. Kail, “Hume, Malebranche, and Rationalism,” *Philosophy* 83 (2008): 320-327) and Leibniz (G. W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, ed.

prevents him from discovering any lawful connections, and so leaves him with nothing but illusion.⁵⁵

In order to avoid illusionism, one must *first* show that space and all its 'determinations' are cognized *a priori* (the doctrine of the Transcendental Aesthetic); *then* one can understand how the structure of our cognition prescribes laws *a priori* for all possible experience (the doctrine of the Analogies of Experience). These laws provide the criteria for truth, and so make veridical perception possible.⁵⁶

Among the *a priori* laws, one is especially important in this context: the persistence of substance. In the First Analogy, which was also crucial to Kant's response to Descartes, Kant argued that it was a necessary law of our cognition that “All appearances contain that which persists (**substance**) as the object itself, and that which can change as its mere determination” (*Cr* A182). Berkeley cannot introduce anything which genuinely persists into our perception; lacking either Descartes' 'pure intellect' or Kant's *a priori* laws, he must confine perception to fleeting ideas. In fact, the fleeting nature of ideas is a consistent Berkeleian theme:

How then is it possible, that things perpetually fleeting and variable as our ideas should be copies of anything fixed and constant? (*3D* 205)

Strictly speaking, Hylas, we do not see the same object that we feel ... What therefore if your ideas are variable; what if our senses are not in all circumstances affected with the same appearances? It will not thence follow, they are not to be trusted, or that they are inconsistent either with themselves or anything else, except it be with your preconceived notion of (I know not what) one single, unchanged, unperceivable, real nature (*3D* 245).

Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 49-51). Berkeley was much influenced by Malebranche and certainly would have been familiar with this line of thought. His response (following Malebranche and other occasionalists) is to deny that laws involve necessary connections and hold instead that they are merely a matter of God's customary mode of action and that our belief that God will continue to observe them must be regarded as merely probable (*Principles*, §107). On Berkeley's theory of laws and causes, see Pearce, *Language and Structure*, §9.3.

55 Kant is not quite fair to Berkeley here: the requirements of universality and necessity are Kant's, not Berkeley's. Berkeley only says that real ideas are “connected, and of a piece with the preceding and subsequent transactions of our lives” (*3D* 235). Although he sometimes refers to laws in the context of the distinction between real and imaginary objects, Berkeley's laws are not necessary connections (see previous note).

56 Here I am in agreement with Dina Emundts, whose account of Kant's argument against Berkeley focuses on Kant's conception of truth. See Emundts, “Kant's Critique.”

as our ideas are perpetually varied, without any change in the supposed real things, it necessarily follows they cannot all be true copies of them (3D 246).

if the term 'same' be used in the acceptation of philosophers ... it may or may not be possible for divers persons to perceive the same thing (3D 247).

According to Kant, sense experiences of this sort could never hope to be anything other than illusion. In the First Analogy and the Refutation of Idealism, Kant attempted to show that our thinking about the world, or even the self, depends on applying the concept of matter or extended substance, a concept which, according to Berkeley, is full of contradictions. Kant addresses the contradictions engendered by the transcendental realist conception of the world in the Antinomies, and attempts to show that transcendental idealism provides a solution.

This approach shows the consistency of Kant's remarks locating the criticism of Berkeley in the first and second editions of the *Critique*. According to Kant, Berkeley had made empirical objects into illusions by discovering contradictions in the concepts of matter and space. In the Transcendental Aesthetic, Kant had attacked transcendental realism about space and time, which was the assumption necessary to generate the paradoxes. Following the Aesthetic, in the Analogies and elsewhere, Kant had shown how transcendental idealism could provide the sort of structure required to generate a genuine empirical world.⁵⁷ Finally, in the Antinomies, Kant exhibited the paradoxes following from transcendental realism, and showed how transcendental idealism prevents them from arising.⁵⁸

This reading also helps to make intelligible Kant's frustration with the Göttingen review. From Kant's perspective, nearly the whole *Critique* is, in one way or another, a refutation of Berkeley. This is not to say that Berkeley was Kant's primary target; the primary target is surely the Leibnizian-Wolffian

57 That Berkeley recognized the problem of giving structure to the world within his view, and developed a sophisticated solution to that problem based on his philosophy of language, is my central thesis in *Language and Structure*.

58 Kant does not use the same paradoxes as Berkeley, but it is reasonable to suppose that Kant believed the same strategy would apply to Berkeley's paradoxes.

tradition. However, Kant understands Berkeley as being a victim of precisely those errors the *Critique* sets out to correct.

2.3 The Thing in Itself

Several scholars have argued that Kant's doctrine of the thing in itself is the key difference between Kant and Berkeley,⁵⁹ and there is support for this claim in Kant's text (*Prol* 4:289). However, this interpretation does not make sense of Kant's claims about his differences from Berkeley.

First, Kant claims that Berkeley “demotes bodies to mere illusion” (*Cr* B71), whereas Kant can maintain that our body perceptions are veridical and not merely illusory. However, the Kantian thing in itself cannot be used to distinguish veridical perception from illusion, since it is unknowable (or, knowable only as it appears to us). Additionally, as James Van Cleve points out,⁶⁰ since (on Kant's view) we cannot know what things are like as they are in themselves, they may well be Berkeleian spirits or Leibnizian monads. Hence the existence of the thing in itself is not, by itself, a difference between Berkeley and Kant.

More importantly, this interpretation does not pay sufficient attention to Kant's own remarks about the interpretive errors contained in the Göttingen Review. Kant strenuously objects to the review's claim that the *Critique of Pure Reason* “is a system of transcendental ... idealism” (*Prol* 4:373-374). According to Kant, this is a mistake on par with regarding Euclid's *Elements* as a guide to drawing. Although he admits that a version of idealism “runs through [his] entire work,” he denies that this idealism “constitute[s] the soul of the system” (*Prol* 4:374). After clarifying the nature of transcendental (or, as he there prefers to put it, ‘critical’) idealism, Kant complains that the reviewer

⁵⁹ See, e.g., Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, 414-415; Emundts, “Kant's Critique,” 134-141.

⁶⁰ Van Cleve, *Problems*, 137; cf. Walker, “Idealism,” 110; Emundts, “Kant's Critique,” 135-137; Winkler, “Berkeley and Kant,” 169-170.

has completely missed the point because “he did not say a word about the possibility of synthetic cognition *a priori*, which was the real problem ... to which my *Critique* (just as here my *Prolegomena*) was entirely directed. The idealism ... was taken up into the system only as the sole means for solving this problem” (*Prol* 4:377). A difference over the status of things in themselves simply does not get at the ‘soul’ of Kant’s system, in the way Kant thinks his disagreement with Berkeley does.

On the other hand, the concept of extended substance and the manner in which we apply that concept in experience is part of the ‘soul’ of Kant’s system. In the *Prolegomena*, Kant emphasizes his differences with Berkeley over space and time: Berkeley takes them to be empirical, Kant *a priori*. Kant insists that only if space and time are *a priori* forms of intuition can we be assured of the application of geometry in experience (*Prol* 4:287-288). Further, it is only if subsistence-inherence is recognized among the *a priori* categories presupposed by the very possibility of experience that we can know that it is legitimately applied to experience. My interpretation therefore explains why Kant would regard the assimilation of his view to Berkeley’s in the Göttingen Review as implying that the author had completely misunderstood his system, despite the fact that Kant still held the idealistic views put forward in the Fourth Paralogism.

3. Kant’s Empirical Realism

Kant is an empirical realist insofar as he holds that there are extended substances given in experience about which we can make true assertions. Kant’s task is to show how the problematic notions of matter and space can be understood in unproblematic idealistic terms. In order to do this, however, these concepts must be given *a priori* and *imposed on* or *prescribed to* sensation, and this is a course of action Berkeley the empiricist cannot take.

This interpretation requires Kant to be a genuine idealist: his response to Descartes turns on the claim that assertions about empirical objects are made true (or false) by facts about our representations and our cognitive apparatus. At the same time, this interpretation sees Kant as radically different from Berkeley. The fundamental point is this: for both Descartes and Berkeley, experience consists solely of sensations. Sensations, like the experience of seeing white, are *unstructured*. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is an investigation of the structure of experience and the manner in which we gain knowledge from experience. A central thesis of the *Critique* is that experience itself exhibits robust structure, and hence is not exhausted by sensation. We do not only experience sensations of whiteness or greenness; we experience white and green *objects*, positioned in space and time, interacting causally according to laws.⁶¹ Because, on Kant's conception, experience is so rich, Kant can secure the existence and reality of objects located in space without the need to infer something beyond or behind experience.⁶²

4. Conclusion: A Kantian Narrative

According to Kant, Descartes assumed that if there were to be extended substances they would have to exist (and be extended substances) independent of my mind. However, I have unmediated epistemic access only to items that are dependent on my mind, namely, my own representations. As a result, the existence of extended substances must somehow be inferred from my representations. This is possible only if my representations can somehow be shown not to be deceptive, as, for instance, by showing that they are the product of a non-deceiving God. Thus Descartes ultimately takes the

61 Lucy Allais argues that “what [Kant] takes to be common to Descartes and Berkeley [is] that the objects of our immediate experience are in our mind” (*Manifest Reality*, 97). I have been arguing, on the contrary, that the common view of Descartes and Berkeley that Kant rejects is that the objects of our experience are merely qualities rather than substances possessing those qualities. These substances nevertheless exist only in our experiencing of them and hence in some (transcendental) sense exist only in our minds. Allais gives a characterization of the contrast closer to my own later in her book (*Manifest Reality*, 102).

62 Kant of course does infer something beyond experience, namely, the thing in itself. However, this plays no role in securing the existence and reality of objects in space.

existence of extended substances on faith.

Berkeley went farther than Descartes: he argued that, on the assumption that space and matter must be mind-independent if they are to exist, it can be shown conclusively that neither of them does exist, since both concepts contain contradictions. Thus what was doubted by Descartes was denied by Berkeley.

Kant saw himself as having finally discovered the key to resolving this difficulty: by recognizing space and time, along with the pure concepts and especially substance, as necessary conditions of human cognition, Kant could resolve the contradictions located by Berkeley and banish the doubt introduced by Descartes. The structure of our cognition guarantees that the objects of outer sense are extended substances.⁶³

63 I thank Edwin McCann and James Van Cleve for helpful comments on previous drafts of this paper.