

# Transcendental Idealism

## *An Overview*

Kant is always superbly methodical, persistent, regular and meticulous as he scales that great snowy mountain of thought concerning what is in the mind and what is outside the mind. It is, for modern climbers, one of the highest peaks of all.

Robert Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

### A. The Great Snowy Mountain

“The most important and difficult function of philosophy,” wrote Sir William Hamilton, is “to determine the shares to which the knowing subject and the object known may pretend in the total act of cognition.” This question looms as the great snowy mountain referred to above: how much of the world owes its existence or its character to the activity of human (or other) minds, and how much would be just as it is even in the absence of minds? On this question, philosophies run the gamut from pure idealisms that ascribe everything to the knowing subject to pure realisms that ascribe everything to the object known. There are, of course, many positions in between, including most famously the doctrine (espoused by Descartes, Locke, and others) of primary and secondary qualities.

Kant gave the names ‘things in themselves’ and ‘noumena’ to those objects or aspects of reality that do not depend on human cognition; he labeled as ‘appearances’ or ‘phenomena’ those aspects that do.<sup>1</sup> In Kantian terminology, then, our question may be put thus: how much of the world is phenomenal and how much noumenal? Kant’s own answer lies close to the idealist pole. He was not a total idealist, since he believed that the world does contain a noumenal element. But he placed many more of the world’s features on the phenomenal side of the line than either Descartes or Locke. In particular, space and time (and thus nearly all of Locke’s primary qualities) are for Kant merely phenomenal, space and time being “forms of intuition” rather than features of things in themselves. He also believed that certain structural features of the world (e.g., its being subject to Euclidean geometry and to deterministic causal

laws) were due to the human mind. Such is the view Kant called “transcendental idealism.” (See A26–28/B42–44 and *Prolegomena*, pp. 36–37.)<sup>2</sup>

As I interpret him, then, Kant’s transcendental idealism is idealism indeed, at least regarding everything in space and time. In so taking him, however, I am running against the tide of much contemporary commentary. Reading some commentators, one can begin to wonder whether Kant’s transcendental idealism has anything much to do with idealism at all. Here, for instance, is H.E. Matthews:

To say that space and spatial objects are ‘in us’ . . . is not to say that they are a particular type of thing, the type of thing which exists, as sensation does, only in an individual mind. It is rather to say that thinking in spatial terms, thinking of things as having a position in space, as being extended in space, as having spatial relations to other things, etc., is a purely *human* way of thinking, determined by the nature of human experience. . . .<sup>3</sup>

I am not sure what positive view Matthews means to attribute to Kant, but it appears at any rate that for him, Kant does *not* make objects in space dependent on human minds.

For another instance, here is Ralph Walker:

[T]he world of appearances [is] the world as we believe it to be on the basis of our canons of scientific procedure and theory-construction. . . . And transcendental idealism, which admits the existence of things in themselves while recognizing that our theory about the world is our theory and may not be the right one, does have the support of reflective common sense.<sup>4</sup>

As glossed by Walker, transcendental idealism seems to amount to little more than this: our view of the world is underdetermined by our empirical data and our methodological principles. There is nothing in this to which a realist need take exception.

A final instance is provided by Henry Allison.<sup>5</sup> Allison has developed an interpretation of Kant’s transcendental idealism according to which its key tenets—that things in themselves are not in space and time, and that objects must conform to our knowledge of them—explicitly turn out to be tautologies. The former is a tautology because “to consider things as they are in themselves (in the Kantian sense) means precisely to consider them apart from their relation to human sensibility and its *a priori* conditions,” and these conditions include space and time.<sup>6</sup> The latter is a tautology because “an object is now to be understood as whatever conforms to our knowledge.”<sup>7</sup> It need hardly be said that if transcendental idealism is a tautology, it is not idealism.

When I read Kant, I cannot help thinking to the contrary that he is an honest-to-goodness idealist regarding the entire world in space and time. Compare this definition of transcendental idealism:

By *transcendental idealism* I mean the doctrine that appearances are to be regarded as being, one and all, representations only, not things in

themselves, and that time and space are therefore only sensible forms of our intuition, not determinations given as existing by themselves, nor conditions of objects viewed as things in themselves.(A369)

One large feature of his philosophy that seems to me to be unworkable without idealism is the Copernican Revolution, to which I now turn.

## B. The Copernican Revolution

In a famous passage, Kant compares his philosophy to the central thought of Copernicus:

Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them *a priori*, by means of concepts, have, on this assumption, ended in failure. We must therefore make trial whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge. This would agree better with what is desired, namely, that it should be possible to have knowledge of objects *a priori*, determining something in regard to them prior to their being given. We should then be proceeding precisely on the lines of Copernicus' primary hypothesis. Failing of satisfactory progress in explaining the movements of the heavenly bodies on the supposition that they all revolved round the spectator, he tried whether he might not have better success if he made the spectator to revolve and the stars to remain at rest. (Bxvi–xvii; see also the note at Bxxii)

The pre-Copernican astronomers took the observed motions of the heavenly bodies to be their real motions (give or take a few epicycles). Copernicus, on the other hand, sought to explain the observed motions not by ascribing them to the bodies themselves as their real motions, but by supposing them to be apparent motions generated by the motion of the earthbound observer. Analogously, Kant seeks to account for many of the traits we observe in objects by supposing them to be traits at least partly due to the activity or constitution of the human spectator. He does this especially for traits that we can assign to objects *a priori*. Whenever we know *a priori* that an object O is F, O is F *because* we so apprehend it; we do not apprehend it as we do because it is that way. As Kant likes to put it, the object conforms to our knowledge rather than conversely. Such is Kant's Copernican Revolution in philosophy.

How is it possible for objects to owe any of their traits to our manner of cognizing them? The answer I find most satisfactory is this: the objects in question owe their very *existence* to being cognized by us. An object can depend on us for its *Sosein* (its being the way it is) only if it also depends on us for its *Sein* (its *being*, period). It is in this way that the Copernican Revolution is bound up with idealism. I say more about how this is so in the next section and elsewhere (especially in chapter 3).

Kant himself unhesitatingly draws idealist conclusions from his Copernican strategy. Immediately on the heels of the passage in which he

compares himself with Copernicus, he explicitly equates objects with “the *experience* in which alone, as given objects, they can be known.” And here is the moral he draws from his account in the *Prolegomena* of how we can “anticipate” or know *a priori* the geometrical properties of yet-to-be-encountered objects:

Should any man venture to doubt that these [space and time] are determinations adhering not to things in themselves, but to their relation to our sensibility, I should be glad to know how he can find it possible to know *a priori* how their intuition will be characterized before we have any acquaintance with them and before they are presented to us. Such, however, is the case with space and time. But this is quite comprehensible as soon as both count for nothing more than formal conditions of our sensibility, while the objects count merely as phenomena. . . . (*Prolegomena*, p. 31)

He draws a similar moral from his account of how certain *a priori* concepts—the categories—can be known in advance to characterize objects of experience:

If the objects with which our knowledge has to deal were things in themselves, we could have no *a priori* concepts of them. . . . But if, on the other hand, we have to deal only with appearances, it is not merely possible, but necessary, that certain *a priori* concepts should precede empirical knowledge of objects. For since a mere modification of our sensibility can never be met with outside us, the objects, as appearances, constitute an object which is merely in us.(A129)

The idealist implications of Kant’s accounts of *a priori* knowledge and *a priori* concepts are discussed at length in chapters 3 and 7.

### C. Appearances and Things in Themselves

Appearances, in Kant’s vocabulary, are the objects of intuition, intuition being one species of representation.<sup>8</sup> They include things seen, felt, or otherwise perceived; they also include objects of inner sense or introspection, such as tickles and pains. In dozens of passages, Kant tells us that appearances have no being apart from being represented. Here is a representative sampling of such passages:

[A]pppearances . . . must not be taken as objects capable of existing outside our power of representation.(A104)

Appearances do not exist in themselves but only relatively to the subject in which, so far as it has senses, they inhere.(B164)

It is a proposition which must indeed sound strange, that a thing can exist only in the representation of it, but in this case the objection falls, inasmuch as the things with which we are here concerned are not things in themselves, but appearances only, that is, representations.(A374–75; the passage occurs in a footnote attached to a sentence ending “nothing in [space] can count as real save only what is represented in it”)

The objects of experience, then, are *never* given *in themselves*, but only in experience, and have no existence outside it.(A492/B521)

Kant often puts this point by saying that appearances *are* representations, as in the words I have deleted from the A104 passage above: “[A]ppearances are themselves nothing but sensible representations. . . .” When he does so, I think it is useful to keep in mind the act-object (or ‘ing’-‘ed’) ambiguity of words like ‘representation’ (which is also possessed by words like *Vorstellung* in German). We should construe him as saying that appearances are represented that have no being apart from the representing of them.

Things in themselves, by contrast, are things that exist independently of human representation or cognition. They exist whether perceived or no and have whatever properties they do independently of us. Here are some representative passages:

[Things in themselves] exist independently of us and of our sensibility.(A369)

. . . real in themselves, that is, outside this advance of experience.(A492/B521)

For if we were thinking of a thing in itself, we could indeed say that it exists in itself apart from relation to our senses and possible experience.(A493/B522)

The fundamental tenet of Kant’s transcendental idealism is that things in space and time are appearances only, not things in themselves. With the contrast between appearances and things in themselves drawn as above, this amounts to the claim that things in space and time have no existence apart from being represented by us:

[E]verything intuited in space or time, and therefore all objects of any experience possible to us, are nothing but appearances, that is, mere representations. . . . This doctrine I entitle *transcendental idealism*. The realist in the transcendental meaning of this term, treats these modifications of our sensibility as self-subsistent things, that is treats mere representations as things in themselves.(A490–91/B518–19)

By *transcendental idealism* I mean the doctrine that appearances are to be regarded as being, one and all, representations only, not things in themselves, and that time and space are therefore only sensible forms of our intuition, not determinations given as existing by themselves, nor conditions of objects viewed as things in themselves.(A369)

Kant’s idealism comes to the fore many times in the ensuing chapters.

What I have said so far in this section suggests that things in themselves and appearances are two separate types of object, one type existing independently of human cognition and the other not. This is indeed the traditional interpretation of Kant, but it is not the view now dominant among Kant scholars. The prevailing view, sometimes called the “one-world” or “double-aspect” view, holds instead that there is one set of objects and two ways of consider-

ing them. Appearances are objects as we know them; things in themselves are these same objects as they are independent of our knowledge. Moreover, what properties these objects have depends on the standpoint from which they are being considered. Considered as appearances or in relation to our sensibility, objects have spatial and temporal form; considered in themselves, they lack spatial and temporal form. That, according to the double-aspect view, is what Kant means when he says that appearances are in space and time and things in themselves are not.

The double-aspect view has always seemed to me unfathomably mysterious. How is it possible for the properties of a thing to vary according to how it is considered? As I sit typing these words, I have shoes on my feet. But consider me apart from my shoes: so considered, am I barefoot? I am inclined to say no; consider me how you will, I am not now barefoot. But perhaps I am missing the point of the “considered apart from” locution. Perhaps to say that someone is barefoot considered apart from his shoes just means this: *if* he had no shoes, he would on that assumption be barefoot. Similarly, to say that things considered apart from our forms of sensibility (space and time) are nonspatial would be to say this: *if* things had no spatial characteristics, then they would have no spatial characteristics. That is evidently what the nonspatiality of things in themselves comes to in Allison’s view, mentioned above in section A: rightly understood, it is a tautology. I cannot help wondering: if transcendental idealism is a tautology, why did Kant write such a long book defending it?

Double-aspect theories do not deserve such short shrift, however, and receive a fuller hearing in the course of this book. Allison’s development of it is examined and criticized in chapter 10, section D; other possible developments are considered in chapter 10, section E, and appendices K and L.

#### D. Virtual Objects

The two-worlds interpretation in its traditional form treats appearances as existing things distinct from, though dependent on, mental representings. This conception of appearances as distinct existents gives rise to a number of problems. For one thing, some real existents, namely, appearances, would be in space and time, a result apparently ruled out by Kant’s arguments in the antinomies (as G.E. Moore pointed out).<sup>9</sup> For another, if appearances are entities distinct from the acts by which they are apprehended, it becomes difficult to see why they should be dependent on these acts for their existence. This difficulty is developed further below.

I recommend an interpretation of Kantian appearances that is different both from the one-world view and from the two-worlds view in its traditional form. According to this third interpretation, appearances (or phenomena) are not the same objects as noumena, considered from a specially human point of view; nor are they a second variety of objects existing alongside noumena. Instead, they are *virtual objects*. A virtual object is similar in some ways to what Brentano called an “intentional object,” but it is not to be conceived as having its own special kind of being. Instead, to say that a

virtual object of a certain sort (e.g., a patch of red) exists is shorthand for saying that a certain kind of representation occurs. In the case of a more complex or multifaceted virtual object (e.g., a house or a ship), to say that it exists it is to say that an entire rule-governed sequence of representations occurs or is in the offing.

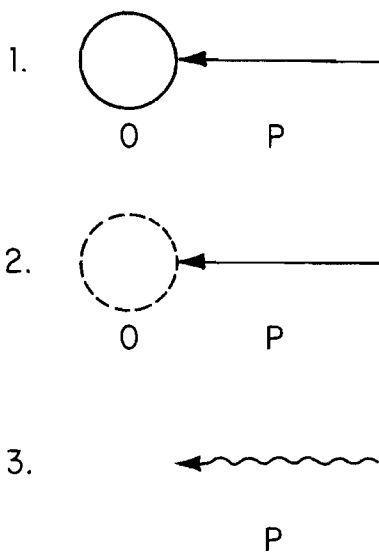
My use of the term ‘virtual object’ is inspired by Quine’s theory of virtual classes (and not, as some readers may have guessed, by computer-simulated “virtual reality”). In Quine’s theory, to say that  $y$  is a member of the class  $\{x:Fx\}$  is only to say that  $y$  is  $F$ , “so that there remains no hint of there being such a thing as the class  $\{x:Fx\}$ .”<sup>10</sup> In short, we may accord classes a nominal form of existence by ostensibly speaking of them and predicating various things of them, but we may also paraphrase away all mention of them. Virtual classes are thus a species of what Russell called “logical constructions” or “logical fictions.”<sup>11</sup> A paradigm of a logical construction in Russell’s sense is the shadow that is now creeping across my lawn: although we may truly say that there is such a shadow, so saying does not commit us ontologically to an aetherial two-dimensional entity that is literally on the move. The whole truth in what we say is exhausted by familiar facts about the sun, the lawn, and the intervening shade tree.

If Kantian appearances are virtual objects, then to say that someone is aware of an appearance of a certain sort is only to say that he is sensing or intuiting in a certain way. Ontologically, then, virtual-object theory is of a piece with adverbial theories of sensation, as developed by Ducasse and Chisholm.<sup>12</sup> The chief difference is that virtual-object theory admits objects back in as nominal subjects of predication. Thus, we may for convenience speak of a red object of Jones’s awareness when in strictness all that is happening is that Jones is sensing redly.<sup>13</sup>

One advantage of construing Kantian appearances as virtual objects is that it enables us to explain how their being can depend on their being perceived. How, after all, are we to understand the relation between an object  $O$  whose *esse* is *percipi* and the corresponding act of perception,  $P$ ? I see three main possibilities:

1.  $O$  and  $P$  are distinct but inseparable existents, as in many versions of the sense-datum theory that flourished from the 1920s through the 1940s: a sense datum is one thing, the sensing of it another, and the first cannot exist apart from the second.
2.  $O$  is not a normal existent at all, but an object that “intentionally inexists” in the act of perceiving it, as in the earlier views of Brentano.
3.  $O$  is a virtual object in the sense explained above, that is, a logical construction out of the states of perceivers: all talk ostensibly about  $O$  is paraphrasable away in favor of talk exclusively about  $P$ . To say what kind of object a given act of perceiving has is really to say in what *manner* the act takes place or what *kind* of act it is; it is to characterize the act intrinsically rather than relationally.

In the first case, perceiving is a relation to the existent; in the second, it is a relation to the in-existent; and in the third, it is not a relation at all. The three possibilities may be diagrammed as follows:



I find the first two models unsatisfactory. The first is untenable on the Humean ground that whatever items are distinct are also separable, or capable of existing apart from each other.<sup>14</sup> Putting the point with the help of the diagram, if I erase the act, why must I also erase the object? The first model affords no good answer to this question.<sup>15</sup>

The second model (unless it reduces to the third) is deeply mysterious. What is this status of “inexistence”? For the early Brentano, it was a special mode of being, “short of actuality but more than nothingness,” and lasting just as long as the object is apprehended.<sup>16</sup> For Meinong, it was *Aussersein*, which is not supposed to be a mode of being at all: on his view, cognitive acts can put us in relation to things that do not exist in any sense however broad.<sup>17</sup> Brentano’s view gives us the mystery of a second mode of being; Meinong’s, the mystery of relations to the nonexistent. Perhaps neither mystery is insuperable, but I would prefer to avoid them if I can.

In any event, it remains unclear to me how the second model enables us to make intelligible to ourselves *esse est percipi* status. Whatever mode of being or nonbeing it is that intentional objects are supposed to have, why could they not have it even when not perceived?<sup>18</sup>

I believe that the third model alone gives us a satisfactory way of understanding *esse est percipi* status. In this model, an appearance cannot exist unperceived for the same reason that a waltz cannot exist undanced: in either case, for the “object” of the act to exist *is* for the act to take place in a certain way (as indicated by the undulations in the arrow).

I note that Brentano, who introduced (or revived) the notion of intentional inexistence, seems in his later writings to have moved from the second model to the third. This is suggested by the following quotations: “‘There is something which is the object of thought’ may be equated with ‘There is something which thinks’”;<sup>19</sup> “[i]ts *being* an object, however, is only the linguistic correlate of the person experiencing it *having* it as object. . . .”<sup>20</sup>



A further advantage of construing Kantian appearances as virtual objects is that it lets us explain how objects can conform to our cognition of them, as required by the Copernican Revolution. To bring this out, I now call attention to a further important feature of logical constructions. If As are logical constructions out of Bs, not only does the *existence* of any A consist in some fact's holding about the Bs, but also the possession of any *properties* by an A consists in the possession of certain properties (not necessarily the same ones) by the relevant Bs. Russell and Ayer sometimes put this by saying that every true statement about the As must be translatable into an equivalent statement just about the Bs;<sup>21</sup> the point is also often put by saying that the As are reducible to the Bs. But requiring translatability or reducibility is requiring more than is needed for present purposes.<sup>22</sup> The essential point is simply that every truth about an A must be derivable from some truths about the Bs. This point is important at a number of places in this book. Its importance just now is that it gives us a sense in which objects must "conform to our knowledge": as constructions out of our cognitive states, objects must be such that every truth about them follows from certain truths about our cognitive states.

If all objects in space and time are appearances, and if appearances are virtual objects in the sense I have explained, it follows that all objects in space and time are logical constructions out of perceivers and their states. That makes Kant a *phenomenalist*, that is, one who holds that all truths about physical things are derivable from truths about states of perceivers. Phenomenalism is now unfashionable, and so likewise is the attribution of it to Kant. Nonetheless, I show below that there are several important places in which an explicit commitment to phenomenalism plays an essential role in Kant's philosophizing. These places include the Transcendental Deduction's account of an 'object', the proof of the Second Analogy of Experience, and the solution to the Mathematical Antinomies. Unlike some phenomenologists, however, Kant is also a *noumenalist*: he believes there are some objects, the things in themselves, that resist phenomenalist reduction. If nothing else, there are the cognitive acts and agents on which phenomena depend, for these can hardly be supposed to exist only as the virtual objects of further acts.

As I have portrayed matters so far, virtual objects exist only in a manner of speaking; to say that they exist is just shorthand for saying certain things about the more basic entities out of which they are constructions. We would not quantify over virtual objects in an ontologically perspicuous language (which is why Russell sometimes calls his logical constructions "logical fictions"). But there is another conception according to which objects of the kind I am deeming "virtual" or "nominal" exist as entities in their own right. Although they exist only in virtue of certain facts about relatively more basic entities, they *do* exist, and it is legitimate to quantify over them. Such is Ernest Sosa's conception of a *supervenient entity*, which he illustrates with the paradigm of a snowball.<sup>23</sup> Sosa would say that when a quantity of snow is packed and rounded in a certain way, a snowball thereby comes into being: it is a genuinely new item under the sun, distinct from the snow of which it is composed, even though its existence consists entirely in the snow's being appropriately shaped. Many of the logical principles that govern virtual objects also govern supervenient entities; most important, if a supervenient entity O exists and has property F,

its existing and its having F must each derive necessarily from certain properties of or relations among the more basic entities on which the existence of O supervenes. The chief difference between the two conceptions is that whereas virtual objects exist only in a manner of speaking, supervenient entities exist as “ontological emergents” over which we are free to quantify.

Why should we regard Kantian appearances as virtual objects rather than supervenient entities? In many contexts it does not much matter which way we regard them. In others, however, Kant’s purposes are better served by the virtual-object approach. I note these as they come up. In the meantime, my language in this book generally favors the constructionist construal.<sup>24</sup>

A word is in order about the provenance of my views. For the conception of Kantian appearances as intentional objects, existing only in the representation of them, I am indebted to work by Wilfrid Sellars, Phillip Cummins, and Richard Aquila.<sup>25</sup> I do not know, however, whether these authors would take the further step of construing intentional objects as logical constructions out of conscious states. In Aquila’s case, I suspect the answer is no; some of the things he says suggests instead a view like our model 2 above. For example, he says that the object of an intuiting might or might not exist. Suppose I am aware of a tree at  $t_1$  that is atomized at  $t_2$ , simultaneously with the onset of a hallucination that leaves the intrinsic character of my experience unchanged. I gather Aquila would say that I am aware of the same object all along, and that it exists at  $t_1$  but not at  $t_2$ . To say this is to quantify over objects in a way that makes them not merely virtual.

### E. Realism, Idealism, and Antirealism

Realism has been defined by one author as the view that “material objects or external realities exist apart from our knowledge or consciousness of them.”<sup>26</sup> Idealism, the main traditional rival of realism, has been defined by another as the view that “being is dependent on the knowing of it.”<sup>27</sup> ‘Knowing’ as it occurs in such definitions is ambiguous, and corresponding to its two meanings are two importantly different things that can be meant by saying that reality does (or does not) depend on the knowing of it. ‘Knowing’ can refer to an act of awareness, acquaintance, or apprehension, whose object (if it has one) is not necessarily propositional. It can also refer, as is more common nowadays, to the knowledge of a fact or the knowledge that something is so. Knowledge in the latter sense is commonly thought to have at least three conditions: belief, truth, and evidence. Furthermore, when someone holds that a certain fact depends on being known or knowable, it is generally dependence on the third component, the evidential component, that is meant.

We may thus distinguish two principal things that might be meant by saying reality depends on being known. It could mean, on the one hand, that the constituents of reality depend for their existence on acts of awareness, on their being apprehended by a conscious mind. It could mean, on the other hand, that any facts that obtain depend for their obtaining on their being known or knowable, hence on there being evidence for them. I shall refer to these two dimensions of dependence as mind-dependence and evidence-dependence, respectively.

Note that in my usage, minds themselves are not necessarily mind-dependent. Although it is trivially true that minds would not exist unless there were minds, it does not automatically follow that they would not exist unless they were *apprehended* by minds.<sup>28</sup>

Mind-dependence and evidence-dependence do not necessarily go together. Entities can be mind-dependent even though facts about them are not evidence-dependent, and facts can be evidence-dependent even though the entities that figure in them are not mind-dependent. To illustrate the first of these possibilities, let us stipulate that *sensa* are entities that do not exist unless someone senses them, so they are mind-dependent. But the following facts are at least evidence-*transcendent* (i.e., there could not be *conclusive* evidence for them) and arguably also evidence-*independent* (i.e., they could obtain in the absence of *any* evidence for them, or at least in the absence of evidence sufficient for knowledge):

A certain sensum occurs fourteen billion years after the Big Bang.

A red sensum of mine is contemporaneous with a green sensum of yours.

Given the round, pinkish *sensa* that are occurring now, if biting-*sensa* were to occur also, pomegranatey-tasting *sensa* would follow.

There is a mental history containing an infinite sequence of *sensa* in which each red is followed by a blue and each blue by a red.

*Sensa* of winning at Wimbledon once occurred in a dream that was never reported and is now irrecoverable in memory.

The first item might be thought not to count, since it involves a relation to something that is not a sensum. But the rest of them are about *sensa* exclusively, and it is arguable that each of them could be true in the absence of evidence sufficient for knowing it to be true.

To appreciate the converse possibility, evidence-dependence without mind-dependence, we need only note that some contemporary philosophers combine verificationism (there are no facts without evidence for them) with physicalism (all facts, including evidential facts, are physical facts). Quine's views on the indeterminacy of translation perhaps afford one example of this combination. Another example would be the view that there are no facts about the past unless there are current records or traces attesting to them, but that such records or traces need not involve consciousness. Indeed, preoccupation with evidence leads some philosophers into a behaviorism that effectively excludes the very existence of consciousness. So, the view that the facts in some domain are evidence-dependent does not necessarily imply that the entities that are the constituents of those facts exist only if they are apprehended by some consciousness. For one last example, this one not involving physicalism, consider a philosophy of mathematics that makes mathematical truth depend on proof without making mathematical objects depend on being apprehended.<sup>29</sup>

So, we have at least two things that can be meant by the dependence of reality on our knowledge of it: dependence of objects on being apprehended, and dependence of facts on there being evidence for them. Traditional idealism is the view that objects are mind-dependent; contemporary antirealism is more often the view that facts are evidence-dependent.<sup>30</sup> Two leading advocates of

the new antirealism are Hilary Putnam and Michael Dummett, both of whom argue for a strong tie between truth and evidence. Perhaps both of them could be characterized as believing that *truth supervenes on evidence*, in the following sense: (a) nothing is ever true unless there is evidence for it, and evidence moreover of such a sort that (b) nothing could be backed by such evidence without being true. In Dummett's case, the emphasis is on clause (a); his bugaboo is truth without evidence. That is why he makes his test for realism the principle of bivalence: do you insist that one of a pair of contradictories must be true even in cases where there is no evidence for either? In Putnam's case, the emphasis is on clause (b); his bugaboo is evidence (or at any rate, ideal evidence) without truth. So, in his case, the test for realism is whether you admit that we might all be brains in vats, possessing a theory that is "epistemically ideal" but false nonetheless.<sup>31</sup>

Some contemporary philosophers have seen in Kant important anticipations of antirealist views. Putnam has suggested that Kant may have been the first philosopher who was not a "metaphysical realist" and has ascribed to Kant elements of the antirealist view he calls "internal realism." Meanwhile, some followers of Dummett have interpreted Kant's transcendental idealism as a species of Dummettian antirealism. The connections between Kant's ideas and those of contemporary antirealists are interesting and worth examining; I turn to that task in chapter 13. For now I will just say that on the whole I find Kant to be more an old-fashioned idealist than a new-fangled antirealist.

## Notes

### Chapter 1

1. Sometimes Kant distinguishes the meanings of the terms 'thing in itself' and 'noumenon'; see chapter 10, section A. For the most part, however, I use the terms interchangeably, as Kant himself and many of his commentators often do.

2. Page references in this style refer to Norman Kemp Smith's translation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), "A" indicating the first and "B" the second edition, and to Lewis White Beck's translation of Kant's *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950).

3. H.E. Matthews, "Strawson on Transcendental Idealism," *Philosophical Quarterly*, 19 (1969), 204–20; reprinted in *Kant on Pure Reason*, edited by Ralph C.S. Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 132–49.

4. Ralph C.S. Walker, *Kant* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 125 and 135.

5. Henry E. Allison, "The Non-spatiality of Things in Themselves for Kant," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 14 (1976), 313–21, and *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983).

6. Allison, "Non-spatiality of Things in Themselves," p. 319. To make his case that it is analytic that things in themselves are not in space and time, Allison would also have to show that it is analytic that space and time are forms of human sensibility. I do not think Kant so regards the matter.

7. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, p. 30.

8. "The undetermined object of an empirical intuition is entitled *appearance*" (A20/B34); "an object of sensible intuition, that is, an appearance" (Bxxvi).

9. G.E. Moore, *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Collier Books, 1962; reprint of 1953 edition), ch. 9.

10. See W.V. Quine, *Set Theory and Its Logic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard

University Press, 1969; revised edition), p. 16. Peter van Inwagen also uses the term ‘virtual object’ in the sense in which I am using it here on p. 112 of *Material Beings* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990).

11. The *locus classicus* for Russell’s views on logical constructions is his 1918 series of lectures on logical atomism, published as “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism” in *Logic and Knowledge*, edited by Robert C. Marsh (London: Allen & Unwin, 1956), pp. 175–281.

12. Roderick M. Chisholm, *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1957), chs. 8–10, and C.J. Ducasse, *Nature, Mind, and Death* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1951), especially pp. 259–60 and 284.

13. There are hints of an adverbial theory in Kant’s frequent references to appearances as “modifications,” as in the following: “For since a mere modification of our sensibility can never be met with outside us, the objects, as appearances, constitute an object which is merely in us” (A129).

14. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, I.i.7. As I have stated it, Hume’s principle is open to the objection that a whole and any of its parts are distinct yet not capable of separate existence. I would therefore restate the principle thus: if two concrete things are not only distinct but discrete (having no part in common), then it is possible for either to exist in the absence of the other.

15. Indeed, in his “Refutation of Idealism” of 1903 (*Mind*, 12, 433–53), G.E. Moore insists on the act-object distinction precisely in order to secure the possibility of objects of awareness whose *esse* is not *percipi*.

16. R.M. Chisholm, “Intentionality,” in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), vol. 4, pp. 201–4.

17. Alexius Meinong, “The Theory of Objects,” in *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology*, edited by R.M. Chisholm (New York: Free Press, 1960), pp. 76–117, esp. sec. 4.

18. As Meinong observes: “[I]t is no more necessary to an object that it be presented (to the mind) in order not to exist than it is in order for it to exist” (*Theory of Objects*, p. 83).

19. Franz Brentano, *The True and the Evident*, edited and translated by Roderick M. Chisholm et al. (New York: Humanities Press, 1966), p. 68.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

21. For Russell, to say that entities of a certain sort are logical constructions is to say that terms purportedly referring to them are incomplete symbols, and one mark of an incomplete symbol is that sentences containing it can be translated into other sentences in which it no longer occurs. See Russell, *Logic and Knowledge*, p. 262. For Ayer’s views on logical constructions and translation, see *Language, Truth, and Logic* (New York: Dover, 1952; reprint of 1946 edition), ch. 3.

22. This is so for two reasons. First, we need not insist on *two-way* implication or mutual entailment between each A-statement and some B-statement, as would be involved in reducibility. It is enough that each A-statement is implied by some B-statement. Second, we need not insist that the implication in question hold solely in virtue of meanings, as the term “translation” suggests. It is enough that the implication hold necessarily, whether by dint of meanings or no.

23. Ernest Sosa, “Subjects among Other Things,” in *Philosophical Perspectives*, edited by James Tomberlin (Atascadero, Calif.: Ridgeview, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 155–87.

24. I pause, though, to note an advantage of the supervenient entity construal: it more literally accommodates the talk of appearances as entities dependent on being perceived. If appearances are virtual objects, then strictly speaking we cannot say that an appearance is an entity that would not exist

unless it were perceived, since strictly speaking there is no *it*. But we can say this: there being an appearance entails the occurrence of certain perceptions.

25. Wilfrid Sellars interprets Kant's distinction between things in themselves and appearances as the distinction between things having "formal reality" and things having "objective reality" (in the medieval and Cartesian senses of these terms). Thus, things in themselves exist *simpliciter* while appearances exist only as contents of thought and awareness. See his *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), ch. 2, and "Kant's Transcendental Idealism," in *Proceedings of the Ottawa Congress on Kant*, edited by P. Laberge, F. Duchesneau, and B.E. Morrisey (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1976), pp. 165–81. Similar interpretations are advanced and illuminatingly discussed by Phillip Cummins in "Kant on Outer and Inner Intuition," *Nous*, 2 (1968), 271–92, and Richard Aquila, *Representational Mind: A Study of Kant's Theory of Knowledge* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1983), especially ch. 4. For Aquila's views, see also his "Things in Themselves: Intentionality and Reality in Kant," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 61 (1979), 293–307.

26. R.J. Hirst, "Realism," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), vol. 7, p. 77.

27. This is R.B. Perry's "cardinal principle of idealism" as quoted in Curtis Brown, "Internal Realism: Transcendental Idealism," in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 12, edited by Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling, Jr., and Howard K. Wettstein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 145–55.

28. Definitions get tricky at this point. I said above (n. 24) that virtual objects are mind-dependent in the sense that their existence entails the occurrence of cognitive acts. On a Cartesian view of the mind, according to which a mind must be thinking at every moment at which it exists, minds would be mind-dependent in just this sense. If we said 'x is mind-dependent iff x would not exist unless there were a cognitive act *apprehending x*,' then perhaps even Cartesian minds would no longer be mind-dependent. But then, strictly speaking, virtual objects would not be mind-dependent either, since they are not in the range of our quantifiable variables.

29. Michael Dummett cites this as a possible view in *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 231.

30. Another important contemporary form of antirealism does away with *facts* altogether, holding that there is nothing in the world to make sentences in the target area evaluable as either true or false. Expressivist or noncognitivist theories about ethical discourse are one paradigm here. For a canvassing of possibilities, see Simon Blackburn, *Spreading the Word* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), ch. 5, and Crispin Wright, *Truth and Objectivity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 1–7.

31. For Dummett's views, see *Truth and Other Enigmas*, especially the preface and essay 10, and *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991). For Putnam's views, see "Realism and Reason," in *Meaning and the Moral Sciences* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 123–40, and *Reason, Truth, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). It is a seldom-noted point of commonality that both philosophers employ a "BIV" test for realism: do you accept Bivalence, and do you allow that we might all be Brains In Vats?

## Chapter 2

1. Gottlob Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, translated by J.L. Austin (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1980), p. 3.