

## Chapter 2

# The Subjective Conditions of Objectivity

### 2.1 From the Early Until the Late 1760s

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

#### 2.1.1 Kant's Theory of Space

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

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

<sup>2</sup> *Gedanken von der wahren Schätzung der lebendigen Kräfte und Beurtheilung der Beweise, deren sich Herr von Leibniz und andere Mechaniker in dieser Streitsache bedient haben, nebst einigen vorhergehenden Betrachtungen, welche die Kraft der Körper überhaupt betreffen.* (AA 01: 1–181).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 2.1.2 *The Possibility and Limits of Metaphysics*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



### 2.1.4 *The Distinction Between the Real and the Ideal*

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

### 2.1.5 *The Internal Order and Coherence of Nature*

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>43</sup> The important distinction here is between a law or a function and a thing.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

manner in which the subject is affected by the object, then it is easy to see how it<sup>79</sup> is in conformity with this object, namely, as an effect accords with its cause, and it is easy to see how this modification of our mind can *represent* something, that is, have an object.” (AA 10: 130).<sup>80</sup> On the other hand the relation of intellectual representations to an object is much more problematic. In this regard he analyzes two alternatives. If the understanding would either create the object (*intellectus archetypus*) or if it could intuit it directly (*intellectus ectypus*), then there would be no problem to conceive of the relation of an intelligible representation to an object.<sup>81</sup> But our intellect neither creates its object nor can it intuit it independently of sensibility. Kant accepts the claim that pure concepts of the understanding “have their origin in the nature of the soul” and since “they are neither caused by the object”, as sensible representations are, “nor do they bring the object itself into being”, their relation to an object is left open. Thus the question is

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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<sup>83</sup> Cf. *Refl* 4473 dated to 1772 and *Refl* 4634 dated to 1772–1773.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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