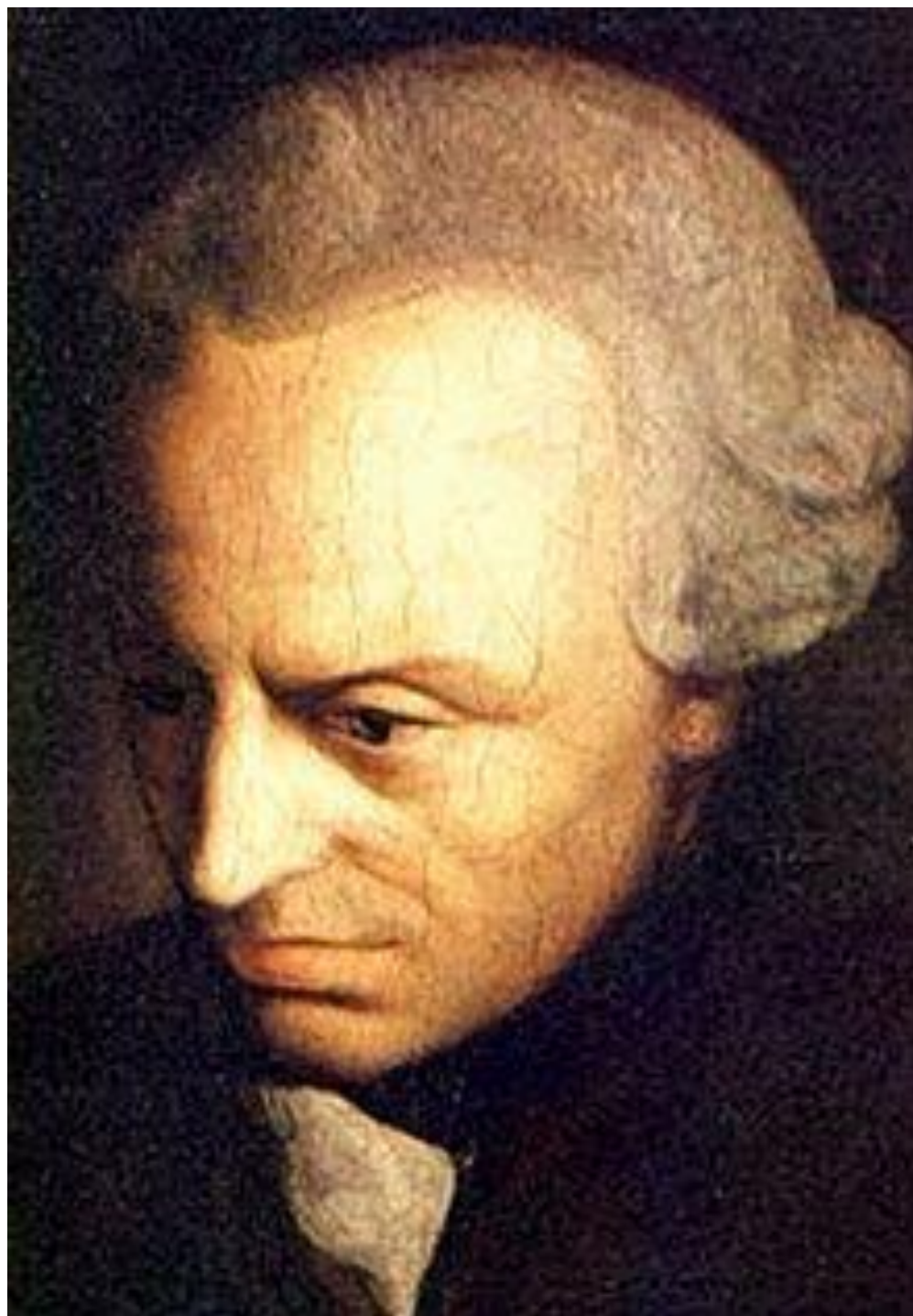


The Limits of Sense and Reason: A Line-By-Line Critical Commentary on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

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The Structure of the *Critique of Pure Reason*

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CPR TEXT Bii/GW91 The Motto

Baco de Verulam

Instauratio Magna. Praefatio

De nobis ipsis silemus: De re autem, quae agitur petimus, ut homines eam non Opinionem, sed Opus esse cogitent; ac pro certo habeant non Sectae nos alicuius, aut Placiti, sed utilitatis et amplitudinis humanae fundamenta moliri. Deinde ut suis commodis aequi . . . in commune consulant ... et ipsi in partem veniant. Praeterea ut bene sperent, neque Instauracionem nostram ut quiddam infinitum et ultra mortale fingant, et animo concipiant; quum revera sit infiniti erroris finis et terminus legitimus.^a

^a This motto was added in the second edition.

Bacon of Verulam

The Great Instauration. Preface

Of our own person we will say nothing. But as to the subject matter with which we are concerned, we ask that men think of it not as an opinion but as a work; and consider it erected not for any sect of ours, or for our good pleasure, but as the foundation of human utility and dignity. Each individual equally, then, may reflect on it himself ... for his own part ... in the common interest. Further, each may well hope from our instauration that it claims nothing infinite, and nothing beyond what is mortal; for in truth it prescribes only the end of infinite errors, and this is a legitimate end.

COMMENTARY ON Bii/GW91 The Motto

The first or 1781 (A) edition of the CPR didn't include a motto.

But the second or 1787 (B) edition includes a Latin quotation from the preface of Francis Bacon's *Great Instauration (Instauratio Magna)* of 1620, which in turn contains the *Novum Organum* as its second part.

The term "instauration" means "restoration" or "renewal."

So Bacon had explicitly and self-consciously initiated a restoration or renewal of what he took to be real (namely, authentic, serious) philosophy by rejecting what he took to be the "infinite errors" of Scholastic metaphysics, by turning it away from what could

exist only beyond what is knowable by means of the human senses, by turning philosophy *towards* the empirical facts, the finite, and the mortal, and by proposing an essentially *experimental* method for philosophy and science.

That Bacon's philosophical and scientific method is aggressively and reductively inductive, and a mere assembly and categorization of classes of particular facts, is *not* what is important for Kant in this context.

Kant's philosophical and scientific method not only includes Baconian induction and empirical evidence about particular facts, but also projective generalization from the particulars (that is, classical Empiricist induction), logical deduction, abduction (that is, inference to the best explanation, which, arguably, is a special form of synthetic a priori reasoning using subjunctive conditionals), and also special forms of non-empirical, non-logical inference he dubs "transcendental deduction" and "transcendental proof" (which in turn, arguably, are special forms of abduction).

In any case, the point of the motto is to establish the following analogy: As *The Great Instauration* is to Scholastic metaphysics, so the *Critique of Pure Reason* is to classical metaphysics, especially including classical Rationalist metaphysics.

Both Bacon and Kant are proposing a restorative, renewing, and indeed revolutionary *anthropocentric turn* in philosophy.

Where Kant differs sharply from Bacon is via Kant's further thesis that, by means of this anthropocentric turn a new and essentially *mitigated* form of rationalist metaphysics is possible, a *real* metaphysics (as opposed to an *empty* and *illusory* metaphysics, which,, in turn, would also be *inauthentic* and *superficial*), that he dubs "transcendental idealism," and which, if true, both fully incorporates the Baconian, Lockean, Berkeleyan, and Humean empiricist critique of classical metaphysics, whether Scholastic, Rationalist, or otherwise, *and also* equally fully incorporates a counterpoint rationalist critique of classical Empiricism.

This fundamental dual theme of Kant's anthropocentric turn and his mitigated rationalism or real metaphysics, aka transcendental idealism, is developed and re-played in many subtle variations throughout the CPR.

The same dual theme is made autobiographically significant by the important fact that Kant *himself* was a fully committed classical Rationalist metaphysician in the tradition of Leibniz and Christian Wolff, during his Pre-Critical period.

Kant's Pre-Critical period, in turn, runs from the 1740s until at least the middle-to-late 1760s or the early 1770s, when, by his own retrospective testimony in 1783, he was suddenly jolted out of his Leibnizian and Wolffian dreams by a skeptical Humean Empiricist wake-up call:

I openly confess that my remembering David Hume was the very thing which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction. I was far from following him in the conclusions at which he arrived ... [But if] we start from a well-founded, but undeveloped, thought which another has bequeathed to us, we may well hope by continued reflection to advance further than the acute man to whom we owe the first spark of light. (Pro 4: 260)

It is reasonable to think that this particular wake-up call happened in July 1771, when Kant would have read a German translation of the "Conclusion" section of book I of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), published in the *Königsberger gelehrte Zeitung*, entitled "Nachdenken eines Skeptikers" ("Night Thoughts of a Skeptic").

In the "Conclusion," Hume re-states the main claims of his skeptical Empiricist analysis of the concepts of causation and causal necessity.

Kant's reading knowledge of English was fairly limited, so it seems very likely that he never read either the *Treatise* or the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) themselves, although he must have originally encountered Hume's ideas and writings in the 1750s or 60s, in translation,¹ in order to be able to "remember" them in 1771.

It is also quite possible that Kant's memory of Hume was further jogged by reading a 1772 German translation of the Scottish common sense philosopher James Beattie's highly influential 1770 *Essay on The Nature and Immutability of Truth*, in which Beattie carefully describes and then vigorously attacks Hume's skeptical Empiricist analysis of causation and causal necessity.

In any case, in the *Treatise* and again in the first *Enquiry*, Hume defends and develops three crucial theses, each of which importantly influenced Kant, whether positively or negatively, after 1771:

(i) all human cognition is strictly limited as to its content, truth, and epistemic scope by sensory experience,

(ii) the class of all judgments is exhaustively divided into those concerning "relations of ideas" (that is, necessary a priori definitional or stipulative truths, for example, truths of

logic or mathematics) and those concerning “matters of fact” (that is, contingent a posteriori experimental truths, for example, truths of natural science), and

(iii) all our judgments concerning supposedly necessary causal relations in fact refer exclusively to experience and matters of fact, and their content and justification is determined solely by non-rational “custom” or “habit,” not reason.

As we will see, in the CPR, Kant fully accepts a carefully qualified version of Hume’s thesis (i), namely:

(i*) all human cognition begins in causally-triggered sense experience, but at the same time neither the form nor the content of human cognition is reducible to or determined by causally-triggered sense experience and/or matters of fact, that is, the form and the content of human cognition is necessarily underdetermined by all actual or possible sense experience and/or contingent facts, that is, the form and content of human cognition necessarily is, at least in part, *non-empirical or a priori*,

and also firmly rejects Hume’s theses (ii) and (iii).

In another fundamentally important and closely-related autobiographical remark in the *Reflexionen*, Kant says that “the year ’69 gave me great light” (R 5037, 18: 69).

By this, I think he means that in that particular year—falling exactly midway between his seminal 1768 essay “Concerning the Ultimate Ground of the Differentiation of Directions in Space” (aka “Directions in Space”) and his breakthrough 1770 Inaugural Dissertation, “On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World” (aka “The Inaugural Dissertation”)—he discovered and formulated the revolutionary three-part *transcendentally idealistic* real-metaphysical doctrine that

(i) all the proper objects of a rational but also specifically *human* capacity for cognition are only

manifest, apparent, or phenomenal objects of the human senses—namely, “appearances” (*Erscheinungen*)—and never non-manifest, non-apparent, essentially non-relational or monad-like, noumenal objects—namely, “things-in-themselves” (*Dinge an sich*),

(ii) the ontic structures of manifest, apparent, or phenomenal physical spacetime *necessarily conform to* the innate and non-empirical mentalistic structure of the rational human cognitive capacity for sensory intuition, and

(iii) the ontic structures of all manifest, apparent, or phenomenal natural objects and states-of-affairs, together with all the causal-dynamic relations between manifest, apparent, or phenomenal natural objects and states-of-affairs also *necessarily conform to* the innate and non-empirical mentalistic structure of the rational human cognitive capacities for conceptualization, judgment, understanding or thought, and logical reasoning.

I will call thesis (i) **The Cognitive Idealism Thesis**, and the conjunction of theses (ii) and (iii), **The Conormity Thesis**.

It is crucial to note that **The Cognitive Idealism Thesis** is substantively different from both Berkeley's *metaphysical or dogmatic idealism thesis*, which says that

(i) matter is impossible, and

(ii) necessarily, everything is

either (iia) an idea in a conscious mind

or (iib) a conscious mind,

and also from Descartes's *skeptical or problematic idealism thesis*, which says:

possibly nothing exists outside my own conscious states.

In sharp contrast to Berkeley's metaphysical or dogmatic idealism, then,

(i) Kant's cognitive idealism does *not* apply to *all* objects whatsoever,

(ii) Kant's cognitive idealism does *not* say that matter is impossible, and

(iii) Kant's cognitive idealism does *not* say that all the proper objects of all human cognition are *nothing but ideas, that is, objects existing merely in "inner sense."*

Correspondingly, in sharp contrast to Descartes's skeptical or problematic idealism, Kant's cognitive idealism does *not* imply that it is possible that nothing exists outside my conscious states, namely, my inner sense.

Sharply on the contrary to both Berkeley and Cartesian idealism, as we will see much later in the B edition's "Refutation of Idealism," Kant's cognitive idealism in fact implies

that, assuming the fact of my self-consciousness of my own conscious states, namely, of my own inner sense, then necessarily, something really and truly exists outside my conscious states in space.

Now, what does Kant mean by “appearances” or *Erscheinungen*?

In her 1947 novel, *Manservant and Maidservant*, Ivy Compton-Burnett makes an extremely profound observation about the concept of *appearances*:

*Appearances are not held to be a clue to the truth. But we seem to have no other.*²

As I read her, she is saying three philosophically important things:

(i) that the concept of *appearances* is ambiguous,

(ii) that according to the first or “falsidical” concept of appearances, the very idea of “an appearance” means *a mere seeming*, which is consistent with *falsity* and *illusion*, and

(iii) that according to the second or “veridical” concept of appearances, the very idea of an appearance means that we have no clue to the truth about reality *except* appearances and that appearances *are* the truth about reality.

More precisely, according to the second or “veridical” concept of appearances, the very idea of an appearance means that things appear to be a certain way, *precisely because they really and truly are that way*.

For example, if I am Sherlock Holmes and have just solved a very subtle case and I say by way of conclusion, “it appears that Professor Moriarity is the culprit,” *then Professor Moriarity really and truly is the culprit*.

But even less dramatically, generally speaking, necessarily, under ordinary circumstances, if Tom or Dick or Mary appears at the door, *then Tom or Dick or Mary really and truly is at the door*.

Appearances that fall under this second or “veridical” concept of appearances are what I call *authentic appearances*.

In ordinary German, the term that corresponds to the first or “falsidical” concept of appearances is *Schein*.

Correspondingly, then, as we will see in what follows, Kant's term *Erscheinungen* is a philosophical technical term that means *authentic appearances*.

For Kant, authentic appearances reveal the empirically real, manifestly real world to rational human cognizers.

Therefore, Kant's transcendental idealism is also an *empirical realism* or *manifest realism*:

*[The] empirical realist grants to matter, as appearance, a reality which need not be inferred, but is immediately perceived (**unmittelbar wahrgenommen**). (CPR A371)*

*Every outer perception ... immediately proves (beweiset unmittelbar) something real in space, or rather [what is represented through outer perception] is itself the real; to that extent, empirical realism is beyond doubt, i.e., to our outer intuitions (**Anschauungen**) there corresponds something real in space. (CPR A375)*

Granting all that as philosophical backdrop, what then would justify Kant's asserting **The Idealism Thesis** and **The Conformity Thesis**, that is, what then would justify his asserting the truth of transcendental idealism?

I think we can, charitably and plausibly, philosophically reconstruct his basic argument for transcendental idealism in the following way.

Suppose, as initial assumptions,

- (i) the minimal Empiricist assumption that all human cognition begins in causally-triggered sense-experience, and
- (ii) the minimal Rationalist assumption that we rational human animals actually cognitively possess some non-empirical or a priori mental representations, and that we also have authentic non-empirical or a priori knowledge of some objectively necessary truths, for example, in logic, mathematics, and metaphysics.

For expository convenience, let's call all non-empirical or a priori mental representations, including a priori beliefs and a priori knowledge, "a priori cognitions."

What then rules out the skeptical possibility that the correspondence between the abstract, non-empirical objects and truth-making states-of-affairs on the one hand, and our a priori cognitions on the other, is nothing but a massive coincidence?

And if it *is* a massive coincidence, then the correspondence between our a priori cognitions and their abstract, non-empirical objects or truth-making states-of-affairs is merely *accidental* or *contingent*, and could just as easily have *failed* to obtain.

Again for expository convenience, let's call this deep skeptical worry *The Problem of Cognitive-Semantic Luck*.

Now one possible solution to The Problem of Cognitive-Semantic Luck is that the abstract, non-empirical objects and states-of-affairs *naturally cause* our a priori cognitions.

That is the *classical Empiricist* or Lockean-Humean solution.

The basic problem with the classical Empiricist solution, however, is that it is doubly incompatible with the initial assumption that the cognitions caused by object and states of affairs are non-empirical or a priori, both in the sense that all cognitions that are manifestly really naturally caused must be empirical or a posteriori, and also in the sense that abstract, non-empirical objects and states-of-affairs, which do *not* exist as embedded inside spacetime, cannot enter into apparent, phenomenal, or manifestly real natural causal relations with human cognizers, who *do* exist as embedded inside spacetime.

In this respect, Kant's recognition of The Problem of Cognitive-Semantic Luck is a substantive anticipation of what 20th and 21st century epistemologists and philosophers of mathematics and logic call "Benacerraf's Dilemma."³

Another pair of possible solutions to The Problem of Cognitive-Semantic Luck are that an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good or non-deceiving God creates either

(i) a direct non-causal cognitive relation of *acquaintance* (*kennen*), or

(ii) an indirect non-relational *pre-established harmony*,

between the abstract, non-empirical referents and truth-makers of a priori cognitions on the one hand, and those a priori cognitions on the other.

Those, respectively, are the *Cartesian* and *Leibnizian* solutions.

But given the fact that all the proper objects of a rational but also specifically human capacity for cognition are apparent, phenomenal, or manifestly real natural objects, and

never noumena or things-in-themselves, then the appeal to a non-deceiving God and to God's creation of humanly-inaccessible mysterious cognitive acquaintance relations or equally mysterious pre-established harmonies seems no better justified—in effect, no more than an arbitrary and question-begging appeal to a *deus ex machina*—than the skeptical hypothesis that the correspondence is nothing but a massive coincidence.

Indeed, in the light of the implausibility of the Cartesian and Leibnizian *deus ex machina*-style solutions, what could decisively rule out the further skeptical possibility that the correspondence is *simply illusory* and has been created by an Evil Demon, namely, by a God-like being who *is* a deceiver?

In view of the failures of the classical Empiricist, Cartesian, and Leibnizian solutions to The Problem of Cognitive-Semantic Luck, and assuming that these three possible solutions exhaust the logical space of all the most promising and relevant solutions to The Problem, then we can infer the truth of transcendental idealism, by philosophical abduction, as the only adequate solution.

In his famous letter to Marcus Herz of 21 February 1772 that I have already partially quoted as the epigraph of LST, and then again 15 years later in the B edition of the CPR, Kant formulates this basic argument for transcendental idealism in the following ways:

*As I thought through the theoretical part [of “The Limits of Sense and Reason”], considering its whole scope and and the reciprocal relations of its parts, I noticed that I still lacked something essential, something that in my long metaphysical studies I, as well as others, had failed to pay attention to and that, in fact, constitutes the key to the whole secret of hitherto still obscure metaphysics. I asked myself: What is the ground of the relation of that in us which we call “representation” to the object? If a representation is only a way in which the subject is affected by the object, then it is easy to see how the representation is in conformity with this object, namely as an effect in accord with its cause, and it is easy to see this modification of our mind can **represent** something, that is, have an object. Thus the passive or sensuous representations have an understandable relationship to objects, and the principles that are derived from the nature of our soul have an understandable validity for all things insofar as those things are supposed to be objects of the senses. In the same way, if that in us which we call “representation” were active with regard to the object, that is, if the object were created by the representation (as when divine cognitions are conceived as the archetypes of all things), the conformity of these representations to their objects could be understood. Thus the possibility of both an **intellectus archetypus** (on whose intuitions the things themselves would be grounded) and an **intellectus ectypus** (which would derive the data for its logical procedure from the sensible intuition of things) is at least intelligible. However, our understanding, through its representations, is not the cause of the object ... nor is the object the cause of the intellectual representations in the*

mind.... Therefore the pure concepts of the understanding must not be abstracted from sense perceptions, nor must they express the reception of representations through the senses; but though they must have their origin in the nature of the soul, they are neither caused by the object nor bring the object into being. In my dissertation I as content to explain the nature of intellectual representations in a merely negative way, namely, to state that they were not modifications of the soul brought about by the object. However I silently passed over the further question of how a representation that refers to the object without being in any way affected by it can be possible. I had said: The sensuous representations present things as they appear, the intellectual representations present them as they are. But by what means are these things given to us, if not by the way in which they affect us? And if such intellectual representations depend on our inner activity, whence comes the agreement that that they are supposed to have with objects — objects that are nevertheless not possibly produced thereby? And the axioms of pure reason concerning these objects — how do they agree with these objects, since the agreement has not been reached with the aid of experience? In mathematics this is possible, because the objects before us are quantities and can be represented as quantities only because it is possible for us to produce their mathematical representations (by taking numerical units a given number of times). But in the case of relationships involving qualities — as to how my understanding may form for itself concepts of things completely a priori, with which concepts the things must necessarily agree, and as to 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 understanding achieves this conformity with the things themselves, is still left in a state of obscurity.

Plato assumed a previous intuition of divinity as the primary source of the pure concepts of the understanding and of first principles. [Malebranche] believed in a still-continuing perennial intuition of this primary being. Various moralists have accepted precisely this view with respect to basic moral laws. Crusius believed in certain implanted rules for the purpose of forming judgments and ready-made concepts that God implanted in the human soul just as they had to be in order to harmonize with things. Of these systems, one may call the former the **influxum hyperphysicum** and the latter the **harmonium preestabilitatem intellectualem**. But the deus ex machina is the greatest absurdity one could hit on in the determination of the origin and validity of our knowledge. It has — beside its deceptive circle in the conclusion concerning our cognitions — also this additional disadvantage: it encourages all sorts of wild notions and every pious and speculative brainstorm. (C 10: 129-135 [21 Feb. 1772], boldfaced roman text in the original, underlining added)

Up to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects; but all attempts to find out something about them **a priori** through concepts that would extend our cognition have, on this presupposition, come to nothing. Hence let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the object must conform to our

cognition, which would agree better with the requested possibility of an **a priori** cognition of them, which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us.... If intuition has to conform to the [physical — R.H.] constitution of the objects, then I do not see how we can know anything of them **a priori**; but if the object (as an object of the senses) conforms to the [mentalistic] constitution of our faculty of intuition (**Anschauungsvermögens**), then I can very well represent the possibility to myself. (CPR Bxvi-xvii, underlining added)

Now there are only two ways in which a **necessary** agreement of experience with the concepts of its objects can be thought: either the experience makes these concepts possible, or these concepts make the experience possible. The first is not the case with the categories (nor with pure sensible intuition); for they are **a priori** concepts, hence independent of experience (the assertion of an empirical origin would be a sort of **generatio aequivoca**). Consequently only the second way remains (as it were a system of the **epigenesis** of pure reason): namely, that the categories contain the grounds of the possibility of all experience in general from the side of the understanding.... If someone still wanted to propose a middle way between the only two, already named ways, namely, that the categories were neither **self-thought a priori** first principles of our cognition, nor drawn from experience, but were rather subjective predispositions of our thinking, implanted in us along with our existence by our author in such a ways that their use would agree exactly with the laws of nature along which experience runs (a kind of **preformation-system** of pure reason), then (besides the fact that on such a hypothesis no end can be seen to how far one might drive the presupposition of predetermined predispositions for future judgments) this would be decisive against the supposed middle way: that in such a case the categories would lack the **necessity** that is essential to their concept. For, for example, the concept of cause, which asserts the necessity of a consequent under a presupposed condition, would be false if it rested only on a subjective necessity, arbitrarily implanted in us, of combining certain empirical representations according to a rule of relation. I would not be able to say that the effect is combined with the cause in the object (i.e., necessarily), but only that I am so constituted that I cannot think of this representation otherwise than as so connected; which is precisely what the skeptic wishes most, for then all our insight through the supposed objective validity of our judgments is nothing but sheer illusion, and there would be no shortage of people who would not concede this subjective necessity (which must be felt) on their own; at least one would not be able to quarrel with anyone about that which merely depends on the way in which his subject is organized. (CPR B166-168, boldfaced roman text in the original, underlining added)

Unfortunately, the positive formulation of transcendental idealism at CPR xvi-xvii is not itself *perfectly* clear and distinct, to put it mildly, and could, at least in principle, express any one of the four following versions of **The Conformity Thesis**, where the options run from the strongest formulation to the weakest:

(i) There is a physical-to-mental *identity relation* between the ontic structures of apparent, phenomenal, or manifestly real physical spacetime, together with the causal-dynamic relations between apparent, phenomenal, or manifest natural objects and natural states-of-affairs on the one hand, and the innate mentalistic structures of rational human sensibility, understanding, and reason on the other.

(ii) There is a mental-to-physical *logical-supervenience-without-identity relation* between the innate mentalistic structures of rational human sensibility, understanding, and reason on the one hand, and the ontic structures of apparent, phenomenal, or manifestly real natural spacetime together with the causal-dynamic relations between apparent, phenomenal, or manifestly real natural objects and natural states-of-affairs on the other.

(iii) There is a mental-to-physical *isomorphism-without-either-identity-or-logical-supervenience relation* between the innate mentalistic structures of rational human sensibility, understanding, and reason on the one hand, and the ontic structures of apparent, phenomenal, or manifestly real natural spacetime together with the causal-dynamic relations between apparent, phenomenal, or manifestly real natural objects and natural states-of-affairs on the other.

Or most weakly of all:

(iv) There is a physical-to-mental *strong modal actualist counterfactual dependency relation* between the innate mentalistic structures of rational human sensibility, understanding, and reason on the one hand, and the ontic structures of apparent, phenomenal, or manifestly real natural spacetime together with the causal-dynamic relations between apparent, phenomenal, or manifestly real natural objects and natural states-of-affairs on the other, such that necessarily, if the manifest natural world actually exists, then if rational human cognizers *were* also to exist, then they *would* be able to know the ontic structures of manifestly real natural spacetime directly through non-empirical intuition, and also *would* be able to know the causal-dynamic relations between manifestly real natural objects and natural states-of-affairs indirectly through concepts, judgments, and inferences.

My own view is that *the most philosophically defensible* version of **The Conformity Thesis** is the conjunction of (iii) and (iv), which I call *Weak or Counterfactual Transcendental Idealism*.

In turn, it should be noted for later discussion, according to Weak or Counterfactual Transcendental Idealism, anything X can be weakly or counterfactually

transcendentally ideal or mind-dependent *even if, and whenever*, no rational human minds actually *do* exist.

It has only to be necessarily true of *X* that *were* rational human minds to exist, then they *would* be able to know some fundamental structural things about *X*.

Or in other words, the weak or counterfactual mind-dependence of *X* is just that it is *necessarily really possible for X to be knowable at least partially by minds like ours*, were such minds to exist.

But that can be true even if minds like ours *do not actually exist*, or *indeed have never actually existed*.

In that way, it is perfectly really possible for the Big Bang to be weakly or counterfactually transcendentally ideal, without postulating either our metaphysically mysterious presence at the Big Bang or our anti-realistic retrospective “cognitive construction” of the Big Bang.

Back now to Kant’s dogmatic slumbering and his awakening from it, originally admitted by him in 1783.

In a much later 1798 letter to Christian Garve, Kant *also* claims that it was “the antinomy of pure reason” that awoke him from his dogmatic slumber:

It was not the investigation of the existence of God, immortality, and so on, but rather the antinomy of pure reason that ... awoke me from my dogmatic slumber and drove me to the critique of reason itself, in order to resolve the scandal of ostensible contradiction with itself.
(C 12: 257-258 [21 Sept. 1798])

In my upcoming remarks on the A edition Preface, I will sketch a preliminary explication of Kant’s notion of an antinomy of pure reason.

But, for the moment, I am concerned to note only this—what what Kant wrote to Garve in 1798 may seem, initially, at odds with what he said in 1783 about Hume’s wake-up call and in the *Reflexionen* about his philosophical breakthrough in the year 1769, in part because it is then natural to think that Kant’s awakening from his Leibnizian and Wolffian dreams actually originally occurred in his 1766 essay *Dreams of a Spirit Seer*.

And of course that chronology fits the “dogmatic-slumber-filled-with-classical-Rationalist-metaphysical-dreams-followed-by-Humean-Critical awakening” metaphor to a T.

Nevertheless, on further reflection, we can see that the 1798 remark is in fact perfectly consistent with his earlier claim in 1783 that it was Hume’s skeptical Empiricism about content, truth, and justification of human cognition, especially as applied to the classical Rationalist metaphysical concept of causation and causal necessity, when taken together with Kant’s own transcendental idealism theses circa 1768-72 about the necessary conformity of the ontic structures of apparent, phenomenal, or manifestly natural spacetime and the causal-dynamic relations between manifestly real natural objects and states-of-affairs, to the innate mentalistic structures of human sensibility, understanding, and inferential reason, that initiated the Critical Philosophy.

This is because the antinomy of pure reason, as discovered in 1766, *also* showed him the self-annihilating character of classical metaphysical and especially classical Rationalist metaphysical reasoning, and thereby the possibility of the critique of pure reason.

So in fact, Kant was awakened and correspondingly enlightened *three times* during his immensely philosophically creative six-year period from 1766-1772.

And thus his revolutionary anthropocentric turn to the mitigated rationalism or real metaphysics of transcendental idealism in fact has *three* conjoined and equally important philosophical sources:

first, Hume’s skeptical Empiricism about the content, truth, and justification of human cognition, especially as applied to the classical Rationalist metaphysical concepts of causation and causal necessity, remembered by Kant in 1771 or 1772,

second, Kant’s own revolutionary thesis in real metaphysics, transcendental idealism, about the necessary conformity of the ontic structures of apparent, phenomenal, or manifestly real natural spacetime and the causal-dynamic relations between manifestly real natural objects and states-of-affairs, to the innate mentalistic structures of human sensibility, understanding, and inferential reason, discovered and formulated by him between the “Directions in Space” essay in 1768 and “the year of great light,” 1769, and 1772, the year of Kant’s famous letter to Herz, and

third, the self-annihilating character of all classical metaphysical reasoning, especially classical Rationalist metaphysical reasoning, demonstrated

by the antinomy of pure reason, and thereby the possibility of the critique of pure reason, discovered by Kant in 1766.

These three sources combined to produce in Kant—a middle-aged, mid-career, and middling-successful academic philosopher who was 42 in 1766 and 48 in 1772, a smallish (5 feet 2 inches tall) confirmed bachelor with mild *angina pectoris*, and a hypochondriac—an intellectual and spiritual rebirth comparable to those of Augustine, Luther, and Pascal.⁴

But unlike the earlier thinkers, Kant's personal rebirth was not caused by discovering or re-discovering God: on the contrary, it was brought about by discovering or re-discovering *the rational human condition*.

NOTES

¹ The first German translation of Hume's first *Enquiry* was published in 1755.

² I. Compton-Burnett, *Manservant and Maidservant* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1947).

³ See P. Benacerraf, "Mathematical Truth," *Journal of Philosophy* 70 (1973): 661-680.

⁴ See M. Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), chs. 4-6, esp. pp. 148-154 and 238.