

The Groundwork for Kant's Metaphysics of Experience: An Essay on the Transcendental Deduction's Contribution to the Analytic of Principles in the Critique of Pure Reason

Dissertation Abstract

Kant thinks that the world about which we can have metaphysical knowledge is the world that appears to us, i.e., is given to us. He argues that we can know *a priori* that the world could not appear to us if it did not appear to contain permanent substances of which everything else is a determination; that no events would appear to us if they did not appear to be caused. According to Kant's transcendental idealism, reality—"empirical reality"—just *is* the world as it appears, not anything lying beyond appearances. So Kant's metaphysics has it that things are as they must appear: there *are* permanent substances of which everything else is a determination; every event *has* a cause. These *a priori* theses, partly defended in the section of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* known as the "Principles of Pure Understanding," are supposed to be legitimate in a way that previous metaphysics was not.

I argue that the Transcendental Deduction of Kant's *Critique* contributes to his project of establishing his novel metaphysics in two ways. First, if the project is to succeed, properties like substantiality, causality, and other "categorical" properties picked out by this metaphysics must *appear* to us. And it is not obvious that they do or even can. Properties such as colors, textures, and sounds seem to appear to us in experience. But some philosophers have thought that we can only *attribute* to the world, not *confront*, such properties as substantiality and causality. In the Transcendental Deduction, Kant attempts to show that they do appear to us and explains how this is possible.

Showing that categorical properties appear to us also constitutes a second contribution of the Deduction to Kant's project. For in the metaphysical theses that Kant wants to establish, he *uses* these categorical concepts, e.g., of substance and causation. But Kant subscribes to a principle that I call his "principle of sense." This is the principle that concepts have "sense and significance" only if it is possible to experience their instantiations. Kant's metaphysical claims would themselves lack sense and significance if it were not possible to experience categorical properties. If they cannot appear to us, we could not experience them. Thus, by proving that categorical properties do appear to us, the Transcendental Deduction undercuts the worry that the theses of the Principles lack sense and significance—as Kant thinks so much previous metaphysics did.

This analysis has two important ramifications for our understanding of Kant's project. First, in the course of defending my interpretation, I defend a novel reading of transcendental idealism. Interpretations of this doctrine tend to fall into two camps: "two-world" readings, according to which appearances and things in themselves are two *ontological types*, and "two-aspect" readings, according to which the distinction is merely perspectival, capturing two ways in which we can *consider* things. I defend a hybrid of these analyses. Roughly, I hold that while two-aspect readings are right that things as they are in themselves and things as they appear are not different kinds of objects, two-world readings are right to insist that these are different sets of truth-makers for our judgments. Sometimes our judgments refer to things *as they are in themselves*; sometimes they refer to the same things *as they appear* to beings like us.

Second, I propose that the faculty of the imagination has a more important and more autonomous role in Kant's philosophy than is typically acknowledged. It is part of Kant's idealism that we impose on to the world its most abstract structure. I claim that the imagination—not the faculty of concepts—is responsible for this imposition. Indeed, this is key for understanding how this structure can be both something that we impose and something that we confront. For ultimately it is the faculty of concepts that receives appearances of objects. If it is to receive structure that is at the same time imposed by the mind, this imposition must be by way of a different faculty. I argue that only the imagination will suffice for this task.