

**‘Kant’s Argument for Transcendental Idealism  
in the Transcendental Aesthetic’**

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My concern in this paper is with Kant’s argument for transcendental idealism in the Transcendental Aesthetic. In a nutshell, the argument is that transcendental idealism is needed to explain our being able to have knowledge of synthetic a priori propositions, and thereby to explain the possibility of metaphysics, which consists of such propositions. In the first section of this paper I discuss a common and apparently straightforward way of reading this argument, which sees Kant’s concern as being with the source of the justification of synthetic a priori propositions, and his solution as invoking mind-dependence to explain this. I mention some objections which have been raised to this argument. Section 2 examines the way Kant presents his argument in the Transcendental Aesthetic, and looks at a worry about how the idealist conclusion is supposed to follow from what he actually argues for. Section 3 proposes a way of answering this worry, which involves paying detailed attention to Kant’s notion of intuition, in general, as well as to what follows from this for his notion of a priori intuition. I argue that Kant’s concern with how synthetic a priori propositions are possible is not a concern with the source of their justification, but with how they can have objects. Section 5 looks at some implications of my reading of the argument.

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Kant introduces transcendental idealism right at the beginning of the *Critique*; the position plays a central role in both his positive and negative projects in this work, and also plays a vital role in his argument for the validity of moral judgment (4:446–463),<sup>1</sup> but there is no agreed interpretation of it. It is difficult even to introduce the position in a neutral way but it is at least uncontroversial to say that transcendental idealism centrally involves distinguishing between things as they appear to us and things as they are in themselves, together with claims made about each side of the distinction: with respect to things as they appear to us, Kant says that they must ‘conform’ to our cognition, and with respect to things as they are in themselves, that we can have no knowledge of them.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For convenience, references to Kant’s texts are given parenthetically in the text, using the standard Akademie edition page numbers. I follow standard practice of A and B referring to the first (1781) and second (1787) editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Other Kant texts are abbreviated as follows: *Proleg*: *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*; *MM*: *Metaphysics Mrongovius*; *MV*: *Metaphysics Vigilantius*; *A*: *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*; *CJ*: *Critique of Judgment*; *D*: *On a Discovery whereby any new critique of pure reason is to be made superfluous by an older one*; *ID*: *Inaugural Dissertation*, *VL*: *Vienna Logic*.

<sup>2</sup> There is of course dispute about how to understand all of these claims: about how Kant’s distinction between things as they are in themselves and things as they appear to us should be understood (and even about whether it is a metaphysical, epistemological or methodological distinction); about how to understand the idea that appearances ‘conform’ to our cognition (whether this involves some kind of idealism, and if so, of what kind); and about whether Kant is actually committed to there existing an aspect of reality about which we cannot have knowledge. See Allison (2003) for the dominant defence in the English literature of the idea that Kant’s distinction is methodological; see Van Cleve (1999) for an example of an extreme (phenomenalist) idealist reading of Kant’s position; see Bird (2006) for a

Kant gives two explicit official arguments for transcendental idealism in the *Critique*, of which the first, which I call the direct argument, is based on the knowledge Kant thinks we have of synthetic a priori propositions. The second argument, which Kant calls indirect, is presented in the section called the Antinomies (A405–567/B432–595), where Kant argues that positing transcendental idealism enables us to avoid contradictions which he thinks our reason otherwise unavoidably drives us to, when we try to think about the extent of the world in space and time, the divisibility of matter, and freedom of the will. My concern here is with the former, and my focus is in understanding Kant’s strategy, not defending his argument.

Kant addresses the whole of the *Critique* to the question: ‘how are synthetic a priori judgments possible?’ and says that the possibility of metaphysics stands or falls with a solution to this problem (B19, see also A8–9, B11–13; *Proleg.* 4:257, 260, 377). While at the start of the *Critique* the possibility of synthetic a priori judgments in *metaphysics* is presented as an open question, his ‘how possible’ question assumes that there is some actual synthetic a priori knowledge, primarily in mathematics, and sees this knowledge as requiring explanation. The idea is that explaining how this knowledge is possible in mathematics will show us how it might be possible in metaphysics. Kant says that synthetic a priori knowledge is a mystery ‘the elucidation of which alone can make progress in the boundless field of pure cognition of the understanding secure and reliable’ (A10). Famously, his solution involves some kind of mind-dependence: ‘we can cognise a priori of things only what we ourselves put into them’ (Bxviii, see also Bxix; Bxxiii; B16; A114; A126–130; B167; *Proleg.* 4:257; 260; 282; 319; 377; D 8:240).

While it may not seem compelling, as it is presented in the B preface, the argument from synthetic a priori knowledge seems fairly straightforward. Kant simply states that a priori knowledge of things which do not ‘conform to our cognition’ cannot be explained, and that a priori knowledge can easily be explained on the assumption that our minds determine the objects of experience in certain respects. The idea that a priori knowledge of mind-independent reality is unintelligible seems to be assumed rather than argued for. Kant says in the *Prolegomena*, ‘it is simply not to be seen how things would have to agree necessarily with the image that we form of them ourselves and in advance’ (*Proleg.* 4:287, also Bxvii, A10, B19; *Proleg.* 4:294, 282). Kant seems to think that previous philosophers have failed to recognise that we do and must have cognition of synthetic a priori propositions, sometimes through not seeing the need for the relevant knowledge claims, and sometimes through not recognising them as synthetic and a priori (B19, B20), and he seems to think that once our cognition of synthetic a priori propositions is recognised it will immediately be seen to require explanation.

One reading of Kant’s line of thought is that substantive a priori claims about mind-independent reality would be unintelligible because we cannot explain the source of their justification and that Kant introduces his idealism precisely to fill this gap: the idea is that it is because our minds are somehow responsible for those features of objects which we can know a priori that this knowledge is possible. For example, Stroud says that, on Kant’s view, a priori knowledge of the fundamental structure of the world of experience ‘is possible at all only if it is somehow

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denial of the idea that Kant is committed to there actually being an aspect of reality which we cannot cognise. The interpretation I favour denies that Kant is a phenomenalist or Berkelean idealist about things as they appear to us, but still sees him as committed to seeing appearances as genuinely mind-independent in some sense, and also sees Kant as committed to there actually being an aspect of reality of which we cannot have knowledge. I discuss this Allais 2004, 2006, 2007.

knowledge of *us*, or of what ‘we’ bring to the ‘raw material’ of ‘sensible impressions’ (2000b: 229). He that according to Kant, *a priori* knowledge is in some sense ‘contributed by us’ and ‘*therefore* directly available to us by the operation of ‘pure reason’ with complete certainty’ (2000b: 238, my emphasis). Roughly, the idea is that we can know (*a priori*) what we make.

As presented so far, obvious questions that can be raised with respect to the argument from synthetic *a priori* knowledge are:

- 1) Is Kant right that we have synthetic *a priori* knowledge?
- 2) Is he right that it is mysterious: that synthetic *a priori* knowledge of mind-independent reality is unintelligible?
- 3) Does transcendental idealism make synthetic *a priori* knowledge intelligible?

Clearly, in response to 1), empiricists who think that all our *a priori* knowledge is analytic, or who deny an analytic-synthetic distinction, or who deny that there is a *a priori* knowledge, will reject the first step of Kant’s argument. I do not consider this move here, as my interest is in understanding Kant’s strategy, what he thinks his argument achieves and how he thinks it does it, and the claim that there is synthetic *a priori* knowledge is simply his starting point. On the other hand, both 2) and 3) involve questioning how we understand Kant’s strategy, and what it is that he takes himself to be explaining.

In response to 2), rationalists who accept synthetic *a priori* knowledge could reject the idea that a *a priori* insight into the nature of reality is really so mysterious. For example, Bonjour argues that Kant’s belief in the mysterious nature of synthetic *a priori* knowledge is born of his exaggerated hostility to rationalism, and that ‘a viable, non-skeptical epistemology, rather than downgrading or rejecting a *a priori* insight, must accept it more or less at face value as a genuine and autonomous source of epistemic justification’ (1998:92).<sup>3</sup> Another way of rejecting Kant’s claim that synthetic *a priori* knowledge is mysterious and requires explanation would be to give an alternative explanation of this kind of knowledge, and one development of this strategy involves suggesting that *Kant himself* provides an alternative explanation, with his transcendental arguments.<sup>4</sup> Roughly, a transcendental argumentative strategy defends some doubted claim by showing it to be a presupposition of something which is not doubted. While Kant does not use the term ‘transcendental arguments’ (and most of his arguments are neither directed to Cartesian-type scepticism, nor concerned with the conditions of coherent thought, as are some contemporary attempts to use the strategy<sup>5</sup>), he does employ this kind of argumentative strategy; in particular, Kant thinks we can show that certain synthetic *a priori* claims are conditions of the possibility of experience and empirical knowledge.<sup>6</sup> If

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<sup>3</sup> An alternative tactic approaches the question from the other side, questioning whether there is a particular sense in which synthetic *a priori* knowledge is mysterious by putting pressure on the idea that analytic necessity is *not* mysterious. See Stroud 2000b and Bonjour 1998.

<sup>4</sup> This is argued by Walker 1985.

<sup>5</sup> See Stern 2003 for an introduction to the contemporary debate, and parts I and II of Schaper and Vossenkuhl (eds.) 1989, for some discussion of transcendental arguments in Kant.

<sup>6</sup> As I understand Kant’s transcendental strategy, his arguments (almost all) assume that we have empirical knowledge, and try to demonstrate something about its conditions; they are therefore not responses to Cartesian-type scepticism, nor are they concerned with the conditions of coherent thought. Stroud says that ‘if would-be transcendental reflection is allowed to start from the fact that we know certain things, there would be no need for further enquiry’ (Stroud 2000a: 210), but I see it, Kant assumes that we have empirical knowledge and sees the aim of his transcendental enquiry as being to show that this *empirical knowledge* requires that we have some *a priori knowledge* of the objects of

transcendental arguments give us a method of establishing synthetic a priori claims, then we have a way of distinguishing those which are justified from those which are not. Further, this method seems to give us insight into how we are able to know these claims: by seeing that they are conditions of the possibility of experience (or of some specific feature of experience). Clearly, independently of his idealist explanation of the intelligibility of synthetic a priori claims in general, Kant needs a strategy for working out *which* synthetic a priori propositions are justified. But once he has such a strategy, it seems less obvious that we need an explanation of how cognition of synthetic a priori propositions is possible.

If we accept that there is synthetic a priori knowledge and that it requires explanation, there still remains the question of how exactly Kant's idealist solution is supposed to explain it. However we understand the idea of what we 'put into' objects, we need to see how our 'putting' something into them could explain our having synthetic a priori knowledge of them. The reading considered so far says that the unintelligibility disappears once we see that our minds are responsible for the features of objects that we can cognise a priori. Clearly, there are problems with this strategy. Crucially, it seems to assume that there is no mystery about the source of the justification of a priori claims concerning what our minds bring to the world, but it is unclear why this should be so.<sup>7</sup> We need some basis for thinking that we have a priori access to what our minds are responsible for.<sup>8</sup> Even more damagingly, Bonjour argues that Kant's solution undermines itself in a parallel way to that in which the verification principle is self-defeating:<sup>9</sup> the claim that we can know a priori of objects only what we ourselves put into them is neither analytic nor empirical; it must therefore be synthetic and a priori. This means, Bonjour argues, Kant must explain it in the only way in which he allows such knowledge to be explicable, which requires him to say that the cognitive structure of our minds is responsible for the fact that the cognitive structure of our minds is responsible for the structure of objects. It is doubtful that this makes sense, and it generates a vicious regress (Bonjour 1998:24). In what follows I present an account of Kant's argument which does not turn on the idea that idealism explains the source of the justification of synthetic a priori claims. I suggest that Kant's 'how possible' question is not about how we justify such claims, but about how it is possible for them to have objects—for there to be anything that they are about.

## 2

I now turn to look in more detail at how Kant actually presents his argument, concentrating only on the arguments concerning space. The official direct argument for transcendental idealism is presented in the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, and a central part of the argument is based on our knowledge of geometry, which Kant sees as synthetic a priori knowledge of space. It is crucial to the argument that we are clear

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which we have empirical knowledge. See Bird (2006) for a detailed account of why Kant's primary concern in the *Critique* is not with responding to Cartesian scepticism.

<sup>7</sup> See Van Cleve 2002:38.

<sup>8</sup> More strongly, this claim might be thought to be at odds with the idea that we do not have knowledge of our minds as they are in themselves. In the *Deduction* Kant says that inner sense 'presents even ourselves to consciousness only as we appear to ourselves, not as we are in ourselves' (B152–3), and in the *Paralogisms*, he argues that 'if we compare the thinking I not with matter but with the intelligible that grounds the appearance we call matter, then because we know nothing at all about the latter, we cannot say that the soul is inwardly distinguished from it in any way at all' (A360).

<sup>9</sup> The verification principle claims that all meaning statements are empirically verifiable, but the principle itself does not seem to be empirically verifiable. A similar objection is raised by Bennett 1966:17.

about Kant's notion of *intuition*; since much of the next section will be concerned with this, here I give only a brief introduction to the notion. One of Kant's most famous and fundamental claims in the *Critique* is that all cognition requires two ingredients, intuitions and concepts; he says that intuitions are singular and immediate representations, through which we are given objects. Empirical intuitions give us empirical particulars, and this always involves objects causally affecting us, but Kant thinks that the *form* of our sensible intuition, which can be thought of, roughly, as a structure in which the sensory input is arranged, is a priori. In the *Aesthetic*, Kant argues for the claim that space is the a priori form of our intuition, and that it is not a feature of mind-independent reality. There is dispute about how these parts of his position relate to each other, and a famous objection to Kant, the so-called neglected alternative, says that showing that space is the a priori form of our intuition does not show that it could not, in addition, be the form which reality has independently of us. The idea is that seeing space as the structure in which we organise the sensory input is compatible with realism about space.

In the A edition of the *Transcendental Aesthetic* Kant presents five short, numbered arguments for the claim that our primary representation of space is an intuition not a concept and is a priori not empirically derived. Arguments 1–3 aim to establish that our representation of space is a priori,<sup>10</sup> 4 and 5 that our primary representation of space is an intuition, not a concept.<sup>11</sup> Immediately after this, without further argument, Kant presents two 'conclusions' which follow from this, which say that 'a) Space represents no property at all of any things in themselves nor any relation of them to each other' and 'b) Space is nothing other than merely the form of all appearances of outer sense, i.e., the subjective condition of sensibility, under which alone outer intuition is possible for us' (A26). Conclusions a) and b) express the transcendental ideality of space, since they say that space is not a feature of anything mind-independent and that it is mind-dependent (is merely the form of our intuition). Since the immediately preceding arguments (1–5) concern *our representation* of space, while the conclusions simply concern *space*, it is by no means clear how the latter follows from the former, and many philosophers have thought that Kant needs further argument to go from the claim that space is the a priori form of our intuition to saying that space is *merely* the a priori form of our intuition.<sup>12</sup> This is the neglected alternative objection. Of the five arguments for the claim that our representation of space is a priori and intuitive, only argument 3 seems to concern cognition of synthetic a priori propositions (in geometry), and, significantly, argument 3 does not say that our knowledge of geometry requires *ideality*, but that the necessity of geometrical claims requires that our representation of space is a priori. This suggests that, like the first two arguments, argument 3 aims to establish that our representation of space is a priori. This still leaves us wondering how we are supposed to get from a claim about our representation of space to a claim about space itself.

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<sup>10</sup> Argument 1 says that space is the way we represent objects as distinct, so our representation of space could not be derived from our representation of distinct objects. Argument 2 says that we can abstract objects from our representation of space, but cannot abstract space from our representation of objects. Argument 3 says that geometrical claims contain necessity, and that this requires that our representation of space is a priori.

<sup>11</sup> The arguments turn on the idea that space is represented as singular (argument 4) and that it is immediately given (argument 5), together with the idea that intuitions are singular and immediate representations through which objects are given.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Hatfield 2006:76, 82, Guyer 2006: 58, 63; Setiya 2004:67.

The idea that there is a step missing in the argument might seem to be supported by the alteration in the presentation of the arguments which Kant makes in the B edition. In B, the arguments for the claim that our representation of space is a priori and is an intuition are grouped under the heading ‘The Metaphysical Exposition of the Concept of Space,’ and the third argument in the A version, which concerns geometry, is taken out of this section and is developed at more length, in the section called ‘The Transcendental Exposition of the Concept of Space,’ which is placed between the Metaphysical Exposition and conclusions a) and b). This suggests that it is the argument from geometry that is supposed to take us from the claim that space is the a priori form of our intuition, to the conclusion that space is *merely* the a priori form of our intuition, and not a feature of reality as it is in itself.

An apparently obvious way to understand this move is according to the ‘we know what we make’ reading. On this reading, once we have shown that our representation of space is a priori and is an intuition, we then point out that we have synthetic a priori knowledge of space, and that synthetic a priori knowledge is intelligible only if it is knowledge of a feature of objects for which our minds are responsible. Therefore, space is something we are responsible for: space is *merely* the a priori form of our intuition. There are two problems with this reading. One problem is the difficulty raised above about why exactly we should have a priori insight into that for which our minds are responsible. The other difficulty is that this reading does not straight-forwardly correspond to what Kant actually argues in the Transcendental Exposition. In the Transcendental Exposition, Kant says that we have synthetic a priori knowledge of space, and asks what the representation of space must be for such cognition of it to be possible. His answer is that it must be a pure (that is, a priori) intuition (B41). Kant thinks that synthetic claims require intuition, because they require something added to what is contained in the concepts.<sup>13</sup> Geometrical claims are a priori, so they require that this added something is a priori. Therefore, synthetic a priori claims require an a priori intuition. Note that rather than saying that we can have this knowledge because we ‘make’ objects in such a way that it is true, what has been invoked to explain our knowledge of geometrical claims is a priori intuition.<sup>14</sup>

The main difference between the Transcendental Exposition and argument 3 in the A version (which it replaces) is that Kant adds the idea that geometry requires that our representation of space is an a priori *intuition*, whereas argument 3 in the A version says that our representation of space must be a priori, to explain the necessity of geometrical claims. The idea is that synthetic a priori propositions require a priori intuition; geometry is synthetic a priori knowledge of space, so our representation of space is intuitive and a priori. Like the arguments in the Metaphysical Exposition, the conclusion is that our representation of space is a priori and is an intuition. This does not add a new argument which shows how we get from the idea that our representation of space is a priori and is an intuition to Kant’s conclusions a) and b). Kant then goes on to ask ‘how can an outer intuition inhabit the mind that precedes the objects themselves?’ He answers ‘Obviously not otherwise than insofar as it has its seat merely in the subject, as its formal constitution for being affected by objects and thereby acquiring **immediate representation** i.e., **intuition** of them, thus only as the form of outer **sense** in general’ (B41). Here we do have the move from substantive

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<sup>13</sup> As Sebastian Gardner puts this point, synthetic claims are made true by objects, not just concepts (1999:72). Kant says that ‘If one wishes to judge synthetically about a concept, then one must go beyond this concept, and indeed go to the intuition in which it is given’ (A721/B747).

<sup>14</sup> See also A178/B746.

a priori knowledge to ideality, but we do not have any new account of the argument that is supposed to get us there. As in the A edition, Kant seems to take the ideality of space to follow from our showing that the representation of space is an a priori intuition. This leaves us still asking how we get from the claim that our representation of space is an a priori intuition to the claim that *space* is merely an a priori form of intuition.

## 3

We have been considering the worry that there is a gap between, on the one hand, showing that our representation of space is a priori and an intuition, and, on the other, the idea that space itself is nothing but the a priori form of our intuition, and that this gap means that Kant has not ruled out realism about space. Guyer says ‘If we somehow know *a priori* that we can only perceive objects distinct from ourselves in space, indeed in three dimensional Euclidean space, why isn’t the explanation of our success in perceiving some particular outer object precisely that it really is spatial, indeed three-dimensional, quite apart from our representing it as such?’ (2006:63). What would make sense of the way Kant thinks his conclusions follow would be a reason for thinking that an intuition could not both be a priori and represent something mind-independent. This would mean that showing our representation of space to be an a priori intuition just is showing that it does not present a mind-independent feature of reality.<sup>15</sup> In this section I argue that we will see that this is indeed the case, once we have the right understanding of what Kant means by intuition. As Marcus Willaschek (1997) points out, Kant’s transcendental idealist conclusions appear to be insufficiently argued for if we expect them to follow from the Metaphysical Exposition alone. Kant might, not unreasonably, expect us to take the argument of the Metaphysical Exposition together with all the previous material introduced in the Aesthetic. Willaschek argues that in the Aesthetic Kant introduces intuition as a kind of representation which is essentially caused by the object it represents. It follows from this, he argues, that an a priori intuition could not represent a mind-independent feature of reality (because, being a priori, it could not be caused by such a feature). My reading disagrees with Willaschek on crucial points, in particular, that intuitions are essentially representations which are *caused* by what they represent, but I agree about one central point: prior to his arguments for our representation of space being an a priori intuition Kant has given us an account of intuition from which it follows that a priori intuition does not present us with a mind-independent feature of reality. This is why he takes it that once we show that our representation of space is an a priori intuition, it follows that our representation of space does not present us with a mind-independent feature of reality.

On my reading, before he gets to the Metaphysical Exposition, Kant takes himself to have established the following points:

- 1) Cognition or knowledge of an objective world requires both intuitions and concepts.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> This reading is suggested briefly by Daniel Warren (1998) who argues that ‘in general the mere fact that a representation has its origin in us has no idealist consequences. But when that representation is an *intuition*, then, according to Kant, it *does*—and that is because intuition, insofar as it is what Kant calls an ‘immediate’ representation, guarantees the presence of its subject’ (Warren 1998:221). See also Setiya 2004.

<sup>16</sup> This one of Kant’s fundamental claims throughout the *Critique*, and although his famous statements about the need for both ingredients in cognition come later (A 51–2/B75–6, A235–26/B294–315), the view is clearly in play in the Aesthetic, where Kant says that ‘all thought...must...ultimately be related

- 2) Intuitions are representations which essentially involve the presence to consciousness of the objects they present.
- 3) Empirical (sensible) intuition requires a priori intuition, which gives it its order or form.<sup>17</sup>
- 4) A priori intuition does not represent a mind-independent feature of reality (from 2).

If we take these claims as established, and then argue (as Kant does in the *Metaphysical Exposition*) that our representation of space is an a priori intuition,<sup>18</sup> it will follow that our representation of space does not present us with a mind-independent feature of reality, so the space that we represent is *merely* the a priori form of our intuition.

The crucial, and controversial, claims in my reading are claims 2 and 4, which I will now discuss in more detail. Claim 2 is part of my reading of what Kantian intuition is.<sup>19</sup> The essential defining features of Kantian intuition are that intuitions are singular and immediate,<sup>20</sup> and the role of intuition is that of giving us the objects about which we think.<sup>21</sup> A clear and straightforward way of understanding the idea that intuitions are singular and immediate is to see intuitions as representations which essentially involve the presence to consciousness of the particular things they

to intuitions, thus, in our case, to sensibility, since there is no other way in which objects can be given to us' (A19/B33).

<sup>17</sup> Before the *Metaphysical Exposition*, Kant states that intuitions must be ordered, and that this order cannot be derived from sensation, so must be a priori (A20/B34); however, this claim might be further argued for, in particular in argument 1 of the *Metaphysical Exposition*. Notice that the claim here is not just that we have a priori intuition, but that what is given in sensibility (objects of empirical intuition) is arranged in a priori intuition, so our a priori intuition is the form of sensible intuition, the form in which all the actual and possible objects of experience are arranged. In fact, Kant thinks that if the a priori intuition which enable us to do mathematics were not also the form of sensible intuition, and therefore something that applies to actual and possible physical objects, mathematics would not be knowledge properly so called. It 'would be nothing at all, but an occupation with a mere figment of the brain, if space were not to be regarded as the condition of the appearances which constitute the matter of outer experience' (A157/B196).

<sup>18</sup> Actually, the *Metaphysical Exposition* is more complicated than this, since it wants to show not just that our representation of space is *an a priori intuition*, but that space is the pure *form of sensible intuition*, the a priori form that organises empirical intuition. Thus the argument proceeds not just by arguing that the representation of space is a priori and is not a concept, but also by showing that space plays a certain role: that of enabling us to be presented with empirical particulars in empirical intuition. Warren (1998) argues convincingly that in the *Metaphysical Exposition* Kant is not trying to show that space is a condition of representing distinct objects, but rather that our representation of space is a priori. While I agree with this it is entirely compatible with seeing the idea that space is necessary to represent distinct particulars as being a *premise* of the argument. On this reading, Kant thinks that the structure in which we represent distinct particulars must be a priori; he takes as a further premise the claim that space is the way *we* represent distinct particulars; it therefore follows that our representation of space is a priori. I discuss this in more detail in Allais 2009:409–412.

<sup>19</sup> I argue for this in more detail in Allais 2009.

<sup>20</sup> A320/B377; A713/B741; MM 29:800, 888; MV 29:970–3; VL905.

<sup>21</sup> Kant says that 'An intuition is a representation of the sort which would depend immediately on the presence of an object' (P:281). By way of contrast to the immediacy of intuition, he explains the mediacy of concepts by saying 'since no representation pertains to the object immediately except intuition alone, a concept is thus never immediately related to an object, but is always related to some other representation of it (whether that be an intuition or itself already a concept). Judgment is therefore the mediate cognition of an object, hence the representation of a representation of it' (A68/B93; A19/B33; A239/B298; *Proleg.* 4:282). A concept is always related to an object through a representation of it, whereas an intuition relates to an object immediately. See Houston Smit 2000: 263.

represent.<sup>22</sup> In other words, intuitions represent objects *immediately* because they *present* the object itself, as opposed to referring to an object through the mediation of further representations (which enable us to think about the object whether it is present or not). Immediacy says that an intuition is not simply a representation which is caused by a particular thing, but that it is in fact a *presentation to consciousness of that thing*.<sup>23</sup> And intuitions are *singular* because an intuition presents a particular thing (as opposed to concepts which apply, in principle, to many particulars, and do not present us with particular things).<sup>24</sup>

I do not have much to say to explain the notion of presence to consciousness, and it seems to me that it may be primitive.<sup>25</sup> I take it to be fundamental at least partly because, unlike Willashek's (1997) proposal that intuitions are essentially caused by the objects they represent, it can be common to a priori and empirical intuition. My view is that Kant's concern is not just with causal origin (provided by sensation) but with the actual presence of the object: the contrast I have in mind here is between a representationalist version of externalism which says that what mental states represent is essentially linked to their causes, and a relational view which sees perceptual states as involving their objects as constituents (Campbell 2002: 140). Kant thinks that empirical intuitions involve receptivity (objects affecting us), but, unlike the

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<sup>22</sup> See Buroker 2006:37; Ewing 1934:29; Setiya 2004:66. Parsons questions whether phenomenological immediacy requires actual presence of the object, saying that imagination can immediately represent a non-present object (1992:83). On my reading, imagination presents an *image* immediately, but not an *object* immediately, whereas intuition immediately presents its object.

<sup>23</sup> One passage which might call into doubt the idea that intuitions involve the actual presence of the things they represent is in the Refutation of Idealism, where Kant says 'From the fact that the existence of outer objects is required for the possibility of a determinate consciousness of our self it does not follow that every intuitive representation of outer things includes at the same time their existence, for that may well be the mere effect of the imagination (in dreams as well as in delusions)' (B278). I take it as significant that this passage does not actually talk about intuition, but *intuitive representation* (*anschauliche Vorstellung*). Any view of perception which says that physical objects are constituents of veridical perceptual states will have to accommodate mental states which are phenomenologically similar, but do not involve physical objects as constituents. It is significant that the Refutation of Idealism is one of the sections which most strongly supports seeing Kant as having a relational view of perceptual content according to which the object perceived is a constituent of the perceptual state, rather than a so-called Cartesian view, according to which perception involves having representational mental states which are caused in the right way, and where the identical mental state could be present with different causation. Of course, Kant's having a relational view of perception would not show that *intuition* has to involve the actual presence of objects, but, I argue, this reading provides the clearest understanding of the immediacy of intuition, as well of the role of intuition—giving us objects. If intuitions, like concepts, were representations which we could have without their objects being present, Kant's claim we need intuitions to give us objects would be much more obscure. Similarly, his view that intuitions are contrasted with concepts in that no concept guarantees that it has a single referent, and that no concept presents its object, would make less sense if intuitions were perceptual images which did not involve the presence to consciousness of their objects.

<sup>24</sup> Kant says 'intuition is namely an immediate representation of an object. This latter can thus be only singular' (MV 29:970). See Willashek 1997:545–6; Grüne 2008. Jaakko Hintikka (1969) suggests that Kant's notion of intuition is close to what we would call a singular term, as does Charles Parsons (1992); for discussion see Thompson (1973), Robert Howell (1973) and Kirk Wilson (1975).

<sup>25</sup> The idea seems relevantly similar to Russell's notion of acquaintance, as explained here: 'I say that I am *acquainted* with an object when I have a direct cognitive relation to that object, *i.e.* when I am directly aware of the object itself. When I speak of a cognitive relation here, I do not mean the sort of relation which constitutes judgment, but the sort which constitutes presentation. In fact, I think the relation of subject and object which I call acquaintance is simply the converse of the relation of object and subject which constitutes presentation. That is, to say that S has acquaintance with O is essentially the same thing as to say that O is presented to S' (1910–11:108).

immediacy and singularity criteria, this is not part of the definition of intuition.

To understand the idea that intuitions present us with objects, it is crucial to see that Kantian intuitions are not *sensations*.<sup>26</sup> Intuitions are not a mere manifold of undifferentiated sensory input, but rather are singular and immediate representations through which we are given objects.<sup>27</sup> And whatever role concepts may play in perception of objects, what gets us from sensations to empirical intuitions is not the application of concepts, but the a priori form of intuition. The role for which Kant invokes intuitions is not simply to give us an external input which involves objects affecting us, although of course he does think we need a sensory input. Rather, we need representations which are singular and immediate to give us objects: ‘all of our cognition is in the end related to possible intuitions, for through these alone is an object given’ (A719/B747, see also A239/B298, A19/B33). Kant’s explicit target here is Leibniz, and in particular Leibniz’s idea of complete individual concepts.<sup>28</sup> Kant thinks that concepts are essentially general, so they cannot individuate particulars, and they are mediate, so it is never the case that simply in virtue of having a concept you are thereby presented with its object (A239/B298). This means that concepts alone cannot ensure that there are actually any objects that our judgments are about, which is why objective cognition requires that there must be some representations which present objects to consciousness; what provides this is intuition.

The role of intuitions as giving us objects plays a crucial role in Kant’s account of mathematics.<sup>29</sup> Kant thinks that mathematical claims are synthetic, so must have objects which are presented to us in intuition. Mathematical concepts are stipulated by us (made, not given), but their definition involves a construction in intuition which exhibits the legitimacy of the concepts (that they have objects).<sup>30</sup> Kant says that ‘I construct a triangle by exhibiting in intuition an object corresponding to this concept’ (713/B741). For his account of mathematics it is crucial that this

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<sup>26</sup> In the first *Critique* Kant’s view seems to be that sensations are nonintentional or nonreferential: they do not, themselves, present objects to the mind, but ‘refer to the subject as a modification of its state’ (A320/B376), whereas intuitions are immediate, singular representations that essentially involve the represented object. See Westphal 2004 and George 1981. If empirical intuitions were simply sensations which had been organised conceptually, *sensation*, not *intuition*, would be the other, distinct ingredient in cognition.

<sup>27</sup> Kant says that ‘with every manner in which we are affected there are two parts: matter, i.e. the impression of sensation, and form, i.e., [the] manner in which impressions are unified in my mind. Otherwise I would have millions of impressions but not intuition of a whole object’ (MM 29:800).

<sup>28</sup> See Leibniz, 1989: 41.

<sup>29</sup> See Brittan (1978, 2006:231) who argues that the point of Kant’s notion of a priori intuition is not justify mathematical proofs, but to ensure that mathematical claims have objects, and therefore can be objective: for Kant, ‘there is no objectivity without objects, there are no objects without reference, there is no reference without intuition’ (Brittan 2006:229). He argues that, for Kant, singular reference requires intuition, and a priori intuition is required in mathematics to show how mathematical claims are possible, i.e., to provide an account of how their subject terms manage to refer (Brittan 2006:229). Arguing against those who see the role of a priori intuition as evidential, or as necessary for proofs, Brittan says that ‘the fundamental issue for Kant has little to do with ‘proof.’ It is, rather, whether one can ‘determine’ the object of singular reference in mathematics in a purely conceptual or descriptive fashion’ (Brittan 2006:228). Further, he argues that it is not clear that the argument in the *Aesthetic* depends on or gives support to any particular body of geometrical knowledge, since the *Transcendental Aesthetic* seems to establish only very general topological features of space, and the ‘metricization’ of space is established only in the *Analytic* (Brittan 2006:227).

<sup>30</sup> As Lisa Shabel points out, Kant thinks that mathematical construction is ostensive, and that ‘to construct a mathematical concept one necessarily exhibits an intuition that displays its features manifestly’ (2006:101; A711–3/B739–41). In this sense of definition, *only* mathematical concepts can be defined (A729/B757).

construction both gives the concept an object and is general (A718–9/B746–7; A721/B749).<sup>31</sup> Important for our present purpose is that Kant insists that mathematical claims require objects which are immediately exhibited to us in intuition.<sup>32</sup> Both empirical and a priori intuitions immediately present their objects.

I have been discussing the first of my controversial claims, claim 2, which says that intuitions are representations which involve the presence to consciousness of the objects they present. The other controversial claim is 4; the idea here is that when you combine the idea of intuition, as I have explained it, with a priority, you get a representation which cannot present us with a mind-independent feature of reality. Kant says that:

‘An intuition is a representation of the sort which would depend immediately on the presence of an object. It therefore seems impossible *originally* to intuit *a priori*, since the intuition would have to occur without an object being present, either previously or now, to which it could refer, and so it could not be an intuition... There is therefore only one way possible for my intuition to precede the actuality of the object and occur in an a priori cognition, *namely if it contains nothing else except the form of sensibility, which in me as subject precedes all actual impressions through which I am affected by objects*’ (Proleg. 4:282).

Notice that the argument here specifically concerns a feature of *intuition*, not a priori cognition in general, and intuition is *contrasted* in this respect to concepts. Kant says: ‘Concepts are indeed of the kind that we can quite well form some of them for ourselves *a priori*... without our being in immediate relation to an object’ (Proleg. 4:282). My suggestion is that it is because of this crucial difference between concepts and intuitions—that intuitions do and concepts do not essentially involve the presence to consciousness of their objects—that a priori intuition cannot present a mind-independent feature of reality. The object of an a priori intuition is present to us independent of experience.

It may be thought stretched to talk about the a priori form of intuition as presenting *an object*. The object here is simply what it is that a priori intuition represents/presents; according to Kant, this is the structure of space and time, a structure which sets limits on what we can construct, and on what we can perceive. I am attributing to Kant the thought that the only way a mind-independent object could be directly present to us would involve its affecting us, so something which is present independently of anything affecting us is not a mind-independent object. An objection is that this might seem to be simply begging the question against the rationalist. I have two brief responses to this. The first is that Kant is certainly not the first person to have thought that it is mysterious how rational intuition can be a source of

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<sup>31</sup> Kant says ‘to **construct** a concept means to exhibit *a priori* the intuition corresponding to it. For the construction of a concept, therefore, a **non-empirical** intuition is required, which consequently, as intuition, is an **individual** object, but that must nevertheless, as the construction of a concept, express in the representation universal validity for all possible intuitions that belong under the same concept. Thus I construct a triangle by exhibiting an object corresponding to this concept, either through mere imagination, in pure intuition, or on paper, in empirical intuition, but in both cases completely *a priori*, without having to borrow the pattern for it from any experience’ (A713/B741).

<sup>32</sup> It might be objected that what Kant requires is objects which can possibly be given to intuition, not actual presence. This seems to me right with respect to Kant’s notion of objectivity. On Kant’s view, something is an object of possible experience if it *can* be given to us in intuition, and concepts have objective content (objective reality) if they can be given objects. Objects are actually given to us in intuitions, and this is true also of mathematical objects: mathematical claims have objective content because their objects can actually be given to us.

knowledge.<sup>33</sup> The second point is that Kant does not simply deny that rational insight can be a source of knowledge, he an explanation of this: knowledge requires the (possible) presence of to consciousness of its objects,<sup>34</sup> and, he thinks, we cannot give an account of how this presence can occur without objects causally interacting with us. It is not enough to seem to have insight, we need an account of how this apparent insight succeeds in being about anything. Kant thinks that the rationalist either incorrectly assumes that we can have knowledge of non-empirical objects (such as God and Cartesian souls) through mere conceptual description, or is unable to explain how we have the required acquaintance with these objects. Kant thinks that we simply cannot see how something independent could be present to us without affecting us. This is why it:

‘seems impossible *originally* to intuit *a priori*, since the intuition would have to occur without an object being present, either previously or now, to which it could refer, and so it could not be an intuition (*Proleg.* 4:282).

Of course, Kant thinks that a priori is not impossible, but this is because the object present is not mind-independent. Our representations of the structure of space and time do not present us with mind-independent features of reality.<sup>35</sup>

A possible objection might be to ask why an object which can be present to us independent of experience could not *also* be present to us in experience. We can, for example, represent things in dreams and hallucinations which can be present to us when we are not dreaming and hallucinating. However, in these cases it is not *the same thing* which is *present* in both cases. In a dream or hallucination, an object can be *merely* represented which is actually present in experience. But, according to Kant’s account of intuition, the object an a priori intuition represents is *actually present* to us independent of experience of mind-independent reality. Of course, Kant thinks that the structure of space and time is present to our minds when we experience empirical objects, but since this very structure does not depend for its presence to mind on our experiencing empirical objects, it cannot present us with a mind-independent feature of the world. The move here is similar to that of the standard argument from hallucination against direct realism. This argument says that what is directly present to the mind when we hallucinate is the same thing that is present to the mind in cases of ordinary perception; but what is present to the mind when we hallucinate is something mental, so what is present to the mind in cases of ordinary perception is something mental. On my reading of Kant he would reject this view of perception in general, because with respect to perception of ordinary objects the first premise is not true: the same object is not present in both cases.<sup>36</sup> However, in the case of a priori intuition, the very structure of space and time is present to us both in

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<sup>33</sup> As Penelope Maddy summarises the worry many have had about Platonism in mathematics: ‘how can human beings gain reliable beliefs about things incapable of interacting with their cognitive faculties?’ (1989:1136).

<sup>34</sup> We can have empirical knowledge of things which are actually presented to intuition, or which are in causal interaction with what is presented to intuition.

<sup>35</sup> Thus Kant’s case against the rationalist rests on his view that cognition requires both intuitions and concepts (and thus requires acquaintance with the objects of cognition), together with his belief that we have no way of making sense of acquaintance with mind-independent things without causation.

<sup>36</sup> Clearly, the position which follows from this will be complicated, since it involves saying that things are present to consciousness which are partly independent of us, but partly (in terms of their structure) dependent on our minds. This does not seem to me to be an interpretative objection, since it seems to me that transcendental idealism does involve this complex combination: Kant thinks that we are presented with things, but that we are not presented with things as they are in themselves (B164; A252; A276/B332).

experience and independent of our experience. This means that what is present to us is not a feature of mind-independent reality.

In philosophical accounts of perception, the argument from hallucination may be used to argue for idealism, but it may also be invoked in support of indirect realism, and in the latter case the proponent of the argument would think that although what is *directly* present to the mind is something mental, this mental content represents something in the mind-independent world. Thus, it might be objected that even if we grant that the structure that is present to us in our a priori intuition is something mental, it would not follow that it cannot *represent* a feature of mind-independent reality. Here what is crucial is the immediacy of intuition: intuitions are not representations which point beyond themselves to some object they picture or describe, rather, the object presented is a constituent of the intuition. Thus, although ‘Concepts are indeed of the kind that we can quite well form some of them for ourselves *a priori*...without our being in immediate relation to an object’ (*Proleg.* 4:282), a priori *intuition* does not present us with a feature of mind-independent reality.

This reading enables us to explain why Kant takes his conclusions to follow when he does. The suggestion is that we start with the idea that an a priori intuition could not present us with a mind-independent feature of reality, and then, in the *Metaphysical Exposition*, argue that our representation of space is a priori and is an intuition. It follows that ‘a) Space represents no property at all of any things in themselves nor any relation of them to each other’ and ‘b) Space is nothing other than merely the form of all appearances of outer sense, i.e., the subjective condition of sensibility, under which alone outer intuition is possible for us’ (A26/B42). While, on my account of the argument, some of Kant’s key premises have been insufficiently established, the claims which are left unargued are exactly those for which Kant does not provide argument, and, crucially, this account of the argument shows why Kant takes his conclusions to follow immediately at the end of the *Metaphysical Exposition*.

I have given an account of why Kant invokes mind-dependence, but it is a further question what kind of mind-dependence this is supposed to be. There is not space to go into this here, so I briefly note that it seems to me that the kind of mind-dependence involved here is something like anti-realism:<sup>37</sup> the idea that the spatio-temporal structure of the objects of experience has no features which go beyond what we can represent. I am not sure exactly how to formulate the view, but the idea seems to me to be that the only way the structure of objects could be present independent of experience is if it does not exist apart from the possibility of its presence to mind. Kant argues that the objectivity of mathematical claims requires objects which are exhibited in pure intuition; he does not claim that mathematical objects exist only as ideas in our minds, but that mathematical claims are limited to what can be constructed in intuition. Another question about transcendental idealism is how Kant gets from the claim that *space and time* are mind-dependent, to the claim that *objects* in space and time are mind-dependent. A quick way of explaining this move is to say that once we accept the mind-dependence of space, all Lockean primaries will go with it.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> See A376; A493/B521; A493–4/B521–2.

<sup>38</sup> One way of understanding the mind-dependence of appearances, suggested by Kant in the *Prolegomena* (4:289), is by analogy with a view of properties like colour which sees them as properties of objects (not mental states), but properties objects have only in relation to our possible perception of them. Kant’s claim is then that Lockean primaries are also like this; they exist only in relation to mind.

In the remainder of this paper I comment briefly on some implications of this way of reading the argument. The argument from synthetic a priori knowledge says that substantive a priori knowledge is mysterious and requires explanation, and that transcendental idealism dissolves the mystery. One thing that seems puzzling about synthetic a priori claims is how we could justify them, and, as we have seen, a common explanation of Kant's thought appeals to the idea that our minds being responsible for certain claims being true of the world makes intelligible our having a priori knowledge of them. The idea is that we need some account of how we have access to these claims, and the explanation is that they come from us, so what we access is simply ourselves. On my reading Kant's 'how possible' question does not concern how synthetic a priori claims are justified (mathematical claims are justified by the particular constructions and demonstrations, and metaphysical claims are justified by transcendental arguments),<sup>39</sup> but rather, how synthetic a priori claims can have objects: how there can be anything that they are about. Kant has a two part answer to this question. At the end of the Aesthetic, he says that we now have one part of the solution to the question of how synthetic a priori knowledge is possible: the pure intuitions of space and time (B73). A priori intuition explains how synthetic a priori knowledge in mathematics is possible: how such claims can have objects.

Crucially, the explanation of the possibility of metaphysical judgments is not straightforwardly the same as that of mathematics, because unlike mathematical concepts and propositions, the a priori concepts and propositions of metaphysics do not have objects that can be exhibited in pure intuition, so the answer to the question of how they can have objects cannot be the answer that was given for mathematics. Kant's solution is to appeal to the *possibility of experience*: a priori concepts in metaphysics do not, like a priori concepts in mathematics, have objects in pure intuition, but rather in the pure synthesis of intuition (A719–20/B747–8, see also A38–9/B53–4; A 156/B195; A217/B264; A721/B747; A737/B765; A782—3/B810–1). The question of how a priori concepts can have objects is answered by seeing that their objects are the objects that are presented to us in experience. Kant thinks he can show that the categories apply to objects presented in intuition by showing that intuition requires a priori synthesis, and that the categories are the rules of a priori synthesis, and he thinks that they have objects *only* if these objects can be presented to intuition (pure or empirical intuition).

Transcendental arguments establish claims about the conditions of the possibility of experience/empirical knowledge (or aspects of experience/empirical knowledge). Kant thinks that we have no justification in asserting that the conditions of empirical knowledge apply to everything that exists. However, we *are* justified in saying that they apply to all spatio-temporal objects, and this is because we have shown that spatio-temporal objects are mind-dependent: their existence is essentially linked to our being able to experience them.<sup>40</sup> It is because the objects of experience

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I discuss the secondary quality analogy in detail in Allais (2007).

<sup>39</sup> Cassam argues that transcendental arguments are neither necessary nor sufficient to answer 'how possible' questions in epistemology (2007: Ch. 2); on my reading of Kant, this is not a problem for him, since they are not intended to do this.

<sup>40</sup> Stroud (1968) famously argued that transcendental arguments like Kant's require the assumption of verificationism to bridge the gap between what we believe and what is true (1968: 252, 255). However, as I understand them, Kant's arguments assume empirical knowledge, and do not intend to establish claims about how we must think about things as being, but rather claims about what empirical knowledge requires. The idealism comes in to enable us to state that conditions of the possibility of

do not exist independent of our possible experience of them that the transcendental strategy of showing certain claims to be conditions of the possibility of experience can be seen to establish claims about all empirically real, spatio-temporal objects (A158/B197).

As many commentators have pointed out, successful transcendental arguments concerning conditions of the possibility of experience seem to establish conditionally necessary claims, and these claims do not look particularly mysterious. If we have a successful transcendental argument for the claim that every event has a cause, then we have shown that we can have empirical knowledge only of events which have necessitating causes. Given this, there does not appear to be much mystery about our knowing that every event that we can experience will have a necessitating cause. Because of this, Guyer has argued that Kant's concern must be not just with conditional necessities, but with absolute necessities. As Guyer sees it, Kant's claim is not that, necessarily, if we are to perceive an object then it is spatial and Euclidean, but that if we can perceive an object then it is necessarily spatial and Euclidean (1987:361–3). There are obvious problems with this reading. For one thing, attributing to Kant the view that the objects that we perceive are spatial and Euclidean in all possible worlds is not compatible with the idea that the necessities in question are not analytic.<sup>41</sup> Further, as Ameriks points out, knowledge of absolute necessity is in fact incompatible with, rather than uniquely explained by, transcendental idealism: 'Kant repeatedly claims that we cannot make absolute modality claims about phenomenal features; thus the Fourth Antinomy indicates that we need to be agnostic about saying that the world is absolutely necessary or that it is absolutely contingent' (Ameriks 1992:337, see A593–4/B621). However, I think Guyer is right to think that Kant does not take transcendental idealism to follow from our knowledge of the conditional necessities that his transcendental arguments establish. On my reading, transcendental idealism does not follow from the explanation of metaphysical claims, rather, the possibility of metaphysics follows from transcendental idealism, which in turn follows from the explanation of the possibility of geometry. The claims made in Euclidean geometry are not part of metaphysics, and are not conditions of the possibility of experience, and on my reading, the explanation of the possibility of geometry is not the exactly same as the explanation of the possibility of metaphysics. While both require *a priori* intuition, they differ in that the explanation of geometry leads to, rather than requires, idealism, while, on Kant's view, his metaphysical claims require idealism.

It might be thought that since synthetic *a priori* claims require something that is (on my reading) essentially mind-dependent—a *a priori* intuition—my view still amounts to saying that it is because we insert something mind-dependent into synthetic *a priori* claims that we can have knowledge of them. It might therefore be said that on my reading idealism is still part of the general explanation of synthetic *a priori* claims. My response to this is that while it is true that, according to my reading, *a priori* intuition is essentially a representation of something mind-dependent, it is not this feature of *a priori* intuition which explains the possibility of geometry. What

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empirical knowledge are true of all spatio-temporal objects.

<sup>41</sup> Kant explicitly says that the claim that 'all things are next to each other in space' is valid only conditionally—given that these things are taken as objects of our sensible intuition (A27–8/B43–4). Kant also says that 'neither absolute nor relative determinations can be intuited prior to the existence of the things to which they pertain, and thus be intuited *a priori*' (A26/B42), suggesting that his concern is not with knowledge of absolute necessity, but with cognition of synthetic *a priori* propositions more generally.

explains the possibility of geometry is that we have a representation of space which enables us to go beyond what is merely contained in the relevant concepts by presenting us with an object, and which does this a priori.<sup>42</sup> The alternative reading sees Kant's concern as with the question of how we can be justified in asserting that geometry applies not just to all the objects which we have experienced, but to all possible objects. On my reading, on the other hand, Kant's concern is with the question of how claims which are not just about relations between concepts, but which are independent of experience, can be about anything, how it can be possible for them to have objects.

A consideration strongly in favour of this reading is that it avoids three serious problems with the alternative reading: 1) why we should assume that we have a priori access to that for which our minds are 'responsible'; 2) whether Kant's solution is self-defeating, and 3) the so-called neglected alternative. In terms of the first problem, my reading does not require that we have a priori access to the cognitive constitution of our minds. In terms of the second, on my account, Kant is not saying that all synthetic a priori claims must be explained by the idea that our minds make them true, but rather that all synthetic a priori claims require a priori intuition.<sup>43</sup> Kant will, of course, need arguments for the claims that all knowledge requires intuition, as well as for his claim that empirical intuition requires a priori intuition, but the account is not self-defeating. The 'neglected alternative' objection says that Kant assumes that space must be either the a priori form of our intuition, or a feature of the way things mind-independently are, and neglects the possibility that it could be both.<sup>44</sup> It is important to notice that the claim that things in themselves are not spatio-temporal is not exactly what Kant asserts in the Aesthetic (although he does provide argument for it in the Antinomies). In the Aesthetic he says that space and time represent no property of things in themselves or relations between things in themselves (*Der Raum stellet gar keine Eigenschaft irgend einiger Dinger an sich, oder sie in ihrem Verhältnis auf einander vor* A26/B42). In other words, he says that our representations of space and time do not present us with mind-independent features of reality. This is not a positive claim about the nature of things as they are in themselves, but about our representations: our representations of space and time do not present us with mind-independent features of reality. Even if there were something like space and time in (entirely) mind-independent reality, this something would not be that of which our representation of space is a representation.

The reading of the argument presented here has implications for the much debated issue of how much Kant's argument depends on his belief that the geometry of space is Euclidean, and that this is knowable a priori. On my account of the argument, Kant does not explain the possibility of knowledge of geometry by saying that our minds make it the case that geometrical claims are true of objects. Further,

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<sup>42</sup> Van Cleve interprets the argument from geometry as saying truths about geometry follow from what we can construct only if they do not describe things as they are in themselves (2002:36). On my reading, Kant thinks that truths about geometry can follow from what we can construct only if we have a priori intuition (A713/B741).

<sup>43</sup> The B Preface's summary that we can know a priori of objects only what we ourselves put into them can be seen as a statement of the position which follows from Kant's explanation of geometry, and which explains how synthetic a priori knowledge in *metaphysics* is possible, rather than a claim about the source of the justification of all a priori knowledge.

<sup>44</sup> The objection assumes that Kant is committed to there being mind-independent reality which has a nature in itself and which we cannot have knowledge of; this assumption is rejected by a number of commentators, for example Bird 2006.

my reading of the argument does not see Euclidean geometry as a condition of the possibility of experience, nor does it see our having specific a priori knowledge of the structure of space as a condition of the possibility of experience. Rather, what is both a condition of the possibility of experience, and a condition of the possibility of geometry, is that there is an a priori form of our intuition.

A final implication of my interpretation of the argument concerns the interpretation of transcendental idealism. In his summary presentation of the argument from a priori cognition in the B preface, Kant suggests that the argument applies in a parallel way with respect to a priori intuitions and a priori concepts; correspondingly, transcendental idealism is frequently thought of as involving the idea that our a priori forms of intuition and our a priori categories play a similar role in structuring the objects of experience. The reading of the argument presented here questions the tightness of this parallel, since the argument turns on a specific feature of the notion of intuition which means that a priori intuition does not present a mind-independent feature of reality. This same impossibility does not apply to a priori concepts; rather, they are unable to give us knowledge of reality as it is in itself because without intuition they do not have objects, and it follows from this, Kant thinks, that our a priori concepts and a priori principles are limited to the mind-dependent spatio-temporal objects that are presented to our intuition. This suggests the possibility of a reading of transcendental idealism according to which the idealism (however this is understood) is fully established in the Transcendental Aesthetic, while Kant's concern in the Deduction is simply to *limit* the categories to whatever kind of mind-dependence the a priori forms of intuition involve.<sup>45</sup>

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I have presented an account of Kant's central argument for transcendental idealism which does not appeal to idealism as the general explanation of synthetic a priori knowledge. Rather, the general explanation of synthetic a priori knowledge is a priori intuition. According to my reading of the Kantian notion of intuition, intuitions are representations which involve the presence to consciousness of the object they represent: intuitions present their objects. I have suggested that this means that what an a priori intuition presents cannot be a feature of mind-independent reality. Thus, establishing that our representation of space is the a priori form of our intuition shows that space does not present us with a feature of mind-independent reality. It is therefore nothing but the a priori form of our intuition. Once we have established this, Kant thinks, we can see how it is that arguments which establish conclusions about the conditions of empirical knowledge can be known to apply to all spatio-temporal objects. This account of Kant's argument enables us to respond to some traditional worries about it, as well as to explain why Kant takes his conclusions to follow at the point at which he does. It also highlights the point at which we need to put pressure if we want to evaluate Kant's argument: the claim that experience requires an a priori form of intuition, and the idea that something independent of us cannot be present to

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<sup>45</sup> See Bxxv–xxvi; A236/B296; A246/B303; A248/B304 for the idea that Kant's point with respect to the categories is that they are *limited* to the objects presented in a *a priori* intuition. The problem with respect to the categories is not that we cannot make sense of the idea of a priori concepts representing mind-independent reality, but rather that, like all concepts, a priori concepts do not supply their objects, and cannot succeed in referring to anything without something given in intuition. See Watkins (2002) and Pogge (1991) for a discussion of the lack of parallel in Kant's position with respect to a priori intuition and a priori concepts.

consciousness without causally interacting with us.<sup>46</sup>

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