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Much Ado about ‘Something (*Etwas*)’: ‘Noumenon’, ‘Thing in Itself’, and ‘Transcendental Distinction’ in Kant’s Meta-metaphysical Thought Experiment

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Abstract

Detailed analysis of the expression ‘things in general and in themselves’ reveals two further uses of ‘noumenon’ (and ‘thing in itself’) in addition to the ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ senses distinguished by Kant himself. It follows (*pace* various ‘reductive’ interpretations) that Kant’s transcendental distinction comprises four different contrasts. On a new resolution of the long-running ‘one or two objects?’ dispute, there follows a complete re-interpretation of Kant’s transcendental distinction as a meta-metaphysical thought experiment. It has the ‘metaphysical density’ necessary to forestall charges of ‘innocuousness’ without giving purchase to the well-known objections that have dogged Kant’s transcendental distinction from its inception.

Keywords: transcendental distinction; noumenon; one-objectism; meta-metaphysics; thought experiment

1. Introduction

In an intriguing essay on the errors of Leibnizian metaphysics appended to the Transcendental Analytic (‘On the amphiboly of the concepts of reflection’, hereafter: the Amphiboly), Kant makes no secret of his profound admiration for his great German predecessor even as he takes him to task for having misapplied to the world of sensible appearances a set of metaphysical principles that *would* hold true for absolutely everything *if* ordinary human experience of sensible things were indeed (as Leibniz held) just a welter of obscure and confused sensory representations of an intelligible reality that is clearly and distinctly knowable through the pure understanding alone. But, for one thing, this *logical* difference in degree of clarity and distinctness is not Kant’s transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves (cf. A43–6/B61–3); and, for another, the *Critique* establishes that things cannot be known even only as they appear, let alone as they are in themselves, through concepts and principles of the pure understanding alone, unaided by the

sensible faculties of the mind, both pure and empirical (cf. A51/B75, A76-7/B102, *et passim*).¹

Far from dismissing it outright, then, the Amphiboly enters sympathetically into the exotic thought-world of Leibnizian metaphysics, deriving the latter's most notorious principles from the very 'concepts of reflection' (A268/B324) from which Kant's own categories are said to spring, and treating them charitably, as rational insights that would in fact be applicable to everything without restriction if they indeed disclosed an intelligible reality of which the sensible were just a pale simulacrum. As for the metaphysical principles that the *Critique* sets out in the chapter entitled 'System of All Principles of Pure Understanding', the situation is in one respect similar, in another quite the reverse. For unlike Leibniz's principles, Kant's are shown to be necessarily true for all actual *and possible* sensible appearances; but, like Leibniz's, Kant's own principles are declared utterly devoid of 'significance (*Bedeutung*)' when applied to 'all things in general' (Bxxvii).²

The purpose of this brief foray into the Amphiboly is to stress the centrality of the concepts 'all things in general' (Bxxvii; cf. A334/B391; A582/B660; A694/B722), 'objects in general' (A56/B1; cf. A63/B88; A130; A235/B294), and 'things in general and in themselves' (B410; cf. also A238/B298) in Kant's critical enterprise. All refer to that unrestricted sphere of application that dogmatic rationalists (following Leibniz) claimed for their metaphysical first principles, whereas the hallmark of Kant's own critical rationalism is precisely the restriction of metaphysical and other synthetic a priori principles to all 'appearances in general (*überhaupt*)' (A31/B46; cf. A34/B50-1, A138/B177, A156/B195, and A494/B522). Now the class of all 'appearances in general' is of course *included* in the unrestricted scope of the above expressions; this much is clear from the Amphiboly itself, where the operative distinction is between 'an object in general (in the transcendental sense), *without further determining whether this is an object of sensible or intellectual intuition*' (A279/B335 e.a.), and an object in general in the *empirical* sense, that is, an object of *our* human *sensible* intuition. But Kant's concept of 'things in general and in themselves' encompasses more than just the infinite class of all objects of human experience, both actual *and possible* (hence: *infinite* class); it includes also objects of a putative other-than-human (but still sensible) intuition (cf. B72), and even objects of a supposed *non-sensible* faculty of intellectual intuition (cf. A249) that creates its objects by intuiting them and so cannot fail to conceive them as they are in themselves since it creates them exactly as it conceives them – failing which, it would not create *them* at all. By contrast, 'all appearances in general' refers to the infinite class of actual and possible objects of human sensory experience alone.³

This paper sets out to catalogue the several sorts of objects, in addition to appearances, that fall within the *hyperextension* of the expression 'things in general and in themselves' and its equivalents, disambiguating the expressions 'thing in itself', 'noumenon', and 'transcendental distinction'. Ever since Jacobi's famous *cris du coeur*: '**without** this presupposition [affection of the senses as a *causal* relation between two *existing* entities, the mind and a noumenal object], I could not find my way into the system, whereas **with** it, I could not stay there' (Jacobi 2000: 173), Kant's transcendental distinction has been subjected to a barrage of *prima facie* unanswerable objections. What gives purchase to these persistent and well-known problems is a marked tendency on the part of the commentators to reduce a complex of molecular distinctions elaborated over the course of the entire *Critique* to that single-molar

transcendental distinction introduced in the B-Preface and deployed throughout the Transcendental Aesthetic and most of the Analytic. And yet it is obvious, on reflection, that the noumenal objects of the three metaphysical pseudo-sciences examined in the Transcendental Dialectic differ from those ‘causes’ of sensation contrasted with appearances in the Transcendental Aesthetic; and that these latter differ in turn from the noumena ‘in a **positive** sense’ to which they are juxtaposed in the Phenomena and Noumena chapter. Less obvious, perhaps, is the fact that all three differ from the noumenal objects of the unschematized categories considered in the Amphiboly. Despite these more or less evident differences, the reductive tendency has largely prevailed. It is partly responsible for the widespread conviction that Kant’s transcendental distinction is philosophically unsalvageable short of abandoning any metaphysical in favour of an epistemological or meta-epistemological interpretation. In what follows it will be argued that Kant’s transcendental distinctions [plural!] are readily defensible as components of an elaborate meta-metaphysical *thought experiment* whose historical origins lie in an onto-theological creation story dating back to the early Middle Ages, but which was still very much part of the philosophical culture of Kant’s age.

The argument comprises five stages. In the first, those further meanings of ‘noumenon’ just alluded to are assigned their proper places alongside the positive and negative senses that Kant himself distinguished in the Phenomena and Noumena chapter (section 2). With this *fourfold* concept of the noumenon or thing in itself in hand, it is possible to distinguish various narrower and wider senses of the term ‘transcendental distinction’ as well, pre-empting in the process that reductive interpretation just mentioned and others as well (section 3). At the same time, it becomes apparent that epistemological ‘one-object’, no less than metaphysical ‘two-object’ interpretations, *both* capture important features of Kant’s transcendental distinctions (see section 4). The challenge will be to preserve what is valuable in them in a new, one-or-many-object interpretation involving not just two, but *multiple* modes of existence of the same or numerically distinct things. In this way, Kant’s transcendental distinctions can be shielded against all those objections predicated on the assumption that his intention is to *assert* rather than merely make ‘room’ (Bxxi, Bxxx, A286/B343, A288/B344) for other things and other modes of existence besides those that exist as appearances. For these *other* things and their modes of existence, it will be argued, are brought into play only *problematically* or hypothetically in the context of a meta-metaphysical thought experiment (see section 5). The brief conclusion (section 6) casts a cursory glance at Kant’s metaphysics of morals after first assembling the various ‘exhibits’ making up the ‘case for the prosecution’ of transcendental idealism on the charge that the ‘doctrine is not merely that we can have no knowledge of a supersensible reality’, but ‘that reality is supersensible and that we can have no knowledge of it’ (Strawson 1966: 38). Well before this point, reasons will have already emerged for thinking that adoption of a meta-epistemological alternative is neither a promising nor the only strategy by which to build a solid case for Kant’s transcendental distinction.

2. The fourfold meaning of ‘noumenon’

First and foremost, Kant’s expression ‘things in general and in themselves’ includes in its hyperextension, along with appearances, (a) all those ‘non-sensible (*nichtsimlich*)’

(A494/B522) objects that Kant invokes as the ‘intelligible ground’ (A545/B573; A563/B591) or ‘transcendental substratum of outer appearances’ (A383). In view of its complete indeterminateness, Kant calls this unknown ‘cause of appearance (thus not itself appearance)’ (A288/B444) a mere ‘something (*Etwas*)’ (three times at A358, once at A372) and a ‘something in general (*Etwas überhaupt*)’ (B307). He also refers to it as a ‘transcendental object’ (using either *Objekt* or *Gegenstand*) in many places (cf. A46/B63, A191/B236, A277/B333, A288/B344, A358, A366, A372, A379–80, A393–4, A494–5/B522–3, A557/B585, and A613/B641), though this must be distinguished from another use of the same expression for something which, as he states explicitly, ‘cannot be called **noumenon**’ (A253).⁴ The ‘intelligible ground’ of appearances is, of course, also called a noumenon (in the *negative* sense specified at B307) as well as a thing in itself (see the quotation from the *Groundwork* below).⁵

This noumenon in what will be called sense (a) is undoubtedly Kant’s *main* use of ‘noumenon’ in the *Critique* and the sole use of ‘thing in itself’ up to the end of the first-edition Transcendental Analytic proper: the ‘Something (*Etwas*)’ about which there has been *most* ado in the critical reception of Kant’s transcendental distinction. And rightly so. For one thing, Kant’s doctrine of affection appears to be in blatant violation of his own ‘restriction thesis’ (Allison 2015: 291), which prohibits application of the categories (here both ‘existence’ and ‘causality’) to any but the objects of possible experience; and, for another, it seems to be a gross ‘violation of noumenal ignorance’ (Robinson 1994: 422), to say nothing of the so-called affection problem: noumena in this sense can no more cause changes in our external sense receptors than can appearances; not appearances, because, as objects first constituted on the basis of sensory affection, they cannot (without circularity) be the causes of sensory affection; and not noumena, for the very reasons noted by Allison and Robinson (among others). And yet *without* the distinction of appearances from noumena in this first sense, Kant’s Copernican reversal of the epistemological model of metaphysical realism (in both its empiricist and rationalist forms) simply cannot ‘get off the ground’. For only the ‘objects of the senses and the understanding for experience’ (B xviii n.) can plausibly be said to ‘conform to our cognition’ (Bxvi), that is, to the *subjective* conditions under which alone they can be experienced; to say as much of those same or other things considered as *existing in themselves* without relation to our minds would be *prima facie* absurd.

With the Copernican reversal of the Transcendental Analytic complete, however, Kant introduces three further senses of ‘noumenon’ and ‘thing in itself’, each required for the achievement of some specific aim of the *Critique*. After the Phenomena and Noumena chapter introduces the noumenon ‘in a **positive** sense’ for the object of the divine *nous*, the Amphiboly engages in a little noticed use of ‘thing in itself’ and ‘noumenon’ for the object of the pure (in the sense of ‘unschematized’) categories. And in the Transcendental Dialectic, the terms ‘transcendental object’ and ‘thing in itself’ that had been used throughout the Analytic to designate the non-sensible object *behind* the appearances are applied chiefly to the ‘supersensible (*übersinnlich*)’ (Bxxi) objects of pure *reason*, (i) God, (ii) the rational soul, and (iii) the world as that unconditioned totality of all things which no human experience can ever completely encompass. The expression ‘things in general and in themselves’ thus comes to include in its hyperextension this (b) trio of super-sensible objects *beyond* the world of appearances.⁶ While the latter are not called noumena anywhere in the *Critique*, but

rather ‘problems of pure reason’ (A3/B7), ‘being[s] of reason’ (twice at A681/B709), and the like, in the *Prolegomena* Kant remarks that ‘we should then think for ourselves an immaterial being [the rational soul], and intelligible world [as a complete totality] and the highest of all beings [God] (*all noumena*), because only in these things, as things in themselves, does *reason* find completion and satisfaction’ (P, 4: 354 e.a.). Even if these super-sensible objects were not explicitly so called in the *Prolegomena*, it would be none the less certain that they *are* things in themselves, since the ideas of pure reason are required in order to complete a series of conditioned things in themselves rather than appearances, and only what *belongs* to such a series can complete it.⁷ The parenthetical ‘*all noumena*’, on the other hand, seems almost redundant, for apart from *enabling* the Copernican reversal, Kant’s distinction of phenomena from noumena is equally intended to *forestall* all pretensions to metaphysical knowledge of super-sensible objects *beyond* the realm of appearances. Given this its role in relation to the three branches of Wolffian *metaphysica specialis*, it is obvious that this is a different sense of ‘noumenon’ from that considered first. For one thing, while the ‘transcendental object’ in the first, negative sense of ‘noumenon’ is in most cases (see section 4) the very *same* object that appears, though *considered as existing in itself*, there is no question but that the three super-sensible objects of rational psychology, cosmology, and theology are numerically distinct entities from all sensible appearances. They do not, nor *can* they, appear, while noumena in the first sense do or at least can.⁸

It is true, of course, that neither in the *Critique* nor in the *Prolegomena* does Kant make any such *terminological* distinction as has just been drawn between (a) noumena ‘behind’ and (b) noumena ‘beyond’ the sensible world. But in the *Groundwork* he remarks of the former that ‘we must admit and assume *behind* appearances something else that is not appearance, namely things in themselves’ (G, 4: 451 e.a.); and in *The Progress of Metaphysics* he speaks of ‘super-sensible objects, of God, of our own capacity for freedom, and of our soul (in separation from the body)’ (PM, 20: 296), whereby ‘super’ (*über*) plainly has the sense of ‘beyond’ (Latin: *trans*, Greek: *metá*). Unfortunately, this further use of ‘noumenon’ and ‘thing in itself’ in what has just been labelled sense (b) only seems to aggravate Kant’s problems. Martin (1955: 148, 158, 189), who distinguishes just two senses of ‘thing in itself’, one corresponding to *part* of (b), namely God and finite rational souls, the other corresponding to (a), that is, the intelligible causes of *outer* appearances, taxes Kant with illegitimately applying, not just the categories of causality and existence, but also ‘unity’, ‘multiplicity’ (both categories of quantity), ‘reality’ (quality), ‘substance’ (a category of relation), as well as the other two modal categories, ‘possibility’ and ‘necessity’ – in short, ‘nearly all’ (p. 198) the categories to ‘noumena’ in one or the other of his two senses.

Before turning next to the Phenomena and Noumena chapter and the noumenon ‘in a **positive** sense’, it is worth noting that Kant also calls the super-sensible objects of *reason* ‘beings of thought’ in the *Prolegomena* (P, 4: 349), and even, surprisingly, ‘being[s] of the understanding’ (P, 4: 352 e.a.) rather than reason. Still, *Verstandeswesen* may just be a literal rendering of the Greek *nooúmenon* (cf. *Noumena oder Verstandeswesen* in Refl CXXXI in Kant’s copy of the first *Critique*, 23: 36), and a use therefore only apparently at odds with Kant’s many statements to the effect that God, the world-totally, and the rational soul are the objects of the pure concepts of *reason* rather than the understanding. In the *Critique*, ‘being of the understanding’ occurs

only once (A562/B591), but again, disconcertingly, in reference to the necessary being, God, the object of an idea of reason. Had Kant always been as attentive as he sometimes is to his own distinction between the two higher cognitive faculties in man, he would have reserved 'being of the understanding' for two *other* classes of objects *besides* noumena in sense (a). One of these he calls 'extra-sensible (*außersinnlich*)' (A287/B343) as distinct from both (a) non- (*nicht-*) and (b) super- (*über-*) sensible objects. This extra-sensible object of God's intuitive understanding is 'the noumenon in a **positive** sense' (B307) or in what will be called sense (c). The other perfectly correct use of 'being of the understanding' is explained most fully in a passage of the *Prolegomena* (P, 4: 332) to be cited below, where it is applied, along with the term 'NOUMENA', to objects of the pure or unschematized categories. The object of this fourth use of 'noumenon' and 'thing in itself' can be called *insensible* and will be referred to as the noumenon in sense (d). It has been amply documented by Allison (1996, note 13 provides many examples). Whether or not, as Allison maintains, the use of 'noumenon' in sense (d) is merely a modification of its use in sense (a) (see n. 14 below), there can be no question but that the Dialectic inaugurates an altogether different use, or that the same is true of the Phenomena and Noumena chapter, to be considered next.

This new use of 'noumenon' is found first in the following passage (replaced in the second edition) of the Phenomena and Noumena chapter:

Appearances, to the extent that as objects they are thought in accordance with the unity of the categories, are called *phaenomena*. If, however, I suppose there to be things that are merely objects of the understanding and that, nevertheless, can be given to an intuition, although not to sensible intuition (as *coram intuitu intellectuali*), then such things would be called *noumena* (*intelligibilia*). (A248-49)

Attempting to disambiguate the latinized Greek term *noumena* in the second edition, Kant contrasts the noumenon in sense (a) with that in sense (c) as follows:

if we call certain objects, as appearances, beings of sense (*phaenomena*), because we distinguish the way in which we intuit them from their constitution in themselves, then it already follows from our concept that to these [appearances] we, as it were, oppose, as objects thought merely through the understanding, *either* [a] the [numerically] *same* objects [as appear] (*eben dieselbe*, modernized by Hartenstein to the strong declension *eben dieselben*), [but] conceived in accordance with the latter constitution [i.e. with 'their constitution in themselves'], even though we do not intuit it in them, or [c] *other* possible things, which are not objects of our senses at all, and call them [both, i.e. both (a) and (c)] beings of the understanding (noumena). (B306 e.a.)

The description of the first class of 'beings of the understanding' or noumena is an unmistakable reference to *non*-sensible things in themselves or noumena in sense (a). For they are, to the extent that they appear, 'the [numerically] same objects' as their appearances, but *considered* differently, or better, considered *also* as *existing* in themselves. What, however, does Kant mean by 'other possible things which are not

objects of our senses at all? The juxtaposition of ‘the same objects’ with ‘other objects’ suggests that the latter, *unlike* the former, differ numerically from those objects that appear to us.⁹ Now the super-sensible objects, God, the rational soul, and the world-totality, fit this description; moreover, they are designated ‘beings of the understanding’ and noumena, if not in the *Critique*, so at least in the *Prolegomena*. But the sequel makes it clear that Kant understands something else by ‘other possible things’. Disambiguating ‘noumenon’ still further in the next paragraph, he juxtaposes noumena in sense (a), which he now designates ‘noumena in the **negative** sense’, with (c) the objects of a purely intellectual intuition such as only the divine understanding is capable of, calling the latter the noumena ‘in a **positive** sense’:

If by a noumenon we understand a thing **insofar as it is not an object of our sensible intuition**, because we abstract from the manner of our intuition of it, then this is a noumenon in the **negative** sense [i.e. in sense (a)]. But if we understand by that an **object of a non-sensible intuition**, then we assume a special kind of intuition, which, however, is not our own, and the possibility of which we cannot understand, and this would be [c] the noumenon in a **positive** sense. (B307)

The contrast here is between (a) *not* being an object of sensible intuition, which is merely a negative description, and (c) being the object of a *non-sensible* or intellectual intuition, which is positive. Leaving further comment on the question of numerical distinctness for later (see section 4), three observations are in order regarding noumena in this positive sense.

The first is merely terminological. While (a) the noumenon in the negative sense is consistently described as *non-sensible* (*nichtsinnlich*) by Kant, (c) the noumenon in the positive sense is called ‘extra-sensible (*außersinnlich*)’ (A287/B343). Even if not something on which Kant lays any stress, the distinction among (a) non-, (b) super-, and (c) extra-sensible objects or noumena is both present in the text of the *Critique* (though, admittedly, with only a single occurrence of *außersinnlich*) and useful for purposes of disengaging three quite distinct senses of ‘noumenon’ or ‘thing in itself’. At the beginning of the next section, some Latin equivalents, based on Kant’s own usage, will be introduced for the same purpose.¹⁰

Secondly, Kant at times refers to *intellectual* intuition (*intuitus intellectualis*) instead of ‘non-sensible intuition’ (A286/B442) when speaking of the extra-sensible object or objects of the divine understanding (e.g. B72; cf. A249, B307, B308, A279/B335, Refl CXXXI, 23: 36, and CLX, 23: 39). For, according to the deleted passage from the A edition quoted above, noumena in sense (c) – literally, ‘things thought by the divine nous’ – are ‘merely objects of an understanding . . . which nevertheless can be given as such to an intuition, although not to a sensible intuition (thus *coram intuitu intellectuali*)’ (A249). As Kant explains elsewhere (cf. ID, 2: 396, CPJ, 5: 407–8, RPT, 8: 391, Corr, 10: 130, and Refl CXIII, 23: 35), the *intuitus intellectualis* of the divine *ens originarium* differs from the *intuitus derivativus* (B72) of created minds in that it brings its objects into existence spontaneously through the very act of intuiting them.¹¹

The third and final observation concerns what was earlier referred to as the merely problematic or thought-experimental status of Kant’s transcendental distinction. It is important to note that the use of ‘negative’ in the phrase ‘noumenon

in the **negative** sense' (B307) is not his only use of that term with reference to noumena. While the above is the *locus classicus* for the *strict* use of 'negative', Kant also applies it in a loose sense to all those '**boundary**' (cf. A254/B310) concepts whose objects are only '**problematically**' (ibid.) asserted to exist, that is, to concepts for the existence of whose objects there is only 'room' or 'space' (*Raum* or *Platz*), without its being possible to assert positively (within theoretical philosophy at least) that they possess 'objective reality' (ibid.) or are non-empty. Thus, at the end of the Amphiboly, Kant startlingly refers to 'objects of a non-sensible intuition' (A286/B342), that is, to (c) noumena in the *positive* sense, as '*noumena* in this negative sense' (ibid.). He is not, of course, confounding noumena in sense (c) with noumena in sense (a), having only just introduced a sharp distinction between the two in the preceding Phenomena and Noumena chapter; rather, 'negative' is being used here in a different, loose sense to signify that the *problematic* concept of the noumenon in sense (c) 'serves for nothing but to designate the boundaries of our sensible cognition and leave open a space (*Raum*) that we can fill up neither through possible experience nor through the understanding' (A288-89/B345). And if even (c) the noumenon 'in a **positive** sense' is negative in the sense of 'merely problematic', then (a) the noumenon in the negative sense is *doubly* so: on the one hand, in the strict sense of '**not an object of our sensible intuition**' (B307), and on the other, in the loose sense of serving 'for nothing but to designate the boundaries of our sensible cognition' (A288/B345). As for those (b) noumena which are the super-sensible objects of reason, they too are problematic or negative in the loose sense, and are so described (that is, as problematic, not as negative) in the famous passage of the second Preface: 'I had to deny **knowledge** in order to make room (*um Platz zu machen*) for **faith**' (Bxxx). And the same can be said of noumena in sense (d), the objects of the unschematized categories alone: a *space* must be reserved for objects such as the categories represent on their own, if only to show why it too can never be 'filled up' without the contribution of the sensible faculty. The third point, then, can be put this way: 'problematic' and 'negative' in the *loose sense* being interchangeable concepts, all four concepts of the noumenon are merely problematic or negative, while the first is negative in a further, strict sense of the term. This is vital to the argument (see section 5) that 'noumenon' designates an object whose existence is not assumed as a matter of metaphysical doctrine, but only hypothesized as part of an elaborate meta-metaphysical thought experiment.¹²

While the enumeration carried out so far covers three different sorts of noumena that fall within the extension of 'thing in general and in itself', there remains a further sense of 'being of the understanding' and 'beings of thought' still to be considered. It has already been designated the *insensible* (as opposed to the *non-*, *super-*, and *extra-*sensible) object and the noumenon in sense (d). It is the thing in itself in this sense that Kant has in mind where, in the Amphiboly chapter, he speaks of 'merely intelligible objects' that are 'determinable in accordance with mere concepts' (A285/B341) and of 'things that are thought through pure categories without any schema of sensibility' (A286/B342); and it is again noumena in this fourth sense that are intended where, in the Antinomies, he speaks of 'objects given to the mere understanding' (A500/B528) and the 'thing in itself thought through pure [i.e. unschematized] concepts of the understanding' (A525/B553). But the clearest reference is perhaps that found in the *Prolegomena* passage mentioned above:

[B]ecause the categories are themselves unable to find any intuition that could provide them with significance and sense *in concreto*, they cannot in and of themselves provide any determinate concept of anything at all, although they can indeed, as mere logical functions, represent a thing in general. Now hyperbolic objects of this kind ['a thing in general' in the sense of an *insensible object*] are what are called NOUMENA or pure beings of the understanding (better: beings of thought) – such as, e.g. *substance*, but which is thought *without persistence* in time, or *cause*, which would however *not act in time*, and so on. (P 4: 332).¹³

It is not surprising that in the Amphiboly and Antinomies Kant should have found it opportune to introduce a new idea of the noumenal that brings the specifically Leibnizian conception of 'things in themselves and as objects of mere understanding' (A206/B251-2) within the ambit of his general critique of *all* dogmatic (as distinct from Kant's own, merely negative or 'problematic') distinctions. In the Transcendental Dialectic, that initial transcendental distinction which, in the Analytic, had been contrasted with both the 'empirical' distinction of Locke (A45-6/B62-3) and the 'merely logical' distinction of 'Leibniz-Wolffian philosophy' (A44/B61-2) was expanded to address the claims of contemporary rational psychology, cosmology, and theology regarding knowledge of super-sensible objects; and, in the Phenomena and Noumena chapter, it underwent a further amplification to ward off any confusion of Kant's problematic transcendental with the dogmatic Augustinian distinction between our sensible and a divine, intellectual intuition that knows extra-sensible objects as they are in themselves by bringing them into existence exactly as it conceives them. Kant, in short, is not equivocating, but consciously articulating the original distinction of the Transcendental Aesthetic and Analytic the better to address metaphysical theories that dogmatically ascribe other modes of existence to the same objects that appear or else posit numerically different objects having other modes of existence than sensible appearances. Since, near the beginning of the Amphiboly chapter, he draws an implicit contrast between *sensibilia* and these '*intelligibilia*, objects of the pure understanding' (A264/B320), the designation '*insensible object*' fits this final sense of 'noumenon' well enough.¹⁴

3. The narrower and wider senses of 'transcendental distinction'

In turning next to the expression 'transcendental distinction', it may not be amiss (in a Kantian context at least) to resort to a convenient Latin shorthand for the four senses of 'thing in itself' or 'noumenon' just distinguished. Picking up on Kant's use of 'without' (Latin: *sine* or *absque*) at B307 ('things that the understanding must think without [*ohne*] this relation to our kind of intuition'), and expanding his use of *coram* at A249 (*coram intuitu intellectuali*), the expressions *absque intuitu sensibili* and *coram intuitu sensibili* can be employed to capture the main transcendental distinction drawn in the B-Preface and put to work immediately in the Transcendental Aesthetic and throughout most of the Analytic.¹⁵ The same Latin terms can serve for another contrast as well. Kant's distinction of the negative from the positive sense of 'noumenon' can be captured by contrasting the object as it exists *absque intuitu sensibili* with the object considered as existing *coram intuitu intellectuali*. Furthermore,

the object existing *coram intuitu intellectuali* may be contrasted with the object considered as existing *coram intellectu humano puro* to mark the change the term ‘thing in itself’ undergoes as Kant passes from the Phenomena and Noumena chapter to the Amphiboly. Adding to the foregoing, as a convenient shorthand for the trio of noumena of the Transcendental Dialectic, objects existing *coram ratione humana*, Kant’s transcendental distinction may be said to be one between objects *considered* as existing *coram intuitu sensibili* (appearances), on the one hand, and, on the other, *either* the *same* objects considered as existing in three *other* ways (*absque intuitu sensibili*, *coram intuitu intellectuali*, and *coram intellectu humano puro*), or a class of numerically *different* objects existing *coram ratione humana*. All this maps neatly onto the earlier distinction of sensible from (a) non-sensible (*absque intuitu sensibili*), (b) super-sensible (*coram ratione humana*), (c) extra-sensible (*coram intuitu intellectuali*), and (d) insensible (*coram intellectu humano puro*) objects; but it takes for granted both a very broad sense of ‘transcendental distinction’ involving all four contrasts and assumes that it is *solely* in the case of super-sensible objects that Kant’s distinction is a two-object theory. The first assumption will be defended in the remainder of the present, the second qualified in the next section.

It is true that, where first introduced in the B-Preface (Bxviii, Bxxi), the transcendental distinction concerns *only* (a), absolutely existing *non*-sensible things or noumena in the negative sense. In the Phenomena and Noumena chapter, where the expression (c) ‘noumenon in a **positive** sense’ is first introduced, Kant even issues a stern warning that his ‘doctrine of sensibility is at the same time a doctrine of the noumenon’ *solely* in the negative sense (B307). But even granting that *only* the thing in itself or noumenon in sense (a) figures in what will henceforth be called the transcendental distinction *proper*, it will be hard to deny that the ‘doctrine of sensibility’ is enriched by the *hypothetical* contrast, first mentioned in the Phenomena and Noumena chapter and only subsequently inserted into the second-edition Transcendental Aesthetic (cf. B72), between a putative divine faculty of *intuitus originarius* and the human faculty described as *intuitus derivativus*. After all, Kant himself notes (cf. A252/B308-9 and A254/B310) that the noumenon ‘in a **positive** sense’ serves to underscore the fact that there is no compelling reason to believe that *sensible* is the only possible kind of intuition, even if it is the only kind *known* to us and the only kind of which the human mind can fully *comprehend* the real possibility; and this is as much as to say that there is no reason *not* to entertain the *hypothesis* of other modes of existence of these same objects *coram* other possible kinds of intuition, notably *coram intuitu intellectuali*, should such an hypothesis prove helpful in determining the limits of our human cognition. Thus, while in the B-Preface Kant speaks only of ‘a twofold standpoint’ (Bxix n. e.a.) and of considering ‘the same objects’ from ‘two different sides’ (Bxviii n. e.a.), to consider appearances from these two sides while *also* considering existence *coram intuitu intellectuali* as a further *possible* mode of existence of those same things that appear may be regarded as Kant’s transcendental distinction in a wider and *improper* sense. That sensible is *derivative* and not ‘originary’ intuition is surely part of Kant’s ‘doctrine of sensibility’.

It was argued earlier (see n. 14) that, despite claiming only to ‘modify’ his initial account of Kant’s transcendental distinction, Allison in fact passes unawares from (what may now be termed) his earlier *coram-absque* distinction to his later *coram-coram* contrast, juxtaposing the object as it appears to our sensible intuition with the

same object *considered* as existing *coram intellectu humano puro*. To the extent that the non-spatiotemporal existence of things *coram intellectu humano* serves as a new foil to their spatiotemporal existence *coram intuitu sensibili*, it too forms part of Kant's 'doctrine of sensibility' and hence of the transcendental distinction in a *still wider* sense. At the very least, its introduction in the Amphiboly clarifies the way in which Kant understands the 'merely logical' (A44/B61) distinction of the Wolffians between the senses, which represent things in themselves obscurely and confusedly or as they appear, and the understanding that represents those same things clearly and distinctly as they are in themselves *through the pure (unschematized) categories alone*.¹⁶

So much for noumena in senses (c) and (d). What, finally, of the remaining use of 'noumenon' in sense (b) for the super-sensible objects 'God', 'the rational soul', and 'the world totality'? Do they too form an integral part of Kant's transcendental distinction in what may be called the fourth and *widest* sense of the expression? It is difficult *not* to accord the trio a special place in that distinction, given Kant's famous remark in the second Preface: 'I had to deny **knowledge** in order to make room for **faith**' (Bxxx). By 'faith' Kant means what he elsewhere calls a *Vernunftglaube* (WOT 8: 140–44) in '**God, freedom, and immortality** for the sake of the necessary practical use' of reason (Bxxx; cf. A3/B7). Since the transcendental distinction between appearances and these *super-sensible* objects of special metaphysics dominates the Transcendental Dialectic, and since it is crucial to what Kant himself considered the whole purpose of the first in relation to the second *Critique* (see section 6), it seems that the distinction between appearances and these super-sensible objects is a key part of Kant's transcendental distinction in the most encompassing sense of the expression.

Before turning, in the next section, to the earlier suggestion that Kant's transcendental is a two-object distinction *only* in the case of these three super-sensible noumena, it is worth considering briefly at least one other interpretation of what has been called the reductive type. It has already been noted that Kant's expansion of the transcendental distinction *proper* to include the object existing *coram intuitu intellectuali* seems to have occasioned Robinson's attempt to shore up Allison's 'one-object' or 'one-world' view by sinking the object existing *absque intuitu sensibili* into the object existing *coram intuitu intellectuali* (see n. 10 above). Of course, Allison himself performs a different reduction: from (a) *absque mente humana* he slides to (d) *coram intellectu humano puro*, two distinct uses of 'noumenon' that were conflated already by Adickes (cf. n. 16). While these confluations were fostered by the Phenomena and Noumena chapter and the Amphiboly, respectively, the (b) super-sensible objects existing *coram ratione humana* in the Transcendental Dialectic have given rise to another reductive interpretation. Schaper (1966: 236, 240) interprets Kant's description of noumena in sense (a), the 'things that the understanding must think without [ohne] this relation to our kind of intuition' (B307), as though 'must' expressed a 'demand of reason' (A305/B362; cf. A332/B389) for the 'postulation of a noumenal world'. This reduces the noumenon in sense (a) to that in sense (b), 'the **unconditioned**, which reason necessarily and with every right demands in things in themselves for everything that is conditioned' (Bxx). And while Schaper's reading of Kant's transcendental distinction is only an isolated attempt to revive the notorious 'as-if' interpretation of Vaihinger (1922), Adickes ascribes to 'Cohen and his [i.e. the whole Marburg] school' the view that 'the thing in itself is . . . a mere Idea' of reason

(1924: 43; cf. also 121). If this blanket ascription is even partially correct, the reduction of which Schaper is guilty has long been a potent source of confusion.

A coherent response to all the stock objections repeatedly brought against Kant's transcendental distinction can hardly be expected as long as these different senses of 'noumenon' continue to be reduced to a single meaning. On the other hand, it may be possible to dismiss the objections *en bloc* if none of Kant's various transcendental distinctions represents an ontological doctrine, being rather parts of a meta-metaphysical thought experiment that Kant regarded as indispensable for the establishment of that new, scientific metaphysics whose foundations are laid in the chapter of the *Critique* entitled 'Principles of Pure Understanding'. That is the subject of section 5. First, however, a word is in order on the implications of the foregoing for one- and two-object interpretations.

4. One- and two-object interpretations

That it is *not* indeed *only* in the case of (b) the super-sensible objects of pure reason that one may speak of two ontologically distinct objects is most easily seen from Kant's reference to 'other possible things' (B306) in the already-quoted passage from the Phenomena and Noumena chapter that introduces (c) extra-sensible noumena 'in a **positive** sense'. As noted in interpreting that passage earlier, by referring to them as 'other possible things' (e.a.) Kant *seems* to imply that *all* noumena in sense (c) are – like the trio of super-sensible noumena in sense (b), but unlike noumena in sense (a) – *numerically* distinct objects from appearances. It seems unlikely, however, that Kant wished to deny the theological truism that the *same* things known through the senses as they appear to us *hinc et nunc* are known from eternity as they exist in themselves by that 'special kind of intuition' (B307) that is God's alone. And indeed, in a marginal note in his desk copy, Kant expressly disavows any such view: 'Objects of a non-sensible [divine] intuition are *either* given [also to us] in a sensible intuition or not' (RefI CXXXI, 23: 36 e.a.). The note goes on to make the familiar point that we cannot comprehend the real possibility of God's non-sensible intuition, from which it follows that we cannot grasp the *real* possibility of such noumena either. And yet if (as will be argued presently) *some* (but not all) of the *same* objects that exist as noumena in sense (a) also appear; and if, as theological orthodoxy demands, *all* things that exist as noumena in sense (a), whether 'given' in sensible intuition or not, are present from eternity to God's intellectual intuition, then it will not be amiss to speak (taking the two-modes-of-existence approach to Kant's transcendental distinction one step further) of *three* distinct ways in which *one and the same object* can exist: first, as appearance before the human mind; second, as (a) noumenon in the negative sense 'without (*ohne*)' relation to the human mind; and, third, as an (c) extra-sensible noumenon intuited by the divine intellect. What both B306 and Kant's note make clear, however, is that the concept of the (c) 'noumenon in a **positive** sense' *also* includes in its extension *some* 'other possible things' (B306) which do *not* appear and are thus numerically distinct from all appearances. Having established that *some* (c) extra-sensible, like *all* (b) super-sensible noumena, are numerically distinct from all objects that appear, it only remains to show that the same is true of *some* noumena in senses (a) and (d).

The case of noumena in sense (c) suggests the following *general* solution to the long-running one- or two-object dispute: insofar as certain noumena (in any of the *disputed* senses) also appear to us, phenomena and noumena are the numerically same object existing (or better, *considered as existing*) in different ways; whereas those noumena that *either do not or cannot appear to us* are to be considered as numerically distinct objects from all phenomena. It was shown in the preceding paragraph that some (c) extra-sensible objects are numerically distinct from appearances, while others are not. But it only stands to reason that the same holds true for *some* noumena in sense (a) as well; for Kant surely meant it to be understood (as ordinary common sense dictates) that not *everything* considered as existing in itself in this, his main sense of 'noumenon' must at some time or other actually appear to the senses of some human being (consider: 'many a flow'r is born to blush unseen'). This means that *some* noumena in sense (a) are numerically distinct objects from any that appear, though, admittedly, Kant's transcendental distinction is principally concerned with those noumena in sense (a) that *do* also appear. Finally, what holds for noumena in sense (a) would seem to be true also of (d) the *insensible* objects of the pure unschematized categories. Recall the 'merely logical' Leibniz-Wolffian distinction between appearances and things in themselves: it is *the very same* objects that appear obscurely and confusedly to the senses which are also clearly and distinctly cognized as they are in themselves *through the pure concepts of the understanding*. As noted in the Introduction, Leibnizian pure principles of the understanding were regarded as universally valid for 'all things in general and in themselves', including those (d) objects of the pure unschematized categories which do *not* or cannot appear to the sense at all. In the *Prolegomena* passage cited earlier, the first example of such an object is a 'substance, but which is thought *without persistence* in time' (P, 4: 332 e.a.). When the unschematized category 'substance' is applied to *material* substances that appear in outer sensible intuition, the *same* object is being considered as existing in two ways, as an appearance and as a noumenon in sense (d); but there are also substances of which, 'just because they are immaterial, there is no sensitive intuition' (ID, 2: 414), and the latter are ontologically distinct objects of the categories alone.

In sum, then, one-object interpretations are correct for *some* noumena in senses (a), (c), and (d), namely those that also appear to us, though other noumena in all three senses either do not or cannot appear and are thus, like (b) the trio of super-sensible noumena, numerically distinct objects. Both one- and two-object approaches thus have their proper place in the interpretation of Kant's transcendental distinction in the widest sense. Most of the controversy, however, has revolved around the distinction of appearances from noumena in sense (a), the 'Something (*Etwas*)' of the title. And here the debate between 'one-' and 'two-worlders' (Van Cleve), or as Aquila puts it, between 'one-objectism' and 'two-objectism', has been bedevilled by (1) the ambiguities of 'noumenon', 'thing in itself', and 'transcendental distinction', but also by (2) the failure to distinguish between those (numerically identical) noumena that do, and those (numerically distinct) noumena that do not, appear.¹⁷

The nowadays most-discussed one-object theory – unhappily baptized the 'two-aspect' or 'dual aspect theory' – is militantly *non-* (even *anti-*) metaphysical, having been variously labelled 'epistemological', 'methodological', 'meta-epistemological', 'meta-philosophical', and 'nonontological' by Allison, its principal proponent in recent decades. By contrast, two-object theories are typically metaphysical and

consequently dismissive of Kant's transcendental distinction between appearances and noumena in sense (a).¹⁸ Precisely because they too are metaphysical in a *doctrinal* sense, two-modes-of-existence interpretations (one thinks not just of Aquila 1979, but of Sellars 1968) are not much better placed than other metaphysical theories when it comes to meeting those objections that (meta-)epistemological one-object/two-aspect interpretations dispose of with relative ease.¹⁹

The *multiple-modes-of-existence* interpretation to be defended in the next section builds on both the metaphysical two-modes-of-existence theory and meta-epistemological two-modes-of-consideration interpretation. It argues that the various noumenal modes of existence distinguished in the foregoing are not something that either appearances or other things are *asserted to have*, but something they *may and should be considered as having* for purposes of a meta-metaphysical thought experiment. What, after all, does 'problematic' mean if not that the existence of noumenal entities is not *maintained assertorically*, as part of a first-order or object-level metaphysical doctrine, but only *entertained problematically*, for purposes of a meta-level or second-order reflection on the possibility of first-order metaphysics? If this is what Kant means, then all the standard objections to his supposed *doctrine* of the noumenal simply fall away, as on the two-aspect reading, yet without Kant's transcendental distinction having been rendered *non-metaphysical*.

5. A meta-metaphysical thought experiment

It remains to this day *a*, if not *the*, scandal of Kant scholarship that there is still no generally accepted reply to the stock objections that have beset Kant's transcendental distinction almost from its inception.²⁰ It has been suggested that the chief obstacle to a satisfactory resolution of these difficulties is the assumption that *the* transcendental distinction (when there are four such) is put forward as a metaphysical *doctrine* (rather than a 'problematic' hypothesis). By 'problematic' (cf. A38/B55, A254-6/B310-1, A259, A286-7/B343, A290/B346, A339/B397) Kant means that nothing prevents us from *hypothetically* ascribing various noumenal modes of existence (or of transcendental reality) to those appearances that we deem empirically real, nor yet to other things that either do not or cannot appear; and that, since we can, we *should* do so, not only to avoid the absurdity of appearances 'without anything that appears' (see n. 5 above), but also in recognition of the fact that our sensible is not the only *possible* kind of intuition, nor the objects that appear to us the only things *capable* of being represented by some (including our own) pure understanding, even though they are the only things that we can be said to *know*. To quote a well-known passage from the *Phenomena and Noumena* chapter:

I call a concept problematic that contains no contradiction, but that is also, as a boundary for given concepts, connected with other cognitions, [i.e. a concept] whose objective reality can in no way be cognized. The concept of a **noumenon** . . . is not at all contradictory; for one cannot assert of sensibility that it is the only possible kind of intuition. Further, this concept is necessary in order not to extend sensible cognition to things in themselves, and thus to limit the objective validity of sensible cognition . . . In the end, however, we have no insight into the possibility of such *noumena*, and the domain outside

the sphere of appearances is empty (for us), i.e. we have an understanding that extends farther than sensibility **problematically**, but no intuition, indeed not even the concept of a possible intuition, through which objects outside the field of sensibility could be given, and about which the understanding could be employed **assertorically**. The concept of a noumenon is therefore merely a **boundary concept**, in order to limit the pretension of sensibility, and therefore only of negative use. But it is nevertheless not invented arbitrarily, but is rather connected with the limitation of sensibility, yet without being able to posit anything positive outside the domain of the latter. (A255/B310-1)

Despite the reference to its merely ‘negative use’, the subject of this passage is clearly not the ‘noumenon in the **negative** sense’, but precisely the ‘noumenon in a **positive** sense’ or those objects described in the first edition as ‘*noumena (intelligibilia)* [existing] *coram intuitu intellectuali*’ (A249). As noted already (see section 2 *in fine*), all Kant’s uses of ‘noumenon’ are ‘negative’ in this loose sense of ‘problematic’, ‘empty (for us)’, etc., the noumenon ‘in the **negative** sense’ being therefore doubly negative. Still, it is precisely the noumenon ‘in a **positive** sense’ that adds a *theological* dimension to Kant’s transcendental distinction broadly understood, while at the same time reinforcing the *ontological* character of his thought experiment.

Unlike the step from (i) ‘noumenon’ as a merely ‘problematic’ or ‘**boundary**’ concept to (ii) two ways of *considering* the same object for meta-philosophical purposes; or, alternatively, from (i) to (iii) two ways in which the same object *exists*, metaphysically speaking; the transition from (i) to (iv) a *thought experiment* involving *multiple* modes of existence of the same or numerically distinct objects may well seem a step *beyond* anything Kant would have recognized as his own transcendental distinction. After all, is it plausible that a pillar of the critical philosophy as central as the transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves is neither a metaphysical nor a (meta-) epistemological *doctrine*, but a thought experiment, and an *onto-theological* one at that?

Kant’s most famous thought experiment, and perhaps the only one generally recognized as such, is found in his 1768 treatment of incongruent counterparts. *Imagining* God to have commenced his creation of the universe with a single human hand, Kant remarks that the hand must surely be either a right or left hand; that, in other words, it cannot, without absurdity, ‘be completely indeterminate with respect to such a property’ (GDS, 2: 383) as spatial orientation or directionality. This purely experimental fragment of an onto-theological creation story is deemed fatal to the Leibnizian view ‘that space [and therefore spatial orientation] simply consists in the *external* relation of the parts of matter which exist alongside one another’ (ibid., e.a.); for, *ex hypothesi*, there is as yet nothing else in the universe apart from the hand. Much the same technique was already used even earlier, in the *Nova Dilucidatio* of 1755, where ‘a being considered absolutely’ (NE, 1: 413) is an entity *thought of* as existing alone in the universe.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the expression ‘things in general and in themselves’ includes in its hyperextension, along with appearances, not just the objects of a hypothetical more-than-human intellectual intuition, but even those of a putative non-human faculty of intuition which, like ours, is finite or sensible, but whose ordering forms are, unlike ours, neither spatial nor temporal. Now if imagining

the created universe to have once contained less than it now contains (for example, a single hand) is a thought experiment, why then should it be otherwise when one imagines *another* type of sensible intuition as existing in the world or – more to the present point – a non-sensible intuition existing outside it? After all, in the Preface to the second edition Kant himself addresses the transcendental distinction *proper* as an ‘experiment’. The word (now the German *Experiment*, now *Versuch*) and its cognates occur over a dozen times. It is used, to be sure, to describe the Copernican ‘transformation of our way of thinking’ (Bxxii n.) in the first instance (cf. Bxvi, Bxviii and n.), but also with specific reference to the transcendental distinction *proper* (cf. Bxviii and n., Bxix n., Bxx and n., Bxxi). Thanks to a new ‘hypothesis’ (Bxxii n.), which Kant describes as ‘analogous’ (ibid.) to ‘the first thoughts of Copernicus’ (Bxvi), metaphysics is to enter upon the ‘secure path of a science’ (Bix *et passim*), the natural sciences having done so several generations earlier thanks to the pioneers of ‘the experimental method’ (Bxiii n.) of early modern science (Kant mentions Bacon, Galileo, Torricelli, and Stahl). From these passages, it appears that the transcendental distinction of the B-Preface is intended as an *auxiliary* meta-metaphysical *hypothesis* or thought experiment in support of the main epistemological or Copernican hypothesis that objects ‘must conform to our cognition’ (Bxvi). Its purpose is (see section 2) to *restrict* the scope of that primary hypothesis to objects *as appearances* by excluding noumena in sense (a), in relation to which it would be patently absurd (ibid.). Still, it by no means *asserts* the real existence or causality of any entities over and above the objects of possible experience, nor yet the non-spatiotemporality of such entities, much less their one-to-one correspondence with appearances. True, according to the experimental method, hypotheses are framed for purposes of testing. Yet Kant’s intent was not to *prove* the existence and/or causality etc. of what he was later to call noumena ‘in the **negative** sense’ by the evident success of his Copernican hypothesis in elucidating the possibility of pure mathematics (cf. Bxxii n.), or by the success of the transcendental distinction in dispelling the Antinomies (cf. Bxix n.). These successes indeed *prove* the Copernican hypothesis that ‘we can cognize of things *a priori* only what we ourselves have put into them’ (Bxviii); and they prove it, so Kant maintains, ‘not hypothetically but rather apodictically’ (Bxxii), albeit only as restricted in scope by the auxiliary hypothesis. Yet *proof* of the transcendental distinction itself (as opposed to showing its usefulness and even indispensability as a secondary hypothesis) is not Kant’s objective. It *enables* the performance of something like an *experimentum crucis* that requires at least ‘a space’ for other-than-sensible or noumenal objects, without in any way committing the experimenter to their *actual* non-spatiotemporal existence or causality, let alone to their possession of still other categorial properties, their non-spatiotemporality, and their one-to-one relationship with appearances.²¹

Admittedly, only what has been called the transcendental distinction *proper* is explicitly described as an ‘experiment’ in the B-Preface. As for the other senses of ‘thing in itself’ and ‘noumenon’ in the Dialectic, the Phenomena and Noumena chapter, and the Amphiboly, Kant *could*, of course, have come to understand these further juxtapositions of sensible with super-sensible, extra-sensible, and insensible objects in the same thought-experimental vein in which he had come – belatedly, in the B-Preface – to understand his central contrast of objects existing *coram* and the same objects existing *absque intuitu sensibili*. But even if only this transcendental

distinction *proper* were a thought experiment, those metaphysical two-modes-of-existence interpretations focused on the Scholastic real distinction between a thing's *realitas obiectiva* or being 'for us' and its *realitas formalis* or being 'simpliciter (i.e. in itself)', as Sellars (1968: 40) puts it, would still have to be recast in merely *problematic* or hypothetical terms as a *conceptual* distinction. However, there is reason to believe that the entirety of the fourfold transcendental distinction is a meta-metaphysical thought experiment and was so regarded by Kant himself. For while the role assigned super- and extra-sensible noumena may well suggest a merely problematic embrace of something resembling the two-world metaphysics of Christian Platonism, it is far likelier that these two, along with both other senses of 'noumenon', *all* figure in a thought-experimental adaptation of a different, medieval Christian onto-theological creation story, versions or vestiges of which are found in St. Augustine (see n. 11), St. Thomas, Descartes, Leibniz, and Malebranche.²²

For present purposes, a schematic and approximative account of the relevant aspects of this medieval Christian creation story will suffice. It provides for as many as *three modes of existence* of the same natures or things (*res*). The first is (i) eternal existence *coram* God's infinite intellect, which belongs to *all* possible finite natures or essences. Kant's concept of God's *intellectus archetypus* (A695/B723; cf. ID, 2: 397) attests to his familiarity with this medieval notion of God's *exemplar causality*: as *ens realissimum*, God intuitus from eternity the natures of all possible finite things by reflecting on his own infinite nature in which they are all contained to the highest degree of perfection. Second, there is (ii) *realitas formalis sive actualis* or temporal existence *in rerum natura*. Kant's concept of God's *intuitus originarius* derives from this old Augustinian notion of the *efficient causality* by which the divine intellect gives *some* of those things existing in it from eternity *temporal* existence outside it in space as well. This further mode of existence obviously belongs only to those finite natures that God makes actual, and only for as long as they are maintained in existence by the efficient causality of God's creative intellect.²³ Third and finally, there is what Descartes and the Scholastics called (iii) *realitas obiectiva* (in a sense just the opposite of Kant's 'objective reality'), that is, intentional or cognitive or ideal existence of *some* of those same natures in the *human* mind, whenever, and for as long as, represented there. Of course, many natures that are (i) eternally present to the divine mind, like many that are *also* (ii) present in the spatiotemporal world of sense, never come to be (iii) *re-presented* in any finite human mind at all; but while such natures are numerically distinct from any that appear to us, others have temporal existence in the human mind as well as outside it, that is, all three modes of existence.²⁴

In adapting the philosophical creation story of dogmatic rational theology, Kant reduces its real to what the Scholastics would have regarded as conceptual distinctions (*distinctiones rationis sine fundamento in re*). Instead of three ways in which certain natures or essences actually exist, Kant entertains the *hypothesis* of three non-spatiotemporal ways in which they can be *considered* as existing, be it *in addition* to their spatial and/or temporal existence in the human mind as inner or outer appearances, or be it without appearing at all. To begin with, all possible finite natures may be considered as (i) *extra-sensible* noumena, that is, natures belonging to a *mundus intelligibilis* existing eternally *coram intuitu intellectuali Dei*, God himself being (not an *extra-*, but rather) a *super-sensible* noumenon or *ens realissimum* existing outside space and time.²⁵ Now *some* of those natures existing eternally in the divine

mind may be considered as also having (ii) contingent existence outside it in the created world order. But here Kant's thought experiment deviates from all traditional philosophical creation stories. Given his doctrine of space and time as pure forms of our sensible intuition, the contingent existence of created natures outside the divine (but, *ex hypothesi*, not in the human) mind cannot be existence *in rerum natura* in the customary sense of belonging to the spatiotemporal *mundus sensibilis*; the *realitas formalis* of those things that God makes actual must rather be noumenal or *transcendentally* real existence, that is, existence as part of the created *mundus intelligibilis* or *non-spatiotemporal* world *behind* the sensible appearances. And just as not everything that exists from eternity in God's mind (as an extra-sensible noumenon in the positive sense) ever becomes actual outside it (as a noumenon in the negative sense), so not everything that comes to exist in the latter way ever acquires (iii) *realitas obiectiva* or existence in the human mind. Of those natures that do, however, some acquire existence in space and/or time only as objects existing (iiia) *coram* the human faculty of sensory intuition (appearances as the object of mere sensation), while others acquire spatial and/or temporal existence as objects existing (iiib) *coram* both the sensory and intellectual faculties of the human mind (appearances as the objects of isolated perceptions, where not *all* of the categories are applied), or (iiic) *coram* both the sensory and intellectual faculties, but where *all* the categories are applied, that is, appearances in the full sense of empirically real objects of *connected* human experience or empirical cognition. Now this last mode of existence of the objects of outer intuition *in* the human mind is (so Kant) tantamount to existence outside it in the *empirical* sense of 'outside' (cf. A373), that is, existence *in rerum natura* as Kant understands it. Finally, for purposes of engaging with Leibnizian metaphysics, Kant entertains a further mode of existence *in* the human mind: existence (iiid) *coram* the pure unschematized categories alone. Like noumenal existence in the negative sense, this third mode of *non-spatiotemporal* existence of the very things that appear (along with others, like immaterial substances, that do not or cannot appear) represents a clear departure from anything in the traditional creation story. To say that in Kant's transcendental distinction, broadly understood, certain formerly dogmatic or real become hypothetical or conceptual distinctions is just to say that they no longer form part of a metaphysical *doctrine* or philosophical creation story, but figure in a meta-metaphysical or onto-theological thought experiment.

If this medieval Christian philosophical creation story is indeed the historical backcloth before which the thought-experimental character and detail of Kant's fourfold transcendental distinction become comprehensible, then *all* the standard objections repeatedly brought against the latter as an incoherent metaphysical doctrine are entirely misplaced. Certainly, the metaphysical density of the original use of 'onto-theological' to characterize the Continental-European mainstream in philosophy (cf. Heidegger 2006: 51–79) is attenuated by the merely hypothetical and *meta-metaphysical* character of Kant's fourfold distinction; and yet the latter is sufficiently metaphysically *oriented* to render the present interpretation proof against dismissal as 'innocuous' (Strawson 1966), 'anodyne' (Guyer 1987), or 'deflationary' (Langton 1999), on the grounds that the historical Kant was above all else a reforming (and himself a reformed) metaphysician rather than epistemologist. Kant remained scrupulously aware of the limits the *Critique* had placed on first-order metaphysical

cognition as he set about making ‘room’ for other modes of existence besides the phenomenal, the latter being the only mode of existence actually *asserted*. It is not surprising that he found himself constrained to employ much of the *conceptual apparatus* of the very (not just Leibniz-Wolffian, but Augustinian and Thomistic) metaphysics he was bent on ousting in his effort to usher in a new, critical metaphysics both of experience (nature) and of morals. To conclude, a rapid glance at the metaphysics of morals, but first at the textual grounds for assigning Kant the ‘disastrous model’ of human cognition with which Strawson saddles him.

6. Conclusion

To the extent that it too defuses the stock objections to Kant’s transcendental distinction *en bloc*, the reductive Vaihinger-Schaper interpretation of ‘the’ noumenon as a ‘heuristic fiction’ still has much to recommend it. For all of the standard objections stem from a wide and understandable consensus that Kant asserted (rather than entertained as a heuristic device) all or most of the following theses about noumena or things in themselves: (1) they exist absolutely (mind-independently), unperceived and unthought of (cf. Bxx, A30/B45, A369, A493-4/B521-2, A566/B594, P, 4: 289, 314-5); (2) they are the causes of *some* of the mind’s representations, namely sensations (A288/B344, A494/B522, A358, A372-3, A494/B522, P, 4: 289, 314-15); (3) they are non-spatial and non-temporal, that is, even if ordered in *some* way, they are *not* ordered in space and time as we know the latter (A26-7/B42-3, A35/B52, A42/B59, A358, A539/B586, P 4: 341-42); (4) they are completely unknown to, and unknowable by, our cognitive faculties (A30/B45, A49/B66, A276/B333, A492/B520, A494/B522, P, 4: 287, 289); (5) they cannot be known by means of (do not satisfy or exemplify) the categories, which can be legitimately applied only to their appearances (Bxxvii, B149, A276/B333, A288-9/B344-5, Refl CXI, 23: 35); and (6) they are the ‘true’ reality *behind* the appearances, the ‘really real’ as distinct from the merely empirically real. This last is the only thesis of the six for which there is *no* direct textual support anywhere in the first *Critique*.

All the standard objections to Kant’s transcendental distinction lose their force at once if the first five theses are just so many facets of an elaborate *expérience de pensée* undertaken for the sake of a Copernican reversal in epistemology, on the one hand, and, on the other, for a solemn lifting of the restriction imposed on theoretical reason in the transition to the domain of practical reason. Like the first, the last word on noumena may go to the Amphiboly:

The concept of the noumenon is therefore not the concept of an [actually existing] object, but rather the *problem*, unavoidably connected with the limitation of our sensibility, of whether there may not be objects entirely exempt from the intuition of our sensibility, a question that can only be given the *indeterminate* answer that since sensible intuition does not pertain to all things without distinction *room remains* for more and other objects [besides appearances]; they cannot therefore be absolutely denied, but in the absence of a determinate concept (for which no category is serviceable) they cannot be *asserted* as objects of our understanding’. (A288/B344 e.a.)

And Kant continues, characteristically: 'If we want to call this object a noumenon because the representation of it is nothing sensible, we are free to do so. But . . . this representation still remains *empty* for us and serves for nothing but to designate the boundaries of our sensible cognition *and to leave open a space* that we can fill up neither through possible experience nor through the pure understanding' (A345/B288-9 e.a.). That space *can* be *partly* 'filled up' in the domain of pure practical reason, however, though only with noumena in sense (b); but then it is precisely these, the objects of the postulates of pure practical reason (cf. A633-7/B661-5), that reveal Kant's motivation in embarking on his thought experiment in the first place. That, however, is another story.

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Notes

1 Quotations from the *Critique of Pure Reason* are referenced by the pagination of the first two editions, designated A and B, respectively. Translations follow, with some emendations, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992 –). Translations of Kant's other works follow the same edition, with references to volume and page of the *Akademie* edition. Square brackets within quotations indicate interpolations by the author, while 'e.a.' after a reference stands for 'emphasis added'. Abbreviations: Corr=Correspondence; CPJ=*Critique of the Power of Judgement*; G=Groundwork; GDS='Differentiation of Regions in Space'; ID=Inaugural Dissertation; NE='New Elucidation'; OP=Opus Postumum; P=*Prolegomena*; PM='Progress in Metaphysics'; Refl=Reflection (from *Nachlass*); RPT='Recently Prominent Tone in Philosophy'; WOT='Orientation in Thinking'.

2 By *Bedeutung* Kant means 'reference'. Cf. A90/B123: 'empty, nugatory, and without significance (*leer, nichtig, und ohne Bedeutung*)', the word *leer* having been glossed just before as 'finds no object anywhere among appearances'.

3 Cf. B410: 'Thus synthetic propositions *a priori* would not, as we have asserted, be feasible and accessible merely in relation to objects of possible experience . . . but rather they could reach as far as *things in general and in themselves*' (e.a.). This remark, from the Paralogisms, confirms the inclusive sense of 'an object in general (in the transcendental sense)' in the Amphiboly, as does this, from the Transcendental Aesthetic: 'with the concept of things in general abstraction is made from every kind of intuition' (A35/B52). However, where he uses the expression 'things **in general and in themselves**' (A238/B298) – as above and with Kant's own emphasis here, in the chapter on 'The Ground of the Distinction of All Objects in General into Phenomena and Noumena' (hereafter: the Phenomena and Noumena chapter) – Kant seems to want to give the 'and' an exegetical rather than conjunctive role, as though the expressions flanking the 'and' were synonymous, or at least coextensive. And in his personal copy of the first edition, he even changed 'things **in general and in themselves**' to 'objects which are not given to us in intuition, thus are not sensible objects' (Refl CXVII, 23: 47), thus excluding appearances. Still, in what is clearly Kant's *ex cathedra* usage, the promiscuous application of the categories to 'objects in general' or 'things in general and in themselves' without restriction constitutes their 'transcendental' (A296/B252-3) or 'pure' (A66/B90) or 'pure *a priori*' (A85/B117) use; their application to appearances *only* is their 'empirical' or 'immanent' (A296/B352, A308/B365, A636/B664) or 'physical' (A845-6/B873-4) use; finally, the application, not of the categories, but of the pure concepts of reason (or *Ideen*) to things in themselves or noumena *alone* is their 'transcendent' (A296/B252-3, A327/B383) or 'hyperphysical' (A845-6/B873-4) use.

4 In a discussion of the term 'transcendental object', Allison (2004: 60) refers to this other 'transcendental object' or 'something = X' as 'the transcendental pointer'. In a very early paper, he had already described it as the 'idea of, or formula for, objectivity' (1968: 182), which is very close to the way Adickes had described it some 40 years earlier: 'die Idee der Gegenständlichkeit bzw. der Beziehung auf Gegenstände' (1924: 104). Adickes, too, was careful to distinguish (p. 111) this 'transzendentes

Korrelatum der Einheit der Apperzeption' (which 'cannot be called **noumenon**') from the noumenon as 'transzendentaler Grund der Erscheinung'. In his most recent discussion of the matter (2015: 351f.), Allison suggests that what he had called the transcendental pointer might be more appropriately termed 'the transcendental concept of an object' instead of the 'concept of a transcendental object', which is again a useful way of forestalling confusion of the correlate of the unity of apperception with the transcendental object as noumenon or thing in itself in any of the various senses of the term to be distinguished here.

5 The transcendental object or noumenon in this first sense, while indeed called 'something (*Etwas*)' and 'something in general (*Etwas überhaupt*)', never receives the adjunct '= X'; when Kant speaks of 'something = X' or 'something in general = X', he is invariably referring to the transcendental object in that *other* sense discussed in the previous note. In the B-Preface (Bxxvi), Kant remarks of the transcendental object as noumenon that 'we must be able to **think** sensible appearances as being of things in themselves, since 'otherwise ... there would follow the absurd proposition that there is an appearance without anything that appears'.

6 The term 'transcendental object' is applied to (b) the *super-sensible* objects of the ideas of pure reason repeatedly (cf. A478/B506 n., A565/B593, A679/B707, and A697-8/B725-6). God as *ens realissimum* is called a '**thing in itself**' at A576/B604, while both 'the **highest being**' and 'the soul' are referred to as '**things in themselves**' at A741/B769. On one occasion, 'transcendental object' is used specifically for (ii) 'the thinking I, the soul (a name for the transcendental object of inner sense)' (A360-1).

7 Cf. Bxx: 'For that which necessarily drives us to go beyond the boundaries of experience and all appearances is the **unconditioned**, which reason necessarily and with every right demands in *things in themselves* [but not appearances] for everything that is conditioned, thereby demanding the series of conditions as something completed' (italics added).

8 The numerical or ontological distinctness of super-sensible objects or noumena in sense (b) is a matter of general agreement. See, for example, Allison 1996: 20 and Guyer 1987: 334-5. As for the more controversial noumena in sense (a), Kant at least says repeatedly (cf. Bxvii n., Bxxvii-xxviii, A34-5/B51-2, B69, A249, A288-9/B344-5; OP, 22: 32-3, 40-1, 43; Refl CX, 23: 35) that it is the 'same object (*eben derselbe Gegenstand*)' that is considered 'in a twofold meaning' (Bxxviii) or 'from two sides' (A38/B55), now as an appearance, now as a thing in itself. On whether this is the whole story, see section 4.

9 Kant's juxtaposition of 'the same (*eben dieselben*)' and 'other' objects is unfortunately lost owing to an obvious slip in the Guyer/Wood translation: 'either *other* objects conceived in accordance with the latter constitution, or else other possible things' (e.a.).

10 The (c) noumenon in the positive sense seldom receives more than cursory – at times, disdainful (cf. Bennett 1966: 60) – mention from those bent on a 'rational reconstruction' that separates the epistemological wheat from the metaphysical chaff, or the descriptive 'metaphysics of experience' from the speculative 'metaphysics of transcendental idealism', as Strawson puts it. The lion's share of the attention goes to (a), the 'noumenon in the **negative** sense', which is, however, at times equally lightly dismissed as part of Kant's 'disastrous model' (Strawson again).

At the other end of the interpretative spectrum is the 'two-perspective' reading of Robinson, which simply 'relegates the thing in itself to God's perspective' (1994: 439) as distinct from the 'man's-eye view' or human way of knowing *the same things* as they appear. Unfortunately, this reductive interpretation sinks (a) the non-sensible noumenon in the negative sense into (c) the *extra-sensible* noumenon in the positive sense (p. 432), neither of which Robinson distinguishes sharply from (b) the *super-sensible* noumena, God, the world-totality, and the rational soul, or from (d) the *insensible* object (to be considered presently).

11 Kant's talk of 'pure intelligences' as beings that have 'causality with regard to the objects of their understanding *through understanding itself*' (Refl CXIII, 23: 35 e.a.) is evocative of the classical Augustinian notion of God's spontaneous creation through an act of the intellect alone. See (in Augustine 1990) *Confessions*, XIII 38, 53: 'We see things that you have made because they are; but as for you, because you see them, they are'; and *De Trinitate*, IV, 13: 'Not because they are does God know all creatures spiritual and temporal, but because he knows them, therefore they are'. On Aquinas's insistence on the role of the divine will, see n. 23 and the article referred to there.

12 The same vacillation between strict and loose senses of 'negative' just noted in the Amphiboly recurs in the Phenomena and Noumena chapter in a key passage (to be quoted in full in section 5) that begins: 'The concept of a noumenon is therefore merely a **boundary concept** ... and therefore only of negative

use' (A255/B311). Here it is again (c) the noumenon in the *positive* sense that is declared to be 'only of negative use'. And here again there is no question of Kant's confounding senses (c) and (a), since *all* his uses of 'noumenon' are negative in the loose sense intended here.

13 As noted earlier, Allison (1996: 7) has drawn attention to this use of 'thing in itself', documenting it in an endnote with a dozen examples (not including the *Prolegomena* passage). The first two examples, from the Transcendental Aesthetic (A28/B34 and A34-5/B51), both refer to the noumenon in sense (a), while the third, from the Second Analogy (A206/B251-2), like the fourth (A249-51), fifth (B307), and sixth (A254-5/B310), all taken from the chapter on Phenomena and Noumena, refer to the noumenon in sense (c). By contrast, the seventh through tenth examples, from the Amphiboly (A259-60/B315, A264/B320, A279/B335, A285/B341), and the last two, from the Antinomies (A500/B528 and A525/B553), are clear instances of Kant's new use of 'thing in itself', 'intelligible object', and 'object of the (pure) understanding'. ('Noumenon' only appears together with 'thing in itself' in the *Prolegomena* passage.) On Allison's unacknowledged slide from the sense he gave to Kant's transcendental distinction originally to a quite different meaning, see notes 14 and 16 below.

14 While Kant is certainly not equivocating, it is hard to be sure about Allison when he writes: 'to consider things as they are in themselves is to reflect on them in a way which ignores or abstracts from the subjective conditions of human sensibility; and ... this amounts to considering them through the mere understanding or as some pure understanding might represent them' (1996: 7). Does the former 'amount to' the latter? The first half of the sentence reiterates Allison's 'earlier view ... that to consider thing as they are in themselves is just to consider them independently of *all* epistemic conditions (conceptual as well as sensible)' (*ibid.*). This is the noumenon or thing in itself in sense (a). The latter half represents Allison's attempt to 'modify' his earlier view. To consider things as they are in themselves is *now* to consider them as objects of some pure intellect: 'Kant explicitly states that to think or consider things as they are in themselves is just to think them as some pure intellect might' (pp. 7-8). This *sounds like* the noumenon in sense (c), in which case Allison would be guilty of the very conflation to which Robinson succumbed (see n. 10 above); but it is clear from the examples Allison cites in note 13 that 'some pure intellect' refers to some *human* understanding *considered* as representing the very objects that appear to the senses, but through its pure or unschematized categories alone. 'What transcendental idealism is committed to', he writes, 'is ... the possibility and indispensability of distinguishing between two epistemic relationships in which things can be considered in philosophical reflection on the conditions of cognition', that is, between 'a consideration of things in relation to the sensible conditions of human knowledge (as they appear) and a consideration of the same things as the putative objects of some 'pure understanding' (as they are in themselves)' (p. 15). There seems indeed to be an equivocation here, since *this* contrast between 'two epistemic relations' is different from that drawn by Allison at the outset of the same essay (faithfully reproducing the account of Kant's transcendental distinction given in his 1983 monograph) between 'in relation to' and 'not in relation to' our human sensibility.

15 Instead of *ohne* (B307) plus accusative, Kant also uses *unangesehen* plus genitive, which Guyer and Wood translate as 'without regard to [*scil.* the sensible manner in which the object is intuited]' (A38/B55, e.a.). *Unangesehen* conveys better than *ohne* the deliberate act of 'prescinding from ...' that Kant evokes in his definition of the noumenon in the negative sense at B307: 'we abstract from (*absehen von*) the manner of our intuition of it'. *Absque* shares that virtue with *unangesehen*, while *sine* does not.

16 If this is correct, then Allison may have been induced to conflate two senses of 'thing in itself' and 'noumenon', not by Robinson, to whose position he responds in the essay in question, but by Adickes. By taking expressions like 'things as they are thought independently of the conditions of our sensibility' to mean 'things as they are known by the human intellect *alone*, apart from the senses', Adickes arrives at an understanding of what is, for him, the transcendental distinction (cf. 1924: chapter 4) between the object known under the conditions of sensible cognition and the same object conceived through the pure (or unschematized) categories of the human understanding. This other reductive approach seems to be exactly that adopted by Allison.

17 Of the passages cited in support of two-objectivism (cf. Aquila 1979: 293 n. 1, Van Cleve 1999: 146, and Allais 2004: 658), some taken as juxtaposing phenomena to *non*-sensible noumena are in fact references to the numerically distinct but *super*-sensible noumenon, God (so A565-6/B594-5 and A606/B734). Others refer to *extra*-sensible noumena existing *coram intuitu intellectuali* but hidden from our sensibility (so the already-discussed phrase 'other possible things, which are not objects of our senses at all' at B306, but also the talk of 'mehr und andere Gegenstände' at A288/B344; these too are numerically distinct from

(*mehr*), as well as qualitatively other (*andere*) than, phenomena, yet they are not noumena in sense (a) but rather in sense (c). So much for (1) complications owing to the different senses of ‘noumenon’ or ‘thing in itself’; as for (2) the other complicating factor mentioned in the text, even those passages that do clearly concern non-sensible noumena may intend only such among them as do *not* also appear; if so, the reference is to entities that are indeed ontologically distinct from any that appear, though such two-objectism will have to yield to one-objectism when it comes to those noumena in sense (a) that *do* appear to our senses.

18 See the Strawson quote in the Introduction, reinforced by Guyer 1987: chapter 15.

19 For more detailed taxonomies of the various one- and two-object approaches, see Ameriks 1982: sec. I, and Aquila 1979 *in initio*.

20 No mention has yet been made of the neglected alternative, isomorphism, and indiscernibility problems that round out the list headed by noumenal ignorance, the restriction thesis, and the affection problem. In moving from the premise that space and time are ‘nothing other than’ (A26/B42; A33/B49) forms of our empirical intuition to the conclusion that they are *not* properties of things in themselves, i.e. that the latter are non-spatiotemporal, Kant neglects the possibility that they might be both, i.e. that different, yet perhaps analogous, spatial and temporal characteristics *might* belong to things in themselves. Furthermore, how can one and the *same* object have different (and contradictory) properties depending on how one considers it? Appearances are knowable, spatiotemporal, governed by laws dictated by the human intellect, and exist only in relation to the mind, whereas none of this is true of things in themselves. If not a contradiction, this is at least a violation of the principle of the indiscernibility of identicals. As this last is a problem only for one-object theorists, so the isomorphism problem poses itself only for ‘two-objectism’. If Kant holds that to every object in the phenomenal there corresponds a numerically distinct object in the noumenal world, then, given that the former are individuated ultimately by spatiotemporal location, while the latter are *ex hypothesi* non-spatial and a-temporal, how can there be a one-to-one mapping? There are, of course, still other problems, but these six are the most intractable difficulties to which the various one- and two-object interpretations must respond (where they are not simply pronounced fatal to Kant’s transcendental distinction on any interpretation).

21 For an analysis of the thought experiment embodied in the Paralogisms, see Miles 2022.

22 Kant’s familiarity with, and interest in, recent philosophical creation stories is attested by section 4 of the Inaugural Dissertation, where he pits his own *principia mundi intelligibilis* against two other theories (cf. ID §22, 2: 409). From the existence of a ‘unique cause [God] of all its parts’ Kant infers that the created intelligible world constitutes a ‘generally established harmony’ in which a ‘real and physical interaction’ connects all parts. He thereby rejects *dos à dos* the divinely pre-established harmony of the Leibnizians and the creation story of Malebranchian occasionalism, both of which provide only for an ‘individually established harmony’, that is, an ‘ideal and sympathetic’ harmony without real interaction.

23 While St. Thomas insists on the need to distinguish the divine intellect and will at this stage, Descartes and Spinoza were to argue for their identity in God. For a less schematic treatment of the medieval and early modern history of this creation story, incorporating both points, see Miles 2018.

24 The two-modes-of-existence interpretation of Sellars picks up only on the Cartesio-Scholastic real distinction between (ii) *realitas formalis* (outside the mind) and (iii) *realitas obiectiva* (in it), which forms part of the onto-theological creation story more or less consciously adapted by Kant.

25 God’s, then, is a *fourth* mode of non-spatiotemporal existence alongside the three non-spatiotemporal ways in which finite *res* can be considered to exist.

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