

## Kant's "Refutation of Idealism" and the Ontological Argument

### Introduction - Thesis and Outline

Throughout his philosophical career Kant was concerned with distinguishing his brand of idealism, which he liked to describe as critical or transcendental idealism, from a wide variety of idealisms wherein the only absolute certainty was the existence of thinking beings. There were in the Enlightenment an assortment of metaphysical, epistemological and sense-perception idealisms which were in turn subject to sundry refutations.<sup>1</sup> Kant was determined not to be characterized as a subjective or productive idealist. This meant that he had to uphold a robust and direct realism while maintaining that whatever was given to us in experience could only be understood through the peculiar a priori structure of the human mind. Reconciling Kant's empirical realism with his transcendental idealism has been a longstanding effort of several centuries of commentary on his philosophy. This is a reconciliation that cannot be divorced from the metaphysical issues embedded in his general critique of the limits of human reason.

Kant's famous critique of the ontological argument for the existence of God rests on a simple premise. If the concept of an *ens realissimum* entails the concept of existence analytically, then the transcendental Idea of a Supreme Being has no probative or epistemological force *vis à vis* determinate, or for that matter indeterminate, reality. Elaborating a theory of the subject out of external objectivity was a dangerous exercise for the German Idealists. More so than the "auto-apprehension" of objectivity in the life of the subject as one finds in Hegel. The latter strategy invariably runs the risk of an epistemological constructivism, while the former often falls back onto some species of realism. The tension in Kant's transcendental idealism between arguments sourced in transcendental Ideas, like the ontological argument, and those founded on the presentational structures of sensibility and the understanding is particularly sharp in the well known Refutation of Idealism.

In the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason (CPR)* Kant conspicuously moved the issue of dealing with the problematic status of outer objects from the Fourth Paralogism, concerning the Ideality of all Outer Appearances, in the Transcendental Dialectic, to the "Refutation of Idealism" in the Actuality section of the "Postulates of Empirical Thought" of the Analytic of Principles in the Transcendental Analytic.<sup>2</sup> There is a protracted literature on the cogency of these counter-idealistic arguments - a literature growing exponentially of late - and on the inconsistencies and relative persuasiveness of the procedures adopted by Kant in the A and B

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief historical overview, see, Manfred Kuehn, "Kant and the Refutation of Idealism in the Eighteenth Century," in Donald Mell, *et al.*, eds., *Man, God and Nature in the Enlightenment* (East Lansing, MI. Colleagues Press, 1988), pp. 25 - 35.

<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis, Hackett, 1996), Unified Edition, hereafter *CPR*; *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, hrsg., Raymund Schmidt (Hamburg, Meiner Verlag, 1956), hereafter *KrV*. The "Refutation of Idealism" (B275 - B279), hereafter "Refutation."

editions. A good deal of this commentary focuses rather myopically on the internal reasoning of the Refutation and does little to connect its conclusions with broader themes in critical idealism, such as Kant's abhorrence of productive idealism and its relation to his critique of speculative theology.

This paper investigates whether Kant's strong claims for his refutation of Cartesian problematic idealism buttress or undermine his equally strong claims with regard to the impossibility of an ontological proof of the existence of God. It is no accident that the principal philosophical figure in both the Refutation and the critique of the ontological argument is René Descartes. In the A edition of the *CPR* Descartes' name is only mentioned in the Paralogisms and The Ideal of Pure Reason of the Transcendental Dialectic, or only in relation to transcendental subjectivity and speculative theology. Why Kant felt it necessary to censure Descartes' epistemology in the B edition of the *CPR* while leaving the critique of the Cartesian ontological argument unchanged is rarely dealt with in the current literature.

Part I of this paper, and its predominant section, is a restatement of the broader philosophical arguments of the Refutation, wherein Kant concludes that outer appearances exist indubitably. Without such a conclusion, Kant maintains, transcendental idealism is destined to become a transcendental realism which inescapably finds itself enmeshed in the pervasive scepticism of empirical idealism. Dream-world, or systemically hallucinogenic, scepticism cannot possibly be countered in such a philosophy. Kant was implacably opposed to the imaginary idealism of the Eleatics, Plato and Berkeley.

Part II examines the epistemological reasons for the metaphysical limits Kant puts on the Ideal of Pure Reason. A failed Refutation results in transcendental realism. This in turn gives rise to the possibility of a legitimate ontological proof. On Kant's view, despite our many finely tuned ideas of a Supreme Being, there will always be a thread of transcendental doubt. However, no form of idealistic or transcendental doubt can be nourished in the face of the ineliminable certainty of the existence or non-ideality of outer appearances. Kantian empirical realism makes the ontological proof of the existence of God the least attractive approach to divine legitimacy.

Part III connects the ontological argument of Descartes Fifth Meditation with his principle of existential subjective certainty. Kant sees Cartesian problematic idealism as necessarily entailing a transcendental realism. This in turn exfoliates an empirical idealism. The latter cannot defeat the evil genius or avoid the scepticism of systemic hallucination. Kant needs to convert Cartesian transcendental realism into the empirically real and the transcendently ideal.

Part IV links the Refutation with Kant's critique of speculative theology. It concludes that the celebrated, though much maligned, Refutation, insofar as it necessarily establishes the existence of objects outside of us, does not subvert, but rather reinforces Kant's critique of the traditional ontological argument. The transcendental Idea of an omnireal being, which has no possibility of cognitive deployment, cannot certify the existence of outer objects for an empirical consciousness. Nor does it need to do so. There is a plausible argument to be made that the Refutation elevates the physico-theological proof for the existence of God to first order status in

the panoply of proofs of an *ens realissimum*.

Part V concludes that Kant's desire to defeat Cartesian problematic idealism is as integral to the overall project of transcendental idealism as is his critique of the Cartesian ontological proof of the Fifth Meditation. Metaphysically the thrust of the Refutation is to restrain the empirically idealistic pretensions of the Transcendental Subject through the transcendental presupposition of a Transcendental Object. Kant's critique of the ontological argument contrariwise restrains the transcendently realistic pretensions of externalism through a conceptual boundary analysis of the transcendental substratum of an omnireal being. Epistemologically, the Refutation affirms the priority of outer experience for all possible objects determinable and determined in space. Such an affirmation is necessary for the objective validity and reality of Kant's theory of truth as involving both intuition and understanding. Historically, the Refutation confronts *both* the dreaming idealism (converting representations into actual things) of the rational subjectivity of the continental Enlightenment *and* the visionary idealism (converting actual things into representations) of the scepticism of its British empirical counterparts.

## Part I - Context and Significance of the "Refutation of Idealism"

### (A) The Fourth Paralogism

In the first edition (1781) of the *CPR* Kant dealt with the problem of the ideality of outer relations in the Fourth Paralogism. The Paralogisms exposed the logical fallacies inherent in the rational psychology of Kant's day especially with respect to metaphysical issues such as the proof of the immortality of the soul. These fallacies, or dialectical illusions, invariably lead to a materialization of the soul and the illegitimate connection of existence-statements with the transcendental "I."<sup>3</sup> The issues in the B edition Refutation of a substratum to transitory determinations, various characterizations of permanency, empirical and transcendental self-awareness are all anticipated in the Fourth Paralogism of the A edition and in other places such as the First Analogy on the Principle of Permanence in Substance and the first Transcendental Deduction.

The chief distinction made by Kant in the Fourth Paralogism is between "idealism" and "dualism." "Idealism" asserts the uncertainty of outer appearances because their existence cannot be perceived directly. These appearances or external objects are the cause of our perceptions of them and are thus mediated or inferred through our perceptions. Outer appearances and their outer relations are thus representational and subjectively determined. Since inferences from inner perception to external things cannot be mono-causally determined, they might be as much internally as externally generated. There is always the risk (risk being analytically true of all inner/outer inferences for Kant) that outer perception is a creature of the mere play of our inner sense. Hence low level off-target perception is as much a part of our experiential field as systemic fictions about externality, which culminate in the inescapable efforts of the all-powerful Evil Genius or Arch Deceiver who haunts Descartes.

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<sup>3</sup> *CPR*, A367-A380, pp. 400-409.

“Dualism,” on the other hand, is certain about the existence of outer objects and has no need of inferring their existence from inner perception as the effect of an external cause. Rather, the dualist grants the existence of matter (externality) without going outside of mere self-consciousness. Matter as a presentation within us may be mistakenly referred to as an externality outside of this presentation, but in fact it is an internalized externality that Kant maintains is “directly perceived.”<sup>4</sup> The relation between self-consciousness and exteriority is such that one does not need to assume an independently existing realm of outer existence and then set up a causal nexus as to what goes on in our minds. This is, of course, the fundamental assumption of classical empiricism. Since in transcendental idealism both inner and outer objects are presentations (*Vorstellungen*) and thus the immediate testimony of self-consciousness (*Selbstbewußtsein*), no inference as to their actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) is necessary.

Kant then aligns the aforementioned dualistic position with his transcendental idealism/empirical realism and distinguishes it from sceptical idealism which is transcendentially real and empirically ideal. Transcendental realism always holds that space and the objects contained therein are things-in-themselves, or distinct substances, while empirical idealism focuses on ideas in our minds and their relation. These two thought-orientations go together much like the reverse correlation in Kant’s critical idealism. The defining feature, for Kant, of transcendental realism is the confusion of appearances with things-in-themselves. The language of the Fourth Paralogism is tortuous, but it serves Kant’s overriding purpose of denying any autonomous status to outer appearances while at the same time deploying his brand of empirical realism against the dream (or hallucinogenic) phenomenality of the Cartesian sceptic. The radical scepticism of the unsuspecting empirical idealist is thus one of the principal foes of transcendental philosophy. The other one, of course, being the entrenched transcendental realism of Humean scepticism.

The reality of outer intuition is established by “empirically external objects,” and not by a “transcendental object.”<sup>5</sup> The ambiguous phrase “outside us” (*außer uns*) is thus restricted to objects outside of us in space, a somewhat pleonastic phrase in Kemp Smith’s view, and not to objects outside of us (things-in-themselves) that are outside of the possibility of sensibility altogether. Space therefore makes possible the presentation of actual objects in external relations with each other. Occasional delusions and deceptions or mistakes in judgment are not the garden variety errors that concern Kant. It is only insofar as we have perception (*Wahrnehmung*) as such that dreaming, fiction, invention and daily off-target perceptions and judgments are possible. But they are one and all benign possibilities, often piquant inaccuracies and fantasies fully rectifiable within the cognitive system of the understanding and the rigours of ordinary science.

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<sup>4</sup> *CPR*, A371, p. 403, Put another way, all things in space are external to one another, but space itself is in us and thus space is nothing if represented as being separate from our sensibility. “Also ist der transzendente Idealist ein empirischer Realist und gesteht der Materie, als Erscheinung, eine Wirklichkeit zu, die nicht geschlossen werden darf, sondern unmittelbar wahrgenommen wird.” *KrV*, A371, p. 400.

<sup>5</sup> *CPR*, A374, p. 404.

It is clear that Kant views perception as necessarily prior to the reproductive imagination. Invention (*Erdichtung*) is based on outer perception. In fact it presupposes the intuition of something actual in space. Empirically external objects as such are thus necessarily prior to the positioning either, directly or through invention, of actual objects given in space or outer perception. For Kant this establishes beyond a doubt the indubitability of his “empirical realism.”<sup>6</sup>

The empirical idealist, who regards objects outside of us as inherently things-in-themselves, in the sense of a projective inference, is the one who systematically undermines the actuality of objects outside of us. One cannot sense outside of oneself, or have a representation of a representation. The “ideality” of the empirical idealist is the substitution of “ideas” for real things as the immediate objects of consciousness. A distinctive, trans-subjective world is then inferred from these ideas rather than being a function of direct perception. As will be seen this methodological assumption in empirical idealism is the same assumption with respect to inference that one finds in the ontological argument. The empirical idealist endeavours to imagine a world without a sensing subject, i.e. an external, ideational world that causally engenders and forms the presentations that in the aggregate make up that subject and its representation of a world outside of that subject. Kant’s *verkehrte Welt*, his Copernican Revolution, is precisely the removal of self-subsistent entities from our cognitive structure.

## (B) The Refutation of Material Idealism

### (i) Contexts for the Refutation - Historical, Philosophical, Aporetic

Ultimately, Kant appears to have found the argument, or at least the form of it, of the Fourth Paralogism unsatisfactory. Perhaps better to say unfinished, but not with respect to the core issues he wished to defend in the philosophy of transcendental idealism. Kant never abandons his doctrines of the unknowability of things-in-themselves and direct empirical realism. The philosophical issues and arguments that regularly clustered around the various refutations of idealism and their critics were irritants, and yes, elixirs, for Kant.

If the second edition of the *CPR* is to be understood principally as a response to his critics, then one has to take the importance Kant put on the Refutation very seriously. But what did he think had to be restated in terms of philosophical or methodological argument? Is it simply to emphasize the inescapable priority of the existence of objects in space outside of us? A vast literature in both article and book form, commentary and polemic, has responded to this question. Every angle, premise and ellipsis has been explored. From outright dismissal of the Refutation as adding nothing to the fortress of transcendental philosophy, to sophisticated attempts to fill out holes and discrepancies in the argument, to wholesale apologetics with regard to the Refutation as being one of the most important sections of the *CPR*.<sup>7</sup> There is also a significant secondary

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<sup>6</sup> “Hence the real [component] of outer appearances is actual only in perception and cannot be actual in any other way.” *CPR*, A375-A376, p. 405.

<sup>7</sup> A full scale review of the literature is not possible here but a few citations from the spectrum of analysis may be helpful. Critics of the Refutation are Jonathan Vogel, “The Problem of

literature which is critical of the “transcendental arguments” that Kant aims at the Cartesian sceptic.<sup>8</sup> This has led to interpretations that Humean, rather than Cartesian, scepticism is Kant’s principal target.<sup>9</sup> Enlisting both Kant’s critique of the ontological argument, as well as his critique of the priority of time, in the Refutation supports, in my view, the philosophical, and not just the textual, interpretation that Descartes rather than Hume was the more potent enemy for Kant.

In a lengthy footnote in the B Preface of the *CPR* Kant provides his reasoning on why he thought it necessary to confront once again the “sceptical idealist” of the Fourth Paralogism. The *nom de guerre* for the enemy is now explicitly cited as the “problematic idealism” of Descartes.<sup>10</sup>

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Self-Knowledge in Kant’s “Refutation of Idealism”: Two Recent Views,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. LIII, No. 4, December, 1993, pp. 875 - 887; Dale Jacquette, “Of Time and the River in Kant’s Refutation of Idealism,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No.3, July, 2001, pp. 297 - 310 and George Dicker, “Kant’s Refutation of Idealism,” *Nous*, 42:1, 2008, pp. 80 - 108. An older, but well known critical assessment is made by Jonathan Bennett, *Kant’s Analytic* (Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 202 - 218. Arduous and defensive reconstructions can be found in Henry Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defence* (Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 294 - 309 and Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 279 - 329. For a critique of Guyer’s causal interpretation of the Refutation on the basis of Kant’s *Nova Dilucidatio* and the *Reflexionen*, see, Andrew Chignell, “Causal Refutations of Idealism,” *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 60, (2010), pp. 487 - 507 and George Dicker, “Kant’s Refutation of Idealism: A Reply to Chignell,” *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 61, No. 242, (January, 2011), pp.175 - 183. A very good reconstruction of the Refutation and a defence of its argument for externalism can be found in Robert Hanna, “The Inner and the Outer: Kant’s ‘Refutation’ Reconstructed,” *Ratio (New Series)* XIII 2 June, 2000, pp.146 - 174. For some insights into Kant’s intentional ambiguities in the use of the phrase *außer uns* in the Refutation, see, J. N. Findlay, *Kant and the Transcendental Object* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 180 - 185. This is a good antidote to the “disambiguation” orientation found in many analytic treatments of the Refutation.

<sup>8</sup> Barry Stroud, “Transcendental Arguments,” *Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1968), pp. 241 - 256, spawned the substantial literature on this issue.

<sup>9</sup> Margaret Wilson, “Kant and the Refutations of Subjectivism,” in L.W. Beck, *Kant’s Theory of Knowledge* (Holland, Reidel, 1974), pp. 208 - 217. For a good review of the various positions see, Patricia Kitcher, *Kant’s Transcendental Psychology* (Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 27 - 28. Kitcher herself subscribes to the view that Descartes is not the primary target of the *CPR*. One does not necessarily have to prioritize in this matter. Clearly Kant wishes to deal with the empirical scepticism of Hume and the problematic scepticism of an empirical idealist like Descartes. The evidence, however, points to Kant’s lifelong pre-occupation with the various refutations of idealism as an abiding and ever present concern.

<sup>10</sup> The general term used in the Refutation, is “material idealism” which covers both the “dogmatic idealism” of Berkeley (summarily dismissed by Kant as having already been dealt with in the Transcendental Aesthetic) and the “problematic idealism” of Descartes, which Kant

Kant attributed so much importance in the second edition of the *CPR* to his proof in the Refutation that commentators from the very beginning took the bait and gave it in turn special critical attention.<sup>11</sup> There are four reasons why the bait is so tempting. First, Kant declares in the B Preface that the Refutation is the only new addition to the second edition and even then it is solely with respect to the method or “kind of proof” (*Beweisart*) that is offered. Secondly, Kant says that it is a “scandal for philosophy” and “human reason” if we have to accept merely on faith (*Glauben*) the existence of things outside of us.<sup>12</sup> Thirdly, Kant’s position in the Refutation, at first glance, intuitively runs counter to his transcendental idealism by appearing to give a mind-independent status to our experience of external objects. Finally, at the last minute before publication of the second edition, Kant changes a passage in the proof in order to make it explicit

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says is reasonable and a product of a philosophical way of thinking, *CPR*, B274, pp. 288 - 289. Kant’s critique of Berkeley’s dogmatic idealism, sometimes labelled by him as “mystical” or “visionary” idealism, see Kant’s response to Christian Garve’s review of the *CPR* in *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, tr. James W. Ellington, (Hackett, 1977), pp. 106 - 108, is critically examined by Colin M. Turbayne, “Kant’s Refutation of Dogmatic Idealism,” *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 20 (July, 1955), pp. 225 - 244; Henry Allison, “Kant’s Critique of Berkeley,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 11 (1973), pp. 43 - 63 and Dina Emundts, “Kant’s Critique of Berkeley’s Concept of Objectivity,” in Daniel Garber and Beatrice Longuenesse, eds., *Kant and the Early Moderns* (Princeton University Press, 2008). Material idealism, which Kant also calls “psychological idealism” in the B Preface, is empirical idealism which is what results from the Cartesian approach to the “empirically determined consciousness” that figures prominently in the Refutation. In the Fourth Paralogism the “sceptical idealist” is the “problematic idealist” of the Refutation. There are useful charts for Kant’s confusing nomenclature with respect the various forms of idealism in Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant’s ‘Critique of Pure Reason,’* (Humanities Press, 1962) “Kant’s Refutations of Idealism,” pp. 298 - 321, the charts appear on pp. 300 - 301.

<sup>11</sup> Brigitte Sassen, ed., *Kant’s Early Critics: The Empiricist Critique of the Theoretical Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2000). See, for instance, Hermann Pistorius’ critical review of the second edition of *CPR* wherein he declares that Kant’s position in the Refutation and the B Preface is utterly inconsistent with his system as a whole, pp. 179 - 182. An early defender of Kant, Friedrich Born, states that the positioning “outside of” in the theorem of the Refutation (*das Dasein der Gegenstände im Raum außer mir*) modifies “existence” (*Dasein*) and the “in space” modifies objects (*Gegenstände*), pp. 187, and this alleviates any inconsistency with Kant’s critical idealism.

<sup>12</sup> *CPR*, Bxxxix, p. 36, *KrV*, Bxxxix, p. 33. For an extensive discussion of the B Preface footnote about the Refutation, see, Luigi Caranti, *Kant and the Scandal of Philosophy: The Kantian Critique of Cartesian Scepticism* (University of Toronto Press, 2007). Caranti’s thesis is that the Refutation fails on its own and can only be salvaged if we borrow some of the anti-sceptical resources found in the Fourth Paralogism. As an aside, I might add, that John Searle, in a recent address (July 18, 2014) to the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology in Berkeley California declared that the scandal of contemporary philosophy is its failure to account for consciousness.

beyond a doubt that he wishes to separate clearly presentations (*Vorstellungen*) within us from something permanent that is *distinct* from these presentations and which therefore necessarily must be something outside of us empirically.<sup>13</sup>

The key operative terms are “*Beharrliche*,” and “*Bestimmungsgründe*” and they have caused Kantian scholars no small amount of grief. There are many obvious questions revolving around this distinction that seem to go against the very grain of Kant’s critical idealism. For example, how can something be empirical and yet be outside of our presentations? How can something be outside of our cognitive presentational capacity, or our sensible intuitional capacity, and at the same time not simply be converted or collapse into a noumenal boundary concept? Is there a noumenal, non-cognitive reality for time-consciousness that is somehow an aspatial, or non-determined spatial, permanency in experience or perception that makes possible spatial perception as such and which further makes possible spatial arrays of determined and determinable outer objects of both a Euclidean and non-Euclidean character?<sup>14</sup> Is Kant skating around the whole issue by transferring the “problematic” of Cartesian idealism to the “problematic,” i.e. non-contradictory nature of noumena.<sup>15</sup>

The permanent (*Beharrliche*) is qualified as the “permanent in perception” in the proof proper of the Refutation. The “grounding determination of my existence” (*Bestimmungsgründe meines Daseins*) wherein all my presentations are encountered presupposes something distinct from those presentations which itself must be permanent and equally distinct from my temporally determined inner intuitions and presentations. Indeed, all presentations have a thoroughgoing

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<sup>13</sup> The original passage at the third sentence in B275 of the Refutation reads:

“Dieses Beharrliche aber kann nicht etwas in mir sein, weil eben mein Dasein in der Zeit durch dieses Beharrliche allererst bestimmt werden kann.”

The amended passage in the B Preface reads:

“Dieses Beharrliche aber kann nicht eine Anschauung in mir sein. Denn alle Bestimmungsgründe meines Daseins, die in mir angetroffen werden können, sind Vorstellungen, und bedürfen, als solche, selbst ein von ihnen unterschiedenes Beharrliches, worauf in Beziehung der Wechsel derselben, mithin mein Dasein, in der Zeit, darin sie wechseln, bestimmt werden könne.”

*KrV*, B275, p. 273, *KrV*, Bxxxix, p. 33.

<sup>14</sup> This raises many issues in spatial perception and “visual” geometry that were current in the Enlightenment and form a considerable literature in modern psychology. For a review, see, Kircher, *op. cit.*, pp. 30 - 60, as well as James Hopkins, “Visual Geometry,” *Philosophical Review* 82, (1973), pp. 3 - 34 and Amit Hagar, “Kant and non-Euclidean Geometry,” *Kant-Studien*, (2008), Vol. 99, No. 1, pp. 80 - 98.

<sup>15</sup> *CPR*, B310, p. 318.



temporal component which must be backstopped by an atemporal externality. That permanent externality indubitably makes possible the determined and determinable objects existing in space outside of us as found in the Transcendental Aesthetic. Any statements about the existence of those objects cannot therefore, according to Kant, be dependent on inferences from our internal consciousness. But what about inferences from aspatial to spatial perception? It is only insofar as that consciousness is necessarily outwardly directed that the status of objects is indubitable. On Kant's theory, however, there would be no internal consciousness without this outward directionality. Why then did Kant not provide a further schematism for the understanding based on a universal spatial determination?<sup>16</sup>

The Refutation on the surface appears to reverse the arguments in the Transcendental Aesthetic and Analytic that give priority to time as the ultimate filter for all our inner and outer intuitions. In the Transcendental Aesthetic time is the "a priori condition of all appearances generally" and in the Analytic we have, for instance, the fundamental and universal transcendental time determination of the "Schematism of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding."<sup>17</sup> One is left with the puzzling situation of the Refutation undermining the priority of time in key parts of the Transcendental Analytic. Critics have all along zeroed in on Kant's apparent inability to argue his way out of the pervasive realm of subjective time-determinations of the "empirically determined consciousness." Taking a route of compromise by saying that the time-determined interiority of consciousness presupposes the permanent in perception as something distinct from my presentations and conversely, or seemingly conversely, by declaring that those presentations make possible any sense or understanding of the existence of objects outside of me, rings hollow. A deep incoherency in the Kantian position still appears to remain even if we see the whole matter as one of a mutual complementarity between a time-determined presentational consciousness and a spatially-determined consciousness that anchors the consciousness of our existence in time.

It is clear, however, that Kant wishes to pivot on a ambiguity in the notion of permanent (*Beharrliche*) or a double notion of "externality." He deploys externality throughout his critical philosophy both in the transcendental sense and in the empirical, phenomenal sense of a consciousness that is definitionally a correlative grade of mind, as Hegel says, which is the empirically determined consciousness that is the subject of the Theorem (*Lehrsatz*) in the Refutation. And Kant must necessarily view externality in this dual sense for the reason that the empirical realism of an empirically determined consciousness is undergirded by the transcendental idealism of his theoretical philosophy and epistemology in the Transcendental Analytic as portrayed in the Transcendental Deduction (of objects in general) and especially as developed in the First Analogy of the Analytic of Principles.

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<sup>16</sup> This has been suggested by Eckart Förster, *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy: A Systematic Reconstruction*, tr. Brady Bowman (Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 66. He argues that at the end of the Preface to the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, tr. Michael Friedman (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 13, Kant argues for a "schematism of outer sense" that would supplement the "schematism of inner sense" of the A edition of the *CPR*.

<sup>17</sup> *CPR*, A34, p. 88 and B178, p. 211.

We also have the issue of a dual theory of self-awareness or a double notion of “interiority” or “subjectivity.” If we view the Refutation and the Fourth Paralogism as reinforcing each other, we also have to confront the problematic of two radically distinct selves or thinkable interiorities. There is the transcendental “I” which is the unknowable or epistemologically translucent self of the Paralogisms in general. This is also the logical, transcendental “I” of the Analytic - the final guarantor of the unity of experience though not itself to be encountered experientially. Strictly speaking we cannot even conceptualize it as an interiority because it is non-embodied and not open to cognitive presentation. Then there is the embodied empirical consciousness of the Refutation that is engaged in inner/outer fracturation and which is also the provider of a form of sensibility, space, that makes possible the givenness of empirical objects outside of us.<sup>18</sup> The consequences of taking the fracturation of the empirical consciousness as absolute are very different from the necessity of postulating a transcendental “I” in order to make possible Kant’s transcendental idealism and sustain the unity of experience.

(ii) The Refutation Proper - Structurally Defensible or Devilish Credal Logic?

The Refutation contains the following structure:

- (1) Preamble [B274 - B275]
- (2) Theorem [B275]
- (3) Proof [B275 - B276]
- (4) Comments 1, 2 and 3 [B276 - B279]

Relevant passages in the *CPR*, besides the already discussed crucial connection to the Fourth Paralogism, are the references to the Refutation in the “General Comment on the System of Principles” (B291 - B294), the important footnote in the B Preface and the footnote in Comment One on the directness of outer experience. Kant’s positioning of the Refutation within the mode of Actuality in “The Postulates of Empirical Thought as Such” is significant. The First and Third Analogies of Experience in the *CPR* also need to be taken into account for a thorough analysis of the issues raised in the Refutation.

As for other Kantian texts on idealism a wide number could be consulted. The *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* contains discussions about the nature of idealism.<sup>19</sup> *The Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* has much to say about physics and the nature of bodies that could be limned to help us with the Refutation as could some pre-Critical writings and the *Opus postumum*. Most importantly, there are many post-*CPR* references to the intricate problems of material idealism in the *Reflexionen*. These remarks figure prominently in such

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<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of the Refutation in relation to the notion of an “embodied subject,” see, Quassim Cassam, “Inner Sense, Body Sense, and Kant’s Refutation of Idealism,” *European Journal of Philosophy*, 1:2, (1993), pp.111 - 127.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of the relevant passages in the *Prolegomena*, see Kemp Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 305 - 308.

commentators such as Allison, Guyer, Werkmeister and Förster.<sup>20</sup>

There is a school of Kantian commentary which sees the search for consistency in the critical philosophy as foolhardy. It wishes to emphasize the experimental and exploratory quality of Kant's doctrines and arguments. A strident inconsistency would be the direct realism of the Refutation and the general subjective condition of the representation of objects one finds in the Analytic. There can, however, for Kant be no ultimate incompatibility between transcendental idealism and his empirical realism. The critical philosophy must sustain the correlation between the two and it can only do so by defeating both transcendental realism *and* empirical idealism. Even Kemp Smith, an advocate of defending Kant's inconsistencies, seeks supporting arguments in the Paralogisms and the Antinomies, to reinforce the empirical realism of the Refutation.<sup>21</sup> Empirical idealism invariably leads to transcendental realism since the inner sense is that which is most actual in the former and which in turn leads to the postulation of extended beings as things existing in themselves, or the conversion of presentations into things in themselves.

We are here concerned with the basic architecture of Kant's Proof in the Refutation, while recognizing its deficiencies and the controversies they generate. The more expansive issue is the implication of the critique of problematic idealism for Kant's critique of the ontological argument, since ultimately it is my position that Kant is making a strong argument for ontological realism in the Refutation and can only do so insofar as he can defeat the productive or constructivist idealism that lies behind the attempt to elicit existence-statements out of something like the *ens realissimum* or the transcendental "I" or the world and nature-concepts of the Antinomies.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Kant has to confront both a transcendental realism which converts our mental presentations into a self-subsisting ontology and a time-based empirical idealism which is the bane of modernity. The latter not only leaves us with an ineliminable scepticism but also creates the framework for many of the problems of post-Kantian modernity, such as historicism and subjectivism.

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<sup>20</sup> Kant's comments are to be found in the *Reflexionen* (5653-4 and 6311-6, the authorship of the latter being dubious). A good survey of Kant's arguments against materialism idealism in the *Reflexionen* and the *Opus Postumum* can be found in W. H. Werkmeister, "Kant's Refutation of Idealism," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 15, Issue 4, (Winter, 1977), pp. 551 - 565. For Eckart Förster's consideration of the *Reflexionen*, see, "Kant's Refutation of Idealism," *Philosophy, Its History and Historiography*, ed., A.J. Holland (D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1985), pp. 287 - 303.

<sup>21</sup> See, Kemp Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 318 - 319, which quotes a long section from Section VI of the Antinomies entitled "Transcendental Idealism as the Key to Solving the Cosmological Dialectic," *CPR*, B 523 - 524, pp. 509 - 510. Section VI of the Antinomies is crucial for connecting the empirical realism of the Refutation with the transcendental idealism of the Transcendental Dialectic.

<sup>22</sup> Descartes only appears by name in Transcendental Dialectic of the *CPR* in the paralogisms and the critique of speculative theology.

The Theorem in the Refutation declares that:

“The mere, but empirically determined, consciousness of my own existence proves the existence of objects in space outside of me.”<sup>23</sup>

We are not here dealing with the transcendental consciousness which underlies the spontaneity of the understanding in the Transcendental Analytic. Nor are we critically controlling the illicit deployment of such a consciousness in any temporal determination which is the focus of the logical fallacies catalogued in the Paralogisms. The mere, empirically determined, consciousness has, *ab initio*, an original passivity which is simply a consciousness of a determination through something other than consciousness. It is only on the basis of this original passivity that the possibility arises of any form of outer spatial content or the intuitional presentation of objects in space. The mere (*bloß*) in the Theorem signals this original passivity. The presentation in intuition of objects in space allows those objects to first attain reality.

The Proof of the Theorem is maddeningly elliptical and has the following premises:

(1) Consciousness of ourselves as determined in time;

Our empirical consciousness is aware, *qua* consciousness, that we have inner intuitions and presentations which must take the form of time or successiveness. In other words experience must take place in a certain temporal order.<sup>24</sup> Self-awareness, or some degree of self-knowledge, is integral to consciousness and the manifold of inner intuition. This is Descartes' indubitable inner experience. Kant wishes to start with something that the material idealist cannot but accept. He then moves to a refutation of that first principle by means of his anti-sceptical Proof which forces the problematic material idealist to accept that which is most unacceptable i.e. the indubitable existence of objects outside of us. The Proof of the Refutation is therefore a *reductio ad absurdum*.

(2) All time determination presupposes something permanent (*Beharrliches*- persisting, enduring) in perception (*Wahrnehmung*);

Most critics and commentators do not believe that Kant can move inferentially and

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<sup>23</sup> *CPR*, B275, p. 289, the original reads: “Das bloße, aber empirisch bestimmte, Bewußtsein meines eigenen Daseins beweist das Dasein der Gegenstände im Raum außer mir.” *KrV*, B275, p. 273.

<sup>24</sup> This is the standard interpretation of the first premise, see, Dicker, *op. cit.*, p. 81. Dicker also thinks memory is crucial to the Proof and proceeds to reconstruct it on that basis, p. 86. Comment Three lends support to this interpretation in that it declares that the reproductive imagination is only possible through outer perception or the actuality of external objects (B278 - B279). The priority of memory and the reproductive imagination varies in German Idealism, for instance, Hegel puts the reproductive imagination prior to memory, see *Philosophy of Mind*, trs. William Wallace and A.V. Miller (Clarendon Press, 1971), “Mind Subjective, Psychology, Theoretical Mind, Representation,” pp. 206 - 223.

necessarily from (1) to (2). He appears simply to be juxtaposing our temporally determining empirical consciousness, which is (1), with the strong arguments for the permanency of substance in the First Analogy thus (2).<sup>25</sup> Some have argued that indeed the Refutation is merely the critical culmination of the arguments about substance, causality and community in the Analogies of Experience.<sup>26</sup> Perception in this step of the proof means outer perception. If the permanent is portrayed as nothing but a species of inner presentations, then the consciousness of our existence in time would only be something generated by the temporal form of our inner intuition. The empirically determined consciousness would thus involve only time. The consciousness of its consciousness would somehow be aspatial. The empirical idealist is as such an unqualified solipsist.

(3) As amended in the B Preface footnote, this permanent or enduring something cannot be an intuition (*Anschauung*) or presentation within us.

Seeming to recognize the inadequacy of moving from (1) to (2) Kant needed, one presumes, to add the B Preface amendment in order to secure the permanency of the external by unequivocally separating out presentations (*Vorstellungen*) from the equation. In other words, and contrary to Allison's Humean interpretation which tries to find a substratum or permanency in inner sense, Kant appears to be saying that one needs to excise presentational inner sense from the Proof altogether.<sup>27</sup> But then that creates the intractable problem of what we might be conscious of at all in our empirically determined consciousness. Can the inner internal time-consciousness be separated and cut off from the external space-consciousness? Are we then simply assuming an externality solely in a transcendental sense as a thinkable but not a knowable? Kant's "permanent in perception (*Beharrliches in der Wahrnehmung*)" then becomes a transcendental object, the *x*, the unknowable *thing-in-itself*, and thus ceases to be a psychological question of material idealism, which is the focus of the Refutation, but a transcendental presupposition more properly the subject of the critique of dialectical illusion in the Transcendental Dialectic.<sup>28</sup> The permanent of the Refutation is neither the permanency of the form of inner intuition nor the permanency of space as the form of outer sensibility. Therefore:

(4) Perception of this permanent something is only possible through a distinct externality or thing (*Ding*) outside of me and not the mere presentation of a thing outside of me. Thus "the

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<sup>25</sup> Mark Sacks, "Kant's First Analogy and the Refutation of Idealism," *Aristotelian Society*, December 5, 2005, pp. 115 - 132.

<sup>26</sup> P. Abela, *Kant's Empirical Realism* (Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 186.

<sup>27</sup> See, Vogel, *op. cit.*, pp. 877 - 881.

<sup>28</sup> "The *transcendental object* which underlies outer appearances, and likewise that transcendental object which underlies inner intuition is in itself neither matter nor a thinking being, but is, rather, a basis - with which we are unacquainted - of appearances that provide us with the empirical concept of both the first and the second kind." *CPR*, A380, p. 408.

determination of my existence in time is possible only through the existence of actual things that I perceive outside of me.”<sup>29</sup> The key phrase in this step of the proof is “existence of actual things (*Existenz wirklicher Dinge*).” Whenever Kant wishes to indicate that he is referring to non-presentational independent externality, or the Refutation sense of permanent exteriority, he generally uses the word “actual (*wirklich*).”<sup>30</sup>

This fourth step is effectively the conclusion of the proof, but Kant also adds the following sequel which introduces the pivotal notion of a direct consciousness of external things that is further elaborated upon in the footnote to the first Comment.

(5) Consciousness of my own existence in time, as necessarily linked with the consciousness of the possibility of time determination - outer things being the condition of the time-determination (*Bedingung der Zeitbestimmung*), is simultaneously a direct (immediate) consciousness (*unmittelbares Bewußtsein*) of the existence of other things outside me.

This section has the ambience of a summation but it introduces the Fourth Paralogism notion of a direct consciousness, i.e. something non-inferential, which is a key argument in the Refutation. This in turn gives rise to Kant’s further elaboration of what he means by direct consciousness in the first Comment

#### Comment One - Apagogic Proofs and Direct Consciousness

This Comment (*Anmerkung*) changes the directionality of the argument in the Proof and must be read in close conjunction with the long B Preface footnote. There are many subtle, but nonetheless rewarding, distinctions to be found in both texts. First of all, and most well known, it provides us with a transcendentially based argument which apagogically assumes the opposite of the material idealist. It can be graphically represented as follows:

#### Problematic Idealism

Inner Experience - Direct - External Things Inferred - Indirect

#### Transcendental Idealism

Outer Experience - Direct - Inner Self Determined - Indirect

Therefore:

Inner experience is only possible through our experience which presupposes the independent

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<sup>29</sup> “die Bestimmung meines Daseins in der Zeit nur durch die Existenz wirklicher Dinge, die ich außer mir wahrnehme, möglich.” *KrV*, B275 - B276, p. 274.

<sup>30</sup> There are numerous examples of the use of *wirklich* in this sense, apart from the Refutation, throughout the *CPR*, A377, p. 406; B519, p. 506.

existence of outer things, or the permanent in perception, and thus the empirical and transcendental first principle of epistemology is the indubitable and proven existence of objects in space outside of us.

In order to see the full strength of the argument it is necessary to examine Kant's B Preface footnote as well as his footnote to the first Comment. Kant proposes to deal with the appeal of both sides to the "directness" issue with the following argument:

(1) Empirical consciousness of my existence is identical with the consciousness of my existence *and* its determinability in time.<sup>31</sup> That which is connected in my inner experience is only possible through a consciousness of something outside of me. And this experience is intrinsically objective, i.e. it is not a function of the power of imagination. Kant then distinguishes this empirical consciousness of my existence from an intellectual consciousness of my existence in the concept *I am*.<sup>32</sup> This is the logical "I" which accompanies our judgments and discursive acts of the understanding. As Kant states further in the Comment, the *I am* is not *cognition* of the subject in any sense and certainly not empirical cognition.<sup>33</sup>

In the B Preface Kant uses the term "contrast" (*wogegen* - against which) as a requirement of distinguishing our inner empirical consciousness from the permanent outside of us. The reality (*Realität*) of outer sense makes the reality of inner sense possible and not the other way around as the Cartesian problematic idealist would have it. The "contrast" also gives us the pre-cognitive awareness of the fractured empirical consciousness that lies at the basis of presentational acts in both space and time.

Kant then adds this sentence in the B Preface:

"The presentation of something permanent in one's existence is not the same thing as a permanent presentation."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *CPR*, Bxl, p. 37.

<sup>32</sup> For a detailed discussion of Descartes *ego cogito* and Kant's "I think," see Béatrice Longuenesse, "Kant's "I Think" versus Descartes' "I am a Thing That Thinks," in *Kant and the Early Moderns*, eds., Daniel Garber and Béatrice Longuenesse (Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 9 - 31. Longuenesse, in contrast with the position taken in this paper, sees considerable discrepancies between Kant's critique of the Cartesian ontological proof and the Refutation, since she asserts that Kant endorses the Cartesian view that the "I think" necessarily entails the existence-statement "I exist."

<sup>33</sup> *CPR*, B277, p. 291.

<sup>34</sup> *CPR*, Bxli, p. 38. "die Vorstellung von etwas Beharrliches im Dasein ist nicht einerlei mit der beharrlichen Vorstellung." *KrV*, Bxli, p. 35. Caranti, *op. cit.*, p. 146, deals extensively with this passage.

The permanent in existence is immutable and prior to the “presentation” of something permanent which may vary greatly since all presentations are temporally determined. This resolves the inherent ambiguity in the term “permanent.” The “permanent in existence” of the Refutation is not the same as the various possible cognitive permutations of the “permanent” as one might find in the First or Third Analogies. Kant further adds that this permanent in existence is a single experience. These passages point to a non-cognitive theory of awareness. It is a direct consciousness of the permanent outside of us, that does not undermine the cognitive machinery of transcendental idealism, such as the ideality of space.

In the footnote to the first Comment Kant declares that *direct* consciousness is not presupposed in the first premise of the Proof but is itself proved. Cartesian inner sense would only give us outer imagination, i.e. not indubitable outer objects. Problematic idealism can only present, or represent, and thus forever mire us in a projection unto outer sense. This gives us no assurance of what may be empirically real and we are thus always vulnerable to what is empirically illusory, both piecemeal and systemic.

The potentially misleading passage in the first Comment that leads commentators to conclude that Kant somehow elicits existence-statements out of the “I” is the declaration of simply “I am” which is a subject that has consciousness. This is just an existence-statement with respect to a subject that is conscious. The human being of the Refutation is a primitive, pre-cognitive, pre-imaginative subject. To say that empirical realism requires us to view inner experience as something which is indirectly inferred and only possible through outer experience is not the same thing as to attach existence-statements to a transcendental Idea. The permanent in perception of the Refutation is not a transcendental Idea. The notions of completeness and unconditionality are not part of the empirical consciousness. We are in the Refutation dealing with an empirically determined consciousness that is necessarily and primordially immersed in existence, i.e. a subject within the conditionedness of the existence of the permanent in any possible perception.

The further point to be emphasized in the first Comment and its footnote is that if outer sense is only to be imagined, and this is necessarily the position of the empirical idealist, then the power of intuition (*Anschauungsvermögen*) would be negated. This is reminiscent of the apriority argument in the Metaphysical Exposition of Space of the Transcendental Aesthetic. Imagination has no place in the receptive capacity of sensibility. Spontaneity belongs to the discursiveness of the understanding and certainly not to the direct consciousness of the existence of external things. Secondly, imagination presupposes the priority of outer sense. As Kant emphasized in the Fourth Paralogism, the imagination takes its raw material from outer sense.<sup>35</sup> He is careful to maintain a rigorous boundary between empirical realism and idealism by unyieldingly situating the imagination outside of sensibility otherwise it easily becomes the power behind the fathom world of the empirical idealist, a world that Kant abhorred. Analytically, imagination always has the character of being “inner” in some sense. Whether imagination involves us haphazardly in non-veridical, off-target perceptions or projections outward, or in a world-deception orchestrated by the Evil Genius is irrelevant. Outer perception therefore provides us with a veridical basis

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<sup>35</sup> CPR, A373 - A374, p. 404.



which makes possible imagination as well as non-veridical perceptions.<sup>36</sup>

The final issue to be canvassed in the first Comment is the unreliability of inference. Kant touched upon the risks of inference in the Fourth Paralogism. There are, of course, many species of inferences, formal and informal. Kant is clearly concerned here not with logical, syllogistic inference that involves some level of necessity, such as the inferences of regressive syntheses in the Antinomies, but with the corrigible inferences of perception and the empirical consciousness. Corrigible perceptions and the improbabilities of the imagination are all, for Kant, parasitic *vis-à-vis* basic on-target perception.

#### Comment Two - The Argument from Variation in External Relations

This Comment is divided into two sections. The first section deals with a non-specified, indeterminate view of matter as the presupposition of all temporally based determinations with respect to our intellectual approaches to permanency. The second section focuses on the transcendental “I,” which has no predicate of intuition. Comment Two should be cross-referenced with the “General Comment on the System of Principles,” (B291 - B284) where the arguments about variation and motion are further developed. Since time determination can only be perceived through motion, the permanent in space must necessarily be presupposed by any form of time determination. Kant then gives a very cryptic example of movable objects in space and proceeds to show that there is nothing in sensible intuition that could give us the a priori concepts we associate with permanence, such as the concept of substance.<sup>37</sup> The principle of permanence embedded in substance is something drawn from the cognitive resources of the understanding.<sup>38</sup>

Kant’s view of matter in the Refutation is very different from the understanding of substance as permanence in the First Analogy and the portrayal of matter in the Transcendental Aesthetic. Matter in the latter is intuitively presentational and provides us with an array of sensible external determinations which the understanding then takes up in terms of the cognition of outer objects such as, for instance, what we might find in categories (predicaments) of impenetrability, affinity, cohesion and variation in external relations. In the Refutation matter (*Materie*) is a non-presentational, pre-intuitive permanency which is a necessary condition of all time determination and all intuition as such. Matter as the ultimate permanency in the empirical consciousness is construed by Kant in this Comment as being thoroughly independent of the subjective forms of sensibility. The external material world gives us all the possible content for our inner cognitive realm.

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<sup>36</sup> This argument is put nicely by J.N. Findlay, *op. cit.*, pp. 182 - 183.

<sup>37</sup> “The sun’s motion with respect to the earth’s objects,” *CPR*, B278, p. 291. The analogy represents the earth as the permanent in space and the sun as determinate motion. It is an ironic example, if one thinks of Kant’s Copernican revolution.

<sup>38</sup> Comment Two is fair warning to those who see a convergence between the First Analogy and the Refutation.

The latter part of this Comment is crucial in showing that the Refutation is compatible with Kant's critique of the Cartesian ontological argument. The consciousness of myself in the presentation of the "I" is not an intuition, but an intellectual presentation of the self-activity of a thinking subject (*intellektuelle Vorstellung der Selbsttätigkeit eines denkenden Subjekts*).<sup>39</sup> It is not therefore possible for there to be a predicate of intuition that, as permanent, could serve as a correlate for the time-determination buried in inner sense. The intellectual "I" cannot generate any intuitional predicates whatsoever, as the Fourth Paralogism demonstrates. On the other hand, empirical outer intuition seems to generate lower level permanencies within the overall singularity of the permanent in perception, such as impenetrability.

In the "General Comment on the System of Principles" Kant goes further and states that outer intuitions, and further the permanent in perception, underpin the objective reality (*Realität*) (as distinct from the objective validity - *Gültigkeit*) of the Transcendental Deduction of the categories of the understanding.<sup>40</sup> Kant's exposition of the pre-cognitive priority of outer intuitions in the General Comment is primarily from the standpoint of the relational categories, although the qualitative and quantitative categories are mentioned towards the end. The argument proceeds sequentially as follows:

- (1) Space, determined as permanent, is assumed by;
- (2) Concepts of relation, which in turn, assume;
  - (3) (i) That the concept of substance assumes something permanent in intuition;
  - (ii) That the concept of causality assumes time which assumes motion or change *in space*.
  - (iii) That the concept of community assumes space as the condition for formal external relations which in turn are the conditions for the possibility of real relations in an interactive community (*Wirkung und Gegenwirkung*).<sup>41</sup>
- (4) Internal change is only comprehensible through motion;
- (5) Successive existence of ourselves is comprehensible only through outer intuition.
- (6) Therefore, self-cognition from mere inner consciousness, without outer intuition, is severely limited in its possibilities, as is demonstrated in the Paralogisms.

Outer intuition, and the givenness of the permanent in space, is the pre-categorical ontological reality for any possible cognitive presentation of that reality within our mental structure. Kant's epistemology requires not only a co-terminous interaction between sensibility

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<sup>39</sup> *KrV*, B278, p. 275.

<sup>40</sup> *CPR*, B291, p. 300.

<sup>41</sup> *CPR*, B293, p. 301, *KrV*, B293, p. 286

and the pure concepts of the understanding, but it also must assume at the same time the priority of the thoroughgoing permanency of outer perception. We are therefore spatially embodied perceivers and are also conscious of the inelastic irremovability of that embodiment. All of this is a precondition of our existence as discursive thinking beings.

### Comment Three - Reproductive Imagination and the Problem of Systemic Hallucination

In this Comment Kant deals with the reproductive imagination since it is the principal operational tool of the empirical idealist. The productive imagination, on the other hand, is the chief instrument of the transcendental idealist. Outer intuition can be immediately real or inventive. Intuitive presentations as such do not imply a thing's necessary existence. Imaginative reproduction, or the associative re-alignment of outer intuitions, is predicated, for Kant, on the permanent in perception. This is a point he consistently reiterates in his various articulations on how to refute idealism. We must not therefore allow the reproductive imagination to usurp the objective role of outer perception and make our inner sense the absolute source of phenomenal objectivity. Apprehension and the reproductive imagination must always be checked by the recognition of the actuality of outer experience or the criterion of all actual outer experience.

The reproductive imagination does not have an all-pervasive capacity for systemic hallucination, i.e. the counterfeiting of all external reality. Awareness of self, for Kant, is always subordinate, even parasitic, upon a basic embodied awareness of objects that are outside and thus other to the self. This is the standard deep contradiction in the machinations of Descartes' Evil Genius. In order to postulate a completely imaginative world one must stand outside of that world, but this is impossible since to do so it is necessary to have a world outside of ourselves. The primitive, embodied, empirically-determined, but nonetheless universal, consciousness of the Refutation is therefore always, in Kant's view, the bulwark against systemic self-deception and the arts of the sceptical idealist.

### (C) The *Reflexionen* - Against Material Idealism

Kant did not systematically respond to criticism of the Refutation by Pistorius, Eberhard and others. He did, however, provide a "proof of dualism" in *Reflexion* 5653 that might be interpreted as a variation on the Refutation as well as support for the position taken in the Fourth Paralogism. We have a series of arguments and observations in the so called *Reflexionen* which show that he was occupied with the issue to the very end of his career.<sup>42</sup> There are two basic themes in the *Reflexionen*. The first arguments are a series of justifications for the ontological independence of externality. The second is a critique of the inadequacy of the inner empirical self, especially in the form of the power of the imagination, to counter our scepticism about the unprovability of the existence of objects in space outside of us.

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<sup>42</sup> Guyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 289 - 295, has an extensive discussion of the light the *Reflexionen* shed on the Refutation, see also, "Kant's Intentions in the Refutation of Idealism," *The Philosophical Review*, XCII, No. 3 (July, 1983), pp. 329 - 383. For a critical assessment of Guyer's interpretation of the *Reflexionen* and the *Nova Delucidatio*, see Jonathan Vogel, *op. cit.*, pp. 882 - 887.

*Reflexion 5653* introduces into the counter-idealism arguments the notions of intellectual intuition, spontaneity, intuited (asymmetrical) simultaneity and original passivity which are not generally found as specified terms of art in the text of the Refutation. The *Reflexionen* also contain further arguments about the inadequacy of inference from inner to outer, the circularity of problematic idealism and the hopelessness of using the principle of sufficient reason to defeat the empirical realism of the Refutation. All these reformulations of the Refutation support Kant's insistence on the obvious numerical and ontological distinctness of something outside of us that is different from our subjective presentations of objects in space. Furthermore, Kant constantly reiterates in the *Reflexionen* that this distinct otherness is not an illusion (*Schein*). Empirical idealism conflates what is outside of us and its presentation - ontological otherness and ideation, and is thus inherently susceptible to systemic deception.

There is a cryptic reference to a non-cognitive intellectual intuition in *Reflexion 5653* which seems to hint at the possibility that the empirical consciousness of things external to us is similar to the intellectual intuition of the Transcendental Aesthetic. In the Transcendental Aesthetic divine cognition is understood as a self-activity that is wholly intuitive and in no sense a form of discursive thought, since the latter always manifests limits.<sup>43</sup> Divine intuition is original, while all human intuition is derivative. Human space/time intuition is dependent on the prior existence of an object which then affects our subjective capacity to present objects in particular space/time configurations and arrays. The a priori intuitions are, of course, the inner/outer forms for these particular space/time arrays.

There are several reasons why Kant may think that the empirical consciousness of things external to us is similar (perhaps only analogously) to divine intellectual intuition. First of all, the primordial permanency of perception in the Refutation is non-discursive. The simple awareness of objects outside of us in general, which in turn makes possible internal time-determination, is limitless and non-determined. Secondly, empirical, time-determined consciousness of ourselves is always mediated. Mere, empirical consciousness of externality is direct and immediate, like divine intuition, wherein strictly speaking there is no distinction between the immediate and the mediated. Finally, we may have a hint in the elusive remark in *Reflexion 5653* about the relation of intellectual intuition to idealism with regard to the crucial concept of "intuitive understanding" that Kant was, at around this time (1790), developing in the *Critique of Judgment*.<sup>44</sup> There are some parallels between the permanent in perception of the Refutation and the synthetic universal of non-human intuitive understanding.

Kant's comment about intellectual intuition is completely at odds with the next passage in *Reflexion 5653* where he invokes the "original passivity" of our consciousness of all things

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<sup>43</sup> CPR, B68, B71 - B72, pp., 100 and 102 - 103.

<sup>44</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, tr. Werner S. Pluhar (Hackett Publishing, 1987), Section 77, pp. 288 - 294. The intuitive understanding proceeds from the "synthetically universal," or the intuition of a whole as a whole, to the particular. Human intellectual understanding proceeds from the "analytically universal."

external. When there is no possibility of a determining factor being within us, as is the case with the consciousness of externality, then there is no possibility of any spontaneous subjectivity being present in such consciousness. Dreams and fantasies may give the impression of spontaneous object-creation through the power of the imagination, but Kant insists once again, as he does in Comment Three of the Refutation, that the illusion of such existences presupposes a consciousness of external perceptions.

The issue of the consciousness of external things and intellectual intuition may be related to the notion of “intuited simultaneity” in the *Reflexionen*. It needs to be emphasized that both symmetrical and asymmetrical forms of simultaneity are key parts of Kant’s position in the various refutations of idealism. First of all, it is not possible to have inner time-determination without the non-temporal other necessarily present in any empirical consciousness.<sup>45</sup> This is simply the “simultaneity of correlation.” A correlative simultaneity is a consistent theme throughout all the refutations of idealism. In general, time-determination is not possible without externality. If there is an inner sense, then it must be present simultaneously with the empirical consciousness of objects outside of us. We are conscious of the simultaneous co-existence of inner and outer consciousness. Space and time are thus correlated. There cannot be one without the other.

The priority of spatial otherness in the Refutation gives rise, however, to another more problematic type of simultaneity. This can be called asymmetrical simultaneity and it has a reductive character. The argument appears in the short *Reflexion* 6312. For Kant not all time-determination is spatial, but everything that is in space must also be in time. Our external sense is therefore circumambient, prior and determinative of the possibility of inner time-determination. It is the ever present backstaging to all time-determination. Simultaneity makes possible the permanent. The latter is the basis of all forwards and backwards apprehension in our empirical awareness. Space necessarily engenders time (*flux per se*), but time does not necessarily engender space. Spatialized objects exist simultaneously, and this simultaneity makes possible temporal succession. External simultaneity is thus non-inferential and direct.

The closest Kant comes in the *Reflexionen* to a formal restatement of the CPR Refutation is in the “proof of dualism” that can be found in *Reflexion* 5653 entitled “Against Idealism.” As previously noted, Kant described his transcendental idealism as dualism in the Fourth Paralogism. Neither the Refutation *per se* nor the B Preface footnote make explicit reference to transcendental idealism as dualism. Kant revisits the issue in *Reflexion* 5653. Like the Refutation the proof is maddeningly succinct, although one might say that Kant did not think of it as a proof at all since in the B Preface footnote he says that the Refutation is “the only possible proof” of the objective reality of outer intuition.

The proof of dualism goes as follows:

(1) There is an inherent contradiction in the determination of our existence in time

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<sup>45</sup> Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, pp. 299 and 312, emphasizes the importance of the notion of simultaneity.

if we do not view the consciousness of space as something of an entirely different relationship than the presentation of our inner self;

(2) If the perception of space is granted without an object that is external to us, then the presentation only contains a relation to ourselves as subject;

(3) The preceding premise only gives us an intuition of time;

(4) The intuition of time, as the mere form of inner sense, gives us a de-spatialized object, which is impossible;

Therefore,

(5) Any presentation of an object as spatial must be based on a presentation of something that is numerically and ontologically other than the subject.

Kant's proof of dualism is essentially a declaration that the presentation of an object is necessarily spatial, in other words, the presentation is not possible without the assumption of an other to the inner empirical self making the presentation and that this otherness has the character of an objective primordial permanency which in turn makes possible the presentational space/time dictions and correlations of our sensibility.

In the various *Reflexionen* of the 1790s as well as the *Opus postumum*, Kant sees material or problematic idealism as in fact being an obstacle to metaphysics since it undermines the advance from the sensible to the supersensible. There are two reasons for the anti-metaphysical *nisus* of empirical idealism. The first has to do with the nature of time and the inner self. The second focuses on the power of the imagination.

Empirical consciousness of myself existing in time must assume a non-temporal other to that consciousness. This is the conclusion of the Refutation. Kant did not explore the deep connections between time and empirical idealism in the Refutation, but he was always sensitive to the fact that an overemphasis on time would make his philosophy vulnerable to the charge of subjective or constructive idealism. By its very nature time must presuppose something that transcends the inner empirical self. The latter on its own cannot decisively distinguish between systemic illusion and actual objects. The unidimensionality of time *per se* thus precludes the possibility of the transcendence of sensible intuition as such because it is inherently particularizing. The issue raises difficult questions of the relation between the empirical and transcendental consciousness. Nonetheless it shows that Kant believed there are gleams of the supersensible in the otherness of the empirical consciousness. In a pedestrian sort of way self-transcendence begins with the basic awareness of ourselves as being located or positioned in a world that is outside of us. Empirical idealism absorbs that outside world into the totality of the inner sense and cannot apodictically prove the existence of outer objects but only accept them on faith.

The Third Comment dealt with the reproductive imagination, while the Fourth

Paralogism discussed the poetic and inventive imagination. Both aspects of the power of the imagination are taken up in the *Reflexionen* of the 1790s.<sup>46</sup> Kant's anti-idealism therefore has to prove that the presentation of external things does not belong to the power of the imagination alone but rests on our awareness of actual objects outside of us. Both the inventive and reproductive imagination are parasitic upon such an external sense. The externalizing power of the imagination to project outwards an imaginary object depends on the possibility of objectivity. Imaginary intuition, as distinguished from sensory intuition, projects only the form of external sense. The empirical idealist collapses the distinction between sensory and imaginary intuition. This convergence then gives us the scepticism of totalizing dream-worlds. The transcendental idealist must therefore necessarily be a dualist.

Problematic idealism was still on Kant's mind in the *Opus postumum*.

#### (D) Kant's Transcendental Counter-Idealism

A consistent theme in Kant's critical philosophy is its labyrinthine endeavour to avoid a productive or constructive idealism. The importance of the Refutation can only be understood within this context. Human intuition is receptive and sensible. This does not preclude the possibility of intellectual intuition or the non-sensible intuition of things in themselves. The principal assumptions behind the latter are that it would have to be a productive intuition (something like the emission theory of perception in Plato's *Theaetetus*), that it is a limiting concept, that it is non-human and that it is the transcendental substratum of appearances. Apart from such assumptions it is not even possible for us to comprehend such a form of intuition.

Human understanding, which is discursive and which relates, a priori, to objects in general, is also non-productive. The Transcendental Deduction of the pure categories of the understanding does try to show that the understanding creates its own objects. That is anathema to Kant's critical project. Those objects are given to us in intuition and we are powerless to do anything about it. Likewise, the aim of the Refutation is to show definitively that any scheme of inner presentation is dependent on the independent existence of objects outside of us. The object of both Transcendental Deductions is to show the objective validity of the understanding's pure a priori concepts and the a priori interconnections between given sensible intuitions.<sup>47</sup> This is the a priori combinatory power of human understanding. It is all that the discursive understanding can do and it rests on the fact that for us possibility and actuality are not one. Kant on numerous occasions in the Transcendental Deduction declares that the understanding does not create its own objects and that any interpretation of transcendental philosophy as a productive idealism would nullify the validity of the Deduction *ab initio*, indeed, it would render it superfluous.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Reflexionen*, 6313, 6315 and 6316.

<sup>47</sup> *CPR*, A128, p. 173

<sup>48</sup> In the B edition Deduction Kant identifies this an "intuitive understanding," *CPR*, B135, p. 179, which he further elaborates upon in the *Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment*. See also, *CPR*, B139, p. 182, B145, pp. 186 - 187, B149, p. 189, and B159, p. 196, where Kant states

For both human intuition and intellect the condition of existence, the *via dolorosa*, is the unbridgeable separation of thought and being, which the productive idealist tries to remedy through the anchoring of all presentations in the absolute inner self. The empirical, constructive idealist is a self-appointed arbiter and sacred designer. This self-enclosed world of inner combination and imaginary fabrication is, for Kant, philosophy's worst nightmare, the scandal that provides a never-ending stream of pointless chatter and futile argument.

To conclude, what is being attempted by Kant in the Refutation is a shift away from the unknowable Transcendental Subject of the Fourth Paralogism, variously portrayed as an "I think," or "I am a thing that thinks," as an  $x$  for which there is no possibility of real predication, to the non-representable Transcendental Object =  $x$ , which is ultimately the necessary transcendental presupposition for any actual or imagined object of consciousness and which makes possible the bringing into actuality, as real or invented, of any possible empirical object of consciousness. Actuality, as a modal category, and postulate of empirical thought, which also encompasses possibility as a degree of understanding, therefore rests ultimately upon the Transcendental Object. This is the fundamental change which Kant discusses in the Refutation. It is a difference in the "method of proof" (*Beweisart*) because it starts with the Transcendental Object, moves to how external objects come within the purview of an empirically determined consciousness, or the permanent in outer perception, and thus makes possible the realm of presentations in the time-determined consciousness of our inner mental states. Pressing the matter even further, it might be said that one finds in the Refutation an embryonic theory of the genealogy of consciousness, which starts with a generalized precognitive awareness of otherness that has its source in the phenomenological description of the possibility of an embodied perceiver. Unlike Hegel, Kant is attempting to elaborate a theory of subjectivity out of objectivity that reconciles the transcendental idealism of the Aesthetic and Analytic with the direct empirical realism of the Refutation.

## Part II - Kant's Critique of Speculative Theology

### (A) The Transcendental Substratum of the Ideal of Pure Reason

Except for the explicit reference to Descartes' problematic idealism in the Refutation of the Transcendental Analytic, Kant's pre-occupations with the Cartesian philosophy and the principle of subjectivity are to be found in the Transcendental Dialectic, namely, as already seen in the Fourth Paralogism and in "The Ideal of Pure Reason." Indeed, Kant concludes the section entitled "On the Impossibility of an Ontological Proof of the Existence of God" with the following statement:

Hence all effort and labor is lost if expended on the famous ontological (Cartesian) proof of the existence of a supreme being from mere concepts; and, I suppose, a human being

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that we exist only as intelligence and cannot cognize ourselves as if our intuition were intellectual.



could not from mere ideas become richer in insights any more than a merchant could become richer in assets if he tried to improve his situation by adding a few zeros to his cash balance.<sup>49</sup>

A priori cognition into the existence of an ideal being, as putatively demonstrated by Descartes (and Leibniz), is as much a dubious undertaking as is the attempt to establish the existence of outer objects by means of the elevation of the *cogito* to absolute status. By positioning the Refutation in the Transcendental Analytic Kant is able to reinforce his critique of speculative theology from the standpoint of his epistemology or theoretical cognition. Transcendental idealism entails empirical realism. Moving from the *cogito* to indubitable reality-statements about the external is just as much an illegitimate exercise from the standpoint of transcendental idealism as connecting existence-statements with the *ens realissimum*. Generally speaking, an element of transcendental doubt always accompanies the ontological proof. Likewise, problematic idealism cannot rid itself of doubt with respect to the existence of outer objects.

The critique of speculative or transcendental theology in the chapter entitled “The Ideal of Pure Reason” in the Transcendental Dialectic of the *CPR* is well known and only needs to be briefly touched upon here in its relation to existence-statements and the directionality of any explication of the relation between concept and object. The arguments with respect to the deep connection between the critique of the so called Cartesian ontological argument and the indubitable assertion of outer spatiality in the Refutation - a spatiality the existence of which does not require a necessary filtering, *ab initio*, through the alembic of our inner self - is taken up in Part IV.

A key principle discussed by Kant in the critique of speculative theology is that of “thoroughgoing determination” (*durchgängige Bestimmung*).<sup>50</sup> Logically Kant relies on the disjunctive syllogism to provide the formal structure for all possible predication. Determination as such relies on the principle of contradiction and the law of excluded middle. Thoroughgoing determination goes beyond the principle of contradiction and refers to the sum of all predicates, i.e. possibility in its entirety. Therefore “the principle of thoroughgoing determination concerns content, and not merely logical form.”<sup>51</sup> The “thoroughgoing” is indicative of a conjunctive, not logically disjunctive orientation, in that it brings all the disjointed possibilities of negative determination under one concept of omnireality.

God must be an omnipossible being. The transcendental substratum of our reason provides the material for all possible predicates and this is, for Kant, the idea of a total reality.<sup>52</sup> The concept of an *ens realissimum* is the concept of a single being because it contains one

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<sup>49</sup> *CPR*, B630, p. 586.

<sup>50</sup> *CPR*, B599, p. 563, *KrV*, B599, p. 552.

<sup>51</sup> *CPR*, B600, p. 564.

<sup>52</sup> *CPR*, B604, p. 566.

predicate absolutely, i.e. that which belongs to being. The transcendental premise of the principle of thoroughgoing determination is the presentation of the sum of all reality. Through the concept of a supreme reality one recognizes a being that is single, simple, all-sufficient and eternal.<sup>53</sup> This omnireal, omnipossible being has an unconditioned completeness in all its basic concepts, or what Kant quaintly calls “predicaments.” This is the idea of pure reason which lies at the basis of transcendental theology and is none other than the Idea of God.

Another crucial aspect of transcendental theology is the idea of unconditioned necessity. Kant paints the following series of “natural” inferences devised by human reason in order to arrive at the idea of absolutely necessary being:<sup>54</sup>

Existence of Some Necessary Being

Unconditioned Existence

Concept of What is Independent of any Condition

Sufficient Condition of All reality

Absolute Reality

Single Supreme Being

Original Basis of All Things  
(exists with)

Absolute Necessity

A supreme being is also a supreme cause. And there are only three ways theoretically to prove the existence of such a being. One can start from a particular or determinate experience and ascend causally to a supreme being, the physico-theological proof, or one can argue from indeterminate experience as such, the cosmological proof, or one can argue, completely a priori from concepts only to a supreme being or cause, the so called ontological proof. Kant says that experience may prompt us to look for such proofs, but it is really the transcendental idea of a supreme being that guides reason in this endeavour. The transcendental or ontological proof is therefore the place where one must start.

(B) On the Impossibility of an Ontological Proof

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<sup>53</sup> *CPR*, B608, pp. 569 - 570. The various ways in which Kant portrays God as an omnireal being should be compared with Descartes a posteriori and a priori characterizations of the Idea of God in the Third and Fifth Meditations.

<sup>54</sup> *CPR*, B614 - B614, p. 574

The infamous critique of the ontological proof occupies less than nine pages of text in the *CPR*. The argument is straightforward and revolves around the ideas of determination, possibility and the concept/object correlation. Generally it goes like this. All existent propositions are synthetic. This puts them on the far side of the analytical propositions associated with the ideal of pure reason. A determination is a predicate (subject to the principle of non-contradiction) that increases a subject's concept and is not already contained in the subject-concept. Logical and real predicates are not the same. Being is not a real predicate and does not synthetically add anything to the concept of a thing. The actual therefore contains no more than the possible *vis-à-vis* a concept of something.<sup>55</sup> Then follows the well known hundred thalers example.

The content of experience does not augment the concept of an object. Therefore existence and mere possibility cannot be distinguished in defining the parameters of a concept. Objects of pure thought, such as an omnireal being, cannot be cognized through synthetic analysis or existence-statements. There is no such thing as a meaningful existence statement outside of the unity of experience. This does not mean that such an existence-statement is impossible, it simply has no epistemic meaning for us.

Kant's focus on the unconditioned necessity inherent in speculative theology comes out clearly in a short note appended to his critique of the cosmological proof of the existence of God entitled "Exposure and Explanation of the Dialectical Illusion in all Transcendental Proofs of the Existence of a Necessary Being."<sup>56</sup> An absolutely necessary being must be assumed as being *outside* the world. One can "never *complete* the regression to the conditions of existence without assuming a necessary being," but the assumption of such a being as a starting point is impossible.<sup>57</sup> Descartes causal proof for the existence of God asserts as a conclusion that God must exist necessarily outside of us.

The necessity inherent in the ideal of a supreme being lies in its unifying power as the all-sufficient but non-cognitive cause which serves as a *regulative* principle of reason. The conversion of such a regulative principle into a constitutive principle of cognition, or to think this unity hypostatically, is a transcendental subreption.<sup>58</sup> A transcendental realist always commits such subreptions or logical fallacies, which is the sensibilization of intellectual concepts. The intellectualization of appearances is the hallmark of the empirical idealist.

### Part III - Transcendental Realism and Descartes' Ontological Argument

#### (A) The Fifth Meditation - Ontological and A Priori

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<sup>55</sup> *CPR*., B626 - B627, pp. 583 -584.

<sup>56</sup> *CPR*, B642 - B648, pp. 595 - 599.

<sup>57</sup> *CPR*, B644, p. 596.

<sup>58</sup> *CPR*, B647, p. 599 and B671, p. 618.

Although it is disputable whether or not Descartes read Anselm's *Proslogion*, the first thing to remember is that his ontological or a priori argument in Fifth Meditation of the *Meditations on First Philosophy* is still "ontological."<sup>59</sup> In other words it argues the subtleties of inferring existence from the concept or Idea of God as a necessary being. The Third Meditation on the other hand uses causal arguments that, generally speaking, share characteristics of what Kant later called cosmological and physico-theological proofs which have an a posteriori, not an a priori, orientation. The a posteriori arguments in relation to the Refutation are briefly considered below.

That there are deep paradoxes at the bottom of Cartesian metaphysics because of his ambiguous stance with respect to our knowledge of God have long been recognized.<sup>60</sup> Nor should one think of the a priori and a posteriori proofs as being substitutable for one another. Descartes, like Kant, views the various proofs as having their distinctive attractions and weaknesses. In the Fifth Meditation Descartes initially makes the distinction, as does Kant in the consideration of thoroughgoing determination as omnipossible predication, between ideas of determinate things in which their essence can be separated from their existence, such as a triangle.<sup>61</sup> Our minds are replete with "an infinitude of ideas of certain things."<sup>62</sup> These ideas are not pure negations and are clear and distinct. Nor are these ideas our inventions because their diverse properties can be demonstrated. They are mental representations that do not enter our mind through sensible experience.<sup>63</sup> They are nonetheless true because we conceive of them clearly.

The idea of God, a supremely perfect being, is within our thought. It cannot be expunged from our thought. The essence of a supremely perfect being cannot be conceived of without existence. The negation of both the essence and the existence of a supremely perfect being, i.e. the negation of the subject as in Anselm's Fool, contains a sophism to which Descartes responds as follows:

While from the fact that I cannot conceive God without existence, it follows that existence is inseparable from Him, and hence that He really exists; not that my thought can bring this to pass, or impose any necessity on things, but, on the contrary, because of the necessity which lies in the thing itself, i.e. the necessity of the existence of God determines me to think in this way. For it is not within my power to think of God without

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<sup>59</sup> *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trs. Elizabeth Haldane and G.R.T Ross, (Cambridge University Press, 1972), Vol. I, pp. 179 - 185. Hereafter *Meditations*.

<sup>60</sup> Beyssade, Jean-Marie, "The Idea of God and the Proofs of His Existence," *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes*, ed., John Cottingham, (Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 174 - 199.

<sup>61</sup> *Meditations*, pp. 179 - 181.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

existence (that is of a supremely perfect Being devoid of a supreme perfection) though it is in my power to imagine a horse either with wings or without wings.<sup>64</sup>

Finite, imperfect minds have it within their power to determine the existence or non-existence of things that have specific properties or determinations. These determinations are conditional perfections. This is not the construction of the idea of a supremely perfect Being from conditional perfections but the making explicit, or implantation of the idea of God, in us a priori, or innately, so that it empowers all our determinate ideas and rational discussion of their properties and natures.

Descartes' God is the supreme guarantor of all truth and knowledge.

And so I very clearly recognise that the certainty and truth of all knowledge depends alone on the knowledge of the true God, in so much that, before I knew Him, I could not have a perfect knowledge of any other thing.<sup>65</sup>

Knowledge of intellectual matters and of corporal natures contains varying degrees of perfection the existence of which is of a secondary concern. Cartesian theocentric epistemology does not require that external objects exist indubitably. In fact their existence is secondary to the intellectualization of those objects. There is only one ultimate exception to this interiorization of our mental life and that is the presence within us of the idea of God which must have, indubitably, its origin outside of us. This eternal Creator is incomprehensible because it is a Being that is infinite and perfect and we are finite and limited. It is therefore impossible for us to intellectualize this all-knowing, eternal substance.

#### (B) The Third Meditation - Causal and A Posteriori

The proof of the existence of God in the Third Meditation is guided by a causal analysis. According to Descartes, the causal principle is non-reflective or given to us by the "natural light."<sup>66</sup> There must be at least as much reality in the cause as in the effect. Through the analysis of causes we create regressions of cause and effect that ultimately lead us to an "archetype" which represents the whole of reality. The first cause/effect a posteriori analysis by Descartes is ideational, i.e. we possess an idea of an immutable all-powerful Being, the second is existential, i.e. God creates us (and everything else).

Descartes maintains that if the "objective reality" of our ideas is such that it shows that they are not in us either "formally" or "eminently," then we must conclude that we are not the cause of such an idea, rather, it is an effect within us and we are not alone in the world.<sup>67</sup> We

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 181 - 182.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

can self-author ideas of corporeal things and imaginative reconstructions of our representations of these things. Ideas that represent the modes of substance, such as extension or figure, may not be formally within us, but are within us eminently since we are ourselves substances.<sup>68</sup>

The existential argument relies on the fact that we are not the author of our own being. If we were, we would contain a perfection that is far greater than we actually have. The argument is based on our ability as thinking things to think of a thinking thing that is more perfect than us.<sup>69</sup> The idea of a perfect Being that is consequent upon our ability to think it, is innate within us, just like the idea of our own self. Our natures are what they are because they are the effect of this ultimate cause.

And the whole strength of the argument which I have here made use of to prove the existence of God consists in this, that I recognise that it is not possible that my nature should be what it is, and indeed that I should have in myself that idea of a God, if God did not veritably exist - a God, I say, whose idea is in me, i.e. who possess all those supreme perfections of which our mind may indeed have some idea but without understanding them all, who is liable to no errors or defect [and who has none of all those marks which denote imperfection]. From this it is manifest that He cannot be a deceiver, since the light of nature teaches us that fraud and deception necessarily proceed from some defect.<sup>70</sup>

Together the ontological and causal proofs of the Fifth and Third Meditations provide Descartes with a theory of knowledge sustained by an incomprehensible and absolutely necessary Being, which provides the nexus between thought and extension without having to prove the indubitability of external objects. Our conditional epistemic perfections are sufficient for our limited knowledge even though the standards for evaluating truth and falsity are to be found solely within our own inner understanding insofar as it is able to restrain the overreach of the will.<sup>71</sup>

#### Part IV - Ontological Arguments in Relation to Transcendental and Problematic Idealism

Kant's critique of speculative theology is a function of his anthropological model of knowledge. Descartes' ontological argument, as in the classic theocentric models of Malebranche and Leibniz, or the seeing and understanding of all things through the eyes of God, requires also that external objects be seen by the mind's eye accompanied by a theological guarantee. Transcendental realism assumes an unprovable externality. Empirical idealism represents this unprovable externality as a scientifically rigorous realm of ideas on the basis of the theory that

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 168 - 170.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>71</sup> *Meditations*, "Of the True and the False," Fourth Meditation, pp. 175 - 176.

one can only have immediate access to one's inner self. The ideas generated by one's indubitable inner self also involve the idea of God., which is an infinite, all-powerful mind outside of oneself, that guarantees the indubitability of the ideas of empirical idealism about externality. God completes the circle and the "I" of empirical idealism shores up the varying certitudes of the transcendental realist.

The sole purpose of the Refutation is to demonstrate that we have experience as such. This is only possible insofar as we have outer experience which makes inner experience possible. The Cartesian ontological argument equivocates with respect to the inner/outer status of a supreme Being. Kant equivocates with respect to externality, or that which is outside of us, by postulating a Transcendental Object and by prioritizing outer appearances in any empirically determined consciousness. For Descartes if I did not have an idea of a supreme Being within me I would not be able to argue that He necessarily exists outside of me. In the Refutation, Kant argues that I would not have any presentations, intuitional or intellectual, without the permanency of external objects. Descartes establishes the existential outerness of a supreme Being through the innate presence of the idea of such a supreme Being within us. Kant strives to demonstrate that the irremovable status of anything outside of us cannot be established through innerness. Likewise, the predication of existence to the transcendental idea of an omnireal Being adds nothing to such an Idea. Predicating external objects, through a divine guarantor, on the basis of an innate idea of an indeterminate "I" is no different for Kant than predicating external existence, i.e. intellectually cognizable existence, on the basis of the Idea of an omnipossible Being.

#### Part V - Conclusion

Kant's desire to defeat Cartesian problematic idealism is as integral to the overall project of transcendental idealism as is his critique of the Cartesian ontological proof of the Fifth Meditation. Like many arguments in the *CPR*, Kant is trying to demonstrate how transcendental idealism addresses a cross section of issues in metaphysics and epistemology as they historically coalesced in his philosophy.

The thrust of the Refutation and the Fourth Paralogism is to restrain the empirically idealist pretensions of the Transcendental Subject through the transcendental presupposition of the Transcendental Object and the permanent in perception of the empirically determined consciousness. Kant's critique of the ontological argument contrariwise restrains the transcendentially realistic pretensions of externalism through a boundary analysis of the transcendental substratum of an omnireal being.

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