

Restoring the World: Allais' Manifest Interpretation of Transcendental Idealism

In this essay I will argue for Lucy Allais' relational/direct realist reading of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (CPR) to demonstrate how this take on Transcendental Idealism is best suited to cementing Kant's Direct Empirical Realism. I will illustrate the advantages of espousing this interpretation as it enjoys many of the benefits of a two-aspect interpretation but takes a preferable stance ontologically, whilst affirming the validity of the external world for the observer in opposition to two-world readings. My account will conform to the quoted definition below, the assertion of which I take to be a fundamental goal of Kant's in the CPR, for this sufficiently sums up his 'Copernican' metaphysical revolution. Where I view Allais' interpretation as drifting too far afield from Kant's inherent aim, I will show how a few modifications maintain the crucial interdependence of transcendental idealism and empirical realism, as "... the transcendental idealist is an empirical realist, and grants to matter, as appearance, a reality which need not be inferred, but is immediately perceived." (CPR, A372, p. 427)

Kant's transcendental idealism distinguishes between things in themselves, of which we can have no cognition; and things as they appear to us through our faculty of sensibility. These appearances are in part mind-dependent and must be experienced spatiotemporally as is the *a priori* structure of all human experience, yet Kant makes the claim that they are also empirically real and objectively valid by virtue of this same implicit ability to perceive them. The means by which things in themselves can come to affect our sensibility, provide the content of experience, and be subjected to conceptualization by the understanding which regulates these phenomena to conform to our subjective conditions of experience, is one of the most contentious issues in Kant's philosophy. Any successful account of Kant's transcendental idealism must distinguish between things in themselves (which are continuously deemed unknowable, e.g., CPR, Bxxvi, p.115; A378, p. 430) and appearances in such a way that satisfactorily explains how the former can impress upon us intuitions, whilst also remaining beyond the bounds of experience and cognition (cf. Allison, 2004, p. 50).

Put simply, the majority of readings of Kant's CPR can be separated into two predominant interpretations regarding the status of, and relation between, appearances and things in themselves (cf. Allais, 2007, p. 460). Phenomenalist interpretations of Kantian appearances make a sharp distinction between things in themselves and appearances; and assign to the latter the feature of mind-dependence. For phenomenologists, appearances thus exist solely as subjective mental entities. Such a view can be termed a two-world interpretation as it isolates the empirical world that one experiences from that of the noumenal, unknowable world. As Roche (2011, p. 352) notes, a fundamental issue with the phenomenalist interpretation is how to reconcile Kant's idealism with his empirical realism about time and space (cf. CPR, A28/B44, p. 160). If space and time are wholly mind-dependent, how are we to maintain Kant's realism about them? The deflationary interpretation on the other hand, holds that there is no ontological distinction between appearances and things in themselves. The distinction Kant makes rather reflects the two ways in which the world can be considered by beings of our cognitive capacities (cf. Guyer, 2016, p. 262). Such an opinion is often called a two-aspect interpretation. Adhering to this perspective, however, is incongruent with Kant's transcendental idealism and a proponent of such a view struggles to identify the necessity of idealism in our ability to abstract from features of objects (cf. Roche, 2011, p. 352).

Allais' moderately metaphysical stance places her in a most opportune position. She can reap the benefits of both two-world and two-aspect interpretations without committing to the same errors. She shares the advantageous position of conceiving but a single world with proponents of the two-aspect view, this is a crucial step in affirming Kant's realism in tandem with his idealism as both must be resolved with each other for the 'Copernican turn' to be valid. Similarly, she adopts the satisfactory stance of the two-world interpreters by distinguishing between things in themselves and appearances ontologically. This is an essential step in maintaining Kant's claim that appearances are mind-dependent, whilst things in themselves are not. The Refutation of Idealism was added in the second edition of the CPR to address what Kant deemed the continued scandal of philosophy: psychological idealism, and to provide proof of the existence of outer reality (CPR, Bxxxix, p. 121). As this section was acknowledged as the only essentially new addition to the second edition it is obvious that Kant

saw it as being crucial to his argument for transcendental idealism. I believe that Allais' definition of manifest qualities provides us with a uniquely middle ground perspective which facilitates the most fluid and common-sensical reading of Kant's transcendental idealism. However, my own interpretation diverges from hers in a few subtle ways, which I will discuss later.

Allais adheres to a relational/direct realist view of perception which proposes that perception is a means of immediate and direct contact with an object. Direct realists hold that the qualitative aspects of percepts belong to the objects themselves and are not attributed to the objects via some internal subjective state or mediated by a mental representation of the corresponding object.

“The relational view claims that perception is as it subjectively presents in these respects: it makes objects available for demonstrative identification and cognitive scrutiny in a non-mediated way, and the qualitative aspects of perceptual experience are aspects of the objects perceived, and not properties of mental states.” (Allais, 2007, P. 469)

Allais thinks that this perspective is closest to that which Kant intended to espouse and neatly fits his idealism. She coins the term ‘acquaintance’ to signify how intuitions relate to objects in a manner which a relation “guarantees the existence of the object and which individuates a specific particular” (2015, p. 14). This notion of intuition as acquaintance with objects is a novel formulation of what Kant meant by the term, as intuition is typically defined merely as sensation. Allais, however, argues that this does not exhaust what Kant by the term and that to intuit an object should be viewed from a direct realist perspective, thus giving objects to us whilst still under the conditions established in the Transcendental Aesthetic. She contends that this definition is the best means for affirming Kant's realism in tandem with his idealism, and with this I wholly agree. Many objectors of this interpretation, however, fail to see that acquaintance does not equate to directly knowing the thing in itself, it simply provides an explanation to how the thing in itself can come to affect one's sensibility. Alternative interpretations, such as those previously discussed, fail to provide a resolution to the problem of affection as succinctly as adopting a relational view of perception.

It is crucial to distinguish further how we are both affected by things in themselves, whilst also being unable to know of them in themselves. Walker contends that Allais has denigrated Kant's

things in themselves to *intelligibilia*, i.e., by conceiving of the intuition as a capacity which offers properties of the object to the individual, the object is thus knowable, and cognizable. Thus, Walker claims that Allais has adopted a noumenalist interpretation, despite her claim to avoid such a position from the outset of her book (cf. Allais, 2015, p.10). I disagree with Walker's assessment of Allais' position. His is a clear misinterpretation as he has confused Allais' treatment of appearances with things in themselves. Kant continually asserts that we can have knowledge of appearances, and appearances are what Allais' acquaintance refers to. For example, consider the quotations below:

“Perception is empirical consciousness, i.e., one in which there is at the same time sensation. Appearances, as objects of perception, are not pure (merely formal) intuitions, like space and time (for these cannot be perceived in themselves). They therefore also contain in addition to the intuition the materials for some object in general (through which something existing in space or time is represented), i.e., the real of the sensation, as merely subjective representation, by which one can only be conscious that the subject is affected, and which one relates to an object in general” (CPR, B207-208, pp. 289-290)

“But now external objects (bodies) are merely appearances, hence also nothing other than a species of my representations, whose objects are something only through these representations, but are nothing separated from them.” (CPR, A370, p. 427)

Thus, it is impossible to speak of things in themselves, for they lie outside the boundary of comprehension, however, it is possible to differentiate among appearances of objects, as “Appearances are not things in themselves” (CPR, A165, p. 289); “... this still could not be related to appearances at all, which do not represent things in themselves” (CPR, A276, p. 375). If appearances were things in themselves, we would have no need for transcendental idealism, for we would be intellectual intuitions. Allais' relational view does not equate to such an interpretation. On her account, the relational view enables us to say that we can have direct perception of external objects, which does not entail direct perception of how they are in themselves, for all perception must be filtered through our own subjective filter of the possibilities of experience, i.e., spatiality, temporality. This view then makes sense of Kant's common referral to appearances as representations; for the perceived object is mind-dependent, yet also representative of some mind-independent object insofar as an object could affect a being of our kind of cognition (cf. Allais, 2004, p. 674). Thus, it is not breaking the Kantian canon to investigate the means in which these appearances arrive in the form

that they do. Appearances are fundamental to Kant's empirical realism for it is through the changes in appearances that we first come to know of our own self-consciousness. The revelation of a unity of apperception is at once that which also guarantees the objective validity of the application of *a priori* concepts in our experience of the world (cf. CPR, A371, p.427). Nor does an interpretation of intuitions as manifesting properties in appearances go against the claim that Kant makes in the passages below, as Allais continually assures that these qualities are only manifest through the possibility of experience, which is akin to Kant stating that they possess some actuality in appearance.

“By an idealist, therefore, One must understand not someone who denies the existence of external objects of sense, but rather someone who only does not admit that it is cognized through immediate perception and infers from this that we can never be fully certain of their reality from any possible experience.” (CPR, A368-69, p. 426)

“Accordingly every sensation, thus also every reality in appearance, however small it may be, has a degree, i.e., an intensive magnitude...” (CPR, B211, pp. 291-292)

Allais holds that Kantian appearances cannot be successfully interpreted in light of transcendental idealism, if they are to be equated with a view of perception that holds that percepts are reducible to some inner mental state (Allais, 2007, p. 465), such as a conjunctivist or representationalist approach (cf. Johnston, 2019, p. 207). She contends that a direct realist view of perception is necessary for an accurate interpretation of appearances as being manifest; however, this account must hold up against non-veridical perceptions. She therefore cites the example of a stick appearing bent in water. It will be necessary to briefly summarize her conclusions of the stick's bentness for the purpose of this essay. Allais wants to arrive at a conception of perceptual processing which allows us to gain direct acquaintance with representations of objects as they are mind-independently, but one that also shares the disjunctivist opinion that non-veridical perceptions are rooted in mind-dependent features of representations (Allais, 2015, p. 112). What is central to her idea here is that she needs perception to be able to represent things in a certain way, but also to *present* them immediately in some instances. Thus, she takes veridical perception to present things as they are (in experience, crucially, not in themselves). She elaborates that a relational view allows for appearances to be something public and causally connected to the object. That the stick may appear bent in water, means that bentness is a public property of the appearance of the stick, and not of the stick itself (cf. Allais, 2007,

p. 472-473). Thus, we have grounds from which to establish how we can be affected by empirical objects in sensibility, yet the thing in itself remains unknowable.

My own interpretation of a direct realist reading of Kant, however, diverges slightly from Allais' original position. Allais places far too much weight on intuitions, I believe she had the right idea by placing a greater emphasis on intuition in general, for if Kant intended it to mean only sensory input, then surely, he would have used the word sensation in its place. Instead, the word intuition implies a more reciprocal relationship between subject and object, i.e., that one must approach an object from the specific *a priori* lens of spatiality and temporality. Thus, objects are not merely passively presented to consciousness; though the fact that objects can affect us and impress upon us their sense-data would seem to imply this on a surface level. Intuition so conceived provides consciousness with its object (cf. Allais, 2015, p. 197). Objectors to Allais, may misinterpret her claim that intuitions readily arrive for us as ordered spatially and temporally, however. By this I do not take her to mean that the things in themselves, which the intuitions abstract from, possess spatial and temporal features as this would amount to noumenalism (cf. CPR, B307, p. 360). It must be remembered that Allais is referring only to the appearances of these things in themselves, and the qualities "belong to objects only in relation to their possible perceptual appearing to us." (Allais, 2015, p. 135). That intuitions arrive as ordered in space and time, in fact maintains the transcendental idealist view that one can only experience and know the features of empirical reality that are mind-dependent, i.e., features which pertain to the appearance of the object and not to the mind-independent thing in itself. Moreover, Kant states that intuitions must arrive already in some manifold of representation, i.e., be ordered among themselves in some means, as they are the "effect of an object on the capacity for representation" (CPR, A19/B34, p. 156) This account of intuitions presenting manifest qualities, specifies that the mind-dependence of intuitions hinges entirely on the possibility of the presence to consciousness of that appearance; it does not place the mind-dependence of the object on some mental state, rather on the process of being intuited directly itself (cf. Allais, 2015, p. 201). It is thus possible for Allais to claim that outer intuitions are an "immediately presented array of

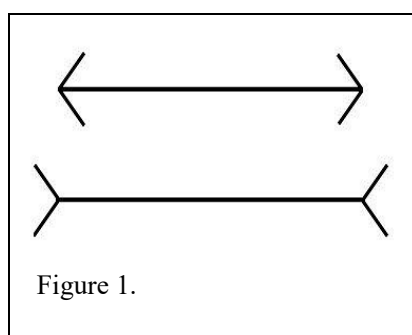
distinct, spatio-temporally located and related particulars” (2015, p. 170) whilst still preserving the core Kantian tenet that space and time do not exist objectively outside of our representing them (e.g., CPR, A24/B39, p. 158; A26/B42, p. 159; A39/B55, p. 183).

Allais’ intuitions, however, evince far more than Kant would have given them license to, she ultimately commits to the claim that manifested qualities appear both ordered in space and time and already bearing their relation to one another. This claim I interpreted above as referring to the intuitions after they had been subject to the synthesis of apprehension (CPR, A97, pp. 227-228), this however is not in keeping with Allais’ own intent (cf. Walker, 2016, p. 269). Moreover, Allais mistakenly posits that intuitions can present themselves to consciousness without the need for conceptualization (cf. Allais, 2015, p. 150). I argue that this non-conceptualist take on intuition is in part due to the emphasis she places on the Transcendental Aesthetic over the Transcendental Deduction in her approach, and that it is also a by-product of her reliance on secondary qualities to assert her relational/direct realist position - an endeavour which Kant himself explicitly stated would not prove fruitful (CPR, B45, p. 161; cf. Allais, 2007, p. 466). Indeed, for a consciousness to be affected by an appearance of an object that representation must involve perceptual properties organized in some manner, though indeterminate. However, I contend that sensibility alone would not be capable of making sense of such an appearance, as intuitions without concepts are “blind” (CPR, A51/B75, pp. 193-194; cf. A95, p. 227), furthermore, Kant states explicitly that every possible sensation must adhere to the categories (cf. CPR, B160, p. 261). I will provide evidence for this below and demonstrate how intuitions can manifest certain relational qualities whilst still necessitating that they undergo categorial scrutiny to be cognized, despite Allais’ and others claims (e.g., Allison, 2004, pp. 15-16). I thus maintain a direct empirical realist interpretation of appearances without the need to reject or modify the claims of the Transcendental Analytic.

I think that the spontaneity of thinking, thus the imagination, is pivotal to a correct interpretation of the qualitative aspects of objects and the manner in which their properties are presented in relation to one and another and distinct from the properties of other representations in appearances. I think that the imagination’s function, as outlined in the threefold synthesis (CPR, A97,

pp. 227-228; cf. Ayas, 2015, p.58), is a more suitable cause for the means in which manifested qualities are presented in experience as bearing specific spatiotemporal relations. Thus, intuitions are better construed as being mediated by this function of the imagination during synthesis, which assigns the specific qualities to the appearance, e.g., specific hue of colour, as “things like colours, taste, etc., are correctly considered not as qualities of things but as mere alterations of our subject, which can even be different in different people” (CPR, B45, p. 161). These relations are then subject to categorial investigation (CPR, A93–4/B126, p.224), the concepts applied to the appearances are also functions of this same spontaneity. This last point is affirmed by Allais (cf. 2015, p. 276), and she states this to demonstrate that even though a relational view of perception can give us perceptual particulars there are countless ways these could be combined or grouped as falling under properties (ibid. p. 277). I think that this claim, which Kant and Allais both hold, goes against a nonconceptualist treatment of intuitions akin to that purported by Allais. She expresses that she takes Kant to mean by “combination... how we group objects in regarding them as falling under a common property is not presented in perception; there are indefinitely many predicates corresponding to possible ways we could group or classify the objects that are given in intuition.” (ibid, p. 278). This statement clearly shows that she would agree with my interpretation that the spontaneity of thinking is crucial to how properties appear when manifested; moreover, by her own definition essentially manifest qualities are correspond to the empirically real object, whilst also being rooted firmly in the conditions of our possible experience. This multifaceted conception, which affirms the existence an empirically real object but insofar as it is subject to the transcendently ideal necessity for it to be manifested in a spatiotemporal guise, in tandem with the spontaneity of thinking, seems to me to be an amply sufficient mechanism for presenting appearances in the format which they appear in. Thus, there is no need to deviate from Kant’s definition of intuition, nor to assign any independence to the faculty of sensibility when Kant continually affirms that all representations are subject to a single unified synthesis (cf. O’Shea, 2012, p. 133). Despite this she contends, incorrectly in my view, that the intuition can provide perceptual particulars without “conceptually governed syntheses” (Allais, 2015, p. 155).

To further elaborate my amended version of manifest qualities and the means in which the perceptual properties can correspond to the object in appearance whilst also necessitating a further conceptual stage I will draw support from a passage of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. Being greatly concerned with the Gestalt of visual perception, Merleau-Ponty is very insightful on how perceptual properties appear before consciousness and what forms they adopt. He notes that it is a grave error to consider qualities as determinate and fully developed. Moreover, the way in which the qualities are manifest are dependent upon the particulars that are constituted by the object itself, as in accordance with a relational view of perception, however, this apparent formation/arrangement of the particulars is superseded by the need for the object to conform to our conditions of possible experience, thus the imagination much assign as much definite qualitative value to the object that it can in apprehension. Consider Figure 1 below, Müller-Lyer's optical illusion presents to lines "are neither of equal nor unequal length... each is taken in its private context as if it did not belong to the same universe as the other." (Merleau-Ponty, 2005, pp. 6-7). There are two important observations to be made here regarding manifest qualities. Firstly, the direction of the triangular lines, that occlude both ends of each line, has a direct effect on how we perceive the length of that line. The top line is generally assumed to be shorter than the line beneath it. This is due to the line on top being enclosed by closed angles. This is taken by the imagination to present it

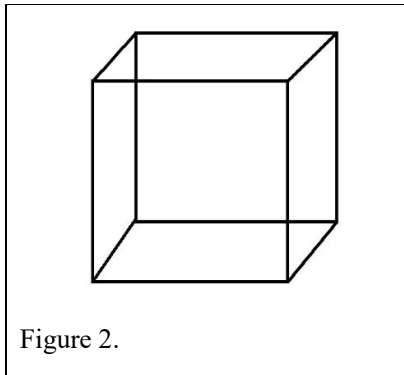


as shorter, sealed/enclosed as experience of the external world would have us presuppose. Conversely, the line beneath has outward angles at its edges, and the opposite quality of it seemingly opening out and being longer than the line above is manifested in its appearance. Secondly, the ends of each can be perceived as corners, thus if you focus on a single corner the

line becomes extended, as if it were in three-dimensional space, this again demonstrates the intermingling of concepts as derived from experience of the world, being directly applied to manifest properties. As the line and its end is a two-dimensional drawing, it could by no means be said of the object that its apparent extension is an intrinsic property of the line. This illusion demonstrates then,

how manifest qualities correspond to the object whilst also being filtered through the constraints of possible empirical experience.

To demonstrate further the synthesis of an appearance through the imagination and the understanding, I will incite the aid of another illusion. The Necker cube below is an illusion which hinges on rivalry, this involves the formation of a multi-stable perception as visual consciousness alternates periodically between the two possible perspectives that the cube facilitates (cf. Crick and



Koch, 1990, p. 273). If you focus on Figure 2, you will notice that this two-dimensional drawing of a cube, is manifested as though it is three-dimensional. Furthermore, the perspective shifts continually, such that the closest face is seen as the front face of the cube momentarily, then the furthest face of the cube is seen as the front face. The order of this succession, and

which face is first seen as the front face, I take as evidence of the role I propose that the spontaneity of thought plays in qualities manifesting. In this same vain as the example above, the cube is clearly subjected to categorial analysis that conforms the illustration to the rules which govern our perception that are applied in typical outer perception (cf. O'Shea, 2012, p. 139). When we are presented with an object in perception, as outlined in the Axioms of Intuitions, we are immediately presented with an extensive magnitudes (cf. CPR, B201, p. 286). This immediate conception of a body necessitates that we represent the shape and impenetrability of an object as well (cf. CPR, A106, p.232). For this is how objects really are empirically and Reason mediates our perceptions as such to conform to the rules of the objective use of *a priori* categories via the mathematical and dynamical principles (cf. CPR, A160/B199, p. 284). With these extensions, we then apply the regulative maxims, which stem solely from the "interest of reason" and are not derived from the constitutive features of the object itself (CPR, A666/B694, P. 603). Figure 2 thus provides a perfect illustration of what O'Shea calls the regulative ideal (1997, p. 233), this is a heuristic-like process through which Reason attempts to construct the most satisfactory object-concepts. This process is a subjective methodology, and is not derived from the appearances themselves, I think the Necker Cube thus provides a perfect example of

Reason's attempt to cement an indeterminate object into one fixed instantiation. This process, however, cannot be completed, so to avoid self-contradiction both perspectives are perceived in sequence (cf. CPR, Bxxxvi-vii, p. 115).

I believe that the illustrations above are the ultimate proof that the intuitions alone do not suffice in explaining manifest qualities and that Allais needs to include the threefold synthesis, the categories and the regulative principles on an equal footing. Furthermore, it coheres generally with Guyer's complaint that immediacy of intuition does not equate to containment in the full sense that Allais intends (cf. Guyer, 2016, p. 268). For it is essential to perception that intuitions arrive in a manifold, but this is not indicative of the full process. Containment is an exhaustive explanation of why the top line in Figure 1 is perceived as being shorter than the bottom line, as its ends (which are an immediate property of the object) are manifested in the possibility of experience that we then infer from this the quality of being shorter, however, such an interpretation cannot be said for Figure 2 also. As such, I agree with Guyer that Kant would not equate immediacy with containment. I contend that my reformulation, however, does not contradict a disjunctivist conception of perception, if anything, I believe it provides further evidence for one by highlighting the *a priori* filters that the appearances must pass through in perception, this shows how non-veridical perceptions can occur without the direct presence of the corresponding intuitions. As such concepts, though lacking intuitional content, would not be wholly meaningless (cf. CPR, A95/B127, p. 127; O'Shea, 2012, p. 123). Veridical and non-veridical perception would thus be distinct by virtue of the presence or absence of intuitions. This formulation conforms to the passage below and maintains the crucial affordance of Allais that the faculty of sensibility must possess the capacity of manifesting properties as they relate to things in themselves, but only as they appear to us through the possibility of experience and subject to the conditions of our cognition.

"It is by no means stranger that the laws of appearances in nature must agree with the understanding and its a priori form, i.e., its faculty of combining the manifold in general, than that the appearances themselves must agree with the form of sensible intuition a priori. For laws exist just a little in the appearances, but rather exist only relative to the subject in which the appearances inhere, insofar as it has understanding, as appearances do not exist in themselves, but only relative to the same being, insofar as it has senses." (CPR, B164, p. 263)

I believe that this modified account of Allais' manifest reality thus provides a novel account which resolves Kant's transcendental idealism with his empirical realism and preserves the original roles assigned to sensibility, the understanding and the imagination in the CPR. Thus Kant's 'Copernican revolution' is upheld and the aim of the Refutation of Idealism; to restore the world for the observer who perceives it, is achieved.

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