In the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, Kant attempts to prove that our representation of space is a priori. In the A edition, Kant defines a priori cognitions as "universal cognitions, which at the same time have the character of inner necessity" (A2), and in the B edition he makes clear that such cognitions must be "independent of all experience and even of all the impressions of the senses" (B2)[1]. Kant offers two arguments for the apriority of space. The first argument, located at A23/B38, proceeds as follows. First, Kant notes that we represent things as located both outside of our selves and of one another. He then asserts that it is only possible to represent things as outside of ourselves and of one another because we already have a representation of space in which to 'place' these things ("in order to represent them as outside one another, thus not merely different but as in different places, the representation of space must already be their ground"). Thus "outer experience" is only possible through our representation of space. Kant concludes by stating that space is therefore not an empirical concept derived from experience. To state this in terms of a priority, it is necessary also to assume that a concept is either derived from experience or a priori, and that therefore the representation of space must be a priori.

The classic objection to this argument is that it proves too much—that, for example, we would need to presuppose "red" in order to represent things as red. Henry Allison attempts to solve this problem by asserting that Kant's argument is not that the representation of space must be presupposed in order to understand objects as spatial, but instead that "the representation of space is necessary in order to be aware of things as distinct from ourselves and from each other" (86). He supports this assertion by contrasting Kant's "outer sense" with "inner sense": whereas inner sense is the awareness "of the self and its states", outer sense is the awareness of "objects distinct from the self and its states" (83). He also says that when Kant speaks of objects as

[1] All citations in this essay are drawn from class material.

outside of each other, that should be taken to imply a contrast between awareness of numerical distinction and qualitative distinction—knowing that objects are outside of each other means that we know that they are numerically distinct (83).

Allison's argument, however, is unsatisfactory. Allison claims that Kant's argument actually rests on the fact that "outside" is not a spatial term, but instead means "distinct from". While it may be true that knowing that things are outside of each other means knowing that they are distinct from each other, Kant is at great pains to make it clear that he is speaking of "outside" spatially[2]. After saying that sensations are related to something "outside me", Kant adds in a parenthesis "i.e., to something in another place in space from that which I find myself" (A23/B38). In this parenthesis, Kant makes explicit that he is talking exclusively about spatial relations, an impression that is strengthened by his statement that regarding objects as outside one another means regarding them as "not merely as different but as in different places" (A23/B38). The emphasis here is on the different places that the objects are in, not on the differences between the objects themselves. Allison's argument that Kant's primary focus is not on space is thus unpersuasive. The objection to Kant's first argument, that it proves too much, has not been satisfactorily answered.

The second argument that our representation of space is a priori immediately follows the first, and is found on A24/B38-9. First, Kant states that it is impossible for us to represent the non-existence of space. Then he adds that it is possible for us to represent empty space, that is, space with no objects in it. From these premises, Kant concludes first that space is a condition of the possibility of appearances, and second that space is not dependent on appearances. Since the representation of space is a necessary condition of appearances/experience and is not dependent on them, it is a priori.

[2] This critique of Allison appears in Daniel Warren's article "Kant and the Apriority of Space".

This argument is somewhat more successful than the first. However, there is a problem with the premises. As Charles Parsons has noted in The Cambridge Companion to Kant, it is unclear exactly why it is impossible for us to represent the non-existence of space. We can conceive of a non-spatial world as logically possible—Kant's own world of noumena is essentially non-spatial. Kant seems to be referring to a psychological inability to think or visualize a non-spatial world, but the vagaries of our own psychology are not necessarily a guide to actual possibility. A similar problem obtains in the second premise. It is not certain that when we imagine space without objects, we do not actually imagine space with a few infinitesimally small particles, or as Parsons has it, with objects of which we have no knowledge (69). However, this second objection is not as serious as it may appear. If it is a problem for Kant to state that it is impossible to represent the non-existence of space, it is equally problematic to assume that it is impossible to imagine space without objects. The objections raised for Kant's first premise hold equally for the objections to his second premise—space without objects seems logically possible, if difficult to conceive of psychologically. We must choose which premise to be discontented with. It seems clear, then, that at least one of the conclusions must hold. If we quarrel with the first premise, that we can imagine a world without space, we can still conclude that space doesn't depend on appearances, since we can imagine a space without any objects to appear in it. If we quarrel with the second premise, we can still conclude that a representation of space must exist even before experience, since we cannot avoid having a representation of space even without experience.

In addition to arguing that the representation of space is a priori, Kant also argues that our representation of space is an intuition rather than a concept. Kant's definitions of intuitions and concepts are spread throughout the *Critique*, but two passages seem especially relevant. The first,

located in the *Transcendental Logic*, describes our two sources of cognition: "the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), [and] the faculty for cognizing an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts)" (A50/B74). The first faculty is related to intuitions, the second to concepts. Intuitions, then, are representations in which "an object is given to us", while in concepts objects are "thought in relation to that representation" (A50/B74). Intuitions are directly received, while concepts are ways of thinking about the objects of intuitions. The second important passage occurs on A320/B377. Speaking of intuitions and concepts, Kant writes that "the former is immediately related to the object and is singular; the latter is mediate, by means of a mark, which can be common to several things". While both concepts and intuitions are representations, intuitions are representations of individual objects and are direct perceptions, while concepts are representations of universals (which can be "common to several things"), and are indirect, or "mediate".

Kant has two arguments that the representation of space is an intuition; this paper will examine only the first.[3] Kant first asserts that we can think of only one "space", that "one can only represent a single space" (A25/B39)[4]. He then remarks that we may think of many spaces, but they are understood as only parts of the one "space". These spaces then cannot be prior to "space"—that is, they cannot "precede the single all-encompassing space as its components". "Space" is not made up of spaces. "Space" is then "essentially single"—it is unique in that we can only think of one space, and it is "all-encompassing", a complete totality. Kant concludes that our representation of "space" is a pure intuition.

This argument successfully demonstrates that space is particular, one of the two defining characteristics of an intuition. "Space" may be able to be carved up into many different spaces,

[3] This reconstruction owes much to Henry Allison's in Chapter 5 of Kant's Transcendental Idealism.
[4] I use "space" to refer to the single intuition of space; spaces or space to refer to the parts of this "space". All other quotations in this section are from Kant, A25/B39.

but "space" itself is not made up of these spaces. "Space" is, essentially, one thing. For Kant, the "space" may appear to be manifold because we place "limitations" on it, marking contingent boundaries around an area that we necessarily think of as part of an essentially unified whole: "It ["space"] is essentially single, the manifold in it, thus also the general concept of spaces in general, rests merely on limitations". Kant's point here is that we must have the singular "space" before we can have spaces, since spaces can only arise as a result of limiting "space". The reverse operation, whereby many spaces are aggregated to form "space", does not occur. And in fact, when we think of aggregating spaces, we think of removing barriers—walls, for instance—rather than bringing spaces together. This demonstrates that spaces are derived from "space", and not the reverse. "Space" cannot, then be a concept, as it is not "thought in relation" to the representation of spaces—our idea of "space" is not dependent on spaces. "Space" thus must be an intuition as Kant defines the terms.