

Fourth Paralogism: Of the Ideality (of Outer Relation)
(Kant's 1st edition Refutation of Idealism – A 367 ff.)

- 1) What can be only causally inferred is never certain;
- 2) Outer objects can be only causally inferred, not immediately perceived by us;
- 3) Therefore, the existence of all objects of outer sense is doubtful.

This uncertainty regarding outer objects can be called 'the ideality of outer appearances', and is the major doctrine of **idealism**. By contrast, one who asserts a certainty regarding objects of outer sense might be called a **dualist**.

In attempted justification of the above argument, the rational psychologist usually offers something like the following argument:

- a) Only what is in ourselves can be perceived immediately.
- b) My own existence is the sole object of a mere perception.
- c) Thus, the existence of objects outside me is never given directly in perception.
- d) So, existence of outer objects must be inferred.

For these reasons, Descartes (it is thought) was justified in limiting all perception to the proposition, 'I, as thinking being, exist.' Accordingly, since I am not in a position to **perceive** directly external things (perception being a modification of inner sense), I can only infer their existence from my inner perception (as that of effect from cause). But, the inference from a given effect to a determinate cause is always uncertain, since the effect may be due to more than one cause. So, all of our so-called outer perceptions may be a mere play of our inner sense. Thus, the transcendental realist regards outer appearances as things-in-themselves, which exist independently of us and our mode of sensibility. Accordingly, the transcendental realist becomes an empirical idealist by supposing that objects of the senses must have an independent existence by themselves, and that our sensible representations are inadequate to establish the reality of external objects.

By contrast, the transcendental idealist holds that appearances are to be regarded as mere representations, and that space & time are the only sensible forms of our intuition. Thus, the transcendental idealist is an empirical realist (or, dualist), in that he admits the existence of matter without assuming anything more than the certainty of his representations (the cogito). For, this matter is only a species of representation (intuition) which is called 'external', not because matter refers to objects in themselves external, but because these representations refer perceptions to the space in which all things are external to one another. However, the space itself is **in us** (thus, it's an idealism). Our view is a turning of the tables on the game played by traditional idealism:

Kant's Argument for Transcendental Idealism (A 370)

- 1) I am conscious of my presentations & re-presentations [**Vorstellungen**].
- 2) Whatever properties an individual thing has are attributes of a substance.

- 3) Therefore, these presentations, and I myself (as a substance which has these representations), exist.
- 4) External objects are mere appearances, thus are nothing but a species of my presentations (= mere kinds of presentations met with **in us**. 'My' is to be understood in an **intellectual**, not an empirical, sense.)

- 5) Thus, external things, as well as I myself, exist.
- 6) Both of these (awareness of an external world and of myself) are founded upon the immediate witness of my self-consciousness.

- 7) So, the presentation of myself (as thinking subject) belongs to inner sense only; presentations signifying extended beings belong also to outer sense.

Kant was ultimately dissatisfied with this proof, since it did not clearly distinguish him from the other idealists of his time. And after the first reviews of the Critique surfaced, Kant decided to present a more radical argument to defeat the rational psychologist. Thus, he claims in the 2nd edition that if and only if knowledge of the external world can be shown to be a condition of all self-knowledge can the sceptic be defeated (B 418). Instead of suggesting sheer immediate perception (and its representation of a reality in space) as a proof of the external world, Kant now emphasizes that it is experience, knowledge of one's self, that provides the key premise of the argument. Outer sense and its objects are now a necessary condition of inner experience (determinate empirical knowledge).

Refutation of Idealism (B 275 ff.)

- 1) I am conscious of my own existence as determined in time.
 - 2) All time-determination presupposes something permanent in perception. (This premise depends on the argument of the First Analogy.)
 - 3a) But, this permanent can't be something in me (since it's only through this permanent that my existence in time can be determined).
- OR,
- 3b) But, this permanent can't be an intuition in me. (For, the only way of determining my existence is through my representations, and since representations are constantly changing, they require a permanent distinct from them. See Kant's important addition to the 2nd ed. Preface, Bxl, fn. a.)
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- 4) Thus, perception of this permanent is possible only through a *thing* outside me, not through the mere *representation* of a thing outside me.

- 5) Therefore, determination of my existence in time is only possible through the existence of actual things which I perceive outside me.
- 6) Now, consciousness of my existence in time is inextricably bound up with consciousness of the possibility of this time-determination.

- 7) So, consciousness of my existence is bound up with an immediate consciousness of the existence of things outside me.

Idealism assumed that the only immediate experience was **inner** experience, and that from it we could only **infer** outer things, and even this in an uncertain manner. (See the 4th Paralogism.) Thus, according to the rational psychologist, we may falsely ascribe the cause of our representations to outer things, when in fact the cause lies within ourselves (due to our imagination or perhaps we are dreaming).

However, Kant's Refutation of Idealism shows that outer experience is really immediate, & it is only by means of outer experience that inner experience is possible. While it is true that the representation 'I am' expresses the consciousness that can accompany all thought, this consciousness does not include knowledge of the subject. To obtain knowledge, we require, in addition to the thought, intuition as well. In this case, we need inner intuition (time) in which the subject can be determined. However, in order to determine such a subject, outer objects are required. Thus, inner experience is itself possible only through outer experience.

Notice, by the way, that Kant has a response to one who wants to claim that Kant's theory is open to the argument from imagination leveled against the rational psychologist. When one wonders how immediate consciousness of outer experience is possible, Kant notes that this question amounts to asking: do we have an inner sense only, and no outer sense but only an outer imagination? Then Kant remarks (B 277, fn.a) that in order even to imagine something as outer (present it to sense in intuition), we must already have an outer sense, which means we must already be able to distinguish the mere receptivity of an outer intuition from the spontaneity which characterizes acts of imagination. If we should merely **imagine** an outer sense, then the faculty of intuition would itself be superfluous.