

3/6 lecture, slide 11 (with added arrows):

Kant's Position

Transcendental Idealism:



- **Limitation Thesis:** we humans cannot know things as they are in themselves and their forms
- **Constitution Thesis:** we humans can know the forms of appearances, because our human perspective constitutes these forms, which are in fact the forms of our perspective
- **Compare with Copernicus:** we humans perceive the sun as moving, because our human perspective is moving
- **Contrast with Berkeley:** we humans can perceive only ideas in the mind, and cannot in any sense perceive things outside the mind

Empirical Realism:



- Space, time, and appearances are **empirically real**: they are fundamental within the project of ordinary and scientific cognition of the sensible world
- They are not **transcendentally real**: they are not fundamental within the project of reflection on the most basic conditions that enable but go without saying within ordinary and scientific cognition, within the enterprise of reflection on things in themselves and their forms

Transcendental Idealism (TI), Transcendental Realism (TR), Empirical Idealism (EI), Empirical Realism (ER) in the 4th Paralogism (note: in A only; not assigned readings):
passages from Kant, with my glosses in this font

First, two preliminary matters:

1. distinction between two senses of “external” and “outside us” (first full paragraph of p. 428):
(a) “empirically external” objects are things “that are to be encountered in space”; (b) “external in the transcendental sense” refers to “something that, as a thing in itself, exists distinct from us”: the thing as it really is, independent from us.

-if “space and time are both to be encountered only in us” (p. 428.2), these two senses turn out to be *very* different

2. Perception, inference, and certainty: (a) Perception for Kant is immediate/non-inferential & (b) knowledge of physical things that could be had by means of an effect-to-cause inference “is always uncertain” (p. 425.9)

“By *transcendental idealism* I mean the doctrine that appearances are to be regarded as being, one and all, representations only, not things in themselves, and that time and space are therefore only sensible forms of our intuition, not determinations given as existing by themselves, nor conditions of objects viewed as things in themselves” (A369=GW426, but using NKS)

TI takes spatial & temporal properties to be only properties of the objects as they appear to us, not as properties of the objects as they are in themselves

“*Transcendental realism*...regards time and space as something given in themselves, independently of our sensibility. The transcendental realist thus interprets outer appearances (their reality being taken as granted) as things-in-themselves, which exist independently of us

and of our sensibility, and which are therefore outside us--the phrase 'outside us' being interpreted in conformity with the pure concepts of the understanding" (A369=GW436, but using NKS).

TR takes spatial and temporal properties to be had by the objects as they are in themselves (by the transcendently external objects)

"It is, in fact, this transcendental realist who afterward plays the part of *empirical idealist*. After wrongly supposing that objects of the senses, if they are to be external, must have an existence by themselves, and independently of the senses, he finds that, judged from this point of view, all our sensuous representations are inadequate to establish their reality" (A369=GW426.7, using NKS)

TR → EI

"The term '*idealist*' is not, therefore, to be understood as applying to those who deny the existence of external objects of the senses, but only to those who do not admit that their existence is known through immediate perception, and who therefore conclude that we can never, by way of any possible experience, be completely certain as to their reality" (A368-9=GW426, using NKS)

EI: objects in space and time have only at most an uncertain / inferred existence, and are not immediately perceived

"The transcendental idealist is, therefore, an *empirical realist*, and allows matter, as appearance, a reality which does not permit of being inferred, but is immediately perceived" (A371; K, p. 347).

ER: We can know / be certain of objects as being in space & time, and we can immediately (w/o inference) perceive them as being so (but only as appearances)

Refutation of Idealism: GW 326-329 (now into our assigned reading)

"[material] Idealism" here divided into 2 kinds:

"the problematic idealism of Descartes": "the existence of objects in space outside us" is "doubtful and indemonstrable"

-Here we might ask whether it's all inference (non-immediacy) that's taken to render our grasp of things "doubtful", or whether, as suggested at GW425.9, it's specifically inference to the best causal explanation that renders a judgment uncertain

"the dogmatic idealism of Berkeley": "the existence of objects in space outside us" is "false and impossible"

Kant's understanding/treatment of his predecessors seems not so great here!

But let's try to critically compare Kant with the positions Descartes and Berkeley actually hold

Could our Kantian "idealists" grant that we have "immediate consciousness of outer things" (what Kant takes himself to here "prove": note at GW327.8), while remaining Kant-styled "idealists" (at least in the way they ever were) and without converting to TI-ER?