

ABSTRACT

A Priori Laws and the External World

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This thesis demonstrates that any interpretation of the status of ‘mind-independent reality’ or ‘the external world’ in Kant’s transcendental idealism is incomplete if it fails to account for the metaphysical implications of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Moreover, I argue that Kant’s description of ‘experience,’ when taken in conjunction with the metaphysical implications of the second *Critique*, probably (if not necessarily) excludes the existence of the traditional conception of physical matter.

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For My Parents

INTRODUCTION

The general question this thesis addresses is what human beings can justifiably believe about mind-independent reality with respect to Kant first and second *Critiques*. This question concerns human knowledge of things as they are in themselves, and the extent to which Kant's vindicates this essential metaphysical inquiry from the withering skepticism of Hume. The more specific question this thesis addresses is whether Kant's well-known strategy for securing justified beliefs concerning God, the immortal soul, and freedom in the second *Critique* ultimately provides the basis for answering whether mind-independent reality exists as reality appears to exist in human perception. When it comes to Kant's defense of the viability of justified belief in God, the immortal soul, and freedom, we know *not* to take the first *Critique* to be Kant's final word on the reality of these subjects. Rather, we know to take the first and second *Critiques* together as our guide, and we know to ask not merely what pure theoretical reason shows, but also what pure practical reason compels us to believe. When it comes to the vexed topic of the status of the external world in Kant's transcendental idealism, however, the issue strangely is treated entirely differently. This project departs from this trend and, in a fashion which I demonstrate to be more faithful to Kant's own approach to the matter, treats the question of the status of mind-independent reality similar to the question of the noumenal existence of God, immortal souls, and freedom. This thesis demonstrates that any interpretation of the status of 'mind-independent reality' or 'the external world' in Kant's transcendental idealism is incomplete if it fails to account for the metaphysical

implications of the *Critique of Practical Reason*.¹ Moreover, my approach demonstrates that Kant's description of 'experience,' when taken in conjunction with the metaphysical implications of the second *Critique*, heavily favors an idealist interpretation of transcendental idealism. This interpretation of Kant's first two *Critiques* entails the exclusion of the existence of the traditional conception of mind-independent physical matter in two important ways.

The first way, I shall argue, consists in Kant's claim that the moral law governs agents' wills in the noumenal world. As I explain in chapter two, physical objects cannot be understood apart from the deterministic implications of the law of causality. The moral law cannot sufficiently and universally govern the wills of agents who ultimately are bound by causal determinism. In order to resolve the tension between the demands of the moral law and the causal determinism of the phenomenal world, Kant postulates the existence of transcendental freedom. Kant holds that the *a priori* moral dictate to actualize the moral law unfettered by causal determinism justifies this postulation. Transcendental freedom is necessary if the moral law is to determine agents' wills sufficiently and universally in the noumenal world. With respect to the aims of this thesis, the importance of the postulate of freedom (as well as the postulates of the immortality of the soul and God's existence) cannot be overstated. These postulates provide substantial *a priori* insight into the nature of mind-independent reality. Therefore, if one is to offer an exhaustive picture of the nature of mind-independent reality afforded by Kant's transcendental realism, then one's picture must harmonize with these postulates. One of

¹ For the purposes of this project, I take 'mind-independent reality' to be *any* reality that is entirely independent of the mind of the subject in question. 'Mind-independent reality,' then, does not necessarily refer only to the existence of physical objects. When I refer to the potential existence of mind-independent physical objects, I specifically refer to them as 'mind-independent physical objects.'

my primary aims is to provide an interpretation which preserves Kant's description of the nature of moral agents and the moral law; his description of the nature of the governing principle of the noumenal world; and his description of the causal determinism he considers *a priori* necessary for understanding 'experience' in the phenomenal world.

I demonstrate that, if Kant's description of these three ostensibly competing principles is preserved, then physical objects as Kant conceives of them either necessarily cannot exist in the noumenal world or probably do not exist in the noumenal world. For the purposes of this thesis, I am content to succeed in proving the more modest claim that physical objects probably do not exist in the noumenal world. The restrictions Kant himself places on the possibility of human knowledge of the noumenal world themselves substantiate this contentment. As I will demonstrate, Kant is highly skeptical of the claims humans may justifiably assert about the nature of the noumenal world. If one adopts Kant's own skepticism about such claims, then any claim which attaches necessity to some feature of the noumenal world is dubious apart from *a priori* justification. Furthermore, it would drastically affect the current debate among Kant scholars to establish that the status of mind-independent reality in Kant's transcendental idealism, when considered in light of the first and the second *Critiques*, in all likelihood does not entail mind-independent physical objects. Demonstrating the overwhelming likelihood that mind-independent physical objects do not exist in the noumenal world, then, is no small feat.

The second way in which the intersection of the first two *Critiques* probably excludes the existence of the traditional metaphysical conception of physical matter rests upon a two-pronged intuition that implicitly runs throughout both works. The first

intuition is obvious upon a close reading of both texts. It is that, with respect to mind-independent reality, the limits of pure *speculative* reason provide no basis for asserting anything as to the nature of the noumenal world (i.e., mind-independent reality). For example, strictly with respect to pure speculative reason, we have no basis either for denying or affirming, in any capacity, whether noumenal objects are physical or merely ideal (as these terms were used by 17th and 18th century philosophers). Furthermore, with respect to the corollaries of the *a priori* moral law established by pure *practical* reason, the only beliefs concerning noumenal objects that are justified *a priori* are those pertaining to transcendental freedom, the existence of immortal souls, and the existence of God. Thus, we can have justified belief in the properties of noumenal reality with respect to these postulates. None of the properties of these objects, however, overlap with the properties ascribed to the traditional conception of physical objects. Therefore, in light of what we can justifiably believe about the noumenal world based upon these postulates and the framework provided by the first *Critique*, there is no justification for attributing the existence of physical properties to noumenal reality.

The second intuition is that, given the difficulty associated with ascribing mind-independent, physical properties to objects that cannot be conceived apart from the contents of our minds, it is very difficult to distinguish between ‘physical’ and ‘ideal’ in the Kantian framework. In light of this difficulty—which I elaborate upon later in this thesis—I argue that, when one considers the *a priori* justification for belief in God’s existence, it is superfluous to think of noumenal reality as including mind-independent physical objects. I base this argument upon Kant’s description in the second *Critique* of

God as sustainer of both the existence of immortal souls and the existence of the phenomenal realm.

According to this description, God is a non-physical noumenal being who sustains the non-physical, noumenal, personal souls that correspond to phenomenal beings and God is a non-physical noumenal being who sustains all of the features of the *mind-dependent* phenomenal world.² The basic argument, then, is 1) that it is superfluous to suppose the traditional conception of dualism, and 2) that it is simply contradictory to try to reduce transcendental idealism to physicalism. I take the traditional conception of ‘dualism’ to suppose that some *mind-independent*, physical reality underlies and supports the *mind-dependent* phenomenal world that we perceive. With respect to the second point, it is simply contradictory to suppose that a faithful reading of Kant’s transcendental idealism can reduce the objects we perceive in the phenomenal world to a physicalist picture because Kant blatantly denies this account.

One might object that 1) one can consistently appropriate Kant’s transcendental idealism to support either a traditional dualist or a physicalist account of the universe, 2) Kant’s transcendental idealism may *actually* entail either of these two accounts despite his own beliefs to the contrary, or 3) it is unclear exactly what Kant believed, and it could very well be that he was practically a dualist in the traditional sense or a physicalist. These are all fair objections. With respect to the first two, these claims are beyond the scope of this thesis. I offer a close reading of Kant’s texts, and I intend to preserve as many parts of both the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* as I can, regardless of how untenable the end result may seem as a metaphysical framework in and of itself.

² I elaborate upon these features at length in Chapter Two.

Many Kant scholars strive to produce plausible interpretations of transcendental idealism, but, unfortunately, the standards of plausibility in question seem to depend upon trends in contemporary metaphysics and epistemology. In this way, much of the secondary literature is inundated with attempts to appropriate Kant to support tenable conceptions of dualism, realism, or physicalism. These endeavors are certainly valuable insofar as addressing the concerns of objections 1 and 2 (above) is integral to the ongoing scholarly evaluation of Kant's work. The shortcoming of this approach, however, is that, with respect to the important questions concerning the nature of mind-independent reality, the implications of the *Critique of Practical Reason* are ignored.³ As I will demonstrate, failure to take the second *Critique* into consideration undermines any exhaustive interpretation of Kant's views on mind-independent reality. By focusing primarily upon the texts of the first and second *Critiques* and Kant's own claims about what his work produces with respect to the relationship therein, my hope is to contribute an interpretation of transcendental idealism that lays a foundation for a more informed approach to the concerns inherent in these first two objections. With these concerns in

³ Bob Adams's "Things in Themselves" (1997) is the only scholarly publication I came across that addresses questions of the status of mind-independent reality in Kant's transcendental idealism in light of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. He concludes that, in light of the claims about noumenal objects espoused in the second *Critique*, Kant's philosophy supports the idea that, with respect to the nature of ultimate reality, minds are more ultimately real and noumenal than physical bodies are (Adams 824). He makes this claim, however, on the basis that Kant's philosophy attributes nothing physical to the noumenal world whereas Kant obviously attributes the existence of minds to the noumenal world (823-824). Our approaches differ, then, in that I argue that Kant's description of noumenal objects in the second *Critique* itself *excludes* the existence of mind-independent physical objects from the noumenal world. His approach addresses the probability, *all things equal*, between whether the existence of minds is more ultimately real or whether the existence of bodies is more ultimately real. I, by contrast, argue that Kant's conception of what is ultimately real excludes the mind-independent existence of physical objects.

Prior to beginning my thesis project, I read Adams's "Why I am an Idealist" (2004). This paper mentions Kant only in passing, but its influence on my understanding of Kant cannot be overstated. This paper substantially influenced my understanding of idealism generally, and this understanding has carried over into many aspects of my approach to the status of mind-independent reality in Kant's critical philosophy.

mind, I believe that it will become clear that Kant's transcendental idealism, when examined in light of a close textual reading of both the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is best understood as a nuanced version of idealism.⁴

No scholar would take Kant's final word on the existence of God, the immortal soul, or human freedom to be settled by the Antinomies and Paralogisms of the *Critique of Pure Reason* alone. It is well established that Kant's full treatment of these objects is found in the second *Critique*. Given that these objects are all explicitly characterized as features of noumenal reality, it is odd that metaphysical inquiries into the status of mind-independent, noumenal reality so often ignore the implications of the second *Critique*. Looking strictly at a textual examination of the Kantian canons of pure reason, are scholars justified in looking exclusively at the *Critique of Pure Reason* to address the issues concerning the status of mind-independent reality in Kant's transcendental idealism? Kant says they are not. In the preface to the *Critique of Practical Reason*, he argues that "the concept of freedom, insofar as its reality is proved by an apodeictic law of practical reason, forms the keystone of the whole edifice of pure reason, even of

⁴ The following list is a sampling of scholars who fail to treat the question of mind-independent reality in light of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. In addressing whether Kant is an irrealist or an internal realist, James Van Cleve in *Problems From Kant* (1999), never once addresses the role the second *Critique* might play with respect to mind-independent reality (Van Cleve 212-226). In *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (1987), Paul Guyer concludes that Kant is actually committed to a form of realism despite Kant's attempt to support a nuanced version of idealism. He makes no reference whatsoever to the second *Critique* (Guyer 333-385, 413-415). In *The Bounds of Sense* (1966), P.F. Strawson argues that one loses nothing of philosophical significance by altogether discarding the notion of the noumenal world (Strawson 262). He argues this position without so much as a wink to what the implications such a claim has for the objects Kant attributes to the noumenal world in the second *Critique* (namely, God and immortal souls). In *Kant's Theory of Mind* (2000), Karl Ameriks provides a conclusion about the status of mind-independent reality in transcendental idealism based solely on the first *Critique* (Ameriks 84-128). This interpretation is consistent with my interpretation of what one can conclude with respect to the status of mind-independent reality in transcendental idealism based solely on the first *Critique*. The problem, however, is that Ameriks makes no mention of the second *Critique*. In *Kant's Analytic* (1966), Jonathan Bennett supports a realist interpretation of Kant and makes no reference to the second *Critique* (Bennett 202-219).

speculative reason” (Kpr V 3.23-3.25).⁵ This assertion serves as the impetus for my exploration of the implications that pure speculative and pure practical reason entail for one another. More importantly, with respect to producing a balanced account of the metaphysical picture of the universe Kant *intended* to produce, Kant’s remark strongly justifies these explorations and the importance of the fundamental positions I support in this thesis.

In chapter one I explain the major elements of the historical context for Kant’s approach to the issue of mind-independent reality. The primary elements of this context that I address are 1) David Hume’s objection both to *knowledge* of the existence of mind-independent reality and to the *existence* of such reality, and 2) David Hume’s objection to the role of cause and effect in human experience. With respect to this second issue, the law of causality is central both to Kant’s conception of ‘experience’ and to the role that the *Critique of Practical Reason* plays in the question of mind-independent reality. Hume’s rejection of knowledge of mind-independent reality and the potential existence of mind-independent reality was not only a major impetus of Kant’s critical project: the overall organization of the first and second *Critiques* in many ways appears to have been fashioned with the organization of Hume’s work in mind. In this way, a grasp of some of Hume’s larger philosophical contributions is integral to understanding the organization of the first and second *Critiques*. Moreover, given the validity of the arguments in the second *Critique*, Hume’s skepticism of mind-independent reality is ultimately undermined by the *a priori* justified beliefs in transcendental freedom, the immortality of

⁵ In accordance with standard citation procedures, ‘Kpr’ refers to the *Critique of Practical Reason*. ‘V’ stands for the fifth volume of the twenty-nine volume *Akademie* collection of Kant’s works, which is where the second *Critique* is located in the series. ‘3.23-3.25’ indicates the *Akademie* edition page and line numbers. References to the *Critique of Pure Reason* are to the standard A and B pagination of the first and second editions.

the soul, and God. I take great pains to address Hume's arguments given the influence that Hume had on shaping Kant's critical period, in particular the effect that attacking the law of causality had in directing the development of transcendental idealism generally.

In the second chapter, I explicate Kant's conception of 'experience' and why the law of causality is inseparable both from Kant's conception of experience and our understanding of 'objects' generally. I then address the difference that this conception of experience requires between 'objects in external space' and 'noumenal objects.' This distinction ultimately entails that speculative reason cannot provide insight into noumenal (i.e., mind-independent) objects apart from a mere 'problematic concept' of their existence. I emphasize, however, that pure speculative reason cannot *prove* the existence or nature of noumenal objects or laws, but that it also cannot *exclude* the existence of a physical mind-independent reality, God, the soul, or transcendental freedom.

The fact that pure speculative reason is limited to agnosticism on these points opens the door for the focus of the third chapter. In this chapter, I present Kant's arguments for the existence of transcendental freedom, the immortal soul, and God. Kant deduces these objects as morally necessary hypotheses for actualizing the object of the *a priori* moral law. Given the fact that it becomes necessary to postulate the existence of these objects, the question of how these objects affect our understanding of mind-independent reality becomes evident. If *a priori* practical reasoning justifies certain beliefs about the nature of mind-independent reality, then certainly these beliefs are not bound by the limits *a priori* speculative reason imposes upon reason generally (as set forth in the first *Critique*).

In the fourth chapter I explicate the two scenarios discussed at length in the beginning of this introduction, and how these scenarios probably exclude the existence of mind-independent, physical reality. Again, I argue that the existence of God and souls in the noumenal realm and the moral law as the governing principle of the noumenal realm probably eliminates the existence of physical mind-independent reality from Kant's framework of mind-independent reality in general. The likelihood of this result is the fundamental reason that the question of mind-independent reality within Kant's *Critical* framework cannot fully be resolved without giving due diligence to the implications of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

CHAPTER ONE

Kant's Arousal from Dogmatic Slumbers

In the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Kant “openly [confesses] that remembering David Hume was the very thing that first interrupted [his] dogmatic slumbers...and gave [his] investigations a different direction” (581). Despite a staunch opposition to many of Hume’s positions, Kant maintains a great deal of respect for the ingenuity of Hume’s work and even defends Hume against the “Commonsense Philosophers” (581). Kant claims, nonetheless, that nothing could have been more decisive in undermining metaphysics than Hume’s rejection of the law of causality (580). Moreover, Kant found Hume’s particular skepticism about the relationship between human minds and the external world unacceptable (623). Thus the *Critique of Pure Reason* attempts to 1) establish *a priori* knowledge of the law of causation and 2) establish the status of human knowledge with respect to the relationship between the world as it exists in its own right and the world as it appears to the human mind.

Kant published the A edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* in 1783, and the B edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1787. The *Prolegomena* and the B edition were published with the intention of correcting gross misunderstandings of the initial formulation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (*Prolegomena* 582, *Critique* B edition xlii). Readers of the *Critique of Pure Reason* today benefit from standard editions that allow one to read the A and B

edition together almost seamlessly. Such editions are beneficial insofar as they facilitate access to a more complete picture of Kant's *Critical* project. Conversely, such editions are detrimental insofar as they often obscure the reader's understanding of Kant's intended targets at key points in the development of his project. The targets of his revisions become evident, however, upon close inspection of the differences between the two editions of the *Critique* and the *Prolegomena*.

Students of modern philosophy are well aware that Kant rejects central components of Hume's skeptical empiricism. Some are not aware, however, that Hume's skeptical empiricism is not the central target of "The Refutation of Idealism" section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.¹ The Refutation of Idealism section is an addendum included within the B edition. Kant published the A edition, as noted above, in response to Hume. The A edition does not include The Refutation of Idealism. Therefore, one would be mistaken in believing that Kant wrote the *Critique of Pure Reason* and then realized that Hume's skeptical empiricism posed a problem for transcendental idealism. A lengthy footnote in the Preface to the B edition explains that the 'Refutation of Idealism' targets certain Cartesian arguments. According to Kant, these arguments begin with inner sense (i.e. the *cogito*) and reason from there to the existence of objects of outer sense. These arguments reject the assumption that one can prove the existence of objects of outer sense *a priori*, and argue instead that belief in the existence of such objects is justified only through faith grounded in proofs for God's existence (*Critique* B xl-xli,

¹ For example, Georges Dicker (2008) and P.F. Strawson (1966) obscure this point about "The Refutation of Idealism" section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

B275-B276).² There is plenty of room for confusion on this point: Descartes is not commonly known as an ‘idealist’ whereas Berkeley and Hume are famously known as defenders of ‘idealism.’ Yet, in the section in question, Kant draws a distinction between *dogmatic idealism* and *problematic idealism*. The former is the idealism of Berkeley and Hume, and is the idealism that, according to Kant, either rejects the existence of a mind-independent reality altogether, rejects the existence of objects of outer sense, or both (B 275).³ The latter is the skeptical system of Descartes that declares mind-independent reality to be “doubtful and indemonstrable” apart from belief in God (B 275).

According to Kant, the foundation of dogmatic idealism is undermined by the arguments for space and time as pure forms of intuition found in the Transcendental Aesthetic section of the *Critique* (B 275). Kant believes that the heavy lifting required for refuting Hume was provided in these earlier arguments. The primary target of The Refutation of Idealism, then, is the Cartesian claim that a subject cannot know the existence of anything outside herself by means of immediate experience. In response to Descartes’ skepticism, Kant argues that the

proof that is demanded must therefore establish that we have experience and not merely imagination of outer things, which cannot be accomplished unless one can prove that even inner experience, undoubted by Descartes, is possible only under the presupposition of outer experience (B 275).

² An important point of clarification: Kant takes ‘objects of outer sense’ to be those objects that are cognized in accordance with ‘space’ as a pure form of intuition. He thus does not treat these Cartesian arguments as if they were trying to establish the existence of physical, mind-independent objects. For the purposes of these brief historical points, I make no contention that this is a faithful construction of Descartes’ original arguments for the existence of the external world, nor do I have the historical background to argue that strands of neo-Cartesian thought existed in Kant’s day that maintained such a position. The central point of these historical points is merely to convey that the ‘Refutation of Idealism’ section targets what Kant conceives to be Cartesian arguments, and that it does not target Hume’s skeptical empiricism. I offer more exposition of the difference between ‘things in themselves’ and ‘objects of outer sense’ in chapter two.

³ I explain the concept ‘objects of outer sense’ in chapter two.

Kant's theorem is that "the mere, but empirically determined, consciousness of my own existence proves the existence of objects in space outside me" (B 276). It is thus evident that Kant is trying to establish that one cannot even have an experience of the sort required by Descartes' famous *cogito* without presupposing the existence of objects cognized through space (i.e., a pure form of the intuition), let alone build a proof for God's existence upon the *cogito* that in turn justifies one's belief in such objects. I do not claim that The Refutation of Idealism is inapplicable to Hume's skepticism with respect to mind independent reality, nor do I claim that The Refutation of Idealism successfully answers these Cartesian objections. The purpose of these historical points is to establish that, contrary to certain interpretations, Kant's answer to portions of Hume's skeptical empiricism is not found in The Refutation of Idealism. Instead, it will become clear that, at least within the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant's answer to Hume with respect to causality and mind-independent reality is found in the Analogies of Experience and the Postulates of Empirical Thinking in General.⁴ With these preliminary historical and interpretive points in mind, I turn to Hume's position.

Hume's Skeptical Empiricism

In order to explain part of Kant's answer to Hume, I must first explain Hume's position concerning mind-independent reality as it is found in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Hume's skepticism with respect to mind-independent reality is a result of his commitment to empiricism, which he shares with Locke and Berkeley.

⁴ Both of these sections are original to the A edition of the *Critique*, though Kant did revise them in light of objections.

Hume owes his particular form of empiricism mostly (if not entirely) to Berkeley.⁵ Hume's empiricism assumes that humans have no thoughts and mental activity apart from perceptions that are before the mind. All perceptions before the mind are either ideas or impressions. The former are distant copies of sensation and less lively, and the latter are vivacious and immediately present before the mind. All ideas arise in the mind as a result of some simple impression. All impressions and ideas (however complex) are reducible to corresponding simple impressions. All simple impressions are given through sensation (i.e. through our sensory capacities). Therefore, according to Hume, there is no mental activity apart from impressions given by sensation, ideas formed from sensations, and combinations thereof (*Enquiry* 96-97).

What, then, impresses itself upon our sensory capacities? Is it some mind-independent reality? Hume argues that "the mind has never anything present to it but the perceptions, and cannot possibly reach any experience of their connexion with objects. The supposition of such connexion is, therefore, without any foundation in reasoning" (*Enquiry* 202). He argues further that reason "could never find any convincing arguments from experience to prove, that the perceptions are connected with any external objects" (202). One could at most "leave only a certain unknowable, inexplicable something, as the cause of our perceptions; a notion so imperfect, that no sceptic will think it worth while to contend against" (203). Humans can formulate no coherent thought about something that is not a perception (i.e., an impression or idea). Any attempt to explain the nature of that which impresses itself upon our sensory capacities is, therefore, undertaken in vain. Any attempt to characterize the relationship between our

⁵Kant asserts that he has refuted Berkeley's idealism, but I do not address this claim in this paper (*Critique* B 275). I only examine his answer to Hume.

impressions and something external to them is also undertaken in vain. Such explanations necessarily reach beyond the impressions and ideas that are before our minds. According to Hume, that which impresses itself upon our senses *could* be some mind-independent object which resembles the ideas before our minds; or it could be our own minds, as in dreams or hallucinations, or God, or some spirit or deceiver (202).⁶ According to Hume we cannot know the source, nor do we even have the means to form a positive idea of the source. Hume maintains the skeptical position: we just cannot know whether there is any sort of substance or object external to our minds. The consequence of this reasoning, then, is that we can only know that which is *mind-dependent* and can know nothing truly external to our minds.

Hume and Kant do not diverge substantially from one another on this point insofar as one considers the knowledge of mind-independent objects one can reach by means of *pure speculative reason alone*. At the end of my chapter concerning the nature of experience and the limits of pure speculative reason, I conclude, citing large amounts of textual evidence, that Kant believes that we must remain skeptical and agnostic as to the nature of noumenal reality. The important divergence comes, however, when Kant undertakes the *a priori* elements of human moral reasoning (i.e., pure practical reason). Kant agrees with Hume in that we can have no *experience* of God, transcendental freedom, or immortality, but he disagrees that there is no *a priori* basis that justifies belief in such objects.

My suggestion is that we approach the status of the external world similarly. Hume approaches the question of the mind-independent reality of the external world in

⁶ Hume rejects God as a possible source on the grounds that this confusion would make God a deceiver (*Enquiry* 202).

terms of what we can *know* via proofs or via empirical discoveries. I suggest that the most faithful reading of transcendental idealism approaches mind-independent reality in the same way Kant approaches God, freedom and immortality of the soul: in terms of what we can *justifiably believe* on the basis of *a priori* considerations. Chapter three, then, represents the crucial point of departure between Kant and Hume with respect to mind-independent reality. As I will demonstrate, whatever role God, freedom, and immortality of the soul play in addressing the question of mind-independent reality, they cannot be understood apart from Kant's conception of the law of causality. With this in mind, I now turn to perhaps the most fundamental point of divergence between Kant and Hume's conclusions as to the use of pure speculative reason: the role the law of causality plays in human experience.

Hume and the Law of Causality

In section IV of *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, David Hume argues that all objects of human reason or inquiry are explicable in terms of *relations of ideas* and *matters of fact*. Relations of ideas are either intuitively or demonstrably certain. Thus, one discovers these propositions *a priori*, without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe. The truths of Euclidean geometry, for instance, are propositions of this kind. Matters of fact, however, are not apprehended in the same manner. The rising of the sun, for instance, is a matter of fact. Knowledge of matters of fact is not demonstrably certain. No one can derive a contradiction between the proposition that *the sun will not rise tomorrow* and the proposition that *the sun will rise tomorrow* (*Enquiry* 108). One may rightly inquire, then, as to what evidence assures a person of any matters of fact that represent states of affairs that extend beyond the present

testimony of her senses or the records of her memory. Hume argues that all beliefs in as-yet-unobserved matters of fact are not derived from any indubitable or credible claim put forth by human reason (e.g., an *a priori* law of causality), but rather from some object present to the memory or senses and a *customary conjunction* between that object and some other object. Therefore, in order to establish his position concerning as-yet-unobserved matters of fact, Hume must demonstrate that humans does not arrive at the knowledge of cause and effect by any *a priori* or demonstrable reasoning.

Hume argues that “all reasonings concerning matter of fact seem to be founded on the relation of cause and effect” and that knowledge of cause and effect “arises entirely from experience when [one] finds that any particular objects are constantly joined with each other” (109). If a person were to imagine a billiard ball striking another billiard ball, he could easily imagine the second ball flying off in a myriad of directions, or he could imagine the second ball remaining perfectly still upon collision. No *a priori* contradiction inheres between ‘a ball possibly flies off in a myriad of directions after a collision’ and ‘a ball remains perfectly still after a collision.’ Accordingly, Hume argues that “every effect is a distinct event from its cause” (111). One could not discover a given effect by examining the nature and definition of the object that caused this effect. The conjunction of the effect and the cause, therefore, appears to be contingent at best, let alone conjoined *a priori*. Accordingly, Hume deems all attempts to infer any cause or effect relationship without the aid of experience or observation to be vain endeavors. Humanity’s widespread belief in cause and effect is founded *strictly on experience*. Hume’s argument up to this point demonstrates that experience is the foundation of all human reasonings and conclusions concerning cause and effect.

Hume cannot yet conclude, however, that human beliefs in as-yet-unobserved matters of fact are derived merely from some object present to the memory or senses and a customary conjunction between that object and some other object. In order to reach this conclusion, he must first prove that beliefs about future events derived from past experience are not founded on demonstrable, *a priori*, or necessary relations of ideas (113-114). Hume concedes that past experience affords a person “direct and certain information of those precise objects only and that precise period of time which fell under [experience’s] cognizance” (114). Hume, however, sees no necessary reason for knowledge of past experiences to be extended to future times and objects that may be similar in appearance only. The following is a modified explication of Hume’s denial that experience can prove the resemblance of the past to the future taken from philosopher Keith DeRose.⁷

The scope of Hume’s argument is as such: matters of fact that go beyond “present testimony of the sense or records of our memory” (108). Call these matters of fact *S-propositions*. Any contingent truths about the future are in the scope of the argument. The sun rising tomorrow is an instance of one of these contingent truths; call this example *P*. Hume defines the force of the argument for matters of fact that go beyond the present testimony of the sense or the memory to be unknown or not based on reason. The following is an adaptation of DeRose’s explication of Hume’s argument:

1. All *S-propositions* are matters of fact.
2. If a proposition is a matter of fact, then one knows it only through experience (see above arguments concerning matters of fact and cause and effect).

⁷ I was unable to locate DeRose’s original formulation of this argument. I took this version of the argument from a series of notes Todd Buras prepared for a classroom lecture.

3. So, one can only know an *S-proposition* by experience (from 1 & 2).
4. *P* [the sun will rise tomorrow] is an *S-proposition*.
5. **So**, one can only know *P* by experience (from 3 & 4).
6. If one can only know *P* by experience, then one must know in advance that the future (i.e., tomorrow) is like the past. (116-117).
7. If one knows that the future is like the past, then one knows the uniformity of nature.
8. **So**, if one can know *P* by experience, then one must know the uniformity of nature prior to (i.e., in advance to knowing) *P* (from 5 & 7).
9. The uniformity of nature is an *S-proposition*.
10. **So**, one can know the uniformity of nature only by experience (from 3 & 8).
11. If one can know the uniformity of nature by experience, then one must know the uniformity of nature prior to knowing the uniformity of nature (from 6 & 8).
12. If one can know the uniformity of nature by experience only if one must already know the uniformity of nature, then one cannot come to know the uniformity of nature by experience.
13. **So**, one cannot come to know the uniformity of nature by experience (from 10, 11, & 12).
14. So, one cannot know the uniformity of nature (from 10 & 12).
15. So, one cannot come to know *P* [the sun will rise tomorrow] by experience (from 6 & 13).
16. **Therefore**, one cannot know *P* (from 5 & 15) (108-118).

DeRose's explication of Hume's argument reveals that knowledge of as-yet-unobserved matters of fact depends upon the uniformity of nature, but that the uniformity

of nature cannot be discovered in experience like other matters of fact. As I noted earlier, Hume also claims that one cannot know as-yet-unobserved matters of fact *a priori* because no contradiction exists between *the sun will rise tomorrow* and *the sun will not rise tomorrow*. Taken together, these arguments indicate experience provides one with no demonstrable, *a priori*, or necessary relation of ideas from which one may conclude that as-yet-unobserved matters of fact will resemble previous or current matters of fact.

With this in mind, one may now understand Hume's argument that as-yet-unobserved matters of fact are derived from some object present to the memory and senses and a customary conjunction between that object and some other object. Hume has to this point proven that one cannot derive belief in as-yet-unobserved matters of fact from cause and effect; that the connection between cause and effect in human thinking does not arise from experiential reasoning or *a priori* reasoning; and that man can be assured only of those matters of fact that are immediately present to the memory or the senses. Therefore, all that remains to be explicated is that *customary conjunctions*, that is, certain habits of the human mind, are the basis of the widespread belief in as-yet-unobserved matters of fact.

If one constantly observed similar objects or events to be conjoined together (e.g., sunrise and sunset), it is only natural that one would derive the existence of one object from the presence of the other. Assuming Hume's points thus far, one would not have derived the existence of the one object from the presence of the other by acquiring some idea or knowledge of the secret power by which the one object produces the other, nor would one have derived this inference by any process of reasoning. Nevertheless, one draws this conclusion. Hume argues that the "repetition of any act or operation produces

a propensity to renew the same act or operation without being compelled by understanding, this propensity is custom” (121). According to Hume, one cannot call the process of simply drawing an inference without having a demonstration or an *a priori* observation anything other than custom. This process is simply what men *do*.

As one can see, one affirmative approach to resolving the skeptical issues raised by Hume’s criticisms of knowledge, human experience, and the law of causality consists in demonstrating the *a priori* existence of the law of causality and the possibility of justified belief in reality one cannot empirically discover in one’s experience. Kant undertakes this approach, and argues further that the notion of ‘experience’ is meaningless apart from the law of causality. With this in mind, I now turn to the *a priori* arguments Kant expounds on behalf of defining the limits of human reason, the boundaries of human experience, and the centrality of the role of causality in his conception of these latter undertakings.

CHAPTER TWO

Causality, Experience, and the Limits of Speculative Reason

In this second chapter, I explicate Kant's conception of 'experience' and the centrality of the law of causality within this conception. I then address the difference between 'objects in external space' and 'noumenal objects.' This distinction helps characterize the limits 'experience' places on human capacity for discerning the nature of ultimate reality. Kant argues that speculative reason ultimately affords us no insight into noumenal objects apart from our 'problematic concept' of their existence. I emphasize, however, that speculative reason alone does not afford the basis for positively asserting or outright rejecting the existence of certain noumenal objects or laws, i.e., the existence of a physical mind-independent reality, God, the soul, or transcendental freedom.¹

The Nature of Experience

In order to understand the limited knowledge of mind-independent reality humans may gain by way of pure speculative reason, one must first understand the role 'experience' plays in transcendental idealism. 'Experience' is a slippery term in the first *Critique*, and its exact meaning is disputed.² Nonetheless, I offer my best interpretation

¹ My aim is to provide a working account of the crucial features of Kant's account of experience and the use of speculative reason as they bear upon mind-independent reality generally. As such, I do not provide an exhaustive account of every feature of experience and pure speculative reason, nor do I defend Kant's description of these concepts *per se*.

² In one place Kant defines *experience* as "an empirical cognition, i.e., a cognition that determines an object through perceptions" (A 176/B 218). In another place, experience is the "synthetic unity of the manifold of perception in one consciousness, which constitutes what is essential in the cognition of objects,

of Kant's definition in this section. According to Kant, objects are given to the mind by the senses and then cognized in perceptions.³ This cognizing of the objects given by the senses happens in accordance with our constitution (i.e. in accordance with space and time as pure forms of intuition and the categories of our understanding). A *perception*, then, is the cognition of a single object given to the mind empirically by the senses. *Experience*, in its fullest sense, is thus not a single perception, but rather *the unified sum of perceptions, taken together, in a fixed order in one subject* (e.g., a human being) (B160-B169). If all of the appearances contained within a subject's experience are in a certain order within the set of appearances, then each appearance bears a necessary relation to every other appearance as they are taken in that set. Experience in its fullest sense, then, is possible *only by representing perceptions in a necessary relation*. This principle is a *formal condition of experience*.

According to Kant, experience must agree with the pure forms of intuition (i.e., space and time) and satisfy the formal conditions of experience. Moreover, if a set of representations is to constitute the contents of a *possible experience*, then these representations must be possible with respect to concepts. In order for experience to be possible with respect to concepts, the concept contained within the individual representations must contain no internal contradiction. A representation of a round square, for instance, could not satisfy the formal conditions of experience because the concept 'round square' is inherently self-contradictory. These elements, taken together,

i.e., of experience" (A 176/B 219). See James Van Cleve *Problems From Kant* (1999) pages 73-79 for a more complete range of possible definitions.

³ 'Objects' here refers to 'representations' or 'appearances' of external objects as they have been cognized in accordance with our constitution (A 104). The objects of our subjective experience are *not* things in themselves. I use 'appearances' and 'representations' interchangeably as Kant does.

satisfy the conditions of the First Postulate of Empirical Thinking in General (B266). The important point of departure with respect to Hume consists in the assertion that experience is impossible without the regulatory principle of a necessary relationship among the contents of a perception. Kant names the regulatory principles of the formal conditions of experience the *Analogies of Experience*.

Kant defines ‘Analogy of Experience’ as a “rule in accordance with which unity of experience is to arise from perceptions...[which] as a principle [is] not valid of the objects (of appearances) constitutively *but merely regulatively*” (A 180/B 223) (emphasis added). The Analogies of Experience are not Kant’s account of why a thinking subject has perceptions, that is, the Analogies are not Kant’s explanation of the constitution of a subject’s perceptions or an explanation of why perceptions take place. The Analogies, rather, are Kant’s explanation of how the necessary relationship among perceptions in an experience (i.e., a unified set of perceptions) must be regulated and determined. There are three Analogies and thus three general regulatory principles: persistence, succession, and simultaneity (A 177/B 220). According to Kant, persistence is the relation of the appearances cognized in perception to time as a pure intuition. Succession is the relation among these appearances in time, as a series (one after another). Simultaneity is all appearances in time as the sum of all existence (A 214/B 261). Each of the Analogies is important for understanding Kant’s argument for the ordering of appearances. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I focus solely on the Second Analogy.

The Second Analogy is Kant’s formulization of this necessary relation as the law of causality. Moreover, Kant argues that the law of causality is an *a priori* law that

governs the necessary ordering of appearances.⁴ There is no necessary relation among perceptions *qua* perceptions but only among perceptions as they exist within a unified set of perceptions (i.e. experience). Individual perceptions, then, are ungoverned by the law of causality. The Second Analogy aims to establish that ungoverned arrays of perceptions fail to amount to experience. In support of this claim, Kant argues that “all alterations occur in accordance with the law of the connection of cause and effect” (A 188/B 233). The alterations in question are the alterations of the representation of a single object. The alterations of the representation of this object are cognized in distinct perceptions within the perceiving subject (a human being). Kant argues that “through the mere perception [of these objects of appearance] the objective relation of the successive appearances remains undetermined” (A 188-B234). Mere perception does not provide knowledge that perception B succeeded perception A objectively. Any perceived order of succession is subjective without an *a priori* guiding principle (i.e., causality). If one were to suppose that perception B need not follow from perception A in accordance with such a rule, then all sequence of perception would be determined solely in apprehension, that is, all sequence of perception would be determined simply by the order in which the subject *apprehends* appearances in perceptions and not objectively determined by the order in which the subject *receives* the appearances in perceptions.

A lack of an objective order undermines the intrinsic nature of experience as a unified set of empirical perceptions. If the subject lacks an apprehension of the objective temporal order of appearances, then she would have “only a play of representations,” that is, an array of individual perceptions with no unifying principle (A 195/B 240). If the

⁴ For Kant, *a priori* means *necessary* and without reference to what is empirically gathered from the senses (A 7/B11).

subject cannot determine the order of her perceptions within her set of perceptions by some principle, then the integrity of the set is undermined. Kant argues that this needed principle is “the relation of cause and effect; of these two, the cause is what determines the effect in time, and determines it as the consequence” rather than just events occurring in the imagination (B 233). He argues, then, that experience (i.e. the unity of perceptions, taken together, in a fixed order in one subject) is possible only inasmuch as human beings subject the succession of experiences to the law of causality. A unified, cohesive experience is impossible, then, apart from the law of causality. The law of causality, therefore, is an *a priori* cognition that determines the order of the succession of appearances within an experience.

The law of causation satisfies the requirements of an Analogy of Experience because it explains the regulatory principles inherent in the formal conditions of experience. It explains the formal conditions of experience because it explains the regulatory principle for the necessary relation among perceptions. The formal conditions of experience, again, are the conditions under which an experience is possible. According to Kant, all three analogies taken together provide the regulations necessary for *possible* experience as experience has here been defined. With the conditions under which experience is possible in mind, I now turn toward the conditions for what constitutes an *actual* experience. From there I provide Kant’s argument for mind-independent reality.

The exposition up to this point is a brief account of the formal conditions under which an experience is possible. In the Second Postulate of Empirical Thinking in General, Kant provides the conditions under which an experience is *actual*. He asserts

that actual experience is “that which is connected with the material conditions of experience” (B 266). In order to satisfy the requirements for the *material* conditions of experience, the representations of the objects in question must meet the aforementioned formal conditions of experience *and be drawn from empirical perceptions* (B 272). Concepts can satisfy the formal conditions of experience and be “nothing but figments of the brain” (A 222/B 269).⁵ These figments are the product of combinations of representations given empirically by the senses, but these combinations themselves do not directly correspond to any one representation given *directly* by the senses. For instance, empirical perception has given us the concept of a *mountain* and the concept of *gold*; it has not given us the concept of a *golden mountain*. One can form the concept of an experience of a golden mountain by an act of the mind, but this concept would not qualify as an object of actual experience in Kant’s system unless one later had an empirical cognition of a golden mountain.

‘Golden mountain,’ then, could satisfy the formal conditions of possible experience, that is, the concept could satisfy the regulations of the Analogies and contain no logical contradictions (i.e. the concept of a gold mountain is not contradictory as the concept of a round square would be).⁶ Apart from empirical perception, however, the mere concept of a thing offers no characteristic of *actual* existence because it does not satisfy the material conditions of experience. In this way, a subject can have a concept

⁵ Furthermore (in accordance with the first postulate of possible experience), actual experience cannot contain contradictions within its concepts (again, one cannot have an experience of a round square). These are the grounds for satisfying the *formal* conditions of possible experience.

⁶ Put in Hume’s language, a concept can be the product of the combinations of complex impressions and ideas drawn from simple impressions, but not itself be the immediate simple idea that corresponds to a simple impression.

that is a ‘possible perception’ insofar as it satisfies the formal conditions of experience.⁷ A future empirical perception involving this same concept, however, can make this possible perception satisfy the material conditions of experience. For example, it is not logically impossible that one might encounter a golden mountain and thereby gain an empirical cognition of it. If one did, then this concept would no longer be a mere figment of the brain but rather the product of an actual empirical perception. Thus empirical perception is that which yields the material for the concept, and an *actual* experience is characterized as an experience that satisfies the formal and material conditions of experience (B 272). We now have Kant’s framework for what constitutes possible and actual experience.

The Furniture of ‘Externality’

This distinction between the ‘formal’ and ‘material’ conditions of experience bears strongly upon the topic of *mind-independent reality*. For most metaphysicians, ‘mind-independent reality’ entails the existence of a physical world, the properties of which correspond either directly or very closely to what we perceive ‘physical objects’ to be in the phenomenal world.⁸ For Kant, however, this conception of ‘mind-independent reality’ is a *problematic* concept. A problematic concept is a concept that “contains no contradiction but that is, as a boundary for given concepts, connected with other cognitions, the objective reality of which can in no way be cognized” (A 254/B310). The problematic concept differs substantially from a concept that satisfies only the formal but not the material conditions of experience. As explained above, a golden mountain

⁷ This notion is essential for Kant’s argument for the existence of mind-independent reality.

⁸ See chapter three of Peter Van Inwagen’s *Metaphysics* (2009).

satisfies the formal but not the material conditions of experience. The concept 'golden mountain' contains no internal contradiction, but no accompanying empirical cognition substantiates this concept by raising it from a possible cognition to an actual cognition. Receiving such an appearance through an empirical cognition, however, is not impossible. A problematic concept, by contrast, is a logically consistent concept, the empirical cognition of which *is impossible*.

Kant devotes such painstaking attention to the notion of a problematic concept in part because he recognizes that many thinkers will use the categories of the understanding, the pure forms of intuition, or the analogies of experience as the basis for drawing inferences as to the nature of objects which ultimately can never be given in an empirical perception. As was stated above, most metaphysicians seek to establish the existence of underlying, physical, mind-independent objects that correspond to the objects that we observe in the phenomenal world or to establish that the objects we observe are simply objects in themselves and that the phenomenal-noumenal distinction is unwarranted. For this reason, Kant believes that most thinkers will unconsciously err by succumbing to the irresistible urge to go beyond the boundaries of the contents of their empirical perceptions by applying the aforementioned formal elements of experience to problematic concepts. He calls this vain misadventure of thought a *paralogism* (A 339-A342/B397-B400).

In order to avoid such misadventures with respect to mind-independent reality, Kant distinguishes between objects *of outer sense* and objects *as things in themselves*. This is perhaps the most fundamental distinction Kant makes with respect to the knowledge human beings may attain of mind-independent reality. 'Objects of outer

sense' are objective representations which are independent of our inner sense. Their properties are not determined by the contents of the active or passive powers of our conscious mind. Rather, their properties are dependent on our inner sense insofar as we do not understand them apart from perception of our inner state of mind (A 373-A374). The existence of noumenal objects and the potential properties of such objects, are simply beyond our knowledge because, by definition, they are beyond the cognitive faculties of our sensible intuition (A391). In order to provide Kant's explanation of these claims, I will first treat Kant's distinction between objects of inner and outer sense. I will then offer an exposition of how objects of outer sense are objective while still dependent upon inner sense in some capacity. Finally, I will exposit Kant's treatment of hypotheses concerning noumenal objects, and how we must approach hypotheses concerning objects that are simply beyond the reach of human cognitive faculties.

When Kant refers to 'objects/things outside us' or 'external objects,' he is referring to those objects that are given to the senses via empirical cognitions. 'External objects' are those objects represented in space and 'internal objects' are those objects represented merely in the relation of time. Space and time, according to Kant, are themselves *a priori* representations which serve as the pure forms of sensible intuition. Since space and time are pure forms of sensible intuition and not things in themselves, no representation cognized in space or merely in time corresponds to an object that exists beyond the fundamental boundaries of human sensible intuition (i.e., to a noumenal object).⁹ Thus, objects cognized in space are empirically external objects or 'objects of

⁹ Karl Ameriks points out that this claim is perhaps too strong. In an interpretation he calls the "neglected alternative," Ameriks asserts that it is possible that objects of outer space do in fact correspond to noumenal objects in some robust fashion, but that establishing this correspondence would be beyond the

outer sense,' and are best referred to as 'things to be encountered in space.' A noumenal object, by contrast, is an object that is outside the scope of empirical cognition and thus truly falls under the category of 'mind-independent reality' (A373).

For Kant, the objects one would find in a mind-independent reality amount to *noumenon*. The concept of a noumenon is the concept of a *thing in itself*, that is, a problematic concept that cannot be thought of as a representation or appearance of an object of the senses as cognized by our sensory capacities (A 254/B310). This concept is not contradictory, for it is unwarranted to assert that the sensible intuition by which our experience is bounded is the only type of intuition. Moreover, the concept of a noumenon, taken in and of itself (i.e. a concept of an object whose perceivable properties is not determined by our constitution), is necessary as an indication that our sensible cognition is limited. If a limit is placed on one concept (A), then another concept (B) naturally arises, namely, the concept of 'that which is beyond the limit of A.' Even if B is an empty or problematic concept and nothing can be known as to its nature, it still arises as a necessary feature of a boundary concept. Therefore, if our sensible cognition is limited by an *a priori* principle, then 'noumenon' is a necessary concept. The contents of our experience are restricted to those appearances that are cognized in accordance with the pure forms of intuition, the analogies of experience, and the categories of our understanding. Thus, the concept of an object outside of this domain of experience is an empty concept for us. Noumenal objects by definition are beyond the domain of our experience, and thus remain problematic concepts for us. A 'noumenon,' then, is best thought of as a boundary concept.

epistemic scope of Kant's conception of our cognitive faculties. For more on this position, see Karl Ameriks *Kantian Idealism Today* (1992).

With the distinction between ‘things that are to be encountered in space’ and ‘noumenal objects’ clear with respect to the ambiguous concept ‘object outside us/external to us,’ I now turn to how this distinction bears upon Kant’s position toward traditional notions of idealism and dualism. Kant’s conception of ‘idealism’ is perhaps as slippery as his conception of ‘experience’. Kant’s first definition of ‘idealism’ in the Paralogisms claims that an idealist is “not someone who denies the existence of external objects of sense, but rather someone who only does not admit that [such objects are] cognized through immediate perception and infers from this that we can never be fully certain of their reality from any possible experience” (A369). This definition then gives rise to the distinction between *transcendental idealism* and *transcendental realism*. Transcendental idealism (i.e., Kant’s position) is the view that all appearances are to be regarded as representations cognized in accordance with the categories of the understanding and space and time as pure forms of intuition, with space and time being merely representations and not things in themselves. Transcendental realism, by contrast, regards space and time as things in themselves (i.e., as independent of our sensibility). Moreover, the transcendental realist also regards ‘objects of outer appearance’ or ‘things to be cognized in space’ as actual things in themselves.

These distinctions are crucial for developing Kant’s conception of a ‘dualist,’ and Kant’s conception of ‘dualist’ is perhaps the most telling concept he develops with respect to discerning his full position as to the nature of mind-independent reality. For Kant, a ‘dualist’ is most fundamentally one who admits of the existence of ‘matter’ (A370). This conception of ‘matter,’ however, does not correspond to the traditional sense of ‘physical material.’ Rather, in this sense, ‘matter’ is a “species of representation

(intuition), which are called external, not as if they related to objects that are external in themselves but because they relate to perceptions in space” (A370). When Kant uses ‘matter,’ then, he means ‘that which composes the objects of external sense.’ The objects of external sense are mind-dependent. Therefore, Kant’s use of ‘matter’ refers to mind-dependent properties. If he uses ‘matter’ to refer to mind-dependent properties, then one cannot construe his use of ‘matter’ to refer to ‘matter’ in the physicalist or traditional dualist sense of the word. According to this conception of ‘matter,’ then, the transcendental idealist affirms a non-traditional conception of matter. Transcendental realists, then affirm the existence of matter and the ideality of matter.

Kant argues that transcendental realists, however, cannot consistently affirm their realism *and* the existence of matter. The transcendental realist claims that, if objects are to exist in themselves, then they must exist apart from the empirical intuition we have of such objects as given through sensible intuition. If such objects must exist apart from the empirical intuition we have of such objects as given through sensible intuition, however, then we have no basis for affirming the existence of such objects, for we have knowledge of nothing beyond our own sensible intuition. Thus, according to the transcendental realist, there is insufficient support for the existence of objects that exist in space (A369-A370).

This conception of ‘objects that exist in space’ leads to several relevant points about mind-independent reality. The first of which is that, for Kant, we simply have no knowledge about the nature of noumenal objects. We can form (as explained above) a problematic concept of such objects, but we have no basis for making assertions about their nature. This leads to a further distinction between Kant’s conception of ‘idealist.’

The *dogmatic idealist* denies the existence of matter (in the sense of objects that exist in space) and denies the existence of ‘matter’ in whatever sense one may hope to noumenal objects. She denies both conceptions of matter because she finds contradictions in the very idea of matter.¹⁰ The *skeptical idealist*, by contrast, doubts the existence of matter with respect to things in themselves because she finds the grounds supporting assertions concerning noumenal objects to be insufficient. This skepticism is based on the fact that all of the contents of our perceptions are dependent upon our sensibility. The difference between the skeptic and the dogmatist, then, consists in that the former *doubts* the justification of assertions concerning the nature of noumenal objects whereas the latter *denies* the truth of such assertions (A378).

The skeptical idealist, then, is simply dubious of whether any object exists that is not subject to our ideas (i.e. to the perceptions we gain from empirical intuitions). This skeptic recognizes that even the objects of outer sense are dependent upon our sensibility, and are thus still ‘ideal’ in an important sense. The dogmatic idealist, by contrast, unjustifiably excludes the existence of noumenal objects on the grounds that they are beyond our experience. This exclusion is unjust because the contents of our perceptions *simply tell us nothing about noumenal reality* beyond its consistency as a problematic concept. Thus the skeptical idealist is more nearly an ally of the transcendental idealist insofar as both types of idealist regard noumenal objects as objects that are ultimately beyond our reach (A380).

So what does this mean with respect to mind-independent reality? Strictly with respect to what one can derive about Kant’s opinion of the nature of noumenal objects, it means that Kant neither affirms nor rejects traditional metaphysical notion of

¹⁰ Berkeley makes this very claim.

materialism. That is, Kant neither rejects nor affirms views in which 1) all matter is physical and perceived as it exists in itself or 2) in which physical objects exist as the fundamental objects underlying the objects (representations) of the phenomenal world. It also means that Kant neither affirms nor rejects that only minds or souls or ‘ideal’ properties comprise the content of noumenal reality. Kant underscores this point in his discussion of three traditional varieties of dualism: 1) *physical influence theory*, 2) the *theory of pre-established harmony*, and 3) the *theory of supernatural assistance*.

These theories all aim to explain the community of the soul with the traditional conception of ‘matter,’ i.e., with ‘physical reality.’ Kant argues that views (2) and (3) are grounded on objections to view (1). According to Kant, those who hold views (2) and (3) object on the ground that physical reality and mental objects are heterogeneous to the extent that no intelligible manner of interaction could be derived from two types of content so distinct from one another. In reply to such objections, Kant argues that “since no one can claim with good ground to be acquainted with anything of the [noumenal] cause of our representations...any assertion about [such a cause] is entirely groundless” (A 391). Essentially, Kant rejects these objections on the ground that no objections to a theory can rely upon supposed knowledge of noumenal reality attained by pure speculative reason. For instance, if ‘noumenal reality’ did somehow correspond to ‘physical reality,’ then we would have no ground on which to base the truth or falsehood of the proposition that such reality interacts causally with our mental content or with a soul.¹¹ We simply have no knowledge about the nature of noumenal reality on the basis

¹¹ This possibility indicates that, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant does not provide a basis for excluding the possibility that noumenal reality perfectly corresponds to phenomenal reality, i.e., that what one perceives in the phenomenal world in fact is identical to what one would perceive in the noumenal world if one had the capacity for perception of noumenal objects. With respect to whether space and time

of theoretical reason, and thus cannot make such exclusions on the basis of theoretical reason. It *could* be the case that a divinely construed pre-established harmony or regular divine interaction explains the relationship between noumenal and phenomenal reality. Neither of these options is intrinsically more viable than the physical interaction view, however, because the probability of each view cannot be assessed given that we have no knowledge of noumenal reality based upon pure speculative reason (A390-A394).

Kant's affirmation of the viability of each of these possibilities is a reflection of his agnosticism with respect to the nature of noumenal, mind-independent reality. Kant claims that "no one can adduce the least ground for...an assertion from *speculative principles*" regarding the true relationship between noumenal and physical reality (A394) (Emphasis added). This means that Kant does not exclude physical reality as noumenal reality; the existence of God as a noumenal object; God as the author of a divinely-orchestrated relationship between noumenal and phenomenal reality; or Divine substance as an aspect (or the entirety) of noumenal reality. I add the emphasis to the quote to reflect that no inference can be made on the basis of pure speculative reason. The remainder of this thesis will demonstrate that the inferences derived from the moral law and pure practical reason tell us far more about positive assertions that are justified with respect to noumenal reality.

Back to Hume

Before I turn to the relevant portions of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, I first want to take stock of how the arguments set forth in this passage respond to Hume. Hume

might exist noumenally in the same as they exist as forms of intuition, this possibility is known as the *neglected alternative*. As I noted earlier, for an extensive treatment of the status of the neglected alternative in contemporary scholarship, see Karl Ameriks's "*Kantian Idealism Today*" (1992).

argues that experience consists in impressions and ideas. Hume rejects the notion of an *a priori* or demonstrable law of causation and offers no positive account of what objectively determines the order of appearances apart from a custom or habit of human reason (*Enquiry* 108-120). According to the conditions of experience given by Kant, Hume provides nothing more than a play of impressions and ideas bereft of a principle of unification and objective determination. Given Kant's arguments, the law of causality preserves the integrity of a subject's unified experience. The Analogies of Experience thus not only establish the regulatory principles of Kant's account of experience, they also explain the manner in which Hume's rejection of causality undermines experience. The centrality of the law of causality for transcendental idealism continues into Kant's moral philosophy. As I noted in my introduction, Kant considers the concept of transcendental freedom to be the keystone of his entire *Critical* project. Kant's conception of transcendental freedom cannot be understood apart from the law of causality. Therefore, the law of causality is integral to the keystone of Kant's entire *Critical* project. With this in mind, I now turn to the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the role the law of causality plays in shaping our understanding of mind-independent reality.

CHAPTER THREE

God, Transcendental Freedom, and Immortality of the Soul

The fact that *pure speculative reason* remains agnostic as to the nature of noumenal objects leaves open the possibility that *pure practical reason* may offer *a priori* justification for assertively characterizing nature of the noumenal realm. In this chapter, I present Kant's arguments for the noumenal reality of transcendental freedom, the immortal soul, and God. Kant deduces these objects as morally necessary hypotheses for actualizing the object of the *a priori* moral law, and thus 1) does not ground his arguments in the tenets of pure speculative reason, and 2) does not claim to prove the noumenal existence or the nature of these postulates deductively. Nonetheless, the *a priori* status Kant attributes to these postulates enables us to have *bona fide* insight into the nature of noumenal reality. I explain Kant's conception of these postulates in order to explain why these postulates dramatically affect the manner in which we interpret the nature of mind-independent reality in Kant's overall *Critical* project. The following is an exposition of the nature of a postulate of pure practical reason, an enumeration of those postulates, and an exposition of the relationship among the three postulates. I address the natural implications these postulates have with respect mind-independent reality in chapter four.

Primacy of Pure Practical Reason over Pure Speculative Reason

Kant's assertion of the preeminence of 'pure practical reason' over 'pure speculative reason' further elucidates the importance of the role the Postulates of Pure Practical Reason play with respect to mind-independent reality. My ultimate argument is that Kant's assertions about the nature of moral philosophy substantially modify his agnostic claims with respect to human knowledge of the metaphysical truths of the noumenal realm, i.e., mind-independent reality. If the knowledge of the noumenal realm gained from moral philosophy ultimately cannot surpass the limits of human speculative reason, then my application of the former to the latter will fail to elucidate the potential nature of mind-independent reality.

By 'primacy' Kant means the preeminence of one thing insofar as the interest of all other things is subordinate (Kpr V 119.24-119.25). Given this definition of 'primacy,' then, Kant must demonstrate why the interest of pure practical reason is supreme over the interest of pure speculative reason. An 'interest' (as it is defined in the Dialectic of the Second *Critique*) is a principle that contains the condition under which alone a power's exercise is furthered (V 119.29-119.30). Given these definitions, then, if pure practical reason has primacy over pure speculative reason, then pure practical reason furthers the power of pure reason generally beyond what pure speculative reason establishes alone. Kant argues that pure practical reason accomplishes this 1) by not contradicting pure speculative reason, and 2) by expanding the cognition of pure reason on the basis of an *a priori* principle rather than on the basis of some empirical cognition or causally determined inclination of the will (V 120.1-120.7).

First, in order to determine whether pure practical reason expands the interest of pure reason in ways that pure speculative reason cannot, we must examine the nature of each category of pure reason. Then, we must consider the content of pure practical reason's expansion of the realm of pure reason. Pure speculative reason consists in the cognition of an object in accordance with *a priori* principles (V 120.1-120.2). Pure practical reason, by contrast, consists in *a priori* principles determining the will of rational agents in the phenomenal world (V 120.2-120.3). As we shall see, pure practical reason postulates immortality of the soul, freedom of the will, and God as the highest being on the basis of the demands of the *a priori* moral law. Kant does not presume that pure practical reason *proves* the existence of the objects of the postulates deductively, nor does he claim that any of the postulates make up the content of an empirical cognition. Pure speculative reason excludes empirical cognition of the objects of these postulates. Kant's arguments in the Paralogisms and the Antinomies of pure speculative reason sufficiently undermine proving the *actuality* of such concepts.¹ Pure Speculative Reason does not, however, exclude the *possibility* of the noumenal existence of these three concepts or the causal influence they may have on the phenomenal world. The postulation of these concepts on the part of pure practical reason, then, does not contradict the limits pure speculative reason places on pure reason generally.

The primary concern with whether pure practical reason contradicts the principles of pure speculative reason shifts, then, to the manner in which pure practical reason justifies these postulates. If the moral law were grounded in the senses or desires in some way, then pure speculative reason would necessarily reject postulation of the actuality of such

¹ 'Actual' in the sense of 'consistent with the formal conditions of an experience and given via an empirical conception.'

concepts pertaining to things which exist in the noumenal realm. The moral law (i.e. the categorical imperative) is an *a priori* principle. The practical law is concerned with making an *a priori* principle the determining basis of the will in the sensible realm. Immortality of the soul, freedom of the will, and God as the highest good are postulated in accordance with the *demand of an a priori principle* and its need to motivate (i.e. serve as a determining basis of) the wills of rational agents to actualize the highest good in the phenomenal realm. Given the *a prioricity* of the moral law and the demands of the moral law, postulating immortality of the soul, freedom of the will, and God as the highest good is consistent with the possibilities left open by pure speculative reason, and is consistent with the grounds from which speculative reason would permit such postulations. Therefore, the justification of this expansion of pure reason does not contradict the principles of justification set forth in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In fact, Kant argues that “speculative reason...must admit these [postulations] and, although they are extravagant for [speculative reason], [speculative reason must] seek to reconcile [these postulates] with its concepts” (V 120.17-120.22).

Kant raises a concern that he fears Epicurus would have with this expansion of pure reason. According to Kant, Epicurus would reject all reasoning that cannot authenticate itself on the basis of obvious examples to be adduced from experience (V 120.23-120.29). Why permit any need of practical reason to allow one’s mind to wander into extrapolations clearly ruled out by the reliable principles of speculative reason? Kant answers him with the fact of reason, which will be discussed further below. The moral law is an *a priori* principle, and like the principles of pure speculative reason, is thus in the general family of pure reason (V 121.1-121.5). Despite the causal determinism of the

world of appearances, we are conscious that the moral law is a possible determining basis of our will. If we were to exclude the postulates of pure practical reason on the basis of the Antinomies and Paralogisms of pure speculative reason, then we would have to attain certainty as to the nonexistence of the fact of reason. We know the existence of the fact of reason, however, and thus have reason to believe that pure practical reason is a possible determining basis in the phenomenal world. Therefore, permitting the postulates of pure practical reason does not contradict the integrity of pure speculative reason, and permitting the postulates of pure practical reason does not constitute an unnecessary blundering of reason beyond well-trusted bounds because these postulates are entailed by an *a priori* law, and are thus a welcomed expansion of the domain of pure reason.

The Nature of a Postulate of Pure Practical Reason

Kant distinguishes the mathematical sense of ‘postulate’ from his unique use of ‘postulate’ in the sphere of pure practical reason. In the former sense, ‘postulate’ entails 1) apodeictic, mathematical certainty and 2) the *possibility of an action* whose object has previously, with complete certainty, been cognized *theoretically a priori* as possible (Kpr V 11.25-11.37). In the latter sense, ‘postulate’ refers to the possibility of [the existence of] an object itself (e.g., God, the immortality of the soul) in accordance with the entailments of apodeictic practical law (i.e., the moral law). The postulates of practical reason, then, are not necessary for the cognition of objects in the way that the law of causality is necessary for cognition of objects and the possibility of experience generally. Rather, with respect to the subjective will of a rational agent, the postulates of practical reason are necessary for complying with the objective demands of the moral law. The possibility of transcendental freedom, God, and immortality of the soul, then, are not

postulated in accordance with any demands of pure speculative reason, but are postulated solely because of the moral requirement to achieve the object of the moral law (V 11.34-11.36)). In this sense, according to Kant, the Postulates of Pure Practical Reason are *morally necessary hypotheses*.

Furthermore, a ‘postulate’ is a ‘theoretical’ proposition insofar as it attaches to a practical law *that holds a priori and unconditionally*; it is not ‘theoretical’ in the sense of ‘pure speculative reason.’ The postulates of pure practical reason are determined by the demands of the moral law, and, according to Kant, the existence of their contents cannot be established through metaphysical or otherwise speculative arguments. One cannot simply postulate anything one wants, and it is not the case that Kant claims that these postulates (freedom, immortality of the soul, God) are deduced from the principles of speculative reason. The moral law (i.e. the categorical imperative) holds true *a priori* for the will of all rational agents. Thus the *demands* of the moral law necessarily follow if such agents are to observe the demands of the *a priori* law. Thus it is permissible to postulate the existence of transcendental freedom, God, and the immortality of the soul *only insofar as these postulates are needed to observe the precepts of an a priori truth*. They are not “proven” theoretically or apodictically, nor are we constituted such that we directly cognize the existence of the objects of these postulates in experience. The postulates are determinations of what presuppositions can be made on behalf of pure practical reason in light of a lack of empirical cognitions or theoretical deductions grounded in pure speculative reason.

Postulate of Transcendental Freedom and the Fact of Reason

With the nature of a postulate of pure practical reason in mind, I turn to the postulate most essential for establishing my interpretation of mind-independent reality in Kant: the postulate of transcendental freedom. The deduction of the postulate of transcendental freedom from the ‘fact of reason’ is arguably the most important element of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. This *a priori* deduction is not merely Kant’s response to certain major objections levied against his description of the relationship between freedom and the moral law in *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. This deduction is Kant’s first positive description of noumenal reality, and this deduction provides the justification for the postulation of the immortal soul and God’s existence. These latter postulates, as I will demonstrate, in turn dramatically alter the justified beliefs one may hold with respect to mind-independent reality and the noumenal world. I now turn to the nature of the moral law and the basis it provides for justified belief in transcendental freedom.

The possibility that the moral law is a determining basis of the will in the world of appearances entails the possibility of transcendental freedom. According to Kant, the form of the moral law is the categorical imperative. The categorical imperative asserts that agents should “so act that the maxim of [their] will could always hold at the same time as a principle of universal legislation” (V 30.37). The world of appearances determines the contents of specific maxims (e.g., the maxim never to tell lies). According to Kant, the maxim never to tell lies sufficiently meets the conditions for categorically binding for the wills of free agents. Given Kant’s conception of the content of known human experience, however, one discovers the capacity for telling the truth and

telling lies based on the objects and persons one encounters in the phenomenal world. The categorical imperative itself, by contrast, is a synthetic *a priori* proposition that determines which maxims ought to bind agents' wills universally, and its content is in no way dependent upon the contents of one's experience in the phenomenal world. The categorical imperative, then, is the *form* of the moral law because, in and of itself, it does not enumerate specific universalizable maxims (V 34.13-34.30). It merely serves as the basis in accordance with which one judges the universalizability and moral value of a given maxim.

If synthetic *a priori* reason determines the form of the moral law, then the formal law of morality is not derived from empirical cognition of causal chains within the world of appearances. If reason does not derive the formal law from empirical cognition of causal chains within the world of appearances, then the formal law "as [the] determining basis of the will is distinct from all determining bases of events [occurring] in nature according to the law of causality, because in the case of these events the determining bases must themselves be appearances" (V 28.37-29.2). Thus, if the form of the moral law determines agents' wills in the world of sense, then the form of the moral law determines agents' wills independently of causally determined appearances within the world of sense.

Kant's negative conception of freedom is the determination of a will independent of the bases of causally determined appearances. Kant's positive, 'transcendental' conception of freedom is of a will 1) that is independent of the law of causality that governs the phenomenal world, 2) that is motivated purely by respect for the moral law, and 3) that determines agents' decisions in the phenomenal world. As we have seen, the

form of the moral law (i.e. the categorical imperative) as a determining basis of the will is distinct from all determining bases of events that occur according to the law of causality; those objects governed by the law of causality affect only the specific contents of maxims (e.g., never to tell lies). Therefore, if it is possible for the categorical imperative itself to serve as a determining basis of agents' wills in the world of appearances, then it must be possible for these agents to be free in the positive (i.e. transcendental) sense of freedom. One cannot emphasize enough that, for Kant, the categorical imperative itself must determine agents' actions in the phenomenal world. It would be insufficient merely to have agents' actions in the phenomenal world *coincide* with the moral law. If agents' actions merely coincided with the moral law, then it would be possible such actions would be the result of causally determined appearances and not the result of acting purely from respect for the law. If the positive, transcendental conception of freedom is to serve as a postulate of pure practical reason, then it must actually be possible for the categorical imperative to be a determining basis of agents' wills. Kant addresses this possibility by way of the *fact of reason*.

As with 'experience' in the first *Critique*, the exact definition of 'fact of reason' is a slippery term in the second *Critique*. Henry Allison notes that Kant equates the nature of the fact of reason with 'moral law,' 'freedom,' and 'consciousness of the moral law,' respectively. (Allison 232). Given the preponderance of textual evidence, Allison characterizes the fact of reason as "consciousness of standing under the moral law and the recognition of this law by every natural human reason as the supreme law of its will" (Allison 233).² Allison argues, however, that this awareness cannot consist in an explicit

² Also, the fact of reason is a *fact* because one cannot deduce it from principles (Kpr V 47.9-47.18).

and distinct awareness of the moral law as a formal principle (Allison 233). If all rational agents had an explicit and distinct awareness of the moral law as the formal principle by which they adopt maxims, then Kant would need no argument supporting the validity of the moral law for the wills of rational agents. Rather, humans deliberate rationally about the moral implications of their actions. When deliberating, they simply *do* ask themselves something akin to whether “the action [I] propose [was] to occur according to a law of the nature of which [I myself] am a part, [I] could indeed regard it as possible through [my] will” (V 69.15-69.20). This portrayal indicates that the fact of reason consists in agents’ rational deliberation about morally significant decisions. In such morally significant deliberations, rational agents are conscious that something akin to the moral law ought to guide their decision (Allison 233). In such scenarios, then, the rational agents recognize, as a *matter of fact*, that the moral law (i.e. the categorical imperative) ought to direct their rational deliberation about their decisions. The question now is whether the fact of reason entails the possibility of acting freely.

A major element of the second *Critique* is the deduction of transcendental freedom from the fact of reason. In accordance with Allison’s treatment of the deduction of freedom, I argue that the fact of reason (i.e. the consciousness of standing under the moral law and the recognition of this law by every natural human reason as the supreme law of its will) entails ‘taking an interest’ in the moral law, and that ‘taking an interest’ implies the possibility of transcendental freedom.

Given Allison’s analysis of the fact of reason, the deduction of transcendental freedom “must rest on the premise that the very consciousness of the moral law as binding produces an interest” (Allison 239). In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of*

Morals, Kant argues that an ‘interest’ “is that by which reason becomes practical,” that is, that by which reason “becomes a cause determining the will” (4:460;63). Kant clarifies that ‘taking an interest’ in the moral law, however, does not consist in a desire or feeling in an agent. Rather, reason takes an interest when it understands that “the universal validity of the maxim of the action is a sufficient determining ground of the will” (4:460;63). ‘Taking an interest,’ then, entails the possibility that the agent is motivated by respect for the law. ‘Taking an interest,’ however, does not necessitate that one’s interest in acting from respect for the moral law ever sufficiently triumphs over the passions or motives that arise from the chain of causes within the world of appearances. As always, Kant is concerned with the *motivation of the will* and not with the result of one’s volition or whether one’s will has the power appropriate for achieving its object (Kpr V 20.11-13). Thus ‘respect for the moral law’ may serve as one of many determining factors of an agent’s will. It may be working against or alongside any number of causally determined actions. ‘Respect for the moral law’ need not be the sufficient determining condition of an agent’s actions in the world of appearances. Rather, it need only be *possible* that ‘respect for the moral law’ legitimately serve as *one* of possibly many determining factors.

Given this account of ‘taking an interest,’ Allison argues that one cannot affirm the possibility of having the motive of acting from respect for the moral law and simultaneously deny the *possibility* of being motivated by the moral law (Allison 241). Thus, given Kant’s account of the fact of reason and ‘taking an interest,’ one cannot deny the possibility that agents are motivated by the moral law. If one cannot deny motivation grounded in the moral law, then one cannot deny the possibility of acting from the moral

law. If one cannot deny the possibility of acting from the moral law, then one cannot deny the possibility of acting freely. Thus the possibility of the moral law as a motivating basis of agents' wills entails transcendental freedom. Therefore, if the fact of reason entails 'taking in interest' in the moral law, and 'taking an interest' in the moral law entails transcendental freedom, then the fact of reason entails transcendental freedom.

The validity of the moral law, as explained above, is a fact of reason. We do not cognize transcendental freedom directly. Rather, we cognize the *possibility* of transcendental freedom given the fact of reason. The fact of reason is the consciousness that the moral law ought to serve as the determining basis for the will of all rational agents. The possibility of the moral law actually being a determining basis is conditioned upon the existence of transcendental freedom. Thus the possibility of the moral law serving as the determining basis of the will of rational agents in the phenomenal world entails transcendental freedom. In this way, though we do not cognize transcendental freedom in the phenomenal world, we do know its possibility *a priori* 1) because it is necessarily entailed by the fact of reason, and 2) because we know it independent of empirical cognition (Kpr V 4.1-4.9).

Immortality of the Soul and God's Existence

In a move comparable to the assertion of this 'fact' of reason, Kant asserts that "it is (*a priori*) morally necessary to produce the highest good through freedom of the will" (Kpr V 113.8-113.10). Furthermore, the moral obligation to produce the highest good entails the immortality of the soul and God's existence in the same way that the fact of reason entails transcendental freedom. In order to understand the justification of these

latter postulates, however, we must first consider Kant's conception of *highest good*. Kant first identifies two conditions inherent in the concept 'highest.' Highest can mean 'supreme' or it can mean 'complete' (Kpr V 110.7-110.9). The 'supreme' condition of 'highest good' refers to the condition of the highest good that is itself not subordinate to any other condition (V 110.10-110.11). One could not, for instance, base the conception of the 'supreme' condition of 'highest good' upon something one experiences in the phenomenal world because all such experiences are empirically conditioned. The 'supreme' condition of 'highest good,' then, must be determined *a priori*.

The 'complete' conception of 'highest good' refers to a wholeness which is itself not a component part of a still greater wholeness (V 110.11-110.12). This conception, too, reflects an *a priori* claim: if something truly is the 'highest' good, then it cannot be improved upon by the addition of some good. If it cannot be improved upon by adding some good, then it certainly cannot be a component part of some greater good. Thus, when these two conditions of 'highest' are considered in relation to one another, the supreme condition of 'highest' is logically prior to the complete condition of 'highest.' The 'supreme' condition of 'highest,' however, does not fully constitute 'highest' without the 'complete' sense of 'highest.' The supreme condition of the highest good consists in virtue, that is, *worthiness to be happy* (V 110.13-110.14). As I explained in the sections of this chapter which address the moral law and the fact of reason (and as I address again later in this chapter), moral worthiness consists in respect for the moral law determining one's choices.

The condition which completes the supreme condition of highest good, i.e., the complete condition of 'highest' good, is 'happiness.' Happiness, according to Kant, is

“the state of a rational being in the world for whom in the whole of his existence *everything proceeds according to his wish and will*” (V 124.15-124.17) (original italics). If an agent is perfectly virtuous, then, in all decisions, that agent’s will is perfectly determined by respect for the moral law. If an agent’s will actually is perfectly determined by respect for the moral law and manifests itself as such in the world of sense, then, in the world of sense, things proceed according to the wish and will of that agent. Thus the happiness of a perfectly moral agent consists in the commensurability of the world of sense with that agent’s perfectly moral acts of volition. The complete sense of ‘highest’ good is thus achieved when an agent attains the conjunction of perfect worthiness to be happy with a level of happiness corresponding to that perfect worthiness. Taking these ‘supreme’ and ‘complete’ conditions of ‘highest good’ together, the full conception of ‘highest good,’ then, entails perfect moral worthiness and perfect agent happiness.

Let us again consider how an agent achieves moral worth. Worthiness to be happy entails striving for perfect morality. Perfect morality entails complete commensurability of one’s attitudes with the moral law, i.e., entails perfect willingness to act purely from respect for the moral law. Thus the highest good entails making one’s will perfectly commensurate with the moral law. It is impossible, however, for rational agents to actualize the highest good in the world of sense *at any one point in time*. This perfection, then, is possible only in an infinite progression toward moral perfection. If this perfection is attainable only by way of an infinite progression toward moral perfection, then the object of the moral law (i.e. the highest good) is attainable only by way of an infinite progression toward moral perfection. This infinite progression, however, is

possible for any one rational agent only if the same rational agent persists infinitely. The infinite persistence of a rational agent amounts to the immortality of the rational agent's soul (V 122.1-122.12). Thus, rational agents can only partake in the infinite progression toward perfect morality if the immortality of the soul is assumed. Moreover, it is impossible to attain the highest good (i.e. the object of the moral law) without the infinite progression of the soul toward perfect morality. Thus, rational agents cannot attain the highest good without postulating the immortality of the soul as a postulate of pure practical reason (V 122.13-122.19). Thus the *a priori* moral law necessarily entails the postulation of the immortality of the soul.

Immortality of the soul is postulated as necessary for achieving the supreme condition of the highest good. This postulate alone, however, is insufficient for actualizing the second, *completing* condition of the highest good, namely, the proportioning and ultimate completion of the happiness of rational beings in accordance with their ever-increasing virtue (V 124.7-124.14). Again, Kant defines happiness to be “the state of a rational being in the world for whom in the whole of his existence everything proceeds according to his wish and will” (V 124.15-124.17). The fact of reason entails transcendental freedom, and transcendental freedom entails independence from the causally determined world of appearances. The sufficient cause of happiness commensurate to perfect virtue cannot, then, come from a source *inside* of the causally determined world of appearances. Therefore, in order to fulfill the demands of the moral law, there must exist a cause of nature as a whole, which, being perfectly distinct from nature, nonetheless provides the basis for the connection between the freedom of the will in the noumenal world and the happiness of agents in the phenomenal world. The only entity which could sufficiently

actualize the causal relationship between the moral law in the noumenal world and appearances in the phenomenal world is an intelligent entity who shares in this causality through freedom. Therefore, the supreme cause of nature, insofar as it is presupposed for the highest good, is a being that is the cause of all nature by way of his understanding and will. This type of being is God. Thus, the possibility of obtaining the highest good entails postulating both immortality of the soul and God's existence (V 125.1-125.26). Thus, "it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God" (V 125.27).

Conclusion

Pure practical reason, then, has primacy over pure speculative reason insofar as it 1) does not contradict pure speculative reason, and 2) expands the domain of pure reason generally via the demands of an *a priori* principle. Pure practical reason justifies the postulation of immortality of the soul, freedom, and God as the highest being, whereas pure speculative reason could establish only the mere possibility of the existence of such concepts in the noumenal world. Given the primacy of pure practical reason, it becomes imperative to consider how transcendental freedom, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God affect our understanding of mind-independent reality within the Kantian framework.

This much is clear: unless we abandon our strongest moral intuitions (i.e., the fact of reason), then it is necessary that we presuppose God's existence in the noumenal realm; the moral law as the governing principle of the noumenal realm (given Kant's conception of 'transcendental' freedom); the existence of immortal souls; and some conception of a causal relationship between the noumenal self and the phenomenal self. Three major

developments follow from these justified presuppositions: 1) Kant's agnosticism with respect to all noumenal reality is greatly diminished, 2) Kant's framework concerning mind-independent reality now sharply departs from the agnosticism of David Hume concerning mind-independent reality, and 3) none of the morally necessary presuppositions concerning elements of the noumenal world concern 'physical' properties. With these developments in mind, I now turn to my argument that the implications of pure practical reason probably exclude the existence of physical, mind-independent reality from Kant's framework of transcendental idealism.

CHAPTER FOUR

Noumenal Reality Bereft of Physical Properties

Given the exposition of both the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* up to this point, it is now settled that, at minimum, any faithful, responsible scholar of the role of mind-independent reality in Kant's transcendental idealism must account for the metaphysical implications of the second *Critique*. If anything, if one wanted to exclude these implications, one would have to undermine major portions of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and openly depart from trying to create a faithful reading of Kant's work. In essence, one would enter into debunking the general viability of transcendental idealism as opposed to developing a textually-based interpretation of the philosophical system Kant envisioned. Up to this point, I have tried to resolve certain tensions within Kant's *Critical* framework with an eye toward preserving as much of the text of the first two *Critiques* and Kant's apparent understanding of his own work as possible. With the substantial role the *Critique of Practical Reason* must play with respect to resolving certain metaphysical issues left unresolved in the *Critique of Pure Reason* in mind, I now argue that, given the noumenal actuality of the Postulates of Pure Practical Reason, Kant's conception of God and the moral law probably exclude the possibility that anything in the noumenal realm satisfies the traditional conception of physical properties.

The Moral Law and the Exclusion of Physical Properties

As I explain in the second chapter of this thesis, physical objects cannot be understood apart from the law of causality. Kant construes transcendental freedom as 1) freedom from the causal determinism of the phenomenal realm, and 2) perfect adherence to the moral law as the governing principle of one's will in the noumenal realm. The moral law cannot sufficiently and universally govern the wills of agents who ultimately are bound by causal determinism. Transcendental freedom is necessary if the moral law is to determine agents' wills sufficiently and universally in the noumenal world. The *a priori* moral dictate to actualize the moral law unfettered by causal determinism justifies the postulation of the transcendental freedom. Thus, if one is to preserve 1) Kant's description of the nature of agents and the nature of the governing principle of the noumenal world *and* 2) the causal determinism he considers to be *a priori* necessary for understanding 'experience' in the phenomenal world, then physical objects as Kant conceives them probably do not exist in the noumenal world.

If physical objects existed in the noumenal world, in what way might they interact with the phenomenal world or other noumenal objects? If physical objects existed in a manner consistent with how we perceive them in the phenomenal world, could noumenal souls perceive, let alone interact with such physical objects? Souls would not be able to interact with physical objects. If they could, then they would somehow interact with objects that cannot be understood apart from the law of causality. If these causally determined objects could meaningfully interact with noumenal souls, then causally determined objects might somehow *affect* these souls. If these causally determined physical objects could somehow affect souls, then such objects might somehow affect the

wills of these souls. If the wills of these souls were somehow affected by anything other than the moral law, then the concept of transcendental freedom would be undermined. The only basis on which belief in the immortality of souls is justified is as a morally necessary hypothesis for actualizing the object of the moral law. If physical objects undermine the concept of transcendental freedom in the noumenal realm, then physical objects undermine the concept ‘immortal soul’ as it is understood in the noumenal realm. If physical objects undermine the concept ‘immortal soul,’ then they undermine the *a priori* basis on which the existence of God is postulated as morally necessary (see last chapter). Thus, if physical objects somehow existed in the noumenal realm, they would undermine the most intrinsic elements of the furniture of the noumenal world offered by the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Thus, if one is to preserve these indispensable elements of the second *Critique*, then one must conclude that physical objects are very probably, if not certainly, excluded from the noumenal world.

‘Physical,’ ‘Ideal,’ and ‘God’

The second way in which the intersection of the first two *Critiques* probably excludes the existence of the traditional metaphysical conception of ‘physical matter’ rests upon a two-pronged intuition implicit in both works. The first intuition is that, with respect to mind-independent reality, the limits of pure *speculative* reason provide no basis for asserting anything as to the nature of the noumenal world (i.e., mind-independent reality). For example, strictly with respect to pure speculative reason, we have no basis either for denying or affirming, in any capacity, whether physical objects are merely ideal or noumenally real. Furthermore, with respect to the corollaries of the *a priori* moral law established by pure *practical* reason, the only beliefs concerning noumenal objects that

are justified *a priori* are those pertaining to transcendental freedom, the existence of immortal souls, and the existence of God. None of the properties of these objects overlap with the properties ascribed to the traditional conception of physical objects. In this way, then, at least with respect to the properties of noumenal objects in which we have justified belief, the properties we may ascribe to noumenal reality are not physical, mind-independent properties.

A second intuition is that, given the difficulty associated with ascribing mind-independent, physical properties to objects that cannot be conceived apart from the contents of our minds, it is very difficult to distinguish between ‘physical’ and ‘ideal’ in the Kantian framework. According to Kant, ‘matter’ does not refer to the traditional sense of ‘physical material’ we traditionally ascribe to physical objects. Rather, ‘matter’ is a “species of representation (intuition), which are called external, not as if they related to objects that are external in themselves but because they relate to perceptions in space” (A370). This sense of ‘matter,’ then, is a mind-*dependent* species of representation. One can thus not appropriate Kant’s use of ‘matter’ to support traditional dualistic or claims or physicalist claims. Furthermore, as was stated above, ‘physical object’ cannot be understood apart from the law of causality, the pure forms of intuition, and the categories of experience. Kant thus does not offer a definition of what properties a *noumenally physical* object would include. If Kant’s conception of ‘physical matter’ in the phenomenal world is mind-dependent, and the concept of a noumenally-physical object is wholly foreign to the *Critical* framework, then transcendental idealism does not provide the basis for ascribing mind-independent physicality to any noumenal object. With this development in mind, I now turn to Kant’s conception of ‘God.’

The 'God' entailed by the obligation to actualize the moral law entails a being whose power sustains both immortal souls and the phenomenal realm. God, a non-physical noumenal being, then, sustains 1) non-physical, noumenal, personal souls that correspond in some way to phenomenal beings, and 2) all of the features of the *mind-dependent* phenomenal world that comprise the content of human experience. In this way, God creates and sustains all ideal properties and the properties we commonly attribute to physical objects as we perceive them in the phenomenal world. If God sustains both sets of properties, then the fundamental issue in accounting for mind-body interaction in Kant's work is not whether and how mind-independent physical objects interact with noumenally and phenomenally ideal objects and persons. Rather, the fundamental issue is the nature of God and how God interacts with those properties God creates. Ideal, physical, and mind-independent properties all would fall under the common heading 'created properties.' Any substantial differences that existed between such properties would be products of God's imagination and design for the moral flourishing of rational agents. (God is presupposed, after all, on the basis that he sustains moral agents' ability to actualize the *a priori* demands of the moral law.)

The differences between ideal and physical properties, when understood in this manner, then, seem relatively trivial. As was explained in chapter two, purely with respect to theoretical reason, Kant conceives of no basis for preferring the physical interaction, pre-established harmony, or divine-assistance accounts of 'dualism.' He offers no basis for altering this claim in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. To recap, according to Kant, the physical interaction dualist account is that God created two heterogeneous sets of objects and persons, i.e., the physical and the ideal; that God

created an organic law for the regular interaction between these heterogeneous properties; and that the physical and ideal properties interact practically free of God's intervention. The pre-established harmony dualist view, according to Kant, is that God regularly affects the interactions of the physical and ideal properties apart from an established law. The divine-assistance dualist account is that God created a law that makes both sets of properties interact in identical patterns despite the fact that no organic guiding principle is in place. There is no basis for preferring any one of these three views over either of the other two.

Because we have no reason to prefer one of these claims about how physical, mind-independent bodies cause our perceptions, and because God would be the creator of both physical and ideal properties, there is no reason to prefer dualism to idealism generally. The lack of a justifiable basis for preferring one type of dualist account over another reveals the fact that the existence of mind-independent physical properties is explanatorily idle with respect to mind-dependent properties when God is the cause of both the mind-independent physical properties and the mind-dependent properties. There is no reason to posit the existence of mind-independent physical properties of which one can have no experience when positing the existence of God ultimately explains mind-dependent properties. God would not need to create a mind-independent set of physical properties (that ultimately depend upon God's existence) to serve as the middle-man (causally speaking) between himself and an entirely different set of mind-dependent properties that also dependent upon God's existence. The content of the phenomenal world would be the same whether this middle-man existed or not because, either way, the content of the phenomenal world depends upon God's creative power. Such a middle-

man, then, is explanatorily superfluous. Therefore, all things equal, the idealist interpretation of transcendental idealism is simpler and less explanatorily superfluous than the physicalist and dualist interpretations of transcendental idealism. Therefore, the idealist interpretation of transcendental realism is, all things equal, preferable to the physicalist and dualist accounts.

All of the important properties of things in themselves that Kant establishes via *a priori* reasoning are non-physical properties. None of the properties of the noumenal world are physical properties. God sustains all of these things. God would not *need* to create noumenally physical objects that correspond to all of these ideal properties in order to achieve the purpose of enabling agents to actualize the object of the moral law. Given Kant's exposition of physical objects up to this point, there is certainly not an *a priori* basis for supporting the necessity of the existence of noumenally physical objects.

My interpretation of transcendental idealism, however, does not make it *impossible* for God to create mind-independent physical objects. My interpretation simply makes it impossible (or exceedingly unlikely) that mind-independent physical objects exist *in the noumenal world*. If Kant's account of noumenal reality is true, then it is still possible that mind-independent physical objects could exist in a world of their own. This world, however, is neither the noumenal world nor the phenomenal world. In this world mind-independent physical properties would exist, but they would exist independently of anything we perceive and independently of anything *necessary* for sustaining that which we perceive. Furthermore, these mind-independent properties could scarcely be conceived in terms of any description Kant espouses for all such terms apply only to the phenomenal and noumenal worlds. Causally speaking, this world

would be the appendix of explaining objects as humans perceive them in the phenomenal world. It might exist alongside the intimately connected noumenal and phenomenal worlds, but its only common feature would be that it, too, was created by God.

The noumenal world, both as it is construed in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*, is posited in order to serve an important explanatory function. The existence of a world of mind-independent physical objects, by contrast, would be explanatorily gratuitous. The existence of this world of mind-independent physical objects would not contradict my interpretation of the nature of the phenomenal and noumenal worlds. The existence of this queer world of mind-independent physical objects is thus not impossible, but transcendental idealism provides no justification for positing the existence of such a world. Again, if mind-independent physical objects exist given my interpretation of transcendental idealism, then they exist neither in the phenomenal world we perceive nor in the noumenal world in which the objects of the postulates of pure practical reason reside.

In this way, then, Kant's account of mind-independent reality in the second *Critique* probably (if not entirely) excludes the existence of mind-independent, physical reality. Such reality may exist, but its existence would be superfluous to everything known or inferred by means of the pure forms of intuition, the categories of the understanding, the analogies of experience, the moral law, or the fact of reason. At minimum, it is now certain that the claims of the *Critique of Practical Reason* dramatically alter what one can conclude concerning the status of mind-independent reality in Kant's transcendental idealism.

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