

Translator's Corner

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We are pleased to present in this issue another installment of Gottlieb Florschütz' dissertation, translated by Rev. Kurt P. Nemitz and Dr. J. Durban Odhner.

SWEDENBORG'S HIDDEN INFLUENCE ON KANT*

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I.5. THESIS: KANT'S NEGATIVE JUDGMENT OF SWEDENBORG'S GIFT OF SEERSHIP FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HIS CRITICAL COGNITIVE THEORY

In the attempt to systematically arrange the occult phenomena in Kant's philosophy two opposite perspectives offer themselves. On one hand, in its cognitive theory the CPR in principle allows no room for the possibility of occult phenomena, as reported by Swedenborg. One could therefore describe the CPR as Kant's thesis against Swedenborg's visions. On the other, Kant's moral philosophy appears to open a space for the existence of occult phenomena such as spatial and temporal clairvoyance, thought transfer, spirit contact, and also for the existence of a mental, moral "spirit world." Practical reason can therefore be understood as Kant's antithesis to his rejection of occult phenomena in theoretical philosophy. In the following careful consideration of Kant's divided relation to Swedenborg and to occult phenomena—divided between his mistrust founded on his cognitive theory and his goodwill based on his moral philosophy—his late lectures on rational psychology will be shown to be a synthesis of his "theoretical" thesis and "practical" antithesis. For in these he prepared the ground for an intellectual concept by aid of which Swedenborg's clairvoyance as well as his visions of the Beyond appear in principle to be possible.

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I.5.1. The System of Kant's Cognitive Theory

As L. E. Borowski's Kant biography brings out, in Kant's polemic tract against Swedenborg and metaphysics the function of metaphysics as transcendental philosophy is already settled on the task of drawing the boundary between the sensorially perceptible world appearing and the extrasensory and therefore in principle unexaminable world:

[Kant] explains quite unreservedly that the question of the reality or even the mere possibility of immaterial beings, of the dwelling place of souls, of the communion between soul and body, etc., completely transcends our insight.³⁵¹

The basis of this sharp limitation of the human cognitive faculty lies, in Kant's view, in its *a priori* structure, which pure reason analyzes in reflecting on itself, precisely as in the renowned *Critique of Pure Reason*.³⁵²

Kant's cognitive theory developed from two interrelated observations:³⁵³

1. There are requirements for the possibility of a conscious being having an experience.
2. These requirements are likewise those of consciousness.

In his effort to produce a system, valid for all men at all times, that would specify the requirements for the possibility of experience with apodictic certainty, rigorous general applicability, and objective efficacy, Kant endeavored to unite the great philosophical currents of his time.

In doing this he classified the faculty of sensation under "Empiricism," the faculty of understanding under "Rationalism." And in order to

³⁵¹ L. E. Borowski, Jachmann und Wassianski, *Immanuel Kant. Sein Leben nach Darstellungen von Zeitgenossen* (Berlin, 1912) 33 (bracketed addition mine).

³⁵² As to the principle of self-reflection in Kant cf. the lecture of Wolfgang Deppert, "Gibt es einen Erkenntnisweg Kants, der noch immer zukunftsweisend ist?" Delivered at the Deutschen Philosophenkongreß in September 1990 in Hamburg.

³⁵³ Cf. regarding the following interpretation of Kant's cognitive system, W. Deppert, *Zeit* (Stuttgart, 1989) 35-39.

be able to assign the appropriate places for these cognitive faculties in the framework of consciousness, he yet needed in addition the higher, supervisory faculty of reason.

According to Kant's conception the pure forms of observation (abbreviated **p.f.o.** in the following), namely Space and Time, as well as the categories of understanding or pure concepts of understanding (abbreviated **p.c.u.** in the following), namely the categories of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Modality with their three respective sub-categories or modes, are centered exclusively on the sensorially perceptible world of appearance, which is so to speak clipped out from the world of a "thing in itself" by the process of cognition. This segment of perceptible sensory data which comes to view is first composed as an object by the *a priori* forms of sensation ("receptivity") and of understanding ("spontaneity"). This composition of an object is then analyzed in detail anew. This process of composing an object and analyzing an item he describes in what he calls his "Transcendental Deduction."³⁵⁴

For the sake of the objective validity of the p.c.u. of Quantity, of Quality, of Relation and of Modality, these concepts definitely remain dependent on concrete sense perceptions, which furnish the "material" of the pure forms of cognition. Nevertheless, in the structural logic of cognition³⁵⁵ these categories as well as the p.f.o. lie in front of empirical perception. The pure forms of observation and of thought furnish therefore *a priori* the framework for all possible experience, the framework within which "experience" or empirical cognition is synthesized from both elements—hylic sense perceptions and their formal comprehension through p.f.o. and p.c.u.. For as Kant says:

Thought without content is empty, observations without concepts are blind.³⁵⁶

Now a consequence of this *a priori* framework, that composes the expanse of sensorially perceptible experience from a world of "things in

³⁵⁴ Cf. Kant, *KrV*, 1787, B 131 - B 169.

³⁵⁵ Cf. the definition of the logic of cognition in Deppert, *Zeit*, 1989, Chapter V.

³⁵⁶ Kant, *KrV* (1787) B 75.

themselves," is that the understanding is utterly and completely dependent on concrete sense data for its functioning, and secondly that no other knowledge is possible for man beyond that experience which is anticipated by way of sensorial perception. This takes place precisely within the *a priori* forms of the cognitive faculty, as the transcendental conditions for the possibility of every conceivable experience, and only within these forms!³⁵⁷

To join the different forms of sensation and of understanding to empirical cognition, so-called "diagrammatic structures" are needed that can make possible the application of categories to the multiplicity of sense experience in accordance with the "system of the principles of pure understanding" established by a sensorial condition—the modification of the transcendental determination of time. Principles and diagrammatic structures here are related to each other as mirror images, as Kant explains in the *CPR*:

This transcendental doctrine of the power of judgment will now contain two chapters: one that treats of the only sensory condition under which concepts of pure understanding can be used, i.e., a chapter that treats of the structuring activity of the pure understanding; another, however, that treats of those synthetic judgments which derive *a priori* from the concepts of pure understanding under these conditions, and which *a priori* lie at the base of all remaining cognitions, i.e., a chapter that treats of the axioms of pure understanding.³⁵⁸

In this *a priori* process of cognition a central function comes to play in the so-called "original synthetic unity of apperception." It is a function that produces the unity of "awareness of self" in that it guarantees the unmistakable conjunction of the synthetic ideas of observation with the "awareness of self," through synthesis of the multiple elements given in

³⁵⁷ Kant distinguishes here original observation ("intuitus originarius"), a directly observing understanding, from a derived observation ("intuitus derivativus"). The first belongs only to God, the second to every finite thinking being, including man. Cf. Kant, *KrV*, B 72.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 175.

sensation on the one hand, and through just such a synthesis of combined action of the cognitive powers on the other. In Kant's words:

The thought, "these ideas given in the observation belong altogether to me," is as much as to say, "I unite them in a consciousness of self...only by virtue of my being able to grasp the multitude of them in a moment of awareness do I call them altogether my ideas..."³⁵⁹

For self-awareness to appear, therefore, a combined action of different mental faculties is required. "Transcendental apperception" makes possible the mental construction of objects and thereby the cognition of a thing of the world of appearances. Thus this construction of an object simultaneously produces self-awareness, and the reverse.

Since these unifying functions cannot be dependent on the randomness of sense perception, in order to guarantee the unity of the self-awareness by which, from the change of ideas, consciousness first comes into being, Kant was convinced *a priori* structures are required in the individual processes of the mind that are independent of the multiplicity of sense perceptions, indeed, they synthesize what are generally speaking first sense perceptions of every kind with apodictic certainty.

These unifying functions in the human mind Kant calls pure forms of sensation and understanding, which must be necessarily objectively valid for all men at all times—and generally speaking for all thinking beings endowed with the power of sensation.

Ultimately reason, as the ability to form cognitions from principles, now further draws up so-called "transcendental ideas" or pure concepts of reason that must serve for the systematization of the cognitions of experience. Thus arise: for the purpose of the absolute unity of the thinking subject—the idea of the soul as simple, temporal substance; for the purpose of the absolute unity of the series of conditions for appearances—the four cosmological ideas (the totality of the world in space and time, the simplicity of matter, unconditional causality, and the simply necessary

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 134.

substance); and finally, for the purpose of the absolute totality of the conditions for the objects of thought in general—the conceptual ideal of a God.

In their application to the experience of the world of appearance the ideas of pure reason prove themselves to be contradictory and therewith illusory. The dialectic of pure reason shows that ideas cannot be concepts of objects of the world of appearance.³⁶⁰ The inherent use of the pure concepts of reason, according to Kant, is therefore not a direct one, but merely as regulative principles for guidance in progressive empirical research of the world of appearances, for which purpose it is at the same time also necessary.

I.5.2. Swedenborg's Gift of Seership and Occult Phenomena Within the Boundaries of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

The grounds on which Kant, in view of his transcendental cognitive system, had to reject from the start not only the empirical reality to be investigated, but also yet more strongly the *a priori* possibility of occult phenomena (like clairvoyance of a spatial and temporal nature, as well as the alleged "spirit contact") of Swedenborg can be presented in a tri-level system of *a priori* cognitive postulates. These I will now introduce with the aid of a few central texts from the CPR.

In his CPR Kant maintained that man could not possibly have any other than sensorial cognition of objects of the world of experience, as well as that he had discovered the perfection of all pure forms of sensation and understanding:

Just as little a reason can be given, however, for the peculiar nature of our understanding to bring about a unity of perception *a priori* only by means of categories and only by the exact nature and number of these, as can be given for why we have just these and no other powers for judgment, or for why time and space are the only forms of our possible observation.³⁶¹

³⁶⁰ Cf. Kant, *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können*, 1783, (ed. Karl Vorländer, Leipzig 1920) 40.

³⁶¹ Kant, *KrV*, B 145f.

Kant gave a twofold argument for the completeness of the table of categories. The first is that due to the unifying function of the categories the completeness of the table of categories is necessarily demanded to produce transcendental apperception; second, Kant believes he can guarantee the completeness of the categories by their derivation from the table of possible forms of judgment, whose completeness he again actually attributes to the unity of the idea involved in a judgment.³⁶²

In any case, in this statement it can once more be noted that Kant is unable to prove his *a priori* stipulation that in principle no other sensory or extrasensory cognition is possible for man than what he has asserted and analyzed in the *CPR*, but that he regards this limitation of the empirical cognitive faculty to perception in space and time as simply manifest. He even goes yet another essential step further in this intuitive declaration of what is manifest,³⁶³ when he extends the human forms of intuition to all thinking beings with sensation:

Furthermore, it is unnecessary for us to restrict the kinds of observation in space and time in human sensation. It may be that every finite thinking being must be similar to man in this respect (although we cannot determine this). So, for the sake of this general validity, it does not cease to be sensation just because it is derived (*intuitus derivatus*), not original (*intuitus originarius*), and thus not intellectual observation, as...seems to be true of the primal being, but never of a being who is derivatively dependent as to his existence as well as to his observation...³⁶⁴

Therefore, whether other possibilities could exist for other thinking beings—perhaps something like the “primal being,”—in sensorial or directly intellectual ways unknown to us, to “observe,” and thus perhaps

³⁶² As Klaus Reich has shown, the completeness of the category table can be exhibited with the aid of a theory of the total system of concepts (Cf. Deppert, *Zeit* (Stuttgart, 1989) 38). Deppert shows, however, that the completeness of the categories can certainly be proven in this way, but not the completeness of the p.f.o. (space and time): “Neither a logical nor a systematic basis for a dichotomy of forms of observation is to be found.” (Deppert, *Zeit* 78).

³⁶³ Cf. regarding limits, “Intuitive Evidenzaussage” Deppert: *Zeit* 39.

³⁶⁴ Kant, *KrV*, B 72.

comprehend the “things-in-themselves” lying on the other side of the world of appearances, Kant leaves open, since reason is not capable of considering such a possibility or of rejecting it *a priori*:

For we cannot at all judge of the observations of other thinking beings, whether they are bound by the same conditions that limit our observations and are generally valid for us.³⁶⁵

Our understanding, nevertheless, is not in the position to consider such a possibility of kinds of observation of a fundamentally different nature:

However, it is unavoidably the primary principle of human understanding, and is so indispensable to it that it cannot even form the least conception of any other possible understanding, either of such a one as is itself observing, or even if it possessed a basic sensorial observation, yet of a different kind from those in space and time.³⁶⁶

Although we can bring nothing of the “thing-in-itself” into experience in a direct manner, the subjective perception of man nonetheless presupposes a “world-in-itself” independent of the perceiving subject, since without this basic assumption needed for thought the whole world deteriorates into mere appearance in the sense of Berkeley’s radical idealism, which Kant obviously cannot accept:³⁶⁷

For all that we must—which should indeed be noted—make this observation that even if we cannot recognize just these objects as things in themselves, we must be able to think of them as possible. For otherwise the irrational conclusion would follow

³⁶⁵ Kant, *KrV*, B 43.

³⁶⁶ Kant, *KrV*, B 139.

³⁶⁷ George Berkeley assumed that nothing exists outside of the thinking being. “*esse est percipi*” = to be is to be perceived. In the framework of this radical idealism the objects of sense exist only in the mental representation of the subject.

that an appearance would exist without that something which appears.³⁶⁸

Kant also approaches this concept posited as necessary for thought from yet another side, namely from the form of the categories. In the invalid, but in principle possible disassociation of the categories from sense perception the productive power of imagination sketches so-called "pure" objects, in that it plays with the forms of sensation empty of content. Therefrom would arise, for one, the objects of art; however for the other, also "insane" productions of fantasy like Swedenborg's "spirits." These "noumena in the negative sense," as Kant also termed objects of the understanding in contrast to the objects of sensation ("*Phainomenon*"), have the important task of drawing the boundary between the sensory and the—in principle inaccessible to us—extrasensory ways of cognition. With this boundary concept of "noumenon in the negative sense" Kant stresses that they are fundamentally unknowable by the only methods of sensorial cognition accessible to man—and indeed to all thinking beings:

The concept of a noumenon, taken merely problematically, remains nonetheless not only admissible, but also, as a concept that places sensation within limits, unavoidable. However this, then, is not a particularly intelligible subject for our understanding. But an understanding for which it was suitable would itself be a problem, namely, in that it does not cognize its object discursively by means of categories but intuitively by a non-sensory observation, a matter about whose possibility we cannot form the least idea.³⁶⁹

As will be shown, in contradiction to this critical claim Kant later in his lectures on rational psychology very definitely formed ideas of such an understanding with an intuitive, non-sensory observation, and going even further even considered an object of this intellectual observation, namely the human soul.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ Kant, *KrV*, B XXVIf.

³⁶⁹ Kant, *KrV*, B 311 ff.

³⁷⁰ Cf. in this regard the discussion of Kant's *Rational Psychology* in Chapter 7.2.

Here, however, in Kant's critical period, by his positing a "noumena in the negative sense" our understanding is limited to sensorial observation as the sole possible source of cognition:

...that is, it is not limited by sensation, but rather, limits sensation itself by the fact that it calls things in themselves (not considered as appearances) noumena.³⁷¹

In what relation the concept of "the thing-in-itself" stands to the concept of the "mental world," and whether one could still more precisely differentiate the moral world of reason from the mental world of understanding, I will deal with in the next section.

Within Kant's cognitive system in the *CPR*, in any case, a different kind of sensory, or utterly non-sensory, spiritual method of cognition is excluded *a priori*, since his first postulate of cognition (CP) reads:

CP 1: For man no other than sensorial cognition of reality is possible, which can only take place in *a priori* structures of pure forms of sensation and understanding.

But since this fundamental claim of Kant does not itself again rest on sensorial cognition but on his own conviction about the theory of cognition, it can only assume the position of a postulate of cognition. It cannot, however, be regarded of necessity as generally valid, something which Kant nevertheless did without reflection on cognitive theory.

If Swedenborg's extrasensory acts and the associated occult phenomena in general seem to be dismissed as absurd by CP 1, then the individual categories of the possibilities of occult phenomena in particular—OC 1, OC 2 and OC 3³⁷²—are refuted by the following postulates of cognition, CP 2 and CP 3.

CP 1 first traces out the general framework of possible cognition. The human cognitive faculty's possibilities, principles and compass are established by an *a priori* investigation of pure reason. According to Kant, by an

³⁷¹ Kant, *KrV*, B 312.

³⁷² Cf. Introduction.

act of reason's reflection on itself it is known *a priori* that the human cognitive apparatus would be applicable only to the "world of appearances," indeed, for the first time it actually constructs it with apodictic certainty. An access to the transcendental "thing-in-itself" is in principle ruled out, although, to escape radical idealism, such a "world-in-itself" must be assumed as necessary for thought.

To this first and fundamental postulate of cognition Kant attaches his second, which runs as follows:

CP 2: The *a priori* structures as transcendental conditions for the possibility of every (human) experience arise from the structures identifiable *a priori*—of the pure forms of observation, space and time, as well as of the pure concepts of understanding in four categories with three modes each. Joined with these *a priori* forms of experience are the general axioms of pure understanding, subdivided into the class of things mathematically constitutive (axioms of observation and anticipations of perception) and into the class of things dynamically regulative (analogies of experience and postulates of empirical thought, generally speaking).

First and foremost, in the following, with the aid of the p.f.o. as well as the mathematically probative classification of transcendental axioms, we will show the *a priori* impossibility of occult phenomena within the Kantian cognitive system.

According to Kant's transcendental aesthetic, the following features are to be associated *a priori* with the p.f.o., Space and Time:³⁷³

- FS 1. Space has only three measurements (three dimensions).
- FS 2. Different spaces are not successive, but simultaneous.
- FS 3. Space is thought of as an infinite, given vastness (a direct thought of an actual infinity in one's observation).
- FT 1. Time has only one dimension.
- FT 2. Different times are not simultaneous, but consecutive.

³⁷³ Cf. regarding the following listing of the space and time also Deppert, *Zeit*, S. 66; FS = Feature of space, FT = Feature of time.

FT 3. The infinity of time means nothing more than that all specific periods of time would be possible only by the limitation of a certain underlying time (a direct idea of a potential infinity, from which is inferred an actual infinity existing in the observation).

From these *a priori* characteristics of space and time the constant continuity of the p.f.o. can be determined, since the dimensions designated in FS 1 and FT 1 already characterize a multiplicity that is continuous.

Kant elaborates in more detail on this *a priori* characteristic of the unbroken continuity of space and time in the mathematically constitutive class of the transcendental axioms of pure understanding:

The characteristic of magnitudes, which states that no part of them is the smallest possible (no part is simple), is called their continuity. Space and time are *quanta continua* because no one part of these can be given without enclosing it between boundaries (points and moments). The consequence of this is simply that this part is itself a space or a time. Space, therefore, is made up of spaces, and time of times...These same magnitudes can also be termed *flowing*...³⁷⁴

In the axioms of observation and in the anticipations of perception the continuity of the p.f.o. already contained in FS 1 and FT 2 is defined in detailed and *a priori* ways:

All appearances in general, then, are continuous magnitudes, both in their observation, as extensive, or in their mere perception (sensation, and thereby reality) as intensive.³⁷⁵

In these I picture only the successive progress of one moment to another where all the segments of time and their addition generate a specific magnitude. Since the simple observation in

³⁷⁴ Kant, *KrV*, B 211f.

³⁷⁵ Kant, *KrV*, B 212.

every appearance is either space or time, so is each appearance as observation an extensive magnitude; yet in the process of its apprehension it can become known only through successive synthesis (of part to part).³⁷⁶

In conjunction with FT 2 it follows from this characteristic of the coherent continuity of space and time, which logically follows from all experience, that an eventual clairvoyant “leap” over space- and time-segments that are apprehended only successively must be declared as impossible on purely *a priori* grounds, since such an extrasensory “leaping action” would violate the constant continuity of space and of time.

The occult phenomenon of clairvoyance of a spatial as well as also of a temporal nature in the sense of such a “leap” over the continuity of all appearances, which is given through the extension of observations, is thereby excluded *a priori* in Kant’s cognitive system!

The possibility of an apparent jump within the constant space-time continuum by means of an infinitely rapid perception within the physical sensation would of course not be excluded *a priori*. With an infinite speed of operation the effect would indeed be a quasi leaping over a given space- and time-segment, the constant continuity of observation remaining nevertheless intact, in spite of this apparent bridging-over of the successive synthesis in the apprehension. This possibility of an infinite speed of operation is at least not to be excluded *a priori*, since Kant stated nothing concerning the duration of the continuous course of space- and time-segments that are to be apprehended successively. Such an infinite rapidity of the perception process could not be excluded in an *a priori*, but at best in an *a posteriori* fashion, namely by experience.

And—excepting the assumption of sensorial perception of infinite rapidity of operation—with this line of argument there would be fundamentally no room within the Kantian cognitive system for the occult phenomena of “clairvoyance” included under Class OC 1, at least one of which Swedenborg too was said to have produced (the observation of the fire in Stockholm³⁷⁷). The “influence at a distance” included under Class

³⁷⁶ Kant, *KrV*, B 203f.

³⁷⁷ Cf. Chapter 1.5.

OC 2 would likewise, entirely analogous to the occult phenomenon of "clairvoyance," find no room in Kant's system, again, of course, with the purely hypothetical exception of the assumption of an infinitely rapid operation in the production of the action.

For in the Kantian cognitive system an immediate, extrasensory influence of one person on another, distant person or perhaps distant object, induced through a mere act of will, is *a priori* unthinkable because of the constant continuity of the causality principle, as will become evident in the following.

Already in his inaugural dissertation, "*De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis* " ("Concerning the Forms and Principles of the World of Sensation and of the Spiritual World"—present author's translation), Kant regards the assumption of supernatural causes for events in the appearing world as inadmissible:

On the same grounds, by comparison we keep miracles, namely the influence of spirits, strictly at a distance from the discussion of phenomena...³⁷⁸

Whereas Kant still regards the constant continuity of the causality principle as a pragmatic rule, as a guarantee of the constant employment of the understanding, for that reason in the pure principles of understanding given in the *CPR* he postulates the continuity of the causal sequence as a condition of the continuous sequence of time:

All alterations take place in conformity with the law of the connection of cause and effect.³⁷⁹

Accordingly, just as time contains *a priori* the sensorial condition of the possibility of an unbroken continuation of existence in whatever follows, so the understanding, by virtue of the unity of apperception, is *a priori* the condition of the possibility of an unbroken determination of all positions for the appearances oc-

³⁷⁸ Kant, "*De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis*," 1770, *Immanuel Kant* (trans. and ed. W. Weischedel; 6 vols; Darmstadt: 1959) 3. 30.

³⁷⁹ Kant, *KrV*, B 232.

curring in this time, through the series of causes and effects, the former of which inevitably lead to the existence of the latter, and so render the empirical knowledge of the time-relations valid universally for all time, and therefore objectively valid.³⁸⁰

In the third antinomy of the “transcendental dialectic” the constant continuity of the causal sequence is finally stressed in sharp contrast to the idea of “unconditioned causality,”

which begins to act of itself. This causality, however, is blind, and shreds the manual of those rules by which a consistent constant experience is possible.³⁸¹

Consequently, however, for Kant it is just this unconditional causality that as he says in the *CPR*, would shred the rule book for a completely constant experience. In the *Critique of Practical Reason* for the sake of the realization of the categorical imperative he must of necessity postulate this unconditional causality. Kant's fundamental differentiation of, and also the connection between, theoretical and practical reason will be gone into in the next chapter, since in this enigmatic relation between “nature” and “freedom” a cleft for the possibility of the existence of occult phenomena could possibly open up.

In this central place in his philosophy Kant is painstakingly careful to distinguish the sensorial world, in which the constant continuity of the causal principle is to be guaranteed, from the mental world, in which “freedom” would be thinkable as a necessary condition for the capability of moral action:

For it is only in appearances that we can empirically apprehend this continuity in the connection of times.³⁸²

Within the world of appearances, therefore, the *a priori* principle of the constant continuity of the p.f.o. space and time as well as of the category of

³⁸⁰ Kant, *KrV*, B 256.

³⁸¹ Kant, *KrV*, B 475.

³⁸² Kant, *KrV*, B 244.

causality is valid, which at the same time apparently *a priori* excludes a clairvoyant leap in the space-time-causality continuum. This emerges quite explicitly from Kant's own words in the *CPR*:

The principle of continuity forbids any leap in the series of appearances, that is, of alterations (*in mundo non datur saltus*). It also forbids, in respect to the sum of all empirical observations in space, any gaps or clefts between two appearances (*non datur hiatus*). For the proposition can be stated this way: nothing that proves that there is a vacuum, or that even admits it as part of the empirical synthesis one makes, can enter into experience.³⁸³

The unifying functions of understanding and of sensation are the guarantees of the original unity of transcendental apperception and thereby of unified self-consciousness. No leap in this constant space-time-causality continuum must therefore be permitted to occur.

These principles "are all entirely one in this, that they allow of nothing in the empirical synthesis which may do violence or detriment to the understanding and to the continuous connection of all appearances, that is, to the unity of the concepts of the understanding. For in the understanding alone is possible the unity of experience, in which all perceptions must have their place."³⁸⁴

Thereby, it is from the *a priori* structure of space and of time, as well as the causality principle of the transcendental axiom of constant continuity of all appearances, as well as the constant continuity of the causality principle, that the continuity of all causes is derived.

This unavoidable principle of continuity of all observation in the world of appearances, however, does not permit, *a priori*, either the clairvoyance comprised under Class OC 1, or the action at a distance under OC 2.

The only cleft for the possibility of occult phenomena in the observational space of sensorial perception which are refuted by CP 1 in general and by CP 2 in particular, appears to lie in the hypothetical assumption of

³⁸³ Kant, *KrV*, B 281.

³⁸⁴ Kant, *KrV*, B 282.

an infinite rapidity of operation. For by this mode of transfer of perceptions and actions the chain of operations could be unobservable simply for purely technical reasons, so that at least a possibility of both kinds of occult phenomena that is not *a priori* excludable would also be thinkable within the Kantian cognitive system as acts that are only apparently extrasensory, without endangering its *a priori* structure.

Before I now come to the third and last of these cognitive postulates in Kant's cognitive system relevant to this inquiry, by which also Swedenborg's "spirit seeing" is excluded, I would like to briefly refer to an essential point in the Kantian cognitive system, which could also prove significant for the possibility of occult phenomena.

According to the transcendental principle of temporal sequence in conformity with the law of causality, the causal sequence, i.e., the necessary relation of cause and effect according to a rule, first fixes the series of events in time, whereby the temporal sequence becomes determinable, as is also elaborated by Deppert in his time-book:

Since the temporal series is thought of as an ordered, irreversible succession of events, and since these can be regarded as objective from the view of the subjective unity of apperception only by way of an indispensable rule, all happenings must consequently be conceived of as one thing that happens followed by another, according to a rule.³⁸⁵

Deppert holds Kant's declaration of the identity of the temporal and causal sequence to be the only form of the causal theory of time that can be maintained so far, and besides, that has proven itself to be very fruitful.³⁸⁶

This independence of temporal succession from causal succession could of course prove to be "fruitful" for the consideration of the possibility of occult phenomena, in which in the case of temporal clairvoyance the temporal sequence of particular events appears to be reversed—since a seer appears to experience future events in the present—merely insofar as the causal sequence would need to be reversible in order for the time

³⁸⁵ Deppert, *Zeit*, 72.

³⁸⁶ Cf. Deppert, *Zeit*, 74f.; Cf. also Kant, *KrV*, B 243.

sequence also to be reversible. Although in Kant's cognitive system the causal sequence is naturally clearly to be assumed as determined, in the lines of his moral philosophy, with the necessity of positing freedom, the possibility of an unconditioned causality from freedom could occur, which thereby would no longer be clearly determined by cause and effect.

Thus, up out of Kant's practical reason a cleft possibly opens in his philosophy that could give a definite space for occult phenomena too in his cognitive system of theoretical reason. For because of the freedom it gives to our mental character, which it is necessary to posit in the features of the moral doctrine, an unconditional and therewith not unequivocally determined causal influence would be possible.

Therefore, in the process of our mental character exerting influence in the world of appearances and thereby also in the constant continuity of the causal chain, together with the causal series, temporal succession would also appear to be interrupted, or affected by a mental series of events. In this case, however, the possibility of the occult phenomena of action at a distance and temporal clairvoyance would immediately exist—at least *a priori*. Thus, in consistent analogy to the realization of the “highest good” by means of compliance with the categorical imperative from duty,³⁸⁷ occult phenomena of the first two classes would receive their legitimate place in Kant's philosophy. This problematic passage in Kant's philosophy, which has its base in his puzzling combination of practical and theoretical reason, I will consider in still more detail in the next chapter. Here the presuppositions for the later conclusions will first be set up.

Here I will now continue with systematically stating, from Kant's cognitive theory in the *CPR*, the grounds of the critique which Kant made of Swedenborg's spirit-seeing in his polemic tract.

Since for Kant in the *CPR* the sensorially perceptible world of appearances offers man the only possible realm of experience, access to the suprasensuous world of noumena is already *a priori* impossible due to his first cognitive postulate CP 1. by which Swedenborgian “spirit-seeing” is put down as empty fancies and delusions.

Then also, the other hypothetical possibility, that “spiritual beings” as simple, immaterial substances could occur at all within the world of

³⁸⁷ Cf. the following chapter regarding the categorical imperative.

appearances, is refused *a priori* by the third cognitive postulate, which is now to be considered:

CP 3. The stuff of sensation structured *a priori* is exclusively material in nature. This is to say, matter, as impenetrable, extended substance in space, as the only imaginable medium, furnishes the forms of pure sensation and of understanding with material in the sense of concrete sensations, to be assimilated into the *a priori* forms of cognition.

In the *CPR* extension and impenetrability are defined as *a priori* characteristics of a body in space.³⁸⁸

I can first recognize the concept of body analytically through the characteristics of extension, impenetrability, figure, etc., all of which are thought of in the concept.³⁸⁹

According to Kant, all the remaining characteristics of bodies, as for example, weight, density, color, etc., must be left to empirical research, as he explains in his *CPR*:

We are acquainted with substance in space only through forces that are active in this and that space, either bringing other objects to it (attraction), or preventing them penetrating into it (repulsion and impenetrability). We are not acquainted with any other properties constituting the concept of the substance that appears in space and which we call matter.

³⁸⁸ Kant also derives extension and impenetrability as *a priori* characteristics of bodies in his *Elements of Natural Science*:

Matter can be infinitely compressed, but however great the compressing power may be, matter can never be penetrated.

Matter is impenetrable and in fact by virtue of its power of extension. (Kant, *Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*, 1786, AA IV (Berlin: 1911) Hauptstück 2, Lehrsatz 3; Lehrsatz 4, Beweis.)

³⁸⁹ Kant, *KrV*, B 12.

In fact extension and penetrability (which together make up the concept of matter) constitute the supreme empirical principle of the unity of appearance, and have in themselves, so far as they are empirically unconditional, the property of the regulative principle.³⁹⁰

Here, to be sure, Kant understandably proceeds from the point that all these effects in the world of appearances would be conveyed via bodies, without explicitly proving this presupposition. As I have explained above in the philosophic critique of *Dreams*, this critique misses the mark of Swedenborg's spirit contact, insofar as this contact is said to take place not through material but through purely spiritual interaction.

In any case, as concerns the possibility of occult appearances of immaterial "spirits" Kant is of the conviction that within the world of appearances in space only material interactions would be perceptible.

This interpretation of Kant's has a definite connection with the mathematical-constitutive division of the transcendental principles in whose axioms and anticipations the *a priori* features of matter—extension and impenetrability as well as composition—are already contained:

- a) Extension for Kant is established by the axiom of observation in the mathematical-constitutive division of the transcendental principles.³⁹¹

It may, then, always be true of a whole made up of substances and only conceived of by the pure understanding, that prior to any formation of this whole we must have [an idea] of the simple:

³⁹⁰ Kant, *KrV*, B 321, B 646.

³⁹¹ Kant regards the appearance of simple substances in space as impossible already in his "Investigation of the Distinctness of the Fundamental Principles of Natural Theology and Ethics":

...that is extended, which taken (alone) in itself fills a space, as would each and every individual body, even if I imagine that there would be nothing besides it. If I have only in mind an utterly simple element, if taken alone (without relation to others) it is impossible that there could be many things beside each other in it and it alone takes up a space. Therefore it cannot be extended. (Kant, "Investigation of the Distinctness of the Fundamental Principles of Natural Theology and Ethics," 1764, AA II, Berlin 1912, 2. Betrachtung, Beispiel.)

this does not hold true, however, of the *totum substantiale phaenomenon*, which, like empirical observation in space, bears with it the necessary characteristic, that no part of it is simple, because no part of space is simple.³⁹²

The logical necessary consequence of Kant's *a priori* principle of the extension of all observations is that no simple substances could appear in space:

All appearances are consequently observed as aggregates (complexes of previously given parts). But this is the case only with those magnitudes that are extensively represented to us and apprehended as such.³⁹³

The simplicity of substance in space would never be discoverable as an idea of pure reason in the world of appearances, but could only be used as a regulative principle of experience.³⁹⁴

In Kant's view, however, the fact that in sensorial observation no part of space can be simple, is due to its *a priori* recognizable extension:

The composite nature of substance in space, which of necessity is already embodied in the concept of matter—since it produces a body's extension—is therefore given *a priori* by the axioms of observation as well as by the pure forms of spatial observation. The composite nature of a material object is therefore determined *a priori* in the *CPR* by the human cognitive structure.

From this it follows, however, that for Kant "spirits" as simple, immaterial substances have in principal no possibility whatsoever of having an influence in the world of appearances. It troubles Kant as little here as in his polemic tract that Swedenborg in no way claimed this to be the case, since Kant proceeds from his own concept of a "spirit" and critiques this concept on the basis of his concept of matter.

³⁹² Kant, *KrV*, B 469.

³⁹³ Kant, *KrV*, B 204.

³⁹⁴ Cf. Kant, *KrV*, B 536, B 541 ff.

- b) The characteristic of the impenetrability of composite substances in space is provided by the anticipation of perception. Here the “intensity” (*Intensität*), i.e., the filling of space to a given degree, is premised *a priori*:

Therefore each reality in an appearance has intensive dimension, i.e., a degree.³⁹⁵

...So no perception, consequently also no experience, is possible that will prove a total lack of everything real in the appearance, be it direct or indirect, i.e., a proof of empty space or of an empty time can never be drawn from experience.³⁹⁶

The impenetrability of matter as a premise for the filling of space is given to a certain degree (*Intensität*) as well by the anticipation of perception, therefore it is determined by the *a priori* structure of the human cognitive faculty.

From this it must logically follow that Swedenborg’s “spirits,” such as Kant conceived them, namely as ostensibly simple, immaterial substances, could *a priori* not come to view in the world of appearance in any of their asserted properties, nor could they by any means influence the material world. Their “existence in itself” (*Existenz an sich*) nevertheless remains an open question. Kant can argue for this categorical prohibition by reference to the *a priori* structure of our cognitive apparatus, for—

1. the spirits’ alleged characteristic of simplicity clashes with the axioms of observation, according to whose transcendental principle all ap-

³⁹⁵ Kant, *KrV*, B 120.

³⁹⁶ Kant, *KrV*, B 214. Already in his polemic tract Kant intuitively derives this intensity of space, accordingly the occupation of space to a certain degree, from the premise that matter is impenetrable. In so doing he does not yet here as later in the *KrV* regard the compositeness of the active subject as a necessary condition for the occupation of space. However, in *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* he clearly also brings into consideration a simple subject as the possible creator of space occupation:

Since this filling of space occurs by means of an active force (the reaction) and therefore only indicates a sphere of greater activity, but not a multiplicity of the component parts of the active subject... (Kant, *Dreams*, 17).

- pearances would be *a priori* combined aggregates, as follows from paragraph a);
2. the characteristic of non-extension that derives from their simplicity clashes with the extension of appearances in space deriving from the necessarily composite nature of matter, in consequence of the *a priori* concept of matter as well in consequence of the extensity of all observations, as follows from paragraph a); and
 3. their alleged penetrability clashes with the principle of the intensity of all perceptions, which the impenetrability of appearances (by virtue of the power of repulsion) premises as a filling of space to a certain degree, as follows from paragraph b).

In any case here Kant must for the sake of consistency let drop the matter of which space the transcendental subject actually occupies. This "soul-body problem" will become especially relevant in his yet to come moral philosophy.

Under the implicit but unproven premise that it is exclusively material interactions that are perceptible, which I have explained in the third cognitive postulate, CP 3, there remains in any case *a priori* no room for "spirits" or "souls" within Kant's cognitive system of the CPR.

As I have already shown in the previous chapter, Kant certainly attaches the property of material in space to Swedenborg's "spirits." That Swedenborg never maintains this, Kant overlooks in his critique in "Dreams." It is not Swedenborg's concept of spirits but only his own construction of "spirit" or "soul," that he lays down in his polemic tract, that he critiques.

In the field of the world of appearance determined *a priori*, occult phenomena like clairvoyance of a spatial or temporal nature, action at a distance, thought reading, or simply a direct contact with the spiritual world such as Swedenborg asserted he carried on, was therefore for Kant with his cognitive postulates CP 2 and CP 3 excluded on *a priori* grounds.

Since, on the other hand, in the Kantian cognitive system with its first cognitive postulate CP 1, no extrasensory perception, perhaps aided by intellectual observation, is imaginable that could cross over the immanent appearing world into the transcendental sphere of the "thing-in-itself,"

the named occult phenomena of all three classes are excluded in an *a priori* fashion for the critical Kant.

Not only is the reality, thus the empirical authenticity, of occult phenomena contested, but yet more pointedly, from the start—*a priori*, and not first *a posteriori*—the possibility of their being experienced is taken from them.³⁹⁷

This categorical judgment must logically follow from Kant's "first postulate of empirical thought in general":

What agrees with the formal requirements of experience (according to observation and concepts) is possible.

The postulate of the possibility of things requires therefore that the concept of them harmonizes with the formal requirements of an experience generally speaking.³⁹⁸

However, since occult phenomena would radically violate the formal requirements of experience—as well in regard to the p.f.o. space and time together with the associated axioms of observation and anticipations of perception as in regard to the pure concepts of understanding, especially that of constant causality, as well as in regard to the *a priori* concept of matter—to be consistent Kant therefore had to declare their existence as impossible.

For what is not permitted *a priori* to exist in the world of appearances, this cannot occur in experience even under any ever so mysterious circumstances. With this death warrant from the highest court—namely that of pure reason—a possible empirical examination of occult phenomena becomes not only superfluous, but downright absurd, as Kant expressly emphasizes not only in *Dreams* but also here in the CPR itself:

A substance which would be constantly present in space, yet without filling it (like that medium between matter and thinking beings which some have wanted to introduce), or a special funda-

³⁹⁷ It is the goal of this philosophical investigation to investigate the *a priori* possibility of occult phenomena, not to describe the empirical research work of parapsychology.

³⁹⁸ Kant, *KrV*, B 265, B 267.

mental power of our mind to view the future ahead of time (not simply to deduce something's outcome), or finally a faculty itself of standing in thought-communion with other human beings (as distant as they ever might be), these are all concepts whose possibility is entirely baseless. They are baseless because they are not based on experience and its known laws, and without them there is an arbitrary association of thoughts that, although it certainly contains no contradiction, still cannot make any claim on objective reality, and thus any claim on the possibility of such a thing as one here wants to believe in.³⁹⁹

But why it is that the kinds of occult phenomena like the clairvoyance, thought-reading and spirit contact that Kant here specifically mentions could in principle not be any object of possible experience, I have deduced in this section from the *a priori* structure of his cognitive system.

The sum of this section—on *a priori* grounds the occult phenomena that Kant explicitly mentions find no room in his cognitive system of the CPR.

There are in particular three formal possibilities for refuting the transference of the occult phenomena OC A, OC B and OC C (see Introduction) with Kant's cognitive postulates that may be placed parallel to them:

OC A: Extrasensory perceptions and influences as well as spirit contact without transfer medium.

This possibility of the existence of occult phenomena is rejected *a priori* by Kant's first cognitive postulate CP 1, which restricts the human cognitive faculty exclusively to sensorial perception.

OC B: Extrasensory perceptions and influences as well as spirit contact without a material transfer medium.

This possibility of the existence of occult phenomena is rejected *a priori* by Kant's second cognitive postulate CP 2, which by virtue of the p. f.o. and the categories is assigned to the material world of appearance within which alone sensorial perceptions would be possible.

³⁹⁹ Kant, *KrV*, B 270.

OC C: Extrasensory perceptions and influences as well as spirit contact with a material transfer medium.

This possibility of the existence of occult phenomena is ruled out *a priori* by third cognitive postulate CP 3 which defines the structure of matter as impenetrable, extended substance in space, whereby occult interactions of a material nature would be impossible.

As tentative openings for the possibility of “occult phenomena” only the two briefly mentioned hypothetical exceptions remain:

- 1.) The exception of infinitely rapid activity in the perception process and analogously in the causal action process.
- 2.) The possibility, not to be excluded in principle, of a non-material interaction, in which merely the results would be perceptible, but not the interaction process itself. In this sense, in which also Swedenborg claimed to have association with spirits, the formal possibilities OC A and OC B would immediately be imaginable. Of course, for the sake of the possibility of the non-material influence of subject on object—as in the case of action at a distance—and of object on subject—as in the case of clairvoyance—Kant’s first postulate of cognition CP 1 must be modified in favor of a broadening of the mode of observation from sensorial to intellectual.

Besides the “*intuitus derivatus*” defined in the CPR a person must have an “*intuitus originarius*” in order to be able to grasp the “thing-in-itself” [*Ding-an-sich*].

Such a category of observation, in principle of such a different nature, that would lie outside the boundaries of the human cognitive faculty as Kant believed he had drawn them with apodictic certainty and strict universal validity in the CPR, would then result in an extrasensory cognitive faculty being imaginable.

As will be pointed out at the end of this dissertation, in his lectures on rational psychology in which he departs from his restrictions of the critical period, Kant in a paradoxical way actually addresses this change from sensorial to intellectual observation in the human soul after its separation from the body. Nevertheless, opposite this “synthesis” I place the “antith-

esis," the possibility of occult phenomena in the outline of Kant's moral philosophy.

I.5.3. Excursus On the Kantian Concept of the *Intelligible World* and the *Thing In Itself*

To be able to understand the following chapter, in which I place Swedenborg and the occult in relation to Kant's moral philosophy, it is first necessary to explain the Kantian concept of the "thing-in-itself" (*Ding-an-sich*). In this investigation it will become evident that in Kant's terminology two different meanings of the concept "thing-in-itself" can be differentiated: first, the "thing in itself" that affects the physical senses and thereby provides the base for the world of appearance—although not at all in a causal sense; second, those very "intelligible objects" that are generated by the subject itself and form the so-called "intelligible world."

To begin with let us go to that "thing in itself" that provides the basis for appearances, that affects the physical senses and so to speak furnishes "stuff" for all the subjects' perceptions:

By positing a "thing in itself" corresponding to the world of appearance Kant seeks to oppose Berkeley's radical idealism ("*esse est percipi*"), as he explains in the prolegomena:

Idealism consists in the claim that there is nothing other than thinking beings; the rest of the things we believe we perceive by observation would only be ideas in the thinking being, to which in fact no real object corresponds outside these. Against this I say: There are things other than the objects of our senses that are present to us, yet we know nothing about them, about what they might be in themselves. We do know only their appearances, i.e., only the mental images they produce in us when they affect our senses.⁴⁰⁰

By positing "things in themselves" or a "thing in itself" (even the determination between singular and plural is practically impossible in

⁴⁰⁰ Kant, *Prolegomena*, (ed. Karl Vorländer; Leipzig 1930) 13, note II.

Kant's view, because of its being in principle unknowable) the randomness of empirically accidental experience is guaranteed within the Kantian cognitive system.⁴⁰¹

Beyond these plausibility-based arguments for the postulate of a "thing in itself" that is in principle unknowable, for Kant there is an assumption in the structure of his moral philosophy that is utterly indispensable. It is the assumption of an "intelligible world"—about whose identity with the "thing in itself" that provides the basis for appearance he does not express a clear and distinct opinion. It is indispensable because only by positing an intelligible quality can the concept of freedom be made compatible with that of physical necessity, while the process of this connection between intelligible and empirical quality to Kant remains hidden, as he explains in the *Transcendental Dialectic*:

But why under the circumstances at hand the intelligible character gives just these appearances and this empirical character, this goes far, far beyond all our rational abilities to answer, indeed, totally surpasses all our right even to ask the question—as though one were to ask, Whence is it that the transcendental object of our outer, sensory observation just produces only observation in space and time and not some other.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰¹ Regarding the problem of Kant's "thing in itself" cr. von K. Thieme's dissertation, *Kant's Transcendental Philosophy in comparison to Schopenhauer's Metaphysics* (Leipzig: 1924), 13-18.

That for Kant the "thing in itself" establishes the appearance's underlying reality as indubitable is also emphasized by Vaihinger. In his commentary on the Critique of Reason (Stuttgart: I 1881, II 1892) in I, pp. 172 ff., and especially in II, pp. 35 ff., in an excursus on the affecting objects he points out their arbitrarily presumed existence. Only Cohen is of a different opinion. He regards the "thing in itself" simply as a "proposition" (*Aufgabe*) (*Kommentar zur Vernunftkritik*, Leipzig: 1907, p. 7; cf. Kant, *KrV*, B 234), as a focal idea of cognition, as in no way a reality in itself. As enticing and, in regard to its moral aspect, obvious an extension of transcendental philosophy this concept may be, Vaihinger still is unquestionably right when he maintains against Cohen too (II, pp. 50 ff.) that for Kant there existed objects independent of subjects, and that Kant was a realist, apparently contradicting himself, as Schopenhauer has shown (cf. Schopenhauer's critique of Kant in *The World as Will and Idea* II): He who has defined "causality" as a category, has no right to speak of a "basis of the appearance" and of "affecting objects"!

Schopenhauer's critique of the causal derivation of the "thing in itself" in Kant is by all means to be pointed to, namely that Kant does not make a direct, causal derivation of the "thing in itself" that affects the senses, but posits it arbitrarily in order to oppose radical idealism.

⁴⁰² Kant, *KrV*, B 585.

That this antinomy rests on a mere appearance, and that the nature of causality from freedom at least does not clash, this was all that we could accomplish, and it was our sole concern.⁴⁰³

The transcendental subject could be referred to as “free” only as to its intelligible being, although at the same time as to its appearance it would still remain determined in a sensorially causal manner, as Kant explains further. For only

so can one consider the causality of this being from two sides: as intelligible in regard its action, as that of a thing in itself, and as sensible in regard to the effects, as those of an appearance in the world of the senses.⁴⁰⁴

The theoretical positing of a “thing in itself” in Kant arises from three sources, as Thieme also shows.⁴⁰⁵

The first source for Kant is the feeling of sensation produced by a contingent diversity, out of which there follows for him the positing of a “thing in itself” that provides the basis for appearance, as explained above.

The second source of the doctrine of the “thing in itself” is to be considered that of pure non-metaphysical transcendental logic, which of necessity leads to the differentiation of all objects into phenomena and noumena.⁴⁰⁶ In the CPR's transcendental analysis Kant has drawn out and separated from these given objects the two factors *matter and form, the observable and concept*. Anything at all first becomes thinkable when that something is apprehended. In fact, only the thought of the existence of a chaos of (objectless) observation and sensation is absurd. However, the “in itself” existence of pure thought-forms is in no wise ruled out. On the contrary, the thought that the conceptual must also be able to exist without fulfilled observation is plainly inescapable, as the history of philosophy

⁴⁰³ Kant, *KrV*, B 586.

⁴⁰⁴ Kant, *KrV*, B 566.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. Thieme, *Kant's Transcendental Philosophy*, 13 ff.

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. Kant, *KrV*, B 294.

indeed sufficiently displays. That this illicit elimination of only a single factor of experience is misleading, Kant has demonstrated in his critical investigation of noumena.

For the result of the fact that concepts are fulfilled and take hold only by concrete, material observations is, in Kant's words,

undeniably that pure concepts of understanding can never be of transcendental, but always only of empirical use, and that the fundamental principles of pure understanding can be related only to the general conditions for a possible experience, to objects of the senses, never, however, to things in general (without considering the way in which we may be able to observe them).⁴⁰⁷

Now no object can be determined by a pure category where there is a departure from all the conditions of sensory observation as the only observation possible for us. By a pure category is determined just the thinking of an object expressed according to various modes.⁴⁰⁸

This then explains all the following. Since our categories that produce experience function only on sensorial data, our observation being structured solely by these categories—without them observation is inconceivable, there are absolutely no “noumena in a positive sense,” i.e., no objects “of non-sensorial observation”⁴⁰⁹—therefore things grasped in categorical fashion, which are independent of our Self, i.e., which are things in themselves, would be “observed intellectually.”⁴¹⁰

Noumena “in the negative sense,” i.e., things, insofar as they are “not objects of our sensorial perception,”⁴¹¹ are certainly imaginable according to Kant, yet they are still without practicable utility for potential experi-

⁴⁰⁷ Kant, *KrV*, B 303.

⁴⁰⁸ Kant, *KrV*, B 304.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. Kant, *KrV*, B 307.

⁴¹⁰ Cf. Kant, *KrV*, B 307.

⁴¹¹ Cf. Kant, *KrV*, B 307.

ence and therefore without significance for potential cognition of objects.⁴¹²

Therefore Kant ascribes only a negative function to noumena, namely the function of setting limits to our sphere of cognition. Noumena are said to restrict the activity of our understanding to its potential use of sensorial observation in the world of appearance:

In this way our understanding now becomes extended in a negative direction, i.e., it is not restricted by sensorial perception, but rather, it restricts sensorial perception, in that it calls things in themselves noumena (not regarded as appearances). However it also forthwith sets limits on itself, not recognizing them by any categories, thus thinking of them only under the name of an unknown something.⁴¹³

Kant's teaching consequently is: I have a faculty of observation, through which the material for things is provided, and I have an understanding, which forms this material. The material is given me by the "things in themselves." I do not have any other first-hand observation than that which is sensorial, therefore it is entirely impossible for me to be given positive "things in themselves." The concepts of my understanding admittedly now extend only to sensorial material; however, the problematic possibility of "noumena" remains preserved for my understanding, since its concepts do not depend on only material from the senses. The province of my sensorial perception does not encompass all possible things whatsoever, it is enclosed by the province of the "things in themselves," of things for another kind of observation, of "noumena" in a negative sense. Nevertheless these "noumena" as pure concept essences ought not in any case be equated with the "things in themselves" that form the basis of appearance. For the "noumena" in a negative sense simply point to a "general something,"⁴¹⁴ as Kant puts it here, but they do not themselves present any "things in themselves."

⁴¹² Cf. Kant, *KrV*, B 308.

⁴¹³ Kant, *KrV*, B 312.

⁴¹⁴ Cf. Kant, *KrV*, B 312

These “things of thought” (*Gedankendinge*) as Kant also calls them are thought of through the agency of the understanding’s naked forms and are therefore not to be identified either with the sensorially perceptible appearances (since the “noumena” are naked forms empty of observation, without content) nor with the “thing in itself” that forms the basis of appearance (since the “noumena” come into being through the pure transcendental use of the understanding, and therefore are definitely not given independently of it, as is that “thing in itself” that affects our sensorial perception). So, to my mind the question here presents itself, whether Kant’s dichotomy, “appearance”—“thing in itself,” must not be broadened by the insertion of a connecting link, the “intelligible world.”

Kant himself certainly does not explicitly distinguish between these distinct planes of existence of “things in themselves,” yet the insertion of a third form of existence of objects alongside the “world of appearance” and the “thing in itself” that forms the basis of appearance seems plausible to me, since the “noumena” cannot be fitted into either of these two Kantian categories.⁴¹⁵

Within this threefold division, “World of Appearance”—“Intelligible World”—“Thing In Itself,” the “transcendental ideas of pure reason”

⁴¹⁵ Regarding the problem of noumenon in Kant, G. E. Schulze expresses his view in his *Kritik der theoretischen Philosophie* (Hamburg, 1891, vol. II, p. 599):

In this regard, however, it has been disregarded that the thought of the noumenon, taken even in the negative sense, always still presumes in part some use of the pure concepts of understanding, which according to reason’s critique of the determination of categories is quite unallowable (for by noumenon taken even in the negative sense some things or other must be thought of using concepts of the understanding, for otherwise it would consist in the suspension of all thought) and, in part that it is worthless for properly justifying the doctrine of transcendental aesthetics that all objects of the senses are appearances.

This just mentioned “justification” is also in no wise the purpose of the noumena, for as regards their origin these are not thought of as “things in themselves” which affect [the senses], but as rational entities, and they only subsequently coincide with those “things in themselves” that affect sensory perception, because according to Kant’s conception there could be no fundamentally different kinds of entity in itself. Therefore, for all things independent of a subject Kant also used the collective concept, “things in themselves” (*Dinge an sich*). Schulze was right however when he observed that the understanding, which is said to think the noumena would still be just as incomprehensible apart from all our observation as in Kant’s view would be the sensory perception that could perceive positive noumena. In any case the noumenon in itself is the most contradictory and difficult to understand of Kant’s three “in-itself” constructions.

("pure rational concepts") which we are now going to consider could also be fitted in without resistance. The "ideas of pure reason" in reason's theoretical usage (the universal ideas "soul," "world," and "God") as well as in practical usage ("God" and "immortality") must be reckoned, as I see it, to the "intelligible world." For these "pure rational concepts" too could not be reckoned to either the "world of appearance" or to the "thing in itself" that forms the basis of appearance, since they are for one without any sensorial experience, but for the other they do not exist independently of reason, as does that "thing in itself" that affects the senses.

The third and in Kant's own view noblest source of his doctrine of the "thing in itself" lies in his ethics. It is the law-giving reason:

Every bit of data (fact) is an object of appearance (of the senses). On the other hand, what can only be envisaged by pure reason, what must be accounted an idea, of which no object in experience can adequately be given—like a completely just system of government among men—this is the thing in itself.⁴¹⁶

And as an example of such an idea, of an "intelligible object of pure reason," Kant here cites "a completely just system of government among men."⁴¹⁷

That by the "thing in itself" in the above quotation from Kant from his system of law is not actually meant the same "thing in itself" that affects our sensorial perception is already evident, insofar as the "transcendental ideas" are designed by reason itself and in practical use are also determined as to content (the system of postulates). In contrast to this, however, the "thing in itself" that forms the basis of appearance is for one thought of as existing independent of the subject, and for the other is in no wise determinable as to content.

Regarding the significance of "ideas" for our experience Kant brings out the following.

⁴¹⁶ Kant, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre*, 1797 (Berlin, AA VII, 1914) Anhang, Beschluß.

⁴¹⁷ *Loc. cit.*.

He characterizes reason as "the power of the unity of the understanding's rules acting under principles,"⁴¹⁸ It no longer uses categories and arranges a given chaos into objects, as does the understanding; but it forms categorical objects into "things in themselves." Theoretically it can do this so to speak idealistically: It sets up regulative principles of unity, according to which it arranges the objects, as if these objects were appearances of a unitary thing. To all practical purposes reason becomes the true creator, in that it moves the will to manage the objects in such a way that their principles become valid and "intelligible objects" can appear, e.g., "a completely just system of government."

"Experience" and "nature" signified for Kant the multiplicity of observation constrained under the unity of transcendental apperception; his Beyond or kingdom of God is unified, regulated, reason-serving Nature. Unity is reason's all-embracing goal: unity of the precepts of action for all men, unity of the understanding's insights under all-embracing principles (e.g., most real entity, totality of the conditions in the conditioned), the dispersal of everything accidental-heterogeneous-peculiar. It is the dominion of the "I" that is ever identical with itself, of the "I" that here emerges as a thoroughgoing suprapersonal (but never extra-personal) principle of order.

One could well ask what reason's principles of unity actually now have to do with the absolutely independent "thing in itself" of sensory perception. That a difficulty lies here certainly Kant too unmistakably senses when he says,

however, the question of how the case is with objects in themselves, how the nature of things is subordinated under principles and cannot but be determined by bare concepts, if not an almost impossible one, is still at the least quite absurd in its demand.⁴¹⁹

This statement describes the problem of the transcendental dialectic. Kant solves it in the following way:

⁴¹⁸ Cf. Kant, *KrV*, B 356.

⁴¹⁹ Kant, *KrV*, B 358.

Experience shows us certain laws and orders, fixed forms, which we grasp as products of the functioning of our understanding. However, this order of nature is not a complete and closed order, not something whole. From every side it leads into what is undetermined. My unified "I" governs the sensations in time; how long, and since when, I know not. Every effect that I experience has a cause associated with it; this effect itself again as a cause determines what happens after it. But what is the initial reason for all happenings?

Is this initial reason itself devoid of a cause, or is it simply involved in an untermiated endlessness of causes? Such problems of necessity arise. Every attempted answer leads to contradictions, one is arising again and again—the world of experience knows no bounds. Into the realm of the indeterminable (*indefinitum*) it thrusts all reasons and standards, the "I" disappears from it at the very moment that the "I" goes through all this experience; nature, which the understanding so wonderfully has graphically imprinted and consolidated out of chaos, threatens to evaporate again into the realm of the boundless. Then, as the ultimate salvation and establisher of order, appears the idea, the category, broadened to include the unconditional,⁴²⁰ and the idea's "intelligible object," the regulative principle and the problematic object. With ideas reason has

in mind systematic unity, to which it attempts to make the unity that is empirically possible approach, without ever fully reaching it.⁴²¹

Explaining the necessity of the postulate of unity is the task of the arguments for the cosmological thesis and antithesis of pure reason: Every consideration of nature presumes its wholeness. This is never given in experience, so it is transferred to the "intelligible world of reason."

As to its origin this "intelligible world of pure reason" is neither the cause of the appearances, nor the categorical noumenon; it is rather the unconditional object that is given to reason and that is problematically

⁴²⁰ Cf. Kant, *KrV*, B 436.

⁴²¹ Kant, *KrV*, B 596.

posited as the cause for the world of the senses.⁴²² It draws its "in itself" character entirely from its antithesis to appearance, not, however, from the unreality of the "I," for with regard to its content it is determined by the experiencing subject. For this reason this "intelligible world" can in no case be identified with that first "thing in itself" that forms the basis of appearances, that affects sensorial perception, in spite of the conceptual overlap that occasionally occurs in Kant.⁴²³

There is certainly one thing that both meanings of the concept "thing in itself" have in common: these "things" never appear in themselves and still all appearances stem from them, in opposite direction. One can say the "stuff" of all appearances comes from the "thing in itself" that forms the basis of appearances, that affects sensorial perception; the "forms" are put forth by the "transcendental subject." The existence of ideas of totality is premised within the "intelligible world," its idea-determined essence is provided by reason itself and is therefore above all proof.

Or is the being and essence of "ideas" perhaps proved if practical reason postulates "God," "freedom," and "immortality"?

Reason's imperative to the will demands a unification of all activity: One ought always to act according to precepts that can be the same for every doer, without this resulting in a conflict among the individual intentions of the will. Wherever this happens, throughout the will the "idea" shapes nature into the "*Civitas Dei*" ("City of God"), into that supreme system of government which itself belongs to the kingdom of the "intelligible world." As a guarantee of the universal development leading

⁴²² Cf. Kant, *KrV*, B 709.

⁴²³ From fragmentarily published posthumous pieces it has been believed possible to conclude that in his old age Kant had thrown over his whole "I-thing" doctrine, particularly that he had given up the postulate of the thing-in-itself. It is to the credit of Adickes to have shown that Kant maintained the essential points of his doctrine and in his mode of expression had merely accommodated to the "anti-in-itself" drift of his opponents. He had only expanded his philosophy with the doctrine of the "doubled affection of the 'I,'" according to which the "transcendental subject," the "I-in-itself," moved by the "things in themselves," beholds the world of pure knowledge, the world of "primary qualities" in the Lockean sense; and according to which this transcendently experienced physical world on its side then moves the empirical "I," that of the "I think," to whom the world of color, sound, and odor appears as it does. This elaboration doubtless takes from the "I think" much of its importance—here it is no longer by itself the unifier—but the intention is to preserve transcendental philosophy as a whole. Cf. Adickes: *Kants Opus postumum*, Berlin 1920, S 418 f.

to the realization of the "intelligible world" in the appearance, Kant believed it necessary to postulate the reality of "God" and "immortality." This absolute stipulation of the "immortal soul" he deduced from the unfinished nature of reason's task that makes its appearance in every individual; that of "God" he deduced, however, from the necessity of a cause that would be adequate to the postulated goal of all moral development, the achievement of the "highest good." In so doing a specific essence within the "intelligible world of pure reason" is alleged, the existence of these "intelligible objects" is further presumed in the practical use of reason. For in the actual Kantian sense what becomes proven is only a rigorously valid unconditional requirement, namely the "categorical imperative." If this law is something that can be realized, then such essences must exist. Therefore they do exist, says Kant, and this he calls "the faith of reason."

Therefore, if on account of this systemic inconsistency in the Kantian use of the concept "thing in itself" one further brings in the third plane of existence, the "intelligible world," in addition to the "world of appearance" and the "thing in itself," then the "ideas of pure reason" also allow themselves to be fitted in without opposition, as well as the "noumena" put forth by the understanding in its one-sided use of the categories as "something general."

If one once accepts this fundamental tripartite division, then one could carry through still more subtle differentiations within this "intelligible world."

Thus, considered as a whole, a tripartite division of the planes of existence of the possible objects of thought within Kant's cognitive system would result, of which the middle element must again be divided into three modes or sub-categories:

- 1.) The "thing in itself" forming the basis of appearance that affects sensorial perception.
- 2.) The "intelligible world" of the "transcendental subject," which is again divided into:
 - a) The "intelligible world" of reason ("ideas").
 - b) The "intelligible world" of the understanding ("noumena").

- c) The “intelligible world” of the pure forms of observation (space and time as concepts and as intuitive, pure forms of observation).
- 3.) the “world of appearance,” composed of the “thing in itself” forming the basis of appearance, which furnishes the “stuff,” and of the “intelligible world in its three modes,” which furnishes the “forms” of every possible experience.

(To be continued)