

“A Critique of Langton on Kantian Substance”

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## Acknowledgements

I first became interested in Kant's metaphysics in the fall of 2007, when I took Lydia Patton's stimulating seminar on the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Under Dr. Patton's guidance, I continued to study Kant's *Critique* and its exegesis. I am greatly indebted to her guidance, as well as the guidance of Drs. Brian Epstein and Walter Ott, who also assisted in the development of this project, both in content and form. As such, any remaining errors or oversights are entirely my own.

## Introduction

Current criticism and exegesis of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* mainly focuses on what Kant could have possibly meant by the assertion that we have no knowledge of things in themselves, particularly when this assertion is combined with other passages that seem to assert that we do indeed have knowledge—albeit limited knowledge—of things in themselves. For instance, we know that they exist and are somehow the grounds of the appearances given to our sensible intuition.

One of the most innovative and appealing interpretations of Kant's philosophy in recent years is presented by Rae Langton, who asserts in *Kantian Humility* that Kant's story of things in themselves and phenomenal appearances can be made coherent if we think of Kant's distinction between them not as being a distinction between particular entities, but between two types of properties. According to Langton, phenomena are the extrinsic or relational properties of things in themselves, and things in themselves are the intrinsic properties of those same phenomena.<sup>1</sup> In interpreting Kant's distinction in this manner, Langton dissolves the age-old tension between one-world and two-world interpretations of Kant's transcendental idealism and attempts to make sense of Kant's commitment to both our ignorance and (seemingly limited) knowledge of things in themselves.

Most interpretations of Kant's distinction fall into two camps, the first of which is noumenalism. Noumenalism posits the existence of supersensible entities entirely

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<sup>1</sup> Rae Langton, *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 49. Hereafter referenced parenthetically.

distinct from the things of everyday experience that make up our knowledge. This two-world view is best-articulated by P.F. Strawson in *The Bounds of Sense*. On Strawson's view, we have no knowledge of things in themselves because they exist outside of the sensible constraints of space and time.<sup>2</sup> This view is beset by problems, particularly when we consider Kant's "Refutation of Idealism" and the third chapter of the *Analytic of Principles*, in which Kant seems to claim that we do have *some* knowledge of things in themselves—we know that they must exist if we are to have an experience of objects at all, and we also know that they are somehow foundational for phenomena.<sup>3</sup> The extreme opposite of this view is one that interprets Kant's notion of things in themselves as merely a "limiting notion"—things in themselves are literally incomprehensible, indescribable, and unthinkable, so it probably best not to discuss them at all.<sup>4</sup>

Of course between these extremes are a myriad of interpretations of Kant's distinction, but I will mainly be focusing on Rae Langton's because it has been one of the most influential in recent years. Like Henry Allison, Langton dissolves common problems with two-world interpretations by offering a one-world interpretation of things in themselves and phenomena. However, like Guyer before her, Langton believes that epistemic interpretations of the distinction such as Allison's tend to trivialize Kant's humility, or our ignorance of things in themselves. On her view, by contrast, Kant can say that we have no knowledge of things in themselves, because what is really meant by

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<sup>2</sup> P.F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: Routledge, 1966), 236: "There exists the sphere of supersensible reality, of things, neither spatial nor temporal, as they are in themselves."

<sup>3</sup> Also entitled, "On the ground of the distinction of all objects in general into phenomena and noumena."

<sup>4</sup> Lucy Allais gives excellent summaries of both of these views in her article "Kant's One World: Interpreting 'Transcendental Idealism,'" *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 12 (4) 2004: 655-684. See particularly pgs. 657-658. Hereafter referenced parenthetically. Matthews and Melnick are proponents of the "limiting notion" conception of noumena. Henry Allison's view is probably closer to their interpretation than Strawson's.

this is that we have no knowledge of the intrinsic nature of things. Yet he can also assert without incoherence that things in themselves are the grounds of appearances, because phenomena are the relational properties of things in themselves. According to Langton we are not asserting too much of things in themselves on her interpretation because we are still precluded from a considerable amount of knowledge, and thus we have considerable reason to feel loss.<sup>5</sup> One could argue that we could have knowledge of the intrinsic properties of things (things in themselves) were we not limited by the categories, but Langton does not take this approach. Instead, she says that our ignorance of things in themselves originates from the fact that they are causally inert and cannot affect us. I will argue that this interpretation misdiagnoses the source of Kant's humility and that it completely ignores the constraining nature of the categories, particularly those related to time.

As for the structure of the following discussion, my first chapter is largely focused on the distinction between things in themselves and phenomena. After a brief exploration of the failures of previous interpretations to make Kant's distinction coherent, I explore the advantages of Langton's one-world view and her interpretation of the distinction between intrinsic properties and relational properties, which has distinct advantages over Allison's epistemological thesis. While it will become evident that I am most sympathetic to Henry Allison's view, there are several inconsistencies and problems with it that Langton's interpretation solves—though, I think, at considerable cost to Kant's

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<sup>5</sup> Both Langton and Lucy Allais treat Henry Allison's inability to account for Kant's "mourning" as the main disadvantage of his interpretation, although Allais' interpretation is, like Allison's, an attempt to reconcile Kant's transcendental idealism with his empiricism. Consider the following: "We are indeed missing out on something. It may be a trivial, analytic thesis to say, with Allison, that we can have no knowledge of things in abstraction from the conditions of knowledge. It is by no means trivial, analytic, that we have 'no insight whatsoever into the intrinsic nature of things' (A277/B333). That is a substantial philosophical discovery, and, in Kant's eyes, a case for mourning" (Langton 14).

metaphysics as a whole. However, the sole goal of the first chapter will be to offer a charitable interpretation of Langton's main theses and to situate her work within the breadth of literature on Kant's distinction.

My second chapter contains the main argument of my thesis and my critique of Langton's interpretation of substance. Langton identifies three concepts of substance in Kant's *Critique*, which correspond to only two types of substance (one concept of substance is not a relevant separate type because it is fulfilled by one of the other types of substance). In my concluding chapter, I will discuss several problematic implications for Langton's discussion of substance, and, by extension, her interpretation of the general distinction between phenomena and things in themselves on which it is based.

In the first chapter, I will outline the basic distinction between things in themselves and phenomena and Langton's unique interpretation of this distinction. I will then discuss the three concepts of substance that complement her distinction and which provide the basis for my main critique of Langton's interpretation. The first concept of substance that Langton identifies is the thing in itself, which satisfies the "pure concept of substance" and has no accompanying intuition. The thing in itself, or the collective intrinsic properties of objects, is substance proper because it is the ultimate substratum of phenomena, or is the ground of phenomena.<sup>6</sup> The second type of substance is matter, which satisfies the "schematized pure concept of substance" found in the First Analogy. Langton says that this type of substance is distinct from phenomenal substance itself

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<sup>6</sup> Langton seems to support a bundle theory of intrinsic and extrinsic properties, in that the collection of the intrinsic properties of an object is the thing in itself (substance proper) and the collection of the extrinsic properties of an object is phenomena (*phenomena substantiatum*). She specifically argues that intrinsic properties are the substratum of objects, and argues against a bare substratum view, so intrinsic properties are not properties of anything else. See Langton, pg.

because it endures. However, she also says that matter is an instance of phenomenal substance in general (the third concept of substance), since it is not the ultimate substratum, but merely *phaenomenon substantiatum*. The third concept of substance is phenomenal substance in general, which is exemplified by any sort of material object or part of an object, be it water molecules or entire forests.

Langton determines from these three concepts that there are two *types* of substance—phenomenal substance, and things as they are in themselves. Thus we might consider intrinsic properties as being substances that lack a further substratum or bearer of properties, while phenomenal substance, which is composed of relational properties, is borne by intrinsic properties (things in themselves). Langton speaks of phenomenal substance as being a poor replacement for things in themselves, in that we treat bodies as subjects in a *grammatical* sense when we say phrases such as, “The book is thick” or “The team won the game.” Matter, while it can certainly be used as a subject in a grammatical sense as well, is different from bodies like books and coffee mugs in the sense that it is a better replacement for substance proper (the intrinsic properties of a thing) because it persists, and can thus function both as a bearer of properties and as an enduring substratum that never alters.

My second chapter focuses more on the pure concept of substance as the thing in itself, and the schematized concept of substance as matter. With the latter, I particularly discuss the role of the Analogies in determining experience, and the role of the First Analogy in particular. I acknowledge that while Langton’s interpretation of things in themselves and phenomena seems attractive, her ultimate identification of matter with phenomenal substance is problematic, in that matter is supposed to represent the

permanent *in appearance* so that objects can be united in one general time-order. Without further discussion of how matter relates to the schema of persistence, it is impossible to see how we could have cognition of objects in time, and therefore phenomenal substance in general. The Analogies are *synthetic* in that they do not determine individual perceptions, but the relations between individual perceptions (their synthesis). They are also rules under the category of relation, which refers not to relation to *us*, but relations between appearances. As such, they are regulative rather than constitutive because by being given two qualitative relations between three members, we can “give *a priori* only the relation to a fourth member but not this fourth member itself, although [we] have a rule for seeking it in experience and a mark for discovering it there” (A180).<sup>7</sup> The schema of the First Analogy is the “persistence of the real in time, i.e., the representation of the real as a substratum of empirical time determination in general, which therefore endures while everything else changes” (A144/B184).

The role of the schema is to connect appearances of a successive time order with general time order itself, or time as the form of inner sense. Without the schematism, such a synthesis of appearances is impossible because it only leaves us with two options: a) appearances are connected in our experience only by regularity and observation or b) appearances are connected in our experience because we can perceive time itself, and see that they are related to time in a certain, determinate matter. The second option is eliminated when Kant says that we cannot perceive time itself. The first option is eliminated because we know that Kant’s *Transcendental Aesthetic* was written in order to

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<sup>7</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all passages from the *Critique* come from the Guyer & Wood translation. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

improve upon Hume, and give space and time the status of a priori intuitions rather than subjective connections between appearances.

As I indicate at the end of Chapter 2, Langton could in principle give us a plausible explanation of how appearances are related together in one time (or even one space), but she explicitly says that such discussion of space and time is irrelevant to her discussion:

Suppose we are interested in the question of why Kant believes we have no knowledge of things as they are in themselves. If humility is supposed to follow from receptivity, then it should be possible to explore this question without exploring in detail the arguments about space, time, and the categories (Langton 3).

Langton goes on in the introduction to state that arguments from the Aesthetic and Analytic are “separable from the conclusion about our ignorance,” or her main thesis of Kantian humility (Langton 3). Having established in Chapter 2 that significant problems arise by leaving out a discussion of time and by diminishing matter to the status of phenomenal substance, I turn to this question of receptivity in Chapter 3—is our ignorance of things in themselves in fact separable from discussions about time and the categories? Or is our humility—that we have no knowledge of the intrinsic properties of substances—due in fact to the constraints of time and the categories?

In Chapter 3, I outline a brief answer to this question by appealing to my earlier discussion of substance, and conclude that speaking of things in themselves as substances entirely misses the point of the First Analogy, which asserts that the concept of substance applies only to intuitions. Interpreting the pure concept of substance as being satisfied by “the thing in itself” is an incoherent, or at the very least, an unproductive endeavor. For Kant, the concept of “substance” never applies to that which lies beyond experience.

Kant in fact warned his readers repeatedly of reason's tendency to misapply pure concepts such as substance to special metaphysical entities like things in themselves, the soul, and God.

It is undeniable that Langton's demotion of matter to the status of phenomenal substance and her determination of things in themselves as substance proper dissolves some common interpretative problems that many philosophers encounter in reconciling things in themselves with phenomena—as such, her discussion of Kantian humility is considerably attractive. However, such an interpretation does not acknowledge the limitations of pure reason Kant carefully delineated in his *Critique*; thus if Langton were to provide a truly holistic account of Kant's distinction she must reconcile this account with Kant's severe prohibition against applying pure concepts to non-intuited entities.

# I

## *Kantian Humility: An Overview*

### §1 Phenomena and Things in Themselves

One of the main features of Kant's critical philosophy and the subject matter of much of Kantian exegesis is the distinction between things in themselves, or noumena, and appearances, or phenomena. Kant grants that things in themselves exist and are related in some way to their appearances, so that the latter are not merely illusive non-entities as they were for Berkeley. There are several problems associated with Kant's distinction between phenomena and things in themselves; in this chapter I will focus on the problem of double-affection, which was most fully developed by Erich Adickes.<sup>8</sup> While several solutions to the problem of double-affection have been offered, Rae Langton's is one of the most innovative and appealing solutions in the current literature. In this chapter, I will outline the problem of double-affection stimulated by certain passages from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and will offer a traditional way of solving this problem. Then I will outline Rae Langton's interpretation of the main theses attributed to Kant by traditional interpretations of the distinction between phenomena and things in themselves, as well as her solution to the double-affection problem. Lastly, I will discuss Langton's interpretation of things in themselves as substances.

From Kant's *Critique* we know that we are affected by objects, but what Kant meant by this source of affection ("objects") is controversial and the source of much

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<sup>8</sup> As discussed in his *Kant's Lehre von der doppelten Affektion unseres Ich als Schlüssel zu seiner Erkenntnistheorie* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1929).

debate. We can derive three possible meanings of the source of affection from Kant's *Critique*. These are commonly referred to as Vaihinger's "trilemma":<sup>9</sup>

(1) We are only affected by the thing in itself (transcendental affection).

(2) We are only affected by the objects in space (empirical affection).

(3) We are affected by both the thing in itself and objects in space (1 and 2).

As Piché points out, choices (1) and (2) seem problematic; if we are affected only by the thing in itself, then it seems we are employing the pure concept of causality outside of sensible intuition, which Kant does not permit. If we are only affected by objects in space, then it seems that something that is merely a representation in us must somehow affect us. Choice (3) is intended to surmount these difficulties, but it is problematic because it inherits all the problems of (1) and (2).

The following passages, taken together, illuminate the problem that arises from Kant's distinction between things in themselves and phenomena:

(1) Appearances, to the extent that as objects they are thought in accordance with the unity of the categories, are called phaenomena. If, however, I suppose there to be things that are merely objects of the understanding and that, nevertheless, can be given to an intuition, although not to sensible intuition (as *coram intuitu intellectuali*), then such things would be called noumena (*intelligibilia*) (A249).

(2) The perception of this persistent thing is possible only through a thing outside me and not through the mere representation of a thing outside me. Consequently, the determination of my existence in time is possible only by means of the existence of actual things that I perceive outside myself (B276).

(3) All our representations are in fact related to some object through the understanding, and, since appearances are nothing but representations, the understanding thus relates

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<sup>9</sup> These are outlined and discussed in great detail in Claude Piché's informative article, "Kant and the Problem of Affection" in *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Philosophy*. 8 (2) 2004: 275-297.

them to something, as the object of sensible intuition: but this something is to that extent only the transcendental object (A251).

The first thing to be noted about passage (1) is the conditional language Kant uses—if noumena were to exist, we would have knowledge of them through non-sensible intuition. He goes on further after that passage to say that such intuition does not exist, and that the concept of noumena thus has no content except as being “the entirely undetermined thought of something in general” (A253). Kant was prompted to write Passage (2) in response to some of his critics who, after reading the *A* edition of the *Critique*, accused him of Berkeleyan idealism. In response, Kant makes a far stronger claim: things in themselves (objects divorced from our representation of them) do exist, and are the means by which the individual’s own existence in time is determined.

Passage (3) is a compromise between the two passages in that it does not posit the actual existence of the thing in itself at all, but rather makes an epistemological claim: we relate our representations to something, a something which is devoid of content and is merely called the “transcendental object.”<sup>10</sup>

Langton notes that much of Kantian explication in recent years has been an exercise in rational reconstruction, which requires “seeing beyond what the philosopher said, to what he really meant to say” (Langton 1). We can see from these three passages alone how scholars enamored with Kant’s critical philosophy have the near-impossible task of articulating what Kant said without falling into contradictions. However, Langton

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<sup>10</sup> It is outside the scope of this thesis to reconcile these passages with each other and offer my own interpretation. I am merely outlining them here to show that the interpretative difficulty of such a reconciliation. These passages demonstrate more than merely an apparent contradiction—it is entirely possible that Kant’s own thoughts were not completely settled on the how to interpret the distinction, and perhaps passages like these led him to write the *Prolegomena* in an attempt at clarification.

wants to find an alternative that balances both interpretive fidelity and charity: we can accept that Kant wrote the passages above, and many more of the like, that he said what he meant to say, and that taken together they need not be nonsensical. Such an alternative interpretation requires new insight into the old problem of double-affection.

## §2 The Problem of Things in Themselves and Double-Affection

According to Kant, humans do not have intuition of things in themselves. This is entirely what “things in themselves” are—things without relation to human sensibility.<sup>11</sup> Knowledge, for Kant, is the product of the sensibility and the understanding in concert with one another. Since sensible intuition is a pre-requisite for obtaining knowledge of objects, we therefore have no knowledge of things in themselves. However, it is obvious from the passages above, as well as a host of others in the *Critique*, that things in themselves exist, and that there is an intimate relationship between things in themselves and their appearances. Merely saying “their appearances” denotes a causal relationship between the two; this is a common way to view the distinction, and is the interpretation Langton adopts: things in themselves are the causes of phenomena. At the very least, we can say that Kant saw things in themselves as the correlates of phenomena:

what we call outer objects are nothing other than mere representations of our sensibility, whose form in space, but whose true correlate, i.e. the thing in itself, is not and cannot be cognized through them, but is also never asked after in experience (A45/B30).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 14-15. Hereafter referenced parenthetically. While this definition has been interpreted as denying the possibility of the existence of things “transcending the conditions of human cognition,” Allison interprets it merely to mean that “such things cannot count as *objects* for us” (Allison 12).

<sup>12</sup> The “two-world” or “two-aspect” view of phenomena and things in themselves is often elicited by passages like this one. It is difficult to imagine that one thing’s “correlate” would be that same thing, even if it is merely that same thing merely “considered” in a different way.

For interpretive parsimony, I will adopt Langton's articulation of this problem, which is an attempt to reconcile the following theses typically attributed to Kant (Langton 7). The first two theses are metaphysical and the third is epistemological:

K1. Things in themselves exist.

K2. Things in themselves are the causes of phenomenal appearances.

K3. We can have no knowledge of things in themselves.

If we can have no knowledge of things in themselves (K3), then, so the argument goes, we certainly cannot posit their existence (K1), nor can we say that they are the cause of anything (K2). Langton says that K3 renders K1 and K2 impossible, but I think only K2 directly conflicts with K3. As he demonstrated in his critique of the ontological proof of the existence of God, Kant did not believe that existence was a predicate (A585/B613). Therefore, he could simultaneously say that we can have no knowledge of things in themselves, and that we know that things in themselves exist, where the latter statement is rather redundant since it is already assumed in K3.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the double-affection problem remains—that is, we seem to be affected both by empirical objects and transcendental objects (we are affected by the latter indirectly, since these are the causes of the empirical objects). Langton focuses on the problem of the existence of things in themselves, which is raised by these contradictory theses; the problem of double-affection is closely linked, and is resolved if the problem of things in themselves is resolved. Following Langton, I will address the theses' seemingly incompatible implications for the ontological status of things in themselves. I will not be addressing

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<sup>13</sup> For example, I could say, "I don't know your mother," but am not thereby doubting that you have a mother. Kant in fact presumed the existence of things in themselves and thought they were necessary in order to ground the phenomena, which can best be seen in his "Refutation of Idealism."

the problem of how we can be affected by empirical objects, since this is only a problem for Kant construed as Berkeley, and such an interpretation, against which Kant expressly defends himself, will not be sanctioned in the following discussion.

### §3 Henry Allison's Solution

There is an obvious way of reading the above theses: there are two sets of entities, and one set of objects somehow causes the other set of objects to affect us. Thus there are two worlds—the phenomenal world to which we have access, and the noumenal world, to which we have only limited access but which nevertheless affects us in some manner. This is the “double-affection” interpretation put forth by Adickes, and because of the epistemological thesis K3, it is not very appealing. We can certainly be affected by something of which we have no knowledge, but as I mentioned above, the idea that things in themselves affect us requires us the application of the pure concept of causation to entities outside of intuited experience. This is why Allison states that we can speak of things in themselves, but that such entities will not count as objects for us. We cannot know that we are affected by something of which we are supposed to have no knowledge. Allison argues that there are not two worlds, but one world *considered in two ways*: in relation to our sensibility, and the same world considered in abstraction from our sensibility (Langton 9).

On Allison's interpretation, the three theses attributed to Kant become the following (Langton 9):<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> While I do not find Langton's version of Allison's view to be entirely charitable or correct, I want to keep the focus of the thesis on Langton's solution to the problem of double-affection and will accept, for this chapter, her version of Allison's interpretation.

A1. We can consider things ‘in themselves,’ i.e. in abstraction from the conditions of our sensibility.

A2. Things considered in abstraction from the conditions of our sensibility can be considered only as something that affects the mind.

A3. Things considered in abstraction from their relation to our sensibility are things considered in abstraction from their relation to our sensibility.

A1 has extensive support throughout the *Critique*. In “On the Ground of the Distinction of all objects in general into phenomena and noumena,” Kant says that the transcendental use of a concept is related to things in general and in themselves, whereas the empirical use of a concept is related “merely to appearances, i.e. objects of a possible experience” (A239/B298). However, when we abstract from conditions of sensibility, we still cannot render a positive definition of the thing in itself, since this would require another intuition lying “absolutely outside our faculty of cognition,” and “the use of the categories can by no means reach beyond the boundaries of our objects of experience” (B309). Thus the concept of a noumenon is that which is not an object of our sensible intuition, and nothing else can be said of it. This makes A1 seem plausible.

A2 is an epistemological thesis, in that it says nothing about what is “supposed to affect the mind,” but only what we consider as affecting the mind. It is entirely possible that this consideration is necessary for a coherent experience of phenomenal objects, but that the actual existence of an entity (the thing in itself) affecting the mind is not.

Langton notes that, “A2 does not require a causal relationship between our minds and some non-spatial, atemporal, unknowable existents” (Langton 11). However, as she points out, and I think quite rightly, even if we merely consider things in themselves as

affecting the mind, this involves the concept of causality, which is contained in the understanding and is directly and only applicable to sensory intuition and thus cannot be abstracted from such intuitions. Kant's adage that thoughts without concepts are empty is apropos here.

We may consider things in abstraction from our sensibility and we may consider them as things that affect the mind, but what is the justification for this claim of affection if affection requires the application of the concept of causality? Langton says that Allison tries to solve this problem by asserting that the

'something' in A2 is not something over and above the familiar phenomenal objects: it is identical with the class of phenomenal objects 'referred to collectively'. It is the class of those objects, considered in an abstract way (Langton 9).

If we grant Langton's interpretation of Allison, it still seems that Allison's A2 is unnecessary—if "our answer to the question 'What affects the mind?' must be an empirical answer," then A2 seems irrelevant to the problem of affection (Langton 9). One could say that A2 is not necessarily a causal claim, but that it should be interpreted psychologically: we happen to consider things in X manner, but what *really* affect the mind are empirical objects. Langton does not entertain this option, but it seems to be the only one left for Allison (on Langton's interpretation of him) if abstraction from the categories is impermissible.<sup>15</sup>

Langton also finds A3 problematic in that it is tautological and does not reflect the fact that Kant thought there *was* something worth knowing beyond sensible intuition, and that we have an "unquenchable desire to find firm footing somewhere beyond the bounds

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<sup>15</sup> Langton's objection to Allison's extrapolation from the categories is strange, considering the fact that such extrapolation is necessary for her own interpretation of affection. I will discuss this later.

of experience” (A96/B824).<sup>16</sup> Langton follows Paul Guyer in thinking that Allison’s interpretation of things in themselves is “deflationary” and “anodyne,” in that it abandons any metaphysical commitments which are, as we have seen, problematic and which can lead to a “two-world” view of things in themselves and phenomena (Langton 12). In particular, Langton thinks that Allison’s alteration of K3 into A3 is uninteresting and does not capture the sense of epistemological loss that Kant seems to have when considering things in themselves. For Langton, it

is by no means trivial, analytic, that we have ‘no insight whatsoever into the intrinsic nature of things’ (A277/B333). That is a substantial philosophical discovery, and, in Kant’s eyes, a cause for mourning (Langton 14).

Although Allison’s interpretation of things in themselves, like Langton’s, neutralizes the two-world problem, Langton believes it puts forward three epistemological theses that do not capture the distinction Kant makes between what affects the mind and what does not. She thinks Allison’s interpretation also does not explain why Kant thought that we lack knowledge of what would quench our philosophical curiosity—knowledge of the intrinsic nature of things. The lack of knowledge of things in themselves which Langton finds lamentable is, from Allison’s

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<sup>16</sup> First of all, if one of Langton’s main problems with Allison’s interpretation of the distinction is that it does not give warrant for Kant’s mourning of our lack of knowledge, then I would think that a tautology would be even more cause for mourning. Secondly, Kant often says we can consider things as noumena, but that such a consideration is rather unhelpful. Consider the following, in which Kant is discussing the transcendental object: “If we want to call this object a noumenon because the representation of it is nothing sensible, we are free to do so. But since we cannot apply any of our concepts of the understanding to it, this representation still remains empty for us, and serves for nothing but to designate the boundaries of our sensible cognition and leave open a space *that we can fill up neither through possible experience nor through the pure understanding*” (B345, my emphasis).

perspective, a limitation that Kant viewed to be “liberating or therapeutic rather than depressing” (Allison 19).<sup>17</sup>

According to Langton, Allison’s solution to the problem of things in themselves does not seem to solve the problem of double-affection; while there might only be one world on his transcendental idealist interpretation, there are still objects in themselves that we consider as affecting our minds (A2). Given that he thinks that we are also affected by empirical objects, one must wonder how these affections can be simultaneous and why both types of affection are needed (or at least the consideration of both types of affection is needed). On a more liberal interpretation of Allison’s solution, we might be able to say that Kant draws a distinction between what is dependent on the mind, and what is independent of it. But even then, given passage (2) from Kant cited above, we know that he made a careful point in the *B* edition of separating himself from Berkeleyan idealism. Thus, the world cannot be made up of ideas or impressions on one side of the veil of appearance (phenomena). Allison’s solution, as we have seen, is to talk about phenomena and noumena as two ways of considering things rather than two distinct sets of entities. He simultaneously acknowledges that we have no knowledge of things in themselves at all and that we have a concept of things in themselves: we know what things in themselves are not (the negative description of noumenon described above).

Thus for Allison, we can say that things in themselves are nonspatial and atemporal because things in themselves are transcendental objects, or objects considered

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<sup>17</sup> While it is futile to determine Kant’s emotional state when he laid out his critical philosophy, I would like to point out that his overall project in the first *Critique* was to purge metaphysics of speculative reason’s lofty ambitions and to explain how reason is instead “taught by nature” (Bxiv). I find it difficult to imagine that the lack of knowledge resulting from the restriction of reason’s domain should be considered unfortunate, since Kant set out to refute dogmatic metaphysics with the first *Critique* as a whole.

in separation from our sensibility. Both Langton and Guyer think Allison defines things in themselves as “the ordinary objects of experience, such as tables and chairs, stripped of their spatial and temporal properties” (Allison 8). Guyer accuses Allison of “interpreting transcendental idealism as an anodyne recommendation of epistemological modesty,” rather than as a sharp distinction between empirical objects and actual things in themselves.<sup>18</sup> Such a modest interpretation of Kant obviously avoids metaphysical difficulties of a two-world approach, but at the expense of making Kant seem like a Berkeleyan idealist.<sup>19</sup>

#### §4 Langton’s Solution

Allison’s attempt to reconcile phenomena with things in themselves might save us “much philosophical embarrassment,” but such reconciliation is beset by old problems that seem to admit of no resolution (Langton 12). Langton offers a new interpretation of the Kantian theses that is quite innovative and solves many of the problems that Allison’s

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 336. Hereafter referenced parenthetically.

<sup>19</sup> Guyer and Allison’s interpretation of Allison seems uncharitable at best. Guyer’s general criticism of Allison is that he does not interpret things in themselves and phenomena in a thoroughly transcendently ideal manner. For instance, on Allison’s argument for the nonspatiality of things in themselves, Guyer says that Allison, “obviously begs the question of transcendental idealism by assuming from the outset that any necessary condition of knowledge is subjective rather than objective, even if this subjective status will be dignified by the title ‘transcendentally ideal’ to signify that it is an indispensable rather than an arbitrary aspect of subjectivity” (Guyer 339). For Guyer, transcendental idealism dogmatically demands that things in themselves are not what we *represent* them to be: by definition, things in themselves cannot be spatial, temporal, etc., because they are not confined by the pure intuitions of space and time. Allison thinks this is a misconception of things in themselves as transcendental objects: we cannot represent things in themselves at all (Allison 7). We can think of things in themselves, but to say that they lack spatiality is just to say that they are not empirical objects. This is where we derive the tautological thesis of A3.

interpretation cannot. Theses K1-K3 on her interpretation become the following (Langton 13):<sup>20</sup>

- L1. There exist things in themselves, i.e. things that have intrinsic properties.
- L2. The things that have intrinsic properties also have relational properties: causal powers that constitute phenomenal appearances.<sup>21</sup>
- L3. We have no knowledge of the intrinsic properties of things.

As in Allison's interpretation, there are not two worlds, but one. Phenomena are distinguished from things in themselves by being causal powers; Langton says that intrinsic properties are causally inert, and that this is why we have ignorance of things in themselves. Since we can only have knowledge of things which affect us, then we only have knowledge of things with which we are in relation, or phenomena—extrinsic properties affect us, while things in themselves do not affect us through their intrinsic predicates or properties. It is only because Langton asserts that intrinsic properties (things in themselves) are completely independent of relational properties (causal powers) that she can maintain this ignorance thesis. If this were not the case, then plausibly we could infer an object's intrinsic properties from its relational properties.<sup>22</sup>

There are several advantages to this interpretation, the first being that Langton's first two theses are metaphysical but avoid positing two distinct entities, and thus the veil of ignorance does not keep us from all knowledge of things in themselves, but only

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<sup>20</sup> In *Kantian Humility*, Langton labels these premises with an 'M', but to make them parallel with the initialism of Allison and Kant's theses, I'll use an 'L'.

<sup>21</sup> By "constitute," I am referring here to the fact that extrinsic properties, or phenomena, just are causal properties. Langton says that the phenomenal world is composed of relations and relational properties, but she grants that Kant regards forces (causal powers) as being both these things. See Langton, pgs. 38-39.

<sup>22</sup> For example, from touching a piece of ice, I could infer from the coldness I experience that some intrinsic property (like the movement of the water molecules) was ultimately the source of the relational property of coldness. On Langton's account, no such inference can be made.

knowledge of their intrinsic properties. A second advantage is that K3 (we can have no knowledge of things in themselves) read as L3 is the basis for “Kantian humility”—Kant believes we lack knowledge of something substantial, and thus the third thesis is not deflationary or anodyne like Allison’s tautological one. Furthermore, unlike K3, Langton’s reconstruction avoids claiming that we have no knowledge of things in themselves. Rather, we do have some knowledge: things have two sets of properties, and we are only ignorant of their intrinsic properties. The third advantage of Langton’s interpretation is that this reading avoids all accusations that Kant was a Berkeleyan idealist. Things really exist, and have two sets of properties, and things do affect us, but only through relational properties. Langton uses several passages from the *Critique* to support this interpretation, but the one she cites most often is from A277/B333, quoted above as well, which in the Guyer-Wood translation reads, “we have no insight into the inner in things.”<sup>23</sup> If appearances consist entirely of relations, it seems probable that phenomena are the relational properties of things in themselves, and things in themselves are the intrinsic properties of which we have no knowledge.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> This is an excerpt from a much longer passage. I will be returning to this quotation in Chapter II, but I hope that by extending the quote a bit further, the reader can presuppose the problems in citing a shortened version of it: “If the complaints ‘That we have no insight into the inner in things’ are to mean that we do not understand through pure reason what the things that appear to us might be in themselves, then they are entirely improper and irrational. . .” Kant was, as Guyer and Wood explain in the footnotes, misquoting the line of a poem when he says, “‘That we have no insight into the inner in things.’” Langton often cites this passage in its brief form and directly attributes it to Kant throughout her book and in the epigraph simply as “We have no insight whatsoever into the intrinsic nature of things.” See, for example, pgs. 2, 11, 16, and 20.

<sup>24</sup> We might ask what extrinsic properties cause, if all phenomena are composed of causal powers. While we might say that they in turn create more causal powers, I see no reason why a phenomenon could not be causally inert, unless by “causal power” Langton merely means that the phenomena is in *relation* to us and *affects* us. There are many more problems to be discussed here, though it is outside the scope of this paper to address them adequately.

## §5 Langton's Three Kantian Theses

In discussing Kant's distinction between things in themselves and phenomena, Langton notes that there "is something in principle quite wrong about understanding Kant's distinction in any way that resembles a veil of appearance" (Langton 15). As I noted above, it is improper to see Kant's distinction this way because such an interpretation far too easily leads us to the Berkeleyan idealism that Kant categorically denied. As we saw, Allison's solution to the problem of double-affection and how we lack knowledge of things in themselves is to make K1-K3 epistemological: we can consider things in relation to our senses, and we can consider things in abstraction from our sensibility. On Allison's interpretation, the computer I am typing on is silver and black, square, and takes up a certain amount of space in my bedroom. Considered in abstraction from my sensibility, I can consider that the transcendental object does not have these qualities—it does not have color, shape, and volume.

Therefore in abstracting from my senses, I consider the thing in itself by its negative qualities; it is worth repeating that this is merely a consideration, and says nothing about unknowable things in themselves, which is Guyer's and Langton's criticism of Allison—his transcendental idealism does not go far enough. While Allison's interpretation seems entirely compatible with Kant's definition of noumena that we saw above, in "On the ground of the distinction of all objects in general into phenomena and noumena," one excerpt from Kant can always be placed in opposition with another, and Langton has found significant textual support for interpreting Kant's distinction in an entirely different light. L1-L3 are significantly developed and explained by three auxiliary theses that Langton attributes to Kant.

First, from L1 and L2 above, we derive the following:

Distinction: Things in themselves are substances that have intrinsic properties; phenomena are relational properties of substance (Langton 20).<sup>25</sup>

This interpretation posits only one set of entities, which are known in part through their relational properties, and are not known as far as their intrinsic properties are concerned. Langton distinguishes her interpretation from Allison's by noting that this distinction is not a "phenomenalistic distinction between mental representations and things independent of the mind," but is a distinction between what can affect the mind and what cannot (Langton 20). Her second thesis addresses the problem of affection:

Receptivity: Human knowledge depends on sensibility, and sensibility is receptive: we can have knowledge of an object only insofar as it affects us.

According to Receptivity, human knowledge is not limited due to the constricting nature of time, space, and the categories, but due to the inability of things in themselves to affect us through their intrinsic predicates or properties. The veil of appearance does not demarcate two types of entities or even two ways of considering them. Instead, on Langton's interpretation, we have access to things in themselves, but only insofar as we are affected by them. The problem of double-affection thus disappears: we are affected by one set of entities, namely the relational (extrinsic) properties of objects. There is a further advantage to Langton's view, in that she notes that Kant seems to find our ignorance of things in themselves lamentable, and, as such, he must think that we lack substantial knowledge of reality. What we are lacking is knowledge of the intrinsic nature of substances: "Substances in general must have some intrinsic nature, which is

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<sup>25</sup> I will always refer to Langton's three Kantian theses in their capitalized forms: "Distinction," "Receptivity," and "Humility."

therefore free from all external relations” (A274/B330).<sup>26</sup> While Allison can certainly say that we lack knowledge of things in themselves, his interpretation is beset by the problem of whether such entities really exist, or are merely objects considered in abstraction from sensibility. Since the understanding “calls an object in relation mere phenomena,” and, apart from that relation, we have “a representation of the object in itself,” Langton has excellent support for both her Distinction and Receptivity theses (B306). To support this claim that things in themselves have an intrinsic nature of which we know nothing, Langton also draws heavily from passages in Kant’s *Reflexionen*, such as, “The substantial is the thing in itself and unknown” (R 5292).<sup>27</sup>

Now one might agree with the Distinction and Receptivity theses, and still wonder why we must be ignorant—why can things in themselves not affect us? Why do intrinsic properties lack causal powers? The answer Langton gives is the subject of her later chapters on “Leibniz and Kant” and “Kant’s Rejection of Reducibility.” To briefly summarize, Langton argues that Kant, unlike Leibniz, believes that relational properties are irreducible to intrinsic properties, and therefore phenomenal relations do not mirror (even confusedly) things in themselves, the latter of which Langton believes are parallel to Leibniz’s monads.<sup>28</sup> For Leibniz, our “minds would, through perception, mirror the monadic realm of things in themselves. The intrinsic properties of substances would be known through perception” (Langton 5). Since Kant does not think that relational

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<sup>26</sup> Langton’s translation (Langton 16). From the Introduction of her book onwards, Langton uses “substances” and “things in themselves” interchangeably. The next section of this chapter will provide evidence for this, and I will assume that the terms are interchangeable until my critique of her interpretation of substance in Chapter 2.

<sup>27</sup> Also Langton’s translation (Langton 16).

<sup>28</sup> It is outside the scope of this thesis to determine whether Langton is portraying Leibniz in a fair light, and whether the metaphysics advanced in his *Monadology* is even a productive foil for Kantian phenomena/things in themselves. For economy’s sake, I will accept Langton’s interpretation since it is not central to my critique of her interpretation of substance.

properties reflect an underlying, intrinsic structure of things in themselves, the mirror of perception is broken on Kant's account, and *this* inaccessibility of things in themselves is the main topic of Langton's work in general and is what motivates Langton's third Kantian thesis:

Humility: we have no knowledge of the intrinsic properties of substances  
(Langton 21).

Langton believes that Humility follows naturally from Receptivity, and this thesis replaces K3, which states that, "We can have no knowledge of things in themselves." As I mentioned before, K3 seems incompatible with K1 and K2. We *do* seem to have knowledge of things in themselves, albeit extremely limited knowledge. On Allison's interpretation, for instance, we know that they "exist" at the very least as ways of considering objects, and that they affect the mind (though we do not know how this affection occurs). On Langton's interpretation, we seem to know much more about things in themselves. First, we know that they exist and that they are substances. We know that they have intrinsic properties that cannot affect us and of which we have no knowledge, and we know that they have relational properties which affect us and of which we do have knowledge. While Langton might be asserting more knowledge of things in themselves than many of her critics are comfortable with, there is still sufficient reason to be epistemically humble even while armed with such a robust definition of things in themselves.

We still, according to Langton, lack insight into the intrinsic nature of things, and this is cause for great disappointment. We can know that something exists without understanding completely *how it exists*. What is important for Langton is that the thing in

itself's existence is entirely independent of our knowledge, or even its own appearance. According to Langton, "appearance presupposes something that exists in itself, independently of the relation that is involved in appearance" (Langton 22). The thing in itself is then entirely self-subsistent and independent of cognitive agents. The thing in itself's existence must therefore be entirely independent of any relations whatsoever—if there were no perceivers, or other objects, the thing in itself would still exist.<sup>29</sup>

Thus Langton makes K1-K3 decipherable and compatible by interpreting them as L1-L3. With the three Kantian theses of Distinction, Receptivity, and Humility, we see that we can have knowledge of things that have an intrinsic nature without knowing precisely what that intrinsic nature is (Langton 22). Such an interpretation has substantial merits and benefits over and above Allison's interpretation: namely it provides a non-trivial account of humility, and solves the problem of double-affection. We lack knowledge not because of our way of considering things or because of the bounds of our senses, but because objects can only affect us through relational properties.

The reader should, at this point, have some concern for the change that takes place between L1-L3 and Langton's Kantian theses, namely the replacement of "things" and "things in themselves" with the inclusive term "substances." Langton believes Kant advances three concepts of substance throughout the *Critique* (Langton 56):<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Langton derives this definition of an intrinsic nature from David Lewis' article, "Extrinsic Properties" in *Philosophical Studies* 44 (1983): 197-200. Lewis does not use the concept of "loneliness" and "lonely properties" to define the notion of substance, but to define Jaegwon Kim's notion of an intrinsic property. Nevertheless, since Langton thinks that substance, the thing in itself, and intrinsic properties are synonymous (as I will discuss in the next chapter), Lewis' concept of loneliness is applicable to her interpretation of the thing in itself.

<sup>30</sup> She later states that (2) is an instance of (3), so on her interpretation there actually are only two concepts of substance. This will be addressed further in my next chapter. Also, the terminology in 1-3 is entirely Langton's. Nowhere does Kant use the term "the pure concept of substance," which I will address in Chapter 2.

1. The pure concept of substance as an absolute subject (thing in itself)
2. The First Analogy's schematized concept of substance as an enduring subject of change (matter)
3. The concept of phenomenal substance in general, a merely comparative subject (*phaenomenon substantiatum*)

While all three concepts will be discussed extensively in Chapter 2, for now I will only address the first concept of substance, "substance as an absolute subject" since this is the subject matter of Langton's Kantian theses (Distinction, Receptivity, and Humility).

### **§6 The Thing in Itself as Substance**

In her chapter "Three Kantian Theses," Langton makes a sharp distinction between "the schematized concept of substance," which is the topic of the First Analogy, and the "'pure concept' of a substance, the concept of a substance in general," which is "something that can be thought only as subject, never as 'predicate' of something else" (Langton 18). On Langton's interpretation, this pure concept of substance requires us to consider something whose existence is "compatible, let us say, with loneliness" (Langton 17). It requires that we "distinguish the object as it is in relation to us from the same object as it is in itself" (Langton 17). This is very different from Allison's interpretation, in which things in themselves are just things considered in a certain way; rather, for Langton this is a very real delineation of the object as it relates to us, and, were we to not exist, how it would be in itself. It is essential that its existence is not dependent on its relational properties, so that

Instead of the incoherent idea of an object that is at once in a relation to something else, and not in relation to something else, we have the coherent idea of an object whose existence is independent of its relations to other things (Langton 17).

This interpretation seems entirely plausible, particularly given passages in the *Critique* such as the following: “Concepts of relation presuppose things which are absolutely [i.e. independently] given, and without these are impossible” (B306, Langton’s translation and parenthetical). One could say that what is “absolutely given” need not be the thing in itself in itself or substance, but such a claim does not coincide well with Kant’s saying that “[s]ubstances in general must have some intrinsic nature, which is therefore free from all external relations” (A247/B330, Langton’s translation). It is obvious from this second passage that substances have an intrinsic nature that seems to be compatible with loneliness. However, that doesn’t imply that these external relations *are* phenomena, until we read that, “[t]he understanding, when it calls an object in relation mere phenomenon, at the same time forms, apart from that relation, a representation of an object in itself” (B307, Langton’s translation). Like the passages from Kant cited at the very beginning of this chapter, it seems as though the first and third definitions could easily support Henry Allison’s interpretation of things in themselves, where “things in themselves” are merely considerations or ways of thinking about things. However, these passages taken with the assertion that substances *have* an intrinsic nature (not merely that we consider them to have an intrinsic nature), can support Langton’s assertion that “there is a close connection between the notion of a substance and the notion of a bearer of intrinsic properties” (Langton 19).

If phenomena are comprised of relations or relational properties, it stands to reason that these properties are being borne by something: the thing in itself. And since nothing can exist by itself without having intrinsic properties, this thing in itself must have intrinsic properties in addition to relational properties, or else its existence would be

dependent on the thing with which it is in relation. Thus our humility is a natural extension of our receptivity because “it is not through their [things in themselves’] intrinsic properties that we are affected,” and therefore “their intrinsic properties remain unknown” (Langton 5, my parenthetical).

Now it is useful to determine what sort of definition of “substance” Langton is working with, and in particular what role it serves. Traditionally, as Langton notes, substance fills the dual functions of

1. The thing as it is apart from the sensory states which are its appearance and
2. The substratum, or bearer, of properties.

Langton contrasts her interpretation of the thing in itself with Jonathan Bennett’s. Bennett purges the thing in itself from Kant’s philosophy since he thinks that Kant continually conflates function (2) with function (1). According to Bennett, Kant confuses the bearer of properties with the entity behind the appearance, and this is problematic because properties of substances are not interchangeable with appearances. Langton, however, thinks that this problem can easily be remedied if we posit one set of entities (things in themselves), which, as substances, bear properties, and yet have a mind-independent reality through their intrinsic properties.<sup>31</sup> Langton says that “Kant’s idea that appearances are properties of a substance gets short shrift with Bennett. It will not get short shrift here” (Langton 26).

The thing in itself is not a bare substratum, so in this sense it is wrong to say that the thing in itself has intrinsic properties and relational properties. Rather, the thing in

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<sup>31</sup> By “properties” here, I mean the same thing as relations, relational properties, extrinsic properties, and causal powers. Langton essentially equates all of these things.

itself is made up of intrinsic properties, and phenomena are made up of its relational properties. Langton says that if we were to characterize the thing in itself as a “bare substratum” in Locke’s sense, “then it would be plausible for Kant to both assert its existence and deny knowledge of it” (Langton 29). She finds this interpretation satisfactory, until we consider that the unknowable nature of the thing in itself gave Kant reason to grieve: “This air of disappointment, which is indeed present in Kant (as I observed in Chapter I), does not sit well with any ‘bare substratum’ interpretation of the thing in itself. There is nothing to miss out on” (Langton 30). Therefore, Langton asserts that the thing in itself must have intrinsic properties, both so its existence is compatible with loneliness, and so we actually lack some knowledge of it.

Langton believes that for substance to exist in a lonely manner, it must be able to exist apart from all relations with outer things, and it must not be the property of anything else (for to say that it is the property of something else means that it is dependent on something else for its existence). For Langton, the thing in itself is a bearer of properties, but it must have an intrinsic nature that is compatible with loneliness, and it is also not the predicate of anything else. Langton says that, as it has previously been conceived, “the transcendental object, and therefore the thing in itself, is a bare substratum,” which “would be knowable insofar as we attribute properties to it, but conceived of as a particular ‘something’ distinct from the properties, not knowable” (Langton 31). So here we have the existence of something that is knowable in one respect, and concealed from us in another respect.

Langton disagrees with this “bare substratum” reading of the transcendental object because in order for it to exist independently of us, it must have properties that are

compatible with loneliness, or it must have an intrinsic nature; to say it is a bare substratum is to say nothing. Therefore, she says that substances, or things in themselves, “in general must have some intrinsic nature, which is therefore free from all external relations” (A274/B330, Langton’s translation). It is because of passages like these that Langton thinks that substance, or the thing in itself, must be the collection of intrinsic properties of things. Only such a description of the thing in itself demonstrates that it exists as an independent entity regardless of whether we are considering it or not. There is perhaps no interpretation of the thing in itself that is more divergent from Allison’s, but Langton’s interpretation has the distinct advantage of making Kant’s three theses about things in themselves entirely compatible with each other, and, in general, of making Kant’s metaphysical commitments necessitate ignorance and, by extension, epistemic humility.

## II

### The Concept of Substance in the First Analogy

#### §1 Three concepts of substance

As I mentioned in the last chapter, Langton believes that Kant advances three concepts of substance throughout the *Critique*, though only two of those concepts—the pure concept of substance (which is fulfilled by the thing in itself) and the concept of phenomenal substance in general (*phenomenon substantiatum*)—are entirely distinct, in that if something is phenomenal it can never be substantial. The second concept of substance is what Langton refers to as the “schematized concept of substance” and sometimes as “the schematism of the pure concept of substance,” which is manifested by matter (Langton 50). As I briefly mentioned in the last chapter, Langton says that matter is *phenomenon substantiatum*, or phenomena taken as substance, a definition that relegates the schematized concept of substance to the status of the concept of phenomenal substance in general. I will briefly review the pure concept of substance before discussing the schematized concept of substance, which is the focus of this chapter.

My criticism of Langton’s interpretation of substance is two-fold: first, I object to her association of substance with the thing in itself largely because all things to which pure concepts in isolation refer can only be empty logical forms of judgment, since they lack an accompanying determination in sensible intuition. Throughout the *Critique*, Kant continuously warns against the application of concepts beyond experience. Since, on Langton’s own account, we cannot be affected by intrinsic properties or the thing in itself with which it is synonymous, such an entity cannot count as substance for us. Because

Langton sees the thing in itself as substance proper, we can see why she speaks of matter (substance in the appearance) as though it is merely filling the role of a true substance. For example, she says that “matter is a non-substance that occupies the role of a substance for us. It is a ‘picture’ of an absolute substance, that, in virtue of its endurance, fills that role very well” (Langton 63).

This leads to my second objection of Langton’s definition of substance: I object to her diminishing the role of the concept of substance in determining what is persistent in the appearances. Matter, in contrast with the thing in itself, is substantial precisely because it is schematized through the principle of persistence, and is connected with the category of *inherence and subsistence*. While Langton acknowledges that matter differs from phenomenal substance in that it endures, she does not explained what this endurance consists in, because such an explanation would require referencing time as a form of inner sense, including the categories as applying only to experience. Thus Langton maintains that the pure concept of substance is satisfied by the thing in itself, and that matter is a poor mimic of the thing in itself, since it is phenomenal and therefore entirely composed of forces (causal relations):<sup>32</sup>

Forces are not themselves substances, for they are not absolutely independent things. But forces can do duty for substance in a manner which is ‘empirically serviceable’ (A349). Spatial relations—even subjective, ideal spatial relations—enable us to represent these dynamical relations as matter: not as absolute subject, but as an ‘abiding picture’ of an absolute subject (Langton 217).

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<sup>32</sup> I will using “forces,” “relational properties,” “causal relations,” and “forces” interchangeably, but will typically use “relational properties.” Langton thinks that Kant similarly equivocates in his use of these terms: “Kant does not distinguish very clearly between relations and relational properties, referring to forces, for example, as both. But a basic distinction is clearly being made between the intrinsic and extrinsic, or relational—somehow construed” (Langton 34).

That matter allows us to apply the concept of substance in an empirically serviceable manner, just as colliding billiard balls allow us to apply the concept of causality in an empirically serviceable manner, does not give us license to assert that the true application and object of the concept of substance lies outside experience, and is really the thing in itself, which we miss out on because of our (admittedly) receptive, sensible nature.

While my last chapter will be concerned with transcendental idealism and the general dangers in discarding or at least diminishing the role of concepts in determining experience, I am here mainly concerned with the fact that Langton never explains what it is to be enduring, nor how the substance employed in the First Analogy differs from phenomenal substance in general, nor the special relationship between time, the categories, and intuition, which I will attempt to outline here.

## **§2 Langton's Definition of the Pure Concept of Substance in General**

It should first be noted that the "pure concept of substance" is a term used by Langton which is only implicitly used by Kant. Langton translates A147/B186 thus: "The pure concept [of] substance would mean simply a something that can be thought only as a subject, never as a predicate of something else" (Langton 16, her brackets). Guyer and Wood's translation is considerably different, and it is necessary to quote the passage in full, since Kant's mention of substance is utilized in this passage only as a demonstration of the limited nature of pure concepts of the understanding:

In fact, even after abstraction from every sensible condition, significance, but only a logical significance, is left to the pure concepts of the understanding, but no object and thus no significance is given to them that could yield a concept of the object. Thus, e.g., if one leaves out the sensible determination of persistence, substance would signify

nothing more than a something that can be thought as a subject (without being a predicate of something else). Now out of this representation I can make nothing, as it shows me nothing at all about what determinations the thing that is to count as such a first subject is to have. Without schemata, therefore, the categories are only functions of the understanding for concepts, but do not represent any object. This significance comes to them from sensibility, which realizes the understanding at the same time as it restricts it.

Kant does not say in this passage that substance is a pure concept, though even if we grant that substance be explicitly called a “pure concept of the understanding,” it must be specified that in the table of the categories it is labeled specifically as the category “of inherence and subsistence” (B106). What is more important is that Langton’s liberal translation of this passage denies Kant the full expression of his humility, in that categories are only *functions* of thought, and do not determine anything objective themselves until they are applied to an intuition.

Thus the “pure concept of substance” (if we should call it that) can indeed be the concept of something thought of as a last subject, but for Kant, this subject is *meaningless*. Because the categories function as much to aid sensibility as they do to restrict knowledge to what can be verified in experience, it is difficult to see how the pure concept of substance could signify the thing in itself; were it to do so, the term “thing in itself” would merely be a logical construction rather than a determined object or even a subject with distinct properties and forces. In the first portion of the *Transcendental Analytic*, Kant avoids using substance as an entity, but always refers to it as a concept or category. Substance is not actually referred to as existing in appearances until the First Analogy, though Kant prefigures the concept of substance found in the First Analogy

when he discusses the limited nature of the categories at the beginning of the Transcendental Analytic:

[I]nfluence, i.e., how one substance can be the cause of something in another substance, is not to be understood immediately by combining the concept of a cause and that of a substance. From this it is clear that a special act of the understanding is requisite for this; and likewise in the other cases (A183/B111).

The special act of the understanding required for the application of concepts to phenomenal appearances is accomplished by each schema, which “is really only the phenomenon, or the sensible concept of an object, in agreement with the category” (A146/B186). While the interplay between the sensibility and the understanding will be discussed in my third chapter, I mention it here only to demonstrate that Langton interprets the pure concept of the understanding to *refer* to something actual, the thing in itself. In discussing the pure concept of the understanding, Langton does grant the following from A147, translated above, “I cannot put this representation to any use, because it doesn’t show me at all which properties belong to the thing whose role is to be a first subject of this kind” (Langton 16).

As was briefly discussed in Chapter One, we are acquainted with and have knowledge of only that which belongs to intuition: the phenomenal, physical properties that are “made up of mere relations” (Langton 41). On Langton’s account, our lack of knowledge of the thing in itself is only partial—we are ignorant of the thing in itself not because we do not have an experience of it (for according to Langton, we *do* have an experience of its relational or extrinsic properties), but because we do not have knowledge of its intrinsic properties, by means of which it is a first subject: “Matter is

external appearance, constituted by forces, constituted by the extrinsic properties of the substance or substratum of matter—the thing in itself” (Langton 40). Langton thus reads “properties” in A147 as “intrinsic properties”; on this interpretation, the pure concept of substance cannot be put to any use because we do not have knowledge of the intrinsic nature of substance.

Although Langton is attempting to identify three concepts of substance, she uses the concepts interchangeably with *types* of substance, and orders the types of substance in a clear hierarchy, with pure substance, or the thing in itself, at the top, followed by schematized substance (matter), which is a special type of the lowest level of substance, *phaenomena substantiata*. Indeed, Langton even uses the term “the schematism of the pure concept of substance” in referring to the concept of substance employed in the First Analogy, thus emphasizing the idea that it is merely the pure concept of substance employed in a different way (Langton 56). For example, we can say of a battle: “The battle lasted for three days” and of pudding, “The pudding is lumpy” when these characteristics and even the battle and pudding are merely composites of relational properties.

By contrast, the pure concept of substance is fulfilled by the thing in itself, and the our knowledge of the thing in itself is incomplete because we do not encounter its *intrinsic nature* in intuition. We need not be entirely dismayed by our ignorance of things in themselves, or substance proper because, as Langton says, “we are acquainted with substance through that which endures, and that which endures is force” (Langton

63).<sup>33</sup> According to Langton, we must seek out what endures in the phenomenal world in order to find an appropriate placeholder for substance, which is an absolute subject.

Langton says that the best candidate for endurance that we will find is matter.

### §3 Langton's Definition of the Schematized Concept of Substance

Langton's chapter in *Kantian Humility* on substance is entitled, "Substance and Phenomenal Substance," which reveals much about how the three concepts of substance are going to be treated: matter, or "schematized substance," is merely a type of phenomenal substance, which is in turn a poor replacement for the true substratum of reality, the thing in itself (substance proper). Both matter and the larger category to which it belongs, phenomenal substance, "can be thought as a subject, but as a subject that must in turn be thought of as a predicate of something else" (Langton 54). As I mentioned in Chapter One, Langton says of phenomenal substance that "in describing it one does not need to mention time, as one does for the schematized concept of the First Analogy" (Langton 53). But two pages later, Langton says that bodies (phenomenal substance) are *phaenomenon substantiatum* and can be viewed as substances because they satisfy the two criteria of substance traditionally construed: first, bodies "can be viewed as bearers of properties," and "they can be viewed as self-subsistent in so far as *they persist for a certain, if finite, length of time*" (Langton 55, emphasis mine).

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<sup>33</sup> Langton uses "substance" here synonymously with "the thing in itself." It is unclear how we can be acquainted with the thing in itself when she argues that the "relations and relational properties of substances are not reducible to the intrinsic properties of substances" (Langton 109). This is the Irreducibility thesis she attributes to Kant, and says that he formulated it in opposition to a Leibnizian thesis of the reducibility of relational to intrinsic properties. By Langton's own lights, it seems that substance (the thing in itself) cannot be known to us via matter or any phenomenal forces.

The substantive nature of bodies is in jeopardy if they do not persist for a certain length of time, yet the prerequisite for their persistence is “the schematized concept of substance as the enduring subject of change,” which Langton in turn calls an “instance” of phenomenal substance. Langton thus distinguishes matter (the substratum spoken of in the First Analogy) from phenomenal substance by saying that the former endures while the latter is often transitory: battles can end and pudding can become more consistent, but what composes them—matter—always endures. Matter makes up all of phenomenal substance and (by extension) all of the relational (or extrinsic) properties of the thing in itself. It is curious, then, that Langton is quicker to identify matter with phenomenal substance than to distinguish it from regular relational properties and to explain just exactly *how* and *why* one needs to mention time in describing it.

Unlike other kinds of phenomenal substance, “[w]hat is central to the schematized concept of substance is the notion of an *enduring substratum of change*” (Langton 50, her emphasis). So the schematized concept of substance must be fulfilled by something that is an enduring bearer of properties, and must also (the second requirement of a substance) be something thought as subject. The only candidate for an enduring something in the appearance is matter, which differs from mere accidents (other types of phenomenal substance) only because it endures (Langton 51).

While I do not deny that Kant often uses the terms “substance” and “matter” almost interchangeably, particularly in the second edition of the *Critique*, he does not equate the two with each other, either as concepts or entities. While I will discuss this later, I would like to briefly mention what I think is a fairly uncontroversial claim: nowhere does Kant say that matter in the appearance is derivative from or dependent on

the thing in itself, the latter of which, according to Langton, is a true or “pure” substance. Langton’s mistranslations of the First Analogy support her construal of the thing in itself as substance. Her translation of A183/B227 reads simply as: ““In all appearances the enduring is the object itself, that is the substance as phenomenon”” (Langton 50). Guyer and Wood’s translation is much different: “Therefore in all appearances that which persists is the object itself, i.e. the substance (phenomenon), but everything that changes or that can change belongs only to the way in which this substance or substances exists, thus to their determinations.” In this passage, Kant is explicitly talking about that which persists in the appearance, e.g., substance *as* phenomenon. I take this to be an identity statement, that substance is phenomenal since it is categorized and is a component of experience. The parenthetical placement of “phenomenon” in the Guyer-Wood translation emphasizes such an interpretation. But Langton’s translation leaves open the possibility that substance is the thing in itself, which is being manifested in appearances *as* phenomenon. On the next page she indeed endorses such a reading:

Kant says ‘where there is action, and therefore. . .force, there is also substance.’ We can take Kant to be making an *identity* statement here: enduring action, or force, *is* substance (as phenomenon). (Langton 51, ellipsis and all emphases in original).

Such a reading naturally leads us to consider other manifestations of substance. If the schematized concept of substance is matter, or substance (as phenomenon), then we might wonder, “What is substance (as noumenon)?” For Langton this will be the thing in itself—or, more properly, the intrinsic properties of a thing.

According to Langton, the concept of substance is not applicable to anything phenomenal, including matter, which Kant calls “substance.” Matter is, for Langton,

only substance by analogy with the thing in itself. Because of her Irreducibility thesis mentioned above, namely that relational properties are not reducible to intrinsic properties, substance qua appearance cannot be the same thing as substance qua intrinsic properties. Langton does not think that matter (phenomenal substance) counts as substance at all: “matter is a non-substance that occupies the role of a substance for us” (Langton 63).<sup>34</sup> In order to understand Langton’s assertion that matter is merely a poor substitution for the thing in itself, and in order to understand the dangers implicit in divorcing matter from its intimate relationship with time, we must briefly consider why Kant wrote the Analogies, and what the First Analogy in particular adds to Kant’s architectonic of reason.

#### **§4 Contextualizing the concept of substance in the First Analogy**

##### **4.1 The function of the analogies in general**

As was mentioned earlier, the pure concepts of the understanding are completely empty until they are applied to an intuition that first comes to our sensibility—both the faculty of understanding and the faculty of sensibility are necessary to yield knowledge.<sup>35</sup> While both the understanding and sensibility have equal roles in contributing to cognition, Kant was extremely concerned with clearly defining the limits and uses of concepts in particular, lest reason overstep its bounds and attempt to claim knowledge of things not empirically encountered. Since, as Langton notes, sensibility is fairly passive

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<sup>34</sup> Later on that same page, Langton says that “We can see how [Kant] can consistently believe that phenomenal substance is in the realm of appearance, while substance is not in the realm of appearance.” According to her, substance is in the realm of the appearance because its relational properties are in the realm of the appearance, but I have already demonstrated why the Irreducibility thesis makes this problematic.

<sup>35</sup> Allison calls this the “Discursivity thesis.” See Allison, pgs. xiv and 12-16.

and is given appearances, it is the understanding's role to subsume appearances under concepts, by which they are in turn synthesized to yield experience as a whole. In relation to appearances, the categories, or pure concepts contain "the function, unrestricted by any sensible intuition, of their [the appearances'] unity, as of a synthesis in general" (A181/B224). But this synthesis is not enough to yield a cohesive experience, where experience is defined as "an empirical cognition, i.e., a cognition that determines an object through perceptions" (A176/B218). Kant realized that the categories must be used in an objective manner, according to certain rules (the principles of pure understanding).

In A176/B218, Kant regards experience to be a cognition of objects and "not merely of the intuition or sensation of the senses," which is governed by the axioms of intuition and the anticipations of perception. The analogies of experience are more holistic, in that they do not synthesize the quantities and qualities of appearances, but rather they connect objects to a single, united consciousness.

For Kant, it was irrefutable that we indeed experience a regular succession of temporal events as Hume noted, but Kant argued that if this succession is to be necessary rather than contingent, and thus to have objective validity, we must represent the relation in the existence of the manifold "not as it is juxtaposed in time but as it is objectively in time" (B219). Thus we take what appear to be successive snapshots in time, and place them necessarily in *one* universal and objective timeframe of inner sense. The analogies of experience are thus analogies not from our experience to the thing in itself, but from the synthesis of appearances to the "logical and general unity of concepts" (A181/B224). The Analogies and their schemata are thus rules for synthesizing appearances according

to the natural unity of concepts that we have already encountered in the Transcendental Deduction.

We should be careful to avoid saying that the concept of substance in the First Analogy is merely the pure concept of substance applied in an empirically serviceable manner. The concept of substance in the First Analogy is not a manifestation of the pure concept of substance, but is that same concept of substance united with an intuition in one time, through the principle or analogy of persistence. And since “we cannot understand anything except that which has something corresponding to our words in an intuition,” the “pure concept of substance” is useless until “that which is to be subsumed under it” is homogenous with it. Furthermore, the only criteria for this homogeneity is the transcendental schema of substance, which is “the persistence of the real in time” (A144/B184). When the real in time, “the substratum of empirical time-determination in general” is identified, an object has already been subsumed under its proper concept by the schema, according to an analogy with the general unity of concepts (A144/B184). What is important to note is that without the analogies and their schemata, the pure concepts of the understanding are merely forms of thought, with no application whatsoever.

The analogies are rules for the application of the category of relation, which refers not to relation to *us*, but relations between appearances. Thus they give us merely regulative rather than constitutive principles for the subsumption of appearances under concepts: by being given two qualitative relations between three members, we can “give *a priori* only the relation to a fourth member but not this fourth member itself, although [we] have a rule for seeking it in experience and a mark for discovering it there” (A180,

my brackets). Two other principles of the understanding—the axioms of intuition and the anticipations of perception—*can* determine the content of an appearance, but the analogies are only needed once these appearances must be united in one time, which necessitates that they be *related* to one another in a certain manner in one time.

As Paul Guyer notes, we should be careful in reading the analogies, lest we think that they are useful only in allowing us to place *objects* in a temporal order. Appearances are subsumed under concepts, and while this act of subsumption itself can determine an object, it is not as though we have to place a fully-represented boat as being upstream at time  $t$  and being downstream at time  $t'$ . Rather, “it is to permit us to judge that subjective representations represent objects at all that the analogies of experience are needed” (Guyer 336). In order to “synthetically bring about a determinate combination of the given manifold,” we must simultaneously organize appearances into defined objects, which is a prerequisite for the time determination of objects, but is also an act of the schema itself (B138).

As all of Kant’s transcendental arguments proceed in a regressive proof in order to determine what is necessary to have an experience such as our experience, so do the transcendental schemata and their analogies explain how we have the sort of experience we do. Given that we identify and employ objects in judgments like, “That boat is moving downstream,” we must identify the prerequisite conditions for justifying and making those judgments. While we can place the ship itself in a temporal relation with the rocks and tree around it, we are capable of saying “boat” in the first place only because we have already organized a manifold of appearances into one representation “of a necessary connection of perceptions” in one time (A176/B218).

## 4.2 The function of the First Analogy

The three analogies should not be read equally, since Kant says that, “simultaneity and succession are the only relations in time” (A182/B226). Persistence (or duration)—the principle of the First Analogy—grounds determinations of succession and simultaneity, which are the principles of the second and third analogies, respectively.

Guyer states that

to judge either that there is any objective change at all or that there is objective coexistence requires the presupposition of causation and interaction. There are not *three* different ‘modes’ of time which can be judged of independently of one another. . . Rather, there is a basic distinction to be made between the alternative temporal possibilities for the objective states of affairs represented by any two successive perceptions (Guyer 212).

As was stated above, in order to determine whether representations are successive or simultaneous, we must first determine them as objects (which already requires the concept of the enduring), and then we must discern through their action and interaction whether such objects are simultaneous or successive. So the First Analogy, which identifies the enduring in appearances, seems to be the foundation for the other two analogies. However, the primacy of the First Analogy is minimal at best, given that Kant thought that the concept of substance by itself cannot provide us with any information about objects. Instead, Kant “explicitly attacks what he takes to be the Lockean idea of substance as a substratum distinct from accidents, since ‘accidents do not need to be borne, but rather signify only the manifold determination of one and the same thing’” (Guyer 212-213, quoting the *Metaphysik Volckmann*, 28:429).

It is too simplistic to identify substance as bearer of properties, which Langton correctly recognizes. She adds to the concept of substance as subject the additional

characterization of being an enduring subject. The two characteristics of substance together form the “schematized concept of pure substance.” While Langton does not focus on what it means to be enduring, which would require discussing time, we can understand that the concept of substance as an enduring subject in time was most important to Kant, and that an enduring subject in time *cannot* be identified by appealing to the First Analogy alone, since substance, causality, and community provide a “triple unity” of concepts, which together determine phenomena (Guyer 213). While something persistent in appearances is necessary in order for us to have an experience of interacting objects, the *proof* for this persistence is attained by first identifying the actions of subjects, which

are always the primary ground of all change of appearances, and therefore cannot lie in a subject that itself changes, since otherwise further actions and another subject, which determines this change, would be required. Now on this account action, as a sufficient empirical criterion, proves substantiality without it being necessary for me first to seek out its persistence through compared perceptions. . . (A206/B251).

Guyer is correct in saying of this passage that substance “appears to manifest itself better and more readily through action than through the permanence of appearance” (Guyer 213). Nevertheless, it is incorrect to understand Kant here as equating the perception of substance with its alterations themselves. In a footnote to the first edition of the *Critique*, Kant states that the proof for the persistence of substance, “‘is valid where I cannot perceive substance outside of its alterations; but where I cannot perceive it except through these alterations themselves, it is not valid’” (B226, footnote *d*). I take Kant to here be asserting that with any possible experience, substance must be present in order for some distinct thing to *alter*—therefore, the perception of alterations in a

transcendental manner proves the persistence of substance. This is very different, however, from saying that the persistence of substance can only be perceived through the alterations themselves, since what proves the persistence of substance is not the alterations, but the possibility of their existence. Guyer says that “knowledge of *alteration in an enduring substance*, a fortiori knowledge of the existence of enduring substance, is itself the necessary condition for knowledge of any *change* at all” (Guyer 224). This does not mean, as Kant notes, that the proof for the existence of enduring substance must be understood prior to the perception of any sort of change—rather, when we perceive that a change has taken place, the warrant for such knowledge has already been provided by a priori concepts. James van Cleve’s formulation of the First Analogy expresses this quite well: “For any x, if x changes, there is a y such that (i) y is a substance and (ii) x’s change is an alteration in (or of) y.”<sup>36</sup>

We recognize that the only possibility of having such an experience of alteration would be to already have in the mind certain concepts of the understanding, one of which is substance. When we acknowledge that something persists in the appearance, we are using the concept of substance in an empirically serviceable manner, as Langton suggests. In discussing the First Analogy, Guyer says that Kant offers three proofs for the persistence of substance, but in the end, Kant’s final argument is the strongest and most appealing because it “is an epistemological argument which demonstrates a condition of the possibility of experience—a necessary condition of the possibility of experience—a necessary condition for a certain form of claim to empirical knowledge”

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<sup>36</sup> James van Cleve, *Problems from Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 107. Hereafter referenced parenthetically.

(Guyer 216). Now those who, like Guyer and Langton, reject transcendental idealism and therefore all transcendental arguments Kant offers will not be persuaded by this argument for the persistence of substance, which might be interpreted as something like, “The possibility for our experience is proved because it is the possibility of our experience.”

According to Kant, the only other way that we could have a possible experience of objects conjoined in time is if time itself can be perceived, allowing us to place objects in certain relations. But Kant says clearly that “time itself cannot be perceived,” and, as such, “the determination of the existence of objects in time can take place only by means of their connection in time in general, thus only through *a priori* connecting concepts” (B219). These *a priori* connecting concepts are the schemata, which we have already discussed briefly. While the schemata may seem superfluous to Kant’s larger project, one cannot merely wish them away because they give us a transcendently ideal picture of cognition—the fact is that, for *both* editions of the *Critique*, Kant thought that the pure concepts of the understanding on their own were sorely insufficient in determining appearances. The only thing that can be determined by concepts are appearances, because they make up experience—this is why Allison thinks that we do not “represent” things in themselves at all, because “such things cannot count as objects for us” (Allison 12).

While a two-world view of experience might seem unappealing and Allison’s “anodyne” recommendation for epistemological modesty might seem to fare no better, it is simply unacceptable to discard a large section of the *Critique* in order to create a non-trivial, “one world” interpretation of his metaphysics. As Langton says, it “seems

unlikely. . .that a philosopher did not mean to say what he said, when he said it over and over again” (Langton 1). Any interpretation of Kant must at least acknowledge that Kant did mention time as the form of inner sense over and over again, and the schemata as the means by which parts of time can be connected to the universal time order. Thus any discussion of substance in the First Analogy, or “the schematized pure concept of substance” must either affirm the schema of persistence as a rule for uniting appearances in one time, or must offer an attractive alternative whereby the schemata are rendered unnecessary—rather than take either of these approaches, Langton simply uses the word “enduring” without quite explaining what endurance entails.

### §5 Matter as *Phaenomenon Substantiatum*

According to Langton, the phenomenal world is entirely made up of forces or extrinsic (relational) properties of the thing in itself.<sup>37</sup> Even properties that we traditionally interpret to be intrinsic, like “shape,” are still extrinsic on Kant’s account, since “corporeal things are never anything but relations only, at least of their parts external to *one another*” (Langton’s translation and parenthetical, A283). While it is impossible to determine what is intrinsic to an object, this doesn’t matter on Langton’s account, because she believes this is precisely the reason for Kant’s humility: that we are completely closed off from the inner nature of things. Since every part of an object is external to another object, we must assume that the whole of an object is made up of relations, and therefore anything that seems to persist will merely be a relation as well.

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<sup>37</sup> Consider the following as well: “Something can have a power to attract without actually attracting, so the power is not to be identical with the relation itself. All the same, there is something relational, something other-directed, about the concept of a force, construed as a power” (Langton 38).

However, given that what “is central to the schematized concept of substance is the notion of an enduring substratum of change,” we must have some candidate in appearances that could qualify as an enduring substratum (Langton 50). As was previously stated, Langton allows matter to fill this role, but then says that matter is merely an instance of phenomenal substance. Langton calls bodies “the phenomena of matter,” which once again implies that matter cannot be demoted to the level of *phenomena substantiata* (phenomena taken as substance) when matter underlies all phenomena, although this demotion is exactly what Langton does in order to avoid discussing time and the categories.

The schematism is needed because nothing else can connect individual experiences of time to a general time order. In order for our experiences to have objective validity, they must be connected to time as the form of inner sense by *a priori* connecting principles, and for the First Analogy, this principle is the principle of persistence. Since Kant rejects the claim that time itself is perceivable, something in the appearances must be the substratum of time-determination, in order that the temporal relations we do experience (simultaneity and succession) will be connected in one time (A184/B227). Something persisting must ground the manifold of experience, because “[o]nly in that which persists. . .are temporal relations possible (for simultaneity and succession are the only relations in time), i.e., that which persists is the substratum of the empirical representation of time itself, by which alone all time-determination is possible” (A182/B226).

Kant sees the Analogies as completing Hume’s unfinished business of determining temporal and causal relations; we can avoid skepticism if we merely agree

that when we experience relations of succession and simultaneity, these are made possible only by a connection to general time-order, and this connection is provided by persistence in the appearance. Kant says that “[p]ersistence gives general expression to time as the constant correlate of all existence of appearances, all change and all accompaniment” (A183). Therefore whatever persists throughout all appearances must be the substratum of all change (succession) and all accompaniment (simultaneity). The only candidate in our phenomenal experience that could satisfy such a strict criterion is matter, which is the relation holding between all appearances and which endures throughout all changes in phenomena. Matter is therefore the “real” in appearance to which we attach the name “substance,” though according to Langton, we merely attach the name substance to matter because we have no access to the thing in itself, which is a substance proper.<sup>38</sup> Matter is distinguished from other *phaenomena substantiata* by its endurance, which “enables matter not only to be thought as a subject, but to serve the task of a substratum that underlies *all* the changing properties with which we can become acquainted” (Langton 56-57).

Langton is correct in recognizing that matter serves a special function as an enduring substratum of appearances, but on her account it seems as though appearances do not qualify for the status of substratum merely because we perceive them as changing, while matter, which is in the appearances, does not. But Kant’s argument for persistence is transcendental and does not proceed in this fashion. Instead, Kant

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<sup>38</sup> Matter is made up of centers of forces, which are relational properties according to Langton. Since the phenomenal realm is entirely made of relational properties, we cannot know the substratum of matter, the latter which is, “external appearance, the substratum of which cannot be known through any predicate that we can assign to it” (A359). Nevertheless, Langton asserts that knowing a substratum is different from knowing that it exists and has relational properties. So we can know that the substratum of matter is the thing in itself without knowing the thing in itself.

is not simply trying to give sense to the concept of objective change by a contrast between the arbitrary and the rule-governed; he is trying to demonstrate the conditions which must be employed to determine in any case that an objective change has taken place (Guyer 231-232).<sup>39</sup>

In other words, substance remains throughout all changes as confirmation of our knowledge that an actual change has taken place; without the principle of persistence, we would be completely unable to connect changing appearances to an objective time order. The argument proceeds in a backwards fashion: we have an experience of the transformations and relations of one object, and we do perceive that something is the same object throughout all changes—given this fact, something must underlie the changes, and the only thing that all objects have in common seems to be matter—it functions as a substratum for us.<sup>40</sup>

However, as van Cleve says, it is debatable whether Kant thought that we can perceive matter anymore than we can perceive time: “We do not perceive matter that undergoes transformation from wood to ashes or from caterpillar to butterfly; we only conceive of it” (van Cleve 107). But Kant does not argue, as Langton does, that the *perception of substance* allows us to assert that a change has taken place; rather, he states that we perceive changes, and makes a logical argument from this that the only way we could perceive changes and unite them to an objective time order in one consciousness is by acknowledging that “everything that is altered is lasting, and only its state changes” (B231). The persistence of *something* in the appearances is necessary for us to have any

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<sup>39</sup> Although not persuaded by Kant’s transcendental argument for persisting substance, Guyer gives an excellent outline of it. See Guyer, pgs. 226-227.

<sup>40</sup> It functions as a substratum in lieu of the perception of time itself (thus Kant says that persistence “gives general expression to time as the constant correlate of all existence of appearances,” not as the constant correlate of the thing in itself (A183/B226).

experience of change at all. The reader would be correct in inferring that if matter is the best candidate for persistence merely because we conceive that it is “neither increased nor diminished in nature,” we can assume that something else besides matter could, theoretically, be the substratum of all change (A182). As Guyer notes, endurance is the primary criterion of substance, and thus “it is simply *whatever* is ultimately determined by empirical theory to endure—or act enduringly—through any empirically discoverable change that is properly identified as substance. . .the question of what substance actually is is a scientific question” (Guyer 233).

Persistence is not proven by the rule-governed existence of matter, but is proven transcendently by establishing the necessary conditions we need in order to experience changing objects connected to one time. After we have established the necessary conditions for such an experience, we then notice that the best candidate for a persistent substance is matter. If substances cease to be, they aren’t substances—therefore, if “our beliefs about what really endures change, then so must our conception of what is actually a substance,” but this does not alter the fact that something must be a substance in order for us to experience change in one time (Guyer 234). Kant seems to be indicating this when he says that “we can grant an appearance the name of substance only if we presuppose its existence at all time, which is not even perfectly expressed through the word ‘persistence’ since this pertains more to future time” A186/B229). Kant goes on to say that the idea of something having always persisted is inextricably connected to the idea that it will always exist. We can therefore apply the term “substance” to matter because it has always existed and will (presumably) always exist. But Kant is far less attached to matter as substance than he is to the fact that something persists in the

appearance; matter is merely the vehicle for such persistence, and it is this sense in which it is “taken as substance”—it satisfies the category of substance because it persists.

Now Kant sometimes refers to material bodies as “substances,” which can cause considerable confusion and basically nullifies the idea that one substance must unite all changes in the appearances. I take Kant to mean by “substances” that the appearances of objects have been subsumed under the category of substance, and just as we can call matter “substance” when really we mean “what persists,” we can call objects “substances” when we really mean that something in them persists. Tables and chairs can be sawed down until they are nothing but bits of wood—it would be improper to say that these “substances” have changed, because the entire concept of a substance is that of something which persists.

Part of this confusion is due to the interchangeable use of grammatical subjects with subjects as bearers of properties. While I can place the word “battle” in the subject of a sentence, as in “The battle was over quickly,” this does not mean that a battle has the same status as bearer of properties that the matter making up the gunpowder and soldiers does. When the battle ends, something persists in the appearances, and this something we call matter. While Langton spends a good amount of time distinguishing between the grammatical subject and true subjects (the thing in itself, matter in place of the thing in itself), she ignores the special status of matter when calling it a *phenomenon substantiatum*, or a phenomena taken as substance. Matter is distinguished from material objects taken as composites because it endures. Schematized substance is not the property of the thing in itself. Substance in the First Analogy is a concept that recognizes matter persisting in the appearance, and we call this matter “substance,” but do so only by

analogy not with the thing in itself, but with the concept of substance. Matter thus has a special status among phenomena because it satisfies the principle of persistence where nothing else in our experience does. If, as Langton states, bodies “can be viewed as self-subsistent in so far as they persist for a certain, if finite, length of time,” we must recognize that lengths of time are determined by concepts, and that the concept of substance best corresponds to that which persists in the appearances: matter (Langton 55). Langton does state that things like rainbows and battles are not “phenomenal substance in the sense of the First Analogy, since none endure,” but in not discussing what constitutes this special status of matter, and in not discussing endurance, Langton indeed makes matter an instance of phenomenal substance in general (Langton 56).<sup>41</sup>

## §6 Where is time?

As noted above, Langton acknowledges that “schematized substance” is inextricably linked to time. However, she unquestioningly accepts that matter is enduring and makes up bodies that persist through time. Without mentioning time as a form of inner sense, or the concept of substance as uniting appearances in one time, it is impossible to see how appearances are connected to one another in one time. Langton neither says that time itself is perceived, nor that it is the form of inner sense, nor that it is a system of relations holding between objects. Considering that Langton draws most of her references to matter (which fulfills the schematism of the pure concept of substance) from Kant’s *Reflexionen*, this is more than a mere oversight. In a passage from the Transcendental Aesthetic in which Kant explicitly defines time, Langton quotes it as the

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<sup>41</sup> Phenomenal substance is “ ‘only a substance comparatively speaking’ ” because it is not the thing in itself. See Langton (56).

following, ““(Human) intuition. . .is always sensible, that is. . .affected by objects”” (Langton’s translation of A35/B51, her ellipses and punctuation). We can compare this with the Guyer-Wood translation and see why a substantial portion of passage was not quoted in Langton’s translation: “Time is therefore merely a subjective condition of our (human) intuition (which is always sensible, i.e., insofar as we are affected by objects), and in itself, outside the subject, *is nothing*” (my italics). Here, Kant explicitly says that time is a subjective condition of our intuition, and has no function outside of this relation to sensibility. As I have already discussed at length, time and its schemata are related to sensibility through concepts of the understanding, the latter which are empty and useless without an accompanying intuition. It is easy to see why Langton leaves the discussion of time to other critics: she thinks that Kant’s humility (that we have no knowledge of things in themselves) follows from our receptive nature, not from the limited nature of our senses and the categories. Now while there may be a relevant distinction to be made between having a receptive nature and being limited by the senses, I do not think Langton has made a convincing case for such a distinction. It is quite plausible that we could have knowledge of the intrinsic properties of things were we not limited by the categories; in avoiding discussion of the categories, Langton cannot omit this possibility.

In the introduction of her book, Langton says that we should be able to answer the question of how we have no knowledge of things as they are in themselves

without exploring in detail the arguments about space, time, and the categories, for which Kant is (perhaps justly) most famous. The arguments from the Aesthetic and Analytic are accordingly given little detailed attention in the following discussion, since, notwithstanding their importance, they are separable from the conclusion about our ignorance (Langton 3).

Langton believes that discussions of space and time are irrelevant when we attempt to explain our ignorance of things in themselves. This seems preposterous, since Kant called all cognition transcendental, and therefore all knowledge can only be related to those appearances that are subsumed under *categories*, one of these being the category of relations in time (B25). In writing the *Critique*, Kant decisively broke free of the rationalist philosophers who sought a “first philosophy” that could inquire into the nature of supersensible objects such as things in themselves, God, and the soul. But Kant,

in renouncing all claims on the supersensible, and redirecting our attention rather to the necessary conditions which make possible natural scientific knowledge (the only genuine knowledge of objects we now have), philosophy of metaphysics can finally leave behind the ‘mock combats’ of the school, and itself enter into ‘the secure path of a science’.<sup>42</sup>

Since the only possible knowledge we have is of *appearances* ordered into one time in a coherent representation of changing objects, any interpretation of Kant that attempts to talk about knowledge outside of the parameters Kant has set forth is drastically departing from the Copernican Revolution for which he is best known.

There is a more logical reason for why Langton omits discussion of time—it is not only because she is departing from problematic implications caused by the preservation of Kant’s transcendental philosophy, but because on Langton’s interpretation *we are not actually humble at all*. In *Problems from Kant*, which was published before Langton’s book, van Cleve prefigures Langton’s interpretation of appearances and things in themselves when he says that appearances are “virtual objects,” and hints that substance must exist in the noumenal realm. He in fact mentions

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<sup>42</sup> Michael Friedman, *The Dynamics of Reason*. (Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, 2001), 9.

*phaenomena substantiata*, that all phenomena is taken as substance (van Cleve 120). In discussing the Analogies in particular, he says

it could be that the schema for a category is meant after all not to enrich its meaning but to replace it. . .In that case, we should drop the requirement that a phenomenal substance be a substance<sup>1</sup>, or a nonadjectival being; it need only be a permanent being or substance<sup>2</sup> (van Cleve 120).

For Langton, appearances are certainly not virtual, but are the properties of things in themselves and are thus adjectival upon things in themselves. But schemata do not replace their categories—they combine them with empirical intuitions, and in doing so they indeed aid the representation of nonadjectival things. Empirical objects are nonadjectival because we have no idea what might exist beyond them—we can imagine such things in abstraction from empirical relations, but this imagining will never constitute *knowledge* of things in themselves. Consider the following from A285/B341:

The fact that if I abstract from these relations I have nothing further to think at all does not cancel out the concept of a thing as appearance, nor the concept of an object *in abstracto*, but does cancel all possibility of such an object determinable in accordance with mere concepts, i.e., a concept of a noumenon.

When Kant uses the phrase “external relations,” Langton says that “what Kant may sometimes mean is that appearance is external to the substance, the thing in itself” (Langton 37). While Kant does state that “[d]oubtless indeed there are intelligible entities corresponding to the sensible entities” (B309), it is not clear to me that these intelligible entities are things in themselves as they are depicted by Langton, nor that we have any access to them whatsoever either through phenomenal relations or the use of pure concepts themselves. Considering a transcendental object in abstraction from

phenomenal appearances is very different from *determining* a noumenal object with distinct properties. In drawing for the reader quite a detailed picture of such a noumenal object, Langton has very little need of the understanding and its concepts in general, and therefore very little need to articulate the relationship between substance in the appearances and time as the form of inner sense.

## Conclusion

Langton thinks that time and the categories are separable from the thesis about our ignorance of things in themselves. On her interpretation, Kant still expresses humility because we do not know the intrinsic properties, or substances, of things:

Kant thinks we have no knowledge of things in themselves. But here that does not express idealism, but something else—the second of the three Kantian theses. Humility: We have no knowledge of the intrinsic properties of substances (Langton 20-21).<sup>43</sup>

Langton believes that her Humility thesis follows from the Receptivity thesis, which states that we are only affected by the relational properties of substances. She supports the Receptivity thesis by appealing to Kant's notion of irreducibility: relational properties are not reducible to intrinsic properties, so we can have no knowledge of intrinsic properties. Intrinsic properties are inert and have no causal powers, so things can only affect us through their relational properties.

I have argued in this thesis that Langton's interpretation of Kant's distinction between phenomena and things in themselves, while initially attractive, distorts Kant's use of the pure concept of substance, which is only useful in relation to the appearances. While we might be ignorant about things in themselves, we are not ignorant because we are only affected by them in a certain way; rather, we "cannot understand anything except that which has something corresponding to our words in intuition" (A278). The concepts of the understanding cannot be employed in a transcendently real manner.

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<sup>43</sup> Langton must mean by "substances" here "things," since she thinks that "substances" just are "things in themselves," or the intrinsic properties of things. Therefore, saying "the intrinsic properties of substances" must be referring to phenomenal substances.

Kant is *not* an idealist because he thinks that we are entirely barred from the intrinsic nature of substances, but because knowledge cannot be warranted outside of the categories, which govern sensible intuition. Kant says that, “If the complaints ‘That we have no insight into the inner in things’ are to mean that we do not understand through pure reason what the things that appear to us might be in themselves, then they are entirely improper and irrational” (A278). The heart of Langton’s interpretation lies in such a complaint: while her use of “substance” to refer to the thing in itself falls short of the determination of the intrinsic properties themselves, I agree with Allison that she is engaging in a “‘transcendental misemployment’ of the categories,” namely in her discussion of substance (Allison 11).

Kant’s Transcendental Idealism consists of three major claims, and that any interpretation of his metaphysics must accommodate them (Allais, “One World” 656).

The three claims are:

T1. Things as they appear to us and things as they are in themselves must be distinguished from each other.

T2. We do not and cannot have knowledge of things as they are in themselves (Kant’s humility as articulated by Langton)

T3. Things as they appear to us are mind-dependent, in some sense and to some extent.

I have already articulated the problems with Langton’s distinction between phenomenal substance (matter and bodies) and pure substance (the intrinsic properties of things), namely that (1) substance is a concept, and concepts are only applicable to intuitions; (2) matter cannot be merely an instance of phenomenal substance because it is intimately

related to the categories and it *endures*. As such, matter, once recognized by the schema of persistence, unites appearances in one time (time as the form of inner sense); (3) the thing in itself does not satisfy the criteria of substance. While I cannot go too deeply into her interpretation of the distinction here, Allais does not conflate things in themselves with substances, and therefore I find her interpretation of the distinction decidedly more favorable.

In short, Allais thinks that things in themselves are everyday empirically objects viewed opaquely, whereas phenomena are those same objects viewed transparently: “Rather than distinguishing between two kinds of properties. . . I way to distinguish between two ways of knowing things.”<sup>44</sup> For example, imagine that we you know there is a triangular-shaped piece of paper in an envelope in a book in the library: you can characterize the piece of paper as having three sides, as being inside the envelope, etc. You know many of its properties, but to know it transparently you would have to know whether it is isosceles, whether the paper is cardstock or computer paper, whether the envelope is quite large, etc. According to Allais, this interpretation of the distinction is favorable over Langton’s because it allows us to know a thing’s powers and relational properties “without thinking that powers are distinct properties which do not flow from things’ intrinsic natures” (Allais “Intrinsic Natures” 160).

For Allais, the main problem with Langton’s distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic properties is that there is no causal connection from the former to the latter—extrinsic properties must be superadded to things in themselves, and we have no idea

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<sup>44</sup> Lucy Allais, “Intrinsic Natures: A Critique of Langton on Kant” in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 23 (1) 2006:143-169. This is from pg. 159. Hereafter referenced parenthetically.

what is the exact relationship between the two sets of properties. Yet Allais still distinguishes between intrinsic natures and extrinsic natures—and thus maintains T2, the humility thesis, without the further positing of causally inert intrinsic properties. Allais also attempts to provide a plausible account of how phenomena are mind-dependent entities, without resorting to phenomenalism. Nevertheless, while I think that both Allais' and Langton's interpretations of Kant's distinction do give a "nontrivial account of humility on a one-world view," I do not think this is a considerable advantage over Allison's interpretation of the distinction (Allais, "Intrinsic Natures" 147).

There are two main concerns Langton and Allais both express for Allison's particular brand of transcendental idealism: the first being that on Allison's interpretation, we do not seem to be lacking a substantial amount of knowledge, and the second being that "the human point of view is just the human point of view" is tautological and cannot be what Kant meant by transcendental idealism. While I cannot answer this concern, the discussion of substance I have presented may help to illuminate that Kant both felt a sense of loss in relegating knowledge to phenomena, and that at the same time this does not have to mean that we cannot assume something about things in themselves—namely their existence.

It is not clear to me that Kant's discussion of time and the categories (which indeed make up over half of Kant's text) are separable from the conclusion about our ignorance. Whether Kant intended to articulate a one-world or two-world view is unimportant to my discussion, but it does seem clear to me that he did intend to provide a more thorough account of experience—and more specifically, of relations in time—than Hume had offered before him. On Langton's interpretation, it is entirely mysterious how

Kant made any improvement on Hume at all, and her discussion of substance makes it abundantly clear that both phenomena and things in themselves are entirely independent of the mind's strictures. Even if we grant that the thing in itself is an absolute subject and is composed of intrinsic properties, and even if we go further and grant that phenomena are the relational properties of the thing in itself, we still cannot say that the thing in itself is substance. Consider the following passage:

If we abstract from our way of internally intuiting ourselves and by means of this intuition also dealing with all outer intuitions in the power of representations, and thus take objects as they may be in themselves, then time is nothing (A34/B51).

If time is nothing outside of phenomenal appearances, then it is difficult to see how substance—which is always instantiated in time—could be the thing in itself.

I will close with a consideration of what Kant thinks happens when we attempt to apply the concept of substance outside of experience. Kant did in fact address how something that cannot be determined to endure could be substance, although his account of this hardly makes Langton's intricately developed notion of the thing in itself any more plausible. I am referring to his discussion of the soul as substance in the "First Paralogism of substantiality," which is an exercise in determining that "I, as a thinking being, am the absolute subject of all my possible judgments," or that the thinking self—the soul—is substance (A348/B406). In his criticism of this paralogism, Kant acknowledges that thinking of the self as a substance is necessary (perhaps in order to have a unified consciousness), but that the soul "signifies a substance only in the idea but not in reality" (A351). To see why this is the case, we must realize that the thinking thing

cannot be proven as existing in time since we do not order the thinking self under the category of relation in one time:

But now what sort of use am I to make of this concept of a substance? That I, as a thinking being, endure for myself, that naturally I neither arise nor perish—this I can be no means infer, and yet it is for that alone that the concept of the substantiality of my thinking subject can be useful to me; without that *I could very well dispense with it altogether* (A349, my emphasis).

Thinking of the self as substance has a very psychological advantage, in that were I not to assert that “I think” and am the subject of all my representations, *I could not have these representations because they would not inhere in anything.*

Nevertheless, Kant says that this extension of the conditions of rationality, the “I think,” is possible cognition’s “merely subjective condition” and is not an experience itself. For the unity of consciousness is nowhere encountered in experience, and therefore can only be the necessary ground for cognition of objects, but is not therefore substance in a real sense. Substance must necessarily be that which persists in the appearance, and since the soul can never come before us as an appearance, it can only be an idea of substance but never real substance. It is interesting that Langton calls the thing in itself substance proper, for it seems that were the thing in itself to be called a substance, it would be so in such a weak sense as to almost seem irrelevant.

Of the self, Kant says that it “signifies only Something in general (a transcendental subject), the representation of which must of course be simple, just because one determines nothing at all about it” (A355). In making an analogy of sorts to the thinking self, we can see that it is not a real substance because it does not persist in time. As I noted above, Kant says once again that the soul “signifies substance only in

the idea but not in reality” (A351). It is similarly difficult to see why the thing in itself would be true or “real” substance when it is not an object of our experience.

Rae Langton’s neglect of the categories, the schematism and time is made self-consciously in an attempt to apply the concept of substance in a transcendently real manner. However, as I have attempted to show, any thorough interpretation of Kant’s philosophy must account for the fact that substance is a concept useful only in unifying appearances in one time. These aspects of the *Critique*, no matter how much their omission simplifies his metaphysical commitments to phenomena and things in themselves, cannot be disregarded.