

Kantian Appearances, Secondary Qualities, and Dispositions

by Tobias Rosefeldt

1. Introduction

In this paper, I want to elaborate on what I think is the most promising interpretation of Kant's distinction between appearances and things in themselves. I will call this interpretation *the Subjectivist Ontological Double Aspect-view*, 'SODA' for short. The two core ideas of SODA are the following:

- (i) we should distinguish properties that objects only have in relation to epistemic subjects of a certain kind and properties that objects have in themselves, i.e. independently of any relation to epistemic subjects
- (ii) Kant's transcendental idealism amounts to the claim that we can only have knowledge of properties of the first kind because all spatio-temporal properties are such that objects have them only in relation to us.

SODA is, of course, not the only interpretation of the notions of appearances and things in themselves to be found in the literature, but is rather only one branch of a ramified Porphyrian Tree. Although it is not the aim of this paper to argue against the alternatives of SODA, I will shortly mention them in order to indicate SODA's place on that Tree. The first branching is that between two-world-views and double-aspect-views. According to two-world views, by 'appearances' Kant means mental states, such as representations, or intentional objects whose properties supervene completely on those of mental states, while by 'things in themselves' he means mind-independent objects which may (or even must) be the causal sources

of these mental states. Proponents of the double-aspect-view, on the other side, argue that appearances, as the objects of empirical knowledge should have another ontological status than mental states or intentional object could possibly have: they have to be intersubjectively accessible objects whose existence and properties do not completely supervene on individual human minds or collections thereof. It is always these mind-independent objects of which Kant speaks when he says that we should distinguish between the things as they appear to us (i.e. in so far as they are appearances) and the things as they are in themselves. The distinction is one between two aspects of the same kind of objects rather than one between two different kinds of objects.

The second branching is one on the side of the double-aspect view, namely that that between methodological and ontological versions of this view. These versions diverge on the question of what the two aspects of mind-independent objects are. According to the methodological double-aspect view, the distinction between the two aspects does not capture features on the side of the so considered objects but rather only has to do with our ways of considering these objects. The idea is that certain properties of objects are such that without them it would be impossible for us to have knowledge of these objects, and that we can consider objects in so far as they have these properties (consider them as appearances, i.e. objects of possible knowledge), but can also abstract from the fact that they have these properties (consider them as they are in themselves) – only in order to notice that we could not have empirical knowledge of them if they did not have the properties from which we abstracted. People on the ontological branch of the double-aspect view think that the methodological version does not pay justice to the systematic role the distinction plays for Kant's philosophy, especially not to the Kantian claim that human beings, as they are in themselves, can have a property – the property of being free – which they lack in so far as they are appearances. They think that some difference on the

side of the object has to correspond to the distinction between appearances and things in themselves. So they interpret the two aspects as two kinds of properties which objects have – properties that objects have as they are in themselves and properties that objects have as appearances.

The third branching, then, is one among these ontological double-aspect views, namely that between subjectivist and non-subjectivist versions of it. The point at issue is by what feature the two kinds of properties are to be distinguished. According to the non-subjectivist ontological double-aspect view, which is more or less exclusively held by Rae Langton, the distinction comes down to that between extrinsic and intrinsic properties, that is between properties that objects could not have unless they stood in relations to other objects and properties that are compatible with the objects' 'loneliness'. Kant's claim that we can only have knowledge of appearances would then just mean that we can only have knowledge of the extrinsic properties of objects. Proponents of SODA – the subjectivist ontological double-aspect view –, however, think that the class of properties which objects have in so far as they are appearances is not identical with the class of their extrinsic properties but rather a subclass of it, distinguished by the kind of objects the relation to which is responsible for the extrinsicness. These objects are kinds of epistemic subjects, and hence, according to SODA, we should distinguish between properties that objects only have in relation to epistemic subjects of a certain kind and properties that objects have in themselves, i.e. independently of any relation to epistemic subjects of any kind.

SODA has been favoured by a number of other authors before me. Some version of it can be found in the interpretations of Paton, Dryer and Putnam,¹ and it was recently explicitly worked out by Arthur Collins and Lucy Allais.² (As we have seen

¹ Vgl. Paton, 1951, 442 ff., Dryer, 1966, ch. 11.6, Putnam, 1981, 59 f.

² Cf. A. Collins, 1999, *Possible Experience. Understanding Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press; Allais, L., 2004, 'Kant's One World. Interpreting "Transcendental Idealism"', in: *The British Journal for the*

this morning, Kris McDaniel, in his paper for this conference, argues for something like SODA, too.) Colling and Allais argue that we should understand Kant's distinction between things in themselves and appearances in analogy to the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Kant himself uses this analogy in order to argue against an idealist misunderstanding of his views. In the *Prolegomena*, for example, he writes that 'as little as someone can be called an idealist because he wants to admit colors as properties that attach not to the object in itself, but only to the sense of vision as modifications, just as little can my system be called idealist simply because I find that even more, nay, all of the properties that make up the intuition of a body belong merely to its appearance: for the existence of the thing that appears is not thereby nullified, as with real idealism, but it is only shown that through the senses we cannot cognize it at all as it is in itself'.³ The appealing aspect of an understanding of appearances in terms of secondary qualities for a subjectivist ontological double-aspect interpretation is that, arguably, secondary qualities such as colours are in some sense dependent on human minds but they nevertheless are properties of mind-independent objects rather than properties of mental states. They are, as Lucy Allais has argued, properties of the form 'appearing to epistemic subjects of such-and-such kind in such-and-such way'. On the one hand, such properties are intersubjectively accessible, on the other hand there is an intuitive sense in which they depend on subjects of a certain kind and do not reveal the way things are 'in themselves', i.e. independently of their being perceived.

Although I completely agree with the general idea of SODA in the form in which Allais presents it, there are two things in which my version of SODA goes beyond it, and these shall be the main topics I will be concerned with in the rest of this paper. Firstly, I will interpret a passage that, in my opinion, offers Kant's most ex-

History of Philosophy, 12, 655-684; Allais, L., 'Kant's Idealism and the Secondary Quality Analogy' (forthcoming in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy*).

³ Immanuel Kant, *A Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics that will present itself as a science [Proleg]*, ed. and trans. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4:289.

plicit and clearest formulation of what is ascribed to him by SODA, a passage which has been neglected by authors favouring SODA. In doing so, I will introduce some terminology which I find helpful for defining what exactly is meant by a property that objects have only in relation to epistemic subjects of a certain kind. I will try to show how the proposed notions help (a) to understand Kant's distinction between the way things appear to us and the way things are in themselves, (b) to spell out what exactly is the illusion of a transcendental realist who thinks that spatio-temporal properties are ways things are in themselves, and (c) to show why, reconstructed in the proposed way, Kant's argument in the 'Transcendental Aesthetic' does not fall foul of Trendelenburg's famous objection against it.

Secondly, I want to argue that the concept of a property of the form 'appearing to epistemic subjects of such-and-such kind in such-and-such way' needs to be analysed further in order to make sense of the many passages in which Kant says that objects affect us and that all we have knowledge of are the representations caused by this affection. These passages are traditionally held to speak for a two-world-interpretation of transcendental idealism, but I think they can be incorporated into SODA if one interprets appearance-properties as *dispositions of objects to cause certain representations in us*. I will spell out a notion of dispositions which is apt to deal with much of the textual evidence in a way that serves the core idea of a double-aspect view. In the last part of my paper, I will argue that, *pace* Jacobi, one can hold that the way a thing is in itself is causally responsible for the way it appears to us without illegitimately applying the categories of cause and effect beyond the limits of human experience.

Before I begin I should say that I will not discuss Kant's two main arguments for transcendental idealism here, i.e. the argument from the apriority of our representations of space and time, and the argument from the receptivity of sensible intuition. I think that both arguments are most convincingly reconstructed as having SODA

as their conclusion, but that shall not be my concern here. My humble aim is to show that SODA can be spelled out in a such way that it offers a systematically as well as exegetically consistent view of transcendental idealism.

2. Properties that are relativised to epistemic subjects

In the second edition of the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, Kant writes the following:

‘If I say: in space and time intuition of outer objects as well as self-intuition of the mind represents both of these things as each affects our senses, i.e. as it appears, that is not to say that these objects were mere illusion. For in the appearance the objects, indeed even properties that we attribute to them, are always regarded as something really given, only that – insofar as this property depends only on the kind of intuition of the subject in the relation of the given object to it – this object as appearance is to be distinguished from itself as object in itself.’ (B 69)⁴

This is not only one of the clearest statements supporting a double-aspect interpretation (the object as appearance is distinguished *from itself* as object in itself), it also entails the core idea of the subjectivist ontological variant of it. Spatio-temporal properties are said to ‘depend on the kind of intuition of the subject in the relation of the given object to it’. In a footnote to the quoted passage Kant explicates how this baroque formulation is to be understood:

⁴ „Wenn ich sage: im Raum und der Zeit stellt die Anschauung sowohl der äußeren Objecte, als auch die Selbstanschauung des Gemüths beides vor, so wie es unsere Sinne afficirt, d.i. wie es erscheint, so will das nicht sagen, daß diese Gegenstände ein bloßer Schein wären. Denn in der Erscheinung werden jederzeit die Objecte, ja selbst die Beschaffenheiten, die wir ihnen beilegen, als etwas wirklich Gegebenes angesehen, nur daß, so fern diese Beschaffenheit nur von der Anschauungsart des Subjects in der Relation des gegebenen Gegenstandes zu ihm abhängt, dieser Gegenstand als Erscheinung von ihm selber als Object an sich unterschieden wird.“

‘The predicates of appearance can be attributed to the object itself, in relation to our sense, e.g. the red color or fragrance to the rose; but the illusion can never be attributed to the object as predicate, precisely that would be to attribute to the object for itself what pertains to it only in relation to the senses or in general to the subject, e.g. the two handles that were originally attributed to Saturn. What is not to be encountered in the object in itself at all, but is always to be encountered in its relation to the subject and is inseparable from the representation of the object, is appearance, and thus the predicates of space and of time are rightly attributed to the objects of the senses as such, and there is no illusion in this. However, if I attribute the redness to the rose in itself, the handles to Saturn or extension to all outer objects in themselves, without noticing a certain relation of these objects to the subject and limiting my judgement to this, only then illusion arises.’ (B 69f. fn.)⁵

Three properties are mentioned here: the property of having handles (which was attributed to Saturn by Galileo when he first saw it through a telescope), the property of being red, and the property of being extended. In the cases of all three of these properties illusion arises if they are attributed to things in themselves. Hence, the following three claims are false, according to Kant:

- (1) Saturn has *the property of having handles* in itself.
- (2) The rose has *the property of being red* in itself.
- (3) Outer objects have *the property of being extended* in themselves.

⁵ „Die Prädicate der Erscheinung können dem Objecte selbst beigelegt werden in Verhältniß auf unseren Sinn, z.B. der Rose die rothe Farbe oder der Geruch; aber der Schein kann niemals als Prädicat dem Gegenstande beigelegt werden, eben darum weil er, was diesem nur im Verhältniß auf die Sinne oder überhaupt aufs Subject zukommt, dem Object für sich beilegt, z.B. die zwei Henkel, die man anfänglich dem Saturn beilegte. Was gar nicht am Objecte an sich selbst, jederzeit aber im Verhältnisse desselben zum Subject anzutreffen und von der Vorstellung des letzteren unzertrennlich ist, ist Erscheinung, und so werden die Prädicate des Raumes und der Zeit mit Recht den Gegenständen der Sinne als solchen beigelegt, und hierin ist kein Schein. Dagegen wenn ich der Rose an sich die Röthe, dem Saturn die Henkel, oder allen äußeren Gegenständen die Ausdehnung an sich beilege, ohne auf ein bestimmtes Verhältniß dieser Gegenstände zum Subject zu sehen und mein Urtheil darauf einzuschränken, alsdann allererst entspringt der Schein.“ (B 69 f. Anm.)

Kant describes the mistake made in these claims as that of ‘attributing to the object for itself what pertains to it only in relation to the senses or in general to the subject’. That suggests that, although the three properties should not be ascribed to the mentioned objects *in themselves*, they could nevertheless be ascribed to them in relation to certain kinds of subjects. So, it seems as if by the following reformulation of the sentences the illusion could be avoided:

- (1.a) Saturn has *the property of having handles* in relation to Galileo looking through his telescope.
- (2.a) The rose has *the property of being red* in relation to subjects with our visual sensory system.
- (3.a) Outer objects have *the property of being extended* in relation to subjects with our forms of intuition.

Although these formulations are rather close to the Kantian text, I do not find them fully satisfactory. They imply the notion of having a property in relation to something else which I find rather awkward. If a ball moves to the left from the goal-keeper’s point of view and to the right from the striker’s point of view it would be odd to say that it has *the property of moving to the left* in relation to the goal keeper and lacks one and the same property in relation to the striker. A more natural way of describing the situation would be to say that the ball has *the property of moving to the left viewed from the goal-keepers perspective*, but does not have *the property of moving to the left viewed from the goal-keepers perspective*. These are two distinct properties. So it would be preferable to reformulate the three sentences in a way that makes the relativisation to a subject part of the property-designator. Another problem with (1.a) – (3.a) is that it is not clear what exactly the relation is which is mentioned in these sentences.

What Kant has in mind becomes clear when he describes appearance as that which ‘is not to be encountered in the object in itself at all, but is always to be encountered in its relation to the subject and is inseparable from the representation of the object’. Hence the relevant relation of Saturn, the rose and outer objects in general, is that of appearing to subjects of a certain kind in a certain way. The following reformulation of (1.a) – (3.a) suggests itself:

- (1.b) Saturn has *the property of appearing to have handles to Galileo, looking through his telescope.*
- (2.b) The rose has *the property of appearing red to subjects with our visual sensory system.*
- (3.b) Outer objects have *the property of appearing extended to subjects with our forms of intuition.*

The properties designated by the italicised expressions have exactly the features which they should have according to SODA: (i) they are properties of mind-independent objects (‘can be attributed to the object itself’, as Kant writes), (ii) they are intersubjectively accessible properties, i.e. can be detected by different subjects, at least by those who belong to the kind of subject mentioned in the property-designators, i.e. by subjects who look through Galileo’s telescope, have our visual sensory system or share our forms of intuition, and (iii) they are – in some sense – relativised to epistemic subjects.

In order to make a little more explicit how the last characterisation is to be understood I want to introduce some terminology.⁶ A predicate shall be called *objective* iff its extension is independent of all parameters to which it is not explicitly relativ-

⁶ I adopt some of the terminology from F. Mühlhölzer, 1988, ‘On Objectivity’, in: *Erkenntnis*, 28, 185-230.

ised. There are many predicates who are not objective in this sense. Take the predicate ‘moves to the left’ for example. Although someone can say something true by using it – e.g. the goalkeeper who says ‘The ball moves to the left’ – its extension depends on parameters that are not explicitly mentioned in the predicate but contributed by the context of the utterance (such as the perspective of the person who utters the sentence). It is not always as easy to detect the non-objectivity of a predicate as in the case of ‘moves to the left’ (where it only takes two people shouting long enough to each other: ‘It moves to the left’ – ‘No, to the right’ – ‘No, to the left’ etc...) Take a predicate such as ‘begins at 5 o’clock’. Someone who has never left her time zone may never detect that something can begin at 5 o’clock with respect to the London time zone and, at the same time, begin at 6 o’clock with respect to that of Berlin. Moreover, it can still be a rather shocking insight that the predicate ‘moves upwards’ is not objective, and it needed some progress in cosmology to detect that its extension depends on the position to the centre of a gravitational field. (In the Epicurean cosmology, for example, all objects in the world were taken to move constantly downwards – obviously in some absolute sense.) And, as physics has taught us, even such objectively sounding predicates as ‘weights 5 kg’ or ‘is simultaneous with such-and-such event’ are not objective in the explicated sense.

Now, a predicate can be made objective, or more objective, if parameters on which its extension depends are made explicit in them. The predicate ‘moves to the left viewed from the goalkeepers’s perspective’ is more objective in this sense than the predicate ‘moves to the left’. It is still not completely objective because its extension also depends on the time (something can move to the left at some time but not do so at some other time.) The predicate ‘moves to the left viewed from Petr Cech’s perspective on the 17th of March at 5 o’clock London time-zone’ may have a good prospect of being completely objective.

Now, if one of the parameters to which a predicate is explicitly relativised is an epistemic subject, or a kind of epistemic subjects, then I will call this predicate *relativised to a (kind of) subject*. ‘moves to the left viewed from Petr Cech’s perspective’ is relativised to an epistemic subject in this sense. ‘moves to the left viewed from the perspective of subjects standing at Petr Cech’s position’ is relativised to a kind of epistemic subjects. Finally, if a predicate is both, objective and relativised to a (kind of) epistemic subject, I will say that it expresses a *property that is relativised to a (kind of) epistemic subject*. The predicate ‘moves to the left viewed from Petr Cech’s perspective on the 17th of March at 5 o’clock London time-zone’, if completely objective, expresses such a property.

It is important to note, though, that this property can also be expressed by a predicate that is not objective. If Petr Cech, on the 17th of March at 5 o’clock London time-zone, utters the sentence ‘This ball moves to the left’, then the predicate ‘moves to the left’, at this utterance, expresses the property of moving to the left viewed from Petr Cech’s perspective on the 17th of March at 5 o’clock London time zone. (His utterance is true just if the ball has this property.) And Petr Cech can do so even if he does not know what time or what day it is. So, in general, you can express a property which is relativised to certain parameters without knowing the values of these parameters. Moreover, and that is the more interesting case for our purposes, you can express a property which is relativised to certain parameters without even knowing *that* the property you express is relativised to any of these parameters. Someone could fail to see that a predicate such as ‘begins at 5 o’clock’ is not objective and that it expresses different properties when uttered in different time zones, each relativised to the respective zone. As long as this person does not meet someone from another time zone, her mistake may never come to light for she applies the predicate to exactly the same things as people who know about the relativity of the time of day. Similarly, people could use predicates such as ‘moves up-

wards' or 'weights 5 kg' without noticing that these predicates express properties that are relativised to the position in a gravitational field and to its force. All these people would fail to notice is that the properties they ascribe to things are relativised to certain parameters.

Let me come back to Kants examples and apply the new terminology to them. (I will confine myself here to the case of the color and that of extension.) I want to make six claims:

(i) Both properties that are talked about in (2.b) and (3.b) – *the property of appearing red to subjects with our visual sensory system*, and *the property of appearing extended to subjects with our forms of intuition* – are properties that are relativised to a kind of epistemic subjects in the explicated sense. For both can be expressed by predicates which are relativised accordingly (e.g. the predicate 'appears extended to subjects with our forms of intuition'. I will assume, for the sake of argument, that this predicate is objective, although other parameters would have to be made explicit, of course.) The fact that these properties are relativised to epistemic subjects is compatible with the fact that they are properties of objects that are distinct from these subjects. (Just as the fact that *the property of moving to the left viewed from Petr Cech's perspective* is relativised to a subject is compatible with the fact that it may be the property of a football.)

(ii) Kant's claim that we can only know things as they appear to us but not things as they are in themselves can be understood in the following way: All predicates that we normally apply in order to gain knowledge of objects in the world around us – predicates such as 'is red', 'is extended', or 'is round' – express properties that are relativised to epistemic subjects of a certain kind. Since the predicates 'is red' and 'is extended' do not make the relativisation explicit, they are not objective in the explicated sense. The relativisation is made explicit in the predicates 'appears red

to subjects with our visual sensory system' and 'appears extended to subjects with our forms of intuition' that are used in the formulations (2.b) and (3.b). All of this is compatible with the fact that someone who fails to see that the mentioned predicates express relativised properties might apply them to exactly the same things as Kantian does. Just as someone who fails to see the lack of objectivity of the predicate 'moves upwards' can apply it to the same things as someone who knows that its extension depends on the position on our planet. In this case the agreement is possible if both users of the predicate just *are* at the same position on the planet. In the case of the two persons who speak about extension no disagreement occurs because both persons just *are* subjects with the same forms of intuition.

(iii) The claim that for Kant all properties which we can cognize are relativised to epistemic subjects and hence, in a way, secondary qualities does not imply that he cannot account for the traditional distinction between primary qualities such as extension and secondary qualities such as color. Although both of these properties are relativised to epistemic subjects of a certain kind they can be distinguished by the generality of the kind to which they are relativised. Traditional primary qualities are relativised to the class of subjects with our forms of intuition, traditional secondary qualities to a subclass of the first, namely the class of subjects with our visual sensory system.⁷ Kant assumes that things can appear in different colors to different human beings (and therefore they are not empirically real), but that things appear in space for all human beings.

⁷ In den *Prolegomena* erwähnt Kant Fälle, in denen Menschen alles nur in Schwarz-Weiß sehen (AA VII 168) und in B 45 schreibt er, daß ein und dieselben Dinge für verschiedene Menschen verschiedene Farben haben können. In der *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* sagt er von der „Sinnenwelt“ insgesamt, daß sie „nach Verschiedenheit der Sinnlichkeit in mancherlei Weltbeschauern [...] sehr verschieden sein kann“ (AA IV 451), was wohl heißt, daß es auch Subjekte mit anderen Anschauungsformen als den unseren geben könnte, denen die Dinge deswegen nicht in Raum und Zeit erscheinen würde. Daß dies zumindest bei allen Menschen so ist, wird durch A 26/B 42 nahegelegt, wo es heißt, daß wir „nur aus dem Standpunkte eines Menschen vom Raum, von ausgedehnten Wesen etc. reden“ können. Abgesehen wie unterschiedlich Menschen untereinander bzw. Menschen und andere Subjekte hinsichtlich ihrer Empfindungs- und Anschauungsfähigkeiten tatsächlich sind, kann man festhalten, daß es zumindest möglich ist, daß verschiedenen Subjekten mit raum-zeitlicher Anschauung dieselben Gegenstände in unterschiedlicher Farbe erscheinen, es aber unmöglich ist, daß einigen Subjekten mit unseren Farbempfindungsfähigkeiten die Dinge nicht als raum-zeitlich strukturiert erscheinen. Nur etwas, das jemandem ausgedehnt erscheint, kann ihm nämlich farbig erscheinen.

(iv) Obviously, the way to find out that a predicate such as ‘is extended’ is not objective and needs to be relativised to some hidden parameter is different from the way in which one can find out that ‘moves to the left’, ‘begins at 5 o’clock’ or ‘weighs 5 kg’ are not objective. In the latter case we can encounter situations in which the parameter takes some other value (e.g. when we take another point of view, move to a different time zone, or travel to another planet). As human beings with fixed forms of intuition, however, we are never in a position to know that an object has a property that is relativised to some kind of subject that does not have our forms of intuition. Kant’s reasons for the claim that all spatio-temporal properties are relativised to subjects with our forms of intuition are philosophical in nature. He thinks that the claim offers the only explanation for the fact that we have a priori knowledge of some features of the objects of our experience, and he seems to think that subjects with a receptive sensibility can only gain knowledge of properties of this kind.

(v) My terminology offers a nice way to describe the kind of error that Kant describes as ‘illusion’. Kant says that illusion arises when ‘I attribute the redness to the rose in itself, [...] or extension to all outer objects in themselves, without noticing a certain relation of these objects to the subject and limiting my judgement to this’. It would be wrong to interpret Kant as saying here, I think, that the man on the street who calls a house extended suffers from an illusion. The man on the street does not bother whether the property which he ascribes is relativised to some kind of subject or is a property of the subject in itself. Illusion arises, I think, at a point at which somebody explicitly assumes that a predicate such as ‘is red’ or ‘is extended’ is objective and hence does not express a property that is relativised to some other parameter. Such a person would attribute something ‘to the object for itself what pertains to it only in relation to the senses or in general to the subject’. In the same sense illusion arises if somebody thinks that the predicate ‘moves to the

left' expresses a property which is not relativised to his point of view, or that the predicate 'weighs 5 kg' expresses a property that is not relativised to a gravitational field with a certain force.

(vi) Maybe the greatest advantage of the interpretation given so far is that it provides Kant with a very straightforward reply to Trendelenburg's famous objection against the argument for transcendental idealism given in the *Aesthetic*. The objection runs as follows: Even if Kant has succeeded in showing that spatio-temporal properties are properties of appearances and that we cannot know whether they are properties of things in themselves, that leaves still open the alternative that things in themselves have these properties although we cannot know this. Hence Kant is not justified when making his further claim that things in themselves do not have spatio-temporal properties. This objection is based on the presupposition that it is conceptually possible that one and the same properties pertain to the things as they appear to us and to the things as they are in themselves. This presupposition seems to be grounded in our way of speaking about appearances: You can say that a thing is red or round and you can say that it only appears to be red or round. Hence, being red or being round are normally treated as properties that things can have and can appear to have. However, on my interpretation, what Kant wants to say is not that there is a property such as being round and that things only appear to have this property. His claim is rather that the predicate 'is round' expresses a property that is relativised to epistemic subjects and is identical to the property more properly expressed by the predicate 'appears round to epistemic subjects with our forms of intuition'. If he is right, then Trendelenburg's objection fails, because then 'is round' expresses a property which cannot pertain to things in themselves for that would mean that it expresses a property that is not relativised to epistemic subjects. An analogy may again help to see this point clearer. As I have said, the conclusion of the argument in the *Aesthetic* can be compared to the discovery that the proper-

ties expressed by the predicate ‘moves to the left’ or the predicate ‘moves downwards’ are relativised to some parameter such as a point of view or a position in a gravitational field. Once you have noticed that, it would be absurd to ask whether a ball that has the property of moving to the left viewed from your perspective may not also have the property of moving to the left in itself, i.e. without any specification of a point of view, or whether that ball that has the property of moving downwards with respect to London may not also have the property of moving downwards in itself and absolutely (just as the Epicureans thought). The reason is that there is simply no such thing as moving to the left without moving to the left viewed from some perspective or another, and no such thing as moving downwards absolutely. There are no such properties that things in themselves could have. In just the same way one should say: If Kant is right and all spatio-temporal predicates express properties that are relativised to epistemic subjects of a certain kind then there simply is no such thing as an object having a spatio-temporal property in itself.

3. Appearances and dispositions

There is one dissatisfying aspect about the interpretation given so far. Properties of which we can have knowledge are analysed as being of the form ‘appearing to subjects of such-and-such kind in such and such way’, but, in this analysis, the concepts of appearing is not given any further analysis itself. I think that this situation is not only systematically unsatisfactory, but that it also does not match the Kantian text in which the notion of appearing *is* further analysed. According to Kant, mind-independent objects appear to us by affecting us, i.e. by invoking representations in us. Here are some passages, in which the notion of appearance is explicated in this way:

‘[...] intuition of outer objects as well as self-intuition of the mind represents both of these things *as each affects our senses, i.e. as it appears* [...].’ (B 69)

‘The representation of a body in intuition contains nothing at all that could pertain to an object in itself, but merely *the appearance of something and the way we are affected by it* [...].’ (A 44/ B 61).

‘[...] if we regard the objects of our senses as mere appearances then, by doing so, we admit that there is a thing in itself that grounds them, although we do not know this thing as it is in itself but rather only *its appearance, i.e. the way our senses are affected by this unknown something.*’ (*Prolegomena*, AA IV 314 f.)

To have an adequate interpretation of these passages is also necessary in order to deal with the fact that they are traditionally held to speak for a two-world view according to which Kant claims that the objects of empirical knowledge are our own mental states, i.e. the effects of an affection by mind-independent things in themselves. In the following, I want to interpret the quoted passages in a way that is compatible with the claim that we have empirical knowledge of mind-independent objects rather but only of our own mental states.

What we know, according to the quotations, is *the way objects affect us*. I think that ways in which objects affect human subjects can be individuated by means of the kinds of representation which the objects cause in the subjects. If some object causes a red-sensation in a subject than than the way in which it affects this subject is different from the way in which an objects that causes green-sensations in the subject affects it. Now, for the SODA-interpretation, it is important that the ways in which objects affect us are understood as properties of non-mental objects. In the following I want to argue that this task can most elegantly be achieved if those

ways are understood as *dispositions of objects to evoke certain kinds of representations in certain kinds of subjects*. Hence, my proposal for a further analysis of sentences (2.c) and (3.c) is the following:

(2.d) The rose has *the disposition to evoke red-sensations in subjects with our visual sensory system*.

(3.d) Outer objects have *the disposition to evoke intuitions of something extended in subjects with our forms of intuition*.

The main task in the following will be to spell out a notion of disposition according to which these dispositions are properties that are relativised to epistemic subjects. Let me first explain why this claim, although it might sound trivial, needs to be supported by further argument. I will do so by citing an objection that James Van Cleve has made against attempts to understand Kantian appearances in analogy to secondary qualities.

According to Van Cleve, the Pre-Kantian philosophical tradition had two models of secondary qualities to offer. According to Berkeley, secondary qualities are things that only exist in minds, or, more accurately, they are ideas or sensations. Obviously, this model would not serve the needs of a subjectivist ontological double-aspect interpretation for, according to this interpretation, appearances shall come out as properties of mind-independent objects. According to Locke, on the other hand, secondary qualities *are* properties of mind-independent objects; they are powers of these objects to produce certain ideas in us. However, these properties are not mind-dependent in the sense required by the interpretation, for the powers could well exist without having their effect on any minds. They are called-secondary qualities only because the ideas they normally produce are not similar to them. Now, I do not want to decide whether Van Cleve's reading of Locke is correct. All I

wanted to show is that it cannot be taken for granted that powers or dispositions to produce ideas in human minds are mind-dependent, or – in my terminology – relativised to subjects. Hence, I now want to present an account of dispositions on which they have this welcome feature.⁸

It is common nowadays to say that properties can be characterised by their causal role. You specify the causal role of a property by naming the typical causes and/or effects of that property. It is possible, for example, that some physical property P causes, under normal circumstances, red-sensation in subjects with a normal human visual system. You can then say that P plays the causal role of causing these sensations in such subjects. Now there are two views of colors in which colors are characterised by means of causal roles, namely physicalism and dispositionalism. Here is what both of these views say about the color red:

Physicalism about color:

red_P = the property that causes, under normal circumstances, red-sensation in subjects with a normal human visual system = (disjunctive) physical property P

Dispositionalism about color:

red_D = the property of having some property that causes, under normal circumstances, red-sensation in subjects with a normal human visual system

According to the physicalist conception of color, the color red is nothing but the player of the mentioned causal role. It is the property that causes, under normal circumstances, red-sensation in subjects with a normal human visual system, i.e. it is just the physical property P . According to this view of colors, colors are not mind-

⁸ Vgl. zum folgenden Prior/Pargetter/Jackson, 1982, McLaughlin, 1995 und den für den Zusammenhang zwischen dem Dispositionsbegriff und der Frage nach der Erkennbarkeit von Dingen an sich besonders interessanten Aufsatz Pettit, 1998.

dependent because objects can have the physical property without this property playing the causal role by which we pick it out. They are as little mind-dependent as Lockean secondary qualities, i.e. the forces that produce sense-impressions in us. Physicalist colors are also not, in my terminology, relativised to human subjects, for they cannot be expressed by predicates that are explicitly relativised subjects.

According to dispositionalism about colors, however, colors *are* properties that are relativised to subjects of a certain kind. Red_D , for example, is expressed by the predicate ‘has some property that causes, under normal circumstances, red-sensation in subjects with a normal human visual system’, a predicate that contains a term referring to a kind of epistemic subjects. The relativisation to epistemic subjects is essential for red_D , for nothing could have this property without causing the respective sensations in subjects with a normal human visual system. Red_D is not identical with the physical property P that, actually, causes red-sensations in us, i.e. red_P , for an object need not have P in order to have red_D . It only has to have *some* property that plays the relevant causal role. One could also say: it has to have *the disposition* to cause red-sensations in subjects with a normal human visual system, for red_D is nothing but that disposition. Red_P , on the other hand, is what is commonly called the categorical base of this disposition.

I want to suggest, that properties of the form appearing to such-and-such objects in such-and-such ways should be interpreted as dispositions in this sense. So my final suggestion for an analysis of our sentences about redness and extension reads as follows:

- (2.e) The rose has *the property of having some property that causes, under normal circumstances, red-sensation in subjects with a normal human visual system.*
- (3.e) Outer objects have *the property of having some property that causes intuitions of something extended in subjects with our forms of intuition.*

The properties that are ascribed here are relativised to epistemic subjects. It is important to note, though, that the properties over which is quantified in the phrase ‘having some property’ are not so relativised. They are properties that things have as they are in themselves.

One advantage of my dispositional version of SODA is that it explains nicely the strong conceptual connection that Kant, at many places in his work, describes as holding between the notion of appearances and that of things in themselves. In A 251 he writes:

‘[...] it follows naturally from the concept of an appearance in general that something must correspond to it which is not in itself appearance, for appearance can be nothing for itself and outside of our kind of representation; thus [...] the word ‘appearance’ must already indicate a relation to something the immediate representation of which is, to be sure, sensible, but which in itself, without this constitution of our sensibility [...], must be something, i.e., an object independent from sensibility.’ (A 251 f.)

The concept of appearance Kant is concerned with here is, I think, the concept of an object as the bearer of subject-relative properties. Kant seems to assume that no object could have only those subject-relative properties, but rather must always also have properties that are not relativised to epistemic subjects, i.e. properties that pertain to it as it is in itself. In other words: it must be somehow in itself in order to appear to us in a certain way. If I am right and subject-relative properties are dispositions in the suggested sense, then Kant has a very good reason for this claim. For, trivially, an object can only have the (subject-relative) property of having some (subject-independent) property that causes such-and-such representations in subjects of our kind, if that object has some (subject-independent) property that

causes those representations in us. There is no mind-dependent disposition without a mind-independent categorical base. It is important that you can know this without knowing *which* subject-independent properties are the categorical base of the disposition of which you have knowledge. This brings me to the last section of my paper.

4. Why Jacobi's objection is no good

The proposed ontological picture is this: mind-independent objects have mind-independent properties, i.e. have some properties in themselves (Karl Ameriks third level). The properties that objects have in themselves are causally responsible for the mental representations in us (Karl's first level). Kant claims that we do not know any of these properties, but he does not want to say that we only know the mental representations caused by them. We also have knowledge of the dispositions of the objects to cause certain kinds of representations in us (maybe that's on the second level). These dispositions are properties of the form *having some property that causes such-and-such representations in us*, and hence are properties that are relativised to subjects of our kind, i.e. properties that do not pertain to objects as they are in themselves. This picture implies that although we may not know one single property that an object has in itself, we know that the properties that objects have in themselves are causally responsible for the representations in us.

I would guess that, at that point of my talk, some of you have the disposition to apply Jacobi's famous objection against Kant's use of a notion of things in themselves to my interpretation. The objection says that Kant himself has forbidden to apply any concepts – including the categories of cause and effect – to things in themselves, and hence, by his own lights, it would be inconsistent for him to claim

that the properties that things have in themselves are causally responsible for the way they appear to us. I must say that I am not impressed by this objection. Firstly, I see no in the least plausible alternative to the assumption that the way things are in themselves at least in part accounts for the way they appear to us. It is true that the fact that object appear to us as being in space and time can be explained by recourse to our forms of intuition. However, our having these forms cannot explain why some glass, say, appears round to us, while this sheet of paper appears square. Some difference on the side of the things which appear to us must be causally responsible for that if we want to avoid the assumption that we make up the world at random. Secondly, and more importantly, I do not think that my interpretation implies that we apply the categories of cause and effect beyond the limits of experience when we say that the way things are in themselves is causally responsible for the way they appear to us. For in saying this, we do not *apply* these categories to things in themselves at all. Let me explain.

The first thing to notice is that the concepts of cause and effect are not applied to things but rather to events, i.e. to the having of properties by things. Secondly, there is no property, which a thing has in itself, such that, according to my interpretation, the category of cause is applied to the having of this property by some object. The crucial point is that you do not *apply* a concept to something just by saying that something falls under that concept. You can know that some number falls under the concept of a prime that is greater than 1 million without applying this concept to any particular number. And somebody can know that there are objects of which he does not think at the moment although he cannot apply the concept of such an object without contradicting herself. In order to *apply* a concept to something you have to know the thing to which you apply it. In order to say that something falls under it, you need not know anything that falls under it. Hence, we can say that there are properties that things have in themselves which are the causes of our rep-

resentations, without applying the category of cause to any property that a thing has in itself. Once you have understood this, it seems to me, you can not only agree that without the thing in itself you would be unable to enter into Kant's system, but you can also realize that even with it you can stay comfortably in it.