

# A PROPER REGULATION OF THE SCIENCE OF REASON AS THE KEY TO INTERPRETING TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM

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**Abstract.** The interpretation of the relation between appearances and things in themselves in Kant's transcendental idealism is a much-debated topic in Kant scholarship. Here I explore the idea that certain biases in Kant's ultimate philosophical interests prevented him from seeing that this relation should form the content of a regulative principle. After noting the biases in the regulative principles of the Antinomy chapter's theses, I propose correcting one of them so that it regulates the domain of knowledge circumscribed by Kant's theoretical critical philosophy, i.e. the Science of Reason. Such a principle is required because the claim of transcendental affection (reformulated in various places in terms of grounding claims) must be unified with the results of this critical investigation to avoid being purely dogmatic. Such a principle can be seen to emerge from the resolution of the third antinomy in its cosmological dimension which Kant, with his focus upon the possibility of free agency, pays little attention to. Indeed, the major unification problem created by transcendental affection, namely the spectre of double affection, is directly addressed by this resolution. This leads to justifying a double-aspect theory of reality-in-itself whereby the latter must be thought from our perspective as grounding empirical causality.

**Keywords:** Kant, Regulative Principles, Transcendental Idealism, Third Antinomy, Transcendental Affection, Science of Reason.

The existence of things in themselves and their relation to appearances define two central issues in the interpretation of Kant's Transcendental Idealism. Both are controversial: any knowledge claims about the existence of what lies beyond the bounds of knowledge and its relation to what lies within is inherently problematic. This suggests retreating to dealing with all claims about reality in itself as having a merely methodological function. But Kant's text contains repeated assertions about things in themselves and their relation to appearances which seem to call for a more metaphysically robust interpretation. If that is the case, further questions arise as to the metaphysical status of appearances and things in themselves and their relations.

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While much has been written on this topic, the general approach to defending a particular stance vis-à-vis these questions has been, reasonably enough, to seek evidence on these issues in Kant's texts, weighing what counts in favour and what counts against it. While this weighing involves assessing the philosophical merits of the proposed stance, this tends to take second place behind the textual evidence itself.

Although this is *prima facie* a reasonable methodology, I would like to explore another approach which acknowledges that Kant has certain blind spots or at least biases connected with his ultimate philosophical interests, that explain why he missed out on the opportunity to be clearer in his claims relating to things in themselves. Specifically, first, as is well known, practical philosophy played a central role in Kant's critical system<sup>1</sup> which is reflected in his arguing for the priority of practical over theoretical reason. Second, Kant's interest in architectonic is evident throughout his critical philosophy: the systematic structure of this philosophical edifice is in evidence at many levels and indeed, systematicity itself has philosophical significance for Kant. I will suggest that these interests have led Kant to ignore certain avenues of investigation: this leads to overlooking resources that his philosophical system possesses when it comes to clarifying certain interpretative issues.

In this paper, the focus will be on the Antinomy chapter and the nature and content of the regulative principles it gives rise to. These issues may seem far removed from the questions I am ultimately seeking to address, namely the status and interpretation of claims about things in themselves and their relation to appearances. To connect these two sets of issues, the conception of the task of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as that of outlining the principles of a Science of Reason, is a helpful tool. On the one hand, I shall argue that the questions that need addressing with regard to things in themselves are crucial to the unity of this science. On the other hand, such unity, I shall claim, requires proper regulation. That is, there is a missing regulative principle which, insofar as it regulates the domain of knowledge of the science of reason, is a meta-regulative principle for our cognition.

The paper is organised as follows. After a brief overview of the nature of regulative principles, I consider the domain of knowledge defined by the theoretical critique of reason: does it need a regulative principle and if so, what can we say about it and where should we look for it? This leads me to turn to the Antinomy chapter and the problem of the regulative principle(s) it gives rise to. To address this problem it will be essential to obtain clarity about the Resolution of the Third

<sup>1</sup> This was already noted by his contemporaries; see Hermann Andreas Pistorius, "Review of 'Elucidations of Professor Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* by Joh. Schulze, Royal Prussian Court Chaplain, Königsberg, Dengel, 1784, 8, 254 pages", in *Kant's Early Critics on Freedom of the Will*, 1786/2022, pp. 3–8.

Antinomy. The regulative principle this gives rise to will then, I shall argue, have the meta-regulative function I have described. Its content will then be seen to justify a double-aspect metaphysical interpretation of Transcendental Idealism with further important perspectival features.

### THE TRANSCENDENTAL DIALECTIC AND THE REGULATIVE PRINCIPLES OF REASON

In the introduction to the Transcendental Dialectic Kant presents reason as faculty which, in its pure use, unifies the cognitions of the understanding (A305-6/B362). Kant asks whether reason itself has any synthetic a priori principles (A306/B363). The general form of such principles is then identified as that of ‘find[ing] the unconditioned for conditioned conditions of the understanding, with which its unity will be completed’ (A307/B364). Such principles are however transcendent. Their legitimate function will be confined to giving a direction to the cognitive activity of the understanding (A308-9/B365-6). This function is carried out through reason’s formulation of transcendental ideas that represent ‘the totality of conditions to a given conditioned thing’ (A322/B379). Kant identifies the ideas of the soul, the world and God as unities, respectively of ‘the thinking subject’, ‘the series of conditions of appearance’ and ‘the conditions of all objects of thought in general’ (B391-2/A334-5). Willaschek<sup>2</sup> clarifies that these are in fact types of ideas, since each of them subsumes several ideas under it. For instance, the cosmological idea (world) subsumes composition, division, arising, and dependence of the world (A415/B443)<sup>3</sup>.

After these general considerations about the faculty of reason, in the Paralogisms, the Antinomy and the Ideal of Pure Reason chapters, Kant investigates how reason is led to various types of error through its natural propensity to take the unconditioned to be given. While this doctrine of *transcendental illusion* is primarily negative in its destruction of key tenets of traditional metaphysics, it has a positive aspect which Kant spells out in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic (A642-67/B670-95). This is the hypothetical use of reason (A647/B675) which Kant

<sup>2</sup> Marcus Willaschek, *Kant on the Sources of Metaphysics: The Dialectic of Pure Reason*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> I follow Stephen Howard (“The cosmological ideas in Kant’s critical philosophy: their unique status and twofold regulative use”, in *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 2023, pp. 1–17, p. 2, <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjp.12529>) in keeping four rather than five cosmological ideas as M. Willaschek (*Kant on the Sources of Metaphysics: The Dialectic of Pure Reason*, pp. 205–6) further proposes. Jonathan Bennett (*Kant’s Dialectic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974, p. 258) criticises Kant’s apparently arbitrary identification of the traditional ideas of metaphysics, that of the soul, the world and God as playing a central role here. But as Henry Allison (*Kant’s Transcendental Idealism. An Interpretation and a Defense*, Yale, Yale University Press, 2004, p. 320) shows, there is nothing arbitrary about this, and there is no claim that this is in any way an exhaustive list. We shall see below that this latter point is important.

characterises as ‘regulative, bringing unity into particular cognitions as far as possible and thereby approximating the rule to universality’ (A647/B675). But reason’s conception of the systematic unity of nature is not just an arbitrary logical principle that is *chosen as heuristic guide* for the use of the understanding: it is also a transcendental one. As Paul Guyer<sup>4</sup> explains, Kant is claiming that we could not apply the logical principle of systematicity without the presupposition that nature itself is systematically organised.

While this unity or ideal of systematicity is merely ‘projected’, Kant nevertheless describes this hypothetical use of reason as ‘the touchstone of truth for [the understanding’s] rules’. Exactly why the systematic unity of nature acquires such as status becomes clearer after Kant’s presentation of general principles of the systematic organisation of the understanding’s cognitions, namely ‘the principles of homogeneity, specification and continuity of forms’ (A658/B686). Indeed, Kant reminds us that ‘the three kinds of transcendental ideas (psychological, cosmological and theological) cannot be referred directly to any object referring to them, and to its determination’ (A671/B699). Nevertheless, they have a positive function insofar as ‘under the presupposition of (...) an object [corresponding to] (...) the idea’, such ideas lead to systematic unity, always extending the cognition of experience but never going contrary to experience’ (ibid.). So while the ideas of reason thus define what Henry Allison describes as a *focus imaginarius*<sup>5</sup>, without their guiding roles, the understanding would not be able to carry out its function. So it is necessary to apply the logical principle of the systematic unity of nature which, from what was just said, entails that it is necessary to endorse the transcendental principle of the systematic unity of nature. This result is described by Kant’s assigning these principles ‘objective but indeterminate validity’ (A663/B691). The aim of this paper is not to discuss these difficult issues, so I shall accept these claims about regulative principles, noting that a regulative principle is thus not merely a fictional principle defining a *focus imaginarius*, i.e. functioning in an ‘as if’ mode, and that it has a function defining a necessary condition for cognition. With these assumptions, I proceed to the task of circumscribing the domain of cognition defined by the results of Kant’s theoretical critical enquiry.

## THE CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON AS A SCIENCE OF REASON

Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (CPR) is a text whose method is synthetic, as opposed to the *Prolegomena*’s (*Prol.*) analytic method (*Prol.* AA04: 274-9). The latter proceeds by assuming the truth of certain types of scientific knowledge (mathematics, pure natural science, etc.) and proceeds to an analysis which identifies the conditions for the possibility of having such knowledge. The CPR on the other

<sup>4</sup> Paul Guyer, *Kant’s System of Nature and Freedom*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 62.

<sup>5</sup> H. Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism. An Interpretation and a Defense*, p. 430.

hand derives its claims synthetically from certain basic assumptions. That means that the *CPR*'s ability to persuade will depend upon how widely these assumptions are accepted.

Melissa McBay Merritt<sup>6</sup> focuses upon two controversial assumptions. At the outset of the Transcendental Aesthetic (TAe), Kant spells out a thesis about the heterogeneity of two faculties of cognition, the faculty of intuitions, i.e. sensibility, and the faculty of concepts, i.e. the understanding (A15/B29–30). Further, it is assumed that each faculty has some *a priori* elements: it will be the task of transcendental philosophy to separate these from anything that is empirical (A20/B34–5). This assumption of *a priori* elements is already spelled out in the B Preface when Kant proposes a new epistemological methodology for metaphysics: ‘we cognize of things a priori only what we ourselves have put into them’ (Bxviii).

While these are not assumptions that would be endorsed by an empiricist philosopher, it is possible to make a case for them. This involves noting that they define a starting point that can be presented as reason in the broad sense, i.e. including the understanding with its synthetic *a priori* judgements which are taken to be possible<sup>7</sup>. This is in line with Kant’s own statements: the *CPR* is the ‘science of an a priori judging reason’ (*Prol.* AA04: 2561–2; see also A849/B877). And then we note that, if cognition of objects is to be possible *a priori*, it must involve *a priori* concepts. And further, the synthetic *a priori* cognition of empirical objects requires that there be *a priori* conditions of sensibility under which these objects are given. This provides some support for Kant’s assumptions.

But now, we should ask the question, if this is the science of reason, i.e. of a well delimited domain of cognition analogously to cosmology as cognition of the natural world of outer sense and psychology as cognition of the domain of inner sense, should it not, like these areas of knowledge, have its own regulative principle?

As we saw above, regulative principles are required for knowledge acquired by the understanding to provide a *focus imaginarius* for the purpose of unifying the domain of knowledge in question into a systematically organised unified whole (A645/B673). But the knowledge that is the science of reason is a product of reason so it should arguably already display the required unity: that would be the unity of the synthetic method characterising the *CPR*.

However, the starting point of the *CPR* does include another important claim which cannot itself be justified by the synthetic method. Unlike the distinction

<sup>6</sup> Melissa McBay Merritt, “Science and the synthetic method of the *Critique of Pure Reason*”, in *Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 59, nr. 3, 2006, pp. 517–539.

<sup>7</sup> A synthesis also implies elements that are to be synthesised. McBay Merritt makes a good case for the claim these elements are the various cognitive capacities with their characteristic features and principles, with the Transcendental Deduction ultimately establishing in what sense they are indeed cognitive faculties and how they combine in the constitution of objectivity (*ibid.*, pp. 534, 538–539). In this way, she makes a good case for defending Kant’s conception of the *CPR* as a science of reason.

sensibility/understanding and the claim that these faculties have pure elements, this claim would have been considered uncontroversial by Kant's empiricist interlocutors, and acceptable to some rationalists<sup>8</sup>; this may explain why this claim has apparently been overlooked by McBay Merritt. That is the claim that the object 'affects the mind in a certain way' (A19/B33). Although some commentators argue that the reference to an object implies that what is described here is the empirical causing of affections by the perceived object<sup>9</sup>, this is implausible precisely because of the synthetic method of the *CPR*. The conditions for the constitution of the objectivity of appearances are only available once the TAe has reached its conclusions and the principles of the pure understanding in the *Transcendental Analytic* have been formulated. There is therefore, at the outset of the TAe, no conception of objective appearance in place. Further, the way Kant refers to an object affecting the mind, its complete independence of the latter's faculties would seem to be implied. Finally, if this statement is to resonate with the empiricist (and with some rationalists), it should be an uncontroversial statement that our senses are affected by some reality that is characterised by this independence. I take this as supporting the view that the object in question is the default thing-in-itself which, the transcendental realist (e.g. the naturalist) assumes, affects our senses. Since the affection by this object is a material condition of objective experience and knowledge, it is called *transcendental affection*<sup>10</sup>.

This assumption is not integrated with the rest of the knowledge generated by the science of reason in the *CPR*. Indeed, as Jacobi<sup>11</sup> famously observed (1787), this is a claim that we have to endorse to be able to first "enter into" Kant's critical system. While there can be no question of seeking to ground this claim independently of this system, the integration of the system of knowledge of the science of reason calls for this claim to be unified with the rest of the knowledge of this science. Since such integration, i.e. unification of knowledge, is what regulative principles aim for by defining a type of systematic unity to be pursued, it is arguably to achieve this integration that a regulative principle is required.

<sup>8</sup> It would have been accepted by proponents of a physical influx understanding of causality (see A390–392) such as Knutzen for instance. Kant himself, even in his pre-critical phase, defended this understanding of causality (*ND* AA01: 410, see Eric Watkins, *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 112–159).

<sup>9</sup> Erich Adickes, *Kant und das Ding an Sich*, Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlag, 1924/2013, p. 36.

<sup>10</sup> See Jill Vance Buroker, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: An Introduction*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006; Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, New York, Basic Books, 1999. Even if one were to question this interpretation, the assumption of transcendental affection is needed to justify Kant's repeated claim that some thing in itself or things in themselves ground(s) appearances (e.g. A190/B235, A358f, A380, A387).

<sup>11</sup> Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, "On Transcendental Idealism", in G. di Giovanni (trans.), *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel*, Montreal and Kingston, McGill and Queen's University Press, 1994, pp. 331–338.

But how exactly can this claim be integrated? Sensations are characterised in the principles of empirical thought as the mark of the actuality of an empirical object (A218/B266). This is only possible insofar as it is assumed that there is a causal link connecting object and sensation. This is confirmed by Kant's endorsing a causal theory of the perception of appearances. In the Refutation of Idealism, he thus refers to sensations as revealing the existence of things outside us insofar as they are 'states, which are given in perception, in accordance with empirical laws of causality' (A227/B280). This causal link by which the object brings about a sensation is *empirical affection*. We now, however, have two types of affection that are deemed to be causally responsible for the occurrence of sensations: empirical and transcendental affection. So the required integration must involve reconciling these two causal claims. Without such an integration moreover, the coherence of the critical system would be threatened: this is the famous *problem of double affection*<sup>12</sup>.

Various proposals have been formulated to address this problem, e.g. recently by Nick Stang<sup>13</sup>. Whatever the merits of such proposals<sup>14</sup>, I claim that what is rather called for here is a regulative principle for the domain of knowledge of the science of reason, i.e. the transcendental cognition of the *CPR*, i.e. a *meta-regulative* principle. That is because solving this problem will enable the unification of transcendental affection with the rest of the Science of Reason.

A *desideratum* would be for this meta-regulative principle not to be an *ad hoc* principle that unifies them by solving the problem of double affection. That is, it should be a principle that arises from this science of reason itself. This would ensure a proper integration of transcendental affection within the science of reason. This means that we should be searching within the Dialectic of the *CPR* for some more general problem whose solution can then be applied to identifying this meta-regulative principle that is designed to solve the particular problem of double affection.

The claim that there is a meta-regulative principle that has not been spelled out by Kant is therefore a claim that there is something missing in the Transcendental Dialectic. Because of the systematic organisation of the *CPR* as science of reason, this must therefore be a claim that something is not quite right with its systematic organisation when it comes to the regulative principles. So a *clue as to where to look for a new regulative principle* is that we should first examine the systematic organisation of the existing set of such principles.

<sup>12</sup> E. Adickes, *Kant und das Ding an Sich*.

<sup>13</sup> Nicholas F. Stang, "The Non-Identity of Appearances and Things in Themselves", in *Nous*, vol. 48, nr. 1, 2015, pp. 106–136.

<sup>14</sup> Chris Onof, "Reality in-itself and the Ground of Causality", in *Kantian Review*, vol. 24, nr. 2, 2019, pp. 197–222, p. 217.

### PROBLEMS WITH KANT'S REGULATIVE PRINCIPLES

In the Appendix to the CPR, having presented the regulative function of a principle of systematicity and added that it defines a purposive unity, Kant proceeds to a transcendental deduction of the Ideas of Reason (A681ff/B709ff). The key to the deduction is that reason can only think the systematic unity of nature by 'giving its idea an object which, however, cannot be given through any experience' (A681/B709).

While the theological idea can fairly easily be seen to posit an object that ensures the unity of all appearances, things are not so clear with the other two ideas as even a sympathetic commentator like Allison<sup>15</sup> observes. Allison<sup>16</sup> makes a good case for viewing some notion of soul as a suitable *focus imaginarius* of all the determinations of inner sense<sup>17</sup>. However, when it comes to the cosmological idea, there are several problems.

To start with, let us remind ourselves of the general regulative principle applying to the whole of the Antinomy chapter:

the principle of reason is only a rule, prescribing a regress in the series of conditions for given appearances, in which regress it is never allowed to stop with an absolutely unconditioned (A509/B537).

This is consistent with Kant's summary in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic where this principle is stated as the principle that

we ought to proceed as if the series [of conditions] were itself infinite, i.e. proceed *in indefinitum* (A685/B713).

Although Allison<sup>18</sup> claims that Kant's statement of a regulative function in the Appendix summarises what he had presented in the very last section of the Antinomy chapter, this is not quite right. In that section, Kant singled out the Fourth Antinomy which argued for the compatibility of the contingency of causal series in appearance with the positing of an absolutely necessary being outside nature as ground of their existence. Indeed, pre-empting the discussion in the Appendix, there he claims that:

<sup>15</sup> H. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism. An Interpretation and a Defense*, p. 441.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 442–443.

<sup>17</sup> Here, Allison seems to endorse the plausibility of a functionalist explanation as compatible with Kant's epistemology insofar as it is not wedded to any particular "hardware" as the bearer of the causal properties characterising cognitive processes. However, as Allison also reminds us, a conception of spontaneity is essential to Kant's account of cognition. This is puzzling insofar as functionalism gives a completely causal account of cognition in which there is no conceptual space for spontaneity.

<sup>18</sup> H. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism. An Interpretation and a Defense*, p. 461.



transcendent ideas have a merely intelligible object, which one is of course allowed to admit as a transcendental object, but about which one knows nothing (A565/B593).

As to the further step of considering such an object to be determinable (e.g. as soul in the Paralogisms and God in the Ideal of Pure Reason), Kant indicates that,

among the cosmological ideas, the one occasioning the fourth antinomy presses us to venture so far as to take this step (A566/B594).

However, much as Kant indicates that, if reason is not to ‘remain in conflict with itself (...) this unconditioned must be posited outside the series in the intelligible realm’ (A564/B592), he shies away from describing this as a regulative principle. But what else could this requirement be described as?

Clearly, Kant wants to retain only the Antinomial antitheses as defining regulative principles of theoretical reason. As justification, one could argue that these are in effect the principles that are required directly to guide the use of the understanding. Kant precisely adopts this approach: the ‘empiricism’ of the antitheses’ regulative principles ‘offers advantages to the speculative interests of reason, which are very attractive and far surpass any that the dogmatic teacher of the ideas of reason might promise’ (A468/B496) with his *focus imaginarii* based upon the antinomial theses. But is this relatively greater usefulness really a satisfactory resolution of the conflicting *foci* which the theses and antitheses define?

Kant’s way of addressing this worry is to formulate regulative principles for the antinomial theses, but practical ones (A466/B494): the dichotomy practical/theoretical is thus supposed to resolve the concern about such conflicts of reason. I think that Jonathan Bennett<sup>19</sup> is right to describe the claim that ‘the line between Thesis and Antithesis correlates with one between “practical principles” and theoretical knowledge’ as ‘fairly wild’. In aligning antinomial theses with Platonism, Kant indicates that these ‘provide (...) principles which are excellent for the practical’ (A472/B500).

In the case of the Third Antinomy, when its actual cosmological dimension is ignored and one exclusively focuses upon causal series of events brought about by human agency, the claim that the ‘self is (...) free and elevated above natural compulsion in its voluntary actions’ (A466/B494) is clearly a ‘cornerstone(...) of morality and religion’ (A466/B494). But what about causal series of events that are not products of human agency?

In the case of the First Antinomy, ‘that the world has a beginning’ may well indeed also qualify as such a cornerstone, although more would have to be said

<sup>19</sup> J. Bennett, *Kant’s Dialectic*, p. 189.

about this. Nothing however is proposed for the spatial version of this antinomial conflict.

When it comes to the Second Antinomy, Kant proposes as principle ‘that my thinking self is of a simple and therefore incorruptible nature’. This is rather *ad hoc* and again leaves out all manner of series of conditions for which no unconditioned defined by the Thesis is proposed<sup>20</sup>.

Only the case of the Fourth Antinomy where the thesis claims that the ‘whole order of things constituting the world descends from an original being’, is fully convincing as practical regulative principle if this means that this order thereby acquires ‘all its unity and purposive connectedness’. But here, we in fact already have a theoretical regulative principle, as pointed out above.

There are two important remarks to be made about these issues. In the case of the Fourth Antinomy and Kant’s reticence to let it define a theoretical regulative principle, Kant is here partly a victim of his own architectonic constraints: he would not want any concept of God to be retained as defining a regulative principle of the Antinomy since the Idea of God is the preserve of the Ideal of Pure Reason<sup>21</sup>. As for the other Antinomies, Kant’s overriding interest in the practical, which is already announced in the Preface to the *CPR* (Bxxvi-xxx) seems to have waylaid him in proposing these practical regulative principles<sup>22</sup>. So, both these key features of Kant’s philosophy, his fixation upon architectonic considerations, and the primacy he bestows upon practical philosophy, can be seen to be at work in the problems with the Antinomy’s regulative principles that I have flagged above.

These brief considerations confirm the Antinomy chapter as the place where Kant’s account of regulative principles is most problematic. For these reasons, it therefore makes sense to look at whether this is where one might find a place for a meta-regulative principle that would ensure the unity of the knowledge of the Science of Reason presented in the *CPR* with the assumption of transcendental affection that is required to enter into Kant’s critical system.

Furthermore, it seems that the Third Antinomy is the right place to look for a very obvious reason. Indeed, the problem of the integration of transcendental affection with the science of reason of the *CPR* lies essentially in the apparent *causal* overdetermination of sensations by transcendental and empirical affection,

<sup>20</sup> Although there is no space to develop this idea here, the regulative principles defined by the antitheses do not in fact rely upon a notion of unconditioned since they posit an indefinitely long series in the regress rather than an infinitely long one. So the claim that they are regulative principles is itself problematic since a regulative principle requires an idea of the unconditioned whose object defines a *focus imaginarius*.

<sup>21</sup> A case can further be made for Kant’s focus upon the absolutely necessary being in the concluding section of the Antinomy because this provides the cue that introduces the next chapter, namely the Ideal of Pure Reason.

<sup>22</sup> Further, depending upon how strongly one interprets Kant’s thesis of the priority of the practical in the *CPrR* (*CPrR* AA04: 120), antinomial conflicts resurface at the level of regulative principles: if a theoretical reason has to endorse as true the claims made in such practical regulative principles, then these will conflict with what the practical regulative principles claim.

i.e. the double affection problem. So it is an issue that concerns the category of causality. And since the Third Antinomy deals with conflicts arising for the use of this category, it is there that we should be looking to find the materials to formulate the required meta-regulative principle.

### **THE THIRD ANTINOMY**

To make headway, it is therefore important to delve a little into the detail of Kant's text of the Third Antinomy and its resolution. To start with, a brief reminder of the nature of this Antinomy. As with the whole of the Transcendental Dialectic, the issue is reason's demand for the unconditioned for all that is conditioned. And the transcendental illusion lies in reason's claiming that the unconditioned is given. This unconditioned is claimed by reason to be a determination of an object, the concept of which is a transcendental idea.

In the case of the Third Antinomy, series of conditions constructed from the category of causality and characterizing the world as a whole are at stake. The Third Antinomy considers series formed by seeking conditions for the causality of the cause of a given event:

[T]he causality of the cause through which something happens is always something that has happened, which according to the law of nature presupposes once again a previous state and its causality (A444/B472).

The Thesis presents the case for causal completion of the series that is thus defined, through 'an absolute causal spontaneity' (A446/B474). The Antithesis takes the opposite view, namely that such a first cause is not allowable because it is incompatible with the causal law (A445/B473).

So, as with all other antinomical conflicts, we have the requirement to satisfy two apparently incompatible sets of demands. The Thesis presents the case for the faculty of reason which seeks directly to posit an unconditioned. The Antithesis prioritizes the truth of a principle that characterises the faculty of understanding, so that the unconditioned sought by reason lies in the totality of the conditions identified by the understanding.

### **THE RESOLUTION OF THE THIRD ANTINOMY**

Although this has generally been overlooked, the Resolution of the Third Antinomy begins in the preamble to the resolution of the dynamical antinomies. There, Kant points to the absence of a constraint of homogeneity on dynamical series. He can therefore draw upon Transcendental Idealism (TI) in the minimal sense that appearances are not real in themselves: this creates the conceptual space for something that is not merely appearance. He thus claims that:

the dynamical ideas allow a condition of appearances outside the series of appearances (A531/B559)

It follows that it will be possible to resolve this conflict of reason with itself by satisfying the demands of the understanding in the domain of appearances (Antithesis) and the demands of reason by going outside this domain (Thesis). Therefore Thesis and Antithesis ‘may both be true’ (A532/B560). I quote Kant’s words because he does not refer to a possibility here. This is because what is at stake is merely a logical possibility, while, at least in this chapter, he reserves the term ‘possibility’ to denote a real possibility. The fact that the logical possibility of the truth of both Thesis and Antithesis is established before the Resolution of the Third Antinomy begins shows that there is more to the latter than establishing a mere logical possibility as is generally assumed<sup>23</sup>.

The Resolution proper starts off by discussing general causal series. Kant introduces the concept of freedom in the required cosmological context that is appropriate to the Antinomy chapter:

By freedom in the cosmological sense (...), I understand the faculty of beginning a state from itself, the causality of which does not in turn stand under another cause determining it in time in accordance with the law of nature (A533/B561).

That is, freedom is defined very generally as a type of causality, that of a first cause. There is no restriction as to what might be endowed with such a causality. Kant then proceeds to add to the merely logically possible scenario sketched in the preamble by now drawing upon the fact that appearances *must be grounded* in things-in-themselves (A537/B565), a stronger claim than that made in the preamble. This allows him to introduce the concept of an *intelligible cause*<sup>24</sup> as more than a mere logical possibility, namely an actuality.

Although this is not the first time that Kant makes such statements about the necessity of appearances being grounded in something else (e.g. A190/B235, A387, B522f, *Prol.* AA04: 286), the grounds for these assertions are unclear. It just seems as though Kant is making a semantic point about the meaning of the word appearance which must be the appearing of something (A252). Kant no doubt would argue that this claim follows from that of transcendental affection. But exactly how is unclear, and precisely this lack of clarity reflects the problem

<sup>23</sup> See Chris Onof, “Kant and the Possibility of Transcendental Freedom”, in *Kant Studien*, vol. 112, nr. 3, 2021, pp. 343–371; and Chris Onof, *The Problem of Free Will and Naturalism*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2024, pp. 46–48.

<sup>24</sup> *Pace* Anja Jauernig (*The World according to Kant: Appearances and Things in Themselves in Critical Idealism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021, p. 76), this intelligible causality is not a causality that is to be understood as operating exclusively in reality-in-itself as opposed to linking this reality with appearances. It is as grounding appearances that this causality is characterised (see A539/B567 and A546/B574).

examined in this paper, namely the lack of a proper integration of the claim of transcendental affection with the rest of the *Critique*. I take this to mean that such a claim of grounding of appearances in something that is real in-itself will have to form part of the sought-after meta-regulative principle<sup>25</sup>.

Before continuing the examination of the Resolution of the Third Antinomy, one might wonder whether, with this grounding claim, Kant has not gone too far. That is, is this claim not stronger than what the resolution requires? For it would appear to show the truth of the Thesis, and given that the Antithesis, at least in its defining an indefinitely long task, is also true of appearances, both are *actually* true.

But equating the claim about a grounding intelligible cause with the truth of the Thesis involves overlooking the fact that Kant has not established that this intelligible cause defines a *plausible candidate condition* for the series of causes. This is elucidated most clearly in the Resolution of the Fourth Antinomy. There, Kant distinguishes the tasks of the resolution of the Third from that of the Fourth Antinomy as follows:

in the case of freedom, the thing itself as cause (*substantia phaenomenon*) would nevertheless belong to the series of conditions, and *only its causality* would be thought as intelligible (A561/B589, my emphasis).

What is needed, and is not given through the mere grounding claim, is what I call a *solution-thing*<sup>26</sup> which is an appearance that is endowed with an intelligible causality that could provide a first term for the causal series in appearance as required by the Thesis. But so far, all the resolution of the Third Antinomy has produced is an intelligible cause. And indeed, Kant's assessment at the end of the first section of the Resolution of the Third Antinomy, of what has so far been achieved, is prefixed by: 'Here I have only wanted to note' (A537/B565), hardly suggesting that the antinomial problem has been solved.

As if to confirm the focus upon what I have suggested is missing for a solution to the Third Antinomy, Kant kicks off the second section of the resolution with a striking affirmation:

I call intelligible that in an object of sense which is not itself appearance (A538/B566).

<sup>25</sup> It might be thought that there is a threat of circularity here if this grounding claim is to be part of the regulative principle that this resolution gives rise to, while at the same time being assumed in this very resolution. However, the resolution, as I show below, amounts to an assertion about the real possibility of a first cause causality (freedom). It does not depend upon any claim about what is *actual*, such as the actuality of a ground of all appearances. The role of this grounding claim is rather to contribute to setting out what is involved in the real possibility of such a first cause causality for the cosmological problem.

<sup>26</sup> C. Onof, *The Problem of Free Will and Naturalism*, pp. 45, 82–84.

This is, in effect, a straightforward affirmation of a metaphysical dual aspect understanding of the relation between reality in-itself and appearances<sup>27</sup>. The grounds for this claim are an interesting topic of investigation that we cannot do justice to in this paper. It will therefore have to suffice to observe that grounds for this claim are clearer in the B-edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the chapter on Phenomena and Noumena, Kant indicates that, ‘we call certain objects, as appearances, beings of sense (phaenomena), because we distinguish the way in which we intuit them from their constitution in itself’ (B306). What justifies the claim that there is a way in which the things these objects identify, exist in themselves? In the B edition, it is the Refutation of Idealism which ensures that we can indeed talk of beings of sense, i.e. that there are objects existing outside the mind (B275). And, as the *Prolegomena* published between the two editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason* clarifies: ‘I leave to things as we obtain them by the senses their actuality and only limit our sensuous intuition of these things to this: that it represents in no respect, not even in the pure intuitions of space and of time, anything more than mere appearance of those things, but never their constitution in themselves’ (*Prolog.* AA04: 292–3). That is, the existence of empirical objects is simultaneously that of the things these identify, as they are in themselves.

In terms of the evolution of the dialectic of the Resolution of the Third Antinomy, this dual-aspect statement announces that Kant is precisely now concerned with finding a *solution-thing*, i.e. something with an intelligible aspect characterised by its being endowed with the intelligible cause which was introduced in the first section.

What is then particularly striking is that, without any warning, the next sentence focuses upon the case of agency:

one can consider the causality of this being in two aspects, as intelligible in its *action* as a thing in itself, and as sensible in the effects of that *action* as an appearance in the world of sense (my emphasis).

The reference to an action leaves us in no doubt that the solution-thing in question is now an agent – later to be specified as a rational agent. So what about the cosmological dimension of the Third Antinomy?<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See A38/B55, Lucy Allais, “Kant’s Idealism and the Secondary Quality Analogy”, in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 45, nr. 3, 2012, pp. 459–484; Tobias Rosefeldt, “Dinge an sich und sekundäre Qualitäten”, in Jürgen Stolzenberg (ed.), *Kant in der Gegenwart*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2007, pp. 167–212; and C. Onof, “Reality in-itself and the Ground of Causality”.

<sup>28</sup> J. Bennett (*Kant’s Dialectic*, pp. 188–189) points out that Kant does not simply drop the cosmological problem, but relies upon a point made in the Thesis that, if a first cause is allowed, then it could be allowed ‘within the course of the world’ (A448-50/B476-8). This is problematic but not for the reason Bennett identifies since he overlooks the fact that the concept of freedom *qua* first cause is not just designed to ‘solve (...) problems about humans’ (p. 189). What is problematic is that the logic of Kant’s statement means that if the Third Antinomy is solved in its cosmological dimension, then it is arguably also solved in its agential form. But we find that the resolution focuses upon the latter so does not obviously license a translation to the former.

One possible thought here would be to argue that it is not necessary to consider the cosmological problem as a separate one. That is: the demand of reason will be satisfied by allowing certain causal series to be considered to have arisen as the effect of freedom<sup>29</sup>. However, it is clear that the faculty of reason would not be satisfied to have an unconditioned posited for only a few causal series: this would not be sufficient to allay its thirst for the unconditioned. What we would be left with is still a plethora of causal series of events for which no unconditioned has been identified. Further, the completeness achieved for agential causal series is only a completeness of the agent's contribution to the action; 'other cooperating [natural] causes' (A549/B577) are also involved.

Although the text is not unambiguous on this issue, it appears that Kant does not, at this point, completely abandon any consideration of general causal series. Indeed, it is striking how he then talks of an 'object of sense' (A538/B566) which would, at the very least, be an unusual way of referring to an agent.

Further, while his focus is however clearly upon causal series of appearances arising from agency, Kant is, I think, aware of the potential problem of a clash between possible solutions of the cosmological and agential versions of the third antinomial conflicts. Norman Kemp Smith<sup>30</sup> and Wolfgang Ertl<sup>31</sup> have argued that a clash arises because once we have provided a grounding in an intelligible cause for the whole of appearances, there is no more conceptual space for also grounding an agent's actions in something else, i.e. in their causality of freedom.

I think that Kant in effect denies this in saying the following:

For since these appearances, because they are not things in themselves, must be grounded in a transcendental object determining them as mere representations, nothing hinders us from ascribing to this transcendental object, apart from the property through which it appears, also another causality that is not appearance, even though its effect is encountered in appearance (A538-9/B566-7).

Here, Kant is talking of appearances in general and the transcendental object that grounds all appearances. This is the intelligible cause identified in the previous section. What he claims is that there still is conceptual space for another causality apart from that of the grounding of appearances in general. It follows that, whatever would be a solution to the cosmological problem and thereby provide a ground for all appearances, would leave room for individual agents' causality of freedom. This directly addresses the worry raised by Kemp Smith and Ertl.

<sup>29</sup> A motivation for this view would be the point Kant makes in an earlier section of the Antinomy chapter in which Kant presents a '[s]keptical representation of the cosmological questions' raised by the antinomial conflicts. There, he refers to the possibility that 'you choose now and then to admit occurrences produced from themselves' (A488/B516). However, the purpose of this section is to illustrate the problem of claiming the truth of the Thesis without Transcendental Idealism.

<sup>30</sup> Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London & Basingstoke, McMillan, 1979, p. 513.

<sup>31</sup> Wolfgang Ertl, *Kants Auflösung der "dritten Antinomie"*, München, Verlag Karl Alber, 1998, p. 90.

But what licenses such an answer to it? The error in the worry they raise lies in assuming that the resolution of the cosmological antinomial conflict must involve a ground for all natural appearances that *excludes* any role for the agent's freedom: the later may be needed to provide further determination of the appearances. Since an empirical object is a determinable object, i.e. not an object given with the totality of its determinations, there is nothing preventing us from considering the possibility that certain further determinations are grounded in freedom. Since, as we shall see, Kant solves the agential antinomial conflict by considering the possibility of an agent grounding a law of nature, i.e. what Matthé Scholten<sup>32</sup> calls an *altered-law* solution, then this must be seen as *the agent's contribution* to the grounding of the whole of appearances of outer sense in an intelligible causality.

So while 'another causality'<sup>33</sup> refers to the agent's causality of freedom, since its effect is in appearance as Kant reminds us here, this effect contributes to the appearing of reality in-itself, and therefore to the manifestation of a nature as appearance in outer sense. I take the fact that Kant addresses this issue as evidence that he has not lost sight of the cosmological antinomial conflict. But further, the way he addresses the problem straightforwardly brings out the parallels between the two problems: just like the whole of appearance is grounded in an intelligible cause, the agent's intentions (and therefore actions) can be grounded in a first cause.

What is missing in the rest of the text of the Resolution of the Third Antinomy is any explicit account of how the grounding of the whole of appearance in an intelligible cause actually defines a solution-thing. I take it that this is because, having established the parallel between the agential and cosmological problems, whatever is claimed for the first is understood by Kant to be unproblematically transferable to the second. To further support the parallelism of the problems which I shall call Kant's *solution transfer principle*, consider a passage from the *Critique of Judgement* where Kant affirms the following about the agent's empirical causality (see below):

It is this causality's *determination* whose basis is contained, in a way not otherwise explicable, in the intelligible that is thought of when we think freedom (just as in the case of the intelligible that is the supersensible substrate of nature) (CJAA05: 196 n.).

The 'just as' here straightforwardly suggests an unproblematic parallel between the solutions to the agential and cosmological problems. And, while an explicit

<sup>32</sup> Matthé Scholten, "Kant's Reply to the Consequence Argument", in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, vol. 29, nr 2, 2021, pp. 135–158.

<sup>33</sup> Adding 'another' (which is not in the German original) is both helpful and potentially misleading. It is helpful insofar as it stresses that this is distinct from the intelligible causality of appearing. It is misleading in that it suggests that it lies beyond the latter whereas in fact, the point is that as part of the appearing of reality in-itself, there is room for a causality that is specific to the agent, i.e. her causality of freedom.



statement of the solution to the latter problem would have been helpful, the transfer between the two solutions is *prima facie* unproblematic insofar as we have the two key elements required for the solution to the cosmological problem: a proposed dual-aspect account of the relation appearance/thing-in-itself and a grounding claim of the former aspect in the latter.

So, as said, from now on, the Resolution of the Third Antinomy proceeds by focussing exclusively upon the case of a subject or agent but *pace* Bennett<sup>34</sup>, for the reasons just given, this will be without ‘forgetting (...) [his] cosmological route into the question’. The questions to be addressed are therefore: (i) what is Kant’s solution for the case of series of agential events, and (ii) how is this to be transferred to any causal series?

I’ll keep the reply to the first question short since I have written about this elsewhere<sup>35</sup>. Kant develops his solution in two stages. In this second section of the Resolution, he introduces the concepts of the intelligible and empirical characters. These are the laws, respectively:

- (i) of the intelligible causality which is hypothesised as one of the faculties of the agent’s in-itself aspect, and which is therefore the causality of freedom as first cause, and
- (ii) of the agent’s psychological causality through which intentions to act caused in inner sense lead to physical actions<sup>36</sup>. This psychological causality is presented in terms of ‘subjective principles of [the] power of choice’ in the third section of the resolution (A549-50/B577-8).

This third section adds to the second section’s introduction of the intelligible and empirical characters. It proposes that the former grounds the latter. That is, the agent’s causality of freedom in the domain of reality-in-itself, is the ground of their psychological causality in the domain of appearances, viz. in inner sense<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> J. Bennett, *Kant’s Dialectic*, p. 189. Kant thus continues in the next sentence with the words: ‘And then for a subject in the world of sense’ (A539/B567).

<sup>35</sup> C. Onof, *The Problem of Free Will and Naturalism*, Chapter 4.

<sup>36</sup> See W. Ertl, *Kants Auflösung der “dritten Antinomie”*, pp. 145–146; and C. Onof, *The Problem of Free Will and Naturalism*, pp. 95–97.

<sup>37</sup> Here, it is worth noting that one might question whether completeness has been achieved for the causal series. For the intelligible character grounds the agent’s causality whose law is the empirical character, but this causality is effective at a certain time together with ‘the other cooperating causes’ (A549/B577). Clearly, one could demand an unconditioned for these causes. This would multiply the causal series and two cases would arise: insofar as any of these causes were manifested as a result of the agent’s action, the series would lead again to the empirical character. But eventually, this will leave us with residual set of causal determinants that are beyond the agent’s reach in space and or time. These will require that there be a solution to the cosmological problem. As far as the agential problem is concerned, Kant is clearly arguing that the demand of reason can be satisfied by following one causal series only. In effect, he is assuming the separation of a driving and an enabling cause, and focussing upon the driving cause. This is enough for his practical interests as it shows that the agent could have acted otherwise by bringing about a different empirical character. But it is arguably not enough for the resolution of the antinomy even merely for agential series. So the resolution of the problem in its cosmological dimension is now essential even for agential series.

But what does all this show? Another way of looking at this is to ask what has been gained beyond the preamble's mere logical possibility of a compatibility between a first cause outside appearances and determinism in the domain of appearance. This means that we have to elucidate the modal status of all these assumptions. The titles of the second and third sections are revealing on this issue. The second section is entitled:

The possibility of causality through freedom unified with the universal law of natural necessity (A538/B566).

This is therefore the issue of the compatibility of the real possibility of freedom and the causal determinism of nature. While it is ultimately a logical issue, it is not the mere logical compatibility of freedom and determinism: rather, the mere concept of freedom has been enriched to that of what is entailed by the real possibility of freedom. This involves the intelligible and empirical characters and their grounding relation<sup>38</sup>. It is the compatibility of this concept of the real possibility of freedom together with causal determinism that is at stake.

Note that this can also be read as, and is logically equivalent to<sup>39</sup>, the logical coherence of the concept of the real possibility of freedom-together-with-natural-causal-determinism. That is, the Antithesis's causal determinism of nature which is assumed true can be included under the scope of the modal operator of real possibility.

With this in mind the title of the third section can be seen to confirm this reading<sup>40</sup>:

Clarification of the cosmological idea of a freedom in combination with the universal natural necessity (A542/B570).

The 'a' is important here since it shows that it is not the mere concept of freedom *qua* first cause that is at stake, but the concept of a freedom which would be compatible with natural necessity: this requires that the real possibility of this freedom be considered since real possibility is defined by Kant as what is compatible with the formal conditions of experience which include the Second Analogy (B265/A218).

<sup>38</sup> The conditions for real possibility are: (i) compatibility with formal conditions of objectivity: the Second Analogy requires that the agent have a causality accounting for physical actions; (ii) freedom of the agent: the causality of freedom must be an intelligible causality with its law; (iii) the latter must ground the agent's empirical causality if this freedom is to be effective in the domain of appearances. That the empirical and intelligible character and their relation do not constitute a mere story to be told about freedom is confirmed by their making another appearance in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (CPrR AA05: 95-6).

<sup>39</sup> C. Onof, *The Problem of Free Will and Naturalism*, p. 208, n. 6.

<sup>40</sup> With this title's stressing of the 'cosmological' nature of the idea of freedom, a case can be made for the claim that Kant wants to remind us that the cosmological version of the Antinomy is also being addressed here.

This reading is also confirmed by considering the solution of the Fourth Antinomy. Just as he did for the Third Antinomy's resolution, Kant explains that the resolution of the Fourth Antinomy will not establish the actuality or even the (real) possibility of the first term of the series which the Thesis posits, i.e. here, 'the absolutely necessary being' (A562/B590). But it shows that the 'thoroughgoing contingency of all natural things' cannot provide the grounds for denying the (real) possibility of such a being (A563/B591): in other words, this (real) possibility is compatible with the contingency of appearances.

### TRANSFERRING THIS TO THE COSMOLOGICAL SOLUTION

So we now have to consider how to transfer the result of the Resolution of the Third Antinomy for actions to the case of any causal series in appearance. That is, we have to show how to translate what is involved in the claim of compatibility of the real possibility of an intelligible first cause together with causal determinism.

A first problem might seem to be that we need to provide an unconditional first term to causal series in appearance by seeking a beginning *in time* for these series. At a first time, some first cause would then have to be identified as manifested in appearance. However, we know from the First Antinomy that there is no such first time.

In fact, the idea that a first time would be needed amounts to a misunderstanding of the way Kant solves the Third Antinomy for agential series. The solution does not involve, as Bennett<sup>41</sup> thought, the need for the agent's causality of freedom to cause the whole causal series leading to an action. This would have required the agent's causality to be effective in the distant past long before their birth. Such an *altered-past* interpretation of Kant's resolution is in fact misguided. As we have seen, Kant's is an *altered-law* not an *altered-past* solution: the solution lies in the agent's ability to ground some natural causality whose law is the empirical character.

That this is the correct way of interpreting the resolution of the antinomial conflict becomes clear by considering the nature of causality. As Eric Watkins showed, causality for Kant is a timeless property of substance. Kant's understanding of the cause-effect relation does not connect two events as it does for Hume for instance, but a timeless power, the causality of a substance, to an event. Kant's language in the Thesis makes this clear: he refers to the 'causality of the cause through which something happens' (A444/B472).

But then, how does this give rise to a causal series in time if the causality of the cause is a timeless property of substance? Kant refers to this causality of the cause as 'something that has happened' (A444/B472) which describes an event after all. That is because a *manifestation* of this power that is the causality of the

<sup>41</sup> J. Bennett, "Kant's Theory of Freedom", in Allen Wood (ed.), *Self and Nature in Kant's Philosophy*, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1984, pp. 102–112, p. 103.

cause is temporally located in appearance: further causal determinants are required to account for this event.

So, if no first time is at stake, the anchoring of the causal series in a first cause is not temporally located at any particular time: the time at which the anchoring is located is indeterminate. As I indicated above, Kant's solution requires identifying a *solution-thing*. Once this has been determined, his solution involves considering the possibility of grounding the empirical causality of this solution-thing in an intelligible first cause that its intelligible aspect would possess<sup>42</sup>. Since empirical causality is a property of substance, the question then is: what is the nature of the substance of this solution-thing?<sup>43</sup>

If the substance in question is to be relevant to any causal series, it must be the timeless notion of substance which is the 'substratum of all change in the appearances' (B227/A184) that the First Analogy (A182/B224) posits. This is further identified as matter in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (MFNS AA04: 472), but this identification is of no relevance to the transcendental philosophy of the *CPR*. This substrate of all appearances (hereafter, 'Substrate') has an empirical causality that we would describe today in terms of the four fundamental forces of nature. This empirical causality can then be anchored in an intelligible causality that will act as first cause of the series.

This involves viewing the empirical causality of any particular substance which appears in the antinomial regress as a feature of the Substrate's empirical causality and then considering that the latter is grounded in the intelligible aspect of this Substrate. Thus for instance, the causality that a magnet possesses and which is manifested in its ability to attract iron is a property of this particular substance, the magnet in question. However, this timeless power can be viewed more fundamentally as electromagnetic property of the Substrate, i.e. matter, which is now organised as this particular crystalline structure but at earlier times, was not, and at some time in the future will again not be so organised.

<sup>42</sup> Since empirical causality is a timeless property of substance, this grounding relates an a-temporal intelligible causality, i.e. a causality outside time, to a timeless causality, i.e. a causality that does not change with time.

<sup>43</sup> One might think that there could be indefinitely many determinate times at which a regressing series is grounded, with the substance then being any of the substances whose causalities appear in the regress. So at any stage in the series, the question about the causality of the cause could be addressed by grounding this causality in some intelligible first cause of the in-itself aspect of the substance whose causality it is. That is, instead of prolonging any causal regress by seeking causes of the manifestation of any particular empirical causality involved in this series, it is terminated by identifying an intelligible ground of this empirical causality. This option however encounters the following problems. Completeness of the account of the 'causality of a cause' as manifested at time  $t$  requires that causes of the conditions under which this causality is manifested also be identified. This would lead to a multiplication of causal series which does not seem compatible with Kant's intent. Further, completeness will never be achieved in this way as there will always be further conditions to account for. This is because there is a multiplicity of "local" solution-things, one for each point of anchoring in the intelligible, and while their totality is what should define the relevant solution-thing, that totality is not given.

Note that this solution I propose for the cosmological antinomial problem does not involve endowing the intelligible aspect of appearances with transcendental freedom *qua* faculty, as Benno Erdmann<sup>44</sup> did with his notion of a ‘cosmological understanding’ (‘kosmologischer Verstand’). The solution I propose is rather closer to Adickes’s<sup>45</sup>. He argues that it is necessary to distinguish two types of transcendental freedom, one for rational agents and the other for appearances in general. But I see no grounds for distinguishing these types beyond the mere fact that they are instantiations of a causality that is manifested in different appearances.

### THE META-REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE

What regulative principle does this solution to the cosmological version of the third antinomial conflict define? This resolution allows us to claim that:

- (i) for every event, one ought to seek further causal determinants of the manifestation of the causality of the cause that brought it about (Antithesis),
- (ii) nevertheless, it is not impossible that the Substrate should have an intelligible aspect which is endowed with a first-cause causality grounding its empirical causality (Thesis).

What is missing here for a regulative principle to be formulated from the Thesis, is a notion of totality of conditions that accounts for why reason would want to endorse the Thesis’s point of view and posit the actuality of the particular type of unconditioned identified here.

But now consider the following. Transcendental idealism identifies the domain of appearances as the *domain of possible experience*. The notion of possibility is defined in terms of the formal conditions of experience as they are identified in the Transcendental Analytic (B265/A218). Furthermore, actual experience is that which is causally linked, through some more or less long causal series, with the sensations involved in perception (A266/A218). Therefore, the domain of appearances is the domain of that which belongs to a causal series that possibly causes some sensation(s), where ‘possibly’ implies that this is in accord with the formal conditions of experience<sup>46</sup>.

If the science of reason’s identification of the formal conditions of experience in the Transcendental Analytic is to be a complete whole, it must correctly identify the domain of possible experience in outer sense. From what has just been said, this

<sup>44</sup> Benno Erdmann, *Kant’s Criticismus in der ersten und zweiten Auflage der Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Leipzig, Leopold Voss, 1878, p. 69.

<sup>45</sup> E. Adickes, *Kant und das Ding an Sich*, p. 51.

<sup>46</sup> Importantly, the notion of possibility is real but not empirical possibility: what is at stake are the formal conditions of experience. So if as a matter of empirical fact, some event could not have a causal impact upon any human (e.g. too far from Earth or occurring after the extinction of the human race), this is due to the contingency of where and when humans are located. It does not impact real possibility.

completeness defines the domain of appearances as totality of causal series in outer sense insofar as they possibly cause some sensation(s). The totality of causal conditions defined by these series is therefore an unconditioned that reason will seek to posit insofar as the formal conditions that have been identified by the science of reason are to define a complete whole, i.e. the totality of possible experience in outer sense.

The meta-regulative principle can therefore be formulated as follows:

*Meta-regulative principle.* We ought to consider all appearances of outer sense as grounded in a first-cause causality characterising the intelligible aspect of the Substrate, i.e. the ‘supersensible substrate of nature’ (CJ AA05: 196 n).

It follows that the domain of cognition defined by the science of reason defines an Idea of Reason which is the unconditioned required to provide completeness to the causal series of appearances. This Idea of Reason is that of an intelligible first cause of the intelligible aspect of the Substrate, a first cause which Kant calls freedom. This therefore shows that the regulative principle we have identified from the Third Antinomy for the Science of Reason, is the regulative principle associated with the Idea of freedom.

The Idea of freedom, which is just that of a first cause (A533/B561), thereby fully takes on the role vacated by the Idea of world. As indicated above, the cosmological idea is characterised by Kant as the concept of the ‘absolute unity of the series of conditions of appearance’ (B391/A334). It is certainly the case that the grounding in reality in-itself as first cause of all empirical causality of outer sense defines a unity of the series of causal conditions of appearance.

### **CONSEQUENCES FOR THE UNITY OF THE SCIENCE OF REASON AND OUR UNDERSTANDING OF TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM**

Finally, let us return to the problem I identified at the outset in this paper, namely the problem of integrating transcendental affection with the science of reason. This integration is designed to address the double affection problem of the apparent causal overdetermination of sensations by both empirical and intelligible causalities. As the solution of the third antinomial conflict in its cosmological dimension shows, the regulative principle just introduced posits an intelligible causality as characterising the in-itself aspect of the Substrate. This causality grounds the substance’s empirical causality. So, for any sensation, its being caused by some empirical causality is a causal relation belonging to a series that can, regulatively, be understood as completed by grounding this causality, *qua* feature of the causality of the Substrate, in an intelligible first cause. This means that the regulative principle just introduced enables empirical affection to be understood as simultaneously transcendental affection. There is therefore no double affection

problem but only one affection which is empirical and which is, regulatively, thought as transcendental.

What does this mean for our understanding of Transcendental Idealism? The meta-regulative principle defines how we are to think of things in themselves. First, it states that we to think of them as intelligible ground of the Substrate<sup>47</sup>. This is the key to eliminating any concerns about double affection. Second, this ground is just the intelligible aspect of the Substrate.

The relation between appearances and reality in-itself is therefore characterised by two features: the latter grounds the former's empirical causalities, and it is the intelligible aspect of the former's Substrate. Importantly, these claims are regulative and so define how we ought to think of this relation. As a result, while they are metaphysical claims, they are also perspectival.

To be clear: the double-aspect property of appearances is a straightforward metaphysical one insofar as it claims that there is another aspect to the things identified as empirical objects in appearance, namely that they exist in themselves. But, that this intelligible aspect is the intelligible aspect of the Substrate of all appearances, and that it grounds all empirical causality, are perspectival claims defining how we ought to think of the relation between the appearance-aspect and the in-itself-aspect of these things. These perspectival claims thus provide a regulative further specification of the metaphysical dual-aspect theory.

By contrast, another type of cognition may thus not have the same perspective upon reality in itself in relation to appearances. To wit, an intuitive understanding has no grasp of appearances at all: it only knows reality in-itself in its particularity. The *perspectival* dimension of this metaphysical dual-aspect account of the relation between reality in itself and appearances is essential and an important corrective to recent metaphysical dual-aspect theories (e.g. Allais, Rosefeldt) insofar as it shows that the existence of two aspects does not entail anything about a multiplicity of things in themselves, but on the contrary must be thought, on regulative grounds, as defining an undifferentiated intelligible aspect for all that appears, an intelligible aspect which grounds all empirical causality in appearance<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> One might want to make this stronger and emphasise that this ground is a first cause. Although this seems to add to the content of the interpretation, this is a mistaken impression. Indeed, as Kant promptly reminds us in the first sentence of the Resolution of the Third Antinomy, '[i]n respect of what happens, one can think of causality in only two ways: either according to nature or from freedom' (A530/B558). Our cognitive limitations therefore ensure that what is not natural causality can only be thought as first-cause causality. Further, since the meta-regulative principle addresses *how one ought to think* of things in themselves in relation to appearances, and not any perspective-independent metaphysical claims, the reference to a first cause adds no content to the interpretation of Transcendental Idealism.

<sup>48</sup> In this paper, I have attempted to provide systematic grounds for this interpretation, thus complementing the focus upon textual evidence in my earlier paper (C. Onof, "Reality in-itself and the Ground of Causality").

