

Kant's appearances as object-dependent senses*

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Abstract:

I present a novel interpretation of Kant's account of appearances, according to which an appearance plays a role in an intuition akin to the role played by an object-dependent 'sense [Sinn]', as this is understood on broadly Fregean accounts of cognitive content. I argue that this approach best captures several key features that Kant attributes to appearances. Perhaps most importantly, this Fregean interpretation best captures the fact that, for Kant, appearances are *representations* of some further object (a 'something = x'), despite being themselves the (phenomenologically) *immediate* objects of intuitions. I also show how the Fregean interpretation can help illuminate the *ideality* of appearances and the extent to which appearances might nevertheless count as *dependent* upon real things. Along the way, I contrast my interpretation with other recently prominent interpretations, such as those given by Aquila, Van Cleve, Langton, Allison, and Allais.

§1. Introduction: revisiting the dual nature of appearances

In this paper I will develop what is, to my knowledge, a novel interpretation of Kant's account of appearances – and with it, a central component of Kant's transcendental idealism. I will argue that, for Kant, the relation between (a) an act of (empirical) intuiting,¹ (b) an appearance, and (c) the 'something = X' that lies beyond the appearance should be understood on the model of Frege's conception of the relation

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¹ Unless I explicitly say otherwise, throughout I mean to be talking about specifically *empirical* intuition, rather than pure intuition (B34-35) or the intuition of the imagination (*Anthropology* §28 (7:167)). The latter restriction – to intuitions 'of sense', rather than 'of the imagination' – is important because of the explicit *independence* from the existence and presence of their objects that Kant accords to intuitions of imagination; cf. (Stephenson, forthcoming). Throughout I will refer to Kant's works besides the first *Critique* by the standard convention of providing the *Akademie Ausgabe* (Kant 1902-) volume number and pagination. For the first *Critique* I will cite by B-edition pagination alone, save for cases where passages only appear in the A-edition. Where available, I have consulted, and usually followed, the translations in (Kant 1991-), though I have silently modified them throughout.

between (a) a mental act (e.g., of thinking), (b) a ‘sense [Sinn]’ (e.g., a ‘thought [Gedanke]’) that is ‘grasped [erfaßt]’ in such an act, and (c) the ‘reference [Bedeutung]’ that is represented by way of such a sense. So:

Table 1: the Intended Analogy

	(a) mental act	(b) content	(c) object
Kant	intuiting	appearance	‘something = X’ (thing-in-itself)
Frege	grasping (e.g., Thinking)	sense (e.g., a Thought)	reference

More specifically, I will argue that appearances should be understood on the model of what has come to be known as an ‘object-dependent’ sense, or a sense that can only be grasped if its referent is both existent and present to the mind’s sensory capacities upon such grasping.²

One of the key motivations for the Fregean interpretation of appearances is that it allows us to make better sense of a certain duality in Kant’s discussion of appearances. On the one hand, as many of his readers have noticed, Kant frequently talks about appearances as if they were *objects* in their own right; for example, he calls them ‘the undetermined objects of empirical intuitions’ (B34). Yet, on the other hand, at crucial

² The two people that I am aware of who partially anticipate my interpretive strategy are Wilfrid Sellars and Peter Rohs. In his 1966 Locke Lectures, Sellars makes the suggestive claim that ‘the core of the Kantian notion of an appearance is that of an idea or content’ (Sellars 1968: 39), in a context in which Sellars both explains the notion of ‘content’ at issue as what ‘exists ‘in’ a representing’ (Sellars 1968: 36), and even later links such content to Frege’s notion of sense (Sellars 1968: 65). More recently, Rohs has claimed that, for Kant, ‘intuitions are not purely qualitative feelings, nor are they mere sense-impressions; rather, they are directed immediately to objects only as the having [Haben] of a singular sense’ (Rohs 2001: 224; cf. 217f). Unfortunately, neither Sellars nor Rohs provides textual evidence for their interpretive suggestions, nor do they show how this analysis of appearances would be compatible with Kant’s other commitments concerning appearances, nor do they (finally) stake out how such an account of appearances would differ from other leading interpretations on offer. In addition to Sellars and Rohs, Michael Dummett has used this analogy in the opposite direction, to help explain Frege’s notion of sense by appeal to Kant’s conception of intuition and appearances (cf., Dummett 2001: 13; and Dummett 1997: 242-43). It is worth noting as well, finally, that, shortly after Kant, Bolzano argued even more explicitly for an account of the content of intuitions that parallels quite closely the Fregean approach that I spell out in §2 below; see (Bolzano 1837: §§72-77).

moments Kant also describes appearances as *representations* of still further objects (e.g., A372 and *Prolegomena* 4:289 and 293). What is more, Kant sometimes deploys both descriptions in the very same paragraph (e.g., A108-9 and *Prolegomena* 4:288). If an interpretation of appearances is to do justice to this persistent duality in Kant's account, then it will need to find something that is both (i) graspable by the mind, and so serves as an *immediate* object of consciousness in this sense, but that also (ii) possesses a dimension of intentionality sufficient to relate the mind to some further object and so can serve as a *representation* of something else. This is in addition to accommodating two equally basic commitments that Kant has about appearances: that appearances are (iii) transcendently *ideal* (B66 and A369), and (iv) *dependent* in some sense on what Kant calls 'affection' (B33-34).

As I will argue below, a chief virtue of viewing appearances as Fregean object-dependent senses is that this promises to allow us to keep track of all four of these features of appearances. Most strikingly, object-dependent senses provide us with a model for understanding how the aforementioned duality in appearances can come together in one item, since a Fregean sense is itself at once (i*) that which is 'grasped' by a mental act, and so, serves as its immediate object, but is also (ii*) a way for some further object (reference) to be presented or 'given' (an *Art des Gegebenseins*, in Frege's words). This mirrors quite closely the fact that, for Kant, an appearance is both (i) that which is 'intuited' by an act of empirical intuition (its immediate object), but also (ii) a way of being intentionally related to some further object (namely, a thing that has a way of being 'in itself'). This is in addition to the further usefulness of this model, and further distinctiveness of the resulting interpretation, when it is applied to the questions of (iii) the ideality of appearances and (iv) their dependence on affection. Though it has not always found a

sympathetic audience, Frege's characterization of senses as (iii*) essentially abstract, even in cases of perception, actually opens the door for a new way to understand Kant's thesis of (iii) the ideality of appearances. And recent discussion of (iv*) the nature of the object-dependence involved in such senses, along with the connection between this dependence and the causal dependence of the act of grasping such a sense upon the very same object it represents, can also help shed light on the persistently vexing question of how appearances are supposed to be (iv) dependent in some sense upon real things while still themselves remaining ideal.

As I will also show below, the most prominent recent accounts of appearances are alike in failing to accommodate one or another of these aspects of appearances, despite their divergences on many other fronts. The five interpretations I will focus on below are what I will call the *simple phenomenalist* interpretation, put forward early in the last century by Hermann Cohen, Norman Kemp Smith and H.A. Pritchard; what I will call the *sophisticated phenomenalist* interpretation, put forward by Richard Aquila and James Van Cleve; what I will call the *real relationalist* interpretation, put forward by Rae Langton; what I will call the *direct realist* form of *representational relationalism*, put forward by Lucy Allais; and the *epistemic* or *methodological* approach to appearances presented by Henry Allison. Seeing the contrast between these views and the Fregean interpretation will help point up what is unique, and (I hope) attractive, about the approach developed here. I also hope it will open up new points of entry for future research into the nature and prospects of transcendental idealism more broadly.

I will develop this interpretation in the following manner. In the next section (§2), I will present the interpretive model that I want to bring to bear on Kant's discussion of appearances, by outlining the relevant elements of the general Fregean account of

cognitive content. I will focus in particular on the aspect of content that Frege calls ‘sense [Sinn]’, as well as on the particular species of sense that has come to be called ‘object-dependent’, such as that which is said to figure in perceptual experience. In the main part of the paper (§3), I will then turn to Kant’s texts, to show that we can find Kant ascribing to appearances four features (our (i)-(iv) above) that closely parallel features we will have identified in §2 as characteristic of object-dependent senses (our (i*)-(iv*) above). In §4 I will use this parallelism to highlight the respects in which the Fregean interpretation stands in sharp contrast with the other influential interpretations of appearances mentioned above. I will also show how the Fregean account would address the traditional questions of whether Kant is committed to either a ‘one world’ or ‘two world’ view, whether he thinks appearances and ‘things in themselves’ are identical or distinct, and if the latter, in what respect (if at all) they still depend on such things; and finally, what Kant might mean by according to appearances an ‘empirical reality’ despite their ideality. In §5 I will conclude by summarizing the results.

Before I get started, though, let me begin with a concession up front. As I will be restricting myself to drawing attention to key points of contrast with existing interpretations of Kant’s doctrine of appearances, rather than showing how the Fregean interpretation can make sense of each and every of the many passages offered as evidence of the alternative views, much more work would need to be done to *refute* the other interpretations. My main goal here, therefore, is simply to introduce the Fregean interpretation – as its very *possibility* has been overlooked – and then show how it can be developed into a serious and substantive interpretive option, in order to secure a place for the Fregean interpretation at the table – with the hope of further demonstrating its promise (and especially its advantages over the alternatives) in future work.

§2. The Fregean account of cognitive content

Let me start, then, by giving a sketch of the Fregean account of cognitive content that I intend to deploy as a model for understanding Kant's account of appearances. We can get our bearings by looking to Frege himself – though eventually we will have to look to his successors, as Frege himself did not give much more than the hints of a treatment of the kind of content that is involved in intuition. (This is also why the resulting model will be Fregean, rather than simply Frege's.)

In his mature writings, Frege famously distinguishes between (a) mental activity or state the belongs to an individual's mind when, e.g., that individual thinks a thought or understands a linguistic expression as meaningful, (b) the objective content that is 'grasped' in such mental acts, and (c) the object, property, or state of affairs ('truth-value') that is 'given' or 'presented' to the mind by grasping this content (cf. Frege 1984: 163-64). When viewed in relation to a linguistic expression, Frege calls (b) the 'sense [Sinn]' of the expression, and calls (c) its 'reference [Bedeutung]' (cf. Frege 1984: 161). Though Frege had initially worked with a simpler picture that distinguished mental acts only from what he called 'content [Inhalt]' in general, Frege's investigation of informative judgments of identity led him to recognize the need for a further distinction in relation to the content itself (cf. Kremer 2010: 220 and 236-40). If the only thing that could function as the content of an expression were the item to which it related us (e.g., an object x or a property F), rather than the particular 'mode of being given [Art des Gegebenseins]' this item that was associated with the expression, then Frege thinks we would not be able to give an account of how statements like 'The morning star is identical to the evening star' could be informative in cases where we are already familiar with relevant item (here: the

planet) when it is presented in one of these ways but not the other, and so are also not aware of the identity of the item across the different modes of its being presented (cf. Frege 1984: 157-58). To keep track of this further difference, Frege introduces the term ‘sense’ to pick out the particular manner of being given an item, and the term ‘reference’ to pick out the item itself.³

Once Frege distinguishes between the simple identity and difference of the objects of our discourse, on the one hand, and the identity and difference in the ways of being given or presented with these objects, on the other, he then goes on to draw several further consequences of this distinction. First, Frege argues that objects (and references more generally) form no proper ‘part’ of what is contained ‘in’ the senses through which they are given or presented to us. Frege makes this point at various places, perhaps most famously in his correspondence with Russell, concerning the particular species of sense that Frege associates with assertoric sentences – namely, what Frege calls a ‘thought [Gedanke]’:

Mont Blanc with its snowfields is not itself a component part [Bestandteil] of the thought that Mont Blanc is more than 4000 meters high. [...] The sense of the word ‘moon’ is a component part of the thought that the moon is smaller than the earth. The moon itself (i.e., the reference [Bedeutung] of the word ‘moon’) is not part of the sense of the word ‘moon’; for then it would be a component part of that thought. (Frege 1980: 245; cf. Frege 1984: 164)

Secondly, Frege also takes a sense to be distinct from any component ‘part [Teil]’ or ‘property [Eigentum]’ of an individual’s mind or consciousness (Frege 1984: 160; cf. 366). Rather, a sense is something that can be grasped by many different individual mental acts, and so can be ‘common property’ to many different minds (Frege 1984: 160; cf. 362-63, 368). In fact, Frege thinks that a sense is what it is independently of actually being

³ For further references and discussion, see (Kremer 2010: 253-58).

grasped by any mind whatsoever, because a sense is ultimately not itself something ‘actual [wirklich]’ at all (cf. Frege 1984: 370). Yet despite its non-actual, abstract standing, Frege still takes the sense, or the way of being given an object, to be what is directly ‘grasped [erfaßt]’ in mental acts like thinking and judging, rather than its reference (cf. Frege: 1984: 355-56). In other words, senses, rather than referents, are the ‘immediate objects’ of mental acts such as thinking.⁴ This is so, despite the fact that this immediate object is itself a representational *relation* to something else, a means to some *further* object (the reference).

Frege provides the following analogy to help illustrate the relationship he has in mind between a mental act or state of an individual mind, a sense, and a reference:

Somebody observes the Moon through a telescope. I compare the Moon itself to the reference; it is the object of the observation, which is mediated [vermittelt] by the real image [Bild] projected by the object glass in the interior of the telescope, and by the retinal image of the observer. The former I compare to the sense, the latter with the idea [Vorstellung] or intuition [Anschauung]. The optical image in the telescope is indeed one-sided and dependent upon the standpoint of observation; but it is still objective [objektiv], inasmuch as it can be used by several observers. (Frege 1984: 160-61)

While the moon is the ultimate object that is given to the mind in an individual act of representing or intuiting through the telescope, what is grasped immediately in this act of intuiting is the way in which the moon being given in this particular case – namely, through the telescope. The moon itself does not form any component part of what is grasped. Rather, what is grasped through the telescope is only a one-sided and standpoint-dependent view (‘image’) of the moon. Even so, this view is itself ‘objective’ in the sense that the same one-sided and standpoint-dependent view can be grasped in

⁴ For the description of thoughts in this context as the ‘objects’ of acts of thinking, compare (Dummett 1997: 242-43). For one place where Frege himself appears to use ‘object of my thinking [Gegenstand meines Denkens]’ to pick out a sense, see (Frege 1984: 366).

several different mental states by mental acts of different individual minds ('observers') – namely, whoever looks through the telescope. Frege takes this to imply that the view in question is not identical with any real part of any one individual's mental state or act, but is rather something there to be taken up by anyone.

Frege's willingness to countenance senses that are objective and yet standpoint- or perspective-dependent sets the stage for an extension by Frege's later readers (such as John McDowell, and more recently, Jason Stanley and Susanna Schellenberg) who aim to use Frege's distinction between sense and reference to provide an analysis of the content of perceptual experience and of what is expressed by indexical and demonstrative phrases.⁵ Starting from the thought that veridical perceptual experience involves a concrete causal relation between a mind and an existent object, it is then argued that this experience *also* involves a sense of a very special sort, one that can be grasped *only* when its reference stands in this causal relation to the mind.⁶ The key assumption is that not only can I not be veridically perceptually related to an *object* that is not there, but I also cannot grasp this particular *way of being given* the object if my mind does not, in fact, occupy the relevant causal relation to it.⁷ Due to the dependence of the mental act of

⁵ Cf. (McDowell 1984), (McDowell 1986), (McDowell 1991a), (Schellenberg 2011), and (Stanley 2011: Chapter 4).

⁶ This kind of extension of the sense/reference analysis to the content of perceptual experience can actually claim to have some roots in Frege's own texts. As we have already seen, many of Frege's own examples involve concrete objects standing in different concrete relations to the mind: the planet Venus and Mont Blanc are surely concrete objects, and the distinction between the sense of 'morning star' and that of 'evening star' rests on the different times of day at which the planet can be perceived. (See also Frege's discussion of the mountain called both 'Aphla' and 'Ateb', and the differences in the senses of these terms, in his correspondence with Philip Jourdain (cf. Frege 1980: 78-80).) Nevertheless, Frege rejects the idea that this concrete relation is sufficient to account for what is involved in intuition. In 'The Thought', for example, Frege explicitly denies that the mere having of sense-impressions (i.e., the mere effects of causal interaction) is sufficient for vision, holding instead that seeing physical objects requires that something 'non-sensible' enter into the mix (cf. Frege 1984: 369).

⁷ As McDowell puts it, our grasp of these senses 'depends essentially on the perceived presence of the objects' (McDowell 1984: 219), such that this sort of 'mode of presentation is not capturable in a specification that someone could understand without exploiting the perceived presence of the [object] itself' (McDowell 1991a: 266). McDowell's analysis of Frege here provides an important counterpoint to the still-

grasping the sense upon the obtaining of this real relation between the mind and its object (reference), such a sense has itself come to be called ‘object-dependent’.⁸

Nevertheless, to remain broadly Fregean, even cases like this, in which the sense at issue is object-*dependent* in this respect, the sense at issue will nevertheless not be object-*involving* or object-*containing*; it will not have the object in question as a constituent or proper part. For a Fregean, the object (referent) itself is *never* a part or constituent of the sense.⁹ As we have already noted, Frege spends considerable amount of time distinguishing sense (and so, thoughts) from anything real or actual in the sense of being concrete or existing in space and time or being causally efficacious (cf. again Frege 1984: 159-60, 354 and 364). What is more, if we now combine Frege’s remarks in his letter to Russell with his telescope analogy, we can see that Frege himself thinks that even in cases of being perceptually related to objects, the relevant mode of being presented with an object remains abstract (non-‘actual’) despite the fact that the ultimate reference is something actual or concrete.

For this reason, even the senses apprehended in perceptual experience – as indexical-laden as they may be – are abstract, and so even they ultimately occupy a realm over and above the realm of the subjective-psychological and, more generally, a realm distinct from anything actual, what Frege infamously called ‘a third realm [ein drittes

prominent understanding of Frege as a ‘descriptivist’ about senses, as Saul Kripke and John Searle would have it. For criticisms of such a descriptivist interpretation, compare (McDowell 1986: 233-34) and (McDowell 1991a: 268-69). In this respect, McDowell’s analysis helps to bring out the possibility (already intimated in Frege) of non-discursive senses – which, in turn, keeps room in the Fregean interpretive model for allowing Kant to embrace non-conceptualism about the content of intuitions. I myself favor this further interpretive thesis, though I will not argue for it here. (See my [xxx] and [yyy].)

⁸ For this terminology, see (McDowell 1986: 233).

⁹ Recall Frege’s letter to Russell cited above; compare (McDowell 1991a: 265 and 268). Here, in addition to recalling Frege’s own telescope analogy mentioned in a note above, it might also be helpful to think in terms of Searle’s graphic (and so potentially misleading because too concrete) depiction of Frege’s conception sense on the model of pipes that lead to bowls (cf., Searle 1958). The pipes (senses) are not complexes that contain or include the bowls (references) to which they are directed, but are instead standing routes to the bowls.

Reich]’ (Frege 1984: 363).¹⁰ Even though the object-dependence of such senses distinguishes them both from those senses graspable in either purely conceptual reasoning about abstract objects (references) or in merely fictional discourse about non-existents (with the latter in particular having the standing of ‘object-independent’ senses), all of these senses nevertheless belong together in the same realm. For this reason, the phrase ‘object-dependent’ should not be taken to entail a real or causal dependence of the *sense itself* upon some mental act or object. As abstract, this sense is what it is independently of any actual mental act or actual relation between a mind and an object. What *is* really dependent on such an actual relation, rather, is the mental *act* of grasping such a sense.

At this point, I hope, we can see more concretely how a broadly Fregean account of the content of intuitions will ascribe the following four features identified at the outset (§1) to the sense involved in intuition: (i) immediacy, (ii) representationality, (iii) abstractness, (iv) and object-dependence. The Fregean account takes perceiving (‘intuiting’) to involve grasping (iv) an object-dependent sense, where this dependence consists in the fact that the grasping of this sense in intuiting is only possible given the existence of its object (reference) and this object’s standing in the right concrete (causal) relation to the mind. Yet despite this dependence, the object that is given through such a sense forms no ‘component part’ of (i) what is immediately grasped in such an act; what is so grasped is limited to the sense itself. This follows from the fact that the sense is (iii) something non-actual (abstract), a denizen of the ‘third realm’, while its object is something that belongs to the actual (concrete) world. Even so, the abstract sense (ii)

¹⁰ For recent work that joins Frege in construing the representational content of perceptual experience as abstract, see (Tye 1995). Burge identifies the abstractness of even the senses associated with indexicals and demonstratives as one of the most deeply problematic features of Frege’s views – though he accepts that Frege does embrace such a commitment (cf. Burge 2005: 50-53 and 234f).

‘gives’ or ‘presents’ this concrete further object, and does so in a one-sided or standpoint-dependent manner.

We can summarize the core of the broadly Fregean account of the content of intuition with the following Table:

Table 2: the Fregean model of object-dependent sense

(actual) (a) mental act	(non-actual) (b) content	(actual) (c) object
e.g., grasping [contains -->]	sense [represents -->]	reference
[<--	---	-- causes]

§3. Kant’s parallel account of appearances

In the previous section I outlined a broadly Fregean account of the content of cognitive acts in general, and of the content of perceptual experience in particular (what Frege himself calls ‘intuition’) in terms of what Fregeans call ‘object-dependent senses’. I also highlighted four key features that the Fregean takes to characterize this content: (i) immediacy, (ii) representationality, (iii) abstractness, (iv) and object-dependence. What I want to show now is that we can find parallels for each of these four key features in Kant’s account of appearances. This will provide the core of my positive case that Kant’s appearances are best understood as object-dependent senses. I will begin with (ii) representationality, since this is the feature that is both most often neglected in Kant’s account of appearances and also the feature that perhaps best motivates the alignment with the Fregean account. What is more, as I will show below, getting this feature in view first will be crucial for coming to a proper understanding of the remaining features.

3.1. The representationality of appearances. The representationality of appearances themselves can be seen if we return to the duality in Kant’s account of appearances that I

noted at the outset (§1). This duality consists in the fact that Kant often refers to appearances as if they were *objects* of mental acts but then also, and equally often, refers to them as *representations* of further objects. We can see both of these trends manifest, for example, in the following passage from the A-deduction:

All representations, as representations, have their object, and can be themselves objects of other representations in turn. [i] Appearances are the only *objects* that can be given to us immediately.... [ii] However, these appearances are not things in themselves, but themselves only *representations*, which in turn *have their object*, which therefore cannot be further intuited by us, and that may therefore be called the non-empirical, i.e., transcendental, object = X. (A108-9; my ital.)

In the sentence I've marked '[i]', we see Kant speaking of appearances as *objects* that are 'given to us immediately'. This is something that Kant does with some frequency.¹¹ In sentence [ii], however, Kant notes that there is more to appearances than simply being the immediate objects of certain mental acts, since appearances themselves are *representations* that 'have' their own further object. This further object that is represented by the appearance is what Kant here identifies with the non-empirical or transcendental 'object = X'. That appearances represent further things is a feature that Kant also returns to at key points elsewhere. In the B-Deduction, for example, Kant describes appearances as 'representations of things that exist without being cognized [unerkannt] as to what they might be in themselves' (B164; my ital.). Similarly, in the Second Analogy, Kant distinguishes between appearances 'insofar as they *are* (as representations) objects' and appearances 'insofar as they *designate* [bezeichnen] an object' (B234-35; my ital.).¹²

¹¹ Kant does this, for example, at the beginning and end of the Aesthetic, describing an appearance as the 'undetermined object of an empirical intuition' (B34), and claiming that 'we are acquainted with [kennen] nothing except our way [Art] of perceiving' things, rather than the things themselves (B59).

¹² Compare as well the A-Edition of the Chapter on phenomena and noumena, where Kant infers from the fact that 'all our representations are in fact related to some object through the understanding', and the further fact that 'appearances are nothing but representations', to the conclusion that 'the understanding thus relates them [i.e., appearances] to a something, as the object of sensible intuition' – even while noting that 'this something' is 'the transcendental object', which 'signifies a something = X, of which we know

The representationality of appearances themselves is something worth dwelling on, since it is something that has often been overlooked. This is not to say that people have not noticed that Kant *calls* appearances ‘representations’. To the contrary, almost everyone has noted and emphasized this fact. What has been neglected, rather, is the *significance* of this fact. Perhaps the most common understanding of Kant’s claim that appearances are representations is that it is Kant’s way of signaling, first, that appearances are items that only ‘exist’ or have their being ‘in’ acts of representing, and secondly, that the way that appearances exist in acts of representing is by being what is represented by such acts, where this means that appearances are the intentional objects of such acts.¹³ Now, while there is surely something right about the first part of the standard understanding (since Kant himself makes this sort of point explicitly throughout the first *Critique* and elsewhere),¹⁴ it is the second part of the common understanding that gives a misleading characterization of the nature of appearances. This is because it makes an appearance into something that is the final stop, as it were, of the representational relations involved in an intuition. This, however, is to ignore the *further* representational relation that we saw Kant claim above is involved or contained ‘in’ the appearance itself – namely, the manner in which an appearance *itself* is a representation of something else. Far from being *merely* ‘what is represented’ in an intuition, and so functioning as the ultimate intentional object of an intuition, an appearance itself ‘has’ its *own* intentional

[wissen] nothing at all nor can know anything in general’ (A250). Kant describes the relation between an appearance and the thing in itself as that of ‘correlation’ in the Aesthetic: ‘what we call outer objects are nothing other than mere representations of our sensibility, whose form is space, but whose true correlate [wahres Correlatum], i.e., the thing in itself, is not and cannot be cognized through them’ (B45).

¹³ One such example of this interpretation is Van Cleve, who claims that when Kant says appearances are representations, we should ‘keep in mind the act-object (or ‘ing’-‘ed’) ambiguity of words like ‘representation’, and so ‘should construe him as saying that appearances are represented that have no being apart from the representing of them’ (Van Cleve 1999: 7). I will take up such an interpretation more directly below in §4.1.

¹⁴ Cf., B164 and B534. I will return to this point below in §3.4.

object (the further ‘thing’, a ‘something = X’), and so, as it were, passes along the chain of intentionality to one more stop.

In this respect an appearance functions more like an image or picture: something that is, and can be considered as, an object in its own right, but which nevertheless involves a representational relation to a further object. In fact, just as we saw Frege doing earlier, on a good number of occasions Kant himself actually associates appearances with something that can serve as an ‘image or picture [Bild]’ (cf. B15, B156, B179-82, B496, and A120-21). This comes out especially clearly in his mid-1770s lectures on metaphysics:

My mind is always busy with forming the image [Bild] of the manifold while it goes through it. E.g., when I see a city, the mind then forms an image of the object which it has before it while it runs through the manifold. [...] This illustrative [abbildende] capacity is the formative [bildende] capacity of intuition. The mind must undertake many observations in order to illustrate an object [einen Gegenstand abzubilden] so that it illustrates the object differently from each side. E.g., a city looks differently from the east than from the west. There are thus many appearances of a thing [Erscheinungen von einer Sache] according to the various sides and points of view. The mind must make an illustration [Abbildung] from all these appearances by taking them all together. (*Metaphysics* L1, 28:235-6)

Here our capacity for forming an image of an object is said to operate by way of ‘taking together’ several appearances of that object, each of which provides a ‘look’ on the object from a certain ‘side and point of view’.¹⁵

To be sure, Kant doesn’t say each appearance is itself already an image (in his sense of the term). Nevertheless, appearances contribute to images of objects by serving

¹⁵ In the first *Critique*, Kant identifies this capacity for ‘illustrating’ with the ‘imagination [Einbildungskraft]’, which he again takes to be a capacity for a certain kind of operation on appearances. Though Kant does not here go into the details of the manner in which each appearance contributes to the image, his characterization of the operation by means of which appearances contribute to images is, in outlines, quite similar to that of the lectures: while ‘every appearance contains a manifold’, the imagination is required ‘to bring the manifold of intuition into an *image*’, which it does by ‘taking up’ this manifold in a certain way (A120). For discussion of the nature of images in Kant’s theory of imagination, see (Makkreel 1990: 16-17, and 22f).

as component parts of them, by providing partial (perspectival) views on the object. What is more, appearances are distinguished from images by ultimately forming parts of images. Both of these points reinforce the general point that appearances are not the ultimate intentional objects *of* intuition or the ultimate objects to which we are related representationally through intuition – due to the representationality of these appearances themselves as providing partial perspectives on some further object.

3.2. *The immediacy of appearances.* An appreciation of the representationality of appearances (in this sense) is crucial, in turn, for the appreciation of their immediacy – i.e., our (i) above. Recall that the Fregean analysis of object-dependent senses involves three items standing in various relations to one another (cf. Table 2). More specifically, the mental act of intuiting stands in relations to both the sense that it grasps and the reference that is represented through this sense, with the sense and reference thereby standing in a kind of relation to one another as well. If we then wished to ask about what sort of immediacy, if any, is involved in an object-dependent sense, it is clear that we would have to be more specific, since there are three relations connected to such a sense, each of which might or might not be an immediate relation. Matters become further complicated by the fact that each of these relations is a distinct kind of relation from the other: the relation between act and sense is the special relation between something real and something abstract that Frege describes as ‘grasping’; while the relation between sense and reference is also a relation between something abstract and something real, it is a representational or intentional relation; in contrast to both of these, the relation between the reference and act (in the object-dependent case) is a real causal relation. This implies, of course, that in each case the significance of calling such a relation ‘immediate’ or not will differ as well.

If we focus, first, on the relation between act and sense, we can recall that the Fregean argues that it is a sense and a sense *alone* that is grasped ‘in’ a mental act, and so what is immediately present within consciousness. Let us call this kind of immediacy *phenomenological* immediacy. We also saw, however, that in the case of object-dependent senses, the possibility of such immediate phenomenological presence within the mind through such grasping was something that rested upon the further, real, and perhaps also immediate relation of the mental act to the reference being presented through the sense: let’s call this sort of immediacy *causal immediacy*. For the Fregean, even if the phenomenological immediacy of the sense in the act of grasping is made possible only by a causally immediate relation obtaining between this act and the ultimate reference, it would be wrong to infer that the reference itself is also thereby phenomenologically immediately present ‘within’ the mind in the act of grasping. Rather, the sense and *the sense alone* remains the phenomenologically immediate object of the mental act in this sense (cf. §2).

What I want to show now is that Kant both relies upon this same kind of distinction in types of immediacy and holds the parallel thesis about what is phenomenologically immediate: it is only the appearance, and *not* the further object represented by this appearance, that is contained ‘in’ the mental act of intuiting. This is despite the fact that Kant places a clear emphasis on the necessity of a real causally immediate relation obtaining between our sensibility as the capacity for intuiting and the object that will be represented through this act, in order for us to have an appearance of this object ‘in’ mind (see below, §3.3).

We can see this in Kant’s discussion of the ‘content [Inhalt]’ of intuitions, and the manner in which he contrasts this content with the ultimate object represented by this

content. For Kant, neither the ‘object in itself’, nor anything that ‘pertains’ to it, is ‘contained’ *in* any intuition, whether of inner or outer sense:

[O]uter sense can also *contain* [enthalten] in its representation only the *relation* [Verhältniß] of an object to the subject, and *not* that which is internal to the object in itself. It is exactly the same in the case of inner sense. (B67; my ital.)

The representation of a body in intuition...*contains* [enthält] *nothing at all* that could pertain to an object in itself, but merely the *appearance* of something and the way [Art] in which we are affected by it. (B61; my ital.)

Rather than containing the object ‘in itself’ or anything that is ‘internal’ to it, intuitions have as their content solely a distinctive representational *relation* between a subject and some object. This is the relation of being appeared to by something, or what Kant here calls ‘the appearance of the thing and the way in which we are affected by it’. In other words, what is immediately ‘contained in’ an intuition is *only* an appearance and *not* the object represented by this appearance. Indeed, the appearance is associated with a (proto-)image of some further object, rather than the object itself.

In fact, once we are on the lookout for this sort of characterization, we can see that Kant actually makes this point quite frequently. In an important footnote to the Aesthetic, Kant again identifies ‘appearance’ with ‘what is *not* to be encountered *in the object* in itself at all, but is always to be encountered *in its relation* [Verhältniß] to the subject and is inseparable from the representation of the object’ (B69n-70n; my ital.). In the A-edition chapter on phenomena and noumena, Kant is even more explicit in his thesis that appearances involve a special kind of relation between an object and its immediate sensible representation:

[T]he word ‘appearance’ must...indicate a *relation* [Beziehung] to something the *immediate representation of which* is *sensible*, yet something *which is an object that is independent of sensibility*, and so something that is in itself without the constitution of our sensibility (upon which the form of our intuition is grounded). (A252; my ital.)

Kant returns to the characterization of appearances in terms of relations time and again, even on into the *Opus Postumum*.¹⁶ In each case, Kant takes the appearance, as what is ‘contained in’ an intuition, and as itself an ‘immediate representation’, to involve only the ‘relation’ of an object to a subject, not anything that is to be encountered ‘in’ the object itself, let alone the object itself.¹⁷

This provides the proper context for understanding Kant’s claim that ‘appearances are the *only* objects that can be given to us immediately’ (A109; my ital.). Appearances can be called the immediate objects of intuitions insofar as they serve as the content of intuitions and so serve as what is phenomenologically immediate ‘in’ consciousness in the act of intuiting. This is so, despite the fact that appearances are not the ultimate objects of intuitions, since appearances themselves represent some further object (cf. §3.1).¹⁸

3.3. *The object-dependence of appearances.* So far I have argued that, for Kant, an appearance is what is phenomenologically immediately (present and given) ‘in’ an intuition insofar as it serves as its content. What I want to show now is that it is a *different* sense of immediacy that is at issue in Kant’s thesis that intuitions depend ‘immediately’ upon things in themselves. This thesis is expressed, for example, in Kant’s claim that an

¹⁶ Cf., (Rosefeldt 2007: §1). In addition to B69, Rosefeldt cites Bxxvii, B306, and *Opus Postumum* (22:26 and 43). To these compare *Prolegomena* §13, where Kant describes ‘appearances’ as things ‘whose possibility rests on the relation [Verhältnis] of certain things, unknown in themselves, to something else, namely our sensibility’ (4:286).

¹⁷ Kant’s belief that an appearance itself is constituted by a relation (i.e., one of appearing and (conversely) being appeared to) would also seem to be behind Kant’s description of appearances as ‘ways’ or ‘modes [Arten]’ of representing or perceiving objects, rather than as ‘things’ in their own right (cf., A372, B59; *Prolegomena* 4:293; and *Metaphysics Vigilantius* 29:972).

¹⁸ To head off a misunderstanding that might arise at this point, let me emphasize that it is appearances *in general* that Kant claims are immediately given and present to the mind, with no further claim whatsoever being made that any *particular kind* of appearance is more immediately given than another. Perhaps most importantly, let me emphasize that Kant does not hold that the appearances of *mental acts* in *inner* sense are given more immediately than the appearances of *bodies* in *outer* sense. This sort of prioritization of inner sense (or ‘inner experience’) is the target of Kant’s argument in the Refutation of Idealism (cf. B276).

intuition is ‘a representation that would *depend* [abhängen] immediately on the presence [Gegenwart] of the object’ (*Prolegomena* §9, 4:281; my ital.). For if ‘object’ here were taken to signify the relevant appearance, then the ‘dependence’ at issue would be a quite trivial one, since it would only amount to a claim that there could be no intuition without an appearance ‘present’ as its content. Without the appearance it contains, however, an intuition simply would not be the kind of representation that it is.¹⁹

What this way of understanding Kant’s talk of ‘dependence’ in *Prolegomena* §9 and elsewhere leaves out is the further *causal* relation that Kant means to affirm between, on the one hand, an act of intuiting – or, seen from the represented object’s point of view, the act of ‘appearing [erscheinen]’ (B43, B59, B69; cf. 4:283, 4:287, etc.) – and, on the other, the object that is external to ourselves and our representations, a relation that Kant calls ‘affection’. Kant introduces the concept of affection in the *Aesthetic* in the course of describing what is responsible for our having sensations. Sensations are said to be the ‘effect [Wirkung]’ of an object ‘affecting’ the ‘capacity for representation’ possessed by our mind (B34). The having of sensations, therefore, depends on affection, and so also depends on there being some object affecting our mind. And because empirical intuitions, for Kant, ‘relate to their object *through* sensation’ (B34; my ital.), the having of an empirical intuition likewise depends upon affection and there being an affecting object. In fact, it is the affection-dependence of intuition that lies at the heart of what Kant means by calling our intuition ‘sensible’:

¹⁹ Compare the parallel claim that thinking is a representation that depends immediately on the (phenomenological) presence of *its* content; this claim too must be true, since an act of thinking would not be what it is but for having the kind of content that it does (i.e. a concept or concepts). What an act of thinking of an object through such content does *not* depend immediately on is the presence of this *object* upon our capacity for thinking.

[Our] intuition is called sensible because...it is dependent [abhängig] on the existence [Dasein] of the object [and] is thus possible only insofar as the representational capacity of the subject is affected through that. (B72)

Now, though some have argued that Kant takes the affecting objects in question to be further appearances,²⁰ at several points Kant affirms a clear distinction between ‘actual [wirkliche]’ affecting objects, on the one hand, and representations that they bring about or produce so as to allow us to become conscious of their appearance, on the other:

There are things given to us as objects of our senses existing outside us, yet we know [wissen] nothing of them as they may be in themselves, but are *only* acquainted with [kennen] their appearances, i.e., with the representations that they produce [wirken] in us because they affect our senses. (*Prolegomena* 4:289; my ital.)

A few sentences later, Kant identifies the affecting object as ‘an object with which we are not acquainted [uns unbekannt] but which is nevertheless *actual* [wirklich]’ (4:289; my ital.). Appearances, by contrast, cannot be identified with these ‘actual’ affecting objects, because we *are* ‘acquainted’ with appearances. Kant instead links appearances to the representations that are the effects or products of this affection. This point is made even more emphatically at the end of the Amphiboly, where Kant claims explicitly that ‘the cause of appearance’ is ‘*not itself an appearance*’, but instead ‘a transcendental object’ (B344; my ital.). In these passages and others, the affecting object gets cashed out by Kant in terms of something *other than* further appearances.²¹

²⁰ For the classic defense of this so-called ‘empirical affection’, see (Adickes 1929).

²¹ Compare *Prolegomena* §32, where Kant writes that though he ‘admits’ that a thing in itself ‘underlies’ appearances, ‘the objects of the senses’ are still to be viewed as ‘mere appearances’, such that ‘we are not acquainted with [kennen] this thing [in itself underlying appearances] as it may be constituted in itself, but only with its appearance, i.e., with the way [Art] in which our senses are affected by this unknown something’ (4:315). See also B594, B723-25, *Prolegomena* §36, and *Groundwork* 4:451.

For an affirmation of the reality of mental acts over and against appearances, see (Van Cleve 1999: 11, 51, 58-59). For a defense of Kant’s entitlement to talk about this kind of affection (sometimes called ‘noumenal’ affection), despite its not obtaining between appearances (within the phenomenal world), see (Hogan 2009).

All of this implies that we can and should distinguish two senses of immediacy that are at issue, for Kant, in relation to appearances – just as we did above with respect to the Fregean account (§3.2). While it is right to note that an act of intuiting (and so, an act of ‘appearing’) not only depends on there being a kind of phenomenological or representational existence and presence immediately *‘in’ consciousness* – namely, the existence and presence of an immediate object (i.e., an appearance) – it is also true that an intuiting or appearing depends as well on the real (‘actual’) existence and presence immediately *upon sensibility* of the affecting object (i.e., the ultimate intentional object of the intuition that the appearance qua immediate object itself represents). These kinds of immediacy are distinct even though the phenomenological immediacy ‘in’ intuition (in mind) is possible only if the latter sort of causally immediate relation obtains. The real concrete *causally* immediate relation that Kant takes to link an act of intuiting (appearing) with the *object* represented by the appearance is a distinct relation from the non-causal, yet *phenomenologically* immediate relation that Kant takes to obtain between the act of intuiting and the *appearance* itself.

3.4. *The ideality of appearances.* This discussion leads quite naturally to see how the Fregean account of object-dependence can help us a key part of what Kant means by the ideality of appearances. Recall that Fregean senses are not themselves ‘real’ or ‘actual’ in the same sense as are either the mental acts that grasp them or (in perceptual cases) the concrete objects (references). Most importantly for our purposes, Fregean senses are not caused and do not bring about effects – even in cases where their reference is a concrete causally efficacious object and the act in which they are apprehended is the result (effect, product) of our mind’s entering into real causal interaction with this object through sensation. Now, as our above analysis of affection suggests, Kant too accepts, first, that

our mental acts of intuiting and sensing (and so the acts of appearing) are real insofar as they are effects of a cause, and also, secondly, that this cause itself is real or ‘actual’.

What is more, we have already seen Kant contrast appearances themselves with the ‘actual’ object that functions as the cause of the mental acts in which these appearances are contained. If we could now show that Kant also means to contrast appearances with the ‘actual’ *effects* of the affection-relation – i.e., with the mental acts themselves – then the relevant parallel with Fregean senses would be secured, and we will have been able to fill in a key part of what the Fregean interpretation takes Kant to mean by claiming that appearances are ‘transcendentally ideal’ rather than real. Appearances would be the non-real, non-actual contents that representationally relate real mental acts with those real actual objects responsible for bringing these acts about.

It must be admitted up front that at times Kant seems to describe appearances themselves as if *they* were the results or products of affection (e.g., 4:289), rather than the mental acts in which they are contained – i.e., the intuitions. The first thing to note, however, is that a kind of ambiguity is present in the word ‘appearance’ and its German correlate ‘Erscheinung’. As many have pointed out, this word can either be used to pick out an act of appearing or that which appears in such an act – much like ‘representation [Vorstellung]’ can be used to pick out the act of representing or that which is represented in such an act.²² Once we bring this ambiguity clearly in mind, it is at least open to us to read the passages in which Kant speaks of appearances as effects of affection as cases in which Kant is using the term ‘appearance’ to pick out the mental act of appearing that that arises due to affection, rather than the content of this act.

²² For a classic reflection on this point, see (Sellars 1968: 33-40); for a more recent discussion, see (Van Cleve 1999: 7).

This reading of some uses of ‘appearance’ is further encouraged by the fact that at *other* places, Kant makes clear that he is using ‘appearance’ to pick out instead something analytically distinct from all such acts (as effects), something that plays the role of the content of these acts. In fact, we have already met with a key piece of evidence for drawing such a distinction, one that comes from the canonical formulation of affection that Kant gives at the outset of the Aesthetic. For here it is specifically *sensation* and not appearance that is called the ‘effect’ of affection (B34). And immediately thereafter, though Kant explicitly links sensation to the ‘matter’ of appearance, Kant also differentiates sensation from this matter by calling this matter ‘that *in* the appearance which *corresponds* to sensation’ (B34; my ital.). Kant makes a similar distinction in the Anticipations, describing ‘the real’, in the empirical sense, as both something ‘*in* all appearances’ and as ‘the *object* of sensation’ (B207; my ital.).²³ This again implies that, for Kant, it is not a sensation itself that is ‘*in*’ an appearance (as a ‘real’ part, as its ‘matter’); what is ‘*in*’ the appearance is rather the immediate object of sensation, something that ‘corresponds’ to sensation.²⁴

This distinction between sensation and the matter of appearance is confirmed by the further relation Kant portrays as obtaining between the matter and the *form* of appearance, and is especially evident from considerations of space as the form of outer appearance. Kant claims that the matter of appearance is something that is ordered ‘*in*’ the form of appearance (B34), with space serving as that form within which the matter of outer appearances is ordered. Now, if sensations were identical with the matter of appearances in general and with the matter of outer appearances in particular, then Kant

²³ In the A-edition Paralogisms Kant describes sensation as ‘that which designates [bezeichnet] a reality in space and time, according to whether it is related to the one or the other sensible intuition’ (A373-74).

²⁴ See also B182 and *Prolegomena* §24 (4:306) and §26 (4:309). Compare as well (Aquila 1989: 6-8).

would be forced into a position according to which sensations – and so, mental acts or states themselves – would have to occupy space and have spatial locations. That Kant would reject this position follows from his claims, first, that neither thinking beings nor their thoughts, feelings, or other ‘inner’ states can come before us in outer appearance (A357-58), and, secondly, that space cannot be ‘intuited as something in us’ (B37), which means it cannot be intuited (in pure intuition) as what contains that which is in us (unlike time, which can be intuited ‘in us’ and which can (and does) contain (the appearance of) sensations themselves).²⁵ If we allow instead for the distinction between sensation and the matter of appearance, by contrast, we need only take Kant to be claiming that it is that which *corresponds* to sensation ‘in’ the appearance which is ‘in’ space.

The fact that there is a correspondence, rather than identity, between sensation and the matter of appearance strongly suggests that there should be a similar correspondence, though not identity, between space as the form of an outer appearance and whatever representation it is that has space as its content. And this is, in fact, what we find. For though Kant at times seems to describe space itself as if it were an intuition (cf. B39) – in a manner quite similar to the way he at times slides between the matter of appearance and sensation – at other times Kant shows that he means to draw a distinction between space as the form of outer appearance and the intuition that would ‘contain’ this form (i.e., contain space) and nothing else. It is this latter act that Kant calls a ‘pure intuition’, a representation *in which* space as ‘the form of all appearances’ is ‘given to the mind’ (B42), rather than the space that is given in such an intuiting.

²⁵ For an attempt to interpret sensations as spatial for Kant, by viewing them as states of (parts of) our bodies, despite these (and other) worries, see (Falkenstein 1995: Chapter 3).

If we now combine the initial distinction between sensation and the matter of appearance which it represents or has corresponding to it, with this distinction between pure intuition and the form of appearance which *it* ‘contains’, we arrive at a picture of an appearance as whole – an appearance as a unity which involves both form and matter – as something that is itself a correlate of the composite act that arises out of the combination of sensation with pure intuition, the act that Kant calls ‘empirical intuition’ (B34). But then, as an appearance is a *correlate* to these acts – more specifically, it is that which is given immediately ‘in’ these acts, as their content (cf. §3.2) – rather than something that is *identical* to these acts, the appearance itself (as content) cannot be said to be effects of affection in the same way as these acts themselves are effects. Appearances in this sense are, strictly speaking, not effects of affection *at all*; *only* the mental acts (sensing, intuiting, appearing) are.

Qua contents of intuition, then, appearances are neither the causes nor the effects of affection, despite nevertheless being ‘contained’ in the results of this affection. With this recognition in mind, we are now in a position to see how the Fregean interpretation will provide us with a unique and informative gloss on Kant’s well-known claim that appearances are transcendently ‘ideal’ rather than ‘real’. One of the most common ways Kant unpacks the ideality of appearances is in terms of the fact that appearances exist only ‘in’ representations, i.e., only ‘in’ the representational ‘relation’ that we bear toward some further object, rather than ‘in themselves’:

[A]pppearances exist only *in* representation [in der Vorstellung].... (B534)
 [A]pppearances do not exist *in themselves* [an sich], but only *relative to* [a subject] insofar as it has senses. (B164; my ital.)
 [A]pppearances in general are nothing [nichts] outside our representations, which is just what we mean by their transcendental ideality. (B535)

An appearance thus ‘exists’ or is ‘actual’ only as a content of possible acts, as what can be contained ‘in’ such acts. Aside from its being grasped in an actual intuition as its content, an appearance can itself be said to be ‘actual’ only in relation to its serving as the content of other possible acts, such as what Kant calls ‘perception [Wahrnehmung]’:

To call an appearance an actual [wirkliches] thing prior to perception means either that in the continuation of experience we must encounter such a perception, or it has no meaning at all. [...] [W]hat is in them (appearances) is not something in itself, but mere representations, which if they are not given in us (in perception) are encountered nowhere at all. (B521-22)

Admittedly, Kant at times puts this point simply in terms of appearances existing only ‘in us’ or even as existing only ‘in me’ (cf. A129, A375, A378), or ‘in our mind’ (B520), or ‘in the sensibility of our subject’ (A383), rather than in a representational *relation* to me or to us. Even so, once we put these passages next to the texts presented above (in §3.2), in which Kant clearly spells out the relationality involved in appearances, it is open to us to see these claims as a kind of shorthand for the more fully expressed point that appearances only have their being or existence ‘in’ a *relation that involves us*, rather than claiming that appearances are *monadic predicates of us* as individual subjects.²⁶

In any case, what cannot be emphasized enough is that what Kant claims is ‘transcendentally ideal’ are *appearances* and *not* the mental acts of *intuition* in which

²⁶ This way of reading such claims also therefore allows us to assuage worries that Kant is committed to a thesis of the radical privateness of ‘my’ appearances over and against ‘yours’. The (relative) publicness of appearances emerges already in the Aesthetic. In §8, for example, though Kant initially puts his thesis of the ideality of appearances in terms of their existence only ‘in’ an individual subject, he then immediately rephrases the thesis in terms of their existence ‘in’ the subjective constitution of human subjects ‘in general’: ‘All our intuition is nothing but the representation of appearance; [...] if we remove *our own* subject or even only the subjective constitution of the senses *in general*, then all constitution, all relations of objects in space and time, indeed space and time themselves would disappear; [...] as appearances they cannot exist in themselves [an sich selbst], but only in us’ (B59; my ital.). Immediately thereafter Kant returns to this point, noting that though ‘our way of perceiving’ things ‘is peculiar to us’ and ‘therefore does not necessarily pertain to every being [Wesen]’, it *does* nevertheless ‘pertain to every human being [Mensch]’ (B59; cf. B62). The relevant context for the existence of appearances is therefore not restricted to what is ‘in’ any one human mind, but rather what could be (potentially) ‘in’ every human mind – where (to repeat) ‘existing in’ is understood as an abbreviation for ‘existing in a relation to’.

appearances are contained. Kant is *not* claiming that the mental *acts* of representing objects by way of appearances are transcendently ideal – anymore than he is claiming that the causes of such acts (the affecting *objects* (things in themselves)) are transcendently ideal. Now, for Kant to be able to restrict his thesis of ideality to appearances rather than extend it to include the mental acts of intuiting and sensing, he must be able to distinguish appearances not just from the causes and but also, and perhaps especially, from the effects of affection. The Fregean interpretive framework handles this specificity quite nicely, insofar as it sees this particular focus on appearances as Kant simply claiming *solely* that the *contents* of intuitions are transcendental ideal.

In fact, at this point the Fregean interpretation can exploit an important further parallel between Kant's account of appearances and the Fregean notion of sense. For the Fregean, too, wishes to emphasize that senses are not identical with any of the real, psychological states in which they are grasped, nor are they made up of such states, nor are they real 'component parts' of such states. If we add to this the fact (noted above) that senses are *also* not identical to their references, we can see why Frege himself was moved to claim that senses formed a 'third realm'. Now, though many have taken Frege's introduction of a third realm of sense to be ontologically extravagant, the peculiarities of this realm actually share much in common with the peculiarities of the 'world' that Kant himself introduces as that which contains all appearances: 'the world of sense', 'the sensible world', 'the world of appearances' (Bxxvii, B63, B312, B409, B447, B839; *Prolegomena* §32 (4:314), *Prolegomena* §54 (4:354), etc.). For just like the denizens of the Fregean third realm, Kant's appearances are not identical with either the real things that they represent or with the real mental acts in which they are contained, nor are they made up of any real parts of these acts. This is in addition to the parallel that we

established above (§3.1): just like the denizens of the Fregean third realm, the items in Kant’s world of appearances occupy a third representational-relating slot between (transcendentally real) subjects and (transcendentally real) things.

§4. Contrasting the Fregean interpretation with several prominent alternatives

In the previous section I have developed a novel interpretation of Kant’s appearances along the lines of Fregean object-dependent senses. More specifically, I have argued that, like the Fregean account of intuition, Kant’s account of empirical intuition also involves a threefold distinction between act, content, and object, with Kant introducing a further distinction between form and matter within both the act and content. We can summarize the resulting picture on the following Table (cf. Table 2):

Table 3: Kant’s account of appearances

(real) (a) mental act	(ideal) (b) representational 'content [Inhalt]'	(real) (c) represented object
empirical intuiting [contains -->] as composed of:	appearance [represents -->] as composed of:	'something = X' represented by appearance
(1) pure intuiting [contains -->]	(1) form (e.g, space)	
(2) sensing [contains -->]	(2) matter (the 'real')	
[<--	----	-- causes]

On this model, the relationship that Kant ultimately takes to obtain between the act of intuiting and the appearance that it involves is something that is a much closer kin to the relationship between what we saw above (in §2) Frege calling the act of ‘grasping [erfassen]’ a sense and the sense itself that is grasped, *rather than* either a relationship which

corresponds to that between an act of grasping and the ultimate *object* (Fregean reference) represented by (or ‘given’ through) the sense grasped, or the relation between an act and a real ‘part’ of this act. Just as Fregean senses are (i*) the immediate objects of cognitive acts – what is ‘grasped’ in them – so too are appearances (i) the *immediate* objects of intuitions. Yet just as Fregean senses are (ii*) ways of representing further objects (references), so too are appearances (ii) *representations* of something beyond themselves, a transcendental ‘object = x’. And just as the object represented by a Fregean object-dependent sense is not contained in the sense itself as a constituent or component part, despite (iv*) the necessity of the mind standing in a real relation to this object in order to undergo the act of grasping the relevant sense, so too are the objects represented by appearances not contained in the appearance itself as constituents or component parts, even though the intuiting of the appearance is (iv) *dependent* on a real relation of affection obtaining between the mind and this object. Finally, just as a Fregean sense is (iii*) an abstract, non-actual object (content), so too is (iii) an appearance non-actual, *ideal* object (content), with the Fregean account cashing out a key part of Kant’s thesis of the ideality of appearances by emphasizing that the only real causal relationship that is involved in the having of an intuition is that between (a) the act and (c) the thing, since (b) the content is not itself something that is in possession of causal powers.

Having now laid out the basics of the Fregean interpretation, and having brought to light some of the important features of Kant’s account that it allows us to capture, let me now say how this interpretation differs from some of the more well-known and more sophisticated alternatives currently on offer.

4.1. *Upholding the representationality of appearances.* The first account of appearances that the Fregean account should be contrasted with is what I will call the *simple*

phenomenalist account. On this account, appearances are to be *identified with* bundles of sensations that result from affection. Versions of this view were more prominent at the end of the 19th and early 20th century, with Hermann Cohen, H.A. Pritchard, and Norman Kemp Smith as some of its more distinguished proponents.²⁷ Now, as we have noted above (§3.4), there are certainly some passages in which Kant speaks about appearances themselves as if they were simply the effects of affection. Even so, we have also noted that there are further texts that suggest that, strictly speaking, it is only sensation that is the effect of affection, rather than the appearance or its corresponding matter. In fact, Cohen, Pritchard, and Kemp Smith themselves all draw attention to places where Kant contrasts sensation and the matter of appearance, though they each think that this represents an aberration on Kant's part and continue to privilege the other passages.²⁸ As we have seen, however, rather than dismissing such texts, we can instead take them as providing reason for thinking that it is the passages used to support simple phenomenalism which are in need of a more careful analysis. I have presented one such alternative analysis above, which would let 'appearance' in these passages refer to the *act* of appearing, which we have aligned with the act of (empirical) intuiting, rather than to the *content* of this act.²⁹

The recognition of the distinction between sensation and appearance has been used recently by Richard Aquila and James Van Cleve to develop what I will call a more *sophisticated* version of *phenomenalism*.³⁰ Like the Fregean interpretation above, Aquila argues that we should distinguish between intuitions as acts of 'sensory apprehension' and

²⁷ See Cohen 1907: 27; Pritchard 1909: 74f; and Kemp Smith 1919: 83-84.

²⁸ Cf. Cohen 1885: 150-56 and 433-34; Pritchard 1909: 75; and Kemp Smith 1919: 84.

²⁹ For further criticisms of the simple phenomenalist interpretation, see (Allais 2004: 660-65) and (McLear forthcoming: §5.1).

³⁰ See (Aquila 1979), (Aquila 1989), and (Van Cleve 1999). In (Aquila 2003), Aquila also attributes a similar view to (Vaihinger 1892).

what he calls the ‘intentional correlate’ of such acts, with appearances qua objects of intuition being then understood as mere intentional correlates rather than as real parts of the act of intuiting, or as being ‘made out of sensations’ (Aquila 1989: 7; cf. Aquila 1989: 28, and Aquila 1979: 301-2 and 308n22). Similarly Van Cleve has also argued that we should view appearances as the intentional objects of mental acts, which he takes to make them only ‘virtual’ objects, and so rules them out from having real sensations as their parts (Van Cleve 1999: 8).

Yet though Aquila and Van Cleve both join the Fregean interpretation in distinguishing the acts of sensation and empirical intuition from the appearances that are immediately given through such intuitions – and in also wanting to do so in a way that captures the ideality of appearances in contrast to the reality of mental acts – the Fregean interpretation ultimately distinguishes itself from the sophisticated phenomenalism of both Aquila and Van Cleve by emphasizing the *further* representationality of these ideal intentional correlates themselves. For both Aquila and Van Cleve, appearances are ‘merely’ the intentional *object* of certain mental acts, and neither recognizes that Kant means to ascribe to appearances a further representational *relation* to things beyond themselves. Though Van Cleve, for example, accepts that appearances are ‘what is represented’ in certain acts (Van Cleve 1999: 7), there is no recognition that appearances themselves also represent further objects. And though Aquila recognizes that appearances form the ‘content’ of certain acts, Aquila proposes that we should view this notion through the lens of *Brentano’s* account of content, according to which the content of a representation *just is* the object toward which the representation is directed, with this

object ‘in-existing’ in the representation itself (Aquila 2003: 238).³¹ Van Cleve, too, accepts a broadly Brentanian understanding of intentionality, one which works only with an act-object distinction, rather than the threefold act-content-object distinction present in the Fregean picture (cf. Van Cleve 1999: 10).³² But then, by taking appearances to be Brentanian contents, and so to be ‘*mere* intentional objects’, these interpretations fail to adequately keep in view the sense in which appearances themselves (as akin to Fregean sense-contents) representationally relate us to some further thing.³³

4.2. *Upholding ideality of appearances.* Another way to put the foregoing contrast is that while both the simple and sophisticated phenomenalist accounts of appearances view appearances (at best) only as the objects of certain mental acts, the Fregean interpretation holds that an appearance itself is essentially *relational*. More specifically, it holds that an appearance is relational both insofar as it consists in a particular way in which something further is given or represented to the mind – in Frege’s terms, an *Art des Gegebenseins* – and also insofar as the grasping of this representational relation is object-dependent in the sense specified above, in that a real causal relation of affection by some object or other is necessary to grasp the appearance that represents this affecting object itself.

³¹ Incidentally, the fact that Aquila does not take care to draw the distinction between his own Brentanian understanding of content as the intentional in-existence of an object and the Fregean understanding of content as sense ultimately vitiates Aquila’s discussion (in Aquila 2003) of what Sellars means by ‘content’ in (Sellars 1968). Aquila assumes that Sellars has a Brentanian picture of content in mind (cf. Aquila 2003: 238), whereas Sellars indicates that he has in mind something much closer to Fregean sense (cf. Sellars 1968: 65f).

³² Perhaps unlike Brentano, however, Van Cleve argues that we should ultimately analyze the notion of intentional directedness in ‘adverbial’ terms, transforming what seems to be a relation to a virtual object into a monadic predicate of an act or a subject (cf. Van Cleve 1999: 9-10).

³³ Vaihinger also presents kind of phenomenalist interpretation, though it is less clear of which sort. Though Vaihinger, too, notes the importance of the notion of ‘content [Inhalt]’ for Kant’s account of intuitions, he also seems to think we can only understand this content either in the simple phenomenalist terms of sense-data or in the more sophisticated phenomenalist (Brentanian) terms of the intentional object of such sense-data (cf. Vaihinger 1892: 34).

In its emphasis on the relation of an appearance to real affecting objects, the Fregean interpretation is closer, therefore, to the more recent ‘relationalist’ approach by Rae Langton. Where the Fregean differs from Langton is in rejecting the idea that an appearance should be *identified* with the *real* relation between the mind of a subject and an affecting object. The distance between the two positions can be seen in the fact that Langton slides between considering an appearance as a relation, as a relational property (cf., Langton 1998: 128), and as an ‘object in a relation’ (Langton 1998: 22). While the Fregean will accept the general point that a representation of something *x* *includes* a kind of relation to that *x*, the Fregean will reject the idea that, in general, a representation should itself be thought of as a relational *property* of the *x* that it represents.

Here it is worth recalling Kant’s above alignment of appearances with aspects of images. Though an image (e.g., a picture or photo) bears a special relation to its object, the image itself is not a relational property of its object, nor is the representational relation at issue one that can be said to belong to this object as a property.³⁴ This is so, even if there are additional, though distinct, relational properties that *are* borne by the object of an image, in virtue of being pictured by this image – e.g., the property of being represented by the image, and that being represented to the mind from the points of view and sides that are portrayed by the image. The key point is simply that none of these further properties are *identical* with either the image itself or with the appearances that contributed their looks to the image’s formation.³⁵

³⁴ Here it may be useful to return to the graphical illustration of this sort of view in (Searle 1958), by reference to pipes and bowls. While it is surely true that pipes (senses) relate us to their bowls (references), it would be wrong to say that any pipe *is* a relational property of its bowl (or that the pipe is *the bowl itself* ‘in a relation’). Rather, the pipes enable or involve a relation to their bowls.

³⁵ A further textual point: though (as we have seen) there are a number of passages in which Kant describes appearances as involving *relations* to objects, at least to my knowledge Kant never says explicitly that the appearances themselves are *properties* of them. Yet even if we were to grant that property-talk in general *is* a

Now, as we saw above, the distinction the Fregean draws between the real causal relation (and relational properties) and the ideal representational relation is what allows the Fregean room to give substance to Kant's thesis that appearances, and *appearances only*, are ideal rather than real. As many of her critics have emphasized, Langton, by contrast, has a very difficult time accounting for why her focus on the relationality of appearances will be sufficient to explain their ideality, in any interesting sense of this term.³⁶ This is because, on Langton's account, the appearance of an object is just one case *among many* of 'objects in a relation' (Cf., Langton 1998: 22; see also 11 and 19). Yet as Langton herself acknowledges (and indeed nicely demonstrates), Kant himself accepts that there are not just ideal but also real relations (cf. Langton 1998: Chapter 5). Langton's strategy for marking what is distinctive about appearances as ideal relations would seem to be to articulate them on the model of Lockean secondary qualities, such that the relations involved in an appearance are ideal because one of the relata is a mind (Langton 1998: 155-62). This alone, however, is unsatisfactory as it would *also* render ideal the affection-relation that we have seen is responsible for sensations, since this relation, too, surely has the mind as one of its relata. But if affection were also merely an ideal relation, then the picture we would be left with is one in which there is *no* real relation or real connection whatsoever between the mind and the things beyond the appearances.³⁷ Conversely, if we instead insist on the reality of affection (as I have done above), then Langton's criterion of mind-relatedness will not be sufficient for singling out what is distinctively

way to capture the ontology of appearances, there would seem to be equal reason for converting the relation involved in an appearance into a relational property *of the subject*, rather than the object (as Langton would have it). Compare Kant's description of colors as 'not attaching to the object in itself as properties', but only 'to the sense of vision as modifications' (*Prolegomena* 4:289).

³⁶ See, e.g., (Moore 2001: 118-19). In her Conclusion Langton herself actually appears to imply that Kant's language of idealism might be best understood as a manner of speaking in which Kant ultimately misrepresents his own position (cf. Langton 1998: 205-18).

³⁷ For more discussion of this point, see (Ameriks 2001/2003: 156-57).

ideal about appearances themselves, raising the worry that appearance-relations will simply collapse into a subset of the real relations that there are between subjects with minds and things external to them.

4.3. *Upholding the immediacy of appearances.* This points to a further distinction between the real relationalist account of appearances provided by Langton and the Fregean interpretation. Langton says very little about why Kant would be so at pains to continuously tie the ideality of appearances with a specifically *representational* context. Unsurprisingly, Langton also says very little about why Kant would talk about specific kinds of representational entities (appearances themselves) as the sole *immediate* objects of certain mental acts, in sharp contrast to the objects to which appearances ultimately representationally relate us. Put in the terms we have introduced above (§3.2), while Langton's account is perhaps well-suited to accommodate the *causal* immediacy involved in affection, Langton says very little about the *phenomenological* immediacy of appearances themselves and their standing 'in' consciousness.

Along with Tobias Rosefeldt, Lucy Allais has sought to remedy Langton's relationalist account precisely by re-emphasizing the representationality of appearances.³⁸ In this respect, Rosefeldt and Allais draw another step closer to the Fregean interpretation. At least for her part, however, Allais then tries to provide a *direct realist* account of the representational relation involved in appearances. This leaves Allais's account at a crucial remove from the Fregean account spelled out above, due to her distinctly non-Fregean understanding of the immediacy of appearances.³⁹

³⁸ See Rosefeldt 2007, Allais 2004, Allais 2007, Allais 2010, Allais 2011a, and Allais 2011b.

³⁹ Rosefeldt, to my knowledge, does not make such a strong claim on behalf of direct realism, though he appears to be critical of what he calls 'indirect realist' interpretations (along with the 'mere intentional object' interpretations); cf. Rosefeldt 2007: §4.

The version of direct realism that Allais means to use to articulate Kant's views on appearances and intuitions is what Allais calls a 'relational' view of perceptual experience (Allais 2011b: 376; cf. Allais 2011a: 93). What Allais has in mind by direct realist relationalism about perception is a view that has its roots in Russell's conception of acquaintance, though Allais herself refers to more recent work by John Campbell and others.⁴⁰ According to direct realism, a perception has as its content the ultimate object of the perception (Allais 2011a: 93), with the object itself thereby featuring as a 'constituent' of the perception (Allais 2011b: 379-80). For Allais,

[I]ntuitions represent objects *immediately* because they *present* the object itself, as opposed to referring to an object through the mediation of further representations.... Immediacy says that an intuition is not simply a representation which is caused by a particular thing, but that it is in fact a *presentation to consciousness of that thing*. (Allais 2010: 59)

The sort of 'immediacy' that pertains to a perception or intuition consists, therefore, in the fact that its object is directly 'present to consciousness' (cf. Allais 2011b: 383). Indeed, Allais claims that this (along with their mind-dependence) is more or less *all* that is meant by Kant's claim that appearances are representations – namely, that appearances are things which present us with objects directly, where (to repeat) this means that they do so without making use of any other representations (cf. Allais 2011b: 385).

Now, this way of construing an appearance shares something in common with the earlier Brentanian conception of the content of an intuition we met with above (cf. §4.1), according to which the content of an intuition is 'merely' (solely) the intentional object of the intuition, rather than a way of representing some further object. What is more, there

⁴⁰ This view has also gone under the name of 'austere relationalism', endorsed by Charles Travis and others. In addition to Allais, we might also mention McDowell, who has aimed to develop a version of Kantianism, if not an interpretation of Kant, that would be compatible with a kind of direct realism, such that what is intuited or perceived is nothing short of 'how things are' or 'aspects of the layout of the world' (cf. McDowell 1991b: 26).

might seem to be a direct parallel between Allais's claim that the object forms a real 'constituent' of the act and Brentano's claim that the intentional object of an act 'in-exists' the act itself (cf. Brentano 1874: I.115).

Despite these parallels, however, Allais is quite concerned to reject the phenomenalism about appearances that such Brentanian ideas have been used to articulate (cf. Allais 2011b: 378). This is because, for Allais, the object being presented in an appearance *is* a real thing. In fact, it is nothing other than the thing appearing by way of the appearance, what we saw Kant above call a 'something = X'. And even if this thing is being presented in a way other than as it is in itself (cf. Allais 2011b: 387), it is still *this thing* that is immediately present in an appearance as its 'constituent' and no other. Indeed, it is crucial to Allais's *realism* that she keeps firm hold of the idea that in intuition we are immediately 'given' this real object itself: we are given 'the things themselves', and not some representational intermediate (cf. Allais 2007: 479 and Allais 2011b: 392).⁴¹

Now, as we saw in §2, Fregean accounts of perceptual content would resist this analysis of the immediate objects of our intuition. For the Fregean, the ultimate object (referent) *never* forms a 'component part' of the sense that is immediately and directly grasped in a cognitive act. All that is grasped is a representational relation to this further object. And in §3 we saw Kant saying parallel things about appearances: though he takes appearances to be object-*dependent* contents, he does not take them to be object-involving or object-*containing* contents, in the sense that he does not think that appearances 'contain'

⁴¹ Compare the following two remarks: 'The view we are considering allows it to be a possibility that the way things visually appear may differ from the way they are in themselves, even though the visual appearing is something which *essentially involves the objects*, and not something which exists merely mentally' (Allais 2011b: 387; my ital.); '[A]lthough seeing is relational in the sense that *the object is essentially present to consciousness*, it does not follow from this that the way the object is seen as being is entirely the way it is apart from its being seen, or that seeing is entirely transparent' (Allais 2011b: 387; my ital.).

things in themselves or any of their parts as constituents.⁴² It is difficult, therefore, to see how Kant could possibly accept that appearances make *their* objects – the ‘somethings = x’, or things in themselves, that they represent – directly or immediately ‘present to consciousness’, in the phenomenological sense, in such a way that these objects *would be* ‘contained’ within the appearance as a component part. Rather, to repeat what we found above, what Kant himself says *is* ‘contained’ in an appearance is not its object (or any thing in itself) but rather a *relation* (Beziehung, Verhältnis) to its object; more specifically, it is a representational relation. This ultimate object (the transcendental ‘object = x’) forms no part of the content of the intuition, and so is not itself immediately present *in consciousness* (is not phenomenologically immediate) – even if this object is immediately present *to sensibility* in the real causal relation of affection (cf. §3.3).⁴³

⁴² Here let me simply note Allais’s tendency to identify an appearance with a ‘property’ of the thing that appears – namely, the property of its ‘appearing’ a certain way: ‘the appearing is something public, a property of the physical object’ (Allais 2007: 472). Following out this tendency would, I think, bring Allais’s picture much closer to Langton’s than Allais suspects. For the Fregean, even though there is a property of the sort that Allais and Langton wish to emphasize, this should not be *identified* with the appearance, since the appearance (understood as the content of an intuition) is a *representation* of the thing, rather than a property of it. Allais seems to be aware of this distinction, but she instead aligns ‘perceptual experience’ with what represents the thing, rather than the appearance itself (Allais 2007: 473).

This same tendency can also be seen in Allais’s proposal that we should view the mind-dependent though public nature of appearances as more or less on par with the mind-dependent though public nature of secondary qualities (cf. especially Allais 2007). This way of construing the publicness of appearances would again seem to mistake the object of an appearance (or, perhaps, features of this object) for the appearance itself (or, perhaps, what is contained in the appearance itself). Rather than appearances themselves being akin to publicly perceivable secondary *qualities* of things in themselves (or being made up of such qualities), it would seem, at best, that appearances could be akin to publicly available *ways of representing* such qualities. For a more recent analysis of color that incorporates this distinction between the ontological (though still subject-relative) relation that constitutes a *color* (or a color ‘quality’) and the representational relation that is involved ‘in’ a *color-appearance* (i.e., in color ‘phenomenology’), see (Cohen 2009: Chapter 6).

⁴³ The Fregean account would thus reject interpreting intuitions on the model of direct realism’s acquaintance for the same reason as it would reject the earlier phenomenalist accounts: regardless of whether what is given ‘in’ an intuition is taken to be a collection or sense-data, or a ‘merely’ intentional (virtual) object, or an ‘apparent’ property of a real thing, or the real thing itself (though in a way different than it is), all of these options fail to make clear that what is immediately present ‘in’ consciousness in intuition is a representation (representational relation) to some further thing and not the thing itself. In the terms we have developed above, the Fregean account insists against both phenomenisms and Allais’s direct realist relationalist approach that an appearance is a content of an intuition and not its ultimate intentional object. For a more recent attempt to defend a direct realist account, according to which the contents of intuitions are ‘partially constituted’ by physical environment, see (McLear forthcoming: §5.2).

Finally, Allais' direct realist account of appearances will be hard-pressed to make sense of the connection we saw Kant draw between appearances and images. By Allais's own lights, an image of an object is clearly something that stands 'intermediate' between the mind and the imaged object (cf. Allais 2011b: 386 and 396n25). Yet Kant takes appearances to serve as that out of which images of objects are formed, as we saw above (cf. §3.1). It is unclear how this could be possible unless appearances themselves were at the same level, representationally speaking, as the resultant images, and so were exactly as 'intermediate' as the images themselves. But if this is right, then it is hard to see how we could avoid drawing just the conclusion that Allais wants to resist – namely, that an intuition *does* 'refer to its object through the mediation of a further representation' (cf. Allais 2010: 59), since it 'refers to' its object by means of the object's appearance.

4.4. *A new approach to Kant's two worlds.* In distancing itself from both Langton and Allais, the Fregean interpretation also distances itself from the more familiar versions of the 'one-world' interpretations of Kant's transcendental idealism. The Fregean interpretation insists that only 'real' things there are in the real world are the things affecting the subject and the affected subject, and that appearances do not belong to this world, neither as parts nor as properties of real things nor as (real) relations between things. For this reason, the Fregean interpretation is committed to a version of the 'two-world' interpretation of transcendental idealism. It accepts that there are peculiar kinds of entities that are not identical with either subjects or things in themselves.

For this reason, the Fregean interpretation will also differ from so-called 'methodological' one-world theorists like Henry Allison, who consider the distinction between the appearance of something and the thing 'in itself' to consist ultimately only in a difference in the kind of standpoint we are taking on the thing in question, or a

difference in the way in which we are ‘considering’ that thing; see especially (Allison 2004). Just as a Fregean sense is distinct from its referent, so too is an appearance of something is genuinely distinct from that thing. An appearance is not that same *thing* simply ‘considered’ in a different way, but rather a *way* of representing that thing, *in contrast to* the thing itself.⁴⁴

As I have also tried to emphasize in the preceding, however, the Fregean interpretation leads to a decidedly non-traditional two-world interpretation. For one thing, it rejects the simple phenomenalist idea that the world of appearances should be seen as the realm of (typically psychologically inner) sense-data. It also rejects the sophisticated phenomenalist idea that this world is sufficiently characterized as a realm of merely intentional objects or constructions out of sense-data (virtual objects).

Even more importantly, though the Fregean interpretation retains an emphasis on the dependence that obtains between appearances and things in themselves, it unpacks this dependence-relation in a very distinctive way. For while most two-world theorists would cash out this dependence-relation purely in terms of the (second) ideal world of appearances being *caused by* the (first) world of things in themselves, the Fregean interpretation insists that this confuses (a) the real causal dependence of *acts* of intuiting upon these things, with (b) the representational connection that links appearances (qua contents) to things in themselves. For just as Fregean senses are abstract, so too are Kant’s appearances ideal, which makes it impossible for them to depend on affecting objects in a straightforwardly causal manner. On the Fregean interpretation, appearances themselves, qua ideal contents, are dependent upon the things in themselves

⁴⁴ For a nice summary of further difficulties with this sort of approach, see (Watkins 2005: 317-23) as well as (Van Cleve 1999: 143-62).

only to provide them (i.e., appearances) with their *intentional* objects. (This is in contrast to ‘appearings’ qua acts; cf. §§3.3-3.4 above.) This is just the non-causal sort of dependence that Fregean senses have toward their references, due to the essential connection they bear to their references, via a relation of intentionality or representationality (cf. §3.3).

Finally, the analogy with object-dependent senses also points the way toward a distinctive interpretation of what Kant means by ascribing to appearances and their forms (space and time) an ‘empirical reality’ (cf. B44, B52, B54, A370f). Perhaps the most familiar way of understanding this is that Kant thinks appearances are empirically real because they are themselves the substances and causes that we represent in what Kant calls ‘experience [Erfahrung]’. Against this, the Fregean interpretation insists that appearances form only part of the *content* of experience, reserving the term ‘substance’ and ‘cause’ for those *objects* that we represent (‘determine’) *through* appearances (and concepts) in experience.

Kant takes an experience to be composed of intuition and judgment (cf. *Prolegomena* §21a, 4:304). The judgment specifies the concept through which the object whose appearance is contained in an intuition is to be thought, the concept through which the object that ‘appears’ by way of the appearance is to be thought: ‘all experience contains in addition to the intuition of the senses, through which something is given, a concept of an object that is given in intuition, or appears’ (B126). But then, rather than taking any appearance itself to *be* a substance or cause, experience consists in the cognition of substances and causes *through* appearances (through intuitions and perceptions), by using the appearances that they contain to ‘determine’ further objects, by judging appearances to representationally relate us to further objects, on the basis of

features of the appearances themselves: ‘Experience is an empirical cognition, i.e., a cognition that determines an object *through* perceptions’ (B218; my ital.).

On the Fregean interpretation, appearances are rightly accorded a distinctive connection to the real substances and causes represented in experience, not by being identical to these objects, but by serving as the only object-dependent part of the content of the experiences that represent these objects. It is only by including appearances in its content that experience gains its necessary link to real substances and causes, since the concepts involved in the content of experience can be present in mental acts (e.g., of thinking) that occur in the absence of the objects they represent.⁴⁵

§5. Conclusion

My goal in the foregoing has been in some ways quite modest. I have aimed to introduce the Fregean interpretation of Kant’s appearances, by first providing the model it will use to interpret Kant’s claims about appearances (§2), and by then showing that key passages in Kant’s texts bear out the applicability of this model (§3), and, finally, by contrasting this interpretation with some of the most prominent recent alternatives (§4). To be sure, much more would need to be said to show how the Fregean interpretation could be carried through to accommodate all of the passages that these alternatives take to point in their favor, let alone to show how the Fregean interpretation could accommodate all of the further twists and turns in Kant’s account of theoretical cognition as a whole. In the meantime, though, I hope to have made a convincing case that, despite having been overlooked for so long, the Fregean interpretation is actually both

⁴⁵ Both concepts and appearances are equally ‘ideal’, however, in the sense that neither are transcendently real, since both concepts and appearances are ways of representing things, rather than real things in their own right.

textually well-grounded and systematically well-motivated, and so should be taken seriously as a competitor to the other more familiar interpretations on offer.

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