

Mind and the World
Kant on “objects”
February 22, 2007

What are *objects* in the world?

Items in the world that can be encountered in space and time, and re-encountered.

It has matter and form, what it's made of and what are its boundaries.

Aristotelean enformed matter.

Descartes: all form and no stuff

Locke: also form without stuff, just extension and the primary qualities, which we can think about but which cannot be supposed to exist (Berkeley).

In the **Axioms and the Anticipations**, Kant is showing how both geometry and the mathematics of infinitesimals have application in the world of objects, in the *stuff* of the world.

B202, p.286: “All intuitions are extensive magnitudes”

All appearances contain, as regards their form, in intuition in space and time...They cannot be apprehended, therefore, i.e. taken up into empirical consciousness, except through synthesis of the manifold through which the representations of a determinate space or time are generated...”

Kant secures here, with respect to the form of appearances, geometry as applied mathematics. He continues, at B206, “This transcendental principle...”

B207, p. 290: “In all appearances the real, which is an object of the sensation, has intensive magnitude...”

Kant now turns to “empirical consciousness, i.e. one in which there is at the same time sensation.” “...the real of the sensation, as merely subjective representation, by which one can only be conscious that the subject is affected, and which one relates to an object in general.” (B208)

“Now that in the empirical intuition which corresponds to the sensation is reality (*realitas phenomenon*); that which corresponds to its absence is negation = 0. Now, however, every sensation is capable of a diminution, so that it can decrease and thus gradually disappear...”

B212/A170: "All appearances whatsoever are accordingly continuous magnitudes, either in their intuition, as extensive magnitudes, or in their mere perception (sensation and thus reality), as intensive ones."

Thus Kant establishes that, not only with respect to form (intuition in space and time), but also with respect to "matter" (sensation of qualities in appearances), the mathematics of infinitesimals applies to all "empirical consciousness."

Notice that he has not introduced the "experience of objects" up to this point, and this is the respect in which the Axiom(s) and Anticipation(s) are "constitutive" or "mathematical" principles. (p. 297, B221) He has told us how the items of our experience are "constituted," how they are "put together." With respect both to form and "matter," they are continuous.

The **Analogies of Experience** take us onto new ground. "Experience is an empirical cognition, i.e. a cognition that determines an object through perceptions." In the first edition, he says, "Their general **principle** is: As regards their existence, all appearance stand *a priori* under rules of the determination of their relation to each other in **one** time."

The Analogies spell out what is involved in "...a synthesis of perceptions, which is not itself contained in perception but contains the synthetic unity of the manifold of perception in one consciousness, which constitutes what is essential in a cognition of **objects** of the senses, i.e. of experience..." (B219, pp. 295-296)

He goes on, then, to explain that this is a matter not of mere "contingent" relations of "juxtaposition in time but as it is objectively in time." Experience of one nature by one consciousness has to be a synthesis under "the three *modi* of time [which] are **persistence, succession, and simultaneity**." (B220)