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Hans Lenk

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology
hans.lenk@kit.edu

WAS KANT A METHODOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONIST?

Abstract

This paper examines Kant's interpretive role of categories (*Verstandesbegriffe*) on the basis of his assertion in the *Prolegomena* § 30, where Kant claims that the role of categories is to spell out appearances in order to read them as experience. Kant's metaphor of "spelling" or even "reading" is just a colloquial expression for the complexities of interpreting reality. The explanatory models that result from the relationship of the categories to the world of experience are conditions of our understanding and cognition of reality. I think we cannot simply hypostatize structures within a reality *per se*, but we should more sophisticatedly speak only of the hypothetical basic constitution of reality. Indeed, reality as such can only be conceived interpretatively, and the particular epistemological model itself can only be articulated from a higher meta-level of interpretation. We could also say that Kant is concerned with interpretations in the sense of applying given schematic forms or schemata in our use of language, i.e., that he is concerned with scheme-interpretation or schema-impregnation, insofar as the activity of the understanding consists essentially in interpreting experience by means of given schemata. In this paper, Kant's theory of experience interpretation is supplemented by a more sophisticated distinction of different levels of interpretation and presented in the form of diagrams.

Keywords: Kant; scheme-interpretation; understanding; reality; epistemology

WAR KANT EIN METHODOLOGISCHER INTERPRETATIONIST?

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Aufsatz untersucht Kants interpretative Rolle der Kategorien (*Verstandesbegriffe*) auf der Grundlage seiner Behauptung in den *Prolegomena* § 30, wo gesagt

wird, dass die Rolle der Kategorien darin besteht, die Erscheinungen zu buchstabieren, um sie als Erfahrung lesen zu können. Kants Metapher des „Buchstabierens“ bzw. des „Lesens“ ist nur ein umgangssprachlicher Ausdruck für die Komplexität der Interpretation der Wirklichkeit. Die Erklärungsmodelle, die sich aus dem Verhältnis der Kategorien zur Erfahrungswelt ergeben, sind Bedingungen für unser Verstehen und Erkennen der Wirklichkeit. Ich denke, dass wir nicht einfach Strukturen innerhalb einer Wirklichkeit per se hypostasieren können, sondern differenzierter nur von der hypothetischen Grundkonstitution der Wirklichkeit sprechen dürfen. In der Tat kann die Wirklichkeit als solche nur interpretativ gedacht werden, und das jeweilige erkenntnistheoretische Modell selbst kann nur von einer höheren Metaebene der Interpretation aus artikuliert werden. Man könnte auch sagen, dass es Kant um Interpretationen im Sinne der Anwendung gegebener schematischer Formen oder Schemata in unserem Sprachgebrauch geht, d.h. dass es ihm um Schema-Interpretation oder Schema-Impregnation geht, insofern die Tätigkeit des Verstehens wesentlich darin besteht, Erfahrung mittels gegebener Schemata zu interpretieren. In diesem Beitrag wird Kants Theorie der Erfahrungsinterpretation durch eine differenziertere Unterscheidung verschiedener Interpretationsebenen ergänzt und in Form von Diagrammen dargestellt.

Schlüsselwörter: Kant; Schema-Interpretation; Verstehen; Wirklichkeit; Erkenntnistheorie

Modern philosophical research, by means of both historical and systematic research of Kant's legacy, produced a kind of new interpretation of the theoretical foundations of Kant's metaphysics and epistemology of experience. On the one hand, Kant's distinction between "objects" and "things in themselves" compared to the respective appearances are assessed in a more differentiated manner than hitherto (notably Prauss 1977², Hutter 2003); on the other hand, the methodology and epistemology of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (CPR) are interpreted, in retrospect in a new light from the point of view of his third critique, the *Critique of Judgment* (Wieland 2001, Hutter 2003, Prauss 1983). In addition, Kant's epistemological model of constituting objects by using categories was supplemented or even replaced by what one may call a theory of interpretation (Hossenfelder 1978: "interpretative synthesis", Röd 1991, 1995: "subsumption theory" or, better, "interpretation theory", Lenk 1995, 2000: "(scheme-)interpretation methodology").

These rather recent changes in research on Kant support my main thesis that according to a relatively decent liberalization and benevolent understanding of Kant's approach there is a convincing methodological and

epistemological interpretation of Kant's theoretical philosophy by means of methodological interpretationism. All that turns out to be compatible with a critical ontological, as well as an epistemological, residual realism. Kant's theoretical philosophy may be extended towards a direction of a systematic, methodological, and epistemological scheme-interpretationism. Only his *a priori* rationalism regarding the very uniqueness and necessity of using the same categories for all reasoning beings and his deductivism regarding final foundations derived from "the highest principle of reason (usage)" (*CPR* B 136 ff., § 17) is to be re-assessed, moderated, liberated or at least played down.

Already in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant clearly takes a perspectival vantage point in stressing (B XXVII) that "objects of experience", though methodologically speaking they have to be distinguished from "things in themselves", would "really" be "the same things": they would be represented according to our "mode of experience" in the "realm of appearances" *qua* "objects of experience", but also on the other hand via the relationship towards the knowing and experiencing subject and its capacity of knowledge and cognition: it would be both times "the very same things" or "objects" – only according to different perspectives (B 69).

Clearly, ontologically speaking there are no two realms or even "worlds" opening up a crevice between the "world" of "things in themselves" and their "appearances", but in the transcendental interpretation of experience and knowledge there is a representation of objects only and mainly "in two interpretations" ("*in zweierlei Bedeutung*"). Kant clearly mentions different "modes of cognition" ("*Erkenntnisarten*", B 25) or, as I would see it, modes of interpretations of different epistemological or, more precisely, methodological perspectives for founding our knowledge and (re)cognition. Some Kant experts (like Prauss as well as both Hutter and Wieland) would, from the viewpoint of the *Critique of Pure Judgement*, retrospectively reinterpret the approach of the *CPR* and the principle of primacy of practical Reason over theoretical Reason by stressing the (perspective of) self-legislation ("*Selbstgesetzgebung*") of the autonomous and spontaneous "subjectivity" also for any theoretical and methodological structuring of knowledge according to Understanding in natural science and even of everyday experience – thus rendering a transcendental perspective for the subjective formation of knowledge by practical subjectivity (as "autonomy" in the Kantian sense) which would found the "foreign legislation" also for "objectivity as nature" ("experience of natural appearances") (Prauss 1983,

236). Thus, there would be an integrative unification of “practical and theoretical intentionality” (Prauss 1983, 170), i.e. the foundation of theoretical and more practical philosophy from the same “original program of a transcendental philosophy” characterizing “the climax of modern philosophy”. Kant would have mixed the transcendental perspective as a non-empirical reflection about theoretical as well as action-oriented and moral-practical integration to found theoretical and practical philosophy *in one and the same strike* – at least in principle.

We have only to take into account that Kant’s activist parlance of “the actions” of “Reason” (“*Vernunft*”) and of “the Understanding” (“*Verstand*”) as well as by the “epistemological subject” should not be interpreted as a certain kind of homunculus theory of epistemology (as I argued elsewhere 1986, 1996), but that we have to understand these statements as a metaphorical or pseudo-psychological characterization of the combination (or even better: combinability in principle) of representations or imaginations (“*Vorstellungen*”) under the perspectives of “Reason” and “Understanding” or by the epistemologically speaking foundational unifying “pole” called “the epistemological subject”. Kant does not do cognitive psychology or actionist homunculus manipulation of “representations” (which would be the task of the empirical psychology, cognitive science etc.), but he concentrates instead on the very epistemological (necessary) conditions of the possibility of experience and cognition under the criteria of “objectivity” and “universality” claims for combining representations.

Although Kant talks of “action of the Understanding” (“*Verstandeshandlung*”), i.e. synthesis (B 130), making object experience and self-experience possible in the first place (B 161), this has to be regarded as a metaphorical issue of terminology, whereas he actually would (and should) mean the necessary as well as sufficient conditions, i.e. *epistemological* criteria, making knowledge and experience possible at all. From the perspective of scheme interpretationism, instead of the “activity of the Understanding”, “Reason”, and “Power of Imagination” (“*Einbildungskraft*”) one would rather have to emphasize the function and disposition of combinability and synthesizability – being an epistemological interpretation from a reflective, higher level perspective.

Indeed, the same is relevant for the Kantian concepts of categories (pure concepts of Reason), schemata, especially “the transcendental schema”, etc. It is clear that schemes in this sense cannot be empirically established or founded but have to be understood as “rules” or configuration patterns of

abstract or transcendental provenance, respectively (as clearly seen by Makreel 1990, ch. 2 – in particular in the higher-level modes of interpretations like “reading” and “interpreting”, but basically also already in the lower-level capacities of “spelling” and “deciphering”).

In general, Kant’s so-called “*transcendental idealism*” turns out to be a methodological and epistemological perspectivism concentrating on the conditions (or the being conditioned (conditionality)) of the structuring of any “grasping” (or even “graspability”) regarding any theoretical as well as practical knowledge (formation). “Grasping the world” is always an interpretative enterprise, concept or idea, i.e. it is structured by scheme interpretation, but it would also indispensably presuppose “the Other of any interpretation”, namely the hypostatized interpreted *relatum*, the interpreted “thing” (“*Ding an sich selbst betrachtet*”) and the respective actor-dependent formation.

Thus, in sum, Kant’s transcendental idealism does not only call for an “empirical realism” in his sense but also for an ontological minimum realism, at least from a reflective transcendental perspective.

This methodologically speaking “liberalized” or even slightly modified version of the transcendental approach may notably be also found in Röd’s “problematistic transcendental philosophy” allowing for a “rudimentary” or “residual realism” in Kant.

Röd, a meticulous historian of modern philosophy including Kant and Hume, tried to revive and revitalize the idea of Kantian transcendental realism in his book on *Experience and Reflection* (1991), calling it a “rudimentary realism” or a hypothetic (“problematistic”) transcendental realism. “Rudimentary” means, one would presuppose such a thing as a “world in itself” as existing, but we can basically only say something about it or even get any (re)cognition of it by our forms (as of the “Understanding” in Kant’s terminology). Röd would also re-interpret Kant’s epistemology along new lines, namely as a “theory of interpretation” rather than as a “theory of constitution” of things and objects. This is a very interesting point of view not only revolutionizing the interpretation of Kant’s epistemology, but also touching on methodological interpretationism very closely.

Therefore, we have to modify Kant’s epistemology with regard to schematization and constitutive interpretation processes or – as Röd did it (1991, 1995) by modifying Kant’s meta-theory of the constitution of things and elements within the realm of appearances to what may be called a *theory of interpretation* or *interpretation theory* insofar as the things in themselves

are interpreted by our recognition. Generally speaking Röd discussed the problem of reality and transcendental philosophy starting from Kant, but somehow liberalizing and rendering the latter's approach tentative or "problematic" ("problematized"): he speaks of a "problematistic transcendental philosophy" ("*problematizistische Transzendentalphilosophie*"): though leaning on Kant, he does not claim anymore that there is a necessary foundation of unique forms of (re)cognition and experience to be derived with absolute certainty from a highest principle of the activity of the Understanding. That very principle of original transcendental apperception, the original self-consciousness in an epistemological connotation, would combine imaginations ("*Vorstellungen*") in a spontaneous way according to the necessary forms given by the list of categories. These are basically derived from the "table of judgments", i.e. the logical connecting forms which Kant claimed¹ to have used for the deduction of the categories and all forms of combinations in (re)cognition. This transcendental interpretation of the forms necessarily presupposed by experience cannot anymore be given with necessity, but according to Röd these are problematic hypotheses. Therefore, his variant of transcendental epistemology is "problematic" or, as he called it, "problematistic". The idea is to obtain epistemological hypotheses in a tentative and hypothetical interpretive approach. It is therefore an interpretational approach which does not, according to modern standards, claim absolute and ultimate foundation or even absolute validity, but is – from the very start – hypothetical, tentative, in a way (re)constructive and interpretative in a model-theoretical and active sense. It is important also for discussions of realism.

Röd's so-called "rudimentary realism" is but a minimum realism that can be defended by talking about "pragmatic minimum or residual realism" from an interpretative perspective, though this approach indeed sounds a bit more explicitly transcendental-philosophical and somewhat less methodologically refined. I have stressed the practical indispensability of a basic minimum realism whereas Röd concentrates on a theoretical argumentation for his so-called "problematistic transcendentalism" including "rudimentary realism". Transcendental philosophy in this sense is a hypothetical

¹ But no proof is found in Kant's published or posthumous works; therefore the claim was a matter of long-standing attempts of reconstructions and criticisms of the alleged reconstructed proofs (from Klaus Reich (1932) via the present author's first chapter in *Kritik der logischen Konstanten* (1968) (*Critique of Logical Constants*) to recent authors like R. Enskat (1986), U. Nortmann (1998), and R. Brandt (1991)).

discipline consisting of hypotheses and methodologically well-founded tentative hypotheses supported by “good reasons” related to experience and knowledge. The indispensable connectedness of any (re)cognition with actions in terms of interpretations (as I stressed it) is not brought to the foreground that much in Röd’s treatises (1991, 1995). Instead, he stresses that we can also talk about the question of reality on the grounds of metaphysics, including ontological arguments for “reality in itself”. According to Röd, starting with Hume the question of reality necessarily took over a rather epistemological or even psychological character. Hume in some sense replaced the question regarding reality by the rather epistemological endeavor to analyze our belief in reality or the real world by replacing the ontological question with an epistemological and psychological one: are we entitled to do that - and how do we come to hypostatize reality or the respective belief in it? Hume somehow “psychologized” the problem of reality while in Kant it undertook a “transcendental turn” insofar as he asked for the (necessary) conditions of the possibility of knowledge and (re)cognition. “Real” would then for Kant be a concept referring essentially to the world of objects and things within the “empire of appearances” and its laws: whatever is connected with the conditions of experience and sense perceptions is called “*real*”. “Real” in this sense would be anything going “together with perception according to empirical laws”, somehow rendering structure and order to the “given”, scil. to anything given to the senses, and is “always appearance” (“*allemal Erscheinung*”). The “thing in itself” is in this sense transcendent as against the “experientially real” “empire of appearances”. The “thing in itself” can only be thought of as “affecting” (“*affizieren*”) our senses – we can only conceive of it in (transcendental) thinking and modeling. Kant concentrates on the question what the necessary and potentially sufficient conditions are under which experience of reality can be conceived of in the first place. The question for these conditions under which something is grasped as “real” within the “empire of appearance” resides center-stage for Kant. In some sense, one should say that the expression “real” is an ambiguous one because in everyday language it is related to “being real” within the realm of appearances and at the same time to the “thing in itself”; one could even think that it would be necessary to introduce different terms here. However, it is a difference also of theoretical levels: the question of transcendental philosophy addressing the conditions of the possibility of capturing reality as such is posed on quite another level than the question of the reality of things within the world or in the realm of appearances. Kant was pretty

clear about that; he always speaks in transcendental philosophy not about objects and their connections, but about the “mode of recognition of objects” (“*Erkenntnisart von Gegenständen*”). Traditional Kant interpreters would hold that the so-called “doctrine of affection” reading that the thing in itself would “affect” our sensitivity and instigate it to provide the material which then the Understanding would shape, construe, and constitute into objects. Following Hossenfelder’s book on Kant’s *Theory of Constitution and the Transcendental Deduction* (1978), Röd thinks that one has to distinguish and differentiate different points of view and interpretations, transcendental philosophy having several tasks.

This “*interpretative synthesis*” is but a kind of “spelling” or “reading” operation; we may also say that Kant deals with interpretations in the sense of applying given schematic forms or schemata in our usage, i.e., that he deals with schema interpretation and/or scheme-impregnation insofar as essentially the activity of the Understanding consists in interpreting (!) experiences by way of pre-given schemata, “spelling” them out so to speak. This is already another, further reaching and modified theory than the previously mentioned constitution theory, which traditionally was understood as Kant’s only respective methodology of relating to objects and things in the realm of appearances. Röd calls this extended theory of “spelling” or “interpretation” – by schemata of synthetic unity or “spelling out” the appearances in order to be able “to read” them as experience – a “subsumption theory” or an “interpretation theory of experience”². The essential idea is that objects are interpreted within the context of a respective theory of the realm of objects. “Objects” (“object” formations and/or representations) are in this sense indeed interpretation dependent. To be sure, there has to be something which can be interpreted, thus there must be something presupposed as “given” in a relative sense in order to be interpreted: “As far as the object is dependent on the interpretation of a relatively given within variable frameworks of interpretation, it is called ‘appearance’ and conceived of as being subjective in this sense” (Röd 1991, 170) – this certainly does not mean “subjective” in the ordinary sense, but it is rather dependent on the forms provided by the epistemological subject. (“Subjectivity” in this sense in Kant always refers to the form in which the subject would dress or represent objects or gain (re)cognition, that has nothing to do with an

² To my mind “subsumption theory” seems to be a somewhat unfortunate expression: later on Röd also calls it explicitly and alternatively a “theory of interpretation” which is much better indeed.

individualistic interpretation, but is throughout a methodological and intersubjectively confirmable construct of experiential knowledge.)

If we speak of interpretations, we have also to think of the “something” which is interpreted and presupposed in an oblique mode of conception; for this “something” is not yet an object which we would already have. What Röd calls a “residuum of the analysis of experience”, something independently presupposed, although we don’t know it or have it and cannot directly “grasp” it from the respective interpretation which would render it meaningful in the first place that we are able to apply an interpretation model to all. Something must be thought of as “*being*” or in some sense “given” “outside” of the realm of appearances in order to make interpretation possible at all. We have to hypostatize some *interpretandum* in the wider sense which has to be and can *only be interpreted* in order to conceive of the processes of interpretation in the narrower sense. One might think of the rather fluid transitions from constitution to construction and reconstruction (see my 1993, 1995, 2003, 23, fig. 2.2, 2007, 2017). In any case, Röd rightly criticizes the “myth of directness” like my criticism of what I call “directism”: there is no *un*-interpretative basic experience, and any interpretation whatsoever has to presuppose something which cannot be interpreted in the same context and vein. One may consider levels and meta-levels of interpretative phenomena and processes as well as activities, but one would never get an absolutely interpretation-free basis for all structuring experience in (re)cognition. There is no immediate absolute *factum brutum* amounting to being a basis of all interpretations and for their probing and testing. However, we can say that such a utopian extreme ideal might be presupposed as a certain kind of limiting concept – notably under Kant’s restriction that we would never be able to know or recognize it: we can only in a sort of minimum realistic approach presuppose such a model within the “world in itself” (of the “thing in itself” according to Kant) which we might according to Röd identify with “*the un-interpreted*”. This hypothesis amounts to postulating the mentioned “residuum of the analysis of experience” which can therefore be related to a “subject-independent reality” (1991, 174). Röd uses this idea to criticize what he calls “*ideatism*” (“*Ideismus*”), namely the idea according to classical epistemology that consciousness is only confronted with representations (“*Vorstellungen*”). In turn any object, as far as we know it, would be the “content of an idea” (“*Vorstellungsinhalt*”). (1995, 427). In the first phase, Kant, like the English early empiricists and sensualists, apparently adhered to this opinion, conceiving of ideas as a sort of representation of

respective objects that are designated by these ideas. But this “ideaism” is as false as Kant’s traditional doctrine of affection, that the thing in itself would (quasi) *causally* affect our sense organs and would only then and by that provide the material for constituting experience and objects. (A category of causality can only be applied to the “realm of appearances”, i.e. to already interpretively shaped objects.)

Since Kant’s early doctrine of “affection” runs into insurmountable difficulties like the traditional doctrine of “ideaism” it seems necessary to avoid or circumvent the constitution theory of object formation. Instead, after Hossenfelder and Röd, we may find in Kant’s later epistemology a rather elegant way out – in the form of an *interpretation theory* of objects, although all that is only very rarely and implicitly sketched in some of Kant’s remarks (most prominently in *Prolegomena*, § 30).

Hossenfelder (1978, §17) talked about an “*interpretative synthesis*” with respect to the theory of experience in addition to the earlier “constitutive synthesis of pure apperception for the construction of objects”. Röd rightly extends this towards a procedure of interpretatively spelling out the experiences within theoretical frameworks: “The thinking subject would interpret given contents within a theoretical framework” (Röd 1995, 431), the content of experience would turn out to be “the result of an interpretation by means of general delineations” (Röd 1991, 169) within a context of already given appearances, interpretations, and experiences. An object is only “*something as far as it is interpreted within a theoretical framework, in the last analysis within the framework of the principles of the pure Understanding*” (Röd 1995, 432, my ital.). Indeed, in this context of interconnections between objects and their respective interpretations, something independent of the respective interpretation is to be presupposed, which, however, cannot be grasped independently of any interpretation. It is not “*given*” in an interpretation-free manner or by being in some sense absolutely “graspable” or founded. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned residuum can be identified with a subject-independent reality in itself that Kant indeed acknowledged (Röd 1991, 171, 174f, 178ff; 1995, 434). The connection between “reality in itself” and objective reality is now to be understood in a way that we have here rather complementary modes of seeing the things, not a causally illegitimate effect of the “thing in itself” to the separate objects of “appearance”. There is no causal relationship between the “thing in itself” and the thing in appearance, but it is just a matter of an interpretative aspect, perspective or, as I would say, of the levels of the respective interpretations. Indeed,

Kant thought that appearances could not be thought of without something being real in itself as independent of interpretation in the first place (yet without being able to be recognized but being always only “*thought*”). According to Röd, now “appearance and being in itself are to be conceived as two sides of the same thing (H. L.: “thing” in what sense?), which can however also well be thought of independently of this interpretation framework and be acknowledged as real” (Röd 1991, 436). By understanding all recognizable objects as interpretation-dependent one has to acknowledge at the same time a “reality in itself” which is independent of interpretations, but which is not anymore, as according to Kant’s theory, involved in a quasi *causal* relationship to the objects in the realm of appearances. Instead, being a certain epistemological “limiting concept of something”, which in no way is objectively or *causally* interpreted. It cannot be recognized or grasped, but at most it is understood – I would say again – by interpretations on a higher level – as a necessary condition of the possibility of experience and experiential knowledge on a higher level of interpretations, e. g. level IS6 (see my 2003, 2007, 2017). The interpretation-dependence pertains to experience and the “grasping” of and in it, to the form of recognized or recognizable objects but not to their general existence being independent from the modes of interpretation. Yet, any theory of experience needs as a background such “*residuum of analysis of experience*” in order to be able to speak of and analyze interpretation processes at all (Röd 1991, 180), as Kant tried to show with his “proof” for the “rejection of idealism” (*CPR* B 275; see also Kant’s reflections 5642, 6314 and 178). In the latter reflection, Kant explicitly stated: “We have proven our objects of experience to be pure appearances. There must also be something real beyond the objects of experiences”³, which in fact is a rejection of “idealism”. According to Röd, in Kant we already have to presuppose a “reality in itself” as such being a “*residuum*” of analysis and requiring an interpretation of something “real” (in the original, all-to-day sense) which is itself independent of being interpreted and has to be hypostatized – without ever being able to be “given” or

³ Kant’s *Works* AA vol. XXIII, 42. Kant (*CpR* B 69) explicitly distinguishes between the “modes of experience” conceiving of an “*object as appearance*” and of the *same* “*object in itself*” stating that objects, even the qualities (“*Beschaffenheiten*”) which we accord to them “are to be seen as dependent on the kind of intuition (“*Anschauungsart*”) by the subject in the relationship of the given object to him” (i. e. the subject). This seems – according to Röd – a first hint to an interpretation theory regarding the relationship between appearance and the thing or reality in itself. Röd even (quoting this) speaks of “complementary modes of regarding the things” (1995, 434).

being recognized by experience or independent of interpretations. Röd emphasizes again: “Something is experienced as an interpreted ‘entity’, therefore there is a reality in itself” (1991, 181) that is to say: *interpretor ergo realitas est*. It would be rather important that this reality in itself is the necessary residuum to be presupposed by any analysis of experience and in any interpretive activity. It cannot be given up. (It is, so to speak, an inverse methodical doubt with regard to Descartes’ methodological questioning.) Röd even thinks that not only does “reality in itself” “exist” (in an all-to-day understanding), but that it would avail itself of or be “accorded to certain general structures” (“*gewisse allgemeine Strukturen zukommen*”, Röd 1991, 182) – whatever that means. Such structures or relationships can in normal all-to-day parlance be interpreted as an existing reality without already presupposing a geometry or time succession.

The Kantian “interpretation theory of experience” may be summarized as follows: appearances are in the first analysis not produced or constituted by subjective faculties, but they consist of the fact that “the thinking subject would interpret given contents within a theoretical framework” (Röd 1995, 431). To use Kant’s expression from the *Prolegomena* § 30 we somehow “spell out” “appearances... in order to be able to read them as experience”. The metaphor of “spelling out” or, similarly, “reading” is but a colloquial expression for “interpreting”.

Though I generally agree with Hossenfelder’s and Röd’s reading of Kant’s theoretical epistemology, I would like to give some additional methodological and critical remarks regarding some of the implications.

First of all, I think that we cannot just hypostatize “structures” (or “certain general structures”) within a reality in itself, but more sophisticatedly we can only talk about the basic hypothetical constitution of reality (“in itself”) that it might be only interpretatively conceived of by successfully using structure concepts or related limiting concepts of an interpretation-free “adjacency” or “time succession” (Röd 1991, 185ff; 1995, 437). Hypostatizing just structures within “reality in itself” would again be too simple a supposition that would somewhat naively project relations to the realm of an external reality. We cannot simply project relations, structures, ordering into reality as such and at the same time conceive of these as absolutely interpretation-free (as Röd seems to do that in 1991, 174f, 181f, 185ff, 189f; 1995, 440f). This would amount to a structure- and relation-realism implying the same difficulties as the causal relationship between “things in themselves” and appearances presented in Kant’s earlier doctrine of affection.

In a sense, we have to differentiate and again conceive in a more sophisticated way of these “pseudo-structurings” or the real constitution of reality in itself by higher-order interpretations. (Cf. also the critically mediating remarks above regarding the parlance “things in themselves”.) Also, reality as such can only be conceived of in an interpretative way; and the respective epistemological model itself can merely be addressed from a higher (meta-) level of interpretation. Therefore, we need to go on and supplement Kant’s interpretation theory of experience with a more differentiated distinction between different levels of interpretation – e.g. in the form of the diagrams of levels of interpretations (see my 1993, 2003, 2007, 2017).

It is interesting that scheme-interpretation admits of *levels* of categorization as well as accordingly to the variability of the respective schemata, i.e. whether or not they are hereditarily fixed or conventionalized or flexible, whether they are subconsciously developed and activated or consciously conceived and used. I developed a hierarchy of levels of interpretation consisting of six different levels, or plains, of interpretation. The following diagram shows the respective six levels:

Diagram of the Levels and Types of interpretation

IS₁: practically unchangeable *productive primary scheme-interpretation* (“*Urinterpretation*”) (primary constitution or schematization, respectively)

IS₂: habit-shaping, (equal) forms-constituting *pattern interpretation* (ontogenetically habitual(ized) form and schema categori(al)ization and preverbal concept-formation)

IS₃: *conventional concept formation* transmitted by social, cultural, and norm-regulated tradition

IS_{3a}: ... by *non-verbal* cultural gestures, rules, norms, forms, conventions, implicit communicative symbols

IS_{3b}: ... by *verbal* forms and explicitly representing communicative symbols, metasymbols, meta-schemata etc.

IS₄: applied, *consciously* shaped and accepted as well as transmitted *classifactory interpretation* (classification, subsumption, description by “sortals”, generic formation of kinds, directed concept-formation)

IS₅: explanatory and in the narrow sense “comprehending” (“*verstehende*”), justifying, *theoretically* or *argumentatively substantiating interpretation, justificatory interpretation*

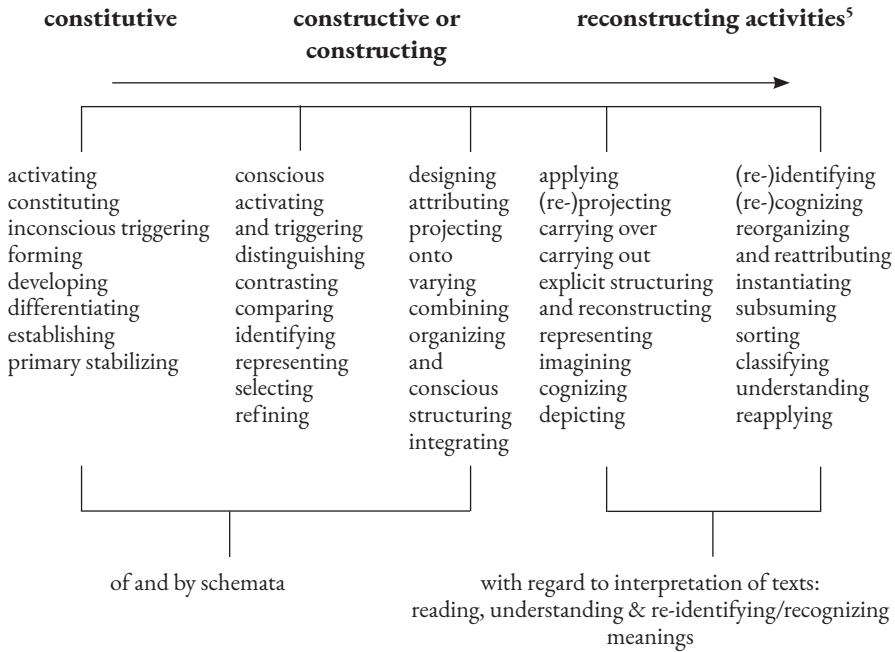
IS₆: epistemological (methodological) meta-interpretation (plus meta-meta-interpretation, etc.) of methods, results, instruments, conception of establishing and analyzing interpretative constructs themselves⁴

⁴ The different levels of interpretation are the following ones: IS1 comprises the practically unchangeable productive primary interpretations of primary constitution which might be represented by subconscious schema instantiation. They comprise the hereditarily fixed or genetically founded activation of selective schemata of sense perception (e. g. contrasts of dark and light etc.) as well as the interactive, selective activations of early ontogenetic developments like the stages of developmental psychology discussed, e.g., by Piaget. Also comprised are the biologically hardwired primary theories which we cannot alter at will, but which we can (only) problematize in principle. For instance, we have no magnetic sense or capacity to trace ultrasound like bats do. But we can conceive of conditions in which we could have these senses or at least devise technological means for substituting these. - On the second level we have the habitual, quality-forming frame interpretations and schema categorisations as well as categorizations which are abstracted from pre-linguistic discriminatory activities, experiences of equality of shape, similarity of presentation and experience, etc. Establishment and discriminatory capacity of pre-linguistic conceptualization and development of concepts about language is to be formed on this level. - On level IS3 we have conventional concept formation, namely social and cultural traditional conventions and norms for representation and forms of discriminatory activities like the explicit conceptualization of framing the world according to natural kinds, etc. In so far as this is not already related to language differentiation we can think of a sublevel (IS3a) on which pre-linguistic convention(alization)s are characteristic. On the other hand, (on IS3b) we have the explicitly linguistic conventionalization or the differentiation of concepts by means of language. - Level 4 would comprise the consciously formed interpretations of embedding and subsuming as well as classifying and describing according to generic terms, kinds, etc. It is the level of ordered concept formation and classification as well as ordering and subsumption. - Level IS5 would go beyond that by rendering explanatory, or in the narrower sense comprehending (“*Verstehen*”), interpretations as well as justifying a theoretically argumentative interpretations in a sense of looking for reasons and grounds of justification. - These activities are certainly not only advanced in science and intellectual disciplines but in any case also in everyday life and common sense. Any kind of systematic comprehension within the compounds of theories, systems, and overarching perspectives of integration is important here.

Beyond that however, we have also a level (IS6) of epistemological and philosophical as well as methodological interpretations of a meta-character, overarching and integrating the procedures of theory building and theory interpretation, methodology and the models of interpretation in the sense of methodological scheme interpretationism

I also tried to arrange the interpreting activities in a diagram of “scheme-interpretative activities” (see my 1993, and in English my 2003, 23; 2007, 2017).

**Scheme-interpretative or interpretive-schematizing activities
(Scheme-)Interpretations**



itself. One could call this a meta-level of interpretativity and talk about epistemological meta-interpretations. However, this level is cumulative and can be considered as being open towards further meta-levels. The model and approach of epistemological interpretationism is itself certainly an interpretative one and can be described and developed only on a certain respective meta-level which is to be seen within the level IS6. Therefore, we have the possibility of a self-application of the interpretational method to interpretative procedures itself. The philosophy of schema interpretation is a philosophy of interpretational constructs as an epistemological model which admits a certain kind of meta-theoretical and meta-semantical self-application in the form of a sort of “meta-interpretation of itself”. This is certainly an asset and epistemological advantage compared to a few other epistemological approaches, including critical rationalism after Popper, a theory which does admit and conceive of the precise conditions of being falsified itself. The human being is indeed the “meta-interpreting being” (cf. my 1995a, also below chapt. 6), capable of ascending to ever higher meta-levels of (scheme-)interpretation.

⁵ On the left side of this diagram, exemplary activities are listed that are somehow productive or constitutive in the narrow sense; in the middle we have consciously or intentionally constructive or constructing activities, whereas on the right all re-constructing or repeating activities are to be mentioned.

If we use these levels and meta-levels of interpretational constructs and activities, we can reinterpret many of the traditional philosophical problems (see my 1993 and 2003, 2017) as well as some psychological concept formations and reformulate them with respect to the relationship between different interpretational levels as mentioned. This is true, e.g., for the concept of truth according to the correspondence theory as well as the consensus or pragmatic theory, as well as many other central problems like the problem of meaning, the problem of reference, and even the problem of content and intentionality, as well as the old-fashioned problem of realism. The latter one can be solved now with respect to what may be called a pragmatic interpretational realism on which we have to rely for practical and common-sense life reasons.

Most problems of “grasping” and assessing connections between “appearance” or “object” and “theory” or “reality”, both in the realm of “appearances” and “reality in itself”, are then to be dealt with by comparisons between constructs on different levels and *meta-levels of interpretations*. Even the model and talk of “the reality in itself” and the distancing and distinguishing of the “real” (in appearance) and “the real as such and in itself” have to be put to an interpretationist analysis on a higher level, namely the epistemological one. Again, this Kantian epistemological model is to be analyzed, methodologically speaking, on a higher level by meta-interpretations, etc. Indeed, transcendental philosophy uses interpretational constructs – only on a higher level. To be sure, in the course of analyzing in a philosophical and epistemological endeavor we are always automatically entangled in interpreting on different, maybe higher, levels reminding us of the musing gorilla in a sort of Rodin thinking pose on a poster: “I am thinking, therefore I am – still confused”, yet – as I would now add – “on a much higher level”. We cannot avoid or evade the levels and meta-levels of interpretation in our processes of “grasping” models and also realities, be they “in appearance” or “in themselves”. Röd explicitly states that the concept of “the given” would be possible only as “a theoretical construct”: “By introducing a construct, i.e. a concept which is only interpreted within the connection of a theory, the framework of the constitution theory is transgressed, and the transition towards an interpretation theory of experience is opened: constructs are not imaginations (“*Vorstellungen*”) presented to the subject as contents, but they are thought within the framework of a theory whereby their meaning is conditioned “by their function within the theory” (Röd 1995, 433f). By stressing that not only “the concept of the given” or “the

concept of objects and appearance” but also “the form of pure intuition and the categorical relationships are to be conceived of as constructs”, Röd implicitly presupposes a certain kind of leveling (stages) of interpretations in a hierarchy of methodological provenance (for instance, levels and meta-levels of interpretations – as worked out by my 1993, 1995, 1998, 2003, 2007, 2017S). Therefore, even in this new interpretation theory accorded to Kant’s epistemology, we have to proceed to a more refined form of this interpretational approach by using levels of interpretation in the above-mentioned sense: not only objects (or their concepts and representations) are interpretative constructs, but also the respective models and constructs themselves. We have interpretative constructs on different levels of interpretation and may again interpret the respective statements regarding objects, realities, and even “reality in itself” and the very interpretations developed thus far from a higher point of, say, an epistemological or methodological *meta*-interpretation. Nevertheless, all this does not mean as Röd rightly stresses that reality as such would dissolve into just interpretations and that there would be no “reality in itself”. He criticizes Putnam’s internal realism for not reaching far enough: the step towards a “rudimentary external realism” would be “unavoidable” (Röd 1995, 426). This is pretty much the same result as the one which my own realistic-pragmatic scheme-interpretationist approach would amount to. (Putnam later went back to a what he called “pragmatic realism” of sorts.) - Differing a bit in accentuation from Röd, I would, in my own variant of *pragmatic realism*, stress the *practical* and *pragmatical* arguments of hypostatizing a mind- and human-independent “reality in itself” much more (e.g. by confrontations with resistance experiences, etc.). Again, I would explicitly differentiate between the levels and models of interpretation, structures, actions, and theoretical constructs of social phenomena including rule-governed social systems, norms, etc... (Röd is – to my mind – a bit too focused on just *theoretical* conceptions and interpretations.) However, in general the results of our analyses are basically similar regarding this *new methodological interpretation of Kant’s approach* and the consequences for general epistemology and the theory of knowledge and experience.

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