Prospectus for <u>Levels of Idealism</u>

0   The purpose of this brief essay is to outline a planned book-length study (tentatively entitled **Levels of Idealism**) of certain evolving patterns in the metaphysics of Berkeley, Hume and Kant.

When finished, the projected manuscript would consist of three sixty-to-eighty-page central chapters on the three philosophers considered, framed by a twenty-page introduction and conclusion. A separate expository appendix would provide a brief glossary (with references for further reading) of the the basic metalogical arguments and notation employed (The metalogical 'quotation-marks' " ... ", for example, which appear a couple of times below, are motivated by Gödel's coding-arguments; they provide a formal counterpart of the traditional distinction between use and mention).

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1   Very roughly, the basic idea behind the manuscript's proposed title is that Berkeley can be regarded as a 'first-order,' and Hume a 'second-order' idealist (where the 'orders' are taken in the metalogical sense of this word), and Kant as a kind of indefinitely-higher-order ('transcendental') idealist, who believed he could formulate a 'transcendental deduction' of the following principal assertions:

1.1   that there 'must' exist a unique (meta)theoretical stratification of **"Erscheinungen"** ("appearances") into **"Anschauungen"** ("intuitions") and **"Begriffe"** ("concepts"), his counterpart(s) of empirical "impressions" and "ideas;"

1.2   that each of these levels is, roughly speaking, semantically **complete** (**"durchgängig bestimmt"** / "thoroughgoingly determined");

1.3   that such 'completeness'(**Bestimmtheit; Vollständigkeit"**) 'must' be dictated by a **unique** background model or interpretation E of theoretical **"Erfahrung"** ("experience");

1.4   that the isomorphism-type of this interpretation E is both **"constitutive"** of human **"Verstand"** ("understanding"), and coextensive with it;

1.5 that there 'must' also exist **another** stratification, this time of Lockean "ideas of reflexion," and partly parallel at least to the one described in 1.1 (textual evidence for this can be found in passages from the First Critique such as the ones cited below in 4), into "**Verstandesbegriffe**" ("concepts of the understanding") and "**Vernunftideen**" ("ideas of reason"); and finally

1.6 that the second stratification in 1.5 is **not** uniquely determined by an interpretation comparable to **E** above, so that ideas of reason ramify in underdetermined and undecidable ways (in the four Antinomies, for example; or in 'proofs' for the existence of god).

1.7 On my interpretation, then, close analogies can be traced between Berkeley's first-order "immaterialism" and Hume's second-order "irrelationism." The latter, moreover, leads quite naturally to Kant's more complex and elusively higher-order denial that there is any perspective **within** "experience" which can clarify an intelligible distinction between "('the') appearances," and whatever it is they (allegedly) represent (the "things in themselves").

1.8 These opening paragraphs, in effect, have provided an outline of the book's introduction. A prototype of the Hume-chapter ("The Second-order Idealism of David Hume")already exists, and I hope to complete a draft of the Berkeley-chapter this year.

The next three numbered sections offer a brief sketch of some of the ideas of the Berkeley-chapter, followed by somewhat longer outlines of the basic ideas of those devoted to Hume and Kant.

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2 The treatment of **Berkeley** in the first of the book's three central chapters will explore (among other things) the implications of an extended analogy between

2.1 two alternative readings of the notorious **'master'-argument** (the one about the 'tree in the quad;' it is a "park" not a quadrangle in Berkeley's text, and he never called his

thought-experiment "master-"; though he **did** clearly consider it
compelling, and perhaps decisive):

2.1.1 one which employs a 'strong,' 'extensional' counterpart
of Berkeley's notion of "perception"/"conception" (essentially
as definability); and

2.1.2 a second which involves a 'weaker,' 'intensional' gloss
of this vexed notion (essentially as internally-coded consistency)
and

2.2 metatheoretic implications of

2.2.1 the **Berry / Richard paradox**, which arises when one tries
to 'define,' e. g., the least integer not 'definable' in less than
10^{65} syllables (this number is sometimes cited as a bound on 'the'
number of electrons in the known physical universe), and

2.2,2 **Gödels (second incompleteness) theorem**, which establishes
(on one reading of formalized 'conceivability') that many
interesting theories **can** 'conceive' of many states of affairs which
are both 'inconceivable' and the case.

2.3 In other sections of this projected chapter, I will explore
related implications of these and other metamathematical ideas,

2.3.1 for Berkeley's critique of abstraction;

2.3.2 for his surprisingly latitudinarian doctrine of "signs"
(set forth briefly in the **Principles**, and in more detail in
Alciphron); and

2.3.3 for the rigoristic **finitism** which underlay both Berkeley's
metaphysics and his philosophy of mathematics, including his cogent
critique of contemporary rationales for the differential and integral
calculus (a subject the Germans, perhaps revealingly, still call
Infinitesimalrechnung).

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3   I originally drafted the hundred-page essay-chapter enclosed
("The Second-Order Idealism of David Hume") as a long independent
paper, and I intend to submit a thirty-page excerpt from it to
a journal.   About eighty laser-printed pages of the present
version -- with some material transferred to an initial discussion

of parallel ideas in Berkeley, and a few pages at the end relocated
in the chapter on Kant -- would form the second chapter of the
projected book.

3.1 According to the view I set forth in this essay, Hume was
in fact not a skeptic in the classical (academic or pyrrhonist)
senses of the word, but rather a **'second-order idealist:'** a reductive
metaphysician who appealed to implicit Berkeleyan "maxims" and
"principles" to reject not **first-order mind-independent objects**
(which he regarded with kind of benign neglect); but **second-order
mind-independent relations** ("necessity," "causation") **between
such objects.**

3.2 In the sense in which Berkeley called himself an **'immaterialist,'**
therefore, one might appropriately call Hume an **'irrelationist.'**
To the extent this interpretation is tenable, one can also attempt
to draw from it some obvious and fairly extensive implications
for Hume's claim to advocate a "consequent skepticism," and I do
this in the essay at some length.

Berkeley, of course, sincerely opposed skepticism, and never
attempted the sort of metacritique of his own methodological
assumptions, maxims and "principles" that characterized academic
and pyrrhonist skepticism, beyond the dialectical rebuttals set
forth in the **Principles** and **Dialogues.** Neither, I would argue,
with a few striking exceptions (most notably, his final critique
of personal identity in the Appendix of T), did Hume..

3.3 With the possible implications of such a metacritique in mind,
I (re)examine several of Hume's explicit appeals to "principles"
and "establish'd maxims of metaphysics" in in some detail, and
argue

3.4 that one can trace several useful analogies between the
structure(s) of Hume's as well as Berkeley's appeals to such elenctic
maxims and dialectical "principles," and 'paradoxical' metalogical
arguments which have arisen in twentieth-century philosophy of
logic and mathematics (principally, the theory-relative nature
of notions such as 'definability' and 'consistency' and
'generality').

One consequence of this analogical study is a tentative

conjecture

3.5 that several of these "principles" **would** in fact have eventuated
in a genuine metatheoretic skepticism, had Berkeley and Hume seriously
applied them to (the "principles") themselves .

3.6 Motivated by this little complex of analogies and suggestive
parallels, I also attempt to (re)consider the extremely strong,
 self -validating properties Hume attributed to the notion he calls
"**Custom**," and wryly characterizes in the First Enquiry (cf. E I
55) as "a kind of preestablished harmony" and "final cause."

   The principal conclusion of this line of argument are

3.6.1 that Hume's arguments for these properties eventuate in
a claim which I call

"Hume's Circle:"

 Only 'Custom' can establish that

 ⌐**only 'Custom' can establish that**

 ⌐   • • •   ⌐⌐;

and

3.6.2 that they ultimately confer so much **unicity** and intersubjective
uniformity on our otherwise-disparate "ideas" that they form a
functional bridge between Berkeley's "god," and Kant's
architectonically much more elaborate claims for his notion of
'the' (?) "synthetic **a priori**."

   Attempts to travel back and forth across this 'bridge,' in
fact, form one of several recurrent themes for the book as a whole.

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4 The chapter devoted to **Kant** is motivated in part by two remarks
in the First Critique:

4.1 that "**Verstand**" ("understanding") is a "**Vermögen der Einheit
der Erscheinungen vermittelst der Regeln**" ("capacity for unity
of appearances by means of rules"), and "**Vernunft**" ("reason")
a "**Vermögen der Einheit der Verstandesregeln unter Prinzipien**"
("capacity for unity of the rules of understanding under
principles") (B359); and

4.2 that "[d]er **Verstand macht für die Vernunft ebenso einen**

Gegenstand aus, als die Sinnlichkeit für den Verstand"
("understanding forms just as much an object for reason, as the
structure of sensibility does for understanding") (B692).

One of the chapter's principal lines of argument is an attempt
to model these informal types or levels of cognition with a hierarchy
of three (recursively) axiomatizable theories $S \subseteq T \subseteq U$, such that

4.2.1 S includes a set-, class- or type-theory S' strong enough
to interpret the number theory and analysis needed for Newtonian
dynamics (formal counterparts of Kant's "forms" of "inner" and
"outer sense"), and has enough additional formal vocabulary to
accommodate an appropriately Kantian theory of **Anschauung(en)**
(intuition(s));

4.2.2 the consistent extension T of S includes a set-, class-,
or type-theory T' strong enough to prove the (relative) consistency
of $S' \subseteq T'$; T also proves the relative consistency of S, and has
enough additional vocabulary to provide a plausible if partial
theory of "'the' (?) **categories of the understanding;**"
and finally,

4.2.3 the consistent extension U of T includes a set-, class-
or type-theory U', which may or may not prove the (relative)
consistency of $T' \subseteq U'$; U also has enough additional vocabulary
to provide a plausible theory of **"ideas of pure reason;"** but U
may or may not, once again, prove the (relative) consistency
of T.

In **4.2.3**, for example, we wish to leave open the possibility
that U is a **conservative extension** of T (i. e., a consistent
extension of T which proves no theorems in the language of T which
are not already provable from T), in keeping with an informal
assertion Kant often seems to make. Since T does not prove its
own consistency, by Gödel's theorem, neither then does U.

4.2.4 These definitions, in effect, are placeholders. They permit
a great deal of latitude about the nature of S, T and U and their
primed counterparts, and I offer them simply to model the idea
that Kant's **"understanding"** involves a kind of (allegedly) canonical
metatheory for his **"intuition(s),"** and his **"reason,"** in turn, a
not-so-canonical metatheory for **"understanding"** (cf. again the

quotations from B359 and B692 above).

4.3 Given the assumptions sketched in **4.2**, we can ask whether
its analogies might be aligned with (plausible counterparts of)
historically Kantian claims -- whether, in effect, one can provide
a formal miniature of significant aspects of the Kantian
architectonic, and use that miniature to clarify some of the
architectonic's limitations. I believe the answer to both these
questions is "yes."

4.3.1 For a brief sample of such potential clarification, consider
first the notion of the **synthetic a priori**, and the central claim
of '**transcendental idealism**,' that "[d]er Verstand schöpft seine
Gesetze (a priori) nicht aus der Natur, sondern schreibt sie
dieser vor" ("the understanding does not draw its laws from Nature,
but prescribes them to it") (Pr 320, para. 36).

If "understanding" **can** be both **characterized** and **represented**
by a **complete** theory T^*, such that $S \subset T \subset T^* = Th(E)$, the theory
of the (allegedly) unique structure **E** alluded to above, **then**
it **is** immediate, first, that assertions in T are substantive,
'synthetic' extensions of merely logical claims (one of the
paraphrases Kant gives for "synthetic" is "**erweiternd**" --
"extending" -- often translated wretchedly as "ampliative").
It is equally obvious, second, that since T is more comprehensive
that the weaker theory S, T^* **must** decide everything in the weaker
theory S^* = the restriction of T^* to the language of S.

4.4 The more vexed underlying question, of course, is whether
any sort of ('transcendental') '**deduction**' could ever show that
we '**must**' assume (or can even "**understand**") the **completeness**
of theories such as T^* and S^*, as Kant essentially claimed, or
provide 'evidence' that a **unique** 'intended' interpretation **E** of
T (unique at least up to elementary equivalence) 'must' 'exist.'

4.4.1 Here too, suggestive metamathematical analogies may exist.
In several passages (cf., e. g., B353, B384 and B809), Kant
elaborates a notion of **Transzendenz**, which he believes characterizes
experientially unsecured "claims of reason," and which anticipates
in several respects (I believe) both Georg Cantor's quasi-formal
notion of class-theoretic **Inkonsistenz**, and later metamathematical

phenomena of incompleteness and undecidability. Kant also associates
this notion explicitly at several points with an intrinsic human
need to make indeterminate and overextended claims of **"Vollständigkeit
der Bedingungen"** ("completeness of conditions") (cf., e. g.,
B443-444). Yet he also remarks in another passage that **"die Einheit
aller möglichen empirischen Verstandeshandlungen systematisch zu
machen"** ("making the unity of all possible empirical activities
of the understanding systematic") -- which sounds like the
quintessential task of any successful 'transcendental deduction' --
is **"ein Geschäft der Vernunft"** ("an affair of reason") (B692).

4.5 Put very briefly, I intend to explore in this chapter the
hypothesis that metamathematical arguments very like those of Kant's
transzendentale Dialektik put into suspension (I have in mind
later uses of the German word **"aufheben"**) claims in the
transzendentaler Analytik to 'deduce' in some sense the 'existence
of structures such as **E. Informally.** this suggests to me that
Kant's claims for the structural unicity (even definability)
of **"Erfahrung überhaupt"** ("experience in general") are inherently
transzendent / inkonsistent. One way to express this conjecture
is to formulate an analogue of the self-referential claim about
"Custom" which I attributed earlier to Hume:

4.6 Kant's Circle:

 Only synthetic a priori judgment can establish that
 ⌜**only synthetic a priori judgment can establish that**

     • • •   ⌝⌝.

4.7 Uncharitably, one might appeal to such formulations to conjecture
that claims such as those in the Analytic must ultimately be begged
(or, at one remove, that we 'must' beg that we 'must' beg them,
as Kant's strangely iterative modal usages sometimes seem to
suggest).

    More sympathetically, one might regard them as epistemic
expressions of faith, or of Blochian "hope," or of what Kant in
other contexts called a **"regulative ideal"** -- not, in this respect
at least, so very unlike Berkeley's god, or Hume's wryly proposed

"final cause" ("Custom"); or even Einstein's elusive "old man,"
who (allegedly) ensures for us the regularity of the physical
and thought-experimental universe, and (again allegedly) does
not "throw dice."

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5   The account of the development of the forms of 'idealism'
I wish to set forth in **Levels of Idealism** is recapitulated in the
following remarks, which also provide a brief prototype of the
book's conclusion.

5.1 Each of Berkeley, Hume and Kant wished to 'show' that a class
of assertions (about "matter," "cause," and "experience in general,"
respectively) was determined by a wider class of **theoretical** data
which they associated, naturally enough, with some species of
intentional or 'mental' activity (for where else have any theories
we have encountered come from?).

5.2 Each supported this 'demonstration,' further, with appeals
for some sort of reductive denial of the **non**existence (or at least
experiential and scientific irrelevance) of anything **not**
"intentionally **in**existent" (if I may employ Brentano's later usage
about 'the mental').

5.2.1 In this manuscript, I argue that each of these reductive
claims has one or more natural metalogical analogues, but that
these formal ectypes are either **inexpressible** in or **independent**
of the theories to which they naturally apply. And this, in turn,
suggests to me that we might do well to draw similar conclusions
about their informal metaphysical prototypes.

5.3 Each of the three great metaphysicians I have been considering
also attempted to confront the problem of the apparent non**unicity**
and non**uniformity** of their 'merely' (?) intentional (theoretical)
objects. Each had also courted this objection, in effect, by
resorting to one or another of the dialectical 'modes' and 'tropes'
of classical skepticism to vindicate one or another aspect of the
reductionism referred to above. And each attempted to resolve
the problem with some sort of ramified mixture of two characteristic

responses, one tacit and the other more explicit.

5.3.1 The first response was to appeal a cardinal motive of
proto-idealistic metaphysics already prominently present in the
writings of Anselm and Descartes: the idea that what 'conceives'
something is in some sense 'greater' than (or perhaps has more
'formal reality' than) what it conceives. This argument lives
on quite strongly in twentieth-century philosophy of mind, I believe,
in the metaphysical pathos which seems to impel certain opponents
of 'neurophilosophy' and rebutters of Turing's test.

5.3.2 The second response of the philosophers I have considered
was essentially to **relocate** the unicity and uniformity most us
trustingly associate with the 'objective' (?) real world in the
theoretical/intentional structures to which they 'reduced' (?)
it.

5.4 Berkeley made the second response quite straightforwardly
with his appeals to the great christian "spirit," and Hume more
indirectly with his dubious "preestablished harmony" of "Custom"
and "Moral Science." Kant's response, in a sense, was most explicit
of all, expressed by his cooptation of 'all' (?) of natural science
into 'the' forms of intuition and categories of the understanding.

5.5 Finally, the meta**logical** analogues of these two "responses"
also seem to me to ramify, this time in ways which may have
potentially interesting implications for the philosophy of
mathematics. One the one hand, all the evidence points in the
direction of a rich (and to me satisfying) **semantic pluralism**,
for any axiomatic theories of serious analogical interest. On
the other, there seems to be a need for practitioners of logic
to have "in mind" preferred, **"intended" interpretations** for such
theories. And **this** notion seems to be **recurrently** metatheoretic --
marginal, in effect, to the fundamental (meta)theories in which
we try to express it.

5.6 If so, this very **need** for logicians to postulate such recurrent
metatheories, within which they can then 'locally' legitimate their
(object)theoretical work (a need expressed most simply and
quaintly, perhaps, in Carroll's parable of Achilles and the

Tortoise), may itself express a formal miniature of Kant's famous
"Schicksal . . . der Vernunft" ("fate of reason") (A VII):

> daß sie durch Fragen belästigt wird, die sie nicht abweisen
> kann; denn sie sind ihr durch die Natur selbst aufgegeben,
> die sie aber auch nicht beantworten kann; denn sie
> übersteigen alles Vermögen der menschlichen Vernunft.

> that it is burdened by questions which it cannot brush off;
> for they are posed to it by the nature of reason itself,
> which it also, however, cannot answer; for they exceed all
> capacity of human reason.

5.7 And if **this** is so, the complex of dilemmas I have discussed
may provide after all a somewhat less eloquent sense (if not
meaning) to the following schematic reproduction of a cartoon
I once saw on an academic's door. It depicts an apparent (baseball)
box-score, of a game between the two metaphysical 'teams' which
are shown below on the left:

Inning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Final
Realists	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	**0**
Idealists	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**1**

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