

*Tom Rockmore*

## **Replies to comments by Profs. Katrechko and Przhilenskiy**

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The replies given by the author to Profs. Katrechko and Prof. Przhilenskiy are very different. Prof. Katrechko approaches Kant as if he was a contemporary thinker simultaneously committed to correlationism, a semanticist, a follower of Strawson, a representationalist, and so on. The response is that he is not a contemporary thinker. What remains is Prof. Katrechko’s view that he shares with some other Kantian scholars that the critical philosophy is a form of representationalism. Prof. Przhilenskiy begins by agreeing that Kant can in fact be read as supporting anti-representational and constructivist ideas, while suggesting that the Copernican turn can be read in different ways. He attributes to the author the view that phenomena are just representations, whereas, on the contrary, the author claims, though perhaps not clearly enough, that the mature Kant turns away from representationalism.

**Keywords:** I. Kant, Copernican revolution, Copernican turn, Parmenides, epistemic constructivism

### **Reply to Prof. Katrechko**

Prof. Katrechko approaches Kant as a contemporary thinker. He describes the author of the critical philosophy as simultaneously committed to correlationism, a semanticist, a follower of Strawson, a representationalist, and so on. These references, which are taken from the recent debate, are implausible as concerns Kant. “Correlationism” emerged in the last few years in Meillasoux’s neo-realist rejection of the critical philosophy. Semantics is broadly understood since Frege as concerning the post-Kantian distinction between Sinn and Bedeutung that has no analogue in the critical philosophy. Strawson’s well-known analytic reading of Kant

as an empiricist but without idealism is not intended as an interpretation of Kant but rather as a revisionary view of what can still be saved from the critical philosophy. What remains is Katrechko's view that he shares with some other Kantian scholars that the critical philosophy is a form of representationalism.

Katrechko relies on the Herz letter in depicting Kant's task as formulating a solution to problem of the representation to the object. "Representationalism" as some form of the claim that there is a representation, or a third term between the subject and object. Representationalism is widespread in modern philosophy beginning with Descartes and continuing to the present. If Kant is a representationalist, then he believes knowledge requires an inference from what is given in experience as an effect to that by inference is its cause. Yet though Kant seems to favor representationalism in some texts, in others from the same period he clearly rejects it.

In a pre-critical text, "The Only Possible Argument in Support of A Demonstration of the Existence of God" (1763) he suggests that "the word 'representation' is understood with sufficient precision and employed with confidence, even though its meaning can never be analyzed by means of definition". In the first edition of the Critique of Pure Reason, at a time when he is still committed to representationalism he later writes, in seeming to equate appearances and representations that "all appearances, are not things, but rather nothing but representations, and they cannot exist at all outside our mind" (A 492) Yet his view of representationalism quickly changes. In the "Dohna Wundlacken Logic" (1797) he explicitly denies that representation can even be defined. And in the "Jäsche Logic" (1800), he unequivocally claims that representation "cannot be explained" at all.

The turn away from representationalism, on which Kant still relies early in the critical period, to post-representational constructivism, is familiar to scholars. Heidegger, for instance, prefers the first edition of the Critique of Pure Reason to the second edition, when Kant has already clearly left representationalism behind in turning toward constructivism.

Kant changes his mind for the important reason: we cannot infer from the appearance, that is an effect, to its cause, that is, to the mind-independent real object, or, in Kantian language, the noumenon or thing in itself. If it were possible to infer from the effect to the cause, then the real could be represented. Yet Kant like Plato rejects the backward inference from effect to cause, hence rejects the idea that the object, or the real, can be represented. Hence Kant rejects representationalism understood as correctly depicting or grasping the noumenon.

In the critical period, Kant's references to representation depict a growing realization of the insuperable difficulty of and disillusionment with representationalism as an epistemic strategy that is replaced as early as the second edition of the Critique of Pure Reason through a turn to constructivism.

Katrechko suggests in passing that the term "Copernican revolution" is "only a metaphor for Kant". It is true that this term is a metaphor. But it is false that it is not more than that. Kant never says that his position illustrates the Copernican turn. His comparative reference to Copernicus calls attention to the crucial role of the subject at the center of the theory. He clearly sets up an exclusive dichotomy: either the subject depends on the object or the object depends on the subject.

Kant can be read as making three conjoined claims: there has never been the least progress if one assumes the subject depends on the object; if the subject depends on the object it is at least likely that, in virtue of the lack of progress, cognition is by inference impossible; it might be useful to invert the relation between subject and object. Obviously in Kant's eyes the Copernican turn is more than a metaphor since unless the object depends on the subject Kant thinks cognition is impossible.

According to Katrechko, who refuses what I am calling the Kantian exclusive dichotomy, claims there is a middle path between constructivism and empiricism. Yet there cannot be a third possibility for Kant, who rests his case on the idea, very similar to indirect mathematical proof, that if the first possibility, or the dependence of the subject on the object is false, then the second possibility, namely the dependence of the object on the subject, is therefore true. Kant does not need a middle path between empiricism and constructivism since, as Katrechko correctly notes, Kant has in mind objects for us, objects for us that the subject supposedly constructs and therefore can know.

### **Reply to Prof. Przhilenskiy**

Prof. Przhilenskiy begins by agreeing that Kant can in fact be read as supporting anti-representational and constructivist ideas, while suggesting that the Copernican turn can be read in different ways. He attributes to me the view that phenomena are just representations, whereas, on the contrary, I claim, though perhaps not clearly enough, that the mature Kant turns away from representationalism.

Przhilenskiy calls attention, correctly so, to Kant's view that the conception of an appearance is cognitively useful within, but not beyond, as Strawson would say, the bounds of experience. Przhilenskii thinks this point shows Kant's desire to preserve the most important so-called advantages of representationalism. Yet we cannot accept this point since Przhilenskiy does not identify these advantages. I agree, however, to his suggestion that the Copernican turn that, in my view lies at the basis of the critical philosophy, further leads to the priority of practical reason over theoretical reason. I further agree that Kant acknowledges the active role of the subject at the same time as he makes important efforts in two directions: on the one hand to preserve the transcendental dimension of the critical philosophy, and on the other to understand the subject as active. The Kantian view of activity that has not often received the attention it deserves unfolds on both the theoretical and practical levels. Przhilenskiy claims that Kant's active subject certainly creates the world, but does so in action, rather than by thought. I would say the subject is active in constructing the world in both ways, as Fichte almost immediately saw. This was the central insight in the transition from Kantian to post-Kantian German idealism.

## Ответ на комментарии профессоров Катречко и Пржиленского

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Ответы, которые даются автором на комментарии профессоров Катречко и Пржиленского, различны. Катречко подходит к Канту так как будто он является современным мыслителем, одновременно приверженцем корреляционизма и последователем Стросона, репрезентационистом и т. д. Дается ответ, что Кант не является современным мыслителем. Остается лишь взгляд профессора Катречко, который он разделяет с рядом других кантоведов, что критическая философия Канта является разновидностью репрезентационизма. Профессор Пржиленский соглашается с тем, что Канта можно рассматривать как сторонника антирепрезентационистских и конструктивистских идей, предполагая, что коперниканский поворот может быть понят разным способом. Он приписывает автору взгляд, что феномены являются простыми репрезентациями, тогда как, на самом деле, автор утверждает, возможно недостаточно четко, что поздний Кант отказывается от репрезентационизма.

**Ключевые слова:** И. Кант, коперниканская революция, коперниканский поворот, Парменид, эпистемологический конструктивизм