

The Refutation of Idealism

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ABSTRACT: This paper analyses Kant's Refutation of Idealism in the B-edition of the Critique of Pure Reason by examining the conditions that must be satisfied for inner states to be objectively determined in time, focusing in particular on the question to what extent their temporal ordering is parasitic on an objective ordering of outer states. Such a dependence of the ordering of inner states on that of outer states would show, contrary to the problematic idealist, that one's existence (understood in terms of one's mental states) cannot be objectively determined in time unless there is an external world.

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I Introduction

The Refutation of Idealism is an addition to the B-edition of the Critique of Pure Reason that replaces Kant's discussion of problematic idealism in the Fourth Paralogism of the A-edition.¹ Kant was much occupied by this form of idealism, considering it "a scandal to philosophy and to common human reason that the existence of things outside us [...] must be accepted merely on faith" (Bxxxix fn), and describing it as "a kind of cancer in metaphysics" (28:681). He returned to this topic at various points after the publication of the B-edition² and already made a number of changes and clarifications to the Refutation in the B-Preface, not being entirely satisfied with the presentation of the argument.

Kant aims to establish in the Refutation that problematic idealism is an untenable theory. This form of idealism, which he also calls sceptical idealism (cf. 4:375) and psychological idealism (cf. Bxxxix fn), is an epistemological theory, more precisely a form of external world scepticism, that considers the existence of outer objects to be "doubtful and indemonstrable" (B274). Whilst doubting outer experience, problematic idealism accepts inner experience, considering it to be unproblematic. In this way, it involves a privileging of our epistemic access to the inner over that to the outer, treating the former as immediate and unproblematic, whereas the latter is considered to be mediate and doubtful.

In particular, the problematic idealist holds that, though we are immediately conscious of our own existence and mental states, the external world is not immediately accessible to us but can only be established on the basis of a doubtful inference from outer representations to the existence of outer objects (cf. R5653, R5709, R6315). This inference is considered to be problematic on the basis of the subjective indistinguishability of outer experience and outer imagination. Given that any outer representation could just as well have been the product of the imagination rather than of intuition, it would seem to follow that the existence of the external world is doubtful and cannot be demonstrated.³

The fact that outer imagination and outer intuition are indistinguishable from the subject's point of view implies that one cannot distinguish them in terms of their determinations, but instead has to appeal to their origin, showing that outer intuitions are required and have to be admitted by the problematic idealist.⁴ This is precisely what Kant does in the Refutation, trying to show that something that

¹For an account of the relation between the Refutation and the Fourth Paralogism, as well as of the Refutation's role and location within the Critique more generally, cf. Bader: 2012.

²Cf. R5653-5655, R6311-6317, R6319, R6323, and the Leningrad Reflexion.

³"From an effect I can indeed infer to a cause, but not to a determinate cause. A representation of things outside us can have its cause (1) in the imagination, (2) in the presence of the thing" (28:771).

⁴The indistinguishability on which problematic idealism is based is present even within the framework of transcendental idealism, where outer and inner sense are equally immediate and only give us access to appearances. This explains why the argument provided in the Fourth Paralogism is insufficient for refuting problematic idealism and why the Refutation is required.

the problematic idealist accepts, namely inner experience, in fact presupposes outer experience. By showing that inner experience requires outer experience, Kant can refute problematic idealism and establish that “we have *experience* and not merely imagination of outer things” (B275).

In particular, Kant argues that the conditions of the determinability of one’s existence in time involve the existence of an external world, since the objective ordering of inner states is parasitic on that of outer states. Kant establishes this on the basis that time determination requires something permanent in perception together with the claim that the relevant permanent cannot be inner but has to be outer. Accordingly, one can only have inner experience if one has outer experience. That is, an objective ordering of inner states presupposes an objective ordering of outer states. In this way, Kant turns the tables on the idealist, showing that, instead of inner experience being privileged over outer experience, the former actually presupposes the latter.⁵

The core of Kant’s argument, which will be explicated in this chapter, is presented at B275 (together with the emendation in the B-Preface):

1. I am conscious of my existence as determined in time.
 2. All time determination presupposes something *permanent* in perception.
 3. But this permanent something cannot be an intuition within me.
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- ∴ Hence determination of my existence in time is possible only through the existence of actual things that I perceive outside me.

2 Determinability in time

I am conscious of my existence as determined in time.

Kant’s argument begins with a claim about time determination. What exactly this claim consists in is a rather contentious matter. In particular, it is unclear how robust this starting point is meant to be. What kind of temporal determinations does this claim attribute to one’s existence and one’s mental states? Does it merely amount to the consciousness that one exists now? Or does ‘my existence’ refer to the subject’s entire life (up to the present moment)? Does this claim involve any reliance on memory, on how past states are ordered? Does it only assert that one is conscious that one’s existence is determined in time, or also that one is conscious of its time determinations (= duration, succession, and simultaneity), i.e. conscious not just that it is determined in time but how it is determined in time?

⁵Kant also provides a somewhat dogmatic argument in the first note following the Refutation (cf. B276-277 fn), that was already found in the Fourth Paralogism (cf. A373-375), based on the idea that the imagination needs to have material provided by outer sense, given that it is merely a reproductive faculty that cannot generate a manifold of its own. This chapter is only concerned with the time determination argument.

The robustness of the starting point of the Refutation has far-reaching consequences for the interpretation of this argument, since it affects both its plausibility and its significance, as well as how we are to understand its role within the Critique of Pure Reason, especially its relation to the Deduction. The more robust this initial claim is, the more plausible it is that a successful argument can be given. After all, it is much easier to establish that a robust claim has substantive presuppositions than it is to identify substantive requirements for a more minimal claim. Yet, any robust starting point will also be more easily susceptible to sceptical challenges and, accordingly, cannot be used in a non-question-begging manner to refute those who are not willing to grant this initial claim. By contrast, the less robust and more minimal the starting point is, the fewer resources Kant will have at his disposal and the more difficult it will be to establish any substantive conclusions. Yet, any conclusions that are established from such a basis will be highly significant, given that the minimality of the starting point makes it much more difficult for a sceptic to call it into doubt.

Kant is quite clear that the Refutation is based on a robust starting point. What is at issue is not the mere 'I' of transcendental apperception (cf. B277 and Bxl). As Kant notes, we are concerned with the conditions for inner experience, for empirical cognition of the self. It is for this reason that the upshot of the Refutation amounts to the claim that inner experience (which involves the determination of the manifold of inner intuitions in time) presupposes outer experience (cf. B275 and B278). In short, the self the existence of which is to be determined in time is the self that is inwardly intuited rather than just transcendently apperceived (cf. R5653, R6311, R6313). Kant is asserting not just the existence of a bare subject of consciousness, i.e. the determining self, but the existence of the determinable self and therewith the existence of a manifold of inner states that exist in time. This is important because the argument is based on identifying the preconditions for the possibility of objectively ordering these various states in time. Without a manifold of inner states the argument would, consequently, not be able to get off the ground.

The fact that Kant is operating with a robust starting point makes his argument susceptible to sceptical doubts. Along with denying knowledge of the external world, the problematic idealist can also deny that the relevant knowledge of inner states is possible. In particular, he can doubt the existence of the manifold of inner states that is to be determined in time, on the grounds that our access to past mental states is inferential and subject to a type of subjective indistinguishability between imagination and memory that is analogous to that in the outer case. In this way, Kant's Refutation can be circumvented by simply rejecting its substantive starting point. This more radical kind of sceptic countenances only a more minimal starting point consisting in an indubitable basis.

The question is thus: why should we suppose that we do have inner experience, or at least suppose that this type of inner experience is possible? On what

grounds is Kant allowed to claim (in arguing against the problematic idealist) that inner states can be objectively ordered in time? And what is the significance of an argument based on this claim about time determination? In particular, what is its anti-sceptical upshot?

Kant's argument puts substantive pressure on moderate forms of scepticism that are based on an asymmetry between inner and outer sense. These types of sceptics (or problematic idealists) consider inner sense to be unproblematic but cast doubt on outer sense. They accept that inner states exist in time and undergo various changes, but deny that we can know the same of outer states. It is precisely this type of view on which Mendelssohn, Lambert and Schultz based their criticisms of Kant's claims about time merely being a form of intuition, which Kant addresses in §7 of the *Transcendental Aesthetic* (cf. A38/B55 and Bader: 2013).⁶ The idea that the inner is epistemically privileged over the outer is refuted by showing that inner experience presupposes outer experience.

However, the argument does not affect more radical forms of scepticism that are willing to accept a wholesale rejection of all beliefs that are not indubitable, doubting inner experience as much as outer experience. Those sceptics who are only willing to countenance the indubitable Cartesian 'I think' will simply reject the starting point of the Refutation. Accordingly, it is important to distinguish the project of turning the tables on the problematic idealist (= epistemological scepticism regarding the objects of outer sense) from the project of refuting hyperbolic doubt. The Refutation is merely concerned with the former, attempting to refute the problematic idealist who privileges the inner over the outer and who adopts a form of scepticism that is restricted to the external world due to this supposed inner/outer asymmetry.^{7,8}

Whilst the robust starting point can be doubted by the radical sceptic, it cannot be called into question by the problematic idealist. Someone who privileges inner over outer sense is precisely someone who doubts the possibility of outer experience whilst considering the possibility of inner experience to be unproblematic. "Alterations of inner sense or inner experience is [*sic*] thus admitted by the

⁶Dyck has argued that "Kant's Refutation of Idealism is intended (at least in part) to undermine the Cartesian starting-point Mendelssohn had presumed throughout his campaign against Kantian idealism" (Dyck: 2011, p. 161).

⁷It might be objected that Kant identifies problematic idealism as that of Descartes at B274 (likewise at 4:375 and in R6311) and that his target is thus after all the radical sceptic embracing hyperbolic doubt. Kant, however, claims at B275 that Descartes does not doubt inner experience. Given that inner experience can be put into doubt by the hyperbolic sceptic, this suggests that Kant considered Descartes to restrict his scepticism to the outer. Moreover, it is unclear whether Descartes did in fact consistently implement hyperbolic doubt, in particular whether he consistently applied this method to the question of the reliability of memory (cf. Chignell: 2010, p. 492).

⁸Given that even the Refutation is not meant to refute hyperbolic Cartesian scepticism, we can see that interpretations of the Deduction that consider it as an anti-sceptical argument addressed at the radical Cartesian sceptic are a non-starter (e.g. Strawson: 1966).

idealist, and if one wants to refute him then this cannot happen otherwise than by showing him that this inner experience, or which is the same the empirical consciousness of my existence, presupposes outer perception” (R6311). The fact that only the outer but not the inner is put into doubt, after all, is precisely the reason why Kant characterises the type of sceptic that he is addressing as a (problematic) idealist. Thus, although Kant is operating with a robust starting point, this is dialectically unproblematic, given that his refutation is only targeted at a restricted form of scepticism that doubts outer but not inner experience.

Accordingly, we can see that worries about the reliability of memory (raised, for instance, by Allison: 2004, p. 290 who favours a thin conception of self-knowledge on the basis of these concerns) are misplaced and are not relevant to the project that Kant is engaged in. The target of Kant’s Refutation is not the radical sceptic who is willing to doubt his own memory and countenance the suggestion that he has only come into existence at this very moment, but the person who privileges inner sense over outer sense, considering the former to be immediate and the latter to be mediate and doubtful. Put differently, the issue of contention is not the epistemic standing of inner experience or the reliability of memory, but the question whether the inner is privileged over the outer.

Moreover, the reliability of memory is besides the point since Kant is not concerned with a judgement of time determination that is indubitable or immune to error (contra Allison: 2004, p. 290). This is because what is at issue is not actual time determination but determinability in time (cf. Bxl). The Refutation is based on a claim about the possibility of objective time determination, that is, about the determinability of one’s existence in time. It is concerned with the necessary preconditions for one’s existence to be objectively determinable in time, identifying the presuppositions that must be satisfied for inner experience to be possible. Put differently, the Refutation concerns the conditions that make inner experience possible rather than those that make it actual. What is at issue is the possibility rather than actuality of inner experience.⁹

This implies that all that the argument requires is the claim that inner experience is possible, i.e. that inner states can be objectively determined in time. There is no need to appeal to the idea that the subject has in fact objectively determined them or that the subject is conscious of their objective determination. There is hence no need to bring in knowledge of the history of the subject’s mental states.¹⁰ Because of this, Kant does not need to claim that one has infallible access to one’s past inner states. More generally, Kant can allow that we are fallible when it comes to determining our existence in time, i.e. that we can be wrong about the ordering of inner states.¹¹ All that the Refutation requires is that is

⁹Cf. “In this way the possibility of inner experience presupposes the reality of outer sense” (R6311).

¹⁰Contra e.g. Bennett: 1966, p. 205; Gochnauer: 1974, p. 198; and Emundts: 2010, p. 170.

¹¹Since the inner ordering is parasitic on the outer ordering, and since we can clearly be wrong

in principle possible to establish the objective ordering. Fallibility is thus not a problem. Instead, the only problem is the hyperbolic sceptic who even doubts that one existed in the past and who is only willing to grant the existence of one's present mental states. Such a sceptic does not countenance any diachronic manifold, which implies that there is nothing that can be ordered and determined in time and thereby ensures that the Refutation cannot get off the ground.

That determinability has to be at issue can be seen from the fact that the Refutation attempts to establish that inner experience is parasitic on outer experience, such that we only have inner experience if we have outer experience. This means that any actual objective ordering of inner states requires an objective ordering of outer states. The ordering of outer states, however, is not something that is simply given, but that has to be established by us, whereby we have to proceed on the basis of the principles outlined in the Analogies and made determinate in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*. This time determination presupposes the general claim that there is outer experience.¹² Once the possibility of outer experience has been established, we can proceed from possibility to actuality and inquire as to which particular perceptions belong to it, i.e. which are due to imagination and which due to outer sense. As Kant notes, the project of classifying particular outer representations presupposes that there is outer experience as established by the Refutation, i.e. "the proposition that there actually is outer experience must always lie at the basis" (cf. Bxli). This means that the rules of experience (specified in the Analogies) only apply once it has already been established that there is outer experience.¹³

The Refutation thus cannot be based on an actual ordering. This is because an inner ordering presupposes a corresponding outer ordering. Yet, such an outer ordering, in turn, presupposes the general claim that there is outer experience, where this is established via the general dependence claim that the inner depends on the outer (together with the possibility of inner experience) which is the conclusion of the Refutation. Any attempt to base the Refutation on an actual ordering would consequently be circular, presupposing precisely that which the Refutation is meant to establish. Instead, the Refutation is based on a determinability

about the outer ordering, it follows that we can also be wrong about the inner ordering.

¹²In addition, objective time determination can only be achieved in the limit, because it depends, amongst other things, on empirical laws which are in an important sense holistic, since they are constitutive of the whole of experience.

¹³It is in this way that idealism poses a threat to the applicability of these rules by questioning their underlying presupposition of the actuality of outer experience (cf. B274), which explains the location of the Refutation in the B-edition after the Second Postulate, which proceeds from what is actual.

This also means that one cannot refute idealism by simply appealing to the rules of experience and that we, consequently, have to reject the view that the Refutation does not go beyond the Analogies, contra Abela: 2002, section 3.2 and Emundts: 2010, p. 182. In order to apply these rules, one already needs to have established 'that there actually is outer experience', that is, the conclusion of the Refutation must already be established.

claim (i.e. it proceeds from the possibility of inner experience rather than from any actual time determination), on the basis of which it establishes a general connection between the inner and the outer. Rather than starting with the claim that one actually has inner experience, the argument is based on the claim that one's existence in time is objectively determinable, i.e. that inner experience is possible, and that this possibility presupposes the existence of something permanent in perception, where one can then show that this permanent has to be outer.

To be conscious of one's existence as determined in time is thus to be conscious that one is a temporal entity, i.e. that the manifold of inner states that constitutes one's existence (i.e. that constitutes the determinable self) is a temporal manifold. The various inner states making up this manifold are in time and change in time. This manifold of states when objectively ordered constitutes inner experience. Kant does not make any claim to the effect that one is conscious of this objective ordering. Instead, it is merely claimed that this ordering can be objectively determined, i.e. that inner experience is possible. Determinability of this ordering is meant to follow straightforwardly: "consciousness of my existence in time is necessarily linked with consciousness of the possibility of this time determination" (B276). How exactly this is supposed to follow is not made clear by Kant (the idea that what is in time can be determined in time could well be based on Kant's commitments regarding the ideality of time). Yet, the details do not matter all that much since the existence, as well as the objective determinability, of one's various inner states that are in time and that change in time is, at any rate, admitted by the problematic idealist. (After all, this type of idealist is only concerned about outer sense being problematic and doubtful.)

It is from this starting point that the Refutation begins, i.e. from the claim that there are various inner states that can be objectively ordered in time. What Kant wishes to establish then is that, instead of the inner being privileged over the outer, the outer is prior to the inner, such that it is not coherent to grant the possibility of inner experience without also granting the possibility of outer experience. This is argued on the basis that the ordering of inner states can only be objectively determined with reference to an objective ordering of outer states, which implies that the objective determinability of inner states (= the possibility of inner experience) presupposes that there are outer states that can be objectively ordered (= the possibility of outer experience).

3 The need for permanence

All time determination presupposes something *permanent* in perception.

Having set out his starting point to the effect that there are inner states that can be objectively determined in time, Kant now turns to the presuppositions of objective time determination, with the goal of showing that these presuppositions

turn out to require the existence of objects of outer sense, thereby refuting the problematic idealist who doubts their existence whilst nonetheless accepting the objective determinability of inner states in time.

The presupposition of time determination to which Kant appeals in the Refutation of Idealism is the need for the existence of something permanent in perception.¹⁴ This requirement was established in the First Analogy, where it was argued that substance, which is schematised as the permanent (cf. A144/B183), has to underlie all time determination and has to satisfy a conservation principle insofar as the quantum of substance can neither increase nor diminish.

In the A-edition the First Analogy is stated as follows: “All appearances contain the permanent (*substance*) as the object itself and the changeable as its mere determination, i.e. as a way in which the object exists” (A182). Here substance is understood as that which underlies all changes, so that changing appearances are understood as mere determinations of the underlying substance. When applied to inner appearances problems would seem to arise. This is because inner appearances would have to reside in an inner substance and would have to be mere determinations of this substance. Yet, the argument of the Refutation relies precisely on the fact that inner permanence and hence substantiality cannot be established and that applying the category of substance to the self gives rise to problems. There would thus seem to be an inconsistency between the Refutation and the First Analogy as stated in the A-edition.¹⁵

This problem is circumvented by the B-edition version of the statement of the principle of the permanence of substance: “In all change of appearances substance is permanent and its quantum in nature is neither increased nor diminished” (B224). The difference between the two editions involves a reconceptualisation of the role of substance in time determination, in particular a switch from considering substance as that which underlies all changes to that which underlies all time determination, thereby allowing not only for time determination that is direct insofar as that which is determined in time inheres in the substance but also for indirect time determination.

It thus seems plausible to suppose that this reformulation was connected to Kant’s work on the Refutation.¹⁶ This is supported by the marginal notes attached to A182-183 that Kant made in his own copy of the A-edition. “Here the proof must be conducted so that it applies only to substances as *phenomena* of outer senses” (R LXXX E 32; 23:30). Likewise, according to R LXXVII, it needs to be shown that the First Analogy pertains only to substances the alterations of which

¹⁴Permanence is to be understood in the sense of absolute not relative permanence, i.e. not just something that persists through some stretch of time but through all time cf. A182/B225-226.

¹⁵Cf. Guyer: 1987, p. 284 for a somewhat related concern regarding what he calls the ‘analytical argument’ interpretation of the First Analogy, according to which it is analytic of an alteration that it is a change in the mode of an enduring substance.

¹⁶Together with his argument for the conservation principle in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, cf. Friedman: 2013, p. 315 fn 61.

are brought about by moving forces and consist in nothing but motions (also cf. R LXXXI). Most notably, R LXXXIII explicitly states that the proof has restricted applicability and that time determination is parasitic in those cases where the First Analogy does not apply, insofar as one needs to estimate duration by reference to outer objects, whereby he includes one's own existence as such a case. Kant concludes this marginal note as follows: "my permanence is therefore not proven" (23:31).¹⁷ These notes suggest that Kant was attentive to the problem that the A-edition version was too broad in scope and conflicted with the Refutation.¹⁸

The existence of permanent substance is thus a precondition of the possibility of objective time determination in accordance with the First Analogy, whereby the determination of the temporal ordering of inner states does not require these states to be mere determinations of a permanent underlying substance but can proceed indirectly by correlating inner states with outer states, thereby rendering the ordering of inner states parasitic on the objective ordering of outer states (cf. B156 and B293). In this way, the principle of the First Analogy is compatible with a situation in which time determination of inner states is possible even though permanence is restricted to the outer realm. In such a situation, outer appearances are nothing but determinations of the underlying material substance, whilst inner appearances need not be thought of as inhering in a substance.

4 A critical gap?

But this permanent something cannot be an intuition within me.

Time determination thus requires something permanent in perception. The next step of the argument consists in showing that the requisite permanent cannot be

¹⁷Kant also notes the seeming conflict between the First Analogy and the claim that the permanence of the soul cannot be established in *Metaphysik K*, after outlining his refutation of Mendelssohn's proof of the permanence of the soul. "It seems contradictory to this way of presenting things that in all alterations in nature substance persists and only the accidents change. But here we are talking merely of bodily substances which we cognise, yet in the case of the human soul we do not cognise anything permanent" (28:764).

¹⁸Kant came to realise more generally that the A-edition versions of the three Analogies were problematic since they had troublesome implications when applied to the inner and that all of them consequently had to be restricted to outer objects. The Second Analogy in the A-edition implies that there are laws of inner sense governing the changes of inner states, given that it is phrased in terms of 'everything that happens' which is unrestricted and applies equally to inner happenings. The B-edition statement, by contrast, is restricted to alterations, i.e. to changes of determinations of substances, requiring only these to be law-governed. Similarly, whereas the A-edition version of the Third Analogy is meant to hold for all substances that are simultaneous (which is problematic since space is the medium of interaction yet inner states are only in time cf. R LXXXVI), the B-edition version is restricted to all substances insofar as they can be perceived in space as simultaneous. There is thus a general asymmetry between the inner and the outer that ensures that duration, succession and simultaneity of inner states are not determined directly by means of the three Analogies but only indirectly.

inner but has to be outer. If this can be established, then the problematic idealist is refuted, since he will have to posit an outer permanent in order to make possible the determinability in time of inner states that he admits. This step consequently turns out to be crucial. Yet, it is also highly controversial. In fact, one of the most common criticisms of the Refutation of Idealism is that Kant has not managed to establish that an outer permanent is required.

In particular, it is claimed that he has not succeeded in excluding the possibility that the self is the only existing permanent and that we can determine the temporal ordering of our inner states by reference to this permanent self. Guyer, for instance claims that “there is no obvious reason why such a substratum, even if required, would have to be a substance which is either spatial in form or ontologically independent from the self” (Guyer: 1983, p. 333). Likewise, Walker asks “why should I not regard my various representations as all modifications of one permanent phenomenal self, not unknowable but known through them?” (Walker: 1978, p. 114). Vogel goes so far as to call this “the critical gap in Kant’s argument” (Vogel: 1993, p. 876).

The First Analogy establishes that substance is permanent and is necessary for objective time determination. The question now is: what can be subsumed under the (schematised) category of substance? To which objects can we apply this concept? In particular, the question is whether it can equally be applied to inner as to outer objects. Kant’s argument in the Refutation is based on the idea that only the latter but not former is possible. If this category can only be applied to outer objects, then the need for permanence will amount to a need for outer substance, which is what the Refutation is trying to establish. To see whether the ‘critical gap’ in Kant’s argument can be filled, we thus need to find out whether inner objects can be subsumed under the category of substance.

The crucial point now is that one needs to establish that something is permanent in order to apply the category of substance. Although we need something permanent in perception, this permanent is not perceived as being permanent (“permanence is not obtained from outer experience” B278), i.e. perception cannot inform us that the sensible conditions for the application of the schematised category of substance are satisfied.¹⁹ Since the permanence of substance is not perceived, but is an a priori necessary condition of experience, permanence has to be proven. In short, permanence is not revealed in perception but is proven. This means that, rather than determining that something is a substance and hence inferring its permanence, we need to prove that it is permanent in order to subsume it under the category of substance. As Kant states at A403, the condition of the application of the category of substance *in concreto* is that one first needs to establish (‘voraus festzusetzen’) the permanence of the object in question, and

¹⁹This shows that the First Analogy is not based on the claim that something permanent (what Allison calls a permanent backdrop) is required in order to be able to perceive change, contra e.g. Paton: 1936, p. 196 and Allison: 2004, p. 239.

that permanence needs to be laid at the basis ('zum Grunde zu legen') of the application (also cf. A365). Kant also makes this clear when considering whether the self can be called a substance in §47 of the Prolegomena.

This thinking self (the soul) may now however, as the ultimate subject of thinking, which itself cannot be represented as predicate of another thing, be called substance: yet this concept remains in this way completely empty and without any consequences, if permanence, as that which makes the concept of substances fertile in experience, cannot be proven of it (4:334).

The crux of the argument then is that permanence can only be proven for outer but not for inner objects. It is this difference between the inner and the outer that allows Kant to fill the so-called critical gap. In particular, it can be filled without having to deny the possibility of inner permanence and without having to assert that the self is not a substance.²⁰ Instead, all that needs to be done is to establish that one cannot prove the permanence of the self, thereby ensuring that one cannot be justified in applying the category of substance to the inner. As Kant notes at A403, applying the category of substance to the self amounts to making an inadmissible application ('unzulässiger Gebrauch') of this category, since permanence cannot be established of the self. By ruling out a valid application of this category to the self, one undermines the possibility of treating it as a substance for the purposes of objective time determination. In order for the permanent to play the requisite role in time determination, it must be known to be permanent and hence subsumable under the category of substance, where this can only be established by means of a proof of permanence. In other words, Kant's claim is not that the self cannot be permanent, but only that we cannot prove its permanence and that it, accordingly, cannot play a role in time determination, which suffices for the Refutation to succeed.²¹

The difference between the inner and the outer on which the Refutation relies is that one can prove permanence for outer objects (for matter) and hence subsume them under the schematised category of substance, but that one cannot likewise prove permanence for inner objects (for the mind). This difference

²⁰If a denial of inner permanence were required for the Refutation to succeed, then there would be a conflict with the postulate of the immortality of the soul established in the Critique of Practical Reason, as well as with the regulative use of the ideas of reason insofar as the idea of the soul would not be able to play its regulative role and function as a *focus imaginarius*, i.e. a denial of inner permanence would contradict Kant's assertion that "there is not the slightest which hinders us from *assuming* these ideas also as objective and hypostatic" (A673/B701).

²¹If the rational psychologist's proof of the substantiality of the soul were to succeed, then permanence of the soul would follow (cf. B417). One would thereby remove the resources for the only possible refutation of problematic idealism, insofar as outer objects would then no longer be required for time determination. It is for this reason that "*idealism*, at least problematic idealism, is inevitable in this rationalist system, and that when the existence of outer objects are not at all required for the determination of one's existence in time, then it can only be assumed entirely gratuitously, without ever being able to give a proof thereof" (B418).

is due to the fact that any decrease in the intensive magnitude (reality) of outer objects goes together with a compensating adjustment elsewhere in space, such that if the intensive magnitude of some objects is diminished, then that of others is increased in a way that conserves the overall quantity of matter.²² There is thus a necessary interdependence between intensive and extensive magnitudes (cf. 4:539-540) that allows Kant to prove a conservation principle, namely: “*First Law of Mechanics*. In all changes of corporeal nature the total quantity of matter remains the same, neither increased nor diminished” (4:541). Material substance thus turns out to be permanent (cf. Friedman: 2013, pp. 311-335).

This can be established because the quantity of matter is given by parts external to one another in space, which allows for the requisite interdependence between the extensive and intensive magnitudes, such that it is not possible to have a diminution in intensive magnitude in one region without a corresponding increase elsewhere. An analogous argument cannot be given in the case of the self. This is because the self lacks the kind of extensive structure that matter has, due to the fact that it is not in space but only in time, and thus does not have the requisite quantitative structure to establish a conservation principle and prove the permanence of the self (cf. 4:542-543). “In the soul no *quantum* of substance is possible” (R LXXXIV E 33; 23:31). Instead, the self is only characterised by an intensive magnitude at any moment in time, making it possible for it to go out of existence as a result of this magnitude continuously fading out until it reaches zero, as argued in the Remark to the Proof of the First Law of Mechanics and in the Refutation of Mendelssohn’s Proof of the Permanence of the Soul in the B-Paralogisms (cf. B413-415).²³ In this way, the one-dimensionality of time is responsible for the fact that no inner permanence can be proven (cf. 4:471). Space but not time has the relevant mathematical structure to allow for a conservation principle to be established, ensuring that we only have a proof of outer permanence but not of inner permanence.²⁴

²²A decrease in intensive magnitude consists in a reduction in density resulting from expansion, i.e. a given quantity of matter takes up a larger volume of space, and this expansion leads to a compression of matter elsewhere and hence to a corresponding increase in intensive magnitude, i.e. an increase in density. Expansion and compression in this way go together.

²³Since Mendelssohn recognised that a simple soul could go out of existence, not by disintegration (i.e. by removal of parts), but by vanishing, his proof of the permanence of the soul was based on the claim that this kind of vanishing would violate the law of continuity. Accordingly, it is crucial for Kant to show that this magnitude can fade out continuously. Kant clearly was aware of this cf. *Metaphysik Mrongovius* 29:912 (also cf. *Metaphysik K₂* 28:763-764), contra Falkenstein: 1998 appendix.

²⁴The proof of the permanence of material substance is based on the interdependence between the intensive and extensive magnitudes of matter. Falkenstein: 1998 has raised an important problem for this argument. His objection is based on the fact that there are two ways in which objects can differ in terms of their intensive magnitudes, namely 1. in terms of compression/expansion, and 2. in terms of their specific densities (cf. 4:533-534). The problem is that the conservation argument is restricted to the former case and does not rule out the possibility of there being a

The Refutation is, accordingly, not based on the claim that inner permanence is not possible, nor on the claim that inner permanence is not perceived, given that permanence cannot be perceived at all (not even in the case of the outer). Rather, it is based on the claim that permanence can only be proven for matter, which is why Kant holds that matter is the only thing in perception that is known to be permanent and that is subsumable under the concept of substance (cf. B278 and B291). The relevant difference is thus not at the level of what is perceived but at level of what can be proven.²⁵ As a result, the category of substance is applicable to the outer but not the inner. For this reason, time determination can only proceed by reference to the outer. As a result, the temporal ordering of inner states becomes parasitic on the objective ordering of outer states, and inner experience turns out to presuppose the existence of an outer permanent.

5 The tables turned

Hence determination of my existence in time is possible only through the existence of actual things that I perceive outside me.

Determining one's existence in time, i.e. objectively ordering the manifold of inner states in time, presupposes an outer permanent, given that permanence cannot be proven of anything inner, thereby rendering the inner ordering parasitic on the ordering of outer states. Accordingly, if inner experience is to be possible, there have to be actual outer things to which one stands in perceptual relations such that one can establish the objective outer ordering.

diminution in terms of the latter quantity. Accordingly, it would appear that, in the same way that the self can fade out of existence, matter can go out of existence by a diminution of its specific density. Friedman has attempted to respond to this objection by claiming that specific densities cannot change. "Kant's First Law of Mechanics does not allow for changes of intrinsic specific densities – changes that would transform one type of matter into another – as physically possible changes of matter. The only physically possible density changes, therefore, result from compressions or expansions of a given type of matter" (Friedman: 2013, p. 322 fn 72). This response appears to be problematic. First, it is not explained how this law of mechanics is meant to preclude the possibility of such changes. Second, it implies that there is a necessary distribution of different types of matter, which seems somewhat implausible. A better response would be to find an analogous connection between intensive and extensive magnitudes in the case of specific densities, such that the decrease in the specific density of one object is necessarily accompanied by a corresponding increase in the specific and/or compression densities of other objects, which would allow for necessary conservation without the requirement of a necessary distribution of types of matter. (Tal Glezer has pointed out to me that the necessary distribution of types of matter might not be all that problematic, on the basis that the variety in types of matter simply consists in the variety in fundamental repulsive forces. Since these forces are fundamental, corresponding to fundamental causal laws, the forces themselves cannot change, such that density can only vary due to compression and expansion.)

²⁵We can thus see, contra Vogel, that it is not the case that "[t]o complete the Refutation, Kant needs to establish some disparity between inner and outer sense, such that outer sense gives us direct knowledge of enduring objects, while inner sense does not" (Vogel: 1993, p. 878).

This conclusion is a general claim regarding the presuppositions that must be satisfied for inner experience to be possible. The upshot of the Refutation is that the determinability of one's existence in time turns out to require the existence of outer objects. In particular, there must be material substance, of which one can prove permanence. Accordingly, what one can establish is that there is material substance. However, although one can in this way establish the existence of outer objects to which one is perceptually related (assuming that inner experience is in fact possible, which is granted by the problematic idealist), one cannot establish which outer representations are in fact the result of outer intuition (i.e. which supposed outer objects are real and which ones merely imaginary). That is, we cannot establish that any particular outer representation does constitute an outer intuition rather than an outer imagination. This means that, whilst we can establish that outer objects do exist, we are not able to establish the existence of any particular outer object. As Kant notes:

From the fact that the existence of outer objects is required for the possibility of a determinate consciousness of ourselves, it does not follow that every intuitive representation of outer objects at the same time implies the existence thereof, because it may well be the mere effect of the power of imagination (in dreams as well as in madness) [...] What was here to be proved is only that inner experience in general is possible only through outer experience in general (B278-279).

As regards particular objects, all we can do is to appeal to the rules of experience to determine which representations can be integrated into a systematic whole of experience. "For which given intuitions there are corresponding objects that actually exist outside me, and that accordingly belong to outer *sense*, which are to be ascribed to it and not to the faculty imagination, has to be established in each particular case in accordance with the rules on the basis of which experience in general (even inner experience) is distinguished from imagination" (Bxli; also cf. *Loses Blatt Leningrad 1*). Yet, this kind of procedure is inferential and only provides defeasible evidence that is not beyond doubt. This means that we are not able to address the concerns of the problematic idealist when it comes to particular outer objects. With respect to any particular outer representation we cannot rule out the possibility that it is the result of the imagination, making the existence of particular outer objects doubtful. The existence of outer objects in general, however, has been conclusively established. Moreover, analogous problems also arise when it comes to ordering inner states and integrating them into inner experience, undermining any claim to that effect that inner experience is privileged over outer experience.²⁶

²⁶There is some asymmetry between inner and outer sense, insofar as it is beyond doubt that any present representation is part of inner experience. That is, no subjective indistinguishability argument can be raised in this case, since there is no such thing as inner imagination when it

6 Conclusion

Thus, Kant's Refutation of Idealism is concerned with identifying the preconditions that must be satisfied for inner experience to be possible. The argument begins with a relatively robust starting point consisting in the determinability of one's existence in time. Although it does not require any reliance on memory or the like, it is nonetheless open to sceptical doubt. This, however, is unproblematic, given that it is not addressed at the radical Cartesian sceptic who is prepared to doubt inner sense but only against the person who privileges the inner over the outer. Since something permanent is necessary for objective time determination (as was established in the First Analogy), the determinability of one's existence in time presupposes something permanent in perception. The requisite permanent has to be outer and cannot be inner because what is at issue is proving permanence, which can only be done for material substance. In this way, the supposed critical gap in Kant's Refutation can be filled. As a result, inner experience turns out to presuppose outer experience and to be only possible given the existence of material substance.

A noteworthy upshot of this line of argument is that Kant could have equally refuted problematic idealism by appealing to the Second Analogy (and likewise for the Third Analogy²⁷). Instead of relying on the claim that something permanent is required for objective time determination to be possible, where this permanent has to be outer rather than inner, he could have appealed to the claim, established in the Second Analogy, that causal laws are required if objective time determination is to be possible. Inner experience can then be seen to presuppose outer experience on the basis that causal laws are required for time determination, together with the claim that there are only laws of outer sense but not of inner sense, which follows from Kant's claim that no science of inner sense is possible (4:470-471). The need for causal laws for objective time determination corresponds to the need for something permanent, whilst the impossibility of establishing laws of inner sense corresponds to the impossibility of proving inner permanence, i.e. in the same way that we can only prove outer but not inner permanence, we can only establish laws of outer but not of inner sense. This suggestion is supported by the fact that the General Note on the System of the Principles, which Kant considers to be a confirmation of his Refutation of Idealism (cf. B293), exhibits the dependence of inner on outer sense with respect to all three

comes to present representations. (The imagination only gives rise to difficulties insofar as it can produce false memories of past mental states, which ensures that claims regarding past states are inferential in nature and can be put into doubt.) Accordingly, given that the inner representation is the very inner object at issue, there is no need for a problematic inference from (present) inner representation to inner object that is analogous to that from outer representation to outer object. Nevertheless, even in the case of present representations, the issue as to how precisely they fit into the whole of inner experience is analogous to that in the case of outer experience.

²⁷In R6312 Kant sketches an argument based on simultaneity.

relational categories. In this way, objective time determination of inner states as such, independently of whether it is concerned with duration (substance), succession (causality), or simultaneity (reciprocity), turns out to presuppose outer experience.²⁸

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²⁸Kant notes in the B-Preface that his refutation is the only possible proof (Bxxxix fn). The suggestion that Kant could have devised variants based on the Second and Third Analogy does not conflict with this claim, since these variants all essentially involve the same proof strategy based on identifying necessary conditions on objective time determination of one's own existence, i.e. conditions on inner experience. They all refute problematic idealism by showing that inner experience presupposes outer experience – they simply differ in terms of whether they are concerned with the conditions on time determination treated in the First, Second, or Third Analogy.

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