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Closing the Gap: A New Answer to an Old Objection Against Kant's Argument for Transcendental Idealism
PROCEEDINGS OF THE ARISTOTELIAN SOCIETY
137TH SESSION

ISSUE NO. 2
VOLUME CXVI
2015 / 2016

CLOSING THE GAP: A NEW ANSWER TO AN OLD OBJECTION AGAINST KANT’S ARGUMENT FOR TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM

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MONDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2016
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The following paper is a draft version that can only be cited or quoted with the author’s permission. The final paper will be published in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Issue No. 2, Volume CXVI (2016). Please visit the Society’s website for subscription information: www.aristoteliansociety.org.uk.
In this paper I present a new solution to the so-called ‘neglected alternative’-objection against Kant’s argument for transcendental idealism. According to this objection, Kant does not give sufficient justification for his claim that not only are space and time forms of our intuition but that they also fail to be things in themselves or properties thereof. I first discuss a proposal by Willaschek and Allais, who try to defend Kant against this charge by building on his account of a priori intuition, and argue that it is insufficient in order to meet the objection in its full force. I then present my own solution to the problem. It is based on a reconstruction of Kant’s account of properties of appearances and tries to show that this account implies that spatio-temporal properties could in principle not pertain both to appearances and things in themselves.

I. THE GAP

Kant’s transcendental idealism consists in the claim that space and time are not things in themselves and that spatio-temporal properties and relations do not pertain to objects independently from the subjective conditions under which these objects appear to us. Kant’s most important attempt to establish this claim starts with arguing for the assumption that we have a priori intuitions of space and time (cf. CpR A 22 ff./B 37 ff. and A 30 ff./B 46 ff.) and then continues with trying to show that such a priori intuitions would not be possible of features that objects have in themselves but can rather only be explained if we assume that space and time are nothing but ‘forms of our intuition’ and that the spatio-temporal order of the appearing world is imposed on it by the structure of our sensible faculty (A 26/B 42 and A 32 f./B 49 f.). Kant’s line of thought is controversial in several respects: One might certainly question the claim that we have an a priori intuition of space and time and find his arguments for this claim inconclusive; and one might also doubt that attributing the spatio-temporality of the contents of our experience to the structure of our own mind really explains that we can have an a priori cognition of this structure. However, the most obvious objection to Kant’s way of reasoning seems to be that even if he succeeded in proving that space and time are ‘forms of our intuition’, this still seems not sufficient for establishing the claim that space and time cannot also be features of the mind-independent world. In this case the structure we impose on the content of our experience would cor-
respond to the structure that the world has independently of us, be it as a matter of pure coincidence or as the result of the actions of a benevolent creator who has adjusted our forms of intuition to what reality is like in itself. It might be that the fact that space and time are forms of our intuition excludes the possibility that we could ever know that the world has a spatio-temporal structure in itself, because we would represent it as having this structure no matter if it has it or not. However, it seems that we should then also not be able to know that the world does not have this structure. But this is clearly what Kant assumes when he claims that things in themselves do not exist in space and time.

In the literature the aforementioned objection is known as the ‘problem of the neglected alternative’\(^1\). It is also discussed under the label ‘Trendelenburg’s gap’ (‘Trendelenburgsche Lücke’), which relates it to a heated debate between Adolf Trendelenburg and Kuno Fischer between 1860 and 1870.\(^2\) In fact the objection dates back much further and already came up in very early reactions to Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, for example in Ludwig Heinrich von Jacob’s *Prüfung der Mendelsohnschen Morgenstunden oder aller spekulativen Beweise für das Daseyn Gottes* from 1786.\(^3\) Jacob was a Kantian and wanted to defend the Kantian limitations of knowledge against Mendelsohn in his book. He lets a fictitious interlocutor raise the following worry about Kant’s doctrine of space and time:

‘I concede that since we have to think everything necessarily in space and time, these representations have to be grounded in the nature of our soul, and that they hence precede all our empirical cognition; however, could not the nature of things nevertheless be such that these predicates pertain to them also in themselves and that our soul was given this constitution in order to prevent errors in our cognition, and to guarantee that our representations correspond to the things themselves?’ (ibid. 26 f., my own translation)

Jacob dismisses this worry quickly and on rather questionable grounds. He first says that it can be ignored because it only concerns a ‘hypothesis’, a remark that seems beside the point at issue; and he then asserts that ‘all philosophers’ would deny that things in themselves exist in space and time anyway, a claim that seems blatantly false (ibid. 27 f.). A third, more promising reply consists in the remark that ‘the sensible world is only a phenomenon for us, and that, since all our predicates are only valid of phenomena, we cannot find any one of them that was suited for the things

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\(^1\) For an overview over the literature on the topic see Specht 2014a.
\(^2\) See Bird 2006 and Specht 2014b.
\(^3\) The text was published together with Kant’s own short reply to Mendelsohn *Einige Bemerkungen zu Ludwig Heinrich Jacob’s Prüfung der Mendelsohn’schen Morgenstunden* (cf. AA VIII 152 ff.).
themselves’ (ibid. 28). However, as long as we are not told why a predicate that is valid for phenomena is in principle unsuited to be applied to things in themselves, this reply simply seems to beg the question against the interlocutor.

If Kant took notice of the discussion of the ‘neglected alternative’-objection in Jacob’s book, which seems rather likely, he must have been so unimpressed by it that he did not feel the need to address the objection himself in the second edition of the Critique. However, he added a passage to this edition that, in my opinion, in fact contains all the material to defend Kant against the charge of not ruling out the possibility that space and time are forms of intuition and features of things in themselves at the same time. In this passage, which occurs in B 69 f., Kant addresses another objection raised by some of his early critics, namely that his restriction of our knowledge to appearances commits him to an extreme and self-refuting form of idealism that turns everything into ‘mere illusion’. Kant answers this objection by distancing his own distinction between appearances and things in themselves from a certain phenomenalist misunderstanding of it. Now, given his own positive account of this distinction, it indeed follows that if space and time are properties of appearances they cannot also be properties of things in themselves and that Jacob’s blunt claim that predicates applicable to phenomena are in principle unsuited to be applied to things in themselves is indeed well justified. At least, this is what I want to show in the following paper.

Before I do so, however, I want to discuss an alternative strategy to defend Kant against the ‘neglected alternative’-objection. It was first proposed by Marcus Willaschek (cf. Willaschek 1997) and has recently been

4 Cf. the review of the Critique of Pure Reason by Feder and Garve from 1782 (cf. Sassen 2000, 53–58) and H.A. Pistorius’ reviews of J. Schulze’s Erläuterungen über des Herrn Professor Kant Critik der reinen Vernunft, which appeared in 1786 (cf. Gesang 2007, 3–25, and Sassen 2000, 93–105). In this review, as well as in his review of Jacobs Buch from 1788 (cf. Gesang 2007, 39–71) Pistorius also raised a version of the neglected alternative objection. Pistorius accuses Kant of having neglected the third one of the following three possible alternative views one might have about our representation of space and time, namely ‘that they are merely subjective, or merely objective, or both subjective and objective at the same time’ (Gesang 2007, 42 f.). Contrary to Jacob, Pistorius did not assume that the neglected third alternative is one in which space and time are forms of intuition and properties of things in themselves, but he characterized it as one in which the spatio-temporal structure of our experience is partially grounded in an analogous structure of the mind-independent world so that we are able to experience a ‘real plurality’ and a ‘real alterability of the represented things in themselves’ (Gesang 2007, 9). He also explains why his version of the neglected alternative objection is superior to the one mentioned by Jacob and not refuted by the kind of reply that Jacob gives (cf. Gesang 2007, 44 ff.). It is an interesting question whether Pistorius’ version of the ‘neglected alternative’-objection can be refuted by means of the strategy presented in this paper. I will leave it for some other occasion.
renewed in a slightly modified form by Lucy Allais (cf. Allais 2010 and 2015). Although I find Willaschek’s and Allais’ defence ingenious and think it can answer the objection on some reading of it, I will argue that it falls short of showing that Kant is justified in claiming what he claims, namely that things in themselves do not have spatio-temporal properties and do not stand in spatio-temporal relations to each other (sec. 2). In sec. 3, I will then give a detailed interpretation of the mentioned passage in B 69 f. and reconstruct his remarks about the distinction between appearances and things in themselves in a way that makes intelligible that, once we have shown that space and time are forms of our intuition, it indeed follows that they cannot also be properties of things in themselves.

2. CLOSING THE GAP 1: KANT’S ACCOUNT OF INTUITION
Willaschek and Allais both base their answer to the ‘neglected alternative’-objection on the insight that Kant does not start his argument for the ideality of space and time from the assumption that we have some a priori cognition of these objects but from the claim that our a priori representation of them is an intuition.\(^5\) They then try to show that, given the specific characteristics that Kant assigns to intuitions, the objects of this a priori intuition could indeed not be things in themselves. The decisive feature of intuitions is that they are ‘singular’ and ‘immediate’ representations. According to Willaschek and Allais, this characterization implies that intuitions of extra-mental objects do not represent these objects in virtue of containing as their content a certain general condition that these objects happen to fulfill, but rather because there exists a certain causal connection between representation and what is represented: an intuition \(i\) presents a certain extra-mental object \(o\) (and not any other) to an epistemic subject \(S\) because it is this very object \(o\) that affects \(S\) in such a way that \(i\) arises in it. From this it follows that in order for our a priori intuitions to represent space and time as things in themselves, these things would have to be the causal source of our intuitions of them.

Now, Willaschek and Allais diverge on how they try to show that space and time conceived of as extra-mental things in themselves are not the causal sources of these intuitions and hence could not be what is presented in them. According to Allais, this is excluded simply because pure intuition does not involve any kind of causal affection at all. Willaschek, on the other, concedes that pure intuition does involve affection and is the result of two causal factors: the forms of intuitions on the one hand and the spontaneity of the understanding, which according to the story Kant tells in \(§\ 24\) and \(§\ 26\) of the B-Deduction has to act under the name of a transcendental imagination in order for space and time to be given to us.

\(^{5}\) For the following cf. Willaschek 1997 and Allais 2015, ch. 8 sec. V.
as objects in pure intuition. However, given that the factors that are in fact responsible for our pure intuition of space and time are not-extra mental things in themselves, but rather features of our own mind, the above principle excludes that pure intuition could represent extra-mental things in themselves. So, in the end, both Willaschek and Allais conclude that it follows from Kant’s account of intuition that the objects of pure intuition cannot be extra-mental things in themselves, and hence, since space and time are the objects of pure intuition, that space and time are not things in themselves.

I think that this an ingenious and very attractive attempt to defend Kant against the charge of the neglected alternative, which can also account for a number of peculiarities about the way Kant presents his claims about the ideality of space and time. For example, it can explain why Kant seemed to have thought that he can infer the ideality of space directly from the fact that things in themselves and their features cannot be objects of our a priori intuition (see A 26/B 42 and Prolegomena, AA IV 282). However, I believe that the proposal falls short of addressing the ‘neglected alternative’-objection in its full force. To put it bluntly, the worry is this: What Willaschek and Allais manage to show is that if space and time were things in themselves or features of them, then these things would not be what we are presented with in a priori intuition. However, this seems to be a merely epistemological claim, whereas the original objection dealt with a certain ontological scenario: The neglected alternative was simply described as one in which space and time are forms of intuition and also things in themselves, period, not as one in which they are also things in themselves that are objects of our intuition. Hence, it seems unclear how Kant can rule out that, on the one hand, there is one spatio-temporal structure of which we are aware in pure intuition, but on the other hand there is another spatio-temporal structure that exists in itself. But the second scenario seems exactly what Kant does want to rule out when he claims that things in themselves do not exist in space and time.

Both Allais and Willaschek are aware of this kind of worry, but it is not clear that they manage to dispel it. Here is what Allais writes:

’[...] it is important to notice that the claim that things in themselves are not spatio-temporal is not exactly what Kant asserts in the Aesthetic (although he does provide argument for it in the Antinomies). Rather, he says that space and time represent no property of things in themselves or relations between things in themselves („Der Raum stellet gar keine Eigenschaft irgend einiger Dinge an sich, oder sie in ihrem Verhältnis auf einander vor“ A26/B42). He says that we have representations of space and time that play a fundamental role in our experience of objects, and that these representations do not present us with mind-independent fea-
tures of reality. This is not a positive claim about the nature of things as they are in themselves (that they are not spatio-temporal), but instead a claim about what is presented to us: our representations of space and time do not present us with mind-independent features of reality. It is compatible with this that there should be some structure in things as they are in themselves; the point is that this structure is not what it is that is present to us when we represent space and time. Here again, the idea that intuitions immediately present their objects makes sense of Kant’s conclusion: it enables us to say that even if there were something like space and time in mind-independent reality, this something would not be that of which our representation of space is a representation, since it would not be that which is present to us in a priori intuition.’ (Allais 2015, 198)

There seem to be two possible interpretations of what Allais is saying here. According to one reading, which is the one supported by most parts of the passage and hence probably the one that correctly represents what Allais has in mind, Kant simply does not want to rule out the alternative that I have claimed is left open by Willaschek’s and Allais’ considerations, or at least he does not want to do so in the Transcendental Aesthetic, but rather only later by means of the indirect arguments presented in the Antinomies chapter. Kant would not want to deny that things in themselves exist in space and time, but only that a mind-independent space and time could be what we are presented with in pure intuition. That would mean to answer the charge that Kant neglected a certain alternative by assuming that he never wanted to rule it out. I do not have any complaints against this strategy as an attempt to clarify what Kant should have said in order to avoid the objection. However, I doubt that it correctly captures what Kant actually asserts in the Transcendental Aesthetic. For example, in the passage about time that corresponds to the claim about space that Allais quotes, Kant not only says that our representation of time does not represent us with a thing in itself but he rather claims that time is nothing that exists in itself or pertains to objects as an objective determination (A 31/B 49). And there are also other passages where he makes the stronger claim about space (cf. A 39 f./B 56 f.).

Now, some parts of what Allais writes also allow for a stronger reading. When she says that ‘if there were something like space and time in mind-independent reality, this something would not be that of which our representation of space is a representation’, then this could be understood as an objection to the effect that I have somehow misdescribed the neglected scenario above, when I said that there might be a spatio-temporal structure that exists in itself but is not an object of our pure intuition. For whatever this structure was like, so the objection goes, it could for reasons of principle not be a spatio-temporal structure, but rather only something ‘like’ or ‘analogous to’ the structure of space and time. If this is what Al-
lais wants to claim, then she would be able to deal with the ‘neglected alternative’-objection in its full force, for then nothing could be correctly characterized by us as space and time that is not the object of our pure intuition. However, now we are faced with the question of why we should assume that no structure of reality that is not the object of our intuition can correctly be described as space and time.

It is important to note that the argumentational resources that one needs in order to answer this question cannot come from Kant’s account of intuition alone. What we would need in addition is an argument to the effect that we lack the conceptual resources to even have thoughts about a possible scenario in which there is a spatio-temporal structure that is not identical to that which is present to us in pure intuition. Allais does not make any attempt to provide such an argument, but at least a sketch of it can be found in a passage in which Willaschek addresses the worry I have raised. Willaschek claims that there is an analogy between what Kant says about space as the object of pure intuition and what semantic externalists say about the meaning of fictional names such as ‘Hamlet’, namely that these names could in principle not refer to any real person even if there happened to be a person in the real world that has all the features associated with the bearer of the name in the respective story. He writes:


Also this passages allows for a weak reading according to which it simply amounts to the claim that a mind-independent structure could never be identical to the space that is the object of our intuition even if it was displaying all the characteristics that the latter has. And again this would only suffice to show that things in themselves do not exist ‘in our space’, or ‘in the space that we represent in our pure intuition’, not that things in themselves do not exist in space, period. However, Willaschek might want to draw the analogy between Kant’s conception of space and the semantics of fictional names further, and ascribe to Kant not only an externalist account of the intuition of space, but also one of the semantics of the term ‘space’, according to which the meaning of this term was so intimately tied to our intuition of space that it would be just as impossible for space to ex-
ist independently of our forms of intuition, as it is impossible for Hamlet to exist in the real world.

Whether or not a reply to the ‘neglected alternative’-objection along these lines makes for a plausible interpretation, obviously depends on whether it is legitimate to assume that Kant would assent to the relevant semantic externalism. Now, it seems obvious that ascribing to Kant a general semantic externalism, which takes the denotation of all terms to be determined by the causal source of their use or introduction, would lead to blatant inconsistencies in his philosophy. For example, if we were to assume that Kant took general terms to represent the properties of the things that are causally responsible for the generation of the concepts that they express, then this would force us to assume that our all our general terms represent properties of things in themselves, for it is these properties that are ultimately causally responsible for the empirical intuitions that lead to the generation of these concepts. This can hardly be something that Kant wants to assume. However, a more confined form of semantic externalism, which restricts it to the semantics of genuine singular terms seems, not entirely alien to Kant’s philosophy. Kant thought that the only genuine singular mental representations of which we are capable are intuitions, not concepts (cf. AA XXIV 567 and 908). So he might have agreed that genuine singular terms could also only be given a meaning by associating them with a particular intuition, not with a particular concept. If we accept the externalist account of Kantian intuitions, this would then imply that genuine singular terms could not possibly denote any other objects than the ones that are in fact represented in the intuitions with which they are associated. Now, although Kant sometimes uses the expressions ‘space’ and ‘time’ as general terms, which allow for the plural (e.g. A 25/B 39), he certainly also has a use for them as singularia tanta (for example when he says that ‘space is represented as an infinite given magnitude’; A 25/B 39 f.). And hence, given all we have said so far, Kant would after all be justified in asserting that space and time are not things in themselves and that a structure of mind-independent reality would not be identical to space even if it displayed all the features that we attribute to space. He could do so without adding the qualification ‘our space’ or ‘space as the object of our intuition’, since the term ‘space’ itself essentially could not denote any other object than the space that we intuit in pure intuition.

Does this close the gap in Kant’s argument and eliminate the allegedly neglected alternative? I do not think so. In order to see why we have to notice that what I have been negligently referring to as the neglected alternative is in fact a sum of two such alternatives, each corresponding to one of the two views about the nature of space and time that Kant criticizes and contrasts with his own account. One of them is the Newtonian
container-view, according to which space and time are mind-independent substances that exist independently of the objects that they contain. The other is the relational conception of space and time according to which there are really only things that have spatio-temporal properties and stand in spatio-temporal relations and maybe also the totality of these properties and relations. Now, a reconstruction of Kant’s argument along the lines of Allais’ and Willaschek’s interpretation in its strong reading might be able to deal with the first neglected alternative that could be constructed on the basis of these two views. For, as we have seen, it might indeed be false to say that it is possible that space and time are forms of our intuition and that nevertheless space and time are also things in themselves, as the Newtonian conception has it. However, this does not rule out the second variant of the neglected alternative according to which space and time are forms of our intuition and there are nevertheless things in themselves that have spatio-temporal properties and stand in spatio-temporal relations, although space and time themselves do not also exist beyond their status as forms of our intuition. When Kant criticizes the relational theory of space and time in their ‘metaphysical expositions’, he points out that this theory cannot be the whole story, for it cannot account for the fact that we have a priori intuitions of space and time that precede all cognitions of particular spatio-temporal relations (cf. A 23/B 38, A 39 f./B 56 f.). However, in the considered scenario there would not only be spatio-temporal relations among things in themselves, but also space and time as forms of intuition that explain these a priori intuitions. And hence, this scenario seems still a genuine possibility that is not excluded by the Kantian considerations we have dealt with so far.

What we would need in order to rule this scenario out is an argument to the effect that it is not only the singular terms ‘space’ and ‘time’ that are unsuited to refer to things in themselves, but that rather also all the predicates and concepts that we use in order to speak and think about the spatio-temporal properties and relations of appearances could never be used in order to characterize things independently of how they appear to us, or – to put in in Jacob’s words – that ‘all our predicates are only valid of phenomena, [and] we cannot find any one of them that was suited for the things themselves’. Now, I think that Kant indeed can provide such an argument. As I have already argued, this argument cannot be built on a semantic externalism about general terms. It rather results from a clari-

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6 Kant distinguishes between these two scenarios more carefully in his ‘Schlüsse aus obigen Begriffen’ with respect to time (cf. A 32 f./B 49) then with respect to space (cf. A 26/B 42).

7 Independently of this argument Kant seems to have thought that the Newtonian conception of space and time is metaphysically so absurd that it is not a serious contender anyway (see A 39/B 56 and B 70 f.).
fication of the distinction between appearances and things in themselves. If we understand this distinction in the correct way, it is indeed true that once we have shown that spatio-temporal properties and relations pertain to appearances they cannot also pertain to things in themselves. Or so I will argue in the reminder of this paper.

3. CLOSING THE GAP 2: KANT’S DISTINCTION BETWEEN APPEARANCES AND THINGS IN THEMSELVES

I will base my interpretation on a passage that Kant added to the second edition of the *Critique* in order to answer an objection that was made by some of his critics who claimed that Kant’s transcendental idealism turns what we normally conceive of as a mind-independent world into ‘mere illusion’. The charge was that Kant’s position is not only indistinguishable from that of Berkeley, but rather also leads to an infinite regress, since it takes also the human soul to be an appearance, whereas in fact the existence of appearances involves a subject to which something appears and which cannot again be an appearance. Kant answers these objections by accusing his critics of ignoring the distinction between appearance (‘Erscheinung’) and illusion (‘Schein’), and by clarifying what he meant with his claim that spatio-temporal properties pertain only to appearances and not to things in themselves. Here is what he writes:

‘If I say: in space and time intuition of outer objects as well as self-intuition of the mind represent both of these things as each affects our senses, i.e. as it appears, that is not to say that these objects were mere illusion. For in the appearance the objects, indeed even properties that we attribute to them, are always regarded as something really given, only that – insofar as this property depends only on the kind of intuition of the subject in the relation of the given object to it – this object as appearance is to be distinguished from itself as object in itself. Thus I do not say that bodies merely seem to exist outside me or that my soul only seems to be given if I assert that the quality of space and time – in accordance with which, as condition of their existence, I posit both of these – lies in my kind of intuition and not in these objects in themselves.’ (B 69)

He then adds a footnote in order to illustrate his remarks:

‘The predicates of appearance can be attributed to the object itself, in relation to our sense, e.g. the red colour or fragrance to the rose; but the illusion can never be attributed to the object as predicate, precisely that would be to attribute to the object for itself what pertains to it only in

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8 See the review by Feder and Garve (cf. Sassen 2000, 53–58).
9 See H.A. Pistorius’ reviews of J. Schulze’s *Erläuterungen über des Herrn Professor Kant Critik der reinen Vernunft* (cf. Gesang 2007, 4 f.)
relation to the senses or in general to the subject [...]. What is not to be encountered in the object in itself at all, but is always to be encountered in its relation to the subject and is inseparable from the representation of the object, is appearance, and thus the predicates of space and of time are rightly attributed to the objects of the senses as such, and there is no illusion in this. However, if I attribute the redness to the rose in itself [...] or extension to all outer objects in themselves, without noticing a certain relation of these objects to the subject and limiting my judgment to this, only then illusion arises.’ (B 69f. fn.)

The first thing to note about these passages is that they contain one of the most explicit and unambiguous statements of the view that the distinction between appearances and things in themselves is one between two different aspects of objects rather than one between two different kinds of objects. As Kant makes clear he does not want to distinguish between appearances one the one hand and numerically distinct things in themselves on the other, but it is the ‘object as appearance [that] is to be distinguished from itself as object in itself’. This clarification brings with it that the claim that material objects are appearances does not diminish them to ‘mere illusions’, a formulation by which Kant characterizes Berkeley’s position a bit later and by which he thus apparently describes the view that spatio-temporal objects are mere representations or objects that have no being whatsoever outside of the representations we have of them. Kant stresses that, on the contrary, his theory assumes that spatio-temporal objects are ‘something really given’, i.e. do not only seem to be distinct from us and given to us through our senses, as Berkeleyan intentional objects would do, but do in fact have this feature. So, the assumption that spatio-temporal properties are properties of appearances is meant to be compatible with the fact that they are properties of extra-mental objects: as Kant puts it in the footnote, they can correctly be ‘ascribed to the object itself’ (‘dem Objecte selbst beigelegt werden’) as long as we bear in mind that they are ascribed to this object only ‘in relation to our sense’. Hence, Kant’s position is not only decisively different from that of Berkeley but is also not threatened by the infinite regress objection, for the claim that the human soul is an appearance does not imply that it does not also exist independently of the representations we have of it.

The positive account of the distinction between appearances and things in themselves that we can extract from the quoted passage interprets this distinction as one between two kinds of properties: properties

10 For a general defense of the version of the two-aspect reading proposed in the following see Rosefeldt 2012, and also Allais 2007 and 2015. The following proposal to deal with the ‘neglected alternative’-objection is a modified version of the ideas presented in Rosefeldt 2013.

11 B 71; see also IV 374.
that pertain to the object only in relation to epistemic subjects of a certain kind, and are dependent on the epistemic constitution of these subjects, and properties that pertain to objects as they are in themselves and are independent of our epistemic relation to them. What Kant wants to say is that spatio-temporal properties belong to the first kind of properties, i.e. that they ‘depend on the kind of intuition of the subject in the relation of the given object to it’. It is clear, that by ‘kind of intuition of the subject’, Kant refers to the assumption that human intuition is subject to space and time as its \textit{a priori} forms. In general, to say that a property \(P\) of an object \(O\) is dependent on the cognitive constitution \(C\) of certain subjects means that \(O\) would not have \(P\) if \(C\) would be different in a certain way. Hence, spatio-temporal properties are dependent on our forms of intuition in that objects would not be spatio-temporal if we had other forms of intuition. In the footnote, Kant illustrates his claim about the mind-dependence of spatio-temporal properties by means of traditional secondary qualities. He obviously expects the reader to agree that colour and fragrance are mind-dependent in the sense that a rose would not be red, or smell a certain way, if our sensory system were not constituted in such a way as to produce certain sensations when confronted with it. In analogy, he seems to argue, material objects would not be extended and have a certain shape and size if we were not constituted in such a way as to structure the contents of our manifold sensual representations in a spatio-temporal order. As Kant puts it, spatio-temporal properties are ‘inseparable from the representation of the object’ and ‘always to be encountered in its relation to the subject’.

Given what Kant says about spatio-temporal properties and relations in the quoted passage, he seems best interpreted as assigning to them the ontological status of what we would nowadays call ‘response-dependent properties’.\textsuperscript{12} Response-dependent properties are properties of objects that essentially have to do with the way we react to them. They can be understood as the higher-order properties of having some first-order property that elicits a certain effect in us. Being poisonous is a typical response-dependent property in this sense, because to be poisonous just is to have some (e.g. chemical) property that elicits symptoms of intoxication in such-and-such organisms. Whereas the first-order (chemical) property, which is the cause of our reaction, is response-independent, the higher-order property of having \textit{some} such first order property with such-and-such effects on us is dependent on our reaction and our constitution. If our biological make-up was different and we reacted differently to the respective first-order property of the poisonous object, the object might no longer be poisonous for us.

\textsuperscript{12} For the following cf. Rosefeldt (forthcoming).
To interpret traditional secondary qualities such as redness and traditional primary qualities such as spatio-temporal extensions and relations as response-dependent in this sense means that objects have them because they bring about certain mental effects in us. In the case of colours the effect is a certain colour-sensation and colour properties themselves can be understood as the higher-order properties of being such as to elicit such-and-such colour sensations in us. This property is one that an object has only ‘in relation to a subject’, and is dependent on the mental constitution of that subject, because objects would not have it if we did not react to them by having the respective sensations. Now, Kant seems to think that a similar analysis can be given with respect to traditional primary spatio-temporal properties. Given what he says about space and time as the forms of our intuition that seems reasonable. If objects affect our outer sense, for example, then we do not only react to it by having a certain sensations but rather also by structuring these sensations according to the form of our outer sense. Although the general spatial form of this structuring is fully determined by us, it is partly due to the affecting object which particular spatial structuring of sensations occurs in us (e.g. one that results in the perception of an object as cubical rather than spherical). Hence, when we ascribe a particular spatio-temporal property to an extra-mental object we are right in doing so as long we interpret it as the higher-order property of being somehow such as to elicit in us a specific ordering of sensations according to the forms of our intuitions.

Now, obviously, conceiving of spatio-temporal properties as response-dependent in this way raises a number of questions whose discussion would go beyond the scope of this paper. However, if some story along the lines just presented was what Kant had in mind, it is at least clear why he thought that spatio-temporal properties pertain to objects only in relation to us and are dependent on our own mental constitution; for if we had different forms of intuition, then objects would no longer have the higher-order properties of giving rise to the particular orderings of sensation that they in fact bring about in us. And this mind- and response-dependence of spatio-temporal properties is enough in order to see that they could not be had by things in themselves. This brings us back to the

13 It is important to note that what Kant calls here the ‘synopsis of the sense’, i.e. the structuring of sensations by the a priori forms, does not yet yield a mental state that represents a determinate spatial form or a particular temporal determination. As Kant makes clear here and at many other passages, this only happens when an additional process of sensible synthesis is performed by the imagination. A characterization of the mental effect in non-representational terms is important in order to avoid certain circularity worries with respect to response-dependent properties (cf. Rosefeldt forthcoming).

14 Some of the questions are addressed in Rosefeldt (forthcoming).
objection of the neglected alternative.

The scenario that we found still not ruled out by Kant at the end of the last section was one in which space and time are forms of intuition but, although space and time do not themselves exist as mind-independent entities, things in themselves nevertheless have spatio-temporal properties and stand in spatio-temporal relations. The objection that Kant neglected this scenario in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* is based on a certain understanding of what Kant took to be his insight about spatio-temporal properties there, namely that they only pertain to one kind of entity – appearances - but not to another one – things in themselves. The objection then reads that although we can only *know* that they pertain to the one objects and do not *know* whether they also pertain to the others, this is not enough in order to rule out that they in fact do.

Given what we have learned from the passage in B 69 f., this way of putting things is mistaken. For, as we have seen, Kant’s distinction between appearances and things in themselves is not one between two different kinds of object, but speaks about the very same objects as bearers of two different kind of properties: response-dependent ones and response-independent ones. Hence, Kant’s insight in the *Aesthetics* has rather to be described as the claim that spatio-temporal properties are response-dependent rather than response-independent and that they pertain to extra-mental objects only in relation to us and not had by them ‘in themselves’, i.e. independently of us. The insight of the *Aesthetic* is thus the overcoming of what Kant in the footnote describes as the ‘illusion’ of transcendental realism, namely the attribution of ‘extension to all outer objects in themselves, without noticing a certain relation of these objects to the subject and limiting my judgment to this’ (B 70).\(^{15}\)

So, the charge of the neglected alternative has to be given another form and would have to read somehow as follows: ‘Kant claims that space and time are mere forms of intuitions and that spatio-temporal properties and relations are response-dependent properties and do not pertain to objects

\(^{15}\) Vaihinger writes about the footnote: ‘Die Fussnote, vermutlich erst nachträglich und flüchtig hinzugesetzt, [...] bringt nun in die bis jetzt gewonnenen klaren Ergebnisse eine peinliche, ja widerwärtige Verwirrung hinein, welche Kant sich und seinen Lesern durch strenge Gedankenführung wohl hätte ersparen können. Anstatt, wie seine Absicht war, den Text zu erläutern, hat Kant ihn nur verdunkelt’ (Vaihinger 1892, 488). I could not agree less. The only slightly unfortunate aspect about the footnote is one further example for an illusion (namely the illusion that Saturn has two handles) that is disanalogous to the other two examples. Whereas in this case we can distinguish between the property of appearing to have two handles and the property of having two handles, Kant’s view in the case of colors and of spatio-temporal properties is precisely not that objects only appear to have these properties but rather that having these properties just is a way of appearing to subjects of a certain kind.
in themselves. But all he is justified is claiming that we only *know* that these properties are response-dependent, which, however, is not enough in order to rule out that they are in fact also mind-independent and pertain to objects in themselves.' Once we have formulated the objection in this way, we see that it is no real threat because the supposed neglected alternative is not a real possibility. The alternative scenario would have to be one in which a property that is in fact response-dependent is also response-independent. However, this is impossible. If the property of being cubical just is the property of being such as to elicit a certain kind of ordering of sensations in us, then this property could not be response-independent. It is essentially such that an object could not have it ‘in itself’. To accuse Kant of having neglected an alternative here would be like accusing someone who has claimed that being poisonous is a response-dependent property of not having excluded that being-poisonous might also a response-independent property and that things might not only be poisonous for such-and-such beings but also be poisonous in themselves. This would of course be absurd, for there simply is no such things as being poisonous without being poisonous for someone or something. Similarly, if Kant is right, then there simply is no such thing as having a spatio-temporal property without having it in relation to someone with space and time as their forms of intuition.

Of course, denying the response-dependence of spatio-temporal extension is by far not as absurd as denying the response-dependence of a property such as being poisonous. After all, philosophers before and after Kant have taken it to be the paradigm of a property that objects have independently of our minds, and Kant has to present an intricate and controversial argument in order to show that these philosophers are wrong. If we look for an analogy from the empirical realm, we should think of properties of which people have first overseen, and then later found out, that they depend on certain parameters. Properties such as taking place at noon, moving upwards, or happening simultaneously might be good examples, because in each of these cases people have first thought that these properties pertain to objects or events in themselves before they later discovered that they do so only relative to a certain further parameter such as a time-zone, a gravitational field or (as is shown in the special theory of relativity) an observer’s reference frame. However, once we have found out that these properties are dependent on these parameters, it is not an open question whether objects could also have them in themselves, for there simply is no taking place at noon independent of any time-zone (on the sun, for example), no upwards motion in absolute space, and no non-relative simultaneity. Analogously, if Kant was right at all that the spatio-temporal properties of objects depend on the constitution of our sensibility, then these objects simply could not have these properties independently
of our sensibility. That is not to say, of course, that it might not turn out that spatio-temporal properties are in fact not response-dependent. But this scenario is not the supposed neglected alternative which Kant should have addressed in his theory, but simply is the all too well-known possibility that a philosophical theory is wrong.

4. CONCLUSION
The neglected alternative was supposed to consist in a scenario in which space and time are forms of intuitions but where nevertheless they also exist independently of us and things in themselves have spatio-temporal properties and stand in spatio-temporal relations. Willaschek’s and Allais’ argument has shown that, given Kant’s account of intuition, the space and the time that is the object of our a priori intuition could not be a thing in itself. We have seen that, with a little help from a rather modest form of semantic externalism, Kant could also directly conclude that space and time could not exist as things in themselves and hence rule out a scenario in which his claims about our forms of intuition are combined with a Newtonian account of mind-independent space and time. Moreover, a careful interpretation of Kant’s distinction between appearances and things in themselves and of his account of the nature of spatio-temporal properties as response-dependent properties made clear that, once we have shown that objects exemplify spatio-temporal properties and relations as appearances, we have ipso facto ruled out that these properties could also be exemplified by things in themselves. And hence it is also not possible to combine a view of space and time as forms of intuition with a relational theory of mind independent space and time. There seems no gap left to be closed.

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