

The motion of the subject – a metaphor? Reply to Pollok

About this paper

This paper is a reply to the criticism of my Kant-interpretation in Konstantin Pollok's "[Kant's Critical Concepts of Motion](#)" in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 44 (2006): 559-575. I submitted my reply on January 8th 2008, but in spite of an anonymous referee report recommending "uniquely that the paper be accepted for publication as is by the journal," it was not accepted. Realizing that the paper will never appear in the journals, I have decided to make it available on the internet "as is."

I also received another referee report, which was negative in the extreme. The editor informed me in a letter of April 16th 2008 that they had "also received a third report to the effect that this work neither introduces a novel line of interpretation nor exposes a deep ambiguity in Pollok's position, and we concurred with this judgment." However, this third report was not sent to me. In reply to my e-mail inquiry of yesterday, the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* states that it is "fine with us" that I post the two referee reports (attached at the end here).

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Jens Saugstad

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Abstract

In *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant speaks about *motion*, as action of the subject in connection with the actions by which we describe a space, such as drawing a line or constructing a circle. In a 1992-paper in *Kant-Studien* I argued that this is one important piece of textual evidence for the so-called externalist interpretation, according to which the transcendental conditions of experience and indeed all the a priori elements in Kant's system are public, depending upon overt action. Konstantin Pollok has criticized my reading, arguing that the relevant use of the term "motion" here is just metaphorical, and considering some central Kantian doctrines that he thinks refutes the externalist interpretation. The present paper defends the externalist interpretation against Pollok's charges.

The motion of the subject – a metaphor? Reply to Pollok

Jens Saugstad

I have become aware of an article in *Journal of the History of Philosophy* in which Konstantin Pollok has attempted to reject my proposal for a radical re-interpretation Kant's philosophy.¹ I need to ask the Editor for space to defend my so-called externalist interpretation.²

I. Brief presentation of the externalist interpretation³

At the end of the *Anthropology*, Kant makes a thought-experiment in order to shed light upon the moral character of the human species:

It could well be that some other planet is inhabited by rational beings who could only think aloud – who, whether awake or dreaming, in company with others or alone, can have no thoughts they do not at the same time utter (*Anthro*: B 331/332).

If Kant allows, in principle, that there could be rational beings who can only think aloud, then it seems that he must hold that rationality per se does not necessarily comprise the capacity for inner thought. Consequently, in order to capture Kant's analysis of reason, we must construe it in such a way that it applies also to such extraterrestrial rational beings. This leads to the externalist interpretation: If we can imagine extraterrestrial rational beings whose whole mental life (short of sensations) is public, we should, for the purpose of a Kantian analysis of the mind, entirely disregard the human capacity for inner, mental acts, for inner speech, and for entertaining mental images before the "inner eye." Rather, rationality should be construed as depending upon a fixed set of interconnected overt actions, or behavioral techniques, to put it in Wittgensteinian terms.⁴ More specifically, *syntheses* or *the actions of the understanding* are not mental acts inside some "private box" called the understanding, but the behavioral techniques that enable us to know the sensible world via language (*Ent*: BA 16n/193-4n).

¹ Konstantin Pollok, "Kant's Critical Concepts of Motion," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 44 (2006): 559-75, esp. pp. 562-4. I refer to this work by page numbers only.

² Jens Saugstad, "Kant on Action and Knowledge," *Kant-Studien* 83 (1992): 381-98. I also refer to this work by page numbers only. In addition, I refer to two follow-up papers of mine which Pollok does not consider: "Sensibility, Space, and Public Display," in Øfsti, A., Ulrich P., and Wyller T. (eds.), *Indexicality and Idealism. The self in Philosophical Perspective* (Paderborn: mentis 2000), and "'I think' Kant on Self-Consciousness," in Øfsti, A., Ulrich P., and Wyller T. (eds.), *Indexicality and Idealism II. The self in Philosophical Perspective* (Paderborn: mentis 2002).

³ All references to *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* are placed in brackets in the main text, e.g. A 23 or B 38 (A and B referring to the first and second edition of that work, respectively). References to other works by Kant are to the *Weischedel*-edition (before the slash), and the *Akademie*-edition (after the slash). For quotation, I have consulted both *Critique of Pure Reason*, edited and translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1933/1990). For other works I rely upon *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, translated by Mary J. Gregor (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), and *Critique of Practical Reason*, translated by Lewis White Beck (New York: Macmillan, 1956), or else draw upon translations given by Pollok and other commentators where such have been available. Abbreviations: *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* = *Anthro*; *Die Metaphysik der Sitten* – Rechtslehre = *MdS-R*; *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* = *KpV*; *Kritik der Urteilskraft* = *KU*; *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft* = *MAN*; *Über eine Entdeckung, nach der alle neue Kritik der reinen Vernunft durch eine ältere entbehrlich gemacht werden soll* = *Ent*, to which I refer in the main text as the *Streitschrift*.

⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations / Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958, originally 1953), # 199.

Productive imagination through *figurative synthesis* (B 151-2), of which *geometrical construction* (or *ostensive construction*, B 745) is an important specimen, is a capacity for producing pictures overtly, for instance by depicting a geometrical figure *in the air* (cf. B 741), or, according to the same rules, upon paper, or like Archimedes, “with his stick in the sand” (*Ent*: BA 13n/191n). Even the form of sensibility, albeit it strictly speaking “does not lie in reason itself” (*KpV*: A 116/65-6), depends upon overt action: The pure, original intuitions of space and time are the public *displays* of locations, directions and the modes of time through ostensive actions (B 38, B 40, B 46).⁵ By implication, sensible intuitions are *paradigmatic, public displays by means of material things*, as is evident in Kant’s reminders about the foundation of arithmetic: In the famous example, he explicitly says that the fingers of my hand or points on paper – later he adds strokes and the beads of the abacus – are *called in aid as intuition* when I add 7 and 5 to get 12 (B 15, B 299).⁶

On my proposal, then, the transcendental conditions of experience – and all the other a priori elements in Kant’s system – are public.⁷ I have called it the *externalist* interpretation simply because it construes the a priori in terms of actions that are performed overtly, in the external world, by embodied subjects, and I oppose it to *internalist* interpretations, which reduce the a priori to something private – either of the familiar kind: inner, mental images and acts, or of a more dubious kind: inner structures and inner operations that allegedly are neither overt nor mental (in the above, narrow sense).⁸ The motive behind my proposal, apart from doing Kant justice, is to rescue his philosophical system from the later Wittgenstein’s devastating criticism of internalism.⁹

Notice that the externalist interpretation does not, of course, deny that inner acts and images are integral to our mental life, or that they are recognized by Kant. But Pollok’s example of the figurative synthesis of a tree (564 and n), echoing Kant’s example of the apprehension of a house (B 162), suggests that he construes my proposal as being at odds with the possibility of a synthesis without the motion of the human body. Therefore, let me stress that the externalist interpretation does not deny that a synthesis can be exercised mentally; it claims that its overt exercise is logically prior.

II. Motion as subject and motion of the object

The immediate object of disagreement between Pollok and me is a distinction that Kant draws in the transcendental deduction of the categories. In the main text Kant writes:

⁵ Notice that this reading of space and time honors the distinction between sensibility and the understanding in terms of passive receptivity and active spontaneity (B 33, B 75). *Sensations* are passively received, but this does not entail that the *forms* of sensibility must themselves be something passive. I also believe that the original, pure intuitions of space and time depend upon ostensive actions that do not, by themselves, function as *syntheses*.

⁶ It seems plausible that the interpretation of intuitions as paradigms also comprises the intellectual intuitions of a non-sensuous understanding “which is itself intuitive”, such as the divine understanding (B 145, cf. B 159). Recall that Plato characterized the ideas as *paradeigmata* – the intellectual “vision” of Platonic ideas, or, perhaps, these paradigms or archetypes themselves as they exist in the divine mind is, presumably, a prominent historical example of that which Kant takes to be intellectual intuitions (see B 370, B 596, B 881-2).

⁷ Actually, this requirement applies also to *the intelligible*; I believe Kant’s definition of the intelligible (B 566) entails that it is just as *manifest* as the sensible, though it does not have the *status* of appearance.

⁸ The terms “externalism” and “internalism” are already in use in contemporary philosophy for a wide variety of positions. However, I am not committed to any connection with other positions called externalism.

⁹ For criticism of mentalism, see *Philosophical Investigations*, §§ 152, 199, 202, and 242ff; for criticism related to the second kind of internalism, see # 36.

We cannot think of a line without *drawing* it in thought, we cannot think of a circle without *describing* it, we cannot represent the three dimensions of space at all without *placing* three lines perpendicular to each other at the same point, and we cannot even represent time save in so far as we attend, in the *drawing* of a straight line (which is to be the external figurative representation of time), merely to the action of the synthesis of the manifold through which we successively determine the inner sense, and thereby attending to the succession of this determination in inner sense. Motion, as action of the subject (not as determination of an object),* and therefore the synthesis of the manifold in space, first produces even the concept of succession – if we abstract from this manifold and attend solely to the action through which we determine the *inner* sense according to its form (B 154-5).¹⁰

In the footnote Kant further illuminates the distinction between motion, as action of the subject, on the one hand, and motion, as determination of an object, on the other:

* Motion of an *object* in space does not belong in a pure science, thus also not in geometry; for that something is movable cannot be known a priori, but only through experience. But motion, as *description* of a space, is a pure act of the successive synthesis of the manifold in outer intuition in general through productive imagination, and belongs not only to geometry, but even to transcendental philosophy (B 155n).

In “Kant on Action and Knowledge” I argued that Kant’s claim that motion as subject¹¹ is a pure act that belongs to both geometry and transcendental philosophy offers hard textual evidence for the externalist thesis that Kant intended “the transcendental action of the imagination” (the figurative synthesis) to pick out a subclass of overt actions – familiar actions essentially involving the movement of the human body, such as drawing a line on a piece of paper (pp. 384-6).

The following passage about inner sense is clearly related to the two above passages:

[F]or in order subsequently to make even inner alterations thinkable, we must be able to grasp time, as the form of inner sense, figuratively through a line, and grasp the inner alteration through the drawing of this line (motion), and thus grasp the successive existence of ourselves in different states through outer intuition; ... (B 292).

Literally taken, the reference to motion here too entails that even an *inner* intuition cannot be an inner state or the introspection of an inner state. According to the externalist interpretation, an inner intuition is the *public display* of a psychological concept of an inner state, formally by means of overt line-drawing, and materially by means of changes in spatial objects (B 156) – in particular, the human body. I have argued more fully for such a novel reading in my “I think’ Kant on Self-Consciousness.”¹²

While I believe that the reference to motion in these central doctrines generalizes to Kant’s transcendental philosophy as a whole, with further externalist implications for the entire critical system, Pollok believes that:

¹⁰ Pollok has only quoted the last sentence of this passage; unfortunately, he has here twice translated “Handlung” as “act”, which tends to bias the translation in an internalist direction due to the frequent use of “act” as shorthand for “mental act” in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy.

¹¹ For simplicity, I shall often speak of *motion as subject* instead of motion, as action of the subject (and motion as *description* of a space), and *motion of the object* instead of motion, as determination of an object (and motion of an *object*).

¹² See esp. Section 5.

Apart from a merely metaphorical use on Kant's part, there is no textual evidence for proposing a close connection between the concepts of geometrical (ii-a) and transcendental motion (ii-b) and, consequently, between those and motion in the objective sense (i). As a result, Saugstad's view must be rejected (p. 564).¹³

Pollok here assumes that Kant makes a division between different *concepts* of motion, which I think is essential to Pollok's argument. He repeatedly makes a shift of reference from motion to concept of motion (and he often confounds them, see e.g., claims on p. 563 and p. 564). Thus, having quoted the passages from the transcendental deduction, he comments upon them (treating them as one) thus:

In this passage Kant simply *refers* to the concept of motion, and the immediate context in which this reference occurs reveals little about what he means by it. In the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, however, motion plays a more significant role, and, concomitantly, it is in his writings on natural science that Kant most fully expresses his thoughts on the subject (p. 559).

The claim that Kant simply refers to the concept of motion is questionable for more than one reason; I first only want to make the somewhat pedantic point that Kant does not *simply* refer to anything; he *draws a distinction*. And the claim that the *Metaphysical Foundations* most fully expresses Kant's thoughts on the subject is misleading, at best. That work is surely not required for understanding the *distinction* between motion as subject and motion of the object. Nor is Pollok's connected argument sound that the externalist interpretation raises the expectation that Kant would have needed to add a fifth chapter addressing motion as subject (p. 564); being ordinary, objective motion, it ought to be fully covered by that work.

But Pollok's most controversial claim is that Kant refers to *concepts*. This shift of reference is also conspicuous in the following passage from the subsequent page:

The first passage from the first *Critique* (quoted above) reveals both that the concept of motion plays a central role in Kant's epistemology and that he distinguishes clearly between motion of the object, on the one hand, and action of the subject, on the other. The two concepts of motion are quite different – the former belonging to transcendental philosophy and geometry (to 'pure science' in the Kantian sense), the latter to the metaphysical and empirical investigation of nature (p. 560).

Though in some ways more adequate than the former passage, it has some minor puzzling features – apart from the major one. First, Pollok must have meant that motion, as action of the subject belongs to transcendental philosophy and geometry, and motion of the object to the metaphysical and empirical investigation of nature, but he actually says the opposite due to a mix-up of "the latter" and "the former." Second, his rendering here of the distinction at issue as one between *motion* of the object and *action* of the subject – having eliminated from "motion, as action of the subject" the very term "motion" that is the immediate topic of our disagreement – serves to bias the reading in favor of his interpretation.

But his most contentious claim is, again, that Kant's distinction is one between *concepts* of motion – two concepts that, as we have seen, soon multiply into three. I dwell on this point, because Pollok's thesis that Kant uses "motion" metaphorically in his two phrases for motion as subject seems to *rely upon* it. Thus, he says:

¹³ I take it that Pollok here means to say that Kant uses the term "motion" in a metaphorical way in the two phrases "motion, as action of the subject" and "motion, as *description* of a space."

I suggest that motion is not an unambiguous and homogeneous concept: the empirical concept of motion should be differentiated from the transcendental concept of synthesis and the geometrical concept of drawing a line or tracking the movement of a point. Collapsing these distinctions into a single concept actually distorts Kant's position (p. 561).

Pollok's underlying reasoning presumably is something like this: If Kant operates with (three) different *concepts* of motion, then he must also acknowledge (three) different *kinds* of motion, and it is possible, indeed highly plausible, that only one of these concepts – the empirical one – refers to the kind which is commonly meant by the word “motion”: change of place (B 48-9).

But there is no explicit reference to three different concepts in the two passages from the first *Critique*. I believe the simple explanation is that Kant here does not distinguish between different *concepts* of motion at all. And while Kant makes a *threefold* division of *sciences*, he makes only a *twofold* division with regard to *motion*. There is no reason to doubt that the concept of motion is the same in both cases – designating change of place; rather, the distinction pertains to the two *roles* that motion itself can have, or two *respects* in which it can be taken. As a determination of an object, motion is the object of experience, while as subject, the very same kind of thing, viz., change of place, is involved in the actions of the understanding that make experience of objects possible.

We should also ask what the metaphorical sense of “motion” might be. What does Pollok understand by geometrical “motion”? And by transcendental “motion”? His diagram on pp. 567-8, where he situates “motion” (in inverted commas) on a middle level between synthesis and motion, makes me no wiser, and his use of the inverted commas does nothing to explain what these “motions” are. His discussion of the figurative synthesis of a tree (p. 564) suggests that he construes geometrical “motion” mentalistically, but I have not been able to find any clues as to what he might mean by transcendental “motion”. His assumption that the thinking subject for Kant is disembodied (see Section IV, below) has the implication that he must be taking transcendental “motions” to be the “spiritual acts” (whatever that might be) performed by an immaterial self, but this does not appear to me as a charitable reading of Kant. Pollok also speaks of “[t]he *transcendental aspect of drawing a line*,” but I can make no sense of the phrase. He is right, of course, that the drawing of a line for Kant “goes beyond geometry” (p. 565) because it “holds also for every determination of inner sense” (p. 566), but this doctrine is, as I have suggested, compatible with the literal interpretation of the term “motion.”

III. Nativism and original acquisition

I now turn to what I take to be Pollok's main arguments against the externalist interpretation. The first of them pertains to my appeal to Kant's claim that all the pure conditions of experience are *acquired*. This is clearly stated in a passage in the *Streitschrift*:

The *Critique* completely rules out any divinely implanted or innate *representations*; all of them in their entirety, no matter if they belong to intuition or to the concepts of the understanding, it assumes to be *acquired* (*Ent*: BA 68/221).¹⁴

¹⁴ In his translation, Pollok has illegitimately restricted Kant's completely general claim about representations (*Vorstellungen*) as if it pertained only to concepts (p. 563).

My appeal to the doctrine alluded to in this passage in “Kant on Action and Knowledge” (pp. 382, n. 4 and 388-9) served two purposes: First, to nip in the bud the natural objection that the transcendental conditions of experience could not be formed through the learning of a set of behavioral techniques, and would instead have to be presuppositions of such learning. Second, to argue that Kant’s rejection of innate representations favors the externalist interpretation, because internalist interpretations seem committed to nativism. However, by presenting the passage as if it were my main evidence, Pollok distorts my reasoning.

In addition, Pollok’s criticism of the first argument above seems to me unsound. Says he:

“The objection fails,” he [Saugstad] concludes, because “Kant says explicitly that absolutely all representations, including the form of things in space and time and the transcendental concepts of the understanding, are acquired”. The textual evidence for this latter claim is rather thin, however (p. 563).

Pollok’s claim here about the textual evidence is bewildering, for syntactically “the latter claim” must be my claim that “Kant says explicitly that absolutely all representations, including the form of things in space and time and the transcendental concepts of the understanding, are acquired.” But the doctrine of acquisition in the *Streitschrift* does not seem to be “rather thin” textual basis for *this* claim – to the contrary! Pollok himself cites the following passage (most of which I also quoted (p. 389, n. 15):

But there is also an original acquisition (as the teachers of natural law say); thus, also of that which did not have any prior existence, and therefore did not belong to any thing before this action. The *Critique* claims that the following (representations) belong to this category: *first*, the form of things in space and time, and *second*, the synthetic unity of the manifold in concepts; for neither of them is derived by our faculty from the objects as they are given in themselves, but is brought forth *a priori* by the faculty of cognition (*Ent*: BA 68/221).

As to Pollok’s first charge, the only explanation I can think of is that he has once more lost track of the reference of “the latter”; what he tried to say, apparently, was that the passage is rather thin textual basis *for the externalist interpretation*, for he goes on to say that “Kant himself goes on to qualify this claim in such a way as to rule out the kind of externalism for which Saugstad argues” (p. 563). But, then, how is the doctrine of original acquisition of the forms of experience supposed to *rule it out*? Here is what Pollok says:

This “acquisition” means nothing but the fact that we do not *possess* any form of intuition or any pure concept *before* we encounter an object of possible experience; if Kant had meant more than this, then talk of *apriori* elements would no longer make sense (p. 563).

This is far from clear; but Pollok’s claim appears to be that the meaning of “a priori” for Kant entails that that which is a priori must already *exist* in the subject before the act of original acquisition, and that original acquisition only means that it comes in our *possession* through that act, viz., that we become *conscious of* innate representations through original acquisition. If so, it is *his* interpretation which is ruled out by Kant’s explicit claim that the original acquisition of the formal conditions of experience is “of that which did not have any prior existence.” This verdict is further supported by a close comparison between the two doctrines of original acquisition: The original acquisition of property comprises also the movable things that belong to (inhere in) the land prior to the act of original acquisition, whereas the original acquisition of the pure conditions of experience, by contrast, pertains to what “did not belong to any thing before this action” (*MdS-R*: AB 82/262; AB 94-5/268-9).

IV. The embodied self

There is now a turn to a new topic in Pollok's criticism, although he introduces it as if it were a mere continuation of his argument from acquisition:

In fact, Saugstad's distinction between the Kantian "motion of an object" and "motion of the subject" finally amounts to the difference between any body and the human body: "Kant is of course right that there is a fundamental difference between the motion of a physical object in space and the bodily motion involved in the description of a space: while both motions are observable, only the latter is part of an action performed by a human agent." [...] Yet for the Critical Kant the human body is nothing but one possible object of experience, and in no sense is it a transcendental concept. Thus Saugstad's identification of "action of the subject" and "description of space" with bodily motions directly contradicts Kant's own argument and the hierarchical structure he gives it (p. 563).

I first need to take exception to some of Pollok's less central claims here. I do not *identify* action of the subject with bodily motions. This sounds rather reductionistic, and I must repeat what I did stress in my paper: The externalist interpretation does not reduce Kant to a behaviorist (pp. 382-3; cf. Section V, below). Nor do I hold that the human body is a transcendental concept, or more charitably interpreted, that the *concept* of the human body is transcendental. Like the concept of any kind of body, it is empirical.

However, although I do not speak of a "difference between any body and the human body" in the quotation that Pollok offers, I concede that the distinction between motion as subject and motion of the object entails that the human body "as subject" is integral to the transcendental conditions of experience: that the transcendental subject is corporeal (p. 563), whereas "as object" the human body is just a body among physical bodies.

Pollok does not have much of an argument against this interpretation, but first just asserts his view on the issue that we are disagreeing upon as if it were an established truth. But perhaps he felt entitled to such a question-begging and seemingly dogmatic assertion in light of his subsequent claim: "at one point Kant states the very opposite to Saugstad's view" (p. 563), quoting a well-known sentence in the Paralogisms:

I distinguish my own existence, as a thinking being, from other things outside me (to which my body also belongs) – this is equally an analytical proposition; for *other* things are such as I think to be *distinguished* from me (B 409).¹⁵

Pollok must be assuming that Kant here says that I distinguish my own existence as a thinking being from my own body. But as I have argued in "'I think' Kant on Self-Consciousness" (pp. 110-11), this is not a plausible interpretation; actually, the claim *supports* the externalist interpretation of the transcendental subject on closer scrutiny.

The latter part of the quotation shows that the intended analytic claim is that I distinguish my own existence as a thinking being from *other* things outside me; this clearly does not entail that I distinguish my existence as a thinking being from my own body. What might seem to suggest that my body is not a part of *me* is Kant's characterization of my body as a thing

¹⁵ Once again Pollok's translation tends to bias the interpretation by singling out and emphasizing the bracketed clause about my body.

outside me. To appreciate that this is not so, we need to recall what Kant means by the term “outside me” (and its first person plural counterpart, “outside us”).

Let us begin with the definition of outer sense:

By means of outer sense (a property of our mind) we represent to us things as outside us, and these altogether in space (B 37).

According to the externalist interpretation, this “property of our mind” is the capacity to distinguish things from ourselves by the use of our own body as a reference point in ostensive actions. The first space-argument is highly suggestive of the externalist position here:

For in order for certain sensations to be related to something outside me (i.e., to something in another place in space from that in which I find myself), thus in order for me to represent them as outside one another, thus not merely as different but as in different places, the representation of space must already be their ground (B 38).

Philosophically, it seems plausible that the acquired ability to accompany locutions such “Look over there!” with pointing gestures enables us to fix a position in space for what we perceive,¹⁶ and that this way of relating our sensations to something outside us supplies the meaning of the term “outside me.” Exegetically, this also seems to me the most plausible reading of what Kant here says. Relating-sensations-to-something-outside-me, accordingly, is part of a “language-game” in which spatial discourse is intertwined with ostensive actions in which we literally point out space from our subjective standpoint (B 42).¹⁷ I believe, furthermore, that this reading adequately captures the a priori status of the representation of space: If the original intuition of space is *brought forth* by the learning of ostensive actions like the above, it is indeed a priori according to Kant’s doctrine of original acquisition. Thus, the phrase “things outside me,” which is here synonymous with “things *that are to be encountered in space*” (A 373), expresses the way in which we refer to objects in space by means of familiar ostensive gestures.

Now the solution to the riddle that Kant calls even *my own body* a thing *outside me* is as follows: When I determine positions in space by means of ostensive actions, I relate to my body “as subject.” But I also relate to my body “as object” on par with other physical bodies, and when I relate to it as an object in space I must relate to my own body (quasi in the third person), by means of, in principle, ostensive gestures involving the very same body of mine as subject.¹⁸ That is, *I must apply to my own body* the concept of *a thing outside me* that is based upon the acquired ability to relate sensations through ostensive actions to “something in another place in space than were I find myself.” For this transcendental reason¹⁹ Kant correctly characterizes my body as *a thing outside me* – even though, nay, *because* I am embodied as subject.²⁰

¹⁶ Not to be confused with *ostensive definitions* of terms, the role of which is duly restricted by Wittgenstein; see *Philosophical Investigations*, §§ 28ff.

¹⁷ There is a long, unbroken line from Kant’s pre-critical works to his later works stressing the embodied subject as, so to speak, a “living co-ordinate system,” see “Kant on Action and Knowledge,” p. 395, n. 26.

¹⁸ Charles Parsons’s criticism that “‘Outside us’ cannot have as its primary meaning just outside our *bodies*,” is, in my view, based on the confusion between my body “as subject” and “as object” in space-discourse. Parsons, “The Transcendental Aesthetic,” in Guyer, P. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 67.

¹⁹ Kant’s term “transcendental” refers to the a priori way in which representations relate to objects (B 25, B 81).

²⁰ The dual perspective on the corporeal human subject fits nicely with a passage in the A-Paralogisms in which Kant concludes that transcendental idealism would make obsolete the talk of souls as thinking substances (A 359-60/226). More work is required, of course, to determine whether the embodiment of the subject is consistent

V. Motion and action

Having (groundlessly) concluded that “Saugstad’s view must be rejected,” Pollok returns to the *Metaphysical Foundations*, claiming that it “provides an alternative way of understanding Kant’s position.” I confess that it is not clear to me what this alternative is supposed to be, or what the argument for it is.

Presumably, Pollok’s alternative position is that “the concept of synthesis does not refer necessarily to motion understood as change in the outer relations of a thing to a given space” (p. 564). But if this just means that one can carry out a synthesis without moving the body, this is, as I have already said, no objection to the externalist interpretation. It certainly allows that a person who has already acquired the behavioral technique involved in a synthesis can, in certain circumstances, carry it out mentally (just as a person who has learnt to calculate overtly can typically calculate just “in the head”). There is an internal connection between apprehending shapes mentally and actually drawing them, say, by tracing them with the index-finger. Philosophically, the latter is plausibly the more fundamental ability: The reason why we can carry out a figurative synthesis, indeed any kind of synthesis, mentally (in circumstances when that suffices) is that we have already acquired the ability (the know-how) to perform it overtly. Exegetically, I believe there is ample evidence that this was also Kant’s own position (e.g., B 745, B 299; *KU*: B 240-1/342-3), and I have discussed some of the textual evidence in my articles.

But perhaps Pollok’s main argument for his alternative is to be found in the subsequent part of the paragraph, in which he draws the distinction between the objective concept of motion and the concept of a synthesis in terms of the passive/active-distinction:

In contrast to the (objective) concept of motion, the concept of synthesis is an active concept; motion of an object is caused by something outside the subject. A synthesis, however, can only come about spontaneously: (p. 564).

This is hardly an objection to the externalist position; in fact, it is a point I made use of in one of three additional arguments for the externalist reading of the distinction between motion as subject and motion of the object (pp. 385-6). If I perform an overt action – say, trace the outline of a tree with my index-finger – then this action comes about spontaneously (indeed, Kant says, at least sometimes, that the action itself *is* the absolutely spontaneous, first cause, not that it *has* such a cause (see B 474 and B 476)). Surely, this action involves a motion (my index-finger changes place), and such bodily motions have causes just like the motions of the leaves that are blowing in the wind. But that does not reduce a synthesis to a mere event (or to “colorless movements”). On the externalist interpretation, the causal schema is the deliberate manipulation of physical objects according to rules (B 183, cf. B 248-9). While the *motions* involved are natural events on par with the accelerated motion of any other physical object, their involvement as subject in the conditions of the experience of events leaves open the possibility that actions are not “completely caught in the nets of causality,” to borrow von Wright’s phrase²¹: This kind of intervenistic analysis of causation seems to me the key also to Kant’s solution to the third antinomy.

with Kant’s doctrine of the regulative use of the idea of the soul as a “simple self-sufficient intelligence” (B 710), and with the postulate of the immortal soul. But see B 712 and *Der Streit der Fakultäten*, A 52/40.

²¹ Georg Henrik von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 81. See also Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions 1912-1951* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), pp. 397-399, and 410.

VI. Mistaking subjects for objects

Pollok seems right, finally, that Kant's emphasis of the distinction between motion as subject and motion of the object was a response to a review in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* (p. 561), probably by the editor, Christian Gottfried Schütz, of Johann Schulze's *Elucidations* of the first *Critique* (with a view to the first *Critique* itself and the *Prolegomena*). But ironically, the review provides additional support for the externalist reading.

Schütz's scruple was that Kant's appeal to the *drawing* of a line jeopardizes the a priori status of mathematical construction by making the latter depend upon empirical assistance.²² The problem disappears by distinguishing between motion as the determination of an object, and motion as part of the a priori conditions of experience. For although our *concept* of motion is empirical, and we can only *determine* (know) the motion of objects through *experience* (B 155n), it seems like putting the cart before the horse to assume that we must first have the concept and experience (empirical knowledge) of motion in order to learn the relevant behavioral techniques. By emphasizing the distinction, Kant reminds his readers – now as then – that the involvement of motion in the a priori conditions of experience does not transform these very conditions into empirical presuppositions.

I conclude that Pollok's criticism of the externalist interpretation stems from the same failure as Schütz's scruple – and that both evaporate once Kant's distinction is correctly understood.²³

²² The review is reprinted in Albert Landau (ed.), *Rezensionen zur Kantischen Philosophie 1781-87* (Bebra: Albert Landau Verlag, 1991), see esp. p. 153. For the conjecture that Schütz is the author of the anonymous review, see *ibid*, pp. 776-7.

²³ I would like to thank Professor Truls Wyller for kindly commenting upon a longer version of the paper.

JHP REFEREE REPORT 2: The Motion of the Subject – A Metaphor? Reply to Pollok

As the title makes clear, this paper is a response to a line of criticism of the author's view developed by Konstantin Pollok in a paper published previously in the JHP. In general, the author is concerned to defend his/her "externalist" proposal for understanding Kant's philosophy of mind, namely, that we should take Kant as recommending that we "entirely disregard the human capacity for inner, mental acts, for inner speech, and for entertaining mental images before the 'inner eye'" in favor of a broadly Wittgenstein-inspired interpretation that, for Kant, "the transcendental conditions of experience—and all the other a priori elements in Kant's system—are public" (2). In the course of defending this view, the author explains how and why Pollok misconstrues his/her position, highlights a number of apparent confusions and weaknesses in Pollok's argument, challenges his interpretation of various key passages in the first *Critique* and elsewhere, and accuses him of failing to provide a clear alternative to the externalist position that he rejects.

This is a clearly written and forcefully argued response not only to the specific criticisms Pollok makes of the author, but of the paper and the interpretation it advances more generally; if correct, it represents a serious challenge to Pollok's view and one which, if published, would and should elicit a counter-response!

Some points, as one might expect, are of less philosophical interest than others and enter into details of Kant interpretation that will hold the attention of only the most serious devotees of Kant scholarship. However, in addition, the discussion concerns central elements of Kant's thought that will be of interest to readers of the journal: *inter alia* the status and meaning of Kant's concept or concepts (depending with whom one agrees) of motion, interpretations of the deduction, the degree to which forms of experience are acquired, and the place of the human body in Kant's philosophy. Thus while the paper is a response piece, it contains much that raises it above what might otherwise be construed as mere niceties of interpretive quarreling.

In short, I recommend unequivocally that the paper be accepted for publication as is by the journal: first, it is a reasonable and justified response by the author to criticisms raised by Pollok, and second, while this clearly gives the paper its focus, it at once touches on topics of independent philosophical interest for readers.

Historical and philosophical significance of the topic

The significance of the topic is considerable, but this paper makes no contribution to it.

Contribution made to scholarship on the topic

Zero. The purpose of this paper is self-promotion. Its style is self-congratulatory. The interpretation of Kant underlying this paper is extremely questionable.

Completeness of the discussion

The author simply responds to criticisms made by Pollock.

Familiarity with primary sources in their original language, appropriate editions, and/or relevant secondary literature

Yes

Strengths and weaknesses of the paper

There is nothing new or of philosophical significance in this paper. Its goal is self-promotion.

Recommendation

I recommend that you do not publish this paper.
