

PRACTICAL AND EMPIRICAL COGNITION OF THE COGNITIVE SELF

Patricia KITCHER¹

Columbia University

1. TRANSCENDENTAL APPERCEPTION AND EMPIRICAL COGNITION OF THE COGNITIVE SELF

Self-knowledge is a complicated issue. Kant addresses it in various contexts, but I am not going to try to be comprehensive. I consider only one piece of the puzzle: how empirical cognition of cognitive selves is possible. By restricting my treatment to cognitive selves—empirical selves insofar as they are cognizers—I believe that I am following the correct order of exposition. Empirical selves have feelings and engage in action, but Kant maintains that in creatures with ‘higher powers,’ the employment of all powers, and so also the powers of desire and feeling, is based on the cognitive power (20. 245).² Cognitive selves are embodied, but Kant sees no special problems in explaining either human physiology or individual cognition of bodily states. What he finds puzzling and tries to explain is how it is possible for cognizers to know themselves as objects, that is, to know their mental states, and how it is possible for psychology to be a science of mind.

Since Kant maintains that all empirical cognition presupposes the transcendental unity of apperception, he must assume that is true for empirical self-knowledge. My central claim in the paper is that he maintains that the transcendental unity of self-consciousness plays two further key roles in making empirical self-knowledge possible. One role is indicated when Kant raises the issue of empirical self-consciousness briefly in the Transcendental Deduction and asserts that its unity is “derived from ... the original unity [of apperception] under given conditions **in concreto**” (B140).³ To appreciate his point, consider the contrast case. The unity of an object of outer sense depends on the rule for the object concept that applies to it. Although cognizing such objects requires the transcendental unity of apperception, their unity as objects does not derive from that unity.

A second role comes into view in the Architectonic. Here, the focus is not individual self-knowledge, but empirical psychology. Kant asks how it is possible to have *a priori* cognition

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of objects that are given *a posteriori* to the senses. Because cognizers have both outer and inner sense, there are two cases.

We take from experience nothing more than what is needed to **give** us an object either of outer or inner sense. The object of outer sense is given through the mere concept of matter (impenetrable, inanimate extension); the object [*Objekt*] of inner sense is given through the concept of a thinking being (in the empirical representation I think). (A848/B876)

That is, *a priori* principles can be applied to objects of outer sense, just so long as outer sense supplies material for a representation that can be brought under the concept of matter. *A priori* principles can be applied to the object of inner sense, just so long as representations available to inner sense include a representation that can be brought under the concept of a thinking being. Kant characterizes that representation as ‘an empirical representation I think.’ If we look back to the Paralogisms chapter, however, we see that this characterization requires clarification. In a note Kant explains that

When I called the proposition **I think** an empirical proposition, I did not mean that the **I** in this proposition is an empirical representation. Rather this representation is purely intellectual, because it belongs to thought as such. Yet without some empirical representation that provides the material for thought, the act **I think** would not take place; and the empirical [element] is only the condition of the application or use of the pure intellectual power. (B423a).

Although the note is an explication of an earlier discussion, it seems clear and emphatic enough that it should also be used to understand what Kant is saying in the Architectonic. An empirical representation, e.g., ‘I think bodies are heavy,’ is given to inner sense when an act of thinking enables the combination of the pure intellectual concept ‘I-think’ with materials related to objects that are distinct from the self. Empirical psychology acquires an object, because the act of uniting representations that come from the senses is real and its effect, the thought, is reportable through inner sense. Although the representation is empirical, because its non-I portion comes from the senses and because it is reportable by inner sense, the ‘I’ or perhaps ‘I-think’ portion of the representation contains nothing empirical. It is a purely intellectual representation—because it represents intellectual activity (see also B1-2).

In sum, the transcendental unity of apperception appears to enable the empirical cognition of selves in three different ways:

1. The transcendental unity of apperception is a necessary condition for all empirical cognition.
2. In the case of cognition of an empirical self (mind), the unity of the object of cognition derives from the unity of the transcendental subject, the transcendental unity of apperception.
3. The transcendental unity of apperception supplies the object for empirical psychology, because empirical representations of thoughts are instances of the pure intellectual concept, ‘I think.’

Later I will add a fourth contribution. As noted, it is uncontroversial that Kant maintains the first contribution of the transcendental unity of apperception to individual self-knowledge and to empirical psychology.⁴ In the rest of the paper, I spell out and defend Kant's reasons for holding that it must also make three further contributions to the possibility of empirical cognition of the self.

2. HOW DO WE REPRESENT COGNITIVE SELVES?

Kant prefaces his critique of Rational Psychology in the Paralogisms by explaining how it is possible to think about a cognitive self, an I that thinks.

It must, however, seem strange at the very outset that the condition under which I think at all, and which is therefore merely a characteristic of myself as subject, is to be valid also for everything that thinks; and that upon a proposition that seems empirical we can presume to base an apodictic and universal judgment, *viz.* that *everything that thinks is of such a character as the pronouncement of self-consciousness asserts of me.* The cause of this, however, lies in the fact that we must necessarily ascribe to things a priori all of the properties that make up the conditions under which alone we think them. Now through no outer experience, but solely through self-consciousness, can I have the least representation of a thinking being. Hence *objects of that sort are nothing more than the transfer of this consciousness of mine to other things, which thereby alone are represented as thinking beings.* (A346-47/B404-405 (A346/B404-405, my italics).

This is a striking claim, for two reasons. First, it raises two important questions. What does the pronouncement of self-consciousness assert of me? What do I transfer from myself to others in order to represent them as thinking beings? Second, it seems inconsistent with the signature doctrine of the Paralogisms chapter that the representation 'I' is completely empty. If the representation 'I' is empty, then how can there be anything to transfer from myself to others to represent them as thinking beings?

One place to look for an answer to the question of what the pronouncement of self-consciousness asserts of me is a well-known note in the Anthropology. There Kant distinguishes two kinds of consciousness of oneself, the consciousness of reflection and the consciousness of receptiveness.

If we consciously represent two acts: inner activity (spontaneity), by means of which a **concept** (a thought) becomes possible, of **reflection**; and receptiveness (receptivity), by means of which a **perception** (*perceptio*), i.e., empirical **intuition**, becomes possible, or **apprehension**; then consciousness of oneself (*apperceptio*) can be divided into that of reflection and apprehension. The first is a consciousness of understanding, **pure apperception**, the second a consciousness of inner sense, **empirical apperception**. ...In psychology we investigate ourselves according to our ideas of inner sense; in logic according to what intellectual consciousness suggests. Now here the "I" appears to be doubled (which would be contradictory): 1) the "I" as subject of thinking (in logic), which means pure apperception (the merely reflecting "I"), and of which there is nothing more to say except that it is a very simple idea; 2) the "I" as **object** of perception, therefore of inner sense, which contains a manifold of determination that make an inner **experience** possible.

... The human "I" is indeed twofold according to form (manner of representation), but not according to matter (content) (7.135a)⁵

Since the topic is consciousness of oneself, the perceptions would involve apprehending a perception of an external object, e.g., ‘I am conscious that I am perceiving a tree,’ or apprehending a feeling or desire, I am conscious of feeling joyful or of wanting to get away for a trip. It is clear from the Architectonic, that subjects are also conscious of their thoughts, e.g., ‘I think bodies are heavy.’ If the consciousness to be transferred to others is that of receptivity, then there would be no conflict with the doctrine of the ‘empty’ I-representation. As Kant notes, this type of self-consciousness involves a manifold of qualitative determinations. Still, it seems implausible that receptive self-consciousness is at issue in the Paralogisms passage, since the focus of the chapter is on the I that thinks. The remaining alternative is that what gets transferred from myself to others in order to represent them as thinkers is consciousness of inner spontaneity, specifically of the activities that makes concepts possible, which we know from Kant’s *Logic* includes reflecting, comparing, and abstracting (9.94).

Before leaving the note, we can use it, along with the Architectonic passage, and the Paralogism passage about ‘I think’ being an empirical representation only in a Pickwickian sense, to make some progress on the relation between the I of thinking and the I whose states are apprehended by inner sense. There seem to be two I’s, that of the subject of thinking and that of the object of inner sense. Kant is clear, however, that two I’s would be a contradiction. Since the I-representation that occurs in an empirical thought, ‘I think bodies are heavy,’ is an instance of the pure intellectual concept of a thinking being, and it can be that only because the spontaneous act of thinking has occurred, the I whose state is an object of inner sense can only be the I whose activity produced the state, the thought. At least this would be the case when the mental state is a thought. As Kant explains, the I differs in the way that it is represented, as determined under the concept of a thinking being in the representation reported by inner sense, and as determining, reflecting, comparing, and abstracting in (active) thinking, but the matter or content is the same. The content is that which thinks, i.e., that which reflects, compares, abstracts, and determines and thereby has determinate thoughts, as opposed to that which is merely determined.

The Anthropology note offers evidence that what consciousness asserts of a thinker are these inner activities. A discussion in the B Deduction, where Kant distinguishes cognition of the subject of thought (which is impossible) from consciousness of the subject, confirms this interpretation.

In the synthetic original unity of apperception, I am not conscious of myself as I appear to myself, nor as I am in myself, but am conscious only that I am. This **representation** is a **thinking**, not an **intuition**. Now **cognition** of ourselves requires not only the act of thought that brings the manifold of every possible intuition to the unity of apperception, but requires in addition a definite kind of intuition. (B157)

After concluding that consciousness of oneself is thus far from being cognition of oneself, however, Kant asserts

I exist as an intelligence. This intelligence is conscious solely of its power of combination. (B158)

That is, what self-consciousness makes conscious to her, asserts of a subject to her, is her activity of combining and so her power of combination. Since ‘combining’ is just a more general description of the four inner activities presented above, this piece of the Deduction confirms the account offered in the Anthropology note.

In a note to the Deduction passage, Kant tries to prevent misunderstanding consciousness of activity.

unless I have in addition a different self-intuition that gives, prior to the act of determination, the determinative in me (only of its spontaneity am I in fact conscious) ... then I cannot determine my existence as that of a self-active being; instead I represent only the spontaneity of my thought ... But it is on account of this spontaneity that I call myself an **intelligence**. (B157-58a)

Kant’s theme in both the passage and the note is that cognizers know themselves only as appearances (in inner sense), not as they are in themselves. But he is also explaining why apperceptive self-consciousness cannot be understood on the model of inner sense. There is no additional sense through which cognizers are conscious of their spontaneous acts of thought (and thereby of their power of combination). How then are we to understand apperceptive or reflective consciousness? In a slightly earlier B Deduction passage aimed at clarifying the distinction between apperceptive self-consciousness and inner sense, Kant claims that the understanding is conscious of its act of combining “even apart from sensibility” (B153). On its own, this remark might suggest that inner sense is still the model, but with understanding somehow playing the role of a faculty that senses. In the immediately preceding sentence, however, Kant emphasized that understanding is not a faculty of intuitions; it is not a receptive faculty.

Given Kant’s emphasis on conscious combination in both Deductions (A103-104, B133 and see below), one way of understanding his position is that the subject of thought is not conscious of combining, but conscious in combining and thereby conscious that she is thinking, even though she has no insight into how she is doing it. As God requires no senses to know the world, because he has produced it, the cognizer knows that she is thinking, e.g., that she is making a judgment, because she is conscious in making it. She must be conscious in making it, because, unlike God, she needs to know the reason for the judgment and to be able to catch and correct deviations from the norms involved. Since the judgment, e.g., ‘I think bodies are heavy,’ is, however, then available to inner sense as a thought, it would be easy to confuse the source of her self-knowledge. The inner sense model that assimilates apperception to inner sense takes inner sense to be the source of the subject’s consciousness that she is thinking. Kant’s argument is that the inner sense theorist has things backwards: Inner sense depends on conscious thinking in order to have a thought to report. It can report a thought only because conscious combining makes it possible for the subject to think ‘bodies are heavy,’ and conscious combining just is conscious thinking. By the time that inner sense has a thought available to report, the thinking is over. On this point, Kant would agree with the psychologist, Johann Nicolaus Tetens, who argued that Descartes erred in claiming, ‘I think, therefore I am,’ because all that (introspective) inner sense can enable the subject to

know for certain is ‘I have thought’ (1777/1979, 1.47). Reports from inner sense are always ‘one-step behind’ the thinking.

Since, as the prefatory remarks to the Paralogisms explain, the only way that thinking can be understood is through self-consciousness, Kant has only one way to establish his claim that thinking is conscious combining. He must follow in the tradition of Descartes and tacitly invite the reader to think along with him as he investigates the necessary conditions for empirical cognition. So, in the A Deduction, he takes the reader through the case of counting:

If, in counting, I forget that the units that now float before my mind or senses [*Sinnen*] were added together by me one after another, I should never cognize ... number. For this number’s concept consists solely in the consciousness of this unity of synthesis.

... this one consciousness is what unites in one representation what is manifold, intuited little by little, and then also reproduced. Often this consciousness may be only faint, so that we do not [notice it] in the act itself, i.e., do not connect it directly with the representation’s production, but [notice it] only in the act’s effect. Yet, despite these differences, a consciousness must always be encountered, even if it lacks striking clarity; without this consciousness, concepts, and along with them cognition of objects, are quite impossible (A 103-104, amended translation).

Kant is not using one case to prove that cognition requires conscious combining, but only to illustrate it. Unless the subject is conscious at some level of the counting rule and conscious of applying it to the items to be counted, then she could not apply the concept, e.g., ‘four’ to them. Since the reader can see that there is nothing special about the illustrative case, Kant can offer his strong general conclusion that “without consciousness ... cognition of object [is] ... impossible.”

By employing the example Kant is also making vivid to readers what thinking involves and that they think in the manner that he claims they do. Demonstrating to readers or reminding readers how they think or that they are thinkers may seem otiose, or even silly. Recall, however, that he is arguing against rival theories of cognition and of self-knowledge, *viz.*, associationism and Rationalism. At one level, he argues that neither associationism nor Rationalism can provide satisfactory accounts of empirical cognition, as we understand cognition. But he is also trying to limit cognition and not eliminate it, so he needs to show that humans are capable of empirical cognition, as we understand it. In taking readers through the example Kant is inviting them to join him in the kind of legitimate self-observation that he discusses in the Anthropology. Although eavesdropping on the course of one’s involuntary thoughts and feelings is a recipe for madness, it is a different matter

[t]o observe the various acts of the representative power in myself, **when I summon them**, and is indeed worth reflection; it is necessary and useful for logic and metaphysics. (7.134)

This is the text to which the note about two types of self-consciousness is appended, where he explains that apperceptive self-consciousness is importantly different from perception (or ‘observation’). In summoning his and his reader’s power of understanding in the counting example, Kant is showing them, in the only way possible, that applying the concept ‘four’ or any concept is not a matter of receiving some representation from one knows not where—as in blind association—but of consciously bringing together varied representations and thereby

producing—actively creating—a further representation, the judgment ‘four.’ The counting example involves more conscious mental activity than, e.g., simply applying the concept ‘apple’ to an item in the grocery store and so may seem unhelpfully atypical. Presumably, however, Kant’s strategy is to use a clear case and leave it to readers to recognize that other less thought-intensive judgments, judgments that have become routine—but not rote—also involve the mental act of applying a concept rather than simply being aware of a thought running through one’s mind.

Although the issue is treated more extensively in the B Deduction, Kant’s summoning of his and his reader’s power of understanding also enables him to demonstrate that making the judgment ‘four’ does not involve any consciousness of the I. In carrying out the exercise, readers can appreciate the paradoxical situation that they can make a judgment about the number of items and a judgment about their state, ‘I think the number is four,’ without having either an external or an internal perception of themselves. Thus, they can understand that philosophers such as Christian Wolff are wrong in asserting that the existence of the self/soul is established empirically through “consciousness of ourselves and other things” (1751/1983, §1.1). In exercising their power of thinking, cognizers consciously combine, but they are conscious only of other things and combining. With this understanding of one role of Kant’s A Deduction example, we can see that his claim in the run-up to the Paralogisms that “everything that thinks is of the same character as the pronouncement of self-consciousness asserts of *me*” (my emphasis), is not an unexpected turn to solipsism. By this point the reader has been reminded that what self-consciousness asserts of *her* in thinking is that she actively combines representations thereby creating a further representation.

I characterize the type of cognition that Kant makes available to his readers by summoning their thinking powers as ‘practical’ in my title, because it arises from the activity of thinking and includes no theory of how the activity happens. In this respect, the demonstration that humans are Kantian cognizers (as opposed to Humean or Wolffian cognizers) resembles the demonstration that humans are moral agents in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. The latter demonstration is also practical in the more familiar sense that it involves action, not cognition. Consider, however, Kant’s description in the Preface of how the *Second Critique* demonstration will be carried out:

If as pure reason it is actually practical, then it proves its reality ... through the act [*durch der Tat*], and all subtle reasoning against the possibility of its being practical is futile. (5.3)⁶

We know from the *Groundwork* that the act in question cannot be external, because it is impossible to know in any actual case that an action was produced through moral motivation. So, it must be an internal act, a thinking. As such, reader’s only access to it will be through practical deliberation. Kant summons the reader’s practical deliberating by offering what Marcus Willaschek has aptly characterized as a ‘*Gedankenexperiment*’ (1992, 186-87). The reader is to imagine herself in the place of someone who is commanded to testify falsely on pain of immediate hanging upon refusal and the reader judges that she ought not to bear false witness. With that internal act—the judgment—she cognizes that reason can determine her

will through the moral law. Or that is what Kant thinks that he has shown. The fact of reason demonstration is extremely controversial.

Although the urgency of demonstrating that humans are free, because they can act on the moral law, is greater, there are parallels between Kant's epistemological and ethical projects. Most simply, the analyses of the necessary conditions for the possibility of cognition and of morality must be relevant to humans. So, in both cases, after analyzing the requirements of morality, and while analyzing the requirements of cognition, Kant offers a demonstration that humans have the capacity for morality and for cognition, by the only method available for exploring thinking—summoning his readers' practical and theoretical thinking. In this way, he can show readers that they are the sort of moral and cognitive agents that he describes. The suggestion that Kant tries to establish his theory of cognition in a way that is analogous to the fact of reason demonstration is not new. Owen Ware reports that Karl Leonhard Reinhold claimed that there were 'facts of reason' in the realm of cognition as well as that of ethics. He called these 'facts of consciousness' (2014, 5).

3. TRANSCENDENTAL AND EMPIRICAL SELVES

As noted, in addition to arguing that cognition requires conscious synthesizing, the B Deduction brings the use of the 'I' or 'I think' representation into sharper focus than the earlier version. So far, I have moved back and forth between judgments such as 'bodies are heavy' and judgments such as 'I think bodies are heavy.' Treating these judgments as equivalent is justified in the Kantian context, because he maintains that it must be possible to attach the 'I-think' to any representation. Now, however, I want to retrospectively justify my practice by considering the argument for this "supreme" principle (B136). Doing so will also permit a retrospective justification of my invocation of the transcendental 'unity' of apperception when I have only been considering his arguments for spontaneity.

The B Deduction addresses the issue of the identity or unity of the apperceptive I, the I that thinks, through what appears to be a criticism of Locke. Although no example is used, Kant again invites the reader to think along with him.

[T]he empirical consciousness that accompanies different representations is intrinsically sporadic and without any reference to the subject's identity. Hence this reference comes about not through my merely accompanying each representation with consciousness, but through my **adding** one representation to the other and being conscious of their synthesis [or combination]. Hence only because I can combine a manifold of given representations **in one consciousness** is it possible for me to represent the **identity itself of the consciousness in these representations**. (B133)

Again, the reader will appreciate that in thinking she has no consciousness of any subject of consciousness in her representations, let alone consciousness of the same subject across them. Yet she will also grasp that what it means for different representations to belong to a common self is that they are or can be consciously combined in a further representation. Having understood this relation for the easy case of conscious combination, the reader can appreciate that insofar as a representation can be combined with others—and so, play a role in cognition—it must

belong with others to a single consciousness. This result establishes Kant's doctrine that it must be possible to attach 'I-think' to any representation through two additional steps provided in the previous section, §15, and in further remarks in §16 ("combination does not lie in objects, and can by no means be borrowed from them by perception" [B134]). In these discussions, Kant argues that all representations, intuitions and judgments, are combinations and that combination can be brought about only by the active power of understanding or apperception. Here are the basic steps of the argument:

- i. All representations are combinations.
- ii. Combination is possible only through the spontaneous power of understanding/apperception.
- iii. Combination is possible if and only if the representations belong to a single consciousness, an I-think.
- iv. Therefore, it is possible to attach the I-think to any representation, because any representation must belong with others to a single consciousness.

Since any judgment is a combination, it is legitimate to move directly from 'bodies are heavy' to 'I think bodies are heavy.' Although the I-think doctrine of the B Deduction is more explicit, both Deductions remind the reader of what self-consciousness asserts of her when she engages in thinking. Thinking is a spontaneous act and the representations that can be combined in thinking must belong to a single thinker. It is controversial how many representations belong to the same I-think—how widely the unity of apperception extends. Katharina Kraus argues that the unity is limited to single judgments. Without arguing this interpretive point in detail, I just note that Kant's remarks after the passage about how the identity of consciousness comes into view through combining suggest a more capacious unity.

The thought that these representations given in intuition all together belong **to me** means, accordingly, the same as that I unite them in one self-consciousness, or at least can unite them therein ... For otherwise I would have a self as multicolored, diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious. (B134)

I take the first sentence to indicate that insofar as I do or can combine a representation with others in one self-consciousness, then those representations all belong to me. They belong to the same I-think as my current judgment. Since many different representations can be so combined, representations that may span long times, Kant seems to be looking at something more like, for example, a whole human life than a momentary judgment. This reading is reinforced by the second sentence. Although uniting various representations in a single judgment would cut down on how multicolored and diverse my self is, a different I for each judgment still seems to result in too many selves.

As I understand Kant, he argues in the A Deduction and in the beginning paragraphs of the B Deduction that cognition requires an active power of apperception and the unity of a manifold of representations in single selves. The topic of §18, where he maintains that

the empirical unity of apperception is derived from the original and transcendental unity of apperception, is the ‘objective unity of self-consciousness.’ Kant characterizes the empirical unity of consciousness as ‘subjective’ and as being ‘a determination of inner sense’ (B139). Since the contents that belong to the empirical unity of apperception are supplied by inner sense, they would include apprehensions of perceivings and of thinkings (as well as of feelings and desires which I am not focusing on). Kant notes that the temporal ordering of such states is contingent, because it depends on the subject’s circumstances. By contrast, the unity of the form of inner sense, time, is not contingent, because it is subject to the necessary reference of the manifold of intuition to one self, to one I-think. Empirical syntheses of states reportable through inner sense, e.g., a perception of a ship downstream after a perception of it upstream, are possible only against a background of the form of time the understanding’s pure synthesis ...lies *a priori* at the basis of the empirical synthesis. (B140).

I use the example from the Second Analogy to draw attention to the fact that Kant is anticipating later results. He will argue in the Analogies that the unity and order of objective time is dependent on the use of the categories, whose use is required for the transcendental unity of apperception.

Because the form of time is subject to the necessary unity of transcendental apperception, transcendental apperception also lies *a priori* at the basis of all empirical syntheses that permit cognition of objects. Hence the transcendental unity of consciousness is ‘objective,’ in Kant’s distinctive sense: It is a necessary condition for the possibility of empirical cognition of objects; it is a necessary condition for something to be an object for a subject (see B138). His way of describing the relation, with the pure form generated by a pure synthesis lying “*a priori* at the basis of the empirical syntheses” may suggest a two-stage process. First the understanding creates a representation of all of time (or space) and then the empirical imagination arranges the perceptions in a temporal and spatial order within that pre-existing representation. Given Kant’s account in the Reply to Eberhard, however, it is clear that he does not believe that there is a pre-existing spatial or temporal representation in which objects and events can be located (8.221-23, see also §26). Rather, empirical cognition requires the simultaneous solution of two representational problems: Using the available sensible materials to represent an object in objective space and time, a solution which is guided by the categories and relevant acquired empirical concepts, and using the apprehension of those sensible materials to represent the empirical unity of a given subject’s consciousness. The pure form of time lies at the basis of the empirical synthesis, not because it is prior to empirical syntheses, but because it is a necessary feature of all of them and so common to all of them.

It might seem that there is only one problem to be solved, *viz.*, connecting sensible representations in the concept of an object in objective time and space. But §18 is also about the unity of empirical consciousness. I take one of Kant’s goals to be clarifying the argument just made in §§s 16 and 17. Kant’s *analysanda* in the Transcendental Deduction are empirical judgments made by empirical subjects. From the illustrative examples, he concludes and expects the reader to conclude that the activity and unity of the subject are necessary conditions for the possibility of any cognition. Although episodes of empirical cognition have been

used to present its necessary conditions, it is important to distinguish the sort of abstraction involved in demonstrating the requirements of cognition from generalization. The unity of self-consciousness is not an empirical generalization from the unity encountered in the cases presented, e.g., in the case of drawing a line just discussed in §17. Nor is the representation of time an extrapolation from the temporal unity of human consciousness. Rather, the original unity of consciousness is a transcendental condition and so “objective,” because it is non-empirical and necessary for any cognition of objects and even for the unity of objective time.

After rejecting the empirical unity of consciousness as a candidate for an objective unity, because it is contingent, Kant adds that it is subjectively valid and “moreover” that the empirical unity can be derived from the transcendental. By adding the point about derivability, he forecloses any suggestion that the relation could be the reverse—that the transcendental unity of apperception is based on or a generalization from the empirical unity. How the empirical unity of apperception can be derived from the transcendental is straightforward. Since any creature capable of empirical cognition must be a unified thinker, then a cognizer whose states are related by time must possess a unity suitable to her condition. For example, her activities required for thinking—for reflecting, comparing, and abstracting—must be so related that the abstracting comes after the reflecting and comparing, i.e., so that the temporal relations mirror the dependency relations.

The relation between transcendental and empirical apperception is also part of the explanation of why judgments about an individual subject’s empirical unity of consciousness are subjectively valid, for example, my claim that I perceived a ship downstream after I perceived it upstream. (It is only part of the explanation, because, as we learn in the Second Analogy, I must derive the order of my perceptions from the causal order of events [A193/B238]). As the moral law is a meta-maxim for evaluating maxims of action, the transcendental unity is a higher-level unity that serves as the standard for evaluating the unity of empirical cognitive subjects. The actual relations between representations of a cognizer depend on the conditions in which she cognizes, but whatever those relations are, they must be such that all representations can be understood as belonging to a single I-think. In this way, the transcendental unity of apperception is not just a necessary condition for the possibility of all cognition; it also provides a criterion for the unity of one kind of empirical object, empirical subjects of cognition.

Kant concludes §18 by reiterating that the empirical unity of apperception—as regards what is given—is not necessary and universally valid. He is not taking back either his claim that the empirical unity is subjectively valid or that it can be derived from the transcendental, which is necessary. His point is that different subjects have different empirical unities, different paths through life, and no one path is universal or necessary for the cognition of objects. Thus, no subjective unity of consciousness is objective. Each path is nonetheless subjectively valid—true of the subject—and some such unified path is necessary for a creature to be an empirical cognizer.

4. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF RATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND THE POSSIBILITY OF EMPIRICAL PSYCHOLOGY

I have argued that in an early passage common to both versions of the Paralogisms chapter Kant reminds readers of what has already been made vivid to them in the Transcendental Deduction. In thinking, their self-consciousness asserts of them that they are active thinkers whose states must belong to a single consciousness. If we look closely at why Kant maintains that the I-representation is empty, we can now see that there is no inconsistency between that claim and what cognizers would transfer to others in order to represent them as thinkers. Indeed, we will see that the discussions complement each other. In support of his claim that the I-representation is quite empty, Kant observes that

Consciousness is not so much a representation distinguishing a particular object, as rather a form of representation in so far as this representation is to be called cognition (A4346/B404)

He is drawing, in part, on the standard view that consciousness has no qualities—and hence nothing to distinguish it from other things. The Deduction has also reminded readers of the absence of any intuition of the thinking I. The absence of qualities means that a putative I-concept would have no marks. With no intuitive content and no conceptual content, the I-representation is empty of content. But Kant continues: the I-think must be understood as the form of a representation insofar as this representation can be called ‘cognition’. He thereby raises a pressing question: What is this form?

Since this passage is immediately followed by Kant’s argument about the need to model other ‘I’s’ on one’s own thinking, I take that discussion to be addressing the question of form. The form of a representation that can be called ‘cognition’ is what is asserted by self-consciousness to a thinker in her thinking. As the reader has learned in the Transcendental Deduction, what self-consciousness asserts of her is that she combines diverse representations with each other to produce new representations that, for that reason, all belong to the same consciousness, the same thinking I. Like other Kantian forms, the form of a representation that can be called ‘cognition’ is relational: As one location in space has that status only in relation to all other spatial locations, a representation can be part of cognition only in relation to other representations that can be combined with it. Absent self-consciousness asserting something of cognizers, they would not have the least representation of a thinking being, including themselves. I take that to mean that a cognizer could attach no sense to the expression, ‘I think.’ With self-consciousness, she can understand herself to be a combiner of representations in other representations.

Although I have stressed the importance of the prefatory remarks to the Paralogisms, I am not going to engage with the complexities of Kant’s arguments in the chapter. I will make just two points about the First Paralogism, which is both the most important in the chapter and the most relevant to empirical psychology. One way to think about the treatment of psychology in the Dialectic is that Kant criticizes the Rational Psychologists for inflating what can be established about thinking—for hypostasizing the form thinking into an object that is thought (A395, 402). Then, having deflated these concoctions in the Paralogisms chapter, in

the Appendix to the Dialectic, he reinflates the necessary form of thinking into an idea that can be used to advance the project of empirical psychology. This would be a fourth contribution of the I that thinks to empirical psychology: It provides the basis for the Psychological Idea.

In the case of the First Paralogism (in A), Kant's first point is that Rational Psychologists rest their case for the substantiality of the soul on the correct observation that the 'I' is in all thoughts (A350). Second, he objects that they then move illegitimately from the doctrine that all representations must *belong* to a common I to the claim that they inhere in a common subject. Because they have done so

the first syllogism of transcendental psychology foists on us what is only a supposed new insight. For the constant logical subject of thought is passed off by it as the cognition of the real subject of the inherence of thought. (A350)

That is, in the First Paralogism, the Rational Psychologists begin with a sound claim, but then try to go beyond it with no grounds for doing so.

On the other hand, their starting place, the doctrine of the thinking I that can be extracted from an analysis of the requirements of cognition, is correct and can be put to good use. Although it is not possible to discover the properties of the I that thinks, and although reason's natural quest for an ultimate substance after all accidents are removed is doomed, the idea that the quest succeeds in the case of the I that thinks (4.333-34) can play a useful role in the pursuit of empirical psychology. Specifically, empirical psychology should proceed according to four principles:

1. Regard all determinations as determinations of a single subject.
2. Regard all powers as derived from a single basic power.
3. Regard all variation as belonging to the states of a permanent being.
4. Regard all actions in space as entirely different from all actions of thought. (A682-3/B710-11)

I take the regulative idea of the soul to be an inflation or reinflation of the I think of the Deduction for three reasons. First, the four principles correspond to the principles offered by Rational Psychology and Kant is clear that that project is an illegitimate inflation—hypostatization—of what can correctly be asserted about the thinking I required for cognition. Second, the object to be studied in accord with these principles is "I myself regarded merely as thinking nature" (A682/B710). Third, at least in the case of the first principle, the 'I-think' doctrine provides the rationale for the principle. Why should mental states be regarded as determinations of a single subject? The answer must be that when considering the 'I' merely as thinking nature, the 'I' must be understood as the common subject of diverse representations.

The first principle does, however, go beyond the principle that all representations that can play a role in cognition must belong to a single consciousness. As noted earlier, insofar as we are dealing with 'higher' feelings and desires, these would come under the basic principles

of cognition, but with the lower faculties, there would be an expansion. In an earlier paper I contrasted my position with Kraus's on the grounds that she took the practice of empirical psychology to be guided by the principles given by the regulative Idea, whereas I thought it must include the constitutive 'I-think.'⁷ For reasons I have provided, I still think that the 'I-think' of the Deduction is essential to the practice of empirical psychology. It provides a standard for claims of knowledge about the mental states of individuals and it provides an object for empirical psychology, both through acts of thinking and as the source of the idea. But I want to modify my position in the direction of Kraus's.

Since the Psychological Idea is supposed to guide all psychological research, including research into lower desires and feelings, it can only be a regulative principle. There can be no argument that the possibility of cognition requires that these states belong to a single I-think. Further, since empirical psychology is an applied discipline, it would resemble applied logic in studying less than perfectly functioning cognizers. There can be lapses and so gaps in the unity of an empirical cognizer. As exhausted or temporarily enfeebled humans make simple logical errors, so too they may occasionally be unable, even while awake, to make any sense of a current mental state—it might be “less than a dream” (A112)—unsynthesizable with any other states. Such states could still be attributed to the same I-think by the person and others *via* criteria of bodily identity. That the objects of empirical psychology might suffer occasional bouts of disunity brought on by countervailing factors does not, however, alter the fact that they are fundamentally cognizers and so must enjoy a basic unity of thought.

Abstract: This paper explores the different ways in which knowledge of ourselves as cognizers depends on the transcendental unity of apperception. First, since all cognition requires the transcendental unity of apperception, so does empirical knowledge of ourselves as cognizers. Second, since empirical cognizers are cognizers, they must possess the unity of self-consciousness required for cognition. Third, empirical psychology needs an object and the transcendental unity of apperception makes it possible to attach 'I-think' to representations of the empirical world, thereby supplying psychological states, such as 'I think that bodies are heavy,' to be studied. Finally, the Psychological Idea through which psychology is made systematic gets its first principle from the necessary unity of apperception.

Keywords: transcendental unity of apperception, subjective unity of consciousness, empirical psychology, Psychological Idea.

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NOTAS / NOTES

¹ Patricia Kitcher is Roberta and William Campbell Professor of the Humanities, Department of Philosophy, Columbia University. Before coming to Columbia, Dr. Kitcher taught at the University of Vermont, the University of Minnesota and the University of California, San Diego. In 2007-2008, she was a Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin. Although she has worked in both philosophy of psychology and Kant, in recent years, her work has focused on the cognitive psychology of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. After publishing *Kant's Transcendental Psychology* (Oxford) in 1990, and a number of preliminary studies, she completed a book-length study of Kant's account of the subject of cognition, *Kant's Thinker* (Oxford, 2011). In 1992, she published *Freud's Dream: A Complete Interdisciplinary Cognitive Science*. Kitcher's most notable interests throughout her career regard cognition and Kantian ethics.

² References to Kant's works will be to Kant (1900-) by volume and page number, except for references to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which will be by the usual A/B pagination.

³ Translations from the *Critique of Pure Reason* are from Pluhar (1996).

⁴ Kraus (2020) interprets Kant's claim that the subjective or empirical unity of consciousness derives from the transcendental to indicate just that transcendental unity is a necessary condition for all unity, see diagram, p. 92.

⁵ Translation from Zöllner and Louden (2007).

⁶ Translation from Puhar (2002).

⁷ An early version of "What is Necessary and What is Contingent in Kant's Empirical Self" that I presented at the Central Division of the APA in February of 2020.

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