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WHAT IS NECESSARY AND WHAT IS CONTINGENT IN KANT'S EMPIRICAL SELF?

1. Sources of Necessary Conditions for the Empirical Self

Kant introduces the empirical self in the discussion of space at the beginning of the Transcendental Aesthetic. As external objects are the objects of outer sense, which represents them in space, the mind or soul is the object of inner sense. After making the parallel between the cases, Kant immediately qualifies it. There is an important difference, because there is no intuition of the soul or mind (as there is of bodies). What inner sense represents are states of the mind. It represents these as in time. Much later, 800 pages later, Kant returns to the issue of how the empirical objects of outer and inner sense (and so the empirical self) relate to cognition. He explains that:

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). Otherwise, we would have to abstain entirely, in the whole of metaphysics of these objects, from using any empirical principles that seek to supplement the concept with some experience in order to judge from experience something concerning these objects. (A848/B876)[1]

Since there are minds, cognizers want to learn about them – especially since the creatures with minds are us, human cognizers ourselves. And to learn about minds, we need to have some concept of a mind.

What are the sources of the concept of a thinking being? One source is experience. At this point in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, however, no reader is going to assume that the concept of an 'empirical' self arises solely from experience, without some *a priori* framework. So, we can ask: What are the sources of the *a priori* scaffolding in the general concept of an empirical self? There seem to be just two possibilities, the twelve constitutive categories and the three regulative ideas of reason.

Recently Katharina Kraus (2020) has argued that the Regulative Idea of the Soul provides an object for mental states to inhere in. The Idea involves four principles:

1. Regard all determinations as determinations of a single subject.
2. Regard all powers as derived from a single basic power.

[1] Translations from the *Critique of Pure Reason* are from Pluhar 1996. I always use 'representation' where Pluhar uses 'presentation.' Other departures from his translations will be indicated in the citations.

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)

Because the Idea of the soul is regulative, the concept of an empirical self would not be that of a substance, but only that of an analogue of a substance, thus honoring Kant's denial that the self is a substance in the Paralogisms chapter. Andrew Chignell's recent work on the empirical self takes the opposite view. Chignell (2017) argues that it is a mistake to assume that the Paralogisms' case against the Rationalists' claims for the substantiality of the soul implies that Kant denies that the empirical self is a substance.

I will argue for a third position. I agree with Kraus that it is hard to see how the empirical self can be an empirical substance, given the lack of a standing and abiding I, but I think that it is a mistake to look for a substitute in the Regulative Ideas of Reason. Instead, I turn to the beginning of the Paralogisms chapter where Kant claims that there is a thirteenth 'transcendental' concept.

We now come to a concept that was not entered in the above general list of transcendental concepts, and that must yet be classed with them …. This is the concept – or, if one prefers, the judgment – **I think**. But we readily see that this concept is the vehicle of all concepts as such and hence also that of transcendental concepts, and that it is therefore always also comprised among these and hence is likewise transcendental … Yet however pure of the empirical (the impression of the senses) this concept may be, it still serves to distinguish two kinds of object taken from nature and our power of representation. ***I***, as thinking, am an object of inner sense and am called soul; what is an object of the outer senses is called body. (A341/B399-A342/B400)

The language of this passage, including the reference to two kinds of object, the soul as the object of inner sense and the body as the object of outer sense, strongly suggests that the representation 'I-think' is the source of the *a priori* elements in the concept of an empirical self or thinker that is needed as a basis for empirical psychology.

In the next two sections, I offer arguments and further textual support for the claim that the *a priori* source of the concept of an empirical self is the 'I-think.' In section 4, I turn to the sources and varieties of contingency in representations of empirical selves. The last section will consider the role of the Idea of the Soul in psychology.

2. Is the Empirical Self a Substance?

There are two possibilities for arguing that Kant's empirical self is a substance in relation to the rational self of the Paralogisms. One could argue, along with Chignell, that although there are many passages where Kant seems to deny a self over and above its states (e.g. A107), these are not relevant to questions about the empirical self, because they concern pure and not empirical apperception. As Chignell realizes, however, this strategy requires the assumption that the doctrine of transcendental apperception does not obviously entail anything about inner empirical substances. (2017, 139-40)

I do not think this strategy is viable for two reasons. First, Chignell has the concept of an empirical self resting on the category of substance and that seems a strange choice. As we have just seen, there is another, more suitable, representation available. The empirical self is a thinker and the *a priori* concept or representation 'I-think' has the same status as categorial representations –it is the thirteenth transcendental concept.

The second consideration is textual. In the passage where Kant explicitly considers the relation between the transcendental and empirical unities of apperception – §18 of the B Deduction – he lays out the relation between the two:

The empirical unity of apperception … is only derived from the original unity under given conditions in concreto [and] has only subjective validity. (B140)

If the representation of the empirical unity of apperception is 'derived from' the transcendental unity in particular circumstances, then empirical selves would be species of transcendental selves. In that case, the concept of an 'empirical self' would have to contain the concept of a 'transcendental self' and it would be governed by rules for the use of 'transcendental self.' I will consider the argument of §18 I more detail in Section 4, when I turn to the contingent elements in the representation of an empirical self.

A second possibility for asserting the substantiality of the empirical self is to grant the entailment relation between the theory of a transcendental self and that of an empirical self but interpret the former theory as asserting rather than denying that the cognitive self is a substance. Karl Ameriks's important work sets the stage for this option. Ameriks (1982/2000) argues that, despite Kant's attacks on the arguments of the Rational Psychologists, he maintained modest or deflationary versions of their conclusions that the I that thinks is a simple, immaterial substance whose identity persists through time.

Ameriks's view has attracted many adherents and the textual evidence for it seems strong. At the end of the discussion of the First Paralogism in A Kant writes that we may quite readily accept the proposition **The soul is substance**, provided that we are content that this concept of the soul as substance does not in the least lead us any further, or that it cannot teach us any of the usual conclusions draw by sophistical psychology, such as to the everlasting duration of the soul in all changes and even in death; and that this concept therefore designates a substance only in idea, but not in reality. (A350-51, amended translation)

Still, it is not clear what exactly Kant is maintaining. If 'or' is interpreted offering a clarification of what went before, then that supports Ameriks's broader claim that the Paralogisms chapter is not a general indictment of regarding the thinking thing as a substance, but only a critique of specific claims and arguments of some of Kant's predecessors. Another possibility, which I favor, involves reading the 'or' as within the scope of the 'not,' which would have Kant rejecting any attempt to go "any further," including, but not be limited to, the teachings of Rational Psychology. My reading leads to an obvious question, 'any further than what?' There seems, however, to be an obvious answer: 'any further than what is asserted about the thinking being in the minor premise.'

Here is the minor premise:

I, as a thinking being, am the **absolute subject** of all my possible judgments, and this representation of myself cannot be used as predicate of any other thing. (A348)

The supporting argument for the minor premise makes several references to the I that must be the subject of all thoughts:

Now in all our thought the **I** is the subject … although the **I** is in all thoughts … one can indeed perceive that in all thought this representation [I] occurs again and again … (A349-50)

Since these claims repeat the conclusion of the Transcendental Deduction, it is reasonable to assume that the argument for the minor premises of the First Paralogism is given in that difficult text. Looking at the Deduction will also enable us to see what the 'I-think' that is required for cognition is and how it differs from both Ameriks's 'modest' notion of a substance and Kraus's Idea of Reason.

3. The Thinking Subject as a Necessary Condition for Cognition

One striking difference between the Transcendental Deduction's argument about the unity of the thinking self and the First Paralogism's discussion of its substantiality is the language used to describe the relation between the 'I-think' and its states. Because the Deduction is concerned with cognition, the states at issue are representations. The relation is one of 'belonging': In cognition, all representations must belong to a single 'I-think' (e.g. B132). By contrast, the states discussed in the First Paralogism are characterized as determinations (and so not are not restricted to representations but would include such things as feelings and emotions); their relation to the thinking subject is one of 'inherence' (A349, A350). The Regulative Idea of Reason involves yet a different relation between determinations and the thinking substance. The Psychological Idea of a subject substance would be an instance of the unity of the causality of a substance – the causality which is called a power. (A648/B676)

That is, the search for homogeneity across apparently heterogeneous powers rests on the metaphysical assumption that the substance is the cause of its powers and so of the determinations that they produce.

As Kant makes clear in the A Preface, finding the causal basis of thinking is not the explanatory project that he undertakes under the title of **Deduction of the Pure Concepts of Understanding** … For [there] the main question is always this: what, and how much, can understanding and reason cognize independently of all experience? rather than: how is our **power of thought** itself possible? This latter question is, as it were, a search for the cause of a given effect, and to that extent there is something about it resembling a hypothesis … (Axvi-xvii)

By contrast, the question addressed in the Deduction is how it is possible for the mind to cognize some things about experience independently of experience. What cognitive powers make such *a priori* cognition possible? The question is not: What is the basis of those powers? Given Kant's explicit separation of explanatory tasks, the thinking thing whose existence is established by the Deduction is clearly not a robust metaphysical substance, the idea of which is used in furthering the explanatory project of psychology. Below I will argue that the transcendental subject of the Deduction is not even Ameriks's alleged deflationary substance of the Paralogisms, a substance in which determinations inhere.

What is the thinking thing whose existence is required for the possibility of cognition? Kant begins the A Deduction by asserting that cognition is a whole in which representations are compared and connected (A97). It follows immediately that cognition will be possible only if diverse representations belong – in some sense – to a single thinking subject who can compare and connect them. The B Deduction begins with a discussion of 'combination' in §15. Taking the simplest case, cognizing that something, a, has some property, F, requires the cognizer to combine the representation 'a' with the representation 'F' and to recognize the resulting representation, 'a is F,' as a combination of those representations. At the end of §15, Kant asserts that recognizing the unity of a multiplicity of representations in a single representation (such as 'a is F) requires a 'higher unity'. Since he is setting the stage for the argument for the transcendental unity of apperception in §16, we know what that higher unity is going to be, but this is of no help until we look at the argument of that crucial section.

In §16, Kant focusses on the relation between the transcendental unity of self-consciousness and combination. He does not argue that representing something as a combination requires the unity of self-consciousness, however, but that the unity or identity of self-consciousness across diverse representations requires conscious combination.

[T]he empirical consciousness that accompanies different representations is intrinsically sporadic and without any reference to the subject's identity. … [T]his reference comes about … through my **adding** one representation to the other and being conscious of their synthesis. 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)

How does conscious combining disclose the identity of a self-consciousness across different representations and permit reference to a single consciousness?

To answer this question, consider what a subject is aware of as she consciously combines two representational elements in one consciousness, e.g., 'a' and 'F' in the conscious representation 'a is F.' Through this conscious act, the subject understands that she has produced a representation by combining the representations of 'a' and of 'F,' and hence that the representation, 'a is F,' would not exist without the representations 'a' and 'F' and without her having combined them. Since Kant agreed with Hume (1739/1978,634) that real or necessary connection is equivalent to existential dependence (4. 257), subjects would be conscious that different representations are necessarily connected to each other. Hume believed that the legitimacy of the idea of a unitary or identical self could be established in *two* different ways – either by tracing it back to an impression of a self or by finding a 'real bond' or necessary connection across mental states (Hume 1739/1978:250, 252, 259). So, even he would have to concede that conscious combining enables subjects to recognize that different representations belong to a single consciousness.

When we attend to Kant's insistence that the subject is conscious in combining, we can understand what he means in claiming that different representations 'belong' to a single 'I-think.' As he notes in the preceding paragraph, it is not enough for different representations to be given in a certain intuition; they must meet the conditions under which they can stand together in a single consciousness (B132). And that requires that they can be used together in thinking, that they can be combined by the power of thought. Diverse representations belong to a single consciousness if and only if they can be combined by a power to produce further representations from them. Conscious combining is essential to grasping the identity of a consciousness across different representations, because without it, subjects would have no idea that their representations are necessarily connected to each other and so belong to a single consciousness. They would also have no idea that they have a power of combination. Later in the B Deduction, Kant explains that any cognizer knows that he exists as a mind:

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

Thus, conscious combining enables cognizers to grasp not just their unity, but also their existence as minds.

This account of Kant's argument about the relation between conscious combination and the unity of self-consciousness sheds considerable light on the further conclusion that he draws almost immediately:

Hence synthetic unity of the manifold of intuition, as given a priori, is the basis [*Grund*] of the identity itself of apperception. (B134)

Although it is widely accepted that Kant takes the unity of apperception and cognition through the categories (which supply the most fundamental rules for combining representations) to be necessary and sufficient conditions for each other,[2] commentators seldom focus

[2] E.g., Allison, 2015, 230. Longuenesse 2012, 92ff.

on Kant's claim that the unity of apperception has a necessary condition. The power of apperception is an innate endowment (8.221), but its ability to create a unity of apperception depends on the suitability of the representational elements to be put together by that power in combinations. Without appropriate materials to work with, there would be no syntheses, and hence no synthetic unity of self-consciousness (B133-34). This point goes beyond what the main argument about the relation between cognizing identity across representations and conscious combining of representations establishes. It is not just that the subject could not represent her identity across different representations. It would not exist.

If different representations belong to the same 'I think' by virtue of being combinable and so capable of being necessarily connected in further representations, then it would be unnecessary to understand this relation in terms of the different representations inhering in a common substance. The inherence relation is supposed to explain how the representations are states of the same subject, but that relation is already and differently explained in the transcendental theory of experience. The First Paralogism thus 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. With this real subject we are not, and cannot be, in the least acquainted. For consciousness alone is what turns all representations into thoughts, and hence solely in it as the transcendental subject must all perceptions be found. (A350)

I conclude that Kant's claim that we can keep the proposition that 'the soul is substance' means only that we can assert what the Deduction establishes, namely that different representations necessarily *belong* to a common 'I think.' We can go no further, not even to a 'modest' substance in which states inhere. The thirteenth category, the I-think, indicates only the necessity that different all representations belong to a common subject that can combine them to produce new representations.

4. Contingent Elements of Empirical Self Representations

The topic of §18 is the 'objective unity of self-consciousness' and Kant begins by observing that the empirical unity of self-consciousness is not objective. He goes on to claim that, as opposed to the transcendental unity, which is objective, the empirical unity is only "an appearance," is "entirely contingent," is merely "subjectively valid" and, as already noted, is merely derived from the transcendental unity under given conditions *in concreto* (B140). To clarify these contrasts, we can use the famous example from the Second Analogy. It depends on external circumstances whether I perceive a ship floating downstream on a current, and so at a lower position after a higher one, or whether I see a motorboat going upstream and so arriving at higher position after being at a lower one. Further, Kant thinks that cognizers might have forms of intuition other than time and space. In that case, my perception of ship moving downstream would be doubly contingent, because I might have a different form of intuition and the external world might have presented me with a different event. My representation of myself as perceiving the ship downstream *after* seeing it upstream is merely an appearance, because everything that I am aware of through the form of time, including the order of my states, is merely an appearance.

How is the empirical unity of the self derived from the transcendental? Kant seems to think this claim is obvious, because he does not explain or defend it. We can see why he might think it obvious by recalling his central epistemological claim that all empirical representations must have both *a priori* and *a posteriori* elements. Consider the representation

of a linden tree. It must have a categorial representation, in this case, substance with attributes, along with representations acquired through the senses, e.g., representations of its bark and leaves. Given sensory encounters with linden trees, we can 'derive' the representation of a linden tree from the category of substance, by filling out the substance-accident framework with properties learned through the senses. Similarly, we can derive the empirical unity of a human mind by starting with the representation of an I-think as something whose states must all belong to a single self-consciousness and then filling out the representation with details about its forms of intuition and the objects and events to which it is contingently related in space and time. That filled out representation is not objective, but subjective, because it includes elements that are not necessary for all cognition of objects, e.g., an experiential history. It may also include elements that are not directly relevant to cognition, such as emotions, feelings and other bodily sensations.

Kant illustrates the relation between the transcendental and the empirical unities by reference to the association of different words with different things.

> One person will combine [*verbinden*] the representation of a certain word with one thing, another with some other thing; and the unity of consciousness in what is empirical is not, as regards what is given, necessary and universally valid. (B140, altered translation)

Depending on their experiential histories, different cognizers will have different concepts. Borrowing Kant's example from the Methodology, one person might think of gold in terms of its weight and color and not rusting, and another person might include only the first two characteristics and so judge different things to be gold (A727/B755). In that case, the first person's judgment, 'this rusted object is not gold,' would not be made by the second person. The second person would not be able to unify her perception of the rusted object with the characteristic of not being gold, so the empirical unification of the two in the first mind would not be objectively valid. Since both individuals are, however, cognizers, their personal histories must have enabled them to have acquired concepts that enable them to make judgments.

Kant's claim that the order of a subject's states in empirical apperception has only 'subjective validity' can seem puzzling. If the order is valid, then how can it be 'only subjective'? The crucial argument of the Second Analogy is that cognizers must derive the subjective order of their states from the objective order of what they are perceiving (A193/B238). Thus, a subject's seeing the ship downstream after she sees it upstream is not contingent in the sense that she could represent her perceptual experiences in a different order; it is contingent because the order is valid only for the type of subject that she is (temporal) and only for someone who has the encounters with the external world that she does (a current moving the ship). The basis of this merely subjective validity is the requirement that if she is a cognizer at all, then her representations must be able to be fitted into a unified consciousness. Since she is a temporal cognizer, they must be fitted into a temporally coherent mental life; since she is perceiving a ship moving downstream, her perception of it downstream must come after her perception of it upstream. These necessities and so the subjective *validity* of the perceiver's temporally ordered experiences are based on the objective unity of transcendental apperception, under the given conditions, which is why the empirical unity derives from the transcendental unity.

At B 155-56, Kant considers the relation between the I that thinks and the I that is conscious of its states through inner sense. His concern is not with the types of unity they require or, as a matter of fact, possess, but with whether it is one and the same I who is conscious in thinking and conscious of its states in time. He expresses perplexity about the issue:

'But how … can the *I* who thinks be distinct from the *I* that intuits itself and yet be the same as it by being the same subject … This question involves neither more nor less difficulty than the question as to how I can be an object to myself at all, *viz.*, an object of intuition and of inner perceptions.' (B155-56)

Kant does not offer a hypothesis about how the faculty of inner sense is brought about, but he is clear that there is just one 'I'. He also identifies these 'I's' in an *Anthropology* note where he distinguishes the consciousness of understanding (pure apperception) from the consciousness of inner sense (receptivity).

[H]ere 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") … 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)

If the I that thinks can intuit itself (i.e., its states), then there cannot be two 'I's, or it would not be intuiting *itself*. Further, insofar as the empirical self is merely an appearance, it can have no powers, not even a power of receptivity. So, only the transcendental self, the I who is conscious of its power of combination, can also be conscious of its states and their apparent temporal relations. These texts confirm my thesis that the *a priori* core of the representation of an empirical self is the I-think, because any empirical cognizer must have a power of combination and, as we have seen above, a power of receptivity for taking in materials for cognition, both of which it has by virtue of being a species of a I that thinks. On the other hand, these texts also raise extremely difficult problems concerning transcendental idealism. How can the thinking I, which is real, be the same as the I whose states appear in inner sense, when those states are merely phenomenal? They also draw attention to the tension involved in characterizing empirical selves, which are determined, as species of transcendental selves, which are not. Resolving this tension would require an account of how an empirical self can be a way in which a thinking self appears to itself under the guise of time. Kant suggests in the last piece of the *Anthropology* note that the solution to the 'two I's' problem depends on the different ways in which the one and only I is represented, but pursuing that suggestion is beyond my current aim to characterize the concept of an empirical self that must be given to psychology for an empirical science of the mind to be possible.[3]

5. What is the Role of the Psychological Idea?

If the *a priori* core of the concept of an empirical self required for psychology comes from the concept of the I-think, then what is the role of the Regulative Idea of the soul? What does it do for psychology or what do psychologists do with it? Borrowing Kant's language from the A Preface where he clarifies the unusual project of the Deduction, psychologists seek the 'causes of given effects.' In the Appendix, he characterizes the target as "thinking nature" or the "properties with which a thinking being exists" (A682/710). By appealing to the idea of a simple substance, psychologists can undertake a systematic search for the character and connection of experiential objects (A671/B699).

In warning against the misuse of the idea, he explains that it cannot be invoked as if it were a real ground of the properties of the soul. (A 683/B711)

[3] I'm grateful to an anonymous referee for *Sententiae* for leading me to address this issue.

The point of the Psychological Idea is not to derive the internal appearances of the soul from a simple thinking substance, but to derive them from one another according to the idea of a simple being. (A673/ B701)

With the help of this regulative principle, psychology would advance in its quest to explain why the world is as it is, in this case, why thinkers have the powers and the determinations that they do. One way to think about the error of the Rational Psychologists is that they mistook their arguments about the necessary conditions for the possibility of thought to yield causal explanations of thought. By contrast, Kant presents the transcendental or philosophical theory of the 'I-think' and psychological investigations into thinking nature as different, but complementary intellectual projects.

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What is Necessary and What is Contingent in Kant's Empirical Self?

How does Kant understand the representation of an empirical self? For Kant, the sources of the representation must be both *a priori* and *a posteriori*. Several scholars claim that the *a priori* part of the 'self' representation is supplied by the category of 'substance,' either a regular substance (Andrew Chignell), a minimal substance (Karl Ameriks) or a substance analog (Katharina Kraus). However, Kant opens the Paralogisms chapter by announcing that there is a thirteenth 'transcendental' concept or category: "We now come to a concept that was not entered

in the above general list of transcendental concepts, and that must yet be classed with them … This is the concept – or, if one prefers, the judgment – I think." (A341/B399). I argue that it is the 'I think' that provides the *a priori* framework for the representation of the empirical self.

Патриція Кітчер

Що є необхідним і що є контингентним у Кантовій емпіричній самості?

Як Кант розуміє уявлення емпіричної самості? Згідно з Кантом, джерела уявлення мають бути як a priori, так і a posteriori. Деякі дослідники стверджують, що частина a priori уявлення «самості» забезпечується категорією «субстанції»: або звичайної субстанції (Ендрю Шігнел), мінімальної субстанції (Карл Амерікс), або аналога субстанції (Катаріна Краус). Однак Кант на початку розділу про «Паралогізми» заявляє, що існує тринадцяте «трансцендентальне» поняття або категорія: «Тепер ми доходимо поняття, яке не зазначено повище в загальному переліку трансцендентальних понять і яке все-таки мусимо до нього зарахувати... Це поняття або, якщо хочете, судження "Я мислю"» (A341/B399). Я стверджую, що саме «Я мислю» забезпечує структуру a priori для уявлення емпіричної самості.

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