Recht und Frieden in der Philosophie Kants

Akten des X. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses

Band 2 Herausgegeben von Valerio Rohden, Ricardo R. Terra, Guido A. de Almeida und Margit Ruffing
Recht und Frieden in der Philosophie Kants

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von

Valerio Rohden, Ricardo R. Terra, Guido A. de Almeida und Margit Ruffing

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Inhalt

Siglenverzeichnis .................................................. XI

Sektion I

Der vorkritische Kant

Maria Inés Cocco
Die Rolle des vorkritischen Gottesbegriffs in der Entwicklung von Kants Theorie von Raum und Zeit .................. 3

Gerson Luiz Louzado
La critique du rationalisme dans la Nova Dilucidatio .......... 15

Helke Panknin-Schappert
Die Bedeutung des ästhetischen Urteils in den vorkritischen und kritischen Schriften Immanuel Kants ....................... 27

Lúcio Lourenço Prado
Physical Monadology: Kant's Reception of Leibniz and Newton . 39

Paulo R. Licht dos Santos
Logical Use and Pure Concepts in Kant's Inaugural Dissertation. 49

Marcos César Seneda
The Discovery of the Non-Analytic Character of Mathematics .. 61

Sektion II

Kants theoretische Philosophie

Lucy Alcântara
Direct Realism and Transcendental Idealism ....................... 73
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anselmo Aportone</th>
<th>Kategorien, reine Verstandesbegriffe und Definitionslehre</th>
<th>85</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steven G. Bayne</td>
<td>Abstract General Ideas and Kant's Schematism</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Adolfo Bonaccini</td>
<td>Allison, Guyer, and Kant on the “Neglected Alternative Charge”</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vera Cristina de Andrade Bueno</td>
<td>The Role of Reflection and the Formation of the Concept of the Understanding in the CPR</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marta De La Vega</td>
<td>The Transformation of Platonic eidos and Its Consequences Regarding the Theoretical Perspective of Kant's Critical Philosophy</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Domski</td>
<td>The Transcendental and the Geometrical: Kant's Argument for the Infinity of Space</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dina Emundts</td>
<td>Kant über die Einheit der Philosophie</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julio Esteves</td>
<td>Kant's Theories of Geometry</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiago Fonseca Falkenbach</td>
<td>The Non-Spatiality of Things in Themselves: A Critical Analysis of Paul Guyer's Interpretation</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alvaro López Fernández</td>
<td>Self-Knowledge and the Unity of the Empirical Self in Kant</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikhail C. Fittic</td>
<td>Transcendental Apperception as Qualitative Unity</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Francisco Fricke</td>
<td>Henrich on Kant's Transcendental Deduction of the Categories</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renato Duarte Fonseca</td>
<td>Categories, Necessity, and the Proof-Structure of the B-Deduction</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avery Goldman</td>
<td>What is Orientation in Critique?</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Greenberg</td>
<td>Some of Kant's Uses of De Re Necessity</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stefanie Grün</td>
<td>Begriffe als Regeln der Wahrnehmung</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José Rafael Herrera</td>
<td>Modernity and Trennung: Hegel and the Kantian Problem of Transcendental Imagination in the Origins of Illustrated Division</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia Jáuregui</td>
<td>Succession and Simultaneity: the Problem of the Cosmological Apperception in the Leningrad Reflexion</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulo Jesus</td>
<td>Le labyrinthe du discontinu : le moi entre Hume et Kant</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgard José Jorge Filho</td>
<td>Tectonics of Critical Philosophy</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre Kerszberg</td>
<td>L'intervention du sujet dans la nature</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bertram Kienze</td>
<td>Kants Kriterien der Apriorität</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berna Kising</td>
<td>Concepts of Objectivity in Kant</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiu-Tai Kim</td>
<td>Three Dogmas of Kant</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frode Kjusvik</td>
<td>Appearances, Things in Themselves and Transcendental Idealism</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Klitz</td>
<td>Logical and Temporal Determination in the Critique of Pure Reason</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manfred Kugelstadt</td>
<td>Inwiefern kann bei Kant von analytischer Einheit des Selbstbewusstseins überhaupt die Rede sein?</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thomask Land
Prescribing Unity to Intuition: Sensibility and Understanding in the Transcendental Deduction ........................................ 419

Raul Landim Filho
Kant: Predication et Existence ............................................. 431

Claus Langhjem
Alter Deus? Kant’s Justification of Synthetic Judgments A Priori and Its Relation to the Metaphysical Tradition ...................... 443

Claudio La Rocca
Der dunkle Verstand. Unbewusste Vorstellungen und Selbstbewusstsein bei Kant ..................................................... 457

Effain Lazos
Kant's Reaction to Cartesian Skepticism ............................ 469

Patricia Kauver-Leite
Causalité empirique et causalité transcendante: vers une approche plus holistique de la théorie de la science de Kant .... 481

Juan Francisco Loitegui
Copernican Hypothesis and Phenomenism in the Transcendental Aesthetic .......................................................... 493

Christine Lopez
J. Van Cleve, L. W. Beck, and Paul Guyer on the Application of Categories to Appearances .............................................. 503

Ubirajara Rancan de Azevedo Marques
« Germes » et « dispositions » dans la Raison pure .............. 513

Catrin Misselhorn
Kant's Theorie der kontrafaktischen Variation modaler Intuitionen .................................................................................. 527

Christian Onof
Understanding Schematism and the Nature of Schemata ........ 539

Gregg Osborne
Human Responses to Kant on Our Putative Awareness of Objective Succession ........................................................... 551

Tatiana Patrone
Kant on Reason and the Synthesis of Ideas ....................... 561

Adriano Perin
The Unity of Reason in the Background of a ‘Critique of Pure Practical Reason’ ......................................................... 573

James Phillips
Truth, Knowledge and the Thing in Itself ................................ 585

Olavo Caldeira Pimenta
The Multiple Meanings of Principles in Kant ...................... 597

Luis Cesar Yanzer Portela
Critique of Pure Reason: Readings .................................... 605

Marcel Quaas
Knowledge of Things in Themselves and Kant’s Theory of Concepts .................................................................................. 615

Constantin Rauer
Die Kritik des Wahns als Schlüssel zu Kant's kritischer Wende . 625

Alberto Rosales
Kants Weg zum Schematismus ............................................. 637

Alirio Rosales
Kant and the Varieties of Content ........................................ 649

Tobias Rosefeldt
Kants Begriff der Existentz .................................................. 657

Thor Sandmey
Kant on Geometry and Spatial Intuition: Commentary on Michael Friedman's Geometry, Construction, and Intuition in Kant and His Successors .......................................................................................... 669

Karl Schaffer
Conceptual Reflection and the Conceptual Role of the ’I Think’ ............................................................ 679

Dennis Schulting
Deducing the Categories of Modality and Relation – Reich Revisited .............................................................. 691

Ulrich Seeberg
Der methodologische Hintergrund der Kategorienreduktion .... 703

Gonzalo Serrano
Kant’s ‘Ich denke’ and Cartesian ‘cogito’ ................................ 717
Siglenverzeichnis


BDG Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht (AA 07)

Br Briefe (AA 10–13)

DIS Die falsche Spirizfindigkeit der vier syllogistischen Figuren erwiesen (AA 02)

EaD Das Ende aller Dinge (AA 08)

EEKU Erste Einleitung in die Kritik der Urteilskraft (AA 20)

Ethica (1763) Ethica Philosophia (AA 27)

FEV Die Frage, ob die Erde veralte, physikalisch erwogen (AA 01)

FM Welches sind die wirklichen Fortschritte, die die Metaphysik seit Leibnizens und Wolffs Zeiten in Deutschland gemacht hat? (AA 20)

FM/Beylagen FM: Beylagen (AA 20)

FM/L FM: Lose Blätter (AA 20)

FRT Fragment einer späteren Rationalthologie (AA 28)

GMS Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten (AA 04)

GSE Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen (AA 02)

GSK Gedanken von der wahren Schätzung der lebendigen Kräfte (AA 01)

GUGR Von dem ersten Grunde des Unterschiedes der Gegenen im Raume (AA 02)

HN Handschriftlicher Nachlass (AA 14–23)

IaG Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht (AA 08)

KpV Kritik der praktischen Vernunft (AA 05)
Henrich on Kant's Transcendental Deduction of the Categories

Martin Francisco Fricke

Dieter Henrich has written several influential, original and insightful texts on Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories. The ones I shall concentrate on in this paper are "Identity and Objectivity" (Henrich 1969) and "The Identity of the Subject in the Transcendental Deduction" (Henrich 1988). The former will serve mainly as background to demonstrate the progress that Henrich achieved in the latter. Curiously, the second article has so far found relatively little attention in the literature; it has hardly been recognised as a self-standing, entirely original attempt at reconstructing the central argument of the transcendental deduction. 2 In this paper, I shall try to elucidate the central ideas of Henrich's latter article with the help of some remarks of Gareth Evans's. On the basis of this elucidation, I shall then argue that although Henrich's arguments are a great improvement on the ideas of "Identity and Objectivity", they probably fail as an attempt to reconstruct a valid argument underpinning the deduction.

In Henrich's view, the central challenge for a reconstruction of the deduction is to find a relation between self-consciousness and the categories. The aim is to show that someone who can think "I think" must think of the world as ordered according to the categories. Henrich spends less effort on an attempt to show, in addition, that there must be a world that is ordered according to the categories. In "Identity and Objectivity", he sketches several different strategies for deriving categories from self-consciousness. The strategy which, in 1976, he identified as the only successful one sees consciousness of the categories as an implication

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of consciousness of one's own identity. Roughly, Henrich's argument is this:

(1) I know with Cartesian (a priori) certainty that I am identical with myself throughout different states of mental activity, in particular throughout the activity of reflection.

(2) "To attribute identity to the subject is to ascribe to it a multiplicity of different states" (Henrich 1976: 175) throughout which it is identical.

(3) An equivalent way of describing this identity throughout different states is to say that the subject is the same in the transition from any one state of a range of states to any other state of the same range.

(4) The transition from one state to another is only intelligible if it is conceived of as a transition of a specific kind or mode (cf. Henrich 1976: 188).

(5) The Kantian categories describe the different modes of transition which make the transition from any one state to any other intelligible.

(6) These different modes of transition describe a formal system within which each possible state has its specific "location".

(7) "[...] since the subject is cognizant of itself in its Cartesian certainty, and since the knowledge of its numerical identity is included in this certainty, everything that is necessarily entailed by the notion of numerical identity so as to constitute the meaning of this notion must be known together with, and in, the a priori knowledge that the subject has of itself". (Henrich 1976: 176 ff.)

(8) Therefore, I must know with Cartesian certainty of a system of categories within which my current state and all other possible states are "located".

There are several points at which one can question this argument. The most general objection to the argument might be that proposition (7) presupposes a questionable closure principle about knowledge. Henrich seems to be saying that whenever I know that some object is P, I must also know "everything that is necessarily entailed" by the notion of being P "so as to constitute the meaning of this notion". But cannot I know, for example, that some object is yellow without knowing that it has a colour? Similarly, could I not know that x is a circle without knowing that each point on x is equidistant from a single point? It seems that it is not in general true that in order to know that some object is P I must know everything that is entailed by the notion of being P. Henrich might reply that he is only talking about what is entailed by the notion so as to constitute its meaning and that this does not include everything that is entailed by it. However, it is not clear whether there is a clear distinction between these two sets of entailments and the critical point might apply to the narrow set as well.

If this point of criticism is justified, then Henrich might be correct in thinking that attributing identity to oneself implies that there must be different states throughout which one is identical and that there must be specific modes of transition from one state to another described by Kantian categories. But he would not be correct in thinking that the subject has to know about this in order to attribute identity to herself. We might put the point as follows: the subject might be able to attribute identity to herself without being able to do the philosophy of self-identity. As we shall see, a similar point of criticism also applies to Henrich's later reconstruction of the central argument of the deduction.

Less general objections can be brought forward against the earlier steps of Henrich's argument: Why is it the case that the transition from one state to another is only intelligible if it is conceived of as a transition of a specific kind or mode? Furthermore, why do we have to assume that there are several different modes of transition? Would not one single mode, say, the relation of temporality, be sufficient to relate all different states to each other? Related to this problem, why does the attribution of identity to a subject imply a multiplicity of different states throughout which the subject is identical? It seems that two different states should be sufficient to make the identity claim meaningful. Here it is even less clear why we should assume more than one type of possible relation (transition) between these two states in order to make the identity claim intelligible.

The objection that has been made most frequently to Henrich's argument concerns its fundamental premise: the claim that we know with Cartesian (a priori) certainty of our own identity throughout different states of mental activity. It seems true that we persist as identical through different thought processes. However, the question is whether this can be known a priori and with Cartesian certainty. It seems that our identity through different states of mental activity is a contingent fact. As such it can only be known a posteriori and not with Cartesian certainty. As Paul Guyer pointed out in his 1979 review of Henrich's text, the Cartesian egoistic argument "implies no proposition about the continuing existence of...

1 Wilfried Hinsch makes a similar point: cf. Hinsch (1986: 26 ff.).
any thinking substance" (Guyer 1979: 163). Note also that Kant says explicitly in the chapter on the "Paralogisms" that we cannot have any a priori knowledge of the self's persistence through time. But does Henrich's fundamental premise not make precisely such a claim: that we can know a priori and with Cartesian certainty that we are identical in different states of mental activity?

It seems unlikely that Henrich had in mind our contingent empirical identity through time when he developed his argument. After all, he explicitly says that his argument is based on the implications of the meaning of the notion of identity. This does not seem compatible with the idea that he develops the conditions under which a real thing, our self, persists as identical through time. However, in "Identity and Objectivity", Henrich fails to explain what distinguishes his fundamental premise from a contingent, empirical claim. This is the point recognised by Henrich's critics. It is also the point on which his text of 1988 dramatically improves his argument, as we shall see in what follows.

In "The Identity of the Subject in the Transcendental Deduction", Henrich suggests that self-consciousness has a formal property which can be described with the help of identity-statements about the subject. He says:

The consciousness 'I think' can be actualized in an indefinite number of instances. It can accompany thoughts which previously were thought without the consciousness that they are mine. The form of this consciousness is constant and I can be certain of it a priori. And it belongs to its form that it is possible in relation to every thought. That it is actually achieved, and in relation to which thoughts, does not belong to what can be known a priori. But that it can occur in relation to every individual thought – this does belong to what is known a priori when its form is known. Thus the concept of an indefinite number of instances of its occurrence also belongs to the concept of self-consciousness itself. (Henrich 1988: 169)

When Kant claims that the "I think" can accompany all my representations (cf. B 131), he is, according to Henrich, making a statement about the form of the consciousness "I think". The "I think" is such that every thought could be prefixed by it. Someone who does not know, in "however implicit and hence unanalysed" (Henrich 1988: 254) a way, about this formal property of the "I think" is not, according to Henrich capable of having the consciousness "I think". Now, if we describe this formal property of the "I think" slightly differently, we make an identity statement about the "I think". If it is true that every thought can be prefixed by the (one and the same) "I think", then we can also say that the "I think" that occurs in some actual thought is identical to the "I think" that could occur in an indefinite number of other possible instances where other thoughts are prefixed by it. As Henrich puts it:

Thus in every instance of self-consciousness there is a reference to the totality of all other instances of self-consciousness. And it is in this reference that the knowledge of the identity of the subject consists: [...] (1988: 271 f.)

This, then, is Henrich's answer to the critics of his 1976 text: The critics are right in saying that we cannot know a priori of our contingent identity through time. But we can know a priori the formal properties of the consciousness "I think"; indeed, we must know these properties a priori, otherwise it does not make sense to say that we have genuine "I think"-consciousness. Some of these properties can be described with the help of identity-statements. Genuine "I think"-consciousness does only exist if the subject knows that this type of consciousness can prefix any other thought instead of the present one. Part of this fact is expressed in saying that the "I think" of my present thought is identical to the "I think" that could accompany any other thought instead of the present one. In so far as we have to know (a priori) of the formal properties of the "I think"-consciousness we also have to know what is expressed by this identity-statement.

Before coming back to this ingenious idea and investigating it in a bit more detail, let me sketch how Henrich further conceives of the reconstruction of the central argument of the deduction based on this premise. The main steps of this argument seem to be these:

9) I know (a priori) that I could think "I think" in relation to every other thought instead of the one in relation to which I am actually thinking it in the present instance of "I think" consciousness.

10) Hence, in my a priori knowledge "there is a reference to the totality of all other instances of self-consciousness" (Henrich 1988: 271 f.).
We do not, and cannot, have all the contents of these instances of self-consciousness explicitly "before our mind" and we do not, and cannot, enlist them all in one single "super-thought".

The only way we can think of (i.e. refer to) all other possible contents of self-consciousness is by thinking of a system of relations in which all of them have a specific location. (Metaphorically: I cannot easily think of 100 flats by thinking of a list of specific characteristics of each of them; but I can easily think of the skyscraper in which they are all located.)

Such a system of relations must contain "elements", that is, logical objects that are related. It must be possible to characterise a "sequence" from one element to another element in the system. And there must be specific relations relating every element to every other element.

These three interdependent features of the system correspond to Kant's categories of substance, causality and reciprocity.

The system of relations (of contents of instances of self-consciousness) as a whole corresponds to Kant's notion of "a nature in general" (B 165).

"I think" consciousness requires that we think that there is such a system of relations of all possible contents of self-consciousness. It does not require that we know what objects exist (or whether any "objects in the weighty sense" [cf. Strawson 1966: 73, 88] exist at all) and what relations exist between them (such as causality). As Kant says, "the categories are not in themselves knowledge, but are merely forms of thought" (B 288).

"It remains logically possible that a thinking that is capable of self-consciousness should exist for only a single moment, so that it cannot actually bring itself into continuity with any other 'I think'-instance of its consciousness and therefore can have no knowledge of any objective unit" (Henrich 1988: 277).5

It seems to me that this is, again, a very interesting and original argument worthy of detailed discussion. Here, I only have space to mention three questions. First, is it true that a reference to every possible content of self-consciousness can only be made sense of with the help of a system of relations within which each of these contents has a specific location? If it is true, then any reference to a larger range of objects (objects understood not in the "weighty" but in the logical sense) presupposes some such system; for example usage of the terms "everything", "the prime numbers", "the electorate of the US" or "Leonardo's drawings" would then presuppose systems of relations within which the objects referred to can be located. It seems that Henrich could have reconstructed a similar argument as he did if Kant's deduction had started with the premise "I do not know everything".

Second, if we accept that reference to a larger range of objects presupposes a system of relations that obtain among these objects in order to be made intelligible, the further question arises as to in what sense we must be aware of this system in order to make the reference. Henrich's answer is that we must think that there is such a system, but we do not have to know what specific system it is. It is possible to think of answers more demanding or less demanding than Henrich's. A more demanding answer might claim that we can only understand reference to a larger range of objects if we know of a specific system of relations in which these objects can be located or, more demanding still, if we are able to locate each of these objects in a specific system of relations. On the other hand, we might reject this form of verificationism and instead claim that we can refer and think about larger ranges of objects without even thinking that there is a system of relations in which each of the objects in the range can be located. Perhaps we will agree that there must be such a system; but we might reject that the subject must in any way be aware of it in order to think about the range. Perhaps it is sufficient that the subject have a practical capacity to locate at least some of the objects of the range within the help of relations that constitute the system. How do we decide which of these alternatives is the correct one?

Third, it is worth pointing out that Henrich's argument, if successful, deduces categories that apply to the possible contents of "I think" consciousness, not to objects in the "weighty" sense such as material objects. The possible contents of "I think" consciousness are thoughts. Every thought can be (syntactically correctly) prefixed with "I think". If awareness of this fact requires awareness of some system of relations, then it must be a system of relations among thoughts. Clearly, Kant's categories were not intended to apply to thoughts (understood, perhaps as "grasping of propositions"). Kant meant to derive categories about material objects standing in relations such as that of causality. Henrich's categories are very abstract. So he might respond that they include as a
One problem with this way of describing Henrich’s argument is that it seems to restrict the generality of thoughts that Henrich is interested in. Kant himself speaks of an “identity of the self in respect of all representations which can ever belong to our knowledge” (A 116). Henrich clearly takes this to mean that the “I think” consciousness is “possible in relation to every thought” (Henrich 1988: 269). However, Evans’s theory, as applied to “I think” thoughts, only demands that someone who has the conceptual resources to think “I think p” also have the conceptual resources to have the “I think” consciousness in relation to every other thought she has the conceptual resources to entertain. Since not everyone has the conceptual resources to entertain every thought (people have differing degrees of intelligence, talent, etc.), Evans’s theory demands only that the identity of the “I think” consciousness in a given person extends to all those thoughts that this person has the resources to entertain. The set of these thoughts seems likely to be smaller than the set that Henrich seems to refer to: the set of all thinkable thoughts.

Evans states quite clearly a major source of inspiration for his theory: the third chapter of Peter Strawson’s Individuals. There Strawson argues that in order to be able to ascribe a predicate to oneself one has also to be able to ascribe it to someone other than oneself. This is meant to be a solution for the other minds problem; very roughly: if I can ascribe a mind to myself, I must also be able to ascribe a mind to others (cf. Strawson 1959: 99 f.). This argument employs a strategy similar to Evans’s. In Evans’s terms, the thought that “I am F” is only one thought of the series “I am F”, “b is F”, “c is F”, etc. That is, in order to be able to ascribe “is F” to “I” I must be able to ascribe it to others (b, c, etc.) as well. Strawson remarks the underlying idea very clearly in a footnote, which is also cited by Evans (cf. Evans 1982: 103):

The main point here is a purely logical one: the idea of a predicate is correlative with that of a range of distinguishable individuals of which the predicate can be significantly, though not necessarily truly, affirmed. (Strawson 1959: 99, footnote)

It seems to me that this quote captures the central point in Evans’s and Henrich’s theories and expresses it in linguistic terms. Propositional thought and complex, contentful consciousness necessarily have a certain logical structure. This structure is a priori in so far as we cannot make sense of the idea that something should be propositional thought or consciousness without having it. The most basic element in this structure
is probably the predicate-object distinction. A predicate can be ascribed to more than only one object. It might be that there is only one object to which the predicate can be truly ascribed, or it might even be that there is no object at all to which it can be truly ascribed; still it remains true that as a predicate it can be syntactically correctly ascribed to everything that is an object in the logical sense. This is a formal (or logical) property of predicates. A predicate has a generality which consists in the fact that more than one object can be subsumed under it. With most objects this subsumption will not be true; still it is possible. A concept that cannot (whether truly or falsely) be ascribed to some logical objects cannot be regarded as a predicate.

Henrich’s reconstruction interprets, we might say, the “I think”-prefix as a sort of predicate. However, “I think” is not a normal predicate. It can be attributed to thoughts only. One cannot say, “I think the tree” or “I think great hunger”. That is, the “I think”-prefix is a predicate for thoughts or, in linguistic terms, a sentence-operator. In “I think p”, “p” stands for a sentence expressing a thought; and this sentence is operated by the prefix “I think”. Now, Henrich’s point could be put like this: because the “I think” has the formal properties of a sentence-operator, it can be significantly, though not necessarily truly, used to operate any other thought instead of the thought expressed through “p” as well. When Henrich speaks of the consciousness “I think” (Henrich 1988: 269), he speaks of a piece of consciousness that can only be so called because it shares the formal properties of the sentence-operator “I think”. This is how we can understand Kant’s claim that “It must be possible for the ‘I think’ to accompany all my representations; [...]” (B 131). This possibility for the “I think” of accompanying any thought can be understood as a consequence of the fact that the “I think” is a sentence-operator. Someone who is not capable of ascribing the “I think” to every thought that she is capable of forming does not grasp the form of the “I think” as a sentence-operator. Since she has not mastered the formal properties of the “I think” she does not really understand the meaning of it and can therefore not really be “credited with” the thought or consciousness “I think”. The identity of the subject of which Henrich and Kant speak is the identity of the sentence-operator “I think” in all its possible applications.

Reconstructing the basis of Henrich’s argument with the help of Evans and Strawson allows us to see one major problem with the argument. Henrich says that the subject must know in “however implicit and hence unanalyzed” (Henrich 1988: 254) a way that “I think” consciousness is capable of accompanying any other thought instead of the actual one. Evans and Strawson help us to explain why it is true that “I think” consciousness must be capable of accompanying every thought that I may have. But they do not claim, as does Henrich, that we must know that “I think” consciousness must be capable of accompanying every thought. Rather, they talk about practical capacities, a form of knowing-how. I must be capable of thinking “I think p” in relation to every thought “p” that I can have — we might say: I must know how to think “I think p” in relation to every thought “p” that I can have. But I do not have to have propositional knowledge of this fact. For Henrich “I think” consciousness includes a “reference to the totality of all other instances of self-consciousness” (Henrich 1988: 271 f.), because he thinks that to have it we must know that the “I think” is possible in relation to every other thought. For Evans and Strawson, there is no such reference, because practical capacities — knowing how to do something — does not involve making a reference. (Knowing how to ride a bicycle does not involve making a reference to bicycles.)

Henrich’s argument points to interesting structural features of self-consciousness, which I have tried to elucidate with the help of theories from Evans and Strawson. In this elucidation Kant emerges as a kind of proto-Fregean who analyses “I think” thoughts as instances of the semantic function: “I think (x)”. But the problem with Henrich’s argument is that it seems to be saying that “I think” consciousness has a certain form, therefore we are aware of this form whenever we are self-conscious. This seems to me to be a non-sequitur. The fact that consciousness has certain structural features does not imply that we are aware of these features. It seems to me that to become aware of them we have to analyse the structure of our own thoughts and, in Cassam’s words, have “to do the philosophy of [our] own situation” (Cassam 1997: 163). Clearly, this is a privilege and an interest that only few, and these on few occasions, exercise. It requires a degree of specialized reflection and logical analysis that is simply not available to everyone and that no-one can exercise permanently.

Bibliography


Categories, Necessity, and the Proof-Structure of the B-Deduction

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Since Henrich (1969), it has been widely recognized among Kantian scholars that the argument of the B-Deduction contains two different moments or steps, which correspond to §§ 15–20 and §§ 21–27 of the 1787 edition of the Critique of Pure Reason. Unsurprisingly, it remains a matter of considerable disagreement how one should understand the proper nature of each step and the logical connection between them. In the present paper, I sketch an interpretative model which aims to contribute to this discussion. In section (1), I propose a set of conditions of adequacy upon the interpretation of the proof-structure of the B-Deduction, and take issue with some of the relevant literature. In section (2), I advance a model of analysis according to which the distinction between the two halves of the B-Deduction refers to a difference, not in the domains of application of the categories, but in the respective scopes of the modal operator of necessity qualifying the categorical determination of the manifold of human intuition. Finally, in section (3), I develop this model in order to demonstrate that it meets the conditions previously set, and sheds light on certain difficult passages of Kant’s text.

1.

The § 20 of the B-Deduction brings together the purported results of the first half of the text into a synoptic argument, the conclusion of which is anticipated in its very title: “All sensible intuitions stand under the categories, as conditions under which alone their manifold can come together in one consciousness” (B 141). The basis of the argument is the connection Kant intends to establish between the necessity of relating the manifold in an intuition to the unity of apperception – as a condition of the intuition representing something to the subject – and the necessity of an a priori synthesis of that manifold according to the pure concepts of the understanding. Such a connection between the unity of consciousness