

Béatrice Longuenesse, *I, Me, Mine. Back to Kant and Back Again*.

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After her well-known and influential first book on Kant, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge* (published in English in 1998), and *Kant on the Human Standpoint* (2005), *I, Me, Mine* is Béatrice Longuenesse's third major monograph on Kant. With this new book, however, she aims to widen the scope beyond mere Kant scholarship. Kant is framed within a broader effort to answer the more general question that has been at the forefront of debates in "recent analytic philosophy of language and mind," namely the question, "What is self-consciousness, and in what ways does it relate to our use, in language and in thought, of the first-person pronoun 'I'?" (1). In her attempt to answer this question, Longuenesse links Kant's views on self-consciousness to insights from central figures in analytic philosophy of mind such as Wittgenstein, Gareth Evans, G. E. M. Anscombe and Sidney Shoemaker but also to the work of Sartre (especially *The Transcendence of the Ego*) and, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, Freud's psychology. She argues that Sartre's view of what he called 'non-thetic (self-)consciousness' can, in some respects, be compared to Kant's transcendental unity of self-consciousness or transcendental apperception as a necessary condition of (at least some) first-order consciousness. Freud is part of Longuenesse's story, not because she is interested in "taking a stand on the scientific credentials of Freudian psychoanalysis," but because "Freud's model of the mind might be an additional resource for naturalizing Kant's notion of a person" (173); moreover, she believes the Freudian 'Ego' bears a resemblance to Kant's 'I think' as the expression of a unity of representations in that the 'Ego' is "an organization of mental events whose contents have a specific type of unity" (3). An important feature of Longuenesse's comparative study of Kant and Freud, in Part III of the book, is that both the theoretical and moral aspects of the 'I' are addressed: Kant's 'I' in 'I think' is Freud's 'Ego', and the moral 'I ought to' is compared to Freud's 'Super-Ego'.

While the first part of the book shows its primary value in that Longuenesse weaves Kantian insights deftly into the standard narrative of contemporary philosophy of mind, thus demonstrating Kant's continued relevance beyond mere historical interpretation, the real meat of the book is to be found in Part II, which concerns a very detailed, analytically precise and persuasively argued account of the first three paralogisms of pure reason in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. The Paralogisms chapter of the *Critique* is where Kant

demonstrates that his rationalist predecessors's attempts to deduce the existence of a metaphysically substantial, simple and numerically identical person from the mere concept of 'I' come to naught, for the concepts 'substance', 'simplicity' and 'numerical identity' cannot be shown to be really instantiated in an object of *inner* sense, i.e. a substantial, simple, numerically identical soul, which is what the rationalists have in mind. I found her account not only extremely clear and helpful, but it strikes me that Longuenesse's analysis often surpasses existing recent accounts in terms of argumentative as well as interpretive rigor. Some of her solutions to long-standing interpretive issues and dilemmas in Kant's text in the Paralogisms chapter are, in my view, also far more convincing than many existing alternative interpretations. Nobody working on the Paralogisms can afford to ignore her account.

In Part I of the book, Longuenesse points to Wittgenstein's famous distinction, in the *Blue Book*, between "the use as object' and 'the use as subject' of the word 'I'" (19), and compares this to Kant's distinction between "consciousness of oneself 'as subject'" and "consciousness of oneself 'as object'" (19). Wittgenstein argues that there is no room for error in the use of 'I' as *subject*, namely "an error in identifying *which* person the predicate is true of, if it is true of anyone at all." In sentences in which 'I' is used as subject no *particular* person must be recognized as the entity of which a particular predicate *p* is true. This view has been amended by Shoemaker in the sense that the most that is needed is the claim that *p* is "true of oneself, without any additional warrant being needed for knowing that the entity the predicate is true of, is identical to oneself" (21), that is, judgments in which 'I' is used as subject are "immune to error through misidentification relative to the first-person pronoun" (21). Evans's position, in his *Varieties of Reference*, is more radical by claiming that the referential use of 'I' in judgments where 'I' is used as a subject depends on the epistemic condition of identifying the 'I' as a spatiotemporally locatable body: information about one's bodily states is a necessary condition for the ability to self-ascribe mental predicates (23–5). Evans's critique of Kant focuses on the apparent merely formal nature of the 'I think', which Kant himself seems to suggest (e.g., A363, A354, A382, A398, quoted by Longuenesse on p. 25), taking him to deny that the 'I' actually refers to an existing entity. But an important point in Longuenesse's account—and this plays a recurring role in her account of the paralogisms—is that the fact that no properties of the entity 'I' can be deduced from the mere concept of 'I' does not imply that the 'I', for any instantiation of it, does not "refer to an entity at all" (25–6). Understanding the Fundamental Reference Rule for 'I' and "being engaged in the activity of thinking are sufficient for a meaningful use of 'I'" (23, 26).

Longuenesse further argues that on Kant's view "binding for thinking," a process of synthesizing one's representations, is a necessary condition on the use of the concept 'I' in 'I think', what Longuenesse calls "the  $I \rightarrow SY$  principle." In fact, the use of the concept 'I' and the binding activity are mutually conditioning, so " $SY \rightarrow I$ " holds too: "there would be no representation 'I' unless an activity of binding representations that leads to their being thinkable, namely, recognizable under common concepts, were going on in our minds" (29–30). The enabling ground of " $I \rightarrow SY$ " and " $SY \rightarrow I$ " is what Kant calls "the transcendental unity of apperception" (31). Importantly, transcendental apperception is not only a formal necessary condition for the consciousness of oneself as subject, but also a necessary condition for the consciousness of oneself as object. This marks an important difference with Strawsonian conceptions of personal identity, such as that of Evans, as Longuenesse makes amply clear in the chapter in which the third paralogism is discussed: For Strawsonians, the pure use of 'I' is just an abstraction out of the empirical self-consciousness of the person who follows a "path through a world of physical objects" (161). But, as Longuenesse rightly says, contrary to what Strawson thinks not all uses of 'I' are to be seen to be grounded "on the consciousness of oneself as an embodied entity" (161). At any rate, the Fundamental Reference Rule holds nonetheless in each instance of using the concept 'I' for the individual who thinks *I am F*, which is solely guaranteed by Kant's principle of the unity of apperception. Against this backdrop, Longuenesse pursues, in Chapter 3, a very illuminating study of Sartre's concept of 'non-thetic (self-)consciousness' and 'non-thetic consciousness (of) the body', in comparison with Wittgenstein and also Anscombe's well-known views on the first person. According to Longuenesse, Sartre's 'non-thetic (self-)consciousness' can in some respects be compared to the self-consciousness that is expressed by the proposition 'I think' in Kant.

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, comprising the second part of the book, Longuenesse provides a detailed, systematic account of the first three paralogisms. But she also discusses the opening section shared by the A and B edition of the Paralogisms chapter, which precedes the actual account of the paralogistic inferences, by way of a fruitful comparison with Descartes's *cogito* argument, which, as Longuenesse shows, has more in common with Kant's 'I think' than is often thought, and than Kant himself realizes. I cannot here even begin to do justice to all of the intricate details of Longuenesse's masterful analysis of Kant's sometimes ambiguously formulated arguments and their variant versions in the A and B edition, but I found two things especially striking. In line with Descartes's *cogito* argument, Longuenesse points out, rightly, that for Kant too, existence—which is not yet the category 'existence'—is implied by the 'I think' for "the

individual currently thinking ‘I think’, whatever the nature of that individual might be” (84, 89–90). In this context, Longuenesse distinguishes between three kinds of consciousness of my own thinking in Kant (86–7), whereby only the third kind of self-consciousness is constrained by categorial rules for determining the temporal succession of my mental states, namely “the empirically determined consciousness of the sequence of my mental states” is possible “only under the condition that I have determinate cognition of the objective sequence of states of objects outside me, including the body I take to be my own in virtue of the systematic connection between its states and mental states ‘in me’” (91).

The second aspect of Longuenesse’s interpretation that marks it out as special is the very detailed way in which she pursues to locate the actual paralogist inference in the first paralogism about the alleged substance of the thinking ‘I’ in the A-edition: often the ambiguity is thought to lie in the middle term, but Longuenesse argues, persuasively, that the problem, under one scenario, rather “lies in the transition from the major and the minor premise” to an invalid conclusion, which “sneaks into the use of concept of substance the supposition of an underlying schema of permanence that has been absent from both the major and minor premise” (119–20).

I am less convinced about some of the details of her analysis, in the context of the comparison with Freud’s ‘Ego’ in the third part of the book, of the ‘I think’ proposition at B131–2 in the Transcendental Deduction and the relation between the ‘I think’ as a conceptual representation and the “pre-discursive binding activity of imagination,” which Kant calls ‘transcendental imagination’ or also ‘synthesis of the imagination’, even apart from the question whether Kant’s views can legitimately be compared to Freudian psychology, given the former’s emphatic denial that his account of the productive imagination has anything to do with empirical psychology (B152) (see 176–85). The same holds for Longuenesse’s argument, fleshed out in Chapter 5, for the need to separate the ‘I think’ and transcendental apperception; she argues that, while Kant does often conflate them, the two should not be identified (104–7), but it is unclear to me how their difference should be anything more than merely formal for the purposes of the analysis of self-consciousness and its cognitive function in the Transcendental Deduction. Similarly, I found her differentiating between the subject or agent, *qua* entity, of an activity of thinking, and the activity itself unhelpful (e.g., 107–8); sure, they are formally distinguishable, but since the activity involved is of the spontaneous, original and a priori kind, a separation of the subject from her activity invites a regress problem as to how the subject *qua* entity is connected with her activity, and a priori at that. Furthermore, how

should we read ‘entity’? A much more felicitous way—and I have argued this myself elsewhere<sup>1</sup>—is to see that relation as one of identity, as indeed Kant himself suggests, which Longuenesse seems to acknowledge. I see no reason to think that the apparent textual evidence that Longuenesse cites mandates adopting her reading.

Despite some disagreement about matters of interpretation, I have found *I, Me, Mine* to be full of insights into central issues of Kant’s theory of self-consciousness that would repay a deeper engagement. This rich book is mandatory reading for philosophers of mind interested in the topic of self-consciousness in Kant as well as Kant scholars.

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<sup>1</sup> See Dennis Schulting, “Apperception, Self-Consciousness and Self-Knowledge in Kant,” in *The Palgrave Kant Handbook*, ed. Matthew Altman (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 139–61, and Dennis Schulting, *Kant’s Deduction From Apperception. An Essay on the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories*, revised edition (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018).