

With *Kant and Rational Psychology* Corey Dyck has written a highly interesting and exhaustively documented book on the historical context of Kant's Paralogisms, which, Dyck claims, has implications for the way the Paralogisms are to be read. Unlike for example Karl Ameriks's famous and justly influential philosophical-systematic account in his *Kant's Theory of Mind* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1982-2000), this book looks, in more historical fashion, at Kant's immediate predecessors, in particular Christian Wolff, whose philosophy is more sophisticated and self-standing than standardly acknowledged and, importantly, is according to Dyck «the most proximate target of Kant's attack» (p. 3). A central aspect of Dyck's book is the claim that Kant criticises «the Wolffian rational psychologist's efforts to provide cognition of the soul on the basis of what is presumed *to be given in experience*» (p. 199; emphasis added). According to Dyck, the «key to Kant's criticism of the rational psychology of his immediate predecessors is the exposure of the illusory character of the idea of the soul, in accordance with which the unconditioned condition of all thinking in general, the 'I' of the 'I think', *seems to be given empirically*» (p. 199; emphasis added). This is a striking element of Dyck's reading, since until now commentators have read Kant's critique of rational psychology precisely as a critique of the belief that we could have cognition of the unconditioned 'I', the soul, *by purely rational means*, that is, by abstracting away from all the conditions that enable an empirical cognition of oneself. Instead, Dyck claims that rational psychology, a term coined by Wolff, does not seek to establish a metaphysical doctrine of the soul through pure reason alone but «relies essentially upon empirical psychology» (p. 9), and «set[s] out from a concept of the spirit acquired through observation» (p. 14). *Experience* is thus the touchstone of rational psychology – this is the *prima facie* extraordinary central claim that Dyck makes (*e.g.*, pp. 22, 28, 36, 45 *et passim*).

To distinguish this reading of the claims of rational psychology from what is usually understood by it, Dyck emphasises the differentiation between what he calls the «broad» rational psychology that Wolff advances, which thus relies on empirical psychology, from the «narrow» rational psychology of Descartes and Leibniz, which is concentrated on a purely rational conception of the 'I'; and it is the former that Dyck focuses on in his contextualist account of the Paralogisms, whereas until now Kant's Paralogisms have, according to Dyck, been read as if they addressed the problems of narrow rational psychology. Only within the context of the broader conception of rational psychology, as incorporating an account of empirical experience, can Kant's Paralogisms be really understood, suggesting that prior accounts of the Paralogisms, including such esteemed interpretations as that by the aforementioned Ameriks, basically misunderstand the core of Kant's critique of rationalism. Dyck takes a text passage from the A-Paralogisms as confirmation of

his thesis that the rational psychologist erroneously bases his conclusions on an *empirical* experience of the soul, that is, that the rationalist is taken in by «the illusion of taking the unity in the synthesis of thoughts for a *perceived* unity in the subject of these thoughts» (*KrV*, A 402). Dyck stresses the word 'perceived' (*wahrgenommene*) to make the point about the necessity of empirical observation, in the eyes of the rational psychologist, for making inferences to the soul's substantiality or simplicity.

The difference between Kant and the (Wolffian) rationalists is not that Kant says that we can have a (limited) cognition of the self only if we have an empirical intuition of self in addition to a concept of self, and that the (Wolffian) rationalist says that we do *not* need experience, but can solely rely on reason in order to know the self unconditionally. Rather, the difference between Kant and the (Wolffian) rationalist, according to Dyck, concerns the «terms [186] of where, precisely, the boundaries of that experience [*i.e.*, the cognition of the soul through experience, D. S.] are to be drawn» (p. 14), based on the idea that, for the (Wolffian) rationalists, the soul was fundamentally a concept of experience. For the (Wolffian) rationalists, it is empirical psychology that is the guide in rational psychology's examination of the soul, «on the basis of which it will infer that which is not readily available to observation and thereby advance our cognition beyond the boundaries of our initial experience» (p. 32). And rational psychology as a «purified discipline of rational psychology», that is, as narrow rational psychology, «is only really inaugurated with the *KrV*» (p. 15), Dyck argues, that is to say, not something that already existed (in the Wolffian tradition), and against which Kant putatively reacts.

Dyck sees a clear distinction between the rational psychology of Descartes and that of Wolff, but it is unclear to me in what way the indubitable experience of the 'I' as described by Wolff is, as he maintains, significantly different from Descartes's view. There is an ambiguity in Dyck's use of the term 'experience'. Does it refer to awareness of self, consciousness? (Kant himself appears to conflate consciousness of ourselves in thinking and experience in *Prolegomena*, AA iv 334). If so, then of course Descartes would also be a rationalist in the sense that Dyck reserves for the Wolffian. Also for Descartes, consciousness of the *cogito* does not rest on ratiocination only, but involves an immediate *awareness* or *observation* of oneself, an intuition, in pure thinking itself. After all, one of the cardinal interpretive issues in Cartesian studies is precisely the question whether the *cogito, sum* is an inference or an intuition; and there is much in favour of seeing the *cogito* as an intuition, an immediate awareness of oneself.

The standard reading of the Paralogisms might be to construe them in the narrowly rationalistic sense, as if Kant accused the rational psychologist of inferring *e.g.* the soul's substantiality purely based on inferences from *concepts* of the soul, not involving observation or empirical consciousness. But of course, the rational psychologist did not make a distinction between a transcendental view of self-

consciousness (transcendental apperception), as constituting merely a formal 'I', empty of material (experiential) content, and empirical apperception, or between the formal and empirical sides of self-consciousness. Experience in Wolff's sense is therefore something entirely different from experience in Kant's critical sense. It would be a caricature of Kant's understanding of the rational psychologists as having a purely ratiocinative view of the concept of the soul, which not even Descartes had, for that matter. Dyck's interpretation is at best a correction of this caricature, but I'm not sure which of the best interpretations of Kant's Paralogisms (*e.g.*, Ameriks) would in fact be committed to such a caricatural reading. Maybe I have unknowingly been following Dyck's contextual hermeneutics all along while reading the Paralogisms, but I do not see why the standard reading of Kant's argument should be taken to involve the belief that Kant's critique is aimed squarely at a *purely* ratiocinative inference from the *concept* of the soul to its substance, simplicity, etc.

In a sense, Dyck is right that the narrowly rationalistic view is Kant's invention (p. 15), but in my view that is because Kant's critique (or, at any rate, the standard readings of it) is, not that the rational psychologist looks *merely* rationalistically at the concept of soul (*i.e.*, rationalistically in the narrow sense), and does not include observation (which Wolff clearly did, as Dyck shows), but rather that the rational psychologist does not disentangle the purely rational and observational views of the soul. In other words, the rational psychologist is too quick in concluding from the *experience/observation* of the self in thought to a rationally grounded, unconditional, view of the soul's substantiality, simplicity, etc. The *experience* or, more precisely, awareness, in some sense, of the soul or more precisely the thinking 'I' is not in dispute between Kant and the rationalists (see, *e.g.*, the important interpretive views of Heinz Heimsoeth in this regard), but with the Kantian proviso that this does not warrant any rationalist inferences about the soul's substance, simplicity, etc.; therefore, Kant disentangles the formal and sensible aspects of the consciousness of the soul, which is Kant's innovation in the phil- [187] -osophy of mind, following, as Dyck nicely points out, Tetens's «two-fold conception of the 'I' or soul» (pp. 59-60), namely, on the one hand, a formal sense of self-consciousness and, on the other, inner sense strictly speaking, which for the critical Kant is no longer identifiable with self-consciousness simpliciter (as it was for Baumgarten for example [*Metaphysica*, § 535]), nor amounts to *knowledge* of the soul.

Dyck is mistaken to think that in «the ML1 [1770s Pölitz] notes, inner sense is understood *in much the same way as it would be in the KrV*», namely, as a «knowledge of that which belongs to me [...] a representation of my representations», or «a consciousness of my mental states, rather than directly of the subject of those states» (p. 65; emphasis added; Dyck quotes *V-Met- L1/Pölitz*, AA xxviii 227). Dyck here conflates the reflexive awareness that Kant points to in the notes, with inner sense. Whereas with respect to those early Pölitz lecture notes this conflation seems justified, given Kant's adherence to Baumgarten's conflationist

view during the 1770s, in the *Critique* reflexive self-consciousness, *i.e.*, transcendental apperception, is precisely *not* inner sense. Hence, Kant can still claim, at this stage (1770s), that «the concept of the soul in itself is a concept of experience» (*V-Met-L1/Pölitiz*, AA xxviii 263), quoted by Dyck (p. 64). However, this by no means licenses Dyck to argue that the early Kant, let alone the later Kant, adhered to a Wolffian conception of the *experience* of the soul, but just that Kant had by then not yet differentiated a formal sense of self-consciousness from inner sense as empirical apperception. Generally, Dyck seems to take Kant's reference to consciousness as confirmation of his claim that, at least for the pre-critical Kant, *experience* plays a foundational role in the analysis of the concept of soul (rational psychology) (see, *e.g.*, p. 67). The contrast that Dyck notes between the fact that in the *Critique* Kant makes it clear that the 'I think' is not an experience (A 354), but a transcendental condition of experience, and the putative position in the early Pölitiz notes, is not so much, as Dyck says, a «dramatic shift» (p. 77) in Kant's conception of self-consciousness and the possible knowledge of the soul *based on a concept of experience* to one *not* based on experience, as that his critique of rational psychology results from differentiating the formal self (the 'I think') from the empirical self, from inner sense – something that Dyck does not mention.

Dyck (p. 96) makes much of the empirical (sensible) nature of the intuition apparently involved in the immediate intuition of substance in the formal 'I', by referring to passages in Kant's pre-critical *Reflexionen* where Kant mentions «inner sense» and says that the concept of substance is «abstracted from inner sense», «depends on inner sense», but to my mind inner sense just means self-consciousness here, hence does nothing to support Dyck's insistence on the fact that some kind of *empirical observation* is involved, as opposed to the purely rational view that only a formal 'I think', where no such observation is involved, is at issue. Of course, Kant does believe that the intuition here is a case of empirical consciousness, but again, that is just because he does not yet differentiate between the transcendental or formal and empirical aspects of consciousness. Dyck says that in the critical period «Kant now shows that it is precisely because we *lack* the relevant intuition of the 'I' that the pretensions on the part of the rational psychologist to offer any such cognition must be strictly curbed» (p. 80). But this mistakenly suggests that with the critical turn Kant makes a strict distinction between, on the one hand, a sensible intuition of the 'I', as envisaged by the rationalists and, presumably, his pre-critical self, and, on the other, genuine (but impossible) cognition of the substantial I, *without allowing any kind of sensible connection to the substantial 'I'*. The critical Kant seems, according to Dyck (p. 80), to argue that any putative rational psychology can only be based on a purely rational conception of the formal 'I think', and not on any mixed conception of the 'I', whereby empirical observation plays an important role, as it does for the Wolffians. In other words, according to Dyck Kant rather criticises the *impurity* of Wolff's rational psychology.

In my view, this unnecessarily restricts Kant's view of the possibility of a rational psy- [188] -chology of the self. While it is true that Kant curbs the pretension of a (Wolffian) rational psychology which, illicitly, argues from the *perception* or *experience* of the unity of self-consciousness to the *metaphysical* unity of the self, it is not the case that, for the critical Kant, there is *no* sense in which I have an immediate *awareness* of myself in apperception, even through the *formal* 'I think'. For the 'I' is in some sense *given* in apperception, in the very act of the 'I think', in that the 'I's existence is necessarily affirmed by the 'I think', or expressed in it; this is of course not a *determinate* perception or *experience* of the soul as an object or substance, or as simple, nor *per impossibile* an empirical intuition of the *formal* 'I think', but just a 'feeling' of self as existing in the very act of my thinking (cf. *Prol*, AA iv 334, fn.; see again Heimsoeth's many reflections on this aspect). Kant's problem with the rational psychologist's view is not so much that the 'I' is considered to be given in the merely formal 'I think', but that, as the rational psychologist believes, the 'I's *unity* or *simplicity*, (or *identity*), is considered to be so given. Because the 'I think' must refer to an 'I' doing the thinking, the mere existence of the 'I' (the 'I am') is indeed given with the formal 'I think', for any instantiation of the 'I think'. Dyck appears to deny this, as we shall see below in discussing the Fourth Paralogism.

Whereas the first two chapters of the book consider only the historical context, chapters 3 to 6 address the details of the arguments concerning the four paralogisms respectively, but always preceded again by an elaborate historical context-setting focused on the particular paralogism at issue. Lastly, chapter 7 is dedicated to an interesting discussion of «reason's use in guiding the investigation of inner appearances in the Appendix to the Dialectic» (p. 17) of the first *Critique*. I have of course no space here to expound Dyck's arguments in these chapters in any detail, but here follow some reflections.

After having discussed the First Paralogism in chapter 3, Dyck considers the so-called 'Achilles' argument for the soul's simplicity in the Second Paralogism in chapter 4. Also here, looking at Kant's immediate predecessors is beneficial, Dyck maintains, for understanding «the specific role played by transcendental illusion in motivating the fallacious inference to the soul's simplicity in the second paralogism itself» (p. 105). Interestingly, Dyck delineates the variant approaches in the Wolffian tradition, in Knutzen, Mendelssohn and Wolff (as well as variants of Wolff's view by Thümmig, Bilfinger, Canz, and Reinbeck), to prove the soul's simplicity. For Wolff, the soul's simplicity was not demonstrated directly but by way of proving the soul's immateriality (a composite, a body, cannot think; so the soul is not a composite; hence it is simple). The differences between these approaches are subtle, and I am not sure if it changes our view of the Second Paralogism radically, depending on which precise predecessor we take Kant to direct his attack at. In any case, based on an early *Reflexion* from the 1770s (*Refl* 4234, AA xvii 470-471) Dyck argues that the rational psychologist, including the Kant of the silent decade, «can bypass the

Achilles argument [...] entirely and take the simplicity of the soul to follow inasmuch as it is straightforwardly identified with the 'I', the simplicity of which is already implied by its immediately *intuited* singularity» (p. 129; emphasis added). Dyck claims that, in the *Critique*, «Kant thus reserves his harshest criticism for himself in the Second Paralogism as he exposes his own previous inference to the soul's simplicity on the basis of its *empirically intuited* singularity as an error founded on the illusory appearance of the soul» (p. 139; emphasis added), thus confirming his reading of Kant's Paralogisms as a critique of the rational psychologist's reliance on empirical psychology.

In chapter 5, Dyck addresses the problem of the soul's consciousness of itself and its identity as delineated in the Third Paralogism. Crucially, Dyck argues that the paralogism is not so much about personal identity as about personality, in which the pre-critical Kant already showed a great interest, following the tradition. Dyck says: «[R]ather than simply exchanging one topic for another, [the critical Kant] came to understand *personality* quite generally to refer to a range of considerations relating to the condition of the soul during life [...], the nature of its identity over time, and its condition in the afterlife, all of which would naturally be of interest for the rational psychologist. I take it, then, that there is no obstacle to under- [189] - standing the Third Paralogism as targeting the rational psychologist's views on all of these issues which are conveniently collected under the general concept of *personality*» (pp. 160-161). Dyck does of course not deny that «Kant does discuss, and reject, any inference to the substantial identity of the soul on the basis of the identity of the 'I think'» (p. 142) – in other words, that the usual focus in the literature on numerical identity across time is warranted – and that the awareness of the identity of the logical subject of thought is by no means tied to the identity of the underlying substance. But Dyck focuses on the issue of personality. As Kant writes at B 408 (cited by Dyck, p. 165), the identity of the subject of which I am conscious does not concern the intuition of myself, «through which it is given as object». Hence, it «cannot signify the identity of the *person*, by which would be understood the consciousness of the identity of its own substance as a thinking being in all changes of state» (emphasis added), precisely what the rational psychologist believes *is* a warranted conclusion. However, Dyck rightly points out (p. 167) that, in the Third Paralogism, Kant does make positive claims about the personality of the soul, for the application of «the concept of personality [...] is also necessary and sufficient for practical use», which Dyck discusses in some detail (pp. 168 ff.), though «we can never boast of it as an extension of our self-knowledge through pure reason, which dazzles us with the uninterrupted continuous duration of the subject drawn from the mere concept of the identical self» (A 365-366). But, as Dyck states, this is not the robust sense of personality in the Wolffian conception, for which the proof of identity of personality of the soul safeguarded the soul's personality after death. Thus, «it would seem that Kant's attribution of personality, in the merely transcendental sense, to the soul ultimately has little in

common with the rational psychologist's understanding and use of that concept» (p. 167).

In commentaries on the Paralogisms, the Fourth Paralogism is often either ignored or considered «misplaced» (p. 173). In chapter 6, Dyck argues, by contrast, that Kant's «purpose in locating a discussion of idealism in the context of his criticism of the rational doctrine of the soul is to draw attention to the overlooked psychological ground for this philosophical position» (p. 174). He thus maintains that the Fourth Paralogism's discussion of idealism is completely appropriate in the context of the other paralogisms. The illusion is the assumption that the 'I think' is actually in time, leading to the question whether the objects of outer sense are actually in space. Dyck thinks the mistaken belief is that one confuses the 'I think' with the 'I am' (as in Descartes's *cogito ergo sum*). That is, the mistake is that one believes that the *cogito* is empirical in character. The key here is the illusory appearance of the soul, that is, the identification of the 'I' of the 'I am' as the subject of rational psychology. Dyck notes the continuity between Kant's pre-critical Wolffian and his critical views that we have an immediate experience of the 'I think' (AA 368-369). However, if we «focus on this superficial continuity», we «overlook the dramatic changes to Kant's view on the *cogito* implied by the introduction of the mature doctrine of the 'I think'» (p. 183). The critical view of the 'I think' is to consider it apart from any claim about existence (p. 184). According to Dyck, at first Kant failed to distinguish the existence that is apparently (but illusorily, as Dyck asserts) given in immediate perception from the 'I am' (p. 184). In the *Critique*, however, Kant is clear that the «I am» can offer no basis for a purely rational doctrine of the soul. Dyck claims there is «a dramatic reversal of Kant's own position in the 1770s where he had explicitly claimed that it was only on the basis of the 'I am' that we can assume 'that we have a soul' at all» (p. 185). In the *Critique*, by contrast, Kant makes it clear that «his previous views amount to a misidentification of the subject of rational psychology as the 'I am', or what amounts to the same thing, a misidentification of the ('I' of the) 'I think' with the ('I' of the) 'I am', where only the former is the proper subject of rational psychology» (p. 185-186). Dyck says, with reference to A 400, that the 'I think' only expresses «that it is something», and that the «existence thought in the 'I think'» is «not of the sort expressed in the 'I am'» (p. 186). But, in contrast to what Dyck suggests, Kant does not explicitly mention the 'I think' here, that is, in the paragraph in which the passage Dyck [190] refers to occurs. At A 400, we read: «I say only that I think something entirely simple, because I really do not know anything further to say about it than merely that it is something.» Kant does not explicitly speak of the 'I' or soul. Rather, it concerns at first the fact that of *an object in general* I just have a concept, and not an intuition; so what, by implication, must be denied is that we have a determinate cognition of the 'I' as an object, since an intuition is missing, *but there is no suggestion here that the 'I am' were not implied by the 'I think'*, as Dyck appears to suggest. That, contrary to what Dyck contends, the 'I am', the existence of the 'I' that thinks, *is* in fact implied by the 'I think' is confirmed by the

well-known passage at B 157 in the B-Deduction: «In the transcendental synthesis of the manifold of representations in general, [...] hence in the synthetic original unity of apperception, I am conscious of myself not as I appear to myself, nor *as* I am in myself, but only *that* I am [*daß ich bin*]» (emphasis added).

Dyck also misinterprets the context of A 347 B 405, where Kant says that, *in the context of the Paralogisms*, the ‘I think’ should only be taken «problematically[,] not insofar as it may contain a perception of an existence [*einem Dasein*] (the Cartesian *cogito, ergo sum*)». Here, Kant does not suggest that in an actual ‘I think’ I am not aware of myself as being, i.e., aware of my existence as thinker, even though such an awareness never constitutes a cognition of myself as a determinate, persisting object (in line with the passage at B 157). Dyck conflates claims regarding the soul’s determinate existence as a persisting object (for which we lack the requisite intuition) and the fact that the ‘I am’ is expressed in and by the ‘I think’ – Kant by no means denies the latter. And in fact, Kant confirms as much in the A-Paralogism: the *cogito* immediately asserts the actuality (existence) of the thinking ‘I’ (A 354-355); and in the B-Paralogism Kant says that my existence is not inferred from the ‘I think’, *but identical with it* (B 422n.), which shows that Kant is coming out on the intuition side of the aforementioned debate among Cartesians on whether the *cogito* is an inference or an intuition. This directly contradicts Dyck’s claim that in the *Critique* Kant no longer believes that the ‘I think’ and the ‘I am’ should be identified. Unsurprisingly, given his reading, he finds the note at B422 «hardly a model of lucidity», evincing «rather mystifying formulations» (pp. 188-189), but they are mystifying only on Dyck’s reading, which assumes that the ‘I think’ should not be identified with the ‘I am’. Kant explicitly says (1) that the ‘I think’ is an empirical proposition, (2) that the ‘I think’ expresses an indeterminate empirical intuition, perception, sensation, or that sensation lies at the ground of this existential proposition, and (3) that existence is here not meant as a category. Kant writes: «The ‘I think’ is [...] an empirical proposition, and contains within itself the proposition ‘I exist’. [...] and here existence is not yet a category [...]. An indeterminate perception here signifies only something real, which was given, and indeed only to thinking in general [*und zwar nur zum Denken überhaupt*], thus not as appearance, and also not as a thing in itself (a noumenon), but rather as something that in fact exists and is indicated as an existing thing in the proposition ‘I think’» (B 422, fn.).

Dyck tries to get round Kant’s repeated assertion that the ‘I think’ is an empirical proposition (B 420; B 422, fn.; B 428), by saying that «the thought of its unity is conditioned by the availability of an empirical manifold» (p. 189). But this is not what Kant says; it is rather a sensation that lies at the ground of the proposition, and is «given [...] *only to thinking in general*» (emphasis added), which makes the proposition an empirical one. It does not concern here the appearances in the empirical manifold that are required for the cognition of an object *in addition to* a formal ‘I think’; rather, the nature of the proposition ‘I think’ itself is at issue. Dyck



insists that Kant «proceeds to disambiguate the way in which the ‘I think’ includes a consciousness of existence from that determinate cognition of my own existence expressed in the ‘I am’» (p. 189); oddly, Dyck characterises the existence concerned in the former merely as a logical function (p. 189). In fact, however, Kant identifies consciousness of my own existence with the ‘I am’, as he says right at the outset of the note: «The ‘I think’ is [...] an empirical proposition, *and contains within itself the proposition ‘I exist’*» (emphasis added). The ‘I am’ does [191] not concern my self «as appearance», which it would be if it concerned a «determinate cognition of my own existence», as Dyck appears to think. A distinction should be made between the modality of «wie ich bin» (B 429) and the modality of «daß ich bin» (B 157); it is only the latter that is concerned in the ‘I am’ that is immediately expressed in the ‘I think’, not any *determinate* cognition of my existence, of the way(s) I exist *as* an appearance in the phenomenal world. It seems to me that Dyck is just confused about the necessary intimacy between the formal ‘I think’ and the existential ‘I am’, when he repeatedly says that the ‘I think’ and the ‘I am’ are not to be conflated (p. 194), suggesting that «the existence of (the ‘I’) of the ‘I think’» has nothing to do with «the existence of (the ‘I’) of the ‘I am’» (p. 190).

The highly interesting Chapter 7 is about the question of the soul as a force, as the causality of substance, and the fact that we cannot reduce the various «comparatively fundamental cognitive forces» to «a single absolutely fundamental force» (p. 206) as well as on the regulative use of the idea of the soul, discussed in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic. As Dyck says, a diversity among forces is contrary to reason’s systematic interest, however, and so it demands that the variety of forces be reduced to a single force, «in which all of the indefinitely many possible forces and faculties of the soul can be regarded as having a common ground» (p. 207). And though such a fundamental force cannot be discovered in experience, the «idea of a fundamental force [...] is at least the problem set by a systematic representation of the manifoldness of forces», as Kant says (A 649 B 677).

Despite having some essential reservations, as delineated above, I believe Dyck’s book is a formidable historical-contextualist account of Kant’s Paralogisms, which throws new light on certain aspects of the relation between Kant’s critique of rational psychology and the particularly Wolffian conception of a rational psychology that, as Dyck shows, takes empirical psychology as its starting point. I remain doubtful though about the extent to which this contextualising approach, specifically the claim that the idea of an empirical observation of the soul is the touchstone for rational psychology (and Kant’s critique thereof), fundamentally alters the way we should look at Kant’s Paralogisms in more philosophical terms.