

Kant and the simple representation I
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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to single out certain characterizations of the “I think” and the “transcendental subject” in an attempt to find out a connection with certain specific metaphysical characterizations of the thinking subject introduced by Kant in the critical period: the thinking, as spontaneity, is the being itself. Most importantly, two distinct meanings of “I think” need be identified: according to the first, mainly found in the Transcendental Deduction, “I think” is the act of apperception, whereas, according to the second, found in the Transcendental Deduction and in the section of Paralogisms in particular – *I think* is assumed in its representational nature. Secondly, the notion of the “transcendental subject” will be interpreted in formal terms as a specific concept that, *mutatis mutandis*, holds the same function of the concept of the “transcendental object”.

1. Preliminaries

In this paper the “I think” and the “transcendental subject” will be analysed in an attempt to find out a connection with certain specific metaphysical characterizations of the thinking subject introduced by Kant¹ in the critical period: the thinking, as spontaneity, is the being itself.

For it accompanies every single representation, the *I think* refers to the thinking subject regardless of its metaphysical nature. At the level of the metaphysics of the self, Kant speaks of the I (*das Ich*), the mind (*das Gemüt*), the thinking subject (*das denkende Subjekt*), and the soul (*die Seele*). Three points at issue stand out: (1) a semantic question concerning the type of reference of the representation *I*; (2) an epistemic question concerning the type of knowledge about the thinking subject produced by the representation *I think*; (3) a more strictly metaphysical question² on the characteristics assigned to the nature of the thinking subject.

From this specific perspective, all varieties of interpretations may be found in the debate: in particular, among these, an anti-metaphysical reading³, some of its arguments

being based on Kant's claims on the limits of cognition and objective significance, and others on Kant's rejection of rational psychology, all aiming at ruling out the possibility of any doctrine on the nature of the self as such. As will be seen, though no *Erkenntnis* (in Kantian technical terms) of the self is possible since there can be no relation between a given representation and a spatial-temporal object to be regarded as a self, Kant maintains several metaphysical claims on the nature of the thinking subject.

On the other hand, the empty form of the referential apparatus in transcendental apperception has been appraised in intrinsically different ways⁴. Two antithetical views on the central notions of the unity of apperception and of the identity of self-consciousness are particularly important in this context: the *substantial ownership reading*, addressed in the influential works by Henrich⁵ and Guyer⁶, and the *formal ownership reading*, especially upheld by Allison.

While the *substantial ownership reading* holds that in the absence of something identical or unified in different states, neither identity nor unity of consciousness is possible, according to the *formal ownership reading* the identity of self-consciousness cannot be considered as though there existed an identical or unified self. Based on the Paralogisms chapter of the Dialectic in particular, Allison⁷ emphasizes how Kant unfolds the *illusion* of considering the unity of apperception as the unity of a thing.

Even if the representation *I think* produces no knowledge of a particular self, the *I* can still play a representational role. For instance, Horstmann⁸ identifies two theses which call the two readings to mind in more than one way: in the A-edition Paralogism, the representation *I* is referred to what is termed "substrate", i.e., the *I* refers to an object even though this is not knowable. Instead, in the B-edition Paralogism, the "I think"

should be regarded only as an act of spontaneity: no entity is picked out by the *I* of apperception, the *I* merely representing the spontaneous activity of thought.

The aim of this paper is to single out certain characterizations of the “I think” on the basis of the *formal ownership reading* so as to place the Kantian metaphysical assumptions on the thinking subject in the context of this interpretative scenario. Most importantly, two distinct meanings of “I think” need be identified (cf. §§ 2-3): according to the first, mainly found in the Transcendental Deduction, “I think” is the act of apperception, whereas, according to the second, found in Transcendental Deduction and in the section of Paralogisms in particular – *I think* (in italics in these pages) is assumed in its representational nature. Secondly, the notion of “transcendental subject” will be interpreted in formal terms as a specific concept that, *mutatis mutandis*, holds the same function of the concept of the “transcendental object”.

Despite his holding a sharp separation between the metaphysical and the epistemic, Kant introduces two meanings of “I think” and the concept of “transcendental subject” to create a bridge between the two planes. In the last three paragraphs (§§4-6), I will attempt to show 1) that in line with the *formal ownership reading*, the identity or unity of self-consciousness does not so much presuppose the identity of a real subject but a formal identity based on the representation *I think*; 2) that Kant establishes precise metaphysical characterizations about the nature of the thinking subject: the thinking, as spontaneity, is the being itself; 3) that, to some extent, such characterisations are captured by the concept of “transcendental subject”. The thinking being represents itself as a transcendental subject = x through the simple representation *I*.

2. The transcendental deduction and the principle of the unity of apperception

2.1 *I think and the principle of the necessary synthetic unity of apperception*

In the famous passage B131-2, Kant introduces the *transcendental unity of apperception*. With Van Cleve, it is important to underline that the fragment indicates both a property and a principle: one ascribing the property to certain collections of representations of the being apprehended by the act of apperception⁹.

In particular, passage B131-2 marks the *incipit* of the B-Deduction condensing two crucial points that have been widely tackled by leading commentators. The first has a more general scope and concerns single representations: in order for a subject to represent something, this subject must be able to think that every representation is its own. Obviously, the point here is not so much that *de facto* representations are accompanied by the “I think”, but the necessity of the possibility of representation of self-ascriptions¹⁰. In this respect, Ameriks refers to a personal quality assigned to individual representations so that these can present the form (E): “I think that x, I think that y, I think that z”¹¹. Similarly, Carl speaks of the ability to make judgments from a first-person standpoint¹².

The second point concerns the set of representations accounting for a complex thought based on synthetic unity: the different representations will merge into one single consciousness as a thought ascribable to a subject, i.e., (T) “I think that (I think that x, I think that y, I think that z, etc.)”¹³. Not only must the uses of *I* be co-referential – the “I” thinking x must be identical to the “I” thinking y, and so on – but the identity of “I think” must also concern the highest-ranking “I think” (outside of parentheses here), upon which lies the synthesis of various representations in a single complex thought.

Taken together, for Allison these two points set up the *principle of the necessary synthetic unity of apperception*¹⁴, for which “all my representations in any given intuition must stand under the condition under which alone I can ascribe them to the identical self as my representations, and thus can grasp them together, as synthetically combined in an apperception, through the general expression I think” (B138). As will be seen below, in passages B137 and B138 Kant holds this principle to be analytic.

The constituents of a complex thought must be connected in a synthetic unity to allow for their ascription to a single thinking subject. Through this very act, the thinking subject brings the components of a complex thought into a synthetic unity and ascribes them to its identical self. Consequently, the one is the condition of the other and *vice versa*: the condition of possibility of the self-ascription of single representations is based on the fact that these can be brought into a synthetic unity, and the condition of possibility of such a synthetic unity is determined by the fact that the representations composing it can be ascribable to a single thinking subject.

If, then, a single complex thought logically involves a single thinking subject, it follows that every single component of such a complex thought must be ascribable to an identical thinking subject, and that the thinking subject must be aware of its identity in the synthetic unity of such a complex thought. In another famous excerpt, Kant holds that the analytical unit of apperception presupposes a synthetic unity: the consciousness of the “I think” identity requires not only a synthesis, but also a consciousness of the synthesis identity: “it is only because I can combine a manifold of given representations in one consciousness that it is possible for me to represent the identity of the consciousness in these representations itself” (B 134). Following Rosenberg, “the I that thinks X = the I

that thinks Y” presupposes the possibility of the synthetic unity of apperception: “I think (X + Y)”¹⁵.

Within Transcendental Deduction, all this should be related to the associations between synthesis, representations, and object, and between apperception, intellect, and judgment, specifying the categories as the conditions of possibility of knowledge. While the intellect is the faculty of knowledge through concepts, the object is what is given through the synthesis of the manifold in intuition on a conceptual basis. The union of representations *via* conceptual synthesis would not exist without the unity of apperception, which refers them to a given object to establish their objective validity (B 137). The unification of representations should also be linked to the faculty of judgment – regarded as the faculty of applying rules – and articulated according to the well-known distinction between objective and subjective unity of consciousness (cf. B 139-142).

If some features are to be ascribed to an object as such through the judgment, the scheme “x is F” – and the unity that follows – must be related to more than a simple “I think that x is F”. The original synthetic unity of apperception stands for the necessary possibility of an all-inclusive “I think”, i.e., the highest level of “I think” which is used to link all first-order acts of thought based on the scheme “I think that: I think that x is F, I think that y is G, I think that z is H, and so forth”¹⁶.

2.2 The I think is the act of apperception

The *principle of the synthetic unity of apperception* is the supreme principle in the whole of human cognition (B135) and the objective condition of all cognition (B138).

In the first place, the principle seems to equate the transcendental apperception with “I think”, as asserted in B137, whereby Kant explicitly states that the “I think” is the act of apperception:

The supreme principle of all intuition in relation to the understanding is that all the manifold of intuition stand under conditions of the original synthetic unity of apperception. All the manifold representations of intuition stand under [this principle] insofar as they must be capable of being combined in one consciousness; for without that nothing could be thought or cognized through them, since the given representations would not have in common the act of apperception, I think, and thereby would not be grasped together in a self-consciousness.

As seen above, in B138 Kant also uses the “I think” as an expression of the act of apperception: all representations in any given intuition must stand under the condition of apperception through which the subject can ascribe them to its identical self as its own representations and combine them synthetically through the general expression “I think”. The same point is expressed in B140, where Kant distinguishes the necessary and universally valid “objective unity of consciousness” from the subjective unity of apperception, which is a determination of the inner sense through which that manifold of intuition is empirically given: “The pure form of intuition in time, on the contrary, merely as intuition in general, which contains a given manifold, stands under the original unity of consciousness, solely by means of the necessary relation of the manifold of intuition to the one I think, thus through the pure synthesis of the understanding, which grounds *a priori* the empirical synthesis”.

As mentioned above, the principle of the unity of apperception expresses an analytic proposition even though it is based on the introduction of the synthetic unit of the manifold in the intuition (B138): the statement “the synthetic unity of consciousness is an objective condition of all cognition” expresses an analytical principle asserting that all representations must stand under such a principle in order for the thinking subject to ascribe them to its identical self as its representations. Only in this way can the subject grasp them as a synthetically combined whole in apperception; this act of apperception of conjunction is precisely expressed by the universal expression “I think”.

2.3 A vicious cycle

As will be discussed in the next paragraph, *I think* (in italics in these pages) is also considered a concept or representation, though of special kind. However, it is precisely at this stage in the Transcendental Deduction that Kant recognizes a double meaning for “I think”, namely, as an act and as a representation, which seems to trigger paradoxical consequences in a famous passage.

In B132 Kant states that the representation *I think* is an act of spontaneity, i.e., it is not concerned with sensibility but with *pure* apperception – to distinguish it from the empirical – or *original*; it corresponds to that self-consciousness producing the representation *I think* which accompanies all representations although it cannot be accompanied by any further representation in turn. Howell remarks that the ensuing circularity – the representation *I think* is the act of apperception producing the representation *I think* – is “a hasty way of stressing the spontaneity and underivedness of the I think”: the capacity or faculty of apperception is original (A117), and produces “the underived and not-further-explicable I think”¹⁷. In other words, based on the

transcendental apperception – understood as the act of conjunction of the representations in synthetic unity – the thinking subject is characterized as a self-conscious subject through the first-person representational component *I think*.

By equating it with the transcendental apperception, “I think” is considered an act of conjunction of the representations that establishes the supreme principle of all cognition. On the other hand, at the very heart of the Transcendental Deduction the *I think* is described as a representation that accompanies and makes all other representations possible by representing the identical self of the thinking subject in the synthetic unit.

This last point – the *I* as a representation of the identical self – is restated at the heart of the Transcendental Deduction, namely in B135, in a much more straightforward way than in B132. Immediately after the passage where the principle of the necessary unity of apperception is held to be analytic, Kant asserts that “without [a synthesis of the manifold given in an intuition] [the] thoroughgoing identity of self-consciousness could not be thought”. In the following paragraph this constant identity is related to the representation *I*: Kant goes beyond saying that *I* is a representation and specifies that it is a simple one: “through the I, as a simple representation, nothing manifold is given; it can only be given in the intuition, which is distinct from it, and thought through combination in a consciousness”.

Notwithstanding Kant’s huge effort to keep the two planes apart, these passages are paradigmatic examples of the close connection between the metaphysical and the representational dimensions and of the fact that two different meanings of “I think” are taken into account here: as it will be said, they are two faces of the same principle. The proposal just outlined should be discussed and argued based on the ontological question

that Kant introduces by equating the thinking with the being. Before, however, a more detailed discussion on *I think* in its representational sense is needed.

3. Transcendental Dialectic: the I think and the analysis of the Paralogisms

3.1 The analysis of the Paralogisms: an epistemic closure

It is in the Transcendental Dialectic, precisely in the section on the Paralogisms of Pure Reason, that Kant focuses more explicitly on the *I think* as a concept or representation and assigns a number of features to it. In this section Kant establishes a sort of epistemic closure regarding the ontological nature of the thinking subject, denying the possibility for the pure or empirical apperception to be the object of knowledge regardless of the conditions of possible experience. No psychological idea can be associated to a knowable content: in the Kantian nomenclature, transcendental ideas are necessarily produced by reason and, unlike the categories of the intellect, have no objective reference in experience. In particular, with the first of the transcendental ideas – the psychological idea proper – by introducing the idea of an ultimate unconditional subject the reason tries to find a suitable object in “I myself, considered merely as thinking nature (soul)” (A682/B710). At the beginning of both editions of the chapter on Paralogisms (B399), Kant defines the *I think* as concept: although it takes no part in the general list of the transcendental concepts, and although it has no special title, the *I think* is a transcendental concept for it is the vehicle of all concepts, included the transcendental ones, and serves to introduce all thinking to the sphere of consciousness.

Kant attacks any metaphysical approach attempting to found a rational doctrine of the soul (*rationale Seelenlehre*) based on the inferences that employ the concept *I*

independently of experience. By means of such inferences, and without the conditions of applicability of the categories to the intuitions, the *rationale Seelenlehre* claims to know the nature of the subject as a soul or as a thinking substance by the *a priori* ascription of categories considered as transcendental predicates to the I or soul, thus taken as noumenal object.

In particular, on account of a systematic connection (*Zusammenhang*), Kant outlines the dialectical propositions and rejects rational psychology's claims and its related topics produced following the *Leitfaden* of categories, to assign a thinking entity the following intrinsic features: 1. the soul is substance; 2. in its quality, simple; 3. in the different times in which it exists, numerically identical, i.e., unity (not plurality); 4. in relation to possible objects in space (A345/B403). The categorical titles do not follow the standard method and start from the category of the relation to proceed with quality, quantity, and mode: Kant's first aim is to analyse rational psychology's propositions with neither intrusion of the experience nor intervention of a perceived existence.

In the A-version Kant highlights the paralogistic nature of the four propositions of topics: the application of these characteristics produces only an illusory knowledge, which may also take the form of a fallacious syllogism: the paralogism proper. With regard to the B-version, Capozzi points out the presence of two distinct arguments¹⁸: in the first argument, Kant examines the soul based on pure apperception and discloses that a) analytically, the topics of the rational doctrine of the soul are not attainable; b) synthetically, the first proposition of the topics referring to the substantiality of the thinking being as such, from which the others derive, is not attainable. With the second argument Capozzi highlights how Kant does proceed from a different assumption: a

rationale Seelenlehre built through an analytical procedure whose object is the perception of an existence – the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* – is groundless. In this case, Kant refers to the empirical apperception, the inner sense, and applies his analysis to the “I think”, which is allegedly assumed to be real and, therefore, perceived as existing in the stream of consciousness.

The two arguments are based on the distinction, which will be taken up later, between the proposition “I think” meant in a Cartesian way, which comes with the perception of an existence, and the proposition “I think” assumed problematically, i.e., in “its mere possibility, in order to see which properties might flow from so simple a proposition as this for its subject (whether or not such a thing might now exist)” (A347; cf. B406).

This distinction is associated with a further distinction between transcendental and empirical apperception, which establishes “how the I that I think is to differ from the I that intuits itself [...] and yet be identical with the latter as the same subject” and, therefore, “I as intelligence and thinking subject cognize my self as an object that is thought, insofar as I am also given to myself in intuition, only, like other phenomena, not as I am for the understanding but rather as I appear to myself” (B156).

3.2 *I as a concept*

As mentioned above, the first argument of the B-version consists of two parts: the first, analytic, is developed in B407-409, and the second, synthetic, in B410-413. Both sections show that the propositions of topics of *rationale Seelenlehre* are not valid, i.e., no knowledge of the thinking subject’s metaphysical nature is attainable.

The analytic approach dwells on the analysis of the consciousness of the self and thought in general, which cannot lead to a determination of the metaphysical thinking

subject as object. With this respect, Kant is forthright: “All *modi* of self-consciousness in thinking are therefore not yet themselves concepts of the understanding of objects (categories), but mere functions, which provide thought with no object at all, and hence also do not present my self as an object to be cognized” (B407). It is not the determining self but only what pertains to the determinable self – i.e., the inner intuition – that can be an object to be cognized.

At the same time, in the four categorical titles Kant introduces a clear-cut distinction between a metaphysical and a representational plane, between the “thinking subject”, or “thinking I” considered as a determining subject, and the logical subject, or the “I” of apperception. The thinking or determining subject is what determines the relation making up every judgment. Kant explicitly expounds this in the first title on substantiality: “in every judgment I am always the determining subject of that relation that constitutes the judgment” (B407). As for the arguments in the Transcendental Deduction, it seems clear that the subject that determines the relation making up the judgment is determining by virtue of the features assigned to the unit of transcendental apperception. In the following passages in B407, Kant shifts focus from the metaphysical plane of the determining subject to a representational one, i.e., the representation of “I”: the subject that thinks is one thing, but what is represented in thought as subject is another. This step is necessary in order to introduce the well-known epistemic closure: through the representation of a subject it is not possible to assert that the thinking self is a substance.

The same argumentative structure recurs in three other titles. For example, under the title of simplicity, the *I* of apperception is a representation which designates a logically simple subject; it follows that *I* features in every thought. If the concept of “thought” is

analysed, the representation *I* is implicit in it, producing an analytic proposition. Likewise, the propositions that the *I* of apperception is identical in each manifold, and that its existence as a thinking being is distinct from external things are analytic. Nonetheless, the characteristics assigned to the representation *I* allow no epistemic conclusion; in particular, from the representation of a subject as an essentially simple, identical substance detached from matter it is not possible to conclude that the thinking self is a simple, identical substance detached from the body. These are synthetic propositions that need not only the involvement of the categories, but also an intuition. In the transcendental system, however, the intuition can only be sensible: it cannot take part in the intellect or in the field of thought, hence the simple representation *I* – referred to as the poorest representation of all – lies solely in such a field (B408).

The same conclusion can be drawn with reference to the synthetic moment. The synthetic method is based on the syllogism, regarded as a synthetic, rational, and necessary procedure used as early as in 1781 to criticize rational psychology's attempts to obtain the four syllogisms of the topics. The introduction to the four paralogisms remains unaltered, but in the B-version Kant just shows the paralogistic character of the syllogism on the substantial nature of the thinking subject¹⁹:

What cannot be thought otherwise than as subject does not exist otherwise than as subject, and is therefore substance.

Now a thinking being, considered merely as such, cannot be thought otherwise than as subject.

Therefore it also exists only as such a thing, i.e., as substance. (B411)

Kant explains why the syllogism is a paralogism by unmasking a *sophisma figurae dictionis* based on the ambiguous nature of the middle term: the predicate of the minor premise does not coincide with the subject of the major premise.

Even in the synthetic moment Kant analyses the representational nature of the *I* starting precisely from the different meaning of the middle term in the two premises. In the major premise the thought or concept's reference is a being that can be thought of in every respect and, as such, that can be given in intuition. On the other hand, in the minor premise the concept's reference is the self-consciousness; here, if what is represented is the relation to oneself as subject (as the form of thinking), in the concept of "Thinking" "the I always serves as subject of consciousness" (B142). The only possible conclusion that can be drawn from this argument is not the paralogistic interpretation on the metaphysical nature of the thinking entity existing as a substantial subject²⁰, but the one concerning a tautological proposition that simply specifies the concept of the thought analytically. For this reason, it is not possible to assign any property to the manner of existence of the thinking subject: "in thinking my existence I can use myself only as the subject of judgment, which is an identical proposition, that discloses absolutely nothing about the manner of my existence" (B412).

All this reflects Kant's *Copernican turn*: in the transcendental approach, the first-order talk about objects is replaced by a second-order talk about the concept of an object and the conditions of the representation of an object. In this case, what we are referring to is the thinking I, so the first-order talk about the determining subject or apperception is replaced by the second-order talk about the concept of thinking or the self-consciousness through which the subject represents its relation with itself as subject.

In *Anthropology* and *Fortschritte* Kant regards the *I* of apperception as being strongly linked with the *logical I*²¹. This connection is articulated in *Opus Postumum*, where Kant maintains that the first act of the faculty of representation is the consciousness of oneself, which is a merely logical act, as we will see in § 4. The *I* of apperception is the logical subject, which specifies the simple representational nature of the *I* in *I think*.

3.3 The “*I exist thinking*”: the empirical apperception

In *Anthropology* Kant introduces the “*I as subject*” and “*I as object*” based on the distinction between transcendental and empirical apperception²²:

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

The distinction enables the subject to (re)present itself in two ways: through the “I” that thinks and through the “I” that intuits itself. In another passage, Kant states that “The I can be taken in a twofold manner: I as human being and I as intelligence. I in the first sense means: I am an object of the inner and the outer sense. I in the second sense means that I am the object of the inner sense only”²³. Obviously, this does not imply two Is: “I as a thinking being am one and the same subject with myself as a sensing being”²⁴.

Unlike the “I think” regarded as an equivalent *a priori* proposition to the *I am thinking*, from the empirical angle the “I think” is an equivalent empirical proposition to the *I exist thinking*: there is no logical function any longer, but only the determination of the subject at the level of existence, i.e., the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*, as seen above. The object of intuition necessarily involves the inner sense: the I as object of perception is revealed by the empirical apperception as a phenomenon that unfolds through the form of time. From the angle of receptivity, at first glance the consciousness of the self as the object of perception appears variable, “it can provide no standing or abiding self in this stream of inner appearances” (A 107).

In primis, also as regards the empirical apperception, Kant rejects the possibility to move from the inner perception of something existing as thinking (what Kant terms “eine unbestimmte empirische Anschauung” – B 423 n.) to the determination of this something as existing substance in time and space, the forms of inner and outer sense through which all phenomena are given; otherwise, this would not be thought, but matter. The consciousness of the self as contemplated by the empirical apperception is the inner perception of something that is not the object of the outer sense²⁵.

For this reason, from the empirical angle the *I think* “expresses an indeterminate empirical intuition, i.e., a perception” (B 423 n.); such is an *empirical* intuition because the empirical-existential proposition *I think/I exist* lies on a sensation belonging to sensibility and revealing itself only in time. Moreover, it is *indeterminate* due to the lack of space, namely the form in and through which the objects manifest themselves and are determined²⁶.

4. *Thinking is being*

Two distinct meanings of the “I think” have been identified: the first, mainly present in the Transcendental Deduction, regards the “I think” as the act of apperception. The second, present in Transcendental Deduction, and especially in the section on Paralogisms, considers the *I think* (in italics in these pages) in its representational nature. With Ameriks, the latter can be considered the thought of the *I as epistemic subject*, the general representation of the *I* as the subject of apperception standing for something present in the general thought of the transcendental apperception. The former, on the other hand, is the thought of the *I as existing subject*: “wherever there really is an epistemic subject, there is a confrontation with one’s own ‘being itself’, an I that at least has ‘existence’”²⁷.

Even though for Ameriks it is no mystery how the same being can be both kinds of subjects, these characterizations are very different. In what follows, Kant specifies a precise ontological issue: *I as existing subject* is the thinking, so the thinking is the being itself. In the next section it shall be argued that thinking as being can be thought through the concept of transcendental subject.

As seen in the first critique, Kant affirms that pure apperception is the original consciousness. As a fundamental transcendental principle, in *Opus postumum* Kant states that “The first act of the faculty of representation is the consciousness of myself which is a merely logical act underlying all further representation, through which the subject makes itself into an object”²⁸. If the faculty of representation proceeds from *apperceptio*, understood as a merely logical act or as an act of thought, the self-consciousness is the first act of knowledge:

The first act of knowledge, rather, is: I am an object of thought (*cogitabile*) and intuition (*dabile*) for myself, initially as *pure* (not empirical) representation, which knowledge is called *a priori*. This act contains as the *formal* element of this unity a principle of the connection of the manifold of these representations, independent of all perception.²⁹

The pure apperception can be expressed by *sum*. With Capozzi, an ontological question arises here: *sum* is nothing but activity – this having nothing receptive about it – as it will not mingle with any element in the sensible dimension. It is a thinking activity to the extent that *sum* and *cogito* are *on a par*, in the first act of knowledge “I am thinking” is a tautology: “In the proposition: I am thinking, because it is completely identical, no progress, no synthetic judgment is given to me; for it is tautological and the alleged inference: I think, *therefore* I am, is no inference”³⁰. The ontological question is specified in the assertion that the subject bound to the first act of knowledge – i.e., to former apperception – is the first subject and the first *Wesen* being thought: with the first act of knowledge, expressed by the verb “I am”, the subject is the being itself.

The first act of knowledge is the verb: I am, - self-consciousness, for I, [as] subject, am an object to myself. In this, however, there lies a relation which precedes all determination of the subject, namely, the relation of intuition to the concept, in which the I is taken doubly (that is, in a double meaning) insofar as I posit myself: that is, on the one hand, as thing in itself (*ens per se*), and, secondly, as object of intuition; to be precise, either objectively as appearance, or as constituting myself *a priori* into a thing (that is, as thing [*Sache*] in itself).³¹

Therefore, the “I” as subject – the self-consciousness – is the being itself. The passage B429 highlights the point: “in the consciousness of myself in mere thinking I am the being itself”. *Sum/cogito* refers to a subject/being that exhibits no properties because it is a something in general (A355). Here Kant is claiming that the subject has an intellectual consciousness of itself as the existence of the being itself (*Das Wesen selbst*), regarded as something (*ein Etwas*) unknown.

This self-consciousness is specified in representational terms, “as intellectual consciousness of my existence, in the representation I am, which accompanies all my judgments and actions of my understanding” (BXL). In B277 Kant states: “the representation I am, which expresses the consciousness that can accompany all thinking, is that which immediately includes the existence of a subject in itself”.

From this metaphysical perspective there emerge a few characterizations of the thinking subject that may explain the absence of an epistemic identification in the representational synthesis. On the one hand, the *I think/I am* is the *I as epistemic subject*, the formal condition of all thinking: “the I think must be able to accompany all representations” (B 132); “the representation I am accompanies all my judgments and actions of my understanding” (BXL). Yet, the self-consciousness is the consciousness of

a subject/being considered as something in general, namely something unidentifiable from an epistemic perspective. The *I as existing subject* is an intellectual awareness of self-existence summarized by those *I am* or *I think* representations that accompany every other representation; as such, they present no proprieties. In point of fact, due to the absence of intuition, it is not possible to determine if that something does exist as a persistent substance in order to make knowledge. This basic kind of consciousness discloses one's own self and existence, i.e., what has been referred to as a kind of special self-familiarity, in a way that cannot be reduced in the terms of a description³². Ameriks refers to this as the *fundamental thesis*³³: “in the consciousness of myself in mere thought, I am the being itself, although nothing in myself is thereby given for thought” (B 429).

What is being assumed according to the representation *I* is just an existent devoid of any proprieties. The subject is able to know that it exists as a thinking activity: “I exist as an intelligence that is merely conscious of its faculty for combination” (B159); however, it is not able to know what it is: “I cannot determine my existence as that of a self-active being; rather I merely represent the spontaneity of my thought [...]. Yet this spontaneity is the reason I call myself an intelligence” (B158)³⁴.

The subject's being is inaccessible from an epistemic angle: what is given is nothing but thoughts regarded as its predicates, which cannot enable one to grasp the thinking subject's nature. If the subject bound to the first act of knowledge is the first object being thought, and if the relative representation is a representation of an indeterminate *aliquid*, nothing more than a logical identity can be given through the *I* taken as the representational subject that accompanies all thoughts.

5. The concept of transcendental subject

With reference to these metaphysical considerations, how many selves are there? This issue also touches the question regarding the nature of transcendental idealism and the important distinction between “appearances” and “things in themselves”. As is known, there is currently a lot of debate about this topic³⁵: even though there is a continuum of interpretive views, roughly Kantian scholars account for this distinction in two ways: the first is called “one-world” or “two-aspect” interpretations (appearances and things in themselves are the same things); the second is called “two-world” or “two object” interpretations (appearances and things in themselves are not, in any important sense, the same things). As Marshall points out, “understanding Kant’s metaphysics of the self is more directly relevant to interpreting his transcendental idealism than many of his readers have assumed”³⁶, above all in order to corroborate the “one-world” or “two-aspect” interpretation. For instance, for the Allison’s two-aspect view the distinction between appearances and things in themselves has an epistemic rather than an ontological import, since it has to be considered a difference between two types of concept of an object rather than two kinds of object. The concept of the object as appearance involves a reference to the necessary conditions for the cognition of an object while the concept of the object as thing in itself includes no such reference, i.e. it abstracts from the cognitive standpoint. In effect, not only both phenomenal and noumenal aspects are ascribed to the self or the subject, but in several passages (cf. *infra*) Kant suggests that if the subject appears as to be double, this does not imply the ontological commitment to two Is, on the contrary “I as a thinking being am one and the same subject with myself as a sensing being”³⁷.

Consequently, Kant seems to introduce no different selves or entities but different types of self-representation.

With Ameriks, two different theoretical dimensions are to be singled out. The first concerns the distinction just stated, between the *I as existing subject* and the *I as epistemic subject*, which is internal to the transcendental apperception apparatus. The second dimension regards the manifold characterisations attributed to the different “selves”, each time identified according to the transcendental and empirical distinguishing characteristics of apperception and the consequent two ways the subject can represent itself (cf. *infra*)³⁸. In this respect, Van Cleve indicates at least three ways: 1) the empirical self or subject, the self as encountered in introspection based on empirical apperception; 2) the transcendental self or subject, which is the thinker of our thoughts, the haver of our experiences; 3) “finally, the noumenal self is the ‘self in itself’ — the real self or the self as it really is”³⁹. As Van Cleve holds three selves to be too many, he reduces their number by equating the transcendental self with the noumenal self: “The transcendental self must exist in its own right, I mean that it must exist independent of being represented”⁴⁰.

One can’t but assume the existence of the noumenal subject: “If thinkers or representers were not noumenal beings, we would have the absurdity of something that exists only as the content of representations, yet is itself the subject of representations”⁴¹. This, however, does not imply the transcendental subject to be equated with the noumenal subject; for instance, for Schulting the transcendental subject, considered as the logical characteristics of the thinking subject, is not – or, at least, need not be – equivalent to the noumenal self. For Rosenberg, the transcendental subject is a “formal” notion, adverting

to modes of representation⁴². In my view, the notion of transcendental subject is just as “formal” as that of “transcendental object”.

The thinking subject has intellectual consciousness of itself just as of the existence of the being itself (*Das Wesen selbst*); this is considered an indeterminate *aliquid* (*ein Etwas*), an object that cannot be acquired in the same way as phenomena. Obviously, it cannot be acquired as noumenon either, otherwise the thinking subject might intuit itself through apperception. For these reasons, Kant states that “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. This representation is a thinking, not an intuiting” (B 157). “The consciousness of myself in the representation I is no intuition at all, but a merely intellectual representation of the self-activity of a thinking subject” (B 278).

To think this something as an indeterminate object (which is not known in the manner of phenomena), Kant introduces the concept of transcendental subject that must be related to the representation *I* to play the same role of the concept of the *transcendental object*. As will be seen soon, despite this functional equivalence, the two notions display remarkably different characterisations: the *I think* is a representational *unicum*.

According to the well-known distinction between “noumenon” and “phenomenon”⁴³, the object has an existence in itself and is presented as a phenomenon through intuition. Provided that it is neither possible to know an object in itself nor assign it certain properties beyond the representational order, to think an object in itself one must employ the indeterminate thought that *something in general* (= x) exists in itself and appears through the intuition (A 104). The concept of an object in general is nothing but the *concept* of a *transcendental object*. Intuitions are sensible singular representations that

immediately refer to objects, whereas appearances – the products of this relation – are representations that must be kept distinct from what is referred to as “transcendental object” (= x). Considered in its function, the concept of a general or transcendental object (= x) is the indeterminate thought of a single object having an existence in itself: it is the condition of possibility to think the singular object – spatio-temporally determined by the intuition as *Erscheinung* – to provide it with objective reality through the consequent unification of empirical concepts and the relative attribution of the properties presented by the intuition⁴⁴.

On the other hand, when Kant addresses “Thinking, taken in itself”, he states that “Thinking” is the logical function as well as sheer spontaneity, although no subject of consciousness is presented. The subject thinks itself in the same way it thinks an object in general: “In this way I represent myself to myself neither as I am nor as I appear to myself, but rather I think myself only as I do every object in general from whose kind of intuition I abstract” (B429).

The concept of transcendental subject (= x) is the indeterminate thought of a thinking being having an existence in itself. The famous passages A346/B404 introduce the concept of transcendental subject: when he criticises the possibility of a science of pure reason about the nature of the thinking being, Kant states that

we can place nothing but the simple and in content for itself wholly empty representation I, of which one cannot even say that it is a concept, but a mere consciousness that accompanies every concept. Through this I, or He, or It (the thing), which thinks, nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of thoughts = x which is recognized only through the

thoughts that are its predicates, and about which, in abstraction, we can never have even the least concept.

The thinking being represents itself as a transcendental subject = x through the wholly empty representation *I*. Nonetheless, the concept of a transcendental subject is different from the concept of a transcendental object in certain respects. The transcendental object is introduced to deal with the problem of objectivity, i.e., the issue of the “immanentization” of cognition: since it is impossible to stand outside representations to compare them with transcendently real entities, the concept of a transcendental object should be considered a sort of transcendental pointer: “it serves to define the philosophical task by indicating that the commonsensical and transcendently realistic concern with the “real” nature of objects must be replaced by a critical analysis of the conditions of the representation of an object”⁴⁵.

The concept of transcendental subject can be considered a sort of transcendental pointer too; however, since no intuition is given here, the concept of transcendental subject will enable no determination of a spatio-temporally singular object through the unification of the conceptual dimension: even though the *I* can be employed as a pointer to conceive the difference between the representation and what is represented, it cannot determine any experiential object: nothing else is given, nor can it be thought of, except the wholly empty representation *I*.

The point is also stated in A350, where Kant critically points out that the first syllogism of transcendental psychology “imposes on us an only allegedly new insight” as it mistakes “the constant logical subject of thinking” for “the cognition of a real subject of inherence, with which we do not and cannot have the least acquaintance”. For Kant,

“consciousness is the one single thing that makes all representations into thoughts, and in which, therefore, as in the transcendental subject, our perceptions must be encountered”. Soon after, Kant states that “apart from *this logical significance of the I*, we have no acquaintance with the subject in itself that grounds this I as a substratum, just as it grounds all thoughts” (italics added).

Therefore, the concept of transcendental subject is tantamount to the representation *I* or the logical *I*: the *I* is the simple and wholly empty representation; the transcendental subject is what is represented, an X. In B399 Kant already states that *I think* is a transcendental – therefore simple – concept for it is the vehicle of all transcendental concepts and “serves to introduce all thinking as belonging to consciousness”. Through this representation the subject can think itself as a thinking being and can refer to its own self based on *transcendental designation*.

With the notion of *transcendental designation*, Kant anticipates some of the features of *self-reference without identification*⁴⁶. The condition of possibility of all judgments relies on the act “I think” and, at this level, the intellectual representation *I* designates only transcendentially, no conceptual mediation being involved. It is a simple representation bearing no content and solely referring to something in general: “its properties [of subject] are entirely abstracted from if it is designated merely through the expression “I”, wholly empty of content (which I can apply to every thinking subject)” (A 355). An empty or bare form (A443/B471), *I* designates, but does not represent: “For in that which we call the soul, everything is in continual flux, and it has nothing abiding, except perhaps (if one insists) the I, which is simple only because this representation has no

content, and hence no manifold, on account of which it seems to represent a simple object, or better put, it seems to designate one” (A 381).

The difference is important: the *I* appended to thoughts designates the “subject of inherence” (A 355); the subject of inherence is not the real thinking subject but a mere logical role. The *I* – as a “simple” or “empty” representation – is a representational *unicum* that only signifies something in general, i.e., a transcendental subject (A 355); it represents no thinking subject, as it uses neither content mediation nor prior instances of identification. The *I* is neither conceptual, i.e., articulable in conceptual marks, nor intuitional representation, since this presupposes a relation to the sensible spatio-temporal forms:

But it is obvious that the subject of inherence is designated only transcendently through the *I* that is appended to thoughts, without noting the least property of it, or cognizing or knowing anything at all about it. It signifies only a Something in general (a transcendental subject), the representation of which must of course be simple, just because one determines nothing at all about it; for certainly nothing can be represented as more simple than that which is represented through the concept of a mere Something. (A 355)

Kant restates this point in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*:

The *I*, the general correlate of apperception, and itself merely a thought, designates, as a mere prefix, a thing of undetermined meaning – namely, the subject of all predicates – without any condition at all that would distinguish this representation of the subject from that of a

something in general: a substance, therefore, of which, by this term, one has no concept of what it may be⁴⁷.

6. Conclusion

Passage B429 can be employed to sum up the topics developed in this paper; these might be grouped into five steps, two metaphysical (the first and the fourth) and three epistemic (the others):

(1) [Thinking, taken in itself, is merely the logical function and hence the sheer spontaneity of combining the manifold of a merely possible intuition]; (2) [and in no way does it present the subject of consciousness as appearance, merely because it takes no account at all of the kind of intuition, whether it is sensible or intellectual. In this way I represent myself to myself neither as I am nor as I appear to myself], (5) [but rather I think myself only as I do every object in general from whose kind of intuition I abstract]. (3) [If here I represent myself as subject of a thought or even as ground of thinking, then these ways of representing do not signify the categories of substance or cause, for these categories are those functions of thinking (of judging) applied to our sensible intuition, which would obviously be demanded if I wanted to cognize myself]. (5) [But now I want to become conscious of myself only as thinking]; (2) [I put to one side how my proper self is given in intuition, and then it could be a mere appearance that I think, but not insofar as I think]; (4) [in the consciousness of myself in mere thinking I am the being itself, about which, however, nothing yet is thereby given to me for thinking.]

1. I think (*qua* Thinking) is spontaneity: “Thinking, taken in itself, is merely the logical function and hence the sheer spontaneity of combining the manifold of a merely

possible intuition". Understanding is spontaneous (A51/B75) and "can best be understood in terms of his identification of its fundamental activity with judgement (A73/B94)", hence the work of judgement can be considered as the sheer spontaneity of understanding in action⁴⁸. If to think is to unify the manifold conceptually, every thought expressed by a judgment is necessarily based on the principle of transcendental apperception; it follows that apperception is the consciousness of the act of thinking or the consciousness of spontaneity. For this reason, Kant identifies the "I think" with apperception taken in itself as an act of spontaneity (B132). "I think" (*qua* Thinking) is then regarded as an act of connection of the representations, the supreme principle of all cognition: it is the bearer or producer of all judgments, the ground of all mental self-ascriptions, the act of judging one's given representations. This entails that

2. I think (*qua* Thinking) is not determined representationally. As spontaneity, I think (*qua* Thinking) represents no thinking subject: "in no way does it present the subject of consciousness as appearance, merely because it takes no account at all of the kind of intuition, whether it is sensible or intellectual. In this way I represent myself to myself neither as I am nor as I appear to myself". "I put to one side how my proper self is given in intuition, and then it could be a mere appearance that I think, but not insofar as I think". *A fortiori*, this entails that

3. I think (*qua* Thinking) is no object of knowledge. "If here I represent myself as subject of a thought or even as ground of thinking, then these ways of representing do not signify the categories of substance or cause, for these categories are those functions of thinking (of judging) applied to our sensible intuition, which would obviously be demanded if I wanted to cognize myself".

4. I think (*qua* Thinking) is the being itself. “In the consciousness of myself in mere thinking I am the being itself, about which, however, nothing yet is thereby given to me for thinking”. This entails that

5. *I think* (*qua* representation) is the way the subject represents or thinks itself to itself. If the “I think” (*qua* Thinking) is the being itself, and nothing is thereby given to the subject for thinking, the subject can think itself only as an object in general: “I think myself only as I do every object in general from whose kind of intuition I abstract”. This entails that “to become conscious of oneself only as thinking” or to think oneself as subject of a thought, or even as the ground of thinking, the subject uses the concept of transcendental subject, i.e., the indeterminate thought of a thinking being having an existence in itself. Yet, apart from this indeterminate thought, which has its representational vehicle in the simple or empty representation *I*, the subject has no acquaintance with itself which grounds this *I* as a substratum just as it grounds all thoughts. For this reason, the consciousness of oneself as thinking is only expressed by the *I*, i.e., by the intellectual representation of the spontaneity of a thinking subject (B278).

In a nutshell, if the *I* is the representational correlate of the apperception or the representation of a logical subject, it must be understood as the representation of something in general as the self-consciousness is an intellectual awareness of self-existence, unidentifiable from an epistemic angle. What is represented is a transcendental subject of thoughts = *x*, recognized only through the thoughts that are its predicates. The fact that the transcendental subject of thoughts = *x* is recognized only through the thoughts being its predicates is tantamount to saying that the representation *I* is contained

analytically in every thought (A350); or also that the analytical unity of apperception is only possible under the presupposition of some synthetic unity (B133-134).

To think is to unify the manifold conceptually; every thought expressed by a judgment must be based on the principle of transcendental apperception. For this reason, Kant holds that the *I* is inherent in the very concept of thought (B132), determining the form of every judgment in general terms (B 406). In the A-edition Paralogism, Kant tackles the relation between all thoughts and the *I* taken as the common subject to which they inhere to affirm that the representation *I* features in all thoughts (A 350). The *I* of apperception – seen as a “logically simple subject” – is analytically contained in the concepts of “thinking” or “thoughts” (*des Denkens*) (B 407-8). If the *I* is the subject of thinking⁴⁹, and if it is not represented except in the form of the judgment established by the synthetic unit of apperception, the *I* expresses the analytical unity of apperception which is only possible under the presupposition of some synthetic unity.

In conclusion, the “I think” (*qua* Thinking) is the synthetic unit of apperception determining the *I think* (*qua* representation) as an analytical unity of apperception, i.e., the *I think* (*qua* representation) is the representation through which the spontaneity of “I think” (*qua* Thinking) is given to one’s own self. In the absence of epistemic mediations of identification, considered as simple representations, the *I think* (*qua* representation) merely designates the activity of thinking transcendently, namely as the nexus established in the judgment by the copula linking the representational synthesis with the synthetic unity of apperception on a conceptual basis. The possibility of thinking oneself as subject is properly and solely given by the simple and empty representation *I*.

¹ Kantian English quotations are from the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, ed. P. Guyer and A. Wood (Cambridge University Press, 1992ff.). As is customary, references to Kant include the volume and page numbers in the *Akademie* edition of Kant's works, followed by the corresponding page numbers of the English translation (if available): *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, hrsg von der Deutschen (formerly Koniglichen Preussischen) Akademie der Wissenschaften, 29 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902ff.). The *Critique of Pure Reason* is cited by the usual A/B method.

² Here I will use the term "metaphysics" in the contemporary philosophical sense, i.e., a metaphysics of the self which accounts for the particular type of entities known as "selves". While Kant asserts that "this name [metaphysics] can also be given to all of pure philosophy including this critique" (A841/B869), in the Transcendental Dialectic he describes and labels as "metaphysical" any dogmatic enterprise aimed at founding the reality of God, freedom, and immortality (cf. B7).

³ C. Marshall, "Kant's Metaphysics of the Self," *Philosophers' Imprint* 10 (2010): 1-21.

⁴ At first glance, Kant puts forward a metaphysical thesis of exclusion whereby the *I* of the *I think* as intellectual representation produces no knowledge about the nature of the thinking subject or self for it refers to something which in no respect can be said to be an object: the transcendental subject – cf. Q. Cassam, *Self and World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). This interpretative approach seems to anticipate Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*'s claims on the subject as not belonging to the world but as a limit of the world – cf. J.F. Bennett, *Kant's Dialectic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974). An elusive interpretation of the *I* in the *I think* as having no reference has been argued more than once by the so-termed *no-ownership reading*. The affinity between Wittgenstein's *Blue Book* argument on the *I as subject* and Kant's *I think* as alleged by a few commentators lies precisely within this framework: cf. W. Becker, *Selbstbewusstsein und Erfahrung: zu Kants transzendentaler Deduktion und ihrer argumentativen Rekonstruktion* (Freiburg: K. Alber, 1984); D. Sturma, *Kant über Selbstbewusstsein* (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1985); C.T. Powell, *Kant's Theory of Self-Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); J.McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Kitcher, on the other hand, has suggested a different *no-ownership reading*: the Transcendental Deduction is a reaction to Hume's challenge to the notion of *personal identity*. In her interpretative view, the self should be considered a contentually interconnected system of mental states – cf. P. Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); "Kant's Cognitive Self" in P. Kitcher, ed., *Critique of Pure Reason: Critical Essays* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998); cf. also A. Brook, *Kant and the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) and his identification of the self with the notion of *global representation*. The dualism in the thesis of exclusion, that is between a person and a transcendental (metaphysical or philosophical) subject expelling any subjective reference from the world, is remarkably different from the *no-ownership reading's*, which contemplates no subjective reference at all. It is worth noting that these two interpretative views are sometimes held as embodying an anti-metaphysical approach, cf. C. Marshall, "Kant's Metaphysics of the Self," p.3.

⁵ There is no way to understand what the *identity of self-consciousness* is across different representations unless we regard it as involving a single conscious self that is always the same in different representations – cf. Henrich, *Identität und Objektivität. Eine Untersuchung über Kants transzendente Deduktion*, (Heidelberg: C.Winter, 1976). Henrich points out the formal implications of an *I think-instance*: every self-conscious thought contains an implicit reference to all the other self-conscious thoughts that the same thinking subject can think of – cf. D. Henrich, "The Identity of the Subject in the Transcendental Deduction" in E. Schaper, W. Vossenkuhl, eds., *Reading Kant* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 278. Even if Henrich asserts that, consistently with the Paralogism, the identity of the self-consciousness cannot enable one to infer the numerical identity of a real thing, Bermúdez contends that the following formal implications of *I think-instances* formulated by Henrich may lead to a substantial conclusion: a) one and the same *I* is certain of its numerical identity in relation to all self-conscious thoughts; b) this one and the same *I* has to be described as the subject of those thoughts; c) in any *I think-instance* the *I* refers to the substantial subject – J. Bermúdez, "The unity of apperception in the critique of pure reason," *European Journal of Philosophy* 2 (1994), p. 219. If the unity of apperception implies the a priori consciousness of the complete identity of the self, the consciousness of numerical identity entails the existence of a numerically identical self.

⁶ On the basis of A116, "we are conscious a priori of the complete identity of the self in respect of all representations which can ever belong to our knowledge", Guyer points out the main features of the Transcendental Deduction's argument: the unity of apperception is a source of an *a priori* knowledge of the

existence of a persisting and enduring self (the Transcendental Deduction is, then, a doomed project) – P. Guyer, *Kant and the claims of knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Alternatively put, the unity of apperception produces the *a priori* knowledge of something that is persisting and numerically identical, even though it does not require the rational psychologist's claim that this *a priori* knowledge is the knowledge of a simple substance – cf. J. Bermúdez, “The unity of apperception in the critique of pure reason,” p.220. Likewise, for Marshall – “Kant's Metaphysics of the Self”, p.9 – “there must be *something* that's identical doesn't itself presuppose any of the views Kant attacks in the Paralogisms chapter, namely, that we know that thing is a substance (First Paralogism), or simple (Second Paralogism), or distinct from material things (Fourth Paralogism)”. As we will see, Kant's metaphysical assertions about the thinking being, which will be considered later, merely presuppose that there must be something, and that something is the being itself.

⁷ H. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism. An Interpretation and Defense*. Revised and Enlarged Edition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 340.

⁸ R.P. Horstmann, “Kants Paralogismen,” *Kant-Studien* 83 (1993): 408–425.

⁹ J. Van Cleve, *Problems from Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.79.

¹⁰ Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism. An Interpretation and Defense*, p.163.

¹¹ K. Ameriks, “Kant and the Self: A Retrospective” in D. Klemm, G. Zöllner, eds., *Figuring the Self: Subject, Absolute, and Others in Classical German Philosophy* (New York: Suny Press, 1997), p.58.

¹² W. Carl, “Apperception and spontaneity,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 5 (1997): 147-163.

¹³ Ameriks, “Kant and the Self: A Retrospective”, p.58.

¹⁴ Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism. An Interpretation and Defense*, p.164.

¹⁵ J.F. Rosenberg, “I Think: Some Reflections on Kant's Paralogisms,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 10 (1986), p.511.

¹⁶ Ameriks, “Kant and the Self: A Retrospective”, p.57.

¹⁷ R. Howell, “Kant, the I Think, and Self-Awareness” in P. Cicovacki, ed., *Kant's Legacy: essays in honor of Lewis White Beck* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2000), p.141.

¹⁸ M. Capozzi, “L'io e la conoscenza di sé in Kant” in E. Canone, ed., *Per una storia del concetto di mente* (Firenze: Olschki, 2007).

¹⁹ In 1787 Kant attacks the system of rational psychology – understood as a rational science resting on rational and necessary principles – through his criticism of the first syllogism of topics: to him, it is sufficient to denounce its paralogistic character for the whole system to collapse.

²⁰ The concept of “substance” must indicate an object to become a cognition, so as to be necessarily grounded on a persisting intuition as the indispensable condition of a concept's objective reality. However, nothing persists in the inner intuition, for the “I is only the consciousness of my thinking; thus if we stay merely with thinking, we also lack the necessary condition for applying the concept of substance, i.e., of a subject subsisting for itself, to itself as a thinking being” (B143).

²¹ I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ed. and trans. R.B. Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 7: 135, p. 23. I. Kant, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, 20: 270.

²² Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 7:135, p.23.

²³ I.Kant, “Metaphysik L₁, mid-1770s” in *Lectures on metaphysics*, ed. and trans. K. Ameriks, S. Naragon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 28: 224, pp.44-5.

²⁴ Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 7: 142, p. 33.

²⁵ From an empirical perspective, the representation *I* designates an object of the inner sense; as such, it should not be considered a concept for the determination of the subject: “For the I is not a concept at all, but only a designation of the object of inner sense insofar as we do not further cognize it through any predicate; hence although it cannot itself be the predicate of any other thing, just as little can it be a determinate concept of an absolute subject, but as in all the other cases it can only be the referring of inner appearances to their unknown subject”. I.Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics that will be able to come forward as science*, ed. and trans. G. Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4: 334, p.86.

²⁶ In the same passage Kant adds: “An indeterminate perception here signifies only something real, which was given, and indeed only to thinking in general, 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 423 n.). Here Kant is on different boundaries – certainly intertwined although kept

separated – and moves between the epistemological and the ontological dimensions, the empirical and the transcendental levels, the empirical and the transcendental apperceptions. In the same passage he also points out that if the “I think” is an empirical proposition, the *I* is a purely intellectual representation of thought in general; nonetheless, the “I think” act occurs only by means of an empirical representation providing material for thought.

²⁷ Ameriks, “Kant and the Self: A Retrospective”, p.61.

²⁸ I.Kant, *Opus postumum*, ed. and trans. E. Forster, M. Rosen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 22:77, p.186.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 22: 79, p.187.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 22: 413, pp. 179-80.

³² This entails holding the anti-reflexive character of self-consciousness, which Sturma and Ameriks – although under different circumstances – have argued against Henrich’s Fichtian interpretation of the apperception based on the *Reflexion Theory*.

³³ Ameriks, “Kant and the Self: A Retrospective”, p.59.

³⁴ If the “I think” expresses the act of determining the transcendental subject’s existence, such an existence, though given, is not determined based on manner, that is, not according to the manifold that belongs to it: a similar determination would require not only an intuition – more precisely, a self-intuition, which is grounded in time as the *a priori* sensible form of the receptivity of the determinable – but also another self-intuition exclusively relative to what is determining, namely mere spontaneity, in much the same way as time provides the condition of the determinable. However, there is only an intellectual consciousness of spontaneity, and since Kant allows for no intellectual intuition, the subject cannot determine its existence as that of a self-active being (cf. B 158, n.).

³⁵ For a first overview, cf. D. Schulting, “Kant’s Idealism: The Current Debate” in D. Schulting, J. Verburgt, eds, *Kant’s idealism. New interpretations of a controversial doctrine* (Dordrecht/Heidelberg: Springer Science, 2011).

³⁶ C. Marshall, “Kant’s One Self and the Appearance/Thing-in-Itself Distinction,” *Kant-Studien* 104 (2013): 421-44.

³⁷ Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 7: 142, p. 33.

³⁸ Even though these two theoretical dimensions must be kept distinct, it is nonetheless possible to find a point of convergence. The self-reference involved in apperception regards the consciousness of oneself as carrying out the action or activity of synthesizing, and the relative representation *I* of the apperception is exactly one of two “Is” contemplated in *Anthropology*: the “I” as the subject of thinking (in logic) means pure apperception (the merely reflecting “I”), and is to be distinguished from the way the subject appears to itself in the inner sense, i.e., the “I” as the object of the perception. On the other hand, the *I* as representation of apperception is not merely a function of thought, but points to a more substantial underlying nature than what is manifest at the phenomenal level. Schulting highlights this point when stating that the *I* of the transcendental apperception refers to someone in particular doing the synthesizing, “viz., the ‘I’ as a substantial thing in itself, so the noumenal and not the empirical self, rather than to a mere activity” – D. Schulting, “Limitation and Idealism: Kant’s ‘Long’ Argument from the Categories” in D. Schulting, J. Verburgt, eds, *Kant’s idealism. New interpretations of a controversial doctrine* (Dordrecht/Heidelberg: Springer Science, 2011), p.168.

³⁹ Van Cleve, *Problems from Kant*, p.182.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* The author refers to several passages, in particular B409-10, A360, and especially A492/B520, where Kant seems to equate the transcendental subject with the self proper, since this exists in itself. The issue is also referred to as *Kant’s third self*, cf. P. Kitcher, “Kant’s real self” in A.W. Wood, ed., *Self and Nature in Kant’s Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); D. Schulting, “Limitation and Idealism: Kant’s ‘Long’ Argument from the Categories”; C. Marshall, “Kant’s One Self and the Appearance/Thing-in-Itself Distinction”.

⁴¹ Van Cleve, *Problems from Kant*, p.184.

⁴² Rosenberg, “I Thinks: Some Reflections on Kant’s Paralogisms”, p. 514.

⁴³ As is well known, also following Prauss, *Kant und das problem der dinge an sich* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1974), and Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism. An Interpretation and Defense* – just to mention two classical works within the huge Kantian debate – there are important distinctions to be made (fortunately, for our purposes we can refrain from taking position on the correct interpretation of Transcendental Idealism). On

the one hand, Kant introduces *Ding an sich* (and its variants, i.e., *Sache*, *Gegenstand*, and *Object an sich*) as a short phrase for *Ding an sich selbst* (and its variants, i.e., *Sache*, *Gegenstand*, and *Object an sich selbst*) and, especially, for *Ding an sich selbst betrachtet*. On first approximation, if it is possible to distinguish between *Erscheinung*, the indeterminate object of sensible intuition, and *Phänomenon*, the sensible object falling under the categories, then it should be also possible to recognize a further distinction between *Ding an sich* and *Noumenon*: “The former is conceptually undetermined, since our thought of it is empty of real content, while the latter, as putative object of an intellectual intuition, is “conceptually” determined, though not for our discursive intellect” – Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism. An Interpretation and Defense*, p. 58.

⁴⁴ Cf. A108/109. I shall leave aside the many exegetical and theoretical problems in the debate on the relation between *transcendental object*, *noumenon*, and the *thing in itself*, and on the terminological change introduced in the second edition of the *KrV* as to the distinction between a positive and a negative sense of *noumenon*, which is not supposed to affect the gist of the theory despite Kant’s dismissal of the expression ‘transcendental object’.

⁴⁵ Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism. An Interpretation and Defense*, p.60.

⁴⁶ A. Brook, “Kant, self-awareness and self-reference” in A. Brook, R.C. DeVidi, eds., *Self-reference and self-awareness* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2001); L. Forgione, “Kant and the problem of self-identification,” *Organon F* 22 (2015): 178-198. Due to the absence of identification components, some *singular judgments* involving self-ascriptions of mental and physical properties are *immune to error through misidentification* relative to the first-person pronoun. The subject formulating such judgments in given epistemic contexts cannot be mistaken as to whether it is he who is attributing a particular property to his own self. The issue is introduced by Wittgenstein – *The Blue and the Brown Books* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), pp. 66f – in his philosophico-linguistic analysis of the grammatical rule of the term *I*: here he distinguishes two uses, the *use as object* (“I have grown six inches”), and the *use as subject* (“I have a toothache”), where no subject identification is taken into account. On this issue, see the classic discussions by Strawson (*criterionless self-ascription*) – *The Bounds of Sense. An Essay on Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Methuen, 1966), p. 165; Shoemaker (*self-reference without identification*) – “Self-reference and self-awareness,” *Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1968), p. 565; Evans (*identification-free*) – *The Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

⁴⁷ I. Kant, *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, trans. M. Friedman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4: 542-3, p.82.

⁴⁸ Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism. An Interpretation and Defense*, p.36.

⁴⁹ I. Kant, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, 7: 134.