

Apperception and Spontaneity

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In §16 of the B-Deduction Kant distinguishes between two forms of representation indicating that whilst intuition is given prior to all thought that its manifold is nonetheless necessarily connected to the “I think”. The representation of the “I think” is however then determined in two ways, which are presented as having a relation to each other. On the one hand, this representation is determined as an *act of spontaneity* although this determination is not here clearly defined with Kant simply stating that the representation of the “I think” cannot be regarded as something that belongs to sensibility. So this initial connection of the “I think” to spontaneity appears to involve only a negative characterization of spontaneity. On the other hand, this representation of the “I think” is connected to a *form of self-consciousness* that is explicitly distinguished from anything empirical. This form of self-consciousness is termed pure or original apperception as it is a self-consciousness that is said to be responsible for *generating* the representation of the “I think”. So, on the one hand, the “I think” is related to spontaneity and described as an expression of it whilst on the other it is presented as connected to pure apperception where the latter is said to be what generates it. Now, whilst the understanding of Kant’s account of apperception has been a subject of some interest for philosophers, its relationship to spontaneity and the “I think”, as explicitly made clear at B132, has been rarely commented on. One of the reasons why this larger agenda has been rarely attempted are well expressed by Robert Pippin. As Pippin writes: “relying on Kant’s discussion of apperception to explain his characterization of thinking as spontaneous can appear a

classic case of the *obscure through the more obscure*".¹ My investigation will differ from Pippin's however as what interests me is not the attempt to explicate spontaneity with the help of apperception but rather the relationship both have to the representations of the "I" and the "I think", in the process thinking through more carefully the question of how to view the connection between acts of spontaneous representation and the manifold of intuition.²

In his revision of the Paralogisms in the second edition of the *Critique* Kant states in response to the claim that the "I" is a simple subject that "apperception is something real" and that "its simplicity is already given in the mere fact of its possibility" (B419). Kant's suggestion that the simplicity of apperception is a consequence of its possibility requires more elaboration. In his parallel treatment of the Second Paralogism in the first edition Kant uses this point to frame a clear logical understanding of apperception: " 'I am simple' means nothing more than that this representation, 'I', does not contain in itself the least manifoldness and that it is absolute (although merely logical) unity" (A355).³ In the A-version of this discussion Kant speaks of the "I" here as referring only to something in general and thus as being indeterminate. On this basis he dismisses the claim that we have a sense of the "I" as a simple subject stating instead that

¹ Robert Pippin *Kant on the Spontaneity of Mind* (1987) in Robert Pippin *Idealism As Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 41-2.

² I should add however that the main point of this piece is to focus on precisely how much we can say about the relationship between apperception, spontaneity and the "I think" independently of the relation either has to intuition. Because of this focus the discussion of the connection to the manifold of intuition will come late and be only presented in the form of a sketch. This paper is the first of a group and only at a subsequent stage will the fuller sense of the relationship of apperception to intuition become the main focus when elaborating on the sense of the objective unity of apperception that is discussed in §18 of the B-Deduction. This would be the topic of a separate paper as would concentration on the necessary unity of apperception.

³ Kant at the same point adds a connection between this logical understanding of apperception and the Cartesian *cogito*, a connection based on his view that the *cogito* states a tautology, a view earlier presented by Gassendi, but always repudiated by Descartes.

we have a simple representation, which does not entail the simplicity of what *is* represented. Whilst connecting the statement from the first edition here to that from the second does clarify the latter it also complicates the question of how to understand the claim that apperception is “something real”. If we understand apperception as involving a merely logical unity then in what sense is it something real?

One solution to this problem is to distinguish between empirical and transcendental apperception in the manner pioneered by Henry Allison.⁴ In the A-Deduction for example, after completing the preliminary statement of the synthetic discussion given there, Kant describes apperception as one of the three “subjective sources” of knowledge. There is then a statement to the effect that these sources can be viewed as both empirical (in application to appearances) and as *a priori* elements of knowledge, which make experience possible. However, after distinguishing these senses Kant proceeds to explain each of the three empirically, giving the following characterization of apperception: “*apperception* in the *empirical consciousness* of the identity of the reproduced representations with the appearances whereby they were given, that is, in recognition” (A115).

On the basis of this description of the empirical application of apperception to appearances Allison makes the following distinction between transcendental and empirical apperception: “the contrast Kant really needs to draw is between a consciousness of the activity as it functions determinately with a given content and a thought of the same activity, considered in abstraction from all content. To regard apperception in the first way is to consider it empirically, and thus as ‘something real’; to consider it in the second way is to consider it transcenden-

⁴ Henry E. Allison (1983) *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London), Chapter 13. The reference to viewing transcendental apperception as involving abstraction from all content is clearly based on A355.

tally, and thus as a transcendental condition of experience.’⁵ This reading thus squares the two statements from B419 by viewing the simplicity that arises from the mere possibility of apperception as a consequence of the logical unity that we term the *transcendental* unity of apperception whilst the *reality* of apperception is taken instead to refer to the awareness of determinate content that we call “empirical apperception”. Whilst this latter is often confused by Kant with “inner sense” it can be distinguished from it as including a reflective act of introspection.⁶

Whilst Allison’s account of the distinction between transcendental and empirical apperception appears to provide a response to the passage from B419 we shall discover that the distinction advanced is more difficult to sustain when it is related to our opening passage from B132 in which Kant connects transcendental apperception to both spontaneity and the generation of the representation of the “I think”. Prior to making the claims with which I opened my discussion Kant opens §16 by the famous declaration concerning the necessity of the “I think” accompanying all my representations which Allison views as constituting the “real starting point” of the B-Deduction as it states the principle on which the first part of its argument is said by him to be based.⁷ Regardless of views on this matter however the point of interest for this investigation turns rather on the way in which the statement of the principle said here to be introduced is assessed.

Allison works on the assumption that the “I think” is identical with what he terms the “apperception principle”, an

⁵ Allison (1983) p. 274..

⁶ Udo Thiel, in contrast to Allison, attempts to make the distinction between transcendental and empirical apperception on the basis of the B-Deduction though in the B-Deduction Kant’s claim concerning empirical apperception is merely that it “accompanies different representations” (B133) and hence lacks the reflective component that Allison generates from A115. See U. Thiel (2006) “The Critique of Rational Psychology” in Graham Bird (ed.) (2006) *A Companion to Kant* (Blackwell: Oxford and New York), p. 210

⁷ There are a number of reasons for finding this claim less obvious than Allison seems to take it to be. Interestingly this statement is added in Allison (2004) (p. 163) and is not in the first (1983) edition of his book.

identification we shall later question. Firstly, however, I wish to look at the manner in which the principle, as viewed by Allison, is determined. The key point is that whilst Allison views Kant as claiming that the principle in question is a single principle, Allison himself does not take it to be so. It is, rather, on Allison's view, multiple. The statement that it must be possible for the "I think" to accompany all my representations is taken to apply to "each of my representations taken individually"⁸. Any given representation, to be taken to be mine, would thus have to meet the condition of being able to be thought as mine. Allison views this claim as equivalent to "the possibility of reflectively attaching the 'I think' " to the representation in question. This point is distinguished from the way that the "I think" relates to the *collective unity* of a subject's representations as in the case of a complex thought.⁹

This point about the unity of a complex thought is what requires an elaboration of Allison's conception of the transcendental unity of apperception in such a way as to make his contrast between transcendental and empirical apperception more difficult to sustain than appears at first sight. The account of empirical apperception on which Allison relies is that stated at A115 in which Kant describes it as involving an empirical consciousness of the identity of reproduced representations with the appearances whereby they were given. Since the reference to appearances here explicitly requires intuitions it would appear that empirical apperception has a manner of individuating representations by means of them. By contrast the indeterminate representations to which transcendental apperception is directed would seem to include no evident principle of individuation. In response to this point Allison's account moves from the discussion of B132 to that of A108 in order to present a discussion of the manner of recognition that

⁸ Allison (1983) (p. 137), slightly emended in Allison (2004) to "each of a *subject's* representations taken individually" (p. 163).

⁹ This is a point where Allison (1983) (p. 138) explicitly invokes B407 which is the second edition statement of the 2nd Paralogism.

reflective awareness of transcendental apperception gives rise to.

Allison addresses this in the following way:

because of the contentlessness of the *I think*, there is literally nothing, apart from the consciousness of the identity of its action (in thinking a complex thought), through which the thinking subject, considered as such, could become aware of its own identity. Expressed schematically, the consciousness of the identity of the I that thinks *A* with the I that thinks *B* can only consist in the consciousness of the identity of its action in thinking together *A* and *B* as its representations. That is why a consciousness of synthesis (considered as activity as well as product) is a necessary condition of apperception, even though the latter requires merely the *possibility* of the self-ascription of one's representations.¹⁰

Allison has here combined together a number of different conceptions of transcendental apperception. Firstly he presents the view that consciousness of the "*I think*" is consciousness of the identity of action in thinking a complex thought. This consciousness of identity of action as the basis of awareness of thinking a complex thought could be assimilated to his earlier view of it as involving merely logical unity. However he here adds to this characterisation two others that are not obviously connected to this one, namely the sense of synthesis (which is itself presented in two distinct ways in this quote) and the view of apperception that we can term a possibility conception of it.

The first question to raise about Allison's view concerns the manner of connection he is suggesting here between the contentless *I think* and the consciousness of synthesis of

¹⁰ Henry E. Allison (2004) *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense Revised & Enlarged Edition* (Yale University Press: New Haven & London), p. 171. In this second edition Allison is here clearly expanding on the earlier account of transcendental apperception though interestingly his discussion of empirical apperception is very much briefer.

different thoughts together in an awareness of identity. The emphasis on the contentlessness of the *I think* is connected to the simplicity of its representation, in as Kant put it, the thought of a bare “I”. However this representation of a bare unity that Kant takes to be the basis of the conception of the subject as simple has to be distinguished from the principle of identity that would be the ground of any analytic unity of consciousness. Allison, in moving from the contentless “I think” to the consciousness of the identity of the action of the “I think” elides the distinction between simplicity and identity. Whereas the simple representation of the “I think” requires no more than a presentation of its bare unity at any given point in time, the assertion of an awareness of identity is, by contrast, related to a grasp of distinct acts of awareness at different moments of time and it is this latter that we can see to be at work with empirical apperception. Hence in moving from the simple representation to the awareness of identity that requires temporal indexing Allison fails to maintain his distinction between transcendental and empirical apperception.¹¹

Not only does Allison’s discussion require a movement from the sense of simple representation to the identity of intra-temporal awareness there is also something curious about the nature of the connection he suggests between the consciousness of synthesis and the understanding of transcendental apperception. Consciousness of synthesis is described in two different ways, as an activity and as a product. Whilst the *activity* sense of synthesis involves the notion of combination of discrete elements into a unity, the *product* sense requires the sense of this unity to be graspable

¹¹ It is necessary to be careful with this point. I am suggesting two distinct things here. Firstly, Allison’s earlier distinction between empirical and transcendental apperception only allowed temporal indexing with regard to empirical apperception so that the reference here to the need for some form of it at the transcendental level introduces complexity that is not included in Allison’s basic account. Secondly, the relationship to temporality would have to be different in the two cases and the nature of the difference is not described and this means there is an implicit elision of transcendental and empirical apperception.

in principle. However Allison suggests that both these senses of consciousness of synthesis are a *condition* of apperception despite the fact that apperception is itself *the basis* of the mere possibility of self-ascription of representations. If the combination that is at work in the synthesis is, even in the “act” sense of synthesis, something that requires a relation to the possible representation of an “I think” then it becomes unclear how this “act”, let alone its product, can also be a *condition* of the “I think” as it must surely rather be an *effect* of the “I think”.

We might also raise the question of how the awareness of the act of thinking a complex thought can itself be given? This implies a description of a kind of reflective act in which the combination of elements is itself made available to some possible consciousness. That would imply a reflexive conception not merely of empirical apperception but also of transcendental apperception and such a reflexive interpretation of transcendental apperception is quite frequently presented. This implication of Allison’s account is not drawn out by him and one reason for this would be that on its elementary description it appears insufficient to provide the sense of unity required for transcendental apperception. Simply reflecting upon awareness of discreet particulars does not provide in itself a connection between them and certainly gives no sense of *necessary* connection.¹²

Kant however would appear to have at times thought otherwise and there are grounds for thinking that one of the senses of transcendental apperception that he occasionally at least endorsed involved a view of reflective consciousness of identity such as is implicitly referred to by Allison and which appears to be given in two passages he cites. These would be A108 where Kant states: “the mind could never think its identity in the manifoldness of its representations, and indeed think this identity *a priori*, if it did not have before its eyes the identity of its act” and we could also refer here to

¹² Allison is indeed clearly aware of this point as is evidenced in the aforementioned reference to the second edition account of the second paralogism.

the similar claim at A116 where we have the following: “We are conscious *a priori* of the complete identity of the self in respect of all representations which can ever belong to our knowledge”. The first citation suggests that the identity of the manifold of representations depends on a prior sense of the identity of the *act* that is required for synthetic combination itself to be possible and hence provides the reversal of Allison’s position on the relation between act of synthesis and transcendental unity of apperception that I intimated earlier. The second citation, by contrast, indicates a dependence on representations that merit the title of “knowledge” on a sense of the identity of the self. These passages suggest a kind of *conflation* understanding of apperception whereby distinction of elements within a synthetic whole are not merely dependent on the sense of something prior existent that could conceivably combine them together into one representation but also that an awareness of the activity of the combination is required for a sense that the combination is occurring and capable of giving knowledge as its product.

Whilst Allison’s reading is not committed to such an explicit conflation account of apperception it is reliant on the implication that some form of reflective awareness of transcendental apperception is necessary.¹³ The nature of this could however be weaker than the implications of a conflation reading of apperception would suggest. Peter Strawson, for example, did not view the reflexive element of apperception in terms of a conflation model as he understood that this would collapse the distinction between transcendental and empirical apperception but suggested instead that empirical self-ascription of experiences depended for their possessive possibility on the *a priori* unity of transcendental self-consciousness where the latter involved

¹³ The peculiarity of this point in Allison’s account is worth emphasis as in the original (1983) edition of his work he explicitly emphasized Reflexion 5661 where Kant distinguishes transcendental apperception from experience (Allison 1983 pp. 275-7) so that the implication of a reflexive reading in the citation given above from the re-edition of his work (Allison (2004) p. 171 is at odds with this point in a way that is singularly surprising.

as a minimum the distinction “between how things are in the world which experience is of and how they are experienced as being, between the order of the world and the order of experience”.¹⁴ Such a weaker type of reflexivity requires only an *implicit* appeal to self-consciousness within the experience of consciousness. In response to this however there are two related problems. The first is that despite the points made above concerning the suggested dependence of transcendental apperception on the activity of synthesis in Allison’s account there is some warrant for this dependence in the B-Deduction where Kant argues that the relation of different representations to the subject requires more than simple accompaniment of representations with consciousness and adds: “Only in so far...as I can unite a manifold of given representations in *one consciousness*, is it possible for me to represent to myself the *identity of the consciousness in [i.e. throughout] these representations*” (B133). This suggests a dependence of the identity of apperception on a prior unification of synthesis that enables it to be produced as implied in Allison’s account. The second problem is that the implied reference to self-consciousness can seem too weak for there to be any sense given to the suggestion that what is here involved merits in any sense the title of *self-consciousness*. As Susan Hurley puts this objection: “if the activity itself, as opposed to its product, need not be something we are conscious of in apperception, then in what sense it is a matter of agency, something we do, rather than a manner of passive happenings, mere events?”¹⁵

These problems are distinct but clearly related. On the one hand, the problem with an implicitly reflexive reading of the claim of transcendental apperception could be taken to be that it first requires an act of unification before identity

¹⁴ Peter Strawson (1966) *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (Routledge: London and New York), p. 107 where he also states that what is meant by self-reflexiveness of experience is that “experience must be such as to provide room for the thought of experience itself”.

¹⁵ Susan Hurley (1994) “Kant on Spontaneity and the Myth of the Giving”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Vol XCIV Part 2: p. 145n.

can be stated to be attained. On the other hand, it may seem that if awareness of apperception does not require awareness of *acts* of combination, that the implication of self-consciousness is simply too weak for the claim to really be one about any *act* of ourselves. Susan Hurley has in fact pressed the latter point as a way of advancing her problem with the suggestion that Kant has achieved, in any fully satisfactory sense, a recognition of the place of subjectivity in the examination of mind when she writes: “Kant ultimately appeals to activity to explain unity, as if unity could not be a feature of the data of sensibility on their own, and more importantly still, as if agency did not already depend on unity”.¹⁶

Here we arrive at two connected problems that show the need for a further examination of the connection of spontaneity to apperception. On the one hand we need some sense of transcendental apperception that enables us to respond to the complicated question of whether Kant views it as leading from unity to identity or the reverse and on the other hand we need some sense of the way in which transcendental apperception really merits description in terms of self-consciousness rather than being understood in a purely impersonal sense that will remove all possessive and subjective connotations.¹⁷

The relationship between unity and identity is one I will return to as I wish first to assess the question of the nature

¹⁶ Susan Hurley (1996) “Myth Upon Myth”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 96: p. 163.

¹⁷ I don’t here intend to simply run together subjectivity and possessive relationships. Subjectivity seems at minimum to require the simple representation of the “I think” with which we began as Descartes suggested. For the “I think” to state in some sense an “I” however does seem to involve something possessive being claimed. Attempts to eliminate this possessive reference tend to produce functionalist accounts of apperception of which there are many in the current literature. See for example Andrew Brook (1994) *Kant and the Mind* (Cambridge University Press), Patricia Kitcher (1990) *Kant’s Transcendental Psychology* (Oxford University Press) and Pierre Keller (1998) *Kant and the Demands of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge University Press). It is impossible to respond to these accounts here but see Gary Banham (2006) *Kant’s Transcendental Imagination* (Palgrave Macmillan: London and New York), pp. 79-90.

and degree of possessive connotation involved in the transcendental unity of apperception. Since Kant repeatedly stresses that acts of spontaneity are carried out by “us” and indicates that one of the ways of understanding transcendental apperception is as a form of transcendental *self*-consciousness it seems natural to assume that there is something possessive involved here and the notion of such a possessive sense is surely connected to the idealistic connotations of the transcendental unity of apperception. When describing the manner in which transcendental idealism provides a key to the solution of the cosmological dialectic Kant suggests the subjective claim involved here is one that relates to the noumenal self when he states: “Even the inner and sensible intuition of our mind (as object of consciousness) which is represented as being determined by the succession of different states in time, is not the self proper, as it exists in itself—that is, is not the transcendental subject—but only an appearance that has been given to the sensibility of this, to us unknown, being.” (A492/B520) The identification suggested here between the transcendental subject and the noumenal self is not an isolated one¹⁸ but it is not repeated in the *Critique* and it is in any case possible to view it as one of the occasions where Kant writes “transcendental” when he should have written “transcendent”, not least because that makes most sense of the noumenal neutrality thesis that is repeated in this very quote. However, if we follow this suggestion through, it follows that the subjective reference included in the notion of transcendental *self*-consciousness is not only, (as befits something declared transcendental) not empirical, but not noumenal either. On those grounds it appears that there is a form of subjective reference that is not involved with anything like the notion of a subject.

In order to begin to make sense of this point I would like to turn to two specific passages of the *Critique*, both from

¹⁸ See Reflexion 60001, Ak. 18: 420-1 where transcendental apperception is equated with noumenal substance.

the second edition. The first passage that is of interest here concerns the manner in which Kant attempts a distinction between inner sense and transcendental apperception, a distinction that will turn out to be important for viewing how the second passage from the emended Paralogisms chapter should be viewed. At B153 Kant claims that transcendental synthesis, when viewed by itself alone contains only “the unity of the act, of which, as an act, it is conscious to itself”. The liminal claim that when, viewed purely alone, such synthesis is contained purely in a conscious act of unification requires, if the term “conscious” is here to be used, some sense of the combination being sensed spontaneously by the kind of being that can be characterized in transcendental terms and this would appear central to Kant’s transcendental idealism. Kant speaks here directly of the transcendental synthesis of imagination as the means by which understanding determines sensibility and in the process performs an act on the passive subject whose faculty it is. An illustration that is subsequently given, in apparent amplification of this point, concerns attention (B156-7n) though the example appears confusing since attention would necessarily be an example of an activity performed empirically.¹⁹ The more useful point that follows the initial discussion of the transcendental synthesis of imagination as involving self-affection concerns the distinction that Kant subsequently gives of the type of representation given of the “I” in transcendental apperception. Kant now claims that in transcendental synthesis generally and hence in the transcendental unity of apperception: “I am conscious to myself, not as I appear to myself, nor as I am in myself, but only that I am” (B157).²⁰

The consciousness that was claimed to belong to transcendental synthesis strictly at B153 concerned the unity

¹⁹ Allison (1983) p. 268 notes this point and suggests a different reading of the passage in question but the reading given certainly requires quite an extension of Kant’s text beyond what is given in it.

²⁰ This substantially corrects the impression of A492/B520 of an identity of reference between the transcendental unity of apperception and the noumenal self.

of the act of synthesis and this consciousness of unity is now explicated in terms of a mere consciousness that “I am”. The representation of the “I am” is claimed to be a thought, not an intuition and so something is required to connect it to intuition. Rather than next directly saying more about the statement that “I am” Kant returns instead to the implications of the “I think” and claims that the “I think” involves an act of determination of existence. In order to claim “I think” he now says, I must first determine my existence which *implies* that the awareness that “I am” is logically prior to the awareness that “I think”.²¹

Rather than expand on this question at this stage of the argument of the *Critique* however Kant merely points out that for determination of the manifold to be given some form of intuition is required and that there is only one type of manifold that is given to awareness of the self, namely awareness of inner sense, or determination of time.²² The representation of my thought as a determination is a representation that entitles me to claim that I am spontaneous or that I am an intelligence.

These claims certainly allow for a sense that whilst the function of transcendental apperception is, in the largest terms, impersonal (in terms of being the foundation of objective judgments)²³, that it remains important to also focus attention on the basis of the claim that I am

²¹ I am here drawing on B157-8n where the “I think” is described as an “act” of determination of my existence. Kant here clearly states: “Existence is already given thereby”, i.e., in my reading, it is there for the I think to be able to determine it.

²² At B153 Kant points out that in order to avoid the contradiction of putting us in a passive state with regard to our own action systems of psychology tend to equate inner sense with apperception. It is clear however from B158n that since I also cannot determine my existence as a self-active being that there is here another source of the tendency to assume that the awareness of inner sense in empirical apperception is sufficient to ground the basic sense of the self.

²³ This element of apperception is the most emphasised in standard accounts of transcendental apperception and is based on §19 of the B-Deduction, B140-2. However, important as it doubtless is to emphasize what we might term the objective unity of apperception, the discussion of the ineliminable subjectivity involved in the apperception claim is obscured by an exclusive focus on it.

spontaneous. Kant summarizes the claim made in the B-Deduction simply when he writes: “I exist as an intelligence which is conscious solely of its power of combination” (B158-9). The point that I am conscious of this power is here directly claimed and that I am assured of my existence as an intelligence is due solely to this consciousness that I possess the power of combination.

Now to understand these claims it is necessary to turn to the discussion of the “I think” in the Paralogisms chapter. This discussion is faceted since Kant here returns to the implication of the argument of the transcendental deduction of a connection between the representations “I am” and “I think”. Kant states that the claim that “I think” is one that we should view as analytically being a proposition that already includes existence as given. Not only does he claim this but, he subsequently adds, that with the “I think” the “unity of consciousness” is also given, but that it is given only in thought. The point of stressing that the unity of consciousness that comes with the “I think” is given only in thought is to deny the status of object to the unity in question. The kind of point Kant is making here is that to make the subject into a determinable object presupposes the activity of the subject that is thereby apparently being explained. The point I would prefer to pursue however concerns the basis of the claim that the “I think” analytically includes a reference to existence.

In making this claim Kant explicitly states that the “I think” is an empirical proposition which contains within itself the proposition “I exist”. If thought is somehow related to existence this does not in itself affect the status of the bare representation “I”. Kant indeed acknowledges this stating that the “I” is not an empirical representation but a purely intellectual one. Hence it *precedes* the determination that is involved in thinking or existing. The conjunction of the “I” with the determination that is involved in thinking is apparently what produces an empirical representation. Kant describes the combination of the bare representation “I” with the determination “thinking” however as still only giving

what he calls “an indeterminate empirical intuition” or something like perception in general. For there to be a perception, even in the most general sense, is to be affected by a sensation so that if the “I think” refers to empirical intuition in this most general sense then the statement of the “I think” is conjoined with a sense that there is something being sensed. What would be being sensed precedes determination of any “object of perception” or as Kant puts this point: “An indeterminate perception here signifies only something real that is given, given indeed to thought in general, and so not as appearance, nor as thing in itself (*noumenon*), but as something which actually exists, and which in the proposition, ‘I think’, is denoted as such” (B423n). So there is here something like the barest minimum of intensive magnitude, the barest sense that something real is given and this sense is so bare that we can express it only in terms of a thought, not directly as appearance though it is by reference to something prompting the thought that we arrive at the sense of it.

The suggestion in general terms however concerns the fact that this awareness of thought involves a sense that what is thinking is, in the very fact of thinking, evidently and immediately given as also existent. However what we have here is first the pure intellectual representation that is given as the bare “I” in combination with a determination and this determination is one in which the “I” becomes conscious of itself as such, a consciousness that we can term *transcendental* self-consciousness. For the act of unity that we have seen to belong to the transcendental synthesis when it is viewed in pure isolation to be made manifest is for the unification of representations to be presented as given not in a pure intellectual form alone but in combination with the direct sense of existence: something is given to thought and this something is first of all the spontaneous sense that there is thinking as such. However this spontaneous sense that there is thinking as such is viewed by Kant as part of an empirical proposition as it relates the “I” to sensation. At B423n the description of the indeterminate perception that

something real is given is described as only given to thought and thought, taken by itself alone, is stated at B428 to involve pure spontaneity only. The consciousness of thought by itself gives the sense that there is a being that thinks but nothing concerning this being is directly given in the thought in question.

We can move from this sense of thought by itself to the thinking of such thought in stating the proposition which is not a mere logical function, namely that “I exist thinking” at which point we must invoke, Kant states, “inner sense” (B429). The understanding that goes beyond the mere intellectual representation and gives an application of it to a manifold occurs with the sense that what is thinking is more than a general being but is something actual whose activity we are aware of. However whilst this gives content to the representation the content in question is described by means of inner empirical intuition which is sensible. Thus the only element that attaches to pure consciousness is the sense of combination, the determination of this combination in relation to the manifold already moves beyond the intellectual element to the empirical and in so doing takes the representation of unity to be the basis of the combination of the intuition of the manifold.²⁴

The relationship between the intellectual representation of the “I” and the combination of the manifold in intuition is likewise set out in the Transcendental Aesthetic where Kant remarks again that what is a simple representation is the consciousness of the “I” with its connection to a manifold again taken to require relation to sensible receptivity in which the intellectual representation is said to affect the mind in order for an intuition of the self to arise. (B68-9) Going back to the argument of the transcendental deduction we also find that Kant there asserts that the principle of the

²⁴ The subsequent discussion in the concluding part of the B Paralogisms chapter moves over to the consciousness of the moral law in which Kant clearly applies a sense of the “fact of reason” in terms of a consciousness that involves activity in a more general sense (B430-1). Exploration of this discussion would require in a different place thinking about the relationship between spontaneity, freedom and autonomy.

necessary unity of apperception is, as stated in the Paralogisms, an analytic proposition which therefore states something purely identical. The “I” is again taken to be a simple representation, which is distinct from the manifold of intuition but again the combination of the manifold requires consciousness of the self as identical in the *activity* of combination. The nature of the type of consciousness is however stated famously at A346/B404 to be of only a transcendental subject which is known only through the thoughts that are its predicates and is distinguished thereby from the “I think” that is individuated.

The relationship between the identity claim that attaches to the bare representation “I” and the unity claim that we require for the manifold of intuition to be able to represent anything like an object and even give the sense of existence to the “I” that thinks is one that still remains to be explored. In Kant’s observation on the antithesis of the Second Antinomy however he writes the following: “Self-consciousness is of such a nature that since the subject which thinks is at the same time its own object, it cannot divide itself, though it can divide the determinations which inhere in it; for in regard to itself every object is absolute unity” (A443/B471). Here the logical point is made that for a representation to be a representation of something there must be a unity given that enables us to determine the distinction between this representation and some other.²⁵ When we have a representation of self-consciousness the basis of distinction is given through the predicates that are attached to the sense of thinking which is the manner in which the purely intellectual representation of the “I” is connected to determinations although these determinations have their basis only in intuition. There is hence required both the sense of absolute unity as attaching to the subject and yet also the determination of perceptions by means of a

²⁵ As I have argued elsewhere this implies the presence of the concepts of reflection as the basis of the most elementary possibility of representations, as the effective genetic source of experience as an experience of anything at all. See Gary Banham (2006) pp. 139-44.

relation not to the purely intellectual representation but instead merely to appearances that are themselves represented according to the pattern of the “I” itself, namely, by means of unification. Thus the “I”’s simplicity is at the same time, in any given act of synthesis and any act of awareness of combination not merely a sense of identity but an awareness of this identity as a combinatory power.

The division between arguments in which Kant appears to go from a sense of the identity of the “I” to its unity by contrast to arguments in which he appears to go from unity to identity has been noted and questioned by some commentators.²⁶ As stated earlier the difference between claims of unity and claims of identity are that whilst unity alone does not require reference to combination over time, identity does imply differential states that are related to each other, a point that is made clear in the difference between the claims examined in the 3rd Paralogism by contrast to the 2nd. The reference to the unity that is inherent within apperception itself can however be grounded in the bare simple representation of the “I” alone so that unification can be grasped in a singular intellectual act whilst identification involves a determination. In a sense Kant’s argument should then go from unity to identity as without unity already existent as such it is impossible to see how it could ever emerge as a product. Since identity also requires differentiation then it implies a sense of particulars and if there is a possessive sense to apperception it would seem to reside in the awareness, as Kant himself suggests, of a real particular that is given.

There are two problems with Allison’s description of this awareness as empirical apperception: the first concerns the question as to whether this distinction is enough whilst the second concerns the problem of whether possessive claims can be left only at the level of the empirical. The first point

²⁶ It is central to the reading given by Dieter Henrich (1976) though the question of whether the reading advanced here can respond to the questions put by Henrich would require much more work than can be undertaken in this piece so the answer given above will be of a provisional nature.

can be made clearer as whilst Kant does interpret the “I think” as an empirical proposition, the basis of this claim concerns two distinct elements, firstly the sense of an indeterminate empirical intuition and subsequently the sense of a relation to “inner sense” with this latter bringing us to the manifold. Rather than it being the case that we distinguish only between transcendental apperception, empirical apperception and inner sense, I suggest we also need a sense of the indeterminate empirical intuition as spontaneity. The grasp of this indeterminate empirical intuition does not yet involve appearances directly but does require a sense of affection and this sense of affection would be the generation of “inner sense”, a generation that would permit the subsequent awareness of relation to “inner sense” that we could term empirical apperception. The point that would follow from this is a rescue of the possessive connotations that would seem to be required for a relation to be sustained between empirical apperception and transcendental apperception. This possessive sense is that it is not merely affection that is occurring but that this affection is something that is happening to a given particular, something “real” as Kant puts it. The actuality of this particular as the ground of the move from transcendental apperception to empirical apperception would be the basis also of a type of possessive relation to the merely possible consciousness given in the bare representation of the “I”. Whilst this “I” is not equivalent to a *personal* sense of identity it is *the ground* of such a sense as without it the general claim of affection would not relate to a sense that the affection in question is touching something that I can identify as a particular. This sense of the particular as affected is indeterminate, given prior to appearances being distinguished as such and yet no longer purely intellectual as the affection in question still possesses a barest intensive magnitude.

In conclusion I have not so much disagreed with the positions of Allison that I presented in beginning as underscored them and in the process amplified their sense so

that further distinctions have become necessary, distinctions that enable a clearer sense of the relation between spontaneity and apperception and also in the process rescue a possessive sense of apperception without compromising the purity of its transcendental unity.