Kant’s Criticism of Rational Psychology and His Theory of Transcendental Ego

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Introduction

In our previous article, “The Cogito Proposition of Descartes and Characteristics of His Ego Theory”, on the basis of which article we are going to analyze Kant’s ego theory, we asserted that through the Copernican revolution in epistemology Kant had completed the ego theory of Western modern philosophy, namely, the paradigm shift in ego theory from the substantiality theory of mind to the theory of transcendental I. In the present article, we would like to clarify Kant’s theory of transcendental I by analyzing the chapter “Of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason” (the Paralogisms Chapter) of the Critique of Pure Reason of its first edition.

Chapter I. The phrase “the proposition, I think, (taken problematically)”

In the introductory part of the Paralogisms Chapter, we find such a complicated phrase: “the proposition, I think, (taken problematically)” (A347/B406). This phrase is used in a close relationship with Kant’s conception of rational psychology. Kant thinks of the proposition “I think” as the only text of rational psychology. He states as follows:

There is, therefore, an alleged science, founded on the single proposition, I think, the ground or absence of ground of which may well be examined here, according to the nature of a transcendental philosophy. It should not be objected that in this proposition, which expresses the perception of oneself, I have an inner experience, and therefore the rational science of the soul, which is founded on it, can never be quite pure, but rests, to a certain extent, on an empirical principle. For this inner perception is nothing more than the mere apperception, I think, which makes even all transcendental concepts possible, because in them we really say: I think substance, I think cause, etc. (A342f./B400f.)

I think is, therefore, the sole text of rational psychology, out of which it must develop all its wisdom.” (A343/B401)

Kant does not necessarily identify the “I think” as “the sole text of rational psychology” with the “I think” of transcendental apperception “I think”. The latter expresses the self-consciousness of the I of transcendental apperception “I think”. The former expresses the self-consciousness of the I of transcendental philosophy. It contains therefore the self-consciousness of the existence of one’s own ego, namely, the “I am, I exist” in the Cartesian meaning. On the other hand, the “I think”, insofar as it is conceived as “the sole text of rational psychology”, indicates nothing but the logical formula of self-consciousness in general. Kant says: “the proposition, I think, (taken problematically) contains the form of any judgement of the understanding in general, and accompanies all categories as their vehicle”. (A347/B406)

In the Paralogisms Chapter, Kant intends also to give an epistemological explanation of our representation of alter ego by using his theory of egological transference. He states as follows:

It must, however, seem strange from the very beginning, that the condition under which I think at all, and which therefore is merely a property of my own subject, should at the same time be valid for everything that thinks, and that, upon a proposition which seems to be empirical, we should venture to found an apodictic and universal judgement, namely, that everything that thinks is such as the voice of my self-consciousness declares it to be within me. The reason for this, however, is that we are constrained to attribute a priori to things all the properties which form the conditions under which alone we think them. Now it is impossible for me to form the least representation of a thinking being through any outer experience, but can do so only through self-consciousness. Such objects, therefore, are nothing but a transference of my own consciousness to other things, which thus alone can be represented as thinking beings. (A346f./B404f.)
Immediately after this statement, Kant says: “The proposition, I think, however, is used in this process only problematically” (A347/B405). The concept of “consciousness in general” (Bewußtsein überhaupt) appeared in the Prolegomena for the first time. But it is not incorporated into the Critique of Pure Reason of the second edition. Insofar as alter ego can be represented merely as “a transference” of the I of “I think” to another intelligent being, it is obvious that the “I think” of alter ego is nothing but a problematic proposition. In the “Criticism of the Second Paralogism of Transcendental Psychology”, Kant states as follows:

○ It is manifest that if we wish to represent to ourselves a thinking being, then we must put ourselves in its place, and substitute, as it were, the object which has to be considered by our own subject (which never happens in any other kind of investigation). …. (A353)

○ Just as in the former paralogism [i.e. the first paralogism of substantiality], therefore, so here too the formal proposition of apperception, I think, remains the sole ground on which rational psychology ventures upon the extension of its knowledge. This proposition, however, is not an experience, but only the form of apperception that adheres and is antecedent to every experience; but it must always be taken only as referring to a possible knowledge in general, namely, as a merely subjective condition of that knowledge. We have no right to turn it into a condition of the possibility of the knowledge of objects, that is, into a concept of a thinking being in general; but we do so because we cannot represent such a being to ourselves save by putting ourselves, with the formula of our consciousness, in the place of any other intelligent being. (A354)

Kant repeats here again the presentation of his theory of egological transference, pointing out that “we cannot represent such a being [i.e. alter ego] to ourselves save by putting ourselves, with the formula of our consciousness, in the place of any other intelligent being.” According to Kant, we cannot represent alter ego, i.e. any other thinking being except for the I myself, without using egological transference mentioned above. (See also A347/B405)

In the Chapter “Of the Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding” in the first edition, Kant did not formulate the transcendental apperception into the formula “I think”. It seems that Kant’s conception of transcendental apperception is not necessarily identical with the “I think”. Kant deduced the transcendental apperception, viz. the original apperception, as the most fundamental mental faculty of a thinking being by using the egological deduction proper to the Transcendental Deduction. According to Kant’s theory of knowledge, every thinking being is possessed of common transcendental apperception. Nevertheless, the thought of transcendental apperception conceived as a universal representation is not taken into Kant’s theory of egological transference. This is the reason why Kant defines the “I think” merely as a problematic proposition.

Chapter II. The concept of transcendental personality

In the “Criticism of the Third Paralogism of Transcendental Psychology”, Kant states as follows:

Like the concepts of substance and the simple, however, the concept of personality may also remain with us (insofar as it is merely transcendental, that is, as a concept of the unity of the subject which is otherwise unknown to us, but in the determinations of which there is thoroughgoing connection through apperception). In this sense, the concept [of personality] is necessary and sufficient for practical use, … (A365)

On the basis of this statement of Kant, Tetsuro Watsuji wrote a prominent treatise: “‘Person’ and ‘Humanity’ in Kant” (Kant ni okeru ‘Jinkaku’ to ‘Jinruisei’), the controlling concept of which treatise is “the transcendental personality”. According to Watsuji, Kant presents there the concept of “the transcendental personality”. Though Kant himself did not use the term “the transcendental personality” except in his early writings, that which is thought by the expression “a concept of the unity of the subject which is otherwise unknown to us, but in the determinations of which there is thoroughgoing connection through apperception” is, Watsuji assures, none other than the concept of “the transcendental personality”. It is obvious that “the unity of the subject” by “thoroughgoing connection through apperception” signifies the transcendental unity of apperception. And the transcendental unity of apperception consists in the epistemological function of “the transcendental subject”. Moreover, the concept of “personality” based on “the unity of the subject” (the transcendental unity of apperception) signifies the concept of “the transcendental subject”. Therefore “the transcendental personality” is essentially none other than “the transcendental subject”, which can be also defined as one of the transcendental ideas. Moreover, Kant insists that “the concept [of personality] is necessary and sufficient for practical use”.

In the above mentioned treatise, Watsuji identifies “humanity in person” with the transcendental personality. He emphasizes
the universality of “humanity in person”. It is Watsuji’s proper thought that “humanity in person” is none other than humanity in general, i.e. humanity commonly owned by human beings as humankind. Nevertheless, he emphasizes also the individuality or singularity of person. According to Watsuji, person consists of psychological ego (sinrigakuteki jiga) and body ego (sintaiga); psychological ego is an appearance of the transcendental personality through time as the pure form of inner sense, and body ego is an appearance of the transcendental personality through space as the pure form of outer sense. On the basis of such a way of thinking, Watsuji demonstrated ontologically the individuality/singularity of person in Kantian conception.

In the last paragraph of the Paralogisms Chapter in the first edition, Kant uses a somewhat peculiar phrase: “the singular representation, I am” (die einzelne Vorstellung, Ich bin) (A405). According to Kant, “I think”, insofar as it is conceived as “the act [Actus] of apperception” (cf. B137), is entirely synonymous with “I am”. Kant says: “what is known as the Cartesian inference, cogito, ergo sum, is in reality tautological, because cogito (sum cogitans) predicates my reality immediately.” (A355) Not only “I am”, but also “I think”, is a “singular representation”. We can therefore replace “I am” in “the singular representation, I am” with “I think”. The transcendental personality is none other than the I of transcendental apperception “I think”. And in this case, “I think” and “I am” are substantially one and same representation. It is obvious that every thinking subject can recognize immediately the actuality and individuality/singularity of his transcendental personality.

Chapter III. Peculiarity of psychological Idea

Insofar as the Cartesian proposition “I think, therefore I am” is a tautological proposition, it is sure that the self-consciousness in transcendental apperception “I think” contains the consciousness of one’s own existence. Furthermore, when Kant refers to transcendental apperception, he sometimes replaces “I think” with “I am”, and uses also such a phrase: “with the intellectual consciousness of my existence, in the representation I am, which accompanies all my judgements and all acts of my understanding”. (Bx1 fn.) Nevertheless, in the Paralogisms Chapter in the first edition, Kant does not explicitly refer to the existential characteristics of the “I think”. Only in the introductory paragraphs of the Paralogisms Chapter, he refers to the existential self-perception of the I of pure apperception “I think”. The existential self-perception of the I of pure apperception “I think” mentioned there seems to be identical with the “indeterminate perception” mentioned in the footnote to a paragraph at B421f. in the Paralogisms Chapter in the second edition, in which footnote Kant says: “An indeterminate perception here signifies only something real, which has been given merely for thought in general, not therefore as appearance, nor a thing in itself (noumenon), but as something that indeed exists and is designated in general in the proposition, I think.” (B423 fn.) We cannot disregard that this footnote begins with the following sentence: “The I think is, as has been stated, an empirical proposition, and contains within itself the proposition, I exist.” (B422 fn.) In this footnote, Kant defines the proposition “I think” as “an existential proposition”. Though there Kant insists on the intellectuality of the I of “I think”, but he does not intend there to clarify the intelligibility of the I of “I think”. In the second edition, especially in the “Refutation of Idealism” and in the argumentation concerning the hidden major premise of Cartesian enthymeme (B415f.), Kant conceives the “I think” as an empirical proposition. The existential proposition, which conceives the I of “I think” as “something real”, is essentially different from the existential proposition which we are going to explain on the basis of Kant’s concept of the transcendental personality.

Watsuji clarified Kant’s concept of the transcendental personality by introducing Heidegger’s fundamental ontology into his interpretation of Kant’s “Criticism of the Third Paralogism of Transcendental Psychology”. According to Watsuji, the transcendental personality is Sein (being), and person is das Seiende (the existent). Insofar as the transcendental personality is Sein, the “I think” must be thought to be an existential proposition, because the transcendental personality is none other the I of transcendental apperception “I think” or “I am”. The “I think” as transcendental apperception contains in itself an authentic existential proposition “I am, I exist”.

The psychological idea defined as “the absolute (unconditioned) unity of the thinking subject” (A334/B391) has a peculiarity in that the transcendental subject, i.e. the I of transcendental apperception, is in itself “the absolute unity of the thinking subject”, i.e. a “transcendental idea”. Though it is transcendental-logically impossible to know (erkennen) the transcendental I in itself as the object of transcendental-psychological knowledge (Erkenntnis), the transcendental I in itself, namely the I of transcendental apperception, is none other than the I who is actually existent as the thinking subject. We can therefore recognize immediately the transcendental unity of the thinking subject in the transcendental unity of one’s own apperception.(1) By his criticism of human mental faculty, Kant clarified that “metaphysics as a science” (B22) is not possible. The possibility of rational psychology is rejected by Kant. Nevertheless, we are able to be conscious of the transcendental personality in my own person. Therefore we are able to be conscious of the actuality or reality of the psychological idea through our self-consciousness. We can
recognize the actuality of the absolute unity of the thinking subject through our mental activity. In the “System of Transcendental Ideas”, we find such a description: “… to the purpose of carrying out our great plan, as enabling us to start from what is immediately given to us in experience — advancing from the science of the soul (rational psychology), and proceeding thence to ….” (A337/B395) The word “experience” means here not an empirical experience, but a phenomenological experience, i.e. the self-consciousness of the I of transcendental apperception. The Cartesian proposition “Ego cogito, ergo sum, sive existo” (AT VI, 558, VII, 140) is an existential proposition in its strict meaning. And this existential proposition is a non-empirical synthetic proposition. We cannot demonstrate the immortality of soul by this existential proposition. Nevertheless, this existential proposition indicates the singularity of the I of “I think, therefore I am or I exist”, which singularity of the I is expressed in Kant’s phrase “the singular proposition, I am”.

Chapter IV. Peculiarity of the paralogism of simplicity

In order to clarify the peculiarity of the paralogism of the simplicity of soul, we would like to make reference to Kant’s usage of the words “something real”. For example, in the Paralogisms Chapter in the first edition, Kant says: “Apperception is something real, and its simplicity is already contained in its possibility.” (B419) As is mentioned above, Kant defined the psychological idea as “the absolute (unconditioned) unity of the thinking subject”. However, “the absolute unity of the thinking subject” is different from “the original synthetic unity of apperception” (B131), because the latter is nothing but a merely logical unity which is expressed also as an “absolute (although merely logical) unity” (A355) or “an absolute, but logical, unity of the subject (simplicity)” (A356). Nevertheless, “the absolute unity of the thinking subject” and “the original synthetic unity of apperception” have a remarkable similarity. It is the reason why Kant characterizes “the second paralogism of simplicity” as “the Achilles of all dialectical inferences of pure psychology” (A351), and characterizes “the proposition, I am simple” (A354f.) as the “cardinal proposition of rational psychology” (A357).

At the footnote to the table of division of the unconditioned unity of the thinking subject, Kant remarks a correspondence of “the simple” (viz. simplicity) to “the category of reality”. (A404) Also in the Paralogism Chapter in the first edition, he assumes, at least transcendental-logically, that the representation of transcendental apperception: “I think” contains something real that is really simple. Insofar as the “I think” contains something real that indicates the real simplicity of the I of transcendental apperception, the “I think” must be essentially an existential proposition. Surely, in the Critique of Pure Reason of the first edition, the “I think” is not explicitly characterized as an existential proposition. However, it is sure that also in the first edition Kant implicitly conceives of the “I think” as an existential proposition. In the “Criticism of the Second Paralogism of Transcendental Psychology”, Kant states as follows:

The proposition, I am simple, must be considered as an immediate expression of apperception, and what is known as the Cartesian inference, cogito, ergo, sum, is in reality tautological, because cogito (sum cogitans) predicates my reality immediately. I am simple means no more than that this representation, I, does not contain the smallest manifoldness, but that it is absolute (although merely logical) unity. (A354f.)

Though the proposition “cogito, ergo sum” is nothing but a tautological proposition, “cogito” signifies essentially “sum cogitans”. It is therefore not impossible for us to conceive the “I think” (cogito, namely, ego cogito) as an existential proposition. The simplicity of the I of transcendental apperception “I think” is nothing but a logical simplicity. However, insofar as the I of transcendental apperception is the I which actually exists, we cannot deny the possibility of recognizing the absolute unity of the thinking subject through the self-consciousness of one’s own existence. And the I of transcendental apperception is in itself the transcendental subject as the psychological idea. Surely, the absolute unity of the thinking subject is nothing but a transcendental idea. However, so far as the I of transcendental apperception is in itself the transcendental subject, the self-consciousness in the transcendental apperception “I think” is in itself none other than the consciousness of the actuality or reality of the transcendental subject, that is to say, the consciousness of the presence of the absolute unity of the thinking subject. The psychological idea is not a mere idea, but the idea which is accompanied by the actuality (reality) of the transcendental subject. According to Kant, “an absolute, but logical, unity of the subject (simplicity)” is essentially different from “the actual simplicity of my subject”. (A356) However, Kant assumes that the actual simplicity of the transcendental subject, which is none other than the psychological idea itself, is closely relevant to the logical simplicity of the thinking subject, at least in the dimension of transcendental ontology. Kant says: “It (the I which adheres to the thought, namely, the formal I of pure apperception) signifies a something in general (transcendental subject), the representation of which must no doubt be simple, because in this something we determine nothing
whatsoever — and nothing can be represented more simply than through the concept of a mere something.” (A355)

In addition, we would like to state our opinion about the existential aspect of the proposition “I think, therefore I am”. Also in the first edition, Kant conceives the Cartesian proposition “I think, therefore I am” as an existential proposition, and conceives the I of “I think” as an actually existent I. For Kant, therefore, also the transcendental subject itself is a really existent subject. Moreover, both the I of transcendental apperception and the transcendental subject as a really existent subject must be conceived as an individual and singular ego, because every existent ego must be actually individual and singular. Consequently, we can immediately recognize the individuality or singularity of the transcendental subject. We cannot deny that the singularity of the transcendental subject, i.e. the singularity of the I of transcendental apperception, is metaphysically relevant to the psychological idea of the simplicity of soul, i.e. to the psychological idea of simplicity of “the thinking I” (A351).

Chapter V. Transcendental subject as the subject of inherence

In the “Criticism of the Second Paralogism of Transcendental Psychology”, Kant uses a somewhat peculiar phrase: “a something in general (transcendental subject)”. Concerning the paralogism of the simplicity of soul, he states as follows:

Thus we see that the famous psychological proof is founded merely on the indivisible unity of a representation, which governs only the verb with respect to a person; but it is clear that the subject of inherence is designated only transcendently by the I which adheres to the thought, without our noticing the smallest property of it, in fact, without our knowing anything about it. It signifies a something in general (transcendental subject), the representation of which must not doubt be simple, because in this something we determine nothing whatsoever — and nothing can be represented more simply than through the concept of a mere something. …. (A355)

In this statement, “the indivisible unity of a representation” means, of course, the indivisible unity of the I of “the formal proposition of apperception, I think” (A354). Nevertheless, the clause: “which governs only the verb with respect to a person” expresses an exceptional conception of the “I think” peculiar to the “Criticism of the Second Paralogism of Transcendental Psychology”, in which the “I think” is conceived not as the representation which indicates the transcendental subject, but as the representation which governs only “the verb” (das Verbum), i.e. only the inherence of the transcendental subject defined as “the subject of inherence”. According to this statement, “the [formal] I which adheres to the thought” is not directly identical with the I of transcendental apperception “I think”, i.e. the transcendental subject. According to the foregoing statement: “We can, however, use as the foundation of such a science nothing but the simple and by itself perfectly empty representation, I, of which we cannot even say that it is a concept, but only that it is a mere consciousness that accompanies all concepts. Through this I, or he, or it (the thing), which thinks, nothing is represented beyond a transcendental subject of thoughts = x. This subject is known only through the thoughts that are its predicates, and apart from them we can never have the slightest concept of it; …” (A345f./B403f.), “the simple and by itself perfectly empty representation, I’, that is nothing but “the I which adheres to the thought”, cannot be conceived as the “transcendental subject of thoughts”. Nonetheless, “the thoughts that are its predicates [i.e. the predicates of the transcendental subject]” designate, though only transcendently, “a transcendental subject of thoughts = x”.

It is obvious that the concept of “a transcendental subject of thoughts = x” corresponds to the concept of “a something in general (transcendental subject)”, which is called also “a mere something”. In the chapter “Of the Ground of the Distinction of All Objects in General into Phenomena and Noumena”, Kant tries to define thing in itself (Ding an sich selbst) by using various expressions: “This something, however, is only the transcendental object; and by that is meant a something [ein Etwas] = x of which we do not, nay, with the present constitution of our understanding, cannot know anything whatsoever, ….” (A250); “the categories do not represent a special object given to the understanding alone, but serve only to determine the transcendental object (the concept of something in general [etwas überhaupt]) through that which is given to us in sensibility, …” (A251); “we must admit that the very word appearance indicates a reference to something the immediate representation of which is no doubt sensible, but which nevertheless, even without this constitution of our sensibility (on which the form of our intuition is founded), must be something in itself, that is, an object independent of our sensibility.” (A252); “[The concept of a noumenon] … implies only the thinking of something in general, in which I abstract from the form of sensible intuition,” (ibid.) In these cases, “something” and “something in general” means noumenon, i.e. thing in itself, which is generally called “the transcendental object” in the Paralogisms Chapter in the first edition.

Consequently, it is obvious why in the “Criticism of the Second Paralogism of Transcendental Psychology” Kant used the phrase “a something in general (transcendental subject)”. However, we cannot deny the ambiguity of Kant’s argumentation about
“the simplicity of the representation of a [transcendental] subject”; especially we cannot disregard the inconsistency in such an opinion: “nothing can be represented more simply than through the concept of a mere something.”\(^{(7)}\)

As is stated above, “the subject of inherence” is none other than the “transcendental subject”. Kant distinguishes “the subject of inherence” (das Subjekt der Inherenz) from “the I which adheres to the thought” (das dem Gedanken anhängte Ich). The latter is nothing but the I of “the formal proposition” of pure apperception “I think”, namely, the formal I of the logical formula of pure self-consciousness, which I is also called “the entirely empty expression I (which we can apply to every thinking subject)”\(^{(8)}\) (A355).

Kant’s conception of ego presented in the “Criticism of the Second Paralogism of Transcendental Psychology” suggests that he supposes the epistemological distinction between “the subject of inherence” (the transcendental subject) and “the I which adheres to the thought” (the merely formal I of pure apperception), and thereby he intends to clarify not only the impossibility of demonstrating the simplicity of soul, but also the impossibility of knowing (cognizing) the transcendental subject in itself by transcendental psychology.

Chapter VI. Kant’s theory of community of substances

The concept of “transcendental object” common to the thinking I and matter, i.e. the concept of intelligible substratum, which concept is presented in the “Criticism of the Second Paralogism of Transcendental Psychology” and is essentially relevant to Descartes’ problem of mind-body connection, is followed by the argumentation in the “Consideration on the Sum Total of Pure Psychology, in Consequence of these Paralogisms” (A381-396). We should not disregard the remarkable relationship between the “Criticism of the Forth Paralogism of Transcendental Psychology”, in which Kant intended to state precisely his thought of transcendental idealism, and the “Consideration on the Sum Total of Pure Psychology, in Consequence of these Paralogisms”. On the basis of his thought of transcendental idealism, Kant develops his theory of the possibility of community (Gemeinschaft) of substances. In the Paralogism Chapter in the first edition, the problem of the community between the thinking I and human body converted finally into the problem of community or relationship between the transcendental subject and the world of sense (die Sinnenwelt), which is none other than the sum total of the objects of our scientific research. As is well known, Kant generalized the traditional problem of the possibility of connection between mind and body into the problem of the possibility of community of substances in general, being influenced by Leibniz’s theory of pre-established harmony. The transition of the point of argument about the problem of the community theory from the mind-body problem to the problem of possibility of community of the thinking I and the world of sense is closely relevant to Kant’s intention of expounding his thought of transcendental idealism.

Concerning the mind-body problem, Kant presents his proper opinion based on his transcendental idealism. According to Kant, the difficulty in metaphysical foundation of the connection of mind with its body originates in a transcendental realism which does not think of body as a representation of the transcendental I. (cf. A389ff.)

All theories concerning mind-body connection: the physical influence theory, the predetermined harmony theory, and the supernatural assistance theory are in a lump rejected by Kant. (cf. A390) He states as follows:

The notorious problem, therefore, as to a possible community between the thinking and the extended, would, when all that is merely imaginative is separated, come to this: How is outer intuition, namely, that of space (or what fills space with shape and motion) possible in any thinking subject? To this question, however, no human being can find an answer, and instead of attempting to fill this gap in our knowledge, all we can do is to indicate it by ascribing outer appearances to a transcendental object …. (A392f.)

In the succeeding paragraph, Kant refers again to the problem of a possible community between the thinking thing and the extended, i.e. the problem of “the community of the thinking and the extended beings” (A393). He states as follows:

The settlement of all disputes and objections concerning the state of a thinking nature before this community with matter (before life), or after the cessation of such community (in death), depends on the remarks which we have just made about the community of the thinking and the extended beings (die Gemeinschaft zwischen dem denkenden und den ausgedehnten Wesen). …. (A393f.)

It is obvious that the point of Kant’s argument about the problem of community of substances shifted here entirely from the problem of community of the thinking subject (the transcendental subject) with his body (human body) to the problem of community of the thinking subject with the extended things in general, i.e. to the problem of community (connection/relation-
ship) of the transcendental subject with the corporeal world (die körperliche Welt) as the sum total of extended things, i.e. the world of sense (the sensible world). However, interpretation of Kant’s argument about the foundation of community or relationship between the thinking subject and the corporeal world on the basis of his thought of transcendental idealism is not the problem of our present study.

Conclusion

In the present study, we tried to make an interpretation of Kant’s theory of transcendental ego by analyzing the Paralogisms Chapter of the Critique of Pure Reason of the first edition. We demonstrated the peculiarity of psychological idea by clarifying that it is none other than the I of transcendental apperception, of which actuality we are able to be immediately conscious of. Thus, we clarified the transcendental and existential characteristics of Kant’s concept of transcendental I.

Notes

1. In the “Criticism of the Second Paralogism of Transcendental Psychology”, Kant states as follows: “So much, then, is certain: that through the I, I always think an absolute, but logical, unity of the subject (simplicity); but not that I thereby know the actual simplicity of my subject.” (A355f.) The transcendental unity of apperception is “an absolute, but logical, unity of the subject”. The transcendental unity of apperception does not signify the actual, substantial simplicity of the thinking I. Nevertheless, we cannot deny that Kant develops his criticism of the paralogism of the simplicity of soul by taking into consideration a close relationship of the transcendental unity of apperception with the supposed substantial unity of the thinking I as the transcendental subject.

2. In the concluding part of the Paralogisms Chapter in the first edition (A396–405), Kant presents the table of the division of the unconditioned unity in “the synthesis of the conditions of a thought in general” (cf. A397), in which table the unconditioned unity which is correspondent to the paralogism of the simplicity of soul is defined as “The unconditioned unity of the quality, that is, it knows itself not as a real whole, but as simple.” (A404)

3. Kant insists that “The simplicity of the representation of a subject, however, is not therefore a knowledge of the simplicity of the subject itself” (A355). We cannot regard the logical, merely formal unity of apperception as the absolute, necessary unity of the thinking subject, namely the substantial simplicity of the transcendental subject. However, as is mentioned in the Paralogisms Chapter in the second edition, “Apperception is something real, and its simplicity is already contained in its possibility.” (B419) Also in the second edition, Kant conceives the I of pure apperception “I think” as a “purely intellectual [representation]” (B423fn.). It seems that in both editions Kant thinks about the reality or actuality of the I of pure apperception, and thinks about the real or actual simplicity of the I of pure apperception. Transcendental-logically, therefore, it is not impossible to think of the simplicity of the I of pure apperception as being potentially relevant to “the absolute (unconditioned) unity of the thinking subject”, i.e. the psychological idea itself.

4. In the Critique of Pure Reason, “I think” is sometimes replaced with “I am”. For example, see the next description: “They [i.e. the assertions of pure psychology] ought therefore to rest on principles and on universal concepts of thinking nature in general. Instead of this, we find that the singular representation, I am, governs them all. This representation, for the very reason that it expresses (indeterminately) the pure formula of all my experience, claims to be a universal proposition valid for all thinking beings; ….” (A405. cf. A404)

5. In contrast, in the Paralogisms Chapter in the second edition, Kant asserts that the “I think”, which is conceived there as an empirical proposition, indicates immediately the actuality or existence of the thinking I. Kant says: “The I think is, as has been stated, an empirical proposition, and contains within itself the proposition, I exist.” (B422fn.), and he defines “the proposition, I think” as an “existential proposition”. Moreover, he insists that the reality (existence) of the I of “I think” can be characterized as “something real” (etwas Reales) (B423fn.) which is also defined as “an indeterminate perception”(eine unbestimmte Wahrnehmung) (ibid.).

6. We use the term “the transcendental object” usually in the meaning opposite to “the transcendental subject”. However, Kant does not necessarily discriminate between “the transcendental subject” and “the transcendental object”. In the “Criticism of the Second Paralogism of Transcendental Psychology”, he states as follows: “But although extension, impenetrability, cohesion and motion — in short, everything that the outer senses can give us — can neither be nor contain thoughts, feeling, inclination or resolution (these never being objects of outer intuition), nevertheless the something which forms the foundation of outer appearances, and which affects our sense in such a way that it obtains the representations of space, matter,
shape, etc., might yet, if considered as noumenon (or better, as a transcendental object) be at the same time also the subject of our thoughts —….” (A358) Kant thinks about the possibility that “a transcendental object” can be at the same time also “the subject of our thoughts”, namely the transcendental subject. Moreover, in the “Criticism of the Second Paralogism of Transcendental Psychology”, he uses such an expression: “the thinking I, or the soul (a name for the transcendental object of inner sense)” (A360f.). After this, he calls the thinking I as noumenon “the transcendental object” instead of “the transcendental subject”. Kant assumes that “the substratum” of the thinking subject and that of his body are probably one and the same. In the “Criticism of the Second Paralogism of Transcendental Psychology”, he states as follows: “But what we call matter is only outer appearance, the substratum of which cannot be known through any predicates that we can assign to it. I can therefore very well suppose that this substratum in itself is simple [in the transcendental meaning], although by the manner in which it affects our senses it produces in us the intuition of something extended, and therefore composite. I may further suppose, therefore, that the substance, which with respect to our outer sense possesses extension, might very well be in itself cohabited by thoughts which can be represented consciously by its own inner sense. In such a way the same thing which in one respect is called corporeal would in another respect at the same time be a thinking being; and although we could not intuit its thoughts, yet we could see the signs of them in appearance.”(A359) Kant concludes the paragraph concerned with such words: “the same thing which, as an outer appearance, is extended, is internally, in itself, a subject, and is not composite, but is simple and thinks.” (A359f.) In the succeeding paragraphs, Kant states as follows: “But without indulging in such hypotheses, we can make this general remark, that if I understand by soul a thinking being in itself, then the very question as to whether or not the soul be the same in kind as matter (which is not a thing in itself), but only a kind of representation in us) would be absurd; for so much at all events must be clear, that a thing in itself is of a different nature from the determinations which constitute merely its state.” (A360); “If, on the contrary, we compare the thinking I, not with matter but with the intelligible that forms the foundation of the outer appearances which we call matter, then it follows, since we know nothing whatever of the intelligible, that we have no right to say that the soul is in any respect internally different from it.” (ibid.) In the last citation, the words “the substratum” is replaced with “the intelligible”, which signifies none other than thing in itself. According to Kant, we should not deny the possibility that in the dimension of “the intelligible” the thinking I, which is none other than the transcendental subject, cannot be distinguished from “the substratum of matter” (A359).

7. Kant refers here to “the concept of a mere something”, considering its correspondence to the sentence: “It signifies a something in general (transcendental subject), …”. Kant conceives “the concept of a mere something” because we cannot know (erkennen) the transcendental subject in itself. The “I think” is nothing but the logical formula of our pure consciousness. The “I think” indicates merely the logical, entirely empty simplicity of the I of pure apperception. Kant says: “The simplicity of the representation of a subject, however, is not therefore a knowledge of the simplicity of the subject itself, because we abstract altogether from its properties when we designate it solely by the entirely empty expression I (which we can apply to every thinking subject).” (A355)

8. Kant’s conception of the “I think” is not necessarily unequivocal. In the expression “the formal proposition of apperception, I think” (A354), the “I think” means nothing but “the form of apperception” (cf. ibid.), i.e. “the formula of our consciousness”. (The latter words are used in such a description: “we cannot represent such a being [i.e. a thinking being in general] to ourselves save by putting ourselves, with the formula of our consciousness, in the place of any other intelligent being.” (ibid.)) However, insofar as we conceive the “I think” as the “I think” of transcendental apperception, which can be defined as “the act of apperception, I think” (B137), the I of “I think” cannot be separated from its act of thinking, i.e. from its verb “think”. Logically, we can never discriminate “the subject of inherence” from “the I which adheres to the thought”.

9. Of Kant’s conception of the problem of community between the thinking subject and the corporeal world, see also the following quotes: “The opinion that the thinking subject was able to think before any community with bodies would assume the following form: …. The other opinion, that after the cessation of its community with the corporeal world the soul can continue to think, would be expressed as follows: …. ” (A393f.); “We thus see that all the wrangling about the nature of a thinking being and its connection with the corporeal world arises simply from our filling the gap, in regard to something of which we are wholly ignorant, with paralogisms of reason, and from thereby turning thoughts into things and so hypostatizing them.” (A395)
References


Addendum

Corrigenda and Revision for Improvement to my article, “The Cogito Proposition of Descartes and Characteristics of His Ego Theory”, *Bulletin of Aichi University of Education*, Vol. LXI (Humanities and Social Sciences), pp. 73–80. In the following list, ‘→’ signifies that the former should be replaced with the latter. In case of indispensable correction, ‘⇒’ is used instead of ‘→’.

- ‘write’ (p. 73, l. 10) → ‘use’; ‘except’ (p. 73, l. 11, p. 78, l. 27, p. 80, l. 24) ⇒ ‘except for’; ‘the’ (p. 73, l. 13, p. 76, l. 11, p. 78, l. 6, l. 28) ⇒ ‘the’; ‘chapter of’ (p. 73, l. 18) ⇒ ‘chapter’; ‘suggests us’ (p. 73, l. 22) ⇒ ‘suggests’; ‘’’ (p. 73, l. 25, p. 76, l. 35, p. 77, l. 13) ⇒ ‘’’; ‘I’ (p. 74, l. 2, p. 76, l. 25, l. 32) ⇒ ‘the I’; ‘action’ (p. 74, l. 4, p. 79, l. 37) ⇒ ‘act’; ‘suggests to us’ (p. 74, l. 5) ⇒ ‘suggests’; ‘of’ (p. 74, l. 8) ⇒ ‘of the’; ‘only one’ (p. 74, l. 8, l. 10) ⇒ ‘only’; ‘But’ (p. 74, l. 24) ⇒ ‘However’; ‘corpus’ (p. 74, l. 24) ⇒ ‘corpus’; ‘(veracitas Dei) antecedently’; ‘(p. 74, l. 26) ⇒ ‘(veracitas Dei) prior to it’; ‘thinking substance’ (p. 74, l. 40) ⇒ ‘a thinking substance’; ‘(continua)’ (p. 74, l. 43) ⇒ ‘(continua)’; ‘only one’ (p. 75, l. 1) ⇒ ‘the only’; ‘could not’ (p. 75, l. 2) ⇒ ‘cannot’; ‘as it were’ (p. 75, l. 16) ⇒ ‘as if it were just’; ‘Meditation’ (p. 75, l. 21) ⇒ ‘Replies’; ‘syllogism opinion about’ (p. 75, l. 26, l. 28) ⇒ ‘syllogism (enthymeme) theory of’; ‘on’ (p. 75, l. 28) ⇒ ‘of’; ‘should’ (p. 75, l. 29) ⇒ ‘had to’; ‘action’ (p. 75, l. 43) ⇒ ‘an axiom’; ‘axiom’ (p. 76, l. 7) ⇒ ‘the axiom’; ‘action of the’ (p. 76, l. 8) ⇒ ‘act of’; ‘exists’ (p. 76, l. 10, p. 77, l. 9, l. 13) ⇒ ‘exists’; ‘i. e.’ (p. 76, l. 12, p. 77, l. 43, l. 46, p. 78, l. 17, p. 79, l. 32) ⇒ ‘i.e.’; ‘The’ (p. 76, l. 14) ⇒ ‘the’; ‘exists’ (p. 76, l. 18, p. 77, l. 1) ⇒ ‘exist’; ‘intuition’ (p. 76, l. 23) ⇒ ‘an intuition’; ‘that he founded’ (p. 76, l. 41) ⇒ ‘that’; ‘’’ (p. 76, l. 42) ⇒ ‘’’; ‘think’ (p. 76, l. 43) ⇒ ‘exist’; ‘[Logi]cally’ (p. 77, l. 1) ⇒ ‘[Logi]cally’; ‘assert’ (p. 77, l. 14) ⇒ ‘asserts’; ‘substituting’ (p. 77, l. 23) ⇒ ‘substituting it’; ‘of the’ (p. 77, l. 34) ⇒ ‘the’; ‘Moreover’ (p. 77, l. 35) ⇒ ‘Moreover’; ‘e. g.’ (p. 77, l. 36) ⇒ ‘e.g.’; ‘a thinking action’ (p. 77, l. 41) ⇒ ‘an act of thinking’; ‘singular I’ (p. 77, l. 46) ⇒ ‘singular I’; ‘Aristotelians’ (p. 78, l. 15) ⇒ ‘Aristotelians’; ‘“Letter” (p. 78, l. 16) ⇒ ‘the “Letter”’; ‘known’ (p. 78, l. 42) ⇒ ‘known’; ‘Galileo Galilei’s’ (p. 78, l. 43) ⇒ ‘Galileo Galilei’s’; ‘methodical’ (p. 79, l. 9) ⇒ ‘methodological/methodical’; ‘the other’ (p. 79, l. 11) ⇒ ‘another’; ‘Surely’ (p. 79, l. 33) ⇒ ‘Surely’; ‘conducting’ (p. 79, l. 43) ⇒ ‘taking’; ‘Sutcliffe’ (p. 80, l. 11) ⇒ ‘Sutcliffe’; ‘On the formation of modern physics,’ (p. 80, l. 15) ⇒ ‘In the formation of modern physics and modern astronomy,’; ‘experientiae’ (p. 80, l. 19) ⇒ ‘experientiae except in several special studies.’; ‘Galileo’ (p. 80, l. 20) ⇒ ‘Galileo’s’; ‘and experience’ (p. 80, l. 21) ⇒ ‘and experiment’; ‘younger’ (p. 80, l. 23) ⇒ ‘young’; ‘Galileo … “mathematical physics”’ (p. 80, l. 26–27) ⇒ ‘Galileo conducted his scientific research as a mathematical philosopher. His idea of mathematical philosophy was succeeded by Descartes. Descartes, the founder of Western modern philosophy, developed the idea of mathematical physics.’; ‘physics constructed’ (p. 80, l. 27, l. 28) ⇒ ‘the physics constructed’; ‘Astronomy’ (p. 80, l. 31) ⇒ ‘astronomy’; ‘… The inference’ (p. 77, l. 36) ⇒ ‘When you say that I could have concluded the same thing from any of my other actions apart from thinking, you depart a long way from the truth because the only action of which I am completely certain (with the metaphysical certainty that is at issue here) is my thinking. … The inference’ (Descartes, René, *Meditations and Other Metaphysical Writings*, translated with an Introduction by Desmond M. Clarke, Penguin Books, London, 2003, p. 96.)

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