

Kant's on Why Knowledge of the 'I-think' is Limited

Patricia Kitcher

Columbia University

1. A Basic Interpretive Dispute

I take the criticisms of the Paralogisms chapter to be a further working out of the positive theory of the 'I-think' presented in the transcendental deduction. This interpretative approach is controversial. Karl Ameriks interprets Kant's attack on Rational Psychology against the background of Rationist metaphysics (2000, vi). The interpretive divide reflects an odd fact about the Paralogisms chapter. It is introduced in relation to the Psychological Idea (A334/B391, cf. 4.333). The Psychological Idea is a regulative principle of scientific discovery: Look for the most basic substance in dealing with the subject of cognition. By contrast the 'I-think' is an *a priori*, but 'constitutive' representation that occurs in all empirical cognition. Cognizers do not merely aim at self-consciousness. They must recognize the unity of self-consciousness in any cognition. Given its location in the Dialectic, it is reasonable to conclude that the Paralogisms relate to the regulative 'I' and not to the constitutive 'I-think.' And under this assumption, the most important background would be the contemporary theories of Rational Psychology. On the other hand, the texts of the Paralogisms arguments do not contain any trace of the regulative idea. They are all about the necessary unity of the thinking subject.

Kant's discussion of the Psychological Idea in the *Prolegomena* provides a clue about how he saw the relation between these two 'I's that can help make sense of the disparity between the Paralogisms chapter's project description and its execution:

It has long been observed that in all substances the true subject—namely that which remains after all accident have been removed—and hence the substantial itself, is unknown to us ...

Now it does appear as if we have something substantial in the consciousness of ourselves (i.e., in the thinking subject), and indeed have it in immediate intuition; for all the predicates of inner sense are referred to the I as subject, and this I cannot again be thought as the predicate of some other subject. It therefore appears that in this case completeness in referring the given concept to a subject as predicates is not a mere idea, but that the object, namely, the **absolute**

subject itself, is given in experience. But this expectation is disappointed. For the I is not a concept ... (4. 333-34).

In the case of the 'I,' the search for an ever more basic substance seems to reach its destination. For this reason, a merely regulative idea is mistakenly understood as constitutive. The reasoning that provides the illusion a target reached concerns the necessary conditions for thought. Hence the way to unmask the illusion that, e.g., a substantial 'I' is constitutive is to be clear about what an analysis of the necessary conditions for thought implies about the subject of thought: It is not a concept, etc. And that, I think, is what the Paralogisms chapter does. It carefully constrains the conclusions about the subject of thought that can be drawn from a correct analysis of the necessary conditions for thought—namely from his analysis.

Thus I read Kant's criticisms of the Rational Psychologists as flowing from his positive theory of the deduction. This does not mean that Ameriks and others are wrong to stress the importance of the then contemporary context. Understanding the Paralogisms requires both knowledge of the tradition and detailed knowledge of the position from which Kant criticizes it.

Despite the disagreement about whether the Paralogisms should or should not be read against the background of the 'I-think' of the deduction, there is considerable interpretive consensus about three themes of the criticisms. First, the Rational Psychologists are mistaken in believing that an analysis of the necessary conditions for cognition can provide information about the nature of the thinker: The representation 'I-think' is unique in being 'empty.' Second, their arguments err because they mix premises that are transcendental with premises that are empirical, thereby committing the fallacy of ambiguous middle (A402, cf. B428-29). There is also agreement about the general framework for the discussion. As in other parts of the Dialectic, the Paralogisms chapter is intended to supply an 'indirect proof' of transcendental idealism (A506/B534), by revealing the philosophical errors that can be prevented by a proper appreciation of the theory. My interpretive argument is that we can follow Kant's diagnosis of how, exactly, intelligent men fell into these errors only against the background of his positive theory of the role of the 'I-think' in cognition.

2. Kant's Earlier and Later Treatments of Rational Psychology

One way to gain insight into the Paralogisms' critique of Rational Psychology is to compare it with Kant's earlier treatments of the subject. The best source for the latter is the L₁ Metaphysics lectures that were given sometime between 1777-78 and 1779-80. Although there is always risk in relying on student notes, it is greater in this case. My argument is that we can understand what he came to see as the systematic error of the Rational Psychologists by contrasting what he says in the *Critique* with what he does *not* say in L₁. The change is explained by the fact that his later discussion can draw on the working out of his I-think theory in the deduction. Another possibility would be that the students merely omitted this information. Although that alternative cannot be ruled out, it seems unlikely, so I press ahead with the available sources.

The discussion of Rational Psychology in the L₁ metaphysics lectures is largely devoted to the 'proof' of spontaneity and to the countervailing problem of how created beings can exercise real freedom. This material does not occur in the *Critique*, because, the issue of the noumenal freedom of the self is moved to the ethics (here I agree with Ameriks), According to the student reports, when Kant took up the arguments that are criticized in the Paralogisms, his focus was on simplicity. Apparently the thesis of substantiality was presented with little argumentation. All he is reported as offering for support is the claim that 'I' is the general subject of all predicates, of all thinking and all acting, and is not a predicate of anything itself (28.266).

By contrast, in presenting the Rational Psychology argument for substantiality as paralogistic in the A edition, Kant goes on at some length about why the 'I' is taken to be something which is always represented as subject and hence why the minor premise seems so plausible.

That whose representation is the **absolute subject** of our judgments and hence cannot be used as determination of another thing is **substance**.

I, as a thinking being, am the **absolute subject** of all my possible judgments, and this representation of myself cannot be used as predicate of any other thing.

Therefore, I, as thinking being (soul), am **substance** (A348).

In the minor premise

we have merely inferred permanence from the concept of the reference that all thought has to the I as the common subject in which it inheres ... for although the I is in all thoughts ... one can indeed perceive that in all thought this representation occurs again and again, but not that it is a constant and enduring [*stehende und bleibende*] intuition wherein the thoughts as mutable vary ...

for the constant [*beständige*] logical subject of thought is passed off by it as the cognition of the real subject of the inherence of thought ... For consciousness alone is what turns all representations into thoughts, and hence solely in it as the transcendental subject must all perceptions be found; and apart from this logical meaning of the I we are not acquainted with the subject in itself (A350, my underscoring).

Kant is being a generous critic. His predecessors have excellent reason for believing that the 'I' is a constant subject—namely his reasons. They appreciate that all thought must belong to the unity of self-consciousness or apperception. Their error arises because they assume that the 'I' is an empirical representation (of Empirical Psychology, the necessary precursor to Rational Psychology). But it is not. There is no constant and abiding I-intuition (cf. A107).

Although more extensive than the discussion of the argument for substantiality, Kant apparently presented the argument for simplicity in L₁ as the first half of the treatment it receives in the A Paralogisms: If the different parts of a verse were divided among different subjects then no subject would contain the whole representation (28.266, CMet 79, A351-52). When presenting this argument as a paralogism, he tries to explain the source of the mistake:

A thing whose action can never be regarded as the concurrence of many acting things is **simple**.

Now the soul, or the thinking I, is such a thing. Therefore, etc. (A351).

What, again, needs to be explained is the support for the minor premise.

The so-called **nervus probandi** of this argument lies in the proposition that in order for many representations to amount to one thought, they must be contained in the absolute unity of the thinking subject ...

Hence here, just as in the previous paralogism, the formal proposition of apperception I think remains the whole basis of which rational psychology ventures to expand its cognitions. But this proposition is, of course, not an experience, but is the form of apperception. Although this

form attaches to and precedes every experience, it must still always be regarded only as concerning a possible cognition as such, viz., as **merely subjective condition** of such cognition ... (A353, A354, my underscoring).

The problem with the Paralogism of simplicity is exactly the same as that of substantiality. The confusion is not about simplicity, but about unity. The error of the Rational Psychologists lies in mistaking a transcendental condition and representation, 'I-think,' for an experience or intuition of Empirical Psychology.

We find the same pattern in the argument about identity, the topic of the Third Paralogism. In L₁, Kant reportedly offers a very brief and weak argument: I am not conscious of myself as several substances. He then goes on to note that

The I expresses oneness: I am conscious of myself as one subject (28. 268).

Again, however, he doesn't elaborate.

In one respect, the A edition treatment of the Third Paralogism is just like its treatment of the First and Second in its focus on the unity of the subject of thought. It continues the discussion of the problem of unity.

What is conscious of the numerical identity of itself in different times is to that extent a **person**.

Now the soul is, etc.

Therefore, it is a person (A361).

Kant explains that the personality of the soul should have been established by considerations about substance:

It is noteworthy, however, that the personality of the soul and its presupposition, permanence, and hence the soul's substantiality must now first of all be proved. For if we could presuppose the latter, then there would follow from it, not yet indeed the continuance of consciousness, but still the possibility of a continuing consciousness in an enduring subject; and that is already sufficient for personality (A365).

But the proof of substantiality is flawed.

There is nothing through which this permanence is given to us prior to the numerical identity of ourselves that we infer from the identical apperception; rather, this permanence is first inferred from the numerical identity (A365).

The proper order of proof for Rational Psychology would be from permanence to substantiality to numerical identity to personality. That is, it would be from experience, which gives permanence, through an analysis of Ontological categories to conclusions about Empirical substantiality and personality, the unending existence of the person. But that is not what happens. Numerical identity, personality and permanence are all inferred from the unity or identity of apperception. Again, the starting point of the paralogistic argument is the sound recognition of the identity of apperception, but the reasoning goes astray in inferring substantial permanence and personality from apperception.

Although it continues the theme that the errors of the Rational Psychologists can be traced to their failure fully to understand the transcendental unity of apperception, the Third Paralogism also introduces a new theme, one that is absent from both L₁ and the first two A Paralogisms. The theme is announced in the major premise, which does not come from Rational Psychology but from Locke. As we have seen, Locke tied moral identity to mental continuity, though not to substantial identity. In the Third Paralogism, Kant denies the inference from mental unity to substantial identity—and to personal identity.

Kant borrows Locke's definition of 'person' for the major premise only to deny its implications:

Hence the identity of the consciousness of myself in different times is only a formal condition of my thoughts and of their coherence, but does not prove at all the numerical identity of myself as subject. In this subject—regardless of the logical identity of the I—there may after all, have occurred such change [*Wechse*] as does not permit us to retain its identity... For in any different state of the subject, even the state of its conversion [*Umwandlung*], this I would always preserve the thought of the preceding subject and thus could also pass it on to the subsequent one (A363).

Identity of apperception does not suffice for identity of moral subject or 'conversion'—change of heart—would be impossible. As is clear in *Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason*, written a dozen years later, Kant feels that it is essential to make room for the possibility of redemption. However badly a person has lived, always considering his self-interest above the moral law, change of heart is always possible. If conversion

is to be taken seriously—if someone can become a ‘new man’ in the terminology of the Gospels—then it must be possible for him to become a new moral person (6.48). As is also clear in the Religion book, he has great difficulties reconciling conversion with standard Lockean account of personal identity and its connection to punishment and reward. It is inconsistent with Divine justice to punish the new person:

After his conversion, however, since he now leads a new life and has become a ‘new man,’ the punishment cannot be considered appropriate to his new quality (of thus being a human being well-pleasing to God) (6.73)

The demands of Divine justice are honored, because the conversion itself can be understood as a sort of punishment—indeed death—of the old person (6.74).

Human justice operates in a different way. Even after someone has become, morally, a different human being

Physically (considered in his empirical character as a sensible being), he is still the same human liable to punishment and he must be judged as such before a moral tribunal of justice and hence by himself as well (6.74).

Kant’s position does not seem consistent. He wants to maintain at once that the convert is a new person and yet that it is just for him to be punished for the deeds of the old person. Inconsistency arises if ‘person’ is a moral term to which punishment and reward are attached.

Setting this problem to one side, it is clear that Kant’s position on conversion implies that he must reject Locke’s view and also carefully limit his own theory of the unity of apperception. Memory could be present through a ‘person-change’. Since Kant wants to make room for conversion, he has to dismiss not just substantial identity, but also memory continuity and sameness cognitive subject—the logical I—as sufficient for sameness of person.

Interpreting the Third Paralogism as disputing the sufficiency of mental continuity for personal identity seems inconsistent with its conclusion:

However, just as the concept of substance and of the simple remained with us, so we may keep also the concept of personality (insofar as it concerns the unity of the subject ... in whose determinations there is a thoroughgoing connection through apperception). And to this extent

the concept of personality is, indeed, needed and sufficient for practical use (A365-66, my underscoring).

Notice, however, that 'personality' is explained in terms of the apperceptive subject. Further, the last sentence of the citation is consistent with the view of the Religion book, because both put forward 'apperceptive personality' as the basis of human legal and social practice. Identical apperception is both necessary and sufficient for the *practical* use of the concept of personality. And, given human epistemic limitations, that is all that can be used. Nonetheless, it is shocking that Kant does not find this practice a mark against human justice. Since it cannot see into the hearts of men, human justice lacks the means to track the truth and is, in this sense, completely arbitrary.

Because it is not an argument of Rational Psychology and because it is dropped in the Second Edition, I don't consider A edition Fourth Paralogism. Summing up the differences in treatment between L₁ and the first three A Paralogisms, where the former hints that these issues revolve around the concept or expression 'I,' the Critical treatment argues that the Rational Psychologists err because they mishandle the unity of consciousness that the 'I' represents. Their project is to argue from an Empirical representation through the intellectual categories of Ontology to the nature of its object. In fact, they start with the intellectual conditions required for thought—which should not be understood as Ontological but as Epistemological or transcendental—and on that basis take themselves to have an unusual, but nonetheless Empirical representation of the 'I.' The Third Paralogism adds a *caveat* about his own position. Despite the natural inference from the Lockean tradition, do not identify the unity of apperceptive consciousness with the continuity of the real moral person.

Kant apparently raised doubts in his presentation of Rational Psychology in L₁. He is reported as observing that nothing in the chain of reasoning is solid unless the main category (i.e. substantiality) proves the consciousness of a subject, a subject that has states and is distinct from the body and can therefore be called a 'soul.' So he seems to see that there is a systematic problem with these arguments in L₁ that centers on the 'I' as subject. Apparently, however, either he did not know how to spell out this insight or he did not choose to do so in this setting. What changes between L₁ and the

Critique is not that he comes to doubt the teachings of Rational Psychology, which he already did, but that he is in a position to criticize them in a systematic way.

3. 'I-Think' as the Vehicle of the Categories

At a general level then, the difference in Kant's situation between L₁ and the *Critique* is clear. He can mount a principled diagnosis of the errors of Rational Psychology in 1781, because he can draw on his theory of transcendental apperception. In this section, I try to pinpoint a key aspect of his new theory that provides much of the basis for the criticisms. We can locate that element by comparing the theory of apperception as it was originally presented in an important collection of his notes from around 1775, the so-called *Duisburg Nachlaß*, which precede L₁, with the way in which the topic is introduced in the Paralogisms chapter.

In the *Duisburg* notes, 'apperception' is introduced in terms of three 'titles' or 'exponents': **relation to a subject, relation of following each other, and composition**. As Paul Guyer observes, the 'titles' of understanding in Kant's *Nachlaß* standardly refer to rules that govern the concept of an object and are forerunners of the categorial principles (e.g., 1987, 41ff.). The titles of apperception would be rules for the representation of a subject of cognition. Since the second title would characterize only spatiotemporal cognizers, there is no mystery about why it doesn't reappear in the transcendental deduction where the goal is to characterize cognizers in general. The third title was not much developed in the notes. But the pattern that Guyer sees between the titles of the *Duisburg* materials and the categories of *Critique* would seem to be repeated in the case of the first title, that of relation to subject. It appears to be a forerunner of the crucial claim of the A deduction that

all the varied empirical consciousness must be combined in one single self consciousness
(A117n.)

and the central thesis of the B deduction that

everything manifold in intuition has a necessary reference to the *I think* in the same subject in whom this manifold is found (B132).

That is, it appears to be the forerunner of the principle of the unity of apperception: all representations must belong to the unity of apperception or to the same 'I-think.' For ease in reference, I will call this principle the 'I-rule.'

The introduction to the Paralogisms chapter explicitly denies this point:

We now come to a concept that was not entered in the above general list of transcendental concepts, and that must yet be classed with them... This is the concept—or, if one prefers, the judgment—I think. But we readily see that this concept is the vehicle of all concepts as such and hence also that of transcendental concepts, and that it is therefore always also comprised among these and hence is likewise transcendental; but that it cannot have a special title, because it serves only to bring forward all thought as belonging to consciousness (A341/B399-400, my underscoring).

I assume that Kant draws attention to this point, because it is crucial to understanding the reasoning that follows.

Kant explicitly rejects of any special 'title' for apperception to signal the unique way in which the 'I-rule' functions. The I-rule cannot be applied on the basis of intuitions. This is so for two reasons. There is no intuition of the 'I' and the I-rule can be applied only when some object-rule is applicable to the manifold of intuitions so that the understanding combines some representations in others, thereby creating a relation of necessary connection across the sensory representations, the partials representations and the judgmental states. Categorical rules cannot be applied on the basis of intuitions of, e.g., substances and causes either. They can be applied only *via* schematized rules. But the 'I-think' is different. It does not apply through a schema, but via the application of an object rule. Despite its being the highest and most general rule of cognition, it is not an independent rule. It depends for its application on the use of an object-rule. Because the 'I-think' does not apply through its own title in virtue of particular representational contents, but piggy-backs on the object-rules, it discloses nothing about the nature of thinkers. It does not apply to a manifold of its own, but serves only to indicate that, through the fact that their contents fall under other rules, representational states stand in relations of necessarily belonging to a single consciousness. This is the basis for Kant's claims that the 'I-think' serves only to

introduce all thought as belonging to consciousness and is, itself, a completely 'empty' representation (A341-42/B400, A345/B406-A346/B404).

Although the peculiar way in which the I-rule functions does not make the Paralogistic inferences inevitable, it shows why they are very likely. Only a philosopher who examines the *a posteriori* and *a priori* sources of representations is in a position to agree with Hume that there is no intuition of an 'I,' without falling into his evident mistake of denying that humans have any I-representation at all. And only a philosopher who considers the necessary conditions for empirical cognition is in a position to see the true source of the necessity and ubiquity of the representation. Without this background, but with some appreciation that the 'I' must always be present, it is natural to think that the ubiquitous 'I' is a permanent feature of representations.

This mistake dominates the discussions of the A edition Paralogisms chapter and explains how empirical premises become mixed with transcendental ones. A proper understanding of the source of the 'I-think' reveals the claim that different representations must belong to a common 'I' to be transcendental—it states a necessary and *a priori* feature of human cognition. Because the representation 'I-think' always appears as a subject and never as a predicate, it meets the definition of a substance, so the minor premise of the First Paralogism can be asserted. The error lies in misunderstanding the ground of the assertion. Correctly understood as transcendental, it permits only the identical conclusion that the 'I' is the absolute subject of all judgments. When a philosopher fails to appreciate that the 'I-think' has no special title, he naturally assumes that the always representation is applied under the title for empirical substances, namely, 'substances are permanent.' From this further erroneous conclusions about immortality quickly follow.

A general problem with the Paralogisms is that they mingle transcendental and empirical claims. The minor premise can be asserted only if understood as transcendental. But so understood it has no implications whatever about the nature of 'I's. On the other hand, the conclusion is interesting only if understood as asserting that the soul is a permanent empirical substance. Since the basis of the minor premises of the Second ('the soul is something whose action can never be regarded as the

concurrence of many acting things') and of the Third ('the soul is conscious of the numerical identity of itself at different times') is also the transcendental unity of apperception, and their conclusions also purport to be about empirical simple substances and immortal persons, they commit exactly the same fallacy.

4. *'I-Think' as Analytically Contained in the Concept of Thought*

Kant begins the much briefer treatment in the B Paralogisms by repeating his view that no cognition of objects is possible without intuitions. He then moves from his doctrine that no object can be cognized merely through thinking to the particular problem with the arguments of Rational Psychology:

Hence I do not cognize myself by being conscious of myself as thinking, but I cognize myself when I am conscious of the intuition of myself as determined with regard to one of the functions of thought. All the **modes** of self-consciousness in thought as such are, therefore, not [*noch keine*] understanding's concepts of objects (categories), but are mere functions that do not allow thought to cognize any object at all, and hence do not allow it to cognize myself as object (B406-407, amended translation).

In the B edition, Kant separates the different aspects of apperception that are employed in the three different Paralogisms. 'Apperception' involves a constant subject, a singular subject, and an identical subject. When he claims that these modes do not permit the cognition of any object, he does not mean that they are not, in fact, necessary conditions for object cognition. His point is, again, that these necessary conditions for a subject of thought should not be confused with schematized categorial principles that would enable the subject to cognize himself as an object.

When we understand how the I-rule works, we can see both that 'I-think' can be asserted and that it yields no cognition of the nature of the subject. It applies to representations and to representations that have content—but that content concerns the nature of the object represented and not that of the subject of representations. This central point is explained in more detail in the B edition's succinct account of the First Paralogism:

Now in all judgments I am always the **determining** subject of the relation that makes up the judgment. But that I, who think, must be considered in such thought always as a **subject** and as something that cannot be regarded as merely attaching to thought like a predicate—this is an

apodeictic and even **identical** proposition. But this proposition does not mean that I am, as an **object**, a **being subsisting** by myself or **substance**. This latter goes very far, and hence it requires data that are in no way found in thought (B407).

Kant's point is not just that in judgments preceded by 'I think' I am the subject of the judgment in the sense that I am she who has the judgment, rather than the subject or topic of the judgment—what the judgment is about. Rather, I am the determining subject who makes a judgment by bringing about a relation between a subject and a predicate. As he has explained in the Transcendental Deduction, combining representations in a judgment requires consciousness of the combining and so an understanding of the representational states as necessarily belonging together (and so, to a common and active subject). Since the analysis of conceptual cognition reveals the necessity of such a subject for judgment, it is analytic that 'I am the determining subject of any judgment.' But although 'I' meets the definition of a 'substance,' it is not brought under this category in the way that objects are, namely, through finding something permanent in intuition. Further (and unavailable) evidence would be needed to establish that the referent of 'I-think' is a being capable of subsisting on its own—even though it is analytic that 'I-think' is a constant subject of thought.

As in the case of the First Paralogism the B discussions of the Second and Third drive home the result of the B deduction that the representation 'I-think' is analytically implied in the concept of rational thought. The Second Paralogism emphasizes the contrast between analytic and synthetic judgments.

That the **I** of apperception, and hence in all thought, is a **singular** that cannot be resolved into a plurality of subjects and therefore designates a logically simple subject—this lies already in the concept of thought and hence is an analytic proposition. But this does not mean that the thinking **I** is a simple **substance**; that would be a synthetic proposition. The concept of substance always refers to intuitions that, in me, cannot be other than sensible ... Indeed it would be miraculous if what otherwise requires so much effort for distinguishing what is substance in what intuition displays—but even more for distinguishing (as with the parts of matter) whether this substance can also be simple—were here in the poorest of all representation given to me thus straightforwardly, as if through a revelation, as it were (B407-408, my underscoring).

Here, as in the A edition, the mistake of the Second Paralogism is a repeat of that of the First: It is analytic that a common subject is in all thought, but that in no way establishes that the 'I-think' represents a simple substance. The 'I-think' is the 'poorest of all representations,' because although it can be and must be able to be attached to judgments, it is not applied to an intuition of an 'I' or to any special intuition of its own. It is applied to representations on the basis of contents that make possible judgments about objects.

The focus of the B edition Third Paralogism is also substantiality and permanence. Its dependence on the B deduction's argument for apperception is especially clear:

The proposition of the identity of myself in all the manifold whereof I am conscious is likewise a proposition that lies in the concepts themselves and hence is analytic. But this identity of the subject, of which I can become conscious in all representations of this subject, does not concern the subject's intuition whereby it is given as object. Hence this identity also cannot mean [bedeuten] identity of the person, by which we understand the consciousness of the subject's own substance as a thinking being in all variation of its states ... (B408, my underscoring).

This discussion indicates a shift from the position taken in A. Perhaps Kant realized that he was trying to do too much in introducing worries about conversion. In the B Paralogisms, the discussion is couched in terms of change [*Wechsel*] of states and not conversion [*Umwandlung*]. He offers a simpler argument: The consciousness of the identity of the 'I,' which is necessary for thought, does not imply consciousness of sameness of substance. As we know from the B Deduction, a subject can be conscious of her identity *only* through being conscious of adding different representations together (B133-34). The consciousness of identity which comes about through an implicit consciousness of synthesizing representations does not involve any intuition of the subject or any intuition of anything other than that of the objects of judgments. And that is the source of confusion. [Failing to grasp how the representation of an identical I is possible] the Rational Psychologists assume that it must depend on the awareness of a permanent or continuing being through all the variations in its states.

As far as I can see, although the discussion of the B edition Fourth Paralogism fits part of the mold of the others—it is analytic that I distinguish my own existence as a thinking being from the existence of other things, since other things are distinct from me—it exposes a simpler mistake, a mistake that was obvious to Descartes' earliest critics. That my idea of myself as thinking is distinct from my idea of other things does not imply that I can exist separately from other things (Descartes 1640/1984, vol.2, pp. 141-43).

The B edition also offers a systematic account of the mistake of the arguments of Rational Psychology. Using the First Paralogism as the model, the problem is that

In the major premise one talks about a being that can be thought in general, in every respect, and hence also as it may be given in intuition. But in the minor premise one talks about it insofar as it considers itself, as subject only relatively to thought and the unity of consciousness, but not simultaneously in reference to the intuition whereby it is given as object for such thought. Therefore, one is inferring the conclusion **per sophisma figurae dictionis** ... (B411).

It is not clear why such a procedure should be invalid: The scope of the major premise appears to include both beings that are intuited and others that are not; the minor concerns a being that is not given in intuition. Unless the conclusion, which Kant omits, concerns a substance that is given in intuition, there is no fallacy.

Perhaps seeing the problem, he adds a clarificatory note:

Thought is taken in two entirely different meanings in the two premises. In the major premise it is taken as it applies to an object as such (and hence as it may be given in intuition). But in the minor premise it is taken only as it consists in the reference to self-consciousness; hence here one thinks of no object whatever, but represents only the reference to oneself as subject (as the form of thought.) In the first premise one talks about things that cannot be thought otherwise than as subjects. In the second premise, however, one talks (by abstracting from any object) not about things but about thought, in which the I always serves as the subject of consciousness. Hence in the conclusion it cannot follow that I cannot exist otherwise than as subject, but merely that in thinking my existence I can use myself only as the judgment's subject. And this is an identical proposition that reveals absolutely nothing concerning the way in which I exist (B411-12n., my underscoring).

According to the note, the major premise is to be taken as applying to any sort of object that can be a subject (topic) of thought, but the minor does not refer to any object, but to

the subject of thought in a very different sense, namely, to the I of apperception. This clarification returns us to the theme we have already encountered in discussing the A Paralogisms, *viz.*, that in using 'I-think' one is not referring to something in anything like the way that one refers to objects; rather the use of 'I-think' is governed by the necessary conditions for thought. The note goes beyond previous discussions in highlighting the fact that thinking about the structure of thought in this way involves an abstraction from objects. Abstraction is necessary for reasons that we have seen. Rational empirical cognition of objects is a necessary condition for the possibility of consciousness of self-identity; so any assertion that makes reference to oneself as a subject must involve object cognition—or an abstraction from the object or objects of cognition.

According to Kant's critique, Rational Psychology contains a number of errors that can be seen perspicuously only from the perspective of his theory. One difficulty with interpreting the Paralogisms chapter is that since the criticisms are deeply intertwined, he piles one on top of another in a dense argument. As I understand them, this is how they interrelate. The overarching diagnosis is that the Rational Psychologists do not grasp the truth of transcendental idealism. This leads them to argue incorrectly from an alleged Empirical awareness of the soul, through purely intellectual considerations about the necessity of an 'I' in thought, to the conclusion that Empirical subjects of cognition would be simple, identical substances and so immortal. One way to see the mistake from the perspective of transcendental idealism is to see that no Empirical evidence could establish that the soul is simple or substantial. This is so, because there can be no spatiotemporal representation of a simple substance (A784/B812). A further error is that the Rational Psychologists misunderstand the nature of the arguments about the 'I-think' in two complementary ways. First, they do not see that the conditions established as the necessary intellectual conditions for thought are merely transcendental, that is, conditions for the organizing the data of intuition. Failing this, they see those conditions as noumenal—as establishing purely intellectual claims. Second, because they fail to appreciate that time is the form of human intuition, they believe that claims that are purely intellectual can involve time, in particular, the endless time of immortality. A related way to see the error is to see that

all cognition requires intuitions. Since the Rational Psychologists don't accept this point, they do not address the Humean question of the lack of an intuition of an 'I.' If they had, they would have seen that they were not following their program of arguing from the discovery of the 'I' in Empirical psychology *via* basic Ontological categories to the characteristics of its referent. Rather they are arguing from the transcendental requirements of thought to the nature of an object of an allegedly 'Empirical' representation. In so doing, they mistake the analytic implications that can be teased out of the concept of rational cognition for a synthetic claim of Empirical psychology. Although the diagnosis is complex, the most fundamental reason for the error is the Rational Psychologists' failure to appreciate the unusual character of the transcendental representation, 'I-think.'