

Spontaneity and Self-Identity: B131-33 and the A-deduction

1. Karl Ameriks has identified two open questions regarding Kant's theory of the self.¹ First, how should we conceive of the "positive account" of the structure of the transcendental self in Kant's system such that the relationship between pure apperception and inner sense could be explained; and, second, the question of whether the a priori aspects of Kant's transcendental self violate his own critical limits. Clarifying Kant's notion of spontaneity is necessary for answering both these questions. First, spontaneity makes for the distinction between pure apperception and inner sense. Therefore, it must be explicated if we wish to understand this distinction. Second, the debate of whether spontaneity is "relative" or "absolute" has implications for whether Kant's transcendental self violates the "critical" enterprise.²

In this paper, I investigate one aspect of Kant's larger theory of spontaneity—whether the relationship between spontaneity and self-identity undergoes a change from the 1781 A-deduction to the 1787 B-deduction of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kemp Smith could be seen to answer this question in the affirmative. He argues that, in the B edition, Kant characterizes the transcendental self as intellectual activity, and immediately conscious existence, and implies that neither of these characterizations can be found in the A edition. I argue against this view to the extent it means that Kant's view of spontaneity, self-identity, and their relationship shifts from the A- to the B-deduction. I will argue that in both the A and the B deductions, spontaneity brings forth self-identity such that the subject can be immediately conscious of this identity as existing but subject to the conditions of discursive cognition.

¹ Ameriks 2006: 51.

² Sellars (1971: 23) argues that it is relative, because it depends on objects external to it, while Allison (1996: 64) contends that Kant views spontaneity as absolute, and as the basis for both the cognizing and practical self without tipping over into Fichtean metaphysics.