

Did Kant Have a Theory of Self-Knowledge?

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Due largely to the work of Strawson, there has been a good deal of discussion in recent years of Kant's theories of the self and of self-knowledge, two of the most difficult and neglected areas within the province of the critical philosophy. The present paper is addressed to the second of these two topics. The original purpose behind it was to determine how *Kant* understood the problem of self-knowledge, that is to say, in his own terms and from the vantage point of the critical system (both completed and planned). My investigation met with some success, though it led me places that I could never have expected — for example, to the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*. In particular, I came across some intriguing facts, previously unknown, that shed a good deal of light on Kant's own efforts to construct a theory of self-knowledge. I present these findings with the hope that they will contribute significantly to any further discussion of this important issue.

I have tried to answer two separate questions: (1) How did Kant understand the problem of self-knowledge? and (2) Did Kant have a theory of self-knowledge? The answer to the first is rather long and complicated while the answer to the second just isn't clear. As we shall see, the reason why there is no sure way to answer the second question is that self-knowledge always remained a *problem* for Kant. He dealt with it on several occasions but never with complete success. It is something that he struggled with for years — indeed, to the very end of his career — without resolving to his own satisfaction.

1. How Did Kant Understand the Problem of Self-Knowledge?

There are certain things that can be said at the very outset about the character of a Kantian theory of self-knowledge (*Selbsterkenntnis*). The first is that self-knowledge must be knowledge of the *empirical* self or ego, i. e. the self as it appears in time, the form of