

<https://doi.org/10.21638/2226-5260-2018-7-1-228-233>

BÉATRICE LONGUENESSE

I, ME, MINE. BACK TO KANT, AND BACK AGAIN

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. ISBN 978-0-19-966576-1

CLAUDIA SERBAN

PhD in Philosophy, Assistant Professor.
University of Toulouse Jean Jaurès, Department of Philosophy.
31058 Toulouse, France.

E-mail: claudia.cristina.serban@gmail.com

The review provides an outline of Béatrice Longuenesse's latest book: *I, Me, Mine. Back to Kant, and Back Again* (Oxford University Press, 2017), which attempts to offer "a more systematic exploration of Kant's account of self-consciousness", with a particular focus on "its relation to contemporary analyses of self-consciousness" (Longuenesse, 2017, xi). Longuenesse's recent analyses have indeed the major interest of orchestrating a fecund dialogue between Kant's comprehension of the I and several key interlocutors, from Wittgenstein to Freud and including Sartre, Anscombe, Evans and others. Thus, the first section of the book originates in twentieth-century debates and challenges the claim that bodily self-consciousness is the ultimate ground of the unity of consciousness. The second section of *I, Me, Mine* provides a thorough discussion of Kant's view on the "I think", on self-consciousness and personhood, and continues to plead for a genuine form of self-consciousness independent from the consciousness of one's body. Yet, a more general objective of the book progressively emerges: that of a "naturalization of the notion of person", by showing that "Kant's criticism of the paralogism of personhood opens the way to substituting for the rationalist concept a rich and complex concept of a person as a spatiotemporal, living entity endowed with unity of apperception and with the capacity for autonomous self-determination" (Longuenesse, 2017, 163). This naturalization of the Kantian concept of subjectivity is set in motion, within the last section of the book, with the unexpected assistance of Freud's account on the ego and the super-ego.

Key words: Kant, I, self-consciousness, apperception, person, naturalization, Freud.

© CLAUDIA SERBAN, 2018

РЕЦЕНЗИЯ НА КНИГУ БЕАТРИС ЛОНГНЕСС

I, ME, MINE. BACK TO KANT, AND BACK AGAIN

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

ISBN 978-0-19-966576-1

КЛОДИА СЕРБАН

Доктор философии, доцент.

Тулузский университет им. Жана Жореса, департамент философии.

31058 Тулуза, Франция.

E-mail: claudia.cristina.serban@gmail.com

Рецензия раскрывает главные итоги самой свежей книги Беатрис Лонгенесс «Я, Мне, Мое. Назад к Канту и снова назад» (Издательство Оксфордского университета, 2017), которая пытается предложить «более систематическое рассмотрение кантовского подхода к самосознанию», фокусируясь, в частности, на «его отношении к современному анализу самосознания» (с. xi). Новый анализ, проделанный Лонгенесс, представляет значительный интерес для налаживания диалога между кантовским пониманием Я и некоторыми ключевыми собеседниками, от Витгенштейна до Фрейда, включая Сартра, Анскомба, Эванса и др. Таким образом, первый раздел книги укоренен в дебатах и вызовах XX столетия, утверждая, что телесное самосознание — это предельное основание единства сознания. Второй раздел книги «Я, Мне, Мое» представляет обсуждение кантовских воззрений на «я мыслю», на самосознание и личность, продолжая защищать подлинную форму самосознания, независимую от сознания тела. Впрочем, о себе последовательно заявляет и более общий сюжет книги. А именно речь заходит о «натурализации понятия личности». Это достигается показом того, что «критицизм Канта, направленный на парализацию личности открывает путь для подмены рационального понятия содержательным и комплексным понятием личности как пространственно-временной, живой сущности, наделенной единством апперцепции и имеющей способность автономного самоопределения» (с. 163). Натурализация кантовского понятия субъективности берется в рассмотрение в последнем разделе книги с неожиданной опорой на фрейдовскую трактовку Я и Сверх-Я.

Ключевые слова: Кант, Я, самосознание, апперцепция, личность, натурализация, Фрейд.

In *I, Me, Mine. Back to Kant, and Back Again*, Béatrice Longuenesse attempts — and brilliantly succeeds — to offer “a more systematic exploration of Kant’s account of self-consciousness”, with a particular focus on “its relation to contemporary analyses of self-consciousness” (Longuenesse, 2017, xi). The major originality of the book comes indeed from the fact of weaving, around Kant, an entire network of contemporary references and interlocutors, from Wittgenstein to Freud and including Sartre, Anscombe, Evans and others. This complex architecture does not affect, though, the clarity and the incisiveness of the problematic core, which consists in conjointly interrogating the uses of “I” and the modalities of self-consciousness.

The first section of the book originates in twentieth-century debates. Thus, the aim of chapter 2 is to confront Kant and Wittgenstein and to show that “Kant’s dis-

inction [...] between two kinds of consciousness” (empirical and pure) and “Wittgenstein’s distinction [...] between two ways in which we use the word ‘I’” (“I” as object and “I” as subject) “do not exactly map” (Longuenesse, 2017, 2, 19). The crucial question that emerges from this discussion is that of knowing if “the properties and states whose self-ascription is IEM [immune to error through misidentification] are not limited to mental states but include bodily states” (Longuenesse, 2017, 26). Is the bodily self-consciousness the ultimate ground of the unity of consciousness? The clinical case of Christina, the “disembodied lady” described by Oliver Sacks (Longuenesse, 2017, 32 ff.), gives the author the opportunity to challenge this claim and to formulate an audacious thesis: “all uses of ‘I’ as subject ultimately depend on the kind of information that grounds Kant’s ‘consciousness of oneself as subject’” — namely, a “particular brand of consciousness [which] is not consciousness of oneself as an embodied entity” (Longuenesse, 2017, 37; see also 161, 231).

In chapter 3, “Sartre meets Wittgenstein”, and this encounter is occasioned by a common shortcoming: “paying insufficient attention to the kind of self-consciousness Kant called ‘consciousness of oneself as subject’ expressed in the proposition ‘I think’” (Longuenesse, 2017, 45). While the author shows that “Sartre’s ‘pre-reflective cogito’ is close to the Kantian ‘I think’” (Longuenesse, 2017, 48), she also unveils an ambiguity in the author of *Being and Nothingness*, for whom the non-thetic consciousness of oneself is not clearly enough emancipated from the non-thetic consciousness of the body. By doing so, the aim is to highlight the existence of a specific kind of non-thetic self-consciousness “present throughout the ‘unified theme’ of a mental activity” (Longuenesse, 2017, 58). It is this form of self-consciousness, consciousness of “the unity [...] of one’s mental activity” (Longuenesse, 2017, 64), that will be analysed with Kant in Part II.

The first chapter (chapter 4) of this second part of the book deals directly with Kant’s account on “I think”. The finesse and precision of these analyses deserve to be noted: they luminously revisit Kant’s criticism of the Cartesian *cogito* (in order to stress, for instance, that “Kant is clearly mistaken by attributing to Descartes the claim that ‘I exist’ is derived from ‘I think’ via a syllogistic inference” (Longuenesse, 2017, 84), and they deploy a most salutary clarification effort, by distinguishing “three ways in which, for Kant, I am conscious of my own thinking”, namely, the pure intellectual consciousness, the mere “indeterminate perception” and the determinate perception, or experience (Longuenesse, 2017, 86). A decisive point here is that of knowing to what extent “the empirical minimal component grounding the proposition ‘I think’” (Longuenesse, 2017, 90) comes from external experience, as the 1787 Refutation of idealism would suggest it. Against the interpretations that give an exorbitant credit to

the reasoning of this Refutation, the author will argue that the (indeterminate) perception that I think does not rely on external experience: only the determinate (temporal) consciousness does (Longuenesse, 2017, 90 ff.). This crucial claim contributes to consolidate the view of a genuine form of self-consciousness independent from the consciousness of one's body.

But this does not suffice to answer the question "what am I, I who have the possibility to use 'I' in 'I think'?" (Longuenesse, 2017, 102), handled in chapter 5 ("Kant on 'I' and the Soul). Again, the author will proceed to important terminological clarifications, by examining the uses and meanings of the transcendental (or synthetic) unity of apperception, of the judgment "I think" (which *expresses* this unity), of the "I", as thinking, as a subject and as a self, in respect to the metaphysical concept of the soul. The two first Paralogisms of Pure Reason (that of Substantiality and that of Simplicity), in their 1781 and 1787 elaborations, are then analysed with a special insistence on the fact that the subjective necessity (incarnated in the "first-person standpoint") (Longuenesse, 2017, 131) of thinking myself as a substantial or as a simple entity does not allow the drawing of any ontological conclusion about the way I exist and about what I am: the consistence or the simplicity of the subject of thinking is only logical.

The third Paralogism (that of Personality) receives a separate treatment in chapter 6 ("Kant on the Identity of Persons"), where a more general objective of the book progressively emerges: that of a "naturalization of the notion of person" (Longuenesse, 2017, 166), by showing that "Kant's criticism of the paralogism of personhood opens the way to substituting for the rationalist concept a rich and complex concept of a person as a spatiotemporal, living entity endowed with unity of apperception and with the capacity for autonomous self-determination" (Longuenesse, 2017, 163). To do so, the author will first denounce the fact that "Kant was prey to a paralogism of practical reason", insofar as he considered that "the notion of person defended by the rationalist can nevertheless remain, as 'necessary and sufficient for practical use'" (Longuenesse, 2017, 157, 152). She will then insist on the necessity to reshape the rationalist concept of person by inscribing it into the empirical world.

The "naturalization of the notion of person" announced in the last chapter of Part II will be pursued in Part III with the unexpected assistance of Freud's account on ego and super-ego. Announced since the Preface, this peculiar alliance of Kantian critical philosophy and Freudian metapsychology will be developed at two levels, by displaying the "structural similarities" (Longuenesse, 2017, 173) that exist, firstly (chapter 7), between Kant's "I" in "I think" and Freud's "Ego", and secondly (chapter 8), between Kant's "I" in the Moral "I Ought To" and Freud's "Super-Ego". This confrontation requires several methodological precautions: the author insists on the

fact that her aim is to provide “an investigation of conceptual similarities, not an account of historical influence” (Longuenesse, 2017, 176) and, to persuade the reader of the interest of such an inquiry, she also stresses that “the link between the transcendental and the empirical investigation is readily apparent in Kant’s works in both directions: from transcendental to empirical and from empirical to transcendental” (Longuenesse, 2017, 175). In respect to the last point, a most fruitful resource is found in Kant’s *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) and in his *Conjectural Beginning of Human History* (1786). But beyond method clarifications, the Freudian framework proves itself fruitful also by entailing a useful clarification of “the scope of Kant’s notion of consciousness” (Longuenesse, 2017, 184): here, once again, the author mobilizes her very sharp sense of distinctions, in order to show in what sense(s), for Kant, representations are “conscious” or are “my” representations (Longuenesse, 2017, 180 ff.). This will also lead to enlightening comments about, on the one hand, the status of imagination and the reasons for which we are, according to Kant, “seldom even conscious” of it (Longuenesse, 2017, 182 ff.) and, on the other hand, the “two importantly different senses in which, for Kant, we are blind to the nature of our motivation” (Longuenesse, 2017, 213).

But the last important challenge of the book is to rigorously articulate Freud’s concept of the super-ego to the Kantian categorical imperative (while Freud himself has stressed their connection on several occasions: see (Longuenesse, 2017, 219 ff.)). Thus, the author underlines the following: “For Kant, morality is the manifestation of the highest in us: our rational self. For Freud, morality is the manifestation of the highest in us: our “social sense” and our capacity to live by norms we endorse. But it is also the “direct heir” of the most helpless in us: the system of emotional dependencies that shape us” (Longuenesse, 2017, 222). And given that, for the founder of psychoanalysis, “the origin of morality [...] locates its roots in our living, sensing, emotion-driven bodies”, the author concludes that “we do find in Freud a general outline for a naturalization of Kant’s critical account of the ‘I’” (Longuenesse, 2017, 224, 227): a naturalization which takes into account the fact that “our capacity for setting norms of cognition and our capacity for setting norms of practical agency both have a developmental history” and which, consequently, is to be regarded in terms of what McDowell has called a “naturalism of second nature” — insofar as “the content of the norms is brought about not only by our relation to nature and our existence as biological entities, but also by the internalization of the parental figures and the learning of language” (Longuenesse, 2017, 227, 194).

The project of such a naturalization of Kantian philosophy is undoubtedly audacious and inspiring, especially as it draws its arguments from the very heart of tran-

scendental philosophy, namely, from the concept of the I. But even those for whom the price that this enterprise demands — leaving completely behind the transcendental path —, is too high to be fully justified, will certainly find profit in reading Béatrice Longuenesse's book.

REFERENCES

Longuenesse, B. (2017). *I, Me, Mine. Back to Kant, and Back Again*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.