

10

The First Person*

I

I will concentrate here on the perplexities some philosophers have felt concerning the simple first person pronoun 'I'. The genesis of these reflections is a fairly recent invitation to Barcelona¹ to give a talk about my views on David Kaplan's manuscript 'What Is Meaning? Explorations in the Theory of **Meaning as Use**' (n.d.),² as well as on his classic publication, 'Demonstratives' (1989).

Were I to be making a general discussion of Kaplan's recent material, I would emphasize my enthusiasm for his general approach.³ There is one aspect of his

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approach that I would also applaud in general terms, but that I would warn may lead one astray in its particular application to the main theme of this talk. One should not, he argues, think of the task of the linguist or the semanticist—as, for example, Quine does in some of his writings—as analogous to that of translating utterances into one's own language. That presupposes the semantics of one's own language and doesn't get us very far. Rather, the linguist or the semanticist gives a description 'from above' of the uses in the community.

Kaplan refers to what some philosophers have called 'scientific language',⁴ and assumes that the description 'from above' is formulated in such a language. The

this is not entirely so, that the opposite conception will lead one astray. For example, Ludlow and Segal (2004) think that on Gricean principles 'but' and 'and' 'literally mean the same thing' (424), though they differ in conventional implicature. Similarly, they think that 'a' and 'the' are synonyms in English (424), even though they state how they are used differently in English (in this view, they have surprised many philosophers who might have followed them thus far). Following Kaplan, as I understand him, 'tu' and 'vous' (as the polite second person singular) are not synonymous in French. In contrast, changes in French attitudes as to when it is appropriate to use 'tu' are matters of the changing sociology of the French, not of changes in the language. (Perhaps one can imagine cases where the distinction is not sharp.) Distinctions of Gricean 'conversational implicature', as in my own suggested treatment in Kripke (1977) of the referential-attributive distinction for definites, are not distinctions in the language. (At the end of Kripke 1977, I suggested that the same strategy might apply to indefinites, as was carried out by Ludlow and Neale 1991.) Ludlow and Segal (2004) should not have considered their own strategy to be a case of the same one that was used in the two papers just mentioned. Note that the issue has nothing to do with whether Ludlow and Segal are correct in their views about 'a' and 'the'. However, they are not entitled to say that, on their view 'a'

vous

so-called scientific language itself would contain neither indexicals nor tense, but be generally stated as applicable to arbitrary speakers, places, times, and the like; if modality is involved, to arbitrary possible worlds as well. Moreover, all this must be done coolly. For example, as Kaplan says, one must be able to describe words expressing anger without getting angry at the same time. This is relevant to what others have written on historiography. We have at one extreme the view of, for example, C. G. Hempel (1942), which takes historical writing to be little different in principle from writing in physics, involving general laws, confirmations, refutations, and so on. The other extreme says that history employs a particular method of *Verstehen*. I think the second view certainly has something to it: the historian is trying to put himself in the position of his subjects to see what they themselves might have thought. Some have given a strong formulation: if you write about any historical character, you should literally try to **become** that character.⁵ Whatever one might say about history, surely the 'coolness' requirement as Kaplan states it is correct for the description of a language 'from above'.⁶

What is description 'from above'? (I perhaps add something here to Kaplan's formulation.) The description, first and foremost, is a description of how the language is used, but it also has an instructional aspect. If language can be described completely and correctly 'from above', in a neutral indexical-free language, the description (of, say, English) should be usable as an **instruction** manual, a set of imperatives for a foreigner wishing to learn English. The instructions themselves should, if given for this purpose, be stated in the foreign language.

question) can only be strengthened when we consider the existence of languages in which the first person is expressed exclusively by a prefix or suffix (or where this is usual and 'I' or its equivalent occurs only in cases of special emphasis).¹¹

Kaplan notes that **Webster's** itself realizes that its attempt to define 'I' 'won't do' and that it goes on to say 'used . . . by one speaking or writing to refer to

by others, perhaps in the sense of 'he who is speaking to you at this moment'; by doing this he makes the conditions accompanying his utterance serve towards the expression of a thought. (1918–19:333, note omitted)¹⁵

Not only has the passage been discussed critically by Perry and by Kaplan (under Perry's influence), it has also been defended against Perry's criticisms in Evans (1981). What Frege is saying about the way everyone is presented to himself seems to me not to be at all unfamiliar. It is the familiar view, going back at least to Descartes, that I am aware of myself in a special first person way. However, Perry, and following him, Kaplan, both argue that for his view of the first person to go through, 'what is needed is a primitive aspect of me, which is not simply one that only I am aware of myself as having, but that I alone have' (Perry 1977:490).

Why does Perry think that this is needed? Well, the special first person Cartesian sense would have to be something like **the subject**, or **the thinker**. But who is that? Is there only one thinker, only one subject? If one reformulates it as **the subject for me**, **the subject that I am aware of**, **by being aware of my own thinking**, the formulation obviously runs into a circle. How can one avoid the circle? Only by there being a special quality, a primitive aspect of me, that I alone have. This is Perry's argument for his conclusion, and Kaplan follows him.

Following Perry, Kaplan makes two objections to Frege. First, he says:

I sincerely doubt that there is, for each of us on each occasion of the use of 'I', a particular, primitive, and incommunicable Fregean self-concept which we tacitly express to ourselves. (1989:534)

So far, Kaplan might just seem to be doubting the neo-Cartesian doctrine of a particular first person perspective (except to the extent that it is given by his theory of the 'character' of 'I'). However, he immediately goes on to assume that the theory must involve Perry's stronger conclusion that the self-concept in question would have to characterize its subject uniquely in a neutral language, and objects:

[E]ven if Castor were sufficiently narcissistic to associate such self-concepts¹⁶ with his every use of 'I', his twin, Pollux, whose mental life is qualitatively identical with Castor's, would associate the **same** self-concept with **his** every (matching) use of 'I'. (Kaplan 1989:534; italics in the original)

One of Kaplan's basic points in 'Demonstratives' is the distinction between demonstratives and indexicals. Demonstratives (such as 'this') require some gesture or something else (such as pointing) to determine their reference, whereas

¹⁵ All references to 'Der Gedanke' (Frege 1918–19) are to the Geach and Stoothoff translation, titled 'Thoughts', as reprinted in Beaney (1997) with the title 'Thought'. Note that the translation of the passage that Kaplan himself uses (1989:533) is the earlier Quinton and Quinton translation. As far as I can see, the differences do not affect the discussion.

¹⁶ Kaplan plainly means to write 'such a self-concept'.

indexicals (such as 'I' and 'now') require only a general linguistic rule to determine their reference.¹⁷ For example, 'I', when used by a given speaker,

So what's wrong with the argument that **either** each subject must be psychologically unique or, otherwise, any definite description of the subject must itself use an egocentric term, and thus run into a circle? Well, again, the people who argue this way are thinking of a language spoken by no one, the so-called scientific language. Since Dr. Lauben is the one speaking the language, by 'the subject' he of course means himself. If Rudolph Lingens²² speaks of 'the subject', he means himself. There is no difficulty for Frege (nor indeed for Descartes), once we rid ourselves of the idea of a 'scientific language' spoken by no one, in supposing that the reference is determined in this way. Nor do we have to worry about the supposed problem of Castor and Pollux. None of these people speaks an impersonal 'scientific language' where the problem would arise. So each of them could determine the referent in the Cartesian–Fregean way, by his own acquaintance with himself.

But perhaps this is not the whole answer. Aren't all these people speaking German, a language in which 'I' (actually 'ich') should mean the same thing for **anyone**? And isn't Kaplan right to say that the whole use of the word 'I' can be captured in a neutral way by saying that a sentence containing 'I' expresses a truth if and only if the rest is actually true of the subject—the thinker, or the speaker? Or if one doesn't wish to restrict oneself to truth-conditional utterances, even with respect to indices,²³ at least that 'I' in any sentence refers to the speaker (writer, thinker)? So, doesn't Kaplan's characterization (that is, the description of Des,59(h)-t

true if and only if S has that property.’ But how can Frege use the word ‘*ich*’ on the basis of these instructions? Should he think, ‘*Hmm*, so how am I going to use the word “*ich*” on the basis of this general statement? Well, any German should attribute, say, being in pain or being a logician to *himself* if and only if the German is in pain or is a logician, as Kaplan says. So I should do this.’ Alternatively, Frege might remark, ‘So Frege, or Dr. Gustav Lauben, should attribute a property to Frege, or respectively to Dr. Lauben, using “*ich*” if and only if Frege (or Dr. Lauben) has the property. But I am Frege, so I suppose that I should use the word “*ich*” if and only if Frege has the property.’ Either formulation would presuppose that Frege already has the concept of *himself*, the concept he expresses using ‘*ich*,’ so here we really are going in a circle.

The point is that each one of us speaks a language that he himself has learned. Each one of us can fix the reference of the word ‘*I*’ by means of acquaintance with oneself, self-acquaintance. There is no requirement that this type of acquaintance is given to us by a qualitative description expressible in a ‘scientific language’ spoken by no one. This is so even if the language each of us uses is a common one—English, German, and so on. No one can grasp the rule for ‘*I*’ stated in the common language except by means of one’s own self-acquaintance. Otherwise, there would be no way of learning how that rule tells us to refer. This is what Frege means when he says that Dr. Lauben uses the word ‘*I*’, thinking to himself, ‘he will probably be basing it on this primitive way in which he is presented to himself’ (Frege 1918–19:333). Frege also says, a bit before that, ‘The same utterance containing the word “*I*” in the mouths of different men will express different thoughts of which some may be true, others false’ (332). To put this matter in Kaplanian terms, the utterance²⁴ has the same character in the mouths of all speakers of the language but has different contents in the mouths of different speakers. I have explained in some detail in my paper on Frege how to put the matter in Frege’s own terms (chapter 9, pages 284ff). Put either way, this is possible because of one’s own self-awareness when one is speaking.

However, Frege’s discussion, as quoted above (298–99), of how Dr. Lauben communicates to others using ‘*I*’ (or ‘*ich*’) does confuse the issue. Frege says that when he wishes to communicate, he can hardly use ‘*I*’ in a sense he alone can grasp. But if that is so, it is easy to see how someone would respond that this alleged special and incommunicable sense of ‘*I*’ must be a chimera. Why should the primary sense of ‘*I*’ be something that one never uses in interpersonal communication? One might after all doubt that ordinary language is used in thought at all. Surely, its primary purpose is for communication.

Matters become even more problematic when Frege discusses what Dr. Lauben means by ‘*I*’ when he wishes to communicate with others. He conjectures that it is in the sense of ‘he who is speaking to you at this moment’

²⁴ Notice that by ‘utterance’ Frege here means a type, not a token. He is not following current technical philosophical terminology.

diary entries (not so discouraged), or in communicating with others. If it is the sense determined by its subject's first person acquaintance with herself, how can

mean, when he commended Frege for his treatment of 'yesterday' and 'today', that this treatment is correct on a Fregean approach.²⁹

II

Enough about Frege—what about according to me? Well, according to me, the first person use of 'I' of course does **not** have a Fregean sense, at least if this means that it has a definition. But it might be a paradigmatic case, one that I did not mention in *Naming and Necessity* (1980), of fixing a reference by means of a description: it is a rule of the common language that each of us fixes the reference of 'I' by the description 'the subject'. However, since each of us speaks a natural language, and not an imaginary 'scientific language' spoken by no one, for each of us the referent can be different. This is the moral that I wish to stress.

A long time ago, in conversation, Harry Frankfurt suggested to me that the Cartesian cogito might be an example of the contingent a priori.³⁰ At the time I thought that whatever may be said about this case, it has a very different flavor from the examples in *Naming and Necessity*. It is certainly contingent because I (or whichever subject is involved in the relevant cogito) might never have been born, and it is a priori at least in the sense of not requiring any specific experience for its verification. But it now seems to me that it does indeed have some of the flavor of my own examples, and perhaps lacks some of their more problematic features. For it follows from the way I fix the reference, as the subject of my own thought, that I must exist. (I will discuss the famous Humean objection to this conclusion later, but here I am assuming that Descartes is right.) In both the cases of the meter stick ('stick S') and Neptune, I must grant that the object might not exist. In the meter stick case, the stick I think I am looking at might be illusory (I was tacitly assuming in *Naming and Necessity* that the reference is being fixed

²⁹ See chapter 9 (page 284, note 81). Kaplan himself mentions one of the objections to the 'yesterday' and 'today' case from a Fregean point of view, and as I said, probably thinks of them as directly referential demonstratives, yielding a single 'content' (in Kaplan's terminology). See also my own distinction between fixing a reference and giving a meaning, as spelled out immediately below. In fairness to Kaplan, I should add that his original theory in Kaplan (1989) was not simply that 'I' is a term that, when used by any speaker, directly refers to that speaker, but also that it is directly referential.

I might mention that Buber's *Ich und Du* (1923) (translated as *I and Thou*, or *I and You*) may be thought of, as among other things, giving an alternative account of the semantics of 'you' to the one I have, in my discussion above, claimed that Frege must give. I am familiar with this work only in part.

³⁰ I don't remember when I had this conversation with Frankfurt. I am now uncertain about the history of my own thoughts on this matter. Such examples of the contingent a priori have been widely accepted even by those who doubt my own examples of Neptune and the meter stick. Kaplan's example 'I am here now', with 'I exist' as an obvious corollary, is well known as an example of the contingent a priori (see Kaplan 1989, pp. 508-509). Even 'I exist' (or strictly speaking, its negation) is explicitly mentioned by Kaplan on p. 495. Plantinga also suggests that 'I exist' is contingent a priori (see Plantinga 1974, p. 8).

by someone who has the stick in front of her), and in the Neptune case the astronomical deduction might have been wrong, with no such planet existing, as turned out to be the case with Vulcan. Thus, if I wish to express a priori truths, I must say 'if there is a stick before me as I see it, then . . . ' (In the Neptune case I must say 'if some planet causes the perturbations in Uranus in the appropriate way, then . . .').³¹ The whole point of the cogito is that no such existence problem arises, epistemically speaking. Yet another difference with the meter stick and Neptune cases is this: in both cases there is a closely related statement that is necessary and trivial given the way the reference is fixed, such as 'the planet, if any, that causes this perturbations, does cause them', and 'stick S, if there is such a stick, has as its length the length of stick S'. Thus someone might argue (but see my accompanying note here) that these examples of the contingent a priori are really cases where one has no information beyond that provided by the related and trivially analytic necessary truth.³²

perceive something simple and continu'd, which he calls **himself**; tho' I am certain there is no such principle in me. (2000:164-65 [Book I, Part IV, Section VI])

The concluding sentences are, of course, a sarcasm. Now, after I had read this passage with shock, I thought that philosophy was a very confusing subject. One philosopher is very convincing, and then another one comes along and gives a very decisive refutation. Who knows what will happen if I read a third one?

Some years later, when I was in my twenties, I talked about it to a non-philosopher, a friend of mine at the time (my attempt when I first read it to talk about it to a classmate was completely unsuccessful). She said, 'Well, Hume must never have looked in a mirror'. At that time I probably thought that her remark simply showed how uncomprehending non-philosophers could be. For of course Hume was objecting to the notion of a Cartesian ego, a pure mind that is the subject of thoughts and impressions. But at the present time I see some justice in her remark, since the idea of a subject, one that I am aware of through self-awareness, as described above, need not in itself imply that the reference is sometimes other than a person, the same person one is aware of, with or without

someone else? In fact, all these things do happen.³⁷ It is not fair to say that only the impressions that I am aware of count. And, as I have already emphasized, Hume says that we confusedly form the notion of a single, persisting entity because of the close relations between the various impressions. But who is this 'we' who do this?³⁸ (The discussion here and following might be compared with my discussion of the issues in the last chapter of my book on Wittgenstein, Kripke 1982).

A more basic problem for Hume is that he seems to think that there could be impressions, mental acts, and so on with no bearer.³⁹ They can simply 'float'—that is, each impression could simply exist in and of itself, and it is only an accident that they are connected by the relations that he mentions. I myself find the notion of an impression or idea without any subject who has it hard to understand. I must admit that even more recently there are those who seem to agree with the Humean picture. In Kripke (1982:123), I quote Moore's account of Wittgenstein's Cambridge lectures in 1930–33:

[Wittgenstein said that] 'a [physical] eye doesn't enter into the description of what is seen . . . ;'⁴⁰ and he said that similarly 'the idea of a person' doesn't enter into the description of 'having [a] toothache'. . . . And he quoted, with apparent approval, Lichtenberg's saying 'Instead of "I think" we ought to say "It thinks"' ('it' being used, as he said, as 'Es' is used in 'Es blitzet').⁴¹

As I've indicated, there are others, even more recently, who appear to agree. For example, Peter Geach argues that if Descartes is merely solipsistically thinking to himself, instead of saying 'I am getting into a muddle', he might as well simply

³⁷ Given Hume's well-known skepticism concerning the notion of causation, it is interesting how he invokes it here and elsewhere. But this is probably no inconsistency and is rather a statement of how one dubious notion depends on another.

³⁸ I find that Chisholm (1976:39–41) has a discussion of Hume closely related to this one. He himself mentions some similar comments by Price.

³⁹ I emphasize this problem in Kripke (1982:130–31, note 12).

⁴⁰ Probably Moore's quotation is somewhat inaccurate here. Of course an eye is involved in seeing, but what Wittgenstein points out is that it is not part of the visual field, that we do not see the eye. See *Tractatus* 5.633, which also states the analogy to the nonexistence of the subject. See also *Tractatus* 5.631: 'There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.' He adds that

have said 'that is a muddle'.⁴² But what would a muddle be with no one to be in the muddle?⁴³

In spite of Wittgenstein (in the periods in question, anyway), Lichtenberg, and so on, Hume's view, for the reasons that I have given, seems to me to be quite unintelligible. He must have gone wrong somewhere. (Though Descartes might have gone wrong somewhere, too.) I mean, what would a floating impression not belonging to anyone be? Yet, according to Hume, the supposed self is simply constructed from a bundle of such impressions that in principle could each 'float' independently of any other impressions, let alone a bearer.

So, basically, I think my friend had a point. So far there is nothing in the notion of a subject, as I have defended it above and as Frege presupposed it, that in and of itself excludes the first person pronoun as referring to the whole person in the ordinary sense.⁴⁴

Thomas Nagel once delivered a paper, unpublished as far as I know,⁴⁵ in which he proposed that a person be identified with her brain. Rogers Albritton was the commentator, and remarked that if that were so, he shouldn't have been so worried about his weight—it is much less than he had thought.⁴⁶

What did Nagel have in mind when he proposed to identify each of us with her or his brain? What he meant was that if I lose my arm, this is very unfortunate, but I have remained. As a matter of practical medicine, not too much could be stripped away if I am to remain alive, but assuming medicine to have conquered the problem, I could survive the loss of a great deal more. But my brain, from a point of view that is not immaterialist in this respect, is essential as the seat of my thought. As long as it is still functioning, I have not disappeared; but if it goes, I have gone. While this is so, Albritton's comment means that it is still true that my arm is a part of me, as long as it is there. And if I lose it, I have lost one of my parts.

⁴² Geach (1957b:117–21, §26 ['The Fallacy of "Cogito Ergo Sum"']).

⁴³ In fairness to Geach, what he is arguing is that the cogito does not directly give us the idea of an immaterial subject. Perhaps not, but not because there might be no subject at all. There is also, in the passage in question, some discussion of how 'I' is used in ordinary communication, supposedly distinct from the Cartesian case.

⁴⁴ I don't know why John Perry, in talking about this, wanted to emphasize someone who erroneously thought he was Hume, rather than a more standard example like Napoleon or Christ. A while ago, I was having dinner, and someone who wanted to criticize philosophers said: 'Philosophers think one is not certain of anything, that you are not certain whether you are Napoleon or not'. I replied: 'Napoleon must have been the greatest philosopher of all time, because only he was right when he thought he was Napoleon'.

⁴⁵ Someone looked it up and reported that it was not in his bibliography, so maybe it hasn't seen the light of day, though I'm pretty sure it was read before an audience.

⁴⁶ I was not present at the exchange between Nagel and Albritton, but when I delivered this talk someone who heard the exchange told me afterward that he remembered it vividly.

Nagel has, of course, written important material on the nature of the self, which I do not discuss here.

Descartes held that my essence is thinking. The only thing that is really indubitable, and therefore constitutes me, is the thinker—what I am aware of whenever I think and feel. It is easy to conclude that he holds that I really am simply the Cartesian ego that Hume (and others following him) have found hard to comprehend, or to locate in their own self-consciousness. And perhaps he is usually read in this way. But, of course, there is a well-known passage that appears to be to the contrary. Once Descartes has proved to his own satisfaction (what initially he doubted) that his own body is real, he states:

Now there is no more explicit lesson of nature than that I have a body; that it is being injured when I feel pain; that it needs food, or drink, when I suffer from hunger, or thirst, and so on. So I must not doubt that there is some truth in this. Nature also teaches by these sensations of pain, hunger, thirst, etc., that I am not present in my body merely as a pilot is present in a ship; I am most tightly bound to it, and as it were mixed up with it, so that I and it form a unit. (1971:117, translated by Anscombe and Geach)⁴⁷

Descartes goes on to argue in the same vein that the way I feel sensation shows that I am a unity, including my body. The case involved in the Nagel–Albritton exchange is similar, though more materialistically expressed. Am I my brain alone, directing my body like a pilot in a vessel? Or am I a unity, including all of my physical body, even though the brain could be the only part that remains, and as long as it is functioning, I have not disappeared? For Descartes, although I may still exist if my body were stripped away and I were still thinking, as long as that has not occurred, I am a unity including my whole body.

It would be very far from my competence or intent to be giving a historical talk on Cartesian exegesis, though I am drawing attention to a suggestive and well-known passage from Descartes. But the philosophical point is that though I might believe that I can doubt the existence of my left hand (and it might be only a contingent fact that I have it), that does not mean that the left hand is not, in fact, a part of me. The commonsense view (and there is no reason to think that Frege, for one, is opposed to it) is that when Lauben says 'I', he means to refer to the person himself, including all bodily parts as genuine parts of himself. Yet he could also think that such parts are subject to Cartesian doubt, that they are only perceived by him as subject, and so on. One could certainly agree with Frege that each of us is aware of himself in a special way. And we have seen that even Descartes ultimately concludes that he is an entity including his own body, even if he believes that he might survive without a body, as long as there is a subject for the cogito.

One notable instance of those who refuse to identify Descartes with the reference of 'I' is Elizabeth Anscombe. In the following passage I am her direct target:

⁴⁷ Though Cottingham may have become the standard translation (Descartes 1996), the Anscombe and Geach translation was better suited to my purposes—namely, discussing Anscombe's interpretation of Descartes (see below).

Saul Kripke has tried to reinstate Descartes' argument for his dualism. But he neglects its essentially first-person character, making it an argument about the nonidentity of Descartes with his own body. Whatever else is said, it seems clear that the argument in Descartes depends on results of applying the method of doubt. (Anscombe 1975:45; emphasis in text)

I certainly don't think Descartes is identical to his body. This point in itself I don't regard as particularly deep, or even incompatible with views that are, broadly speaking, materialist. For Descartes, I say, was not his body when the body was a corpse. 'Descartes had a serious accident, did he survive?' 'Yes, of course—take a look in this coffin.' The response is absurd; rather, we have to say, 'I am afraid Descartes is no longer with us'.⁴⁸ But in and of itself that simply might mean that mere nonidentity is not so important. Perhaps a person is nothing 'over and above' her body, even if they are, strictly speaking, not identical.⁴⁹

However, this hardly touches the main points that Anscombe wishes to make, either substantively or as criticism of my own version of the Cartesian argument in *Naming and Necessity*, that it neglected the first person character of what Descartes says. She mentions Castañeda's well-known discussion (Castañeda 1967; see also his 1966 and 1968) as noting the existence of the indirect reflexive in English, which is grammatically a special form in Greek (the form is exemplified by 'Betty believes that she herself . . .'; see my note 12 above). However, she regards Castañeda's discussion as excessively complicated, a point that Castañeda himself appears to concede. Castañeda does not, as far as I know, mention the technical grammatical term from Greek, but the very simple and clear presentation in Geach (1957b), cited in Lewis (1983:139), does so (see my note 12 again). One would think she would have been aware of this particular author.

Although Castañeda's papers are indeed complicated, Anscombe's is itself none too easy. (I wish I had had the opportunity to talk with her about the paper.) She makes various claims. One is that 'I am not Descartes' follows from the logic of Descartes's argument. She also even argues, from a historical perspective, that Descartes would have accepted this conclusion (see 1975: 55–56). In so arguing, she holds that Descartes uses 'I' to designate the pure Cartesian ego whose nature Hume and others claim not to understand. The idea is supposed to be that, by his very nature, Descartes is a human being, a member

⁴⁸ But don't we say, when asked 'Who is that?' (pointing to a tomb), 'That's Napoleon'? Isn't it even better if the corpse is embalmed? For example, 'That's Lenin'. But we could say the same kind of thing at Madame Tussauds, pointing to a wax figure. I have something to say about related examples (see my discussion of the toy duck fallacy in chapter 11, this volume), but no more detail need be given here.

I am aware that some people will reject the simple argument for nonidentity on various grounds. I don't wish to deal with them, but feel obligated to mention such things when I am writing about Anscombe, since, after all, there is Peter Geach and the notion of relative identity.

⁴⁹ See my discussion of this point in Kripke (1980:145, note 74).

of an animal species, with a body, and so on, whereas 'I' as used in the *Meditations* does not designate such an entity.⁵⁰

Now, we have seen that Descartes's ultimate conclusion—'I' and my body form a unit—is not so simple. There is nothing here to distinguish 'I' from 'Descartes' in the sense Anscombe is talking about. (Of the several translations of Descartes, I have used the one she is most likely to endorse; but everyone agrees that Descartes makes this point.) However, perhaps Descartes believes in an incorporeal entity whose essence is thinking and is the most indubitable part of this unity, one that would remain if everything else were stripped away. But even granting that this is so, I do not see that he would say that such an entity would not be Descartes—nothing I am aware of supports such a dramatic and paradoxical conclusion.⁵¹ Had he accepted it, I would have expected some explicit assertion of such a claim.

Anscombe believes, however, that 'if "I" is a "referring expression", then Descartes was right about what the referent was' (59). And this is her Descartes, where the relevant use of 'I' refers to a Cartesian ego that must be distinct from the man, **Descartes**. She performs certain thought experiments, involving a person being anesthetized, to support her conclusion. Although I am not exactly certain what the argument from these thought experiments is, the conclusion is at least clear: ' "I" is neither a name nor another kind of expression whose logical role is to make a reference, at all ' (60).⁵² She also states, ' "I am E. A." is not an identity proposition' (63).

Very likely Anscombe is writing under the influence of passages in the *Investigations*,⁵³ where Wittgenstein says that 'I' is not the name of a person, and distinguishes between 'I' and 'L. W.' The influence goes down to the use of initials to make the contrast—'E. A.' in the one case and 'L. W.' in the other.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Very likely she is also influenced by the view, advocated by both Peter Geach and Noam Chomsky, that a proper name such as 'Descartes' has a semantical requirement that it name a human being. This might or might not already imply the possession of a body, depending on other views. For my own discussion of Geach's view (in Geach 1957a: §16), see Kripke (1980:115, note 58).

⁵¹ Part of Anscombe's argument, also to be found in other authors (see below), is that the indirect reflexive allows someone to be mistaken about who he is, so the conclusion is not self-contradictory. But Descartes is not in this sense mistaken about who he is.

⁵² Her discussion has an elaborate contrast of the use in an imaginary society of some name that everyone uses for him/herself ('A'-users) with our use of the first person pronoun, which is not entirely clear to me. She also remarks that calling it a personal pronoun, and the like, is simply a trivial restatement of first person usage and, in and of itself, gives no information.

However, her general conclusion is clearly stated in what I have just quoted.

I confess that in both the sentence I am footnoting and the present note, I would be willing to replace 'I' by 'Saul Kripke'—only the resulting awkwardness and compositeness would stand in the way. And I have noted the usage of 'the present writer' above (see note 7). Surely 'the present writer' does make a reference, or at any rate, is a definite description.

⁵³ Wittgenstein (1953: §§405–6).

⁵⁴ Geach (1957a: §26), in the anti-Cartesian passage referred to above, similarly contrasts the Cartesian 'I' with 'P. T. G.', probably under the same influence. At least, so I conjecture. In my own discussion, I probably would not be inclined to use initials. See note 52.

No doubt when Wittgenstein makes the relevant distinction in the **Investigations**, his thought is continuous with his earlier worries about the metaphysical subject, as quoted above (see note 40 and related discussion). The **Investigations** passages are about many things, most of which can't be discussed here, such as the difference between first and third person attributions of sensations, the alleged connection of first person 'avowals' of sensations with more primitive expressions such as groaning or crying, and so on. Obviously, we can't talk about all these things here (they are to some extent in Anscombe's paper too).⁵⁵

I won't attempt to give an exegesis of Wittgenstein on these topics. But one should note the following. Remember that in §410 he says: ' "I" is not the name

One might here remark that Anscombe is a very special case, coming from a special background, that of Wittgenstein. And though, clearly, some of the argumentation is her own, as is the formulation of her thesis, and though Castañeda's well-known discussions of the matter are plainly an influence, the predominant influence may be the special background.

III

Let me turn to a philosopher with quite a different background and orientation. David Lewis was worried about the problem of belief *de se* (Lewis 1979). According to Lewis, there is general agreement that the objects of all the so-called propositional attitudes are propositions, though he acknowledges that not all authors agree as to what propositions are. For him, propositions are sets of possible worlds. But though sometimes I have heard Lewis say that here he simply is giving a stipulative definition—and remember, in addition, that Lewis has his own 4Tm(lobeM14237.TWite7(his)-fions,)-2e(4Tm8(mm51(he)TjT*[(possihis)-

Also, Lewis acknowledges Brian Loar (1976) as making the same proposal (Lewis 1983:519, note 4).⁶⁰ He also makes a comparison of his views with a proposal by John Perry (1977) (Lewis 1983:150),⁶¹ and plainly Lewis is considerably influenced by Perry's paper, as Lewis himself says (139).

Neither Lewis nor Chisholm actually gives an analysis of statements with 'I'. Rather, as Chisholm says explicitly (1979), what is explained is the indirect reflexive. For example, one takes as primitive 'A self-ascribes such and such a property', where self-ascription is a primitive notion, corresponding to 'A believes that he himself has such and such a property'. Since self-ascription, like any reflexive property $\lambda x (xR_x)$, is derived from a relation R , Lewis rightly concludes his paper (sections XIII and XIV) with a brief discussion of belief *de re*. He regards beliefs *de re* as beliefs based on acquaintance, and adds that belief *de se* is a par excellence case of belief *de re*, based on the highest form of acquaintance, namely, one's acquaintance with oneself.⁶²

I should mention that Lewis also wishes to account for 'now' and the present tense, and for this reason regards it as a person stage that has an attitude *de se*. But this is a separable part of the view, drawn from the rest of Lewis's philosophy. As far as the present issue is concerned, he could just as well say that a person (not a stage, but an enduring object) self-ascribes not a property (corresponding to a set of worlds), but a two-place relation between a person (himself) and a time (the time of the ascription, corresponding to the same set).

Note also that Lewis, in contrast with some of those to whom he compares himself, regards all attitudes as *de se*, even those that seem to make no reference to the subject (say, 'lightning is an electrical discharge', or 'Australia is a large island', etc.). For this Lewis cites the advantages of uniformity, so that there

Lewis himself (1983:147–48) discusses some of the differences in motivation that he sees between himself and Quine. He remarks (147) that Quine differs from him in considering a divided theory: the objects of some primitive attitudes may be stimulation patterns rather than sets of worlds, making his theory highly nonuniform, something Lewis wishes to avoid. Moreover, Quine is concerned with attitudes and desires of animals too, an issue that Lewis does not consider (nor shall I). Lewis mentions other differences in motivation, and Quine does not share Lewis's modal realism (as Lewis calls it).

I myself would treat possible worlds differently, even given Quine's project. In particular, I do not agree that either classical or relativistic physics has shown the notion of a (physical) geometrical point to be absurd, as Quine thinks, even though he informally uses this notion to motivate his definitions. The important thing for the present purposes is that to explain *de se* attitudes, Quine introduces the notion of 'centered possible worlds', where the centering is on the subject (or its physical location). In and of itself a possible world is not centered, so that a centered possible world might be thought of as an ordered pair of a world and a center.

⁶⁰ Lewis states that Loar formulates his view for 'certain exceptional beliefs'.

⁶¹ I have discussed Perry's paper above and in chapter 9.

⁶² Elsewhere, Chisholm advocates the theory, rightly (in my opinion) rejected by Lewis in his paper, that one has a belief *de re* about an object as long as one has any description designating the object under which one has the appropriate belief (what I have called 'universal exportation', chapter 11, this volume). So he cannot regard belief *de se* as a special case of belief *de re*. I have not researched whether Chisholm says anything about the issue.

are not two kinds of objects of beliefs, and so on, sometimes propositions, and sometimes properties, but only one. But really, other reasons can be given in Lewis's own framework. First, in the old theory, the object of a propositional attitude is the same for logically equivalent sentences, so that, for any *p*, '*p*' and '*p* and David Lewis is self-identical' express the same attitudinal object (set of possible worlds), even where *p* makes no reference to David Lewis. It would be natural to preserve this feature with 'I' in place of 'David Lewis'.⁶³ Second, and most important, for Lewis the actual world is distinguished as the one the subject inhabits, and hence any ordinary belief is really a belief that I inhabit a world with certain properties; the uniformity is not really artificial at all, given Lewis's view of the nature of possible worlds as vast concrete worlds and his theory of actuality. For example, my belief that **actually** Australia has kangaroos is a belief that I inhabit a world where Australia has kangaroos.

All this, however, seems to me to be an odd reversal of matters.⁶⁴ As I say in *Naming and Necessity*, 'a possible world is given by the descriptive conditions we associate with it' (1980:44; emphasis in original). By this I did not mean to identify possible worlds with sets of descriptive conditions, for example, as Carnapian state descriptions (probably impossible in a countable language anyway). But I wish to emphasize the legitimacy of setting up possible worlds by any description we understand, and in particular that it need not be purely qualitative. For example, I emphasize, as against those who worry about a problem of 'transworld identification', that a counterfactual possibility could be stipulated as being about Nixon, using the name 'Nixon', and not worrying about any reduction to a qualitative description.

Now, what language does a person use when describing counterfactual possibilities? Not a 'scientific', indexical-free language—one that none of us speaks. Each of us has a notion of the self and often a word for it (in English, 'I'). Why can we not use such a language to describe a counterfactual situation, and hence a possible world (even if we normally do so only in part)? I use the word 'I' to designate myself, and to designate myself in a particular way, as has been

⁶³ Pardon the abuse of quotation here. I suppose I should have used Quine's corners. Everyone knows what I mean, and I wish to be excused.

⁶⁴ Evans (1977) suggests that perhaps the indirect reflexive could be thought of as deriving from the *oratio recta* construction with the first person pronoun (98). For example, he sees 'John thinks that he is under suspicion' as 'somehow derived from' 'John thinks "I am under suspicion"' in *oratio recta*, and refers to Anscombe's paper. I am sympathetic with something Evans is trying to say, namely, that the form with the first person pronoun is primary. However, one cannot make this point by deriving the indirect reflexive from an *oratio recta* construction. Nothing in the indirect reflexive form implies that John is speaking or thinking in English. The trouble is that if we wish to ascribe to John an 'I'-thought using a 'that-clause', we use the indirect reflexive itself, and thus get into a tangle expressing the derivation, which I do think goes in the direction indicated by Evans.

I confess that I have not taken Evans's other writings on *de se* attitudes into account.

discussed above. Quine speaks of 'centered possible worlds'.⁶⁵ I would rather speak of possible worlds **simpliciter**; the 'centering' comes when a particular person describes a counterfactual situation.

Lewis himself rightly (as I have said) describes *de se* belief as a special case of *de re* belief, and bases the latter on a notion of acquaintance. Self-acquaintance is such acquaintance in the highest degree. Why then can someone not use such acquaintance to formulate a word 'I', and use it to designate an object in a special way? It will follow from this means of designation that it is rigid, or more strongly, as Kaplan puts it, 'directly referential' (if we are putting the matter that way, 'directly referential in a special way').

One should not think that any situation, actual or counterfactual, really should be described in a 'scientific' language (see note 4), one free of person and tense, and so on, and then tack on an identification of the people and times in it, as 'I', 'now', and so on. Lewis makes much of a situation with two gods (1983:139), one of whom does one thing and one of whom does another. The gods, he says, could be omniscient, as far as propositional knowledge is concerned, without either one knowing which one of the gods he is. Robert Stalnaker has observed that it is difficult to imagine such a situation as intelligible. How can someone be doing something without realizing that it is he himself that is doing it? (Stalnaker 2008:56ff).⁶⁶

My own view is that to describe a possible world is to give a 'possible history of the world' (Kripke 1980:48, note 15). Such a history, or a portion of it, might well be describable in an indexical free (or 'scientific') language, but nothing says that it need be so described. In particular, when I am speaking the language, I am entitled to use the first person singular in describing such a history. Thus, both in an informal, intuitive sense, as well as in the technical sense of determining a set of possible worlds, statements about myself do express propositions, only they determine them in a special way.

Let me speak of possibilities in the way that I spoke of 'metaphysical possibility' in **Naming and Necessity**. I can wonder what will happen to me, and how things might have come out otherwise, even in the past, had only I done such-and-such. Here the picture should not be as if I might be thinking about possible

⁶⁵ See note 59 above. Stalnaker (2008:49) ascribes the notion of 'centered possible worlds' to David Lewis. In fact, the terminology, and the associated picture, is due to Quine, even though Lewis's view can be considered equivalent.

⁶⁶ Can two people get into an argument without each participant knowing which side she is taking? I won't discuss Stalnaker's analysis, and some of his other objections to Lewis's version, further. It appeared subsequent to the original version of this paper. Nor do I discuss some possibilities for reinstating Lewis's example.

perfection, inhabiting the same world that I do?⁷⁰ Here, of course, much depends on our different conceptions of what a world is. I don't think of myself as inhabiting a world in Lewis's sense, nor do I think much of his answer as a solution to the 'problem' of how we know that we are inhabiting the actual world, rather than a merely possible one. But note that, given Lewis's later view, to say that the world is actual is not to state any proposition about it, it is to attribute a special sort of property to the speaker.

What then are the differences between me and Lewis? First, there is the well-known difference in our conception of possible worlds. For Lewis, if I wonder what possible world I am in, it is as if I am wondering whether I am in Pennsylvania or West Virginia, as if I were traveling by car (though, of course, according to Lewis, at least in his ultimate view, such a trip between worlds is impossible). But second, I do not think that genuine propositions must be described in some neutral scientific language. Anyone can describe them in any language he himself speaks. In some sense, one might call this a merely terminological difference, since (and in spite of the considerable influence on him of Perry's paper) Lewis agrees with me that everyone has a special *de se* acquaintanceship with himself. And, of course, he does not deny that special contents using the first person and involving tense are asserted, entertained, and the like. But he does think that these are not genuine propositions, in some intuitive sense. How can a proposition depend on who expresses it? The room around me

Well, what I have been arguing? Not anything really so special, on a topic that has a considerable literature. But each of us does have a special acquaintanceship with himself or herself, as philosophers from Descartes to Frege have held. This

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