

You and I

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The morphological system of Indo-European languages distinguishes between first, second, and third person forms of the finite verb. This does not entail that a logical investigation will make corresponding distinctions of ways of thinking of someone or something. But sometimes language gives us a hint. Perhaps “I” and “you” and “this” are different logical functions.

That this is the case with “I” and “this” is a widely-held view, even if there is no general agreement on how it is to be developed. With “you” it is different. Some think it is a form of “this”. Richard Heck writes:

There is no such thing as a second-person belief [...]. Of course, I can identify someone descriptively, as the person to whom I am now speaking, and may have beliefs whose content involves that descriptive identification. But that is not what I mean to deny: I mean to deny that there is any such thing as an essentially indexical second-person belief. The phenomenon of the second-person is a linguistic one, bound up with the fact that utterances, as we make them, are typically directed to people, not just made to the cosmos. [...] The word “you” has no correlate at the level of thought. (“Do Demonstratives Have Senses?”, *Philosopher’s Imprint* 2 (2002), p. 12.) — “You”, on this view, acts as if it were a special kind of demonstrative, one that always refers to the addressee. So if you want an analysis of “you”, try “That person to whom I am speaking”. (Ibid., p. 15n.)

By contrast, others think “you” is its own logical function, to be distinguished from both “this” and “I”. This idea underlies Stephen Darwall’s book *The Second Person Standpoint* (Cambridge, Mass: HUP 2006), which presupposes that the second person standpoint differs from that of the first person as well as from that of the third person.

I think Heck and Darwall are both wrong: Darwall, because there are not three logical functions, but only two. Heck, because “you” is not a form of “this”, but a form of “I”. Or better: “I” and “you” are the same form and one logical function.

One might think that this is absurd. What difference could be greater than that between me and you? Indeed. But that does not show that “I” and “you” express different logical functions. When I point around me, saying, “This and this and this belongs to me”, I point to different things. Nobody will conclude from the fact that the three uses of “this” refer to different things that the first “this” is a different form from the second, or the second a different form from the third. Now when I say, “You and you and I are going to the other room”, I speak of three different people. This does not show that the first “you” articulates a different form of thought from the second “you”. Therefore, it equally does not show that “you” expresses a different manner of thinking of someone from “I”. Perhaps it does, but that it does cannot be inferred from the fact that you and I are different people. “This and this and this” is a third person manifold; “you and you and I” may be a first person manifold. We shall see that this is indeed the case.

In order to see this, I first consider the logical function articulated by “I” and distinguish it from the function articulated by “this”. Then I argue that “you” expresses the same logical function as “I”.

1 I and This

a) I and He₁

What manner of thinking is expressed by “I”? We can try and make a beginning by saying that, with “I”, one speaks of oneself. However, one may speak of oneself without knowing that it is oneself of whom one speaks. Such was the fate of Oedipus when he said, “The murderer of Laius shall be banished”. He banished himself without knowing it, for he did not know that it was he who had murdered Laius. In order to characterize the manner of thinking expressed by “I”, it does not suffice to say that, thinking in this manner, one thinks of oneself.

Oedipus did not know that he banished himself. He banished himself unknowingly. This suggests that we can improve our account by saying: with “I” one speaks of oneself *knowingly*. This is not wrong but still insufficient. For, “knowing” introduces an intensional context. When we say that Oedipus did not know that he murdered Laius, we do not mean to assert that he knows nothing that could be expressed by a sentence of the form “x murdered Laius” in which a term referring to Oedipus replaces the variable. “Oedipus did not know that he murdered Laius” specifies the knowledge that Oedipus fatefully lacked only if “he” is a form of “I”: what Oedipus did not know, not knowing that he murdered Laius, is something he would have expressed, had he known it, by saying “I murdered Laius”.

This reveals that we used a special reflexive pronoun. “He is hitting himself” indicates that he who is being hit is the same as he who is hitting him. When the pronoun occurs in indirect speech, it may signify no more than this: “he said that he murdered Laius” may signify no more than that he of whom it was said that he murdered Laius is the same as he who said it. We saw that this leaves open whether the reported statement involved the use of “I”. However, it may transpire from the context that the reported statement is first personal (as, for example, in the first paragraph of this section). Then the reflexive pronoun is a special one. When we say, “he thinks of himself”, and use this special pronoun, we assert not only that he of whom he thinks is the same as he who thinks of him, but that he thinks of him in the manner articulated by “I”.¹ It will be helpful to be able to recognize this pronoun by its graphic shape, and therefore I shall represent it by its own word, “he_I”. “He_I” is a first person pronoun; it is “I” of oratio obliqua. We sought to explain “I” in this way: with “I” one refers to oneself knowingly. Now we see that this is sufficient only if “oneself” is a first person pronoun. We must say: with “I” one refers to oneself_I. Now we got it right, but only because now we have a tautology: we are saying that with “I” one refers to oneself in the way in which one does so with “I”.

b) Forms of thinking of something and ways of knowing

If we want to describe the logical function expressed by “I”, we must make a new start. For instance: “I” expresses a manner of thinking of someone such that he who thinks is the one of whom he thinks, not by accident, but in virtue of the form of his thought. This seems good, but helps only if we know how to describe forms of thinking of something or someone.

In Gareth Evans’s *The Varieties of Reference* we find a general format for describing forms of singular thought. We can introduce it in this way: one thinks of something in the context of predicating something of it, thinking that it is such-and-such or is doing this-and-that. Now we may suppose that, in the fundamental case, predication is knowledge: in order to comprehend what predication is, we must consider those—and only those—acts of predication that are knowledge. And this suggests that we can distinguish forms of singular thought in terms of ways of gaining or having knowledge as

¹ This is the special pronoun G. E. M. Anscombe discussed in “The First Person”; Heri-Nestor Castaneda honored it with a star.

follows: the form in which one thinks of something is in the way in which, so thinking of it, one is in a position know how things stand with it.

This formula deploys the locution: knowing how things stand with something *so thinking of it*. Let me explain what I mean by this. When I know that a is F , my knowledge may or may not rest on knowledge that b is F and is identical with a . My knowledge is identification-dependent in the former case, identification-free in the latter. I shall also say, I know that a is F , or, shorter, I know a (meaning I know a to be, or do, such-and-such) without, or by way of, identification. When I know that a is F by way of identification, then I know of a that it is F only because and insofar as I think of a in the manner expressed by “ b ”. By contrast, when I know that a is F without identification, then I know this of a *thinking of it in this way*: as a . I said, the form of thinking of an object is the way of knowing such that, so thinking of it, one is in a position to know the object in this way. This means: it is the way of knowing exercised in identification-free knowledge involving this manner of thinking of the object.

A terminological remark. In the literature, phrases like “without identification” or “identification-free” are sometimes used to signify a distinguishing feature of first person knowledge. It is not our concern to determine what these phrases mean when they are used in this way. As I explained the term, identification-free knowledge is knowledge whose rational basis does not include an identity-judgment. It may involve any form of thinking of an object: first-personal, demonstrative, descriptive.

c) Applied to “this”

We want to say how one thinks of someone with “I” by specifying the way in which one knows oneself as oneself. (Here, the second “oneself” is a first person pronoun: “oneself_I”.) It will help if we first apply this idea to another form of singular thought, namely the one expressed by “this”: demonstrative thought.

This form of thinking of something is defined by the way in which I know something thinking of it demonstratively; that is, it is defined by the way of knowing exercised in identification-free demonstrative knowledge. This way of knowing must be such that when I know that something is F in this way, I know “This is F ”. For, then there is no room for a judgment that identifies the object I thus know with an object of which I think demonstratively. Knowing it in the way in question, I know it *as this*.

We are following Gareth Evans when we say that knowing through sense perception satisfies this description. When I know that something is *F* by perceiving it, I know “This is *F*”. There is no space for an identity judgment “What I perceive is the same as this”. Knowing something by perceiving it, I know it *as this*. Demonstrative reference is reference mediated by sense perception.²

d) Spontaneity

It is commonly held that “I” is a distinct logical function and not a form of “this”. Now we see why this is so. “I” would be a form of “this” if, through sense perception, one knew without identification “I am *F*”. We can rule this out as follows. “I” refers in such a way that, not by accident, but in virtue of the form of reference, she who is referring is the same as she to whom she refers. A way of knowing that gives rise to identification-free first person knowledge must satisfy an analogous condition: it is not by accident, but a character of this way of knowing, that she who knows in this way is the same as she of whom she thus knows. And this does not hold true of sensory knowledge. I perceive something by being affected by it. It is by accident and does not lie in the nature of affection that he who is affected is the same as he who affects him. So here the way of knowing does not settle it that she who knows is the same as she of whom she knows. Therefore an identity judgment is required identifying someone whom one knows through sense perception with oneself_i. Through perception, one does not know oneself as oneself_i. Sensory knowledge is knowledge of something other, or of oneself as other.³

We seek to define the form of thinking of someone expressed by “I” by a way of knowing that is such that he who knows in this way is the same as he of whom he knows. A way of knowing satisfies this condition if and only if one knows in the way in question that one is *F* or is doing *A* by being the one of whom one knows, and that is, when one knows that one is *F* or is doing *A* by being *F* or

² Cf. Gareth Evans, *The Varieties of Reference*, Oxford: OUP 1982, chapter 6, specifically section 6.6.

³ This is parallel to Aristotle’s concept of a power of change in something other, or oneself as other (*Metaphysics* Δ 12, 1019a15–18). Such a power is a power to change something or other, and among the indefinitely many things that may be changed in an exercise of such a power may be her who possesses the power. Hence, when such a power happens to be the cause of a change in her who possesses it, then this is an accident in the sense that the identity of her who possesses the power with her who is changed in its exercise does not follow from the nature of the power. We can, by contrast, define the concept of a power of self-change by precisely this condition: she who possesses the power and she who is changed in its exercise are the same, not by accident, but in virtue of the nature of the power.

doing A .⁴ When one knows that one falls under a concept *by falling under it*, then one knows that about oneself as oneself_i. We have seen that this way of knowing is not a species of sense perception. First person knowledge is not, not in the first instance, by any kind of sense. (Once this manner of thinking of someone—the one expressed by “I”—is constituted through a certain way of knowing, it may be applied in thoughts that predicate all manner of concepts on all manner of grounds. The same holds true of demonstrative thought.) Now, if such knowledge is not from receptivity and does not rely on affection, then it must, in the first instance, be from spontaneity and rely on activity. For this is a complete disjunction. One knows oneself as oneself_i, not by being affected—by something other or by oneself as other—, but by being active. The source of the power of first person thought is a spontaneity whose acts include knowledge of these very acts, and which therefore can be called self-conscious spontaneity. The traditional name of this kind of spontaneity is “reason”, traditionally divided into practical and theoretical reason, will and intellect, action and judgment. I know, for example, that I am making coffee by making coffee, this being an act of the will and an intentional action. Knowing it in this way, I know it of myself as myself_i; I know without identification “*I am making coffee*”. And I know that I know that there is a sheep on the pasture by knowing that there is a sheep on the pasture, this being an act of the intellect and a judgment. Knowing it in this way, I know without identification “*I know that there is a sheep on the pasture.*”⁵

There is receptive knowledge, sensory cognition, which is knowledge of something other (of oneself as other), articulated by “this”—demonstrative thought. And there is knowledge through spontaneity, rational cognition, which is knowledge of oneself as oneself_i, articulated by “I”—first person thought.

⁴ None of the pronouns here are forms of “I”.

⁵ Human self-knowledge extends to pleasure and pain, to passion and emotion, and to sensation. In none of these cases is the knowledge *from* receptivity: it is not on account of being affected by someone (who happens to be me) that I know that I am in pain. Rather, the knowledge is *of* receptivity: these objects of self-knowledge are acts of sensibility. And they are self-conscious on account of the internal relation that, in the human being, sensibility bears to the spontaneity of reason. This is not the place to elaborate on this relation, and thus on the nature of human sentience.

2 *You*

We pondered three possibilities: “you” is a form of “this”, “you” is a form of “I”, “you” is an irreducible third form. The last possibility is ruled out because, as our account of them reveals, demonstrative and first person thought exhaust the logical space. We shall now see that “you” is not a form of “this”, but a form of “I”: it expresses self-consciousness, not other-consciousness; it is sustained by spontaneous, not by receptive knowledge.

a) He_{you}

It is tempting to say that “I” refers to the person who is speaking: with “I”, he who is speaking refers to himself. However, the ordinary reflexive pronoun signifies only that he who is speaking is the one of whom he is speaking. And this leaves open whether he is speaking of himself in the first person. The reported statement is represented as first personal by a special reflexive pronoun, for which we introduced a word of its own, “ he_1 ”, which is a form of “I”. It is equally tempting to say that “you” refers to the person to whom one is speaking. However, again, the ordinary pronoun signifies only that he to whom one is speaking is him of whom one is speaking. And this does not ensure that one deploys the second person pronoun, “you”. It may happen that Livia tells Roquairol that he is a traitor, saying “Roquairol is a traitor”, to Roquairol, thinking, in the dark of the night, that she is speaking to Leon. If we rule out this possibility and report a second person statement, “You are a traitor”, we use a special reflexive pronoun. Again, it will be useful to have a word of its own for this pronoun, “ he_{you} ”. “ He_{you} ” is a second person pronoun; it is a form of “you”, the “you” of *oratio obliqua*.

Our special pronouns, “ he_{you} ” and “ he_1 ”, can come together in one statement. Consider this: “Livia said to Roquairol that she loved him.” The pronoun “she” signifies that she whom Livia said loved him is the same as she who said it. It may be the special reflexive, “ she_1 ”. Then she is not only speaking of herself, but is doing so with “I”, saying “I love ...”, as opposed to, for example, “The heiress of Willbury Castle loves ...”, who, as it happens, is Livia. The other pronoun, “him”, signifies that he whom Livia said that she loved is the same as he to whom she said it. This does not entail that she used the second person pronoun. Maybe she said, “I love the Count of Durberville”, without realizing that she was speaking to him. But now we can use our special pronoun, which signifies not only

that she is speaking of the person to whom she is speaking, but that she is doing so using “you”, saying, “I love you”: “Livia said to Roquairol that she_I loved him_{you}”.

b) He_{you} and He_I

We said there was a further special reflexive pronoun, “he_{you}”, in addition to “he_I”. In truth, this is not a further pronoun. “He_{you}” and “he_I” are the same form. And therefore, “I” and “you” are the same form, for “he_I” and “he_{you}” are forms of “I” and “you”. There is only one logical function, one form of thought, expressed by “I” and by “you”.

Imagine Paula and Paul deliberating what to do in order to accomplish a shared aim. We report the result of their reflections saying: “Paul and Paula decided that he would do *A* and she would do *B*.” The two pronouns, “he” and “she”, signify that they about whom Paul and Paula decided what they should do are the same as they who decided this: he who she and he decided would do *A* is Paul, and she who he and she decided would do *B* is Paula. But the pronouns leave open how he and she think of themselves in this decision. It may have been like this. Paul said, “I will do *A* and you *B*. Agreed?” Paula answered, “Fine; you will do *A* and I *B*.” We can use our special pronouns to signify that Paul referred to himself and to Paula in this way, and write: “Paul proposed that he_I would do *A* and she_{you} would do *B*.” And we can represent Paula’s answer, writing, “Paula agreed that he_{you} would do *A* and she_I would do *B*.” Now, through this exchange, Paul and Paula decided something—not Paul this and Paula that, but both of them together decided one thing. Hence, “They decided that he_{you} would do this and she_I would do that” and “They decided that he_I would do this and she_{you} would do that” articulate the same content. This shows that “he_I” and “he_{you}”, “she_I” and “she_{you}” are one form. We shall write this one form “he_{you/I}” and “she_{you/I}”.

c) Way of knowing

We had these examples: “This and this and this belongs to me”, and “You and you and I are going to the other room”. Or, “These things, this and this and this, belong to me”, and, “We, you and you and I, are going to the other room”. These are plural predications. “This and this and this are *F* (are doing *A*)” expresses a plural demonstrative thought; “You and you and I are *F* (are doing *A*)” expresses a plural first person thought. If there is such a thing as plural first person thought, and “I and you” serve to express it, then “I” and “you” express the same logical function. For, by nominal definition, a first person thought is a thought that is such that the one who is thinking is the one thought

about, or, putting it in the plural, the ones who are thinking are the ones thought about. Hence, if my (or your) “We—you and I—will do this” indeed expresses a plural first person thought, as opposed to a botched attempt at such a thought, then this is a thought that you and I think: the thought is about two, you and me, and since it is a first person thought, it follows that those who think it are two, you and me. But I think “You and I will do this”, and you think, “You and I will do this”. As this is one thought, “I” and “you” express the same form of thought.

As plural first person thought is of thought, what we said about first person thought applies to it. When Oedipus decided that Laius’s murderer should be banished, he did not express his decision with “I”, for he did not know that he spoke of himself. The same may happen to Paul and Paula, as they decide that he would do A and she would do B . Perhaps they decide that the heiress of Willbury Castle should do A and the Count of Durberville should do B , without knowing that Paul is the Count of Durberville, nor that Paula is the heiress of Willbury Castle. Then they will not express their decision saying, “I will do A and you will do B ”. One might try adding that, thinking of him and her in the manner expressed by “I” and “you”, Paul and Paula think of her and him knowingly. This is right, but only if it is a tautology: if “him” and “her” are forms of “I” and “you”. Then it says: with “you and I” Paul and Paula think of her_{you/I} and him_{I/you}.

Paul and Paula think of themselves in the manner expressed by “you and I” if it is not by accident that they who think are the same as they of whom they think, but when this identity characterizes the form of their thought. This form of thinking of people is a way of knowing, the way in which Paul and Paula know without identification that he_{I/you} and she_{you/I} are F or are doing A . It must be internal to this way of knowing that they who know in this way are the same as they of whom they know. Then you and I, knowing in this way that people are doing A , know that you and I are doing it. There is no space for a judgment identifying those of whom you and I know with me and you who know of them.

Now, this knowledge, the knowledge that underlies plural first person thought, cannot be receptive knowledge, for receptive knowledge rests on affection, and those who affect are not as such identical with those whom they affect, but at best by accident. So the knowledge in question must be spontaneous and rest on activity. You and I know about me and you as you and me not in virtue of the fact that something other (or we ourselves as other) are affecting you and me, but through your and my activity. So we do if you and I are active in such a way that you and I know, by being active, that you and I are active. Then our being active in this way is an act of a self-conscious spontaneity, an act of reason, practical or theoretical. This act, which includes knowledge of itself, is one act; it is our act.

For, if one act were mine and another yours, I would not know of you through my act and you would not know of me through yours. And then you and I would not know of you and me but rather, at best, you would know of you and someone else and I of me and someone else. Furthermore, if the act is one, then so is the power that underlies it. With “you” and “I”, we refer to you and me through one and the same power of reason, which is in you and is in me, is yours and is mine.

d) “You” and “you and I”

What is true of “you and I” is true of “you”. Fundamentally, “you” is part of the expression of plural self-consciousness, and therefore it is itself an expression of self-consciousness.

It is tempting to think that, as one can speak of oneself without knowing that it is oneself of whom one is speaking, we must say that, with “I”, one knowingly refers to oneself. But this is false, unless “oneself” is a form of “I”, in which case it is a tautology. The same holds for “you”. Finding that one can speak about him to whom one is speaking without knowing that it is him, we may want to say that, with “you”, one knowingly speaks about him to whom one is speaking. But again, this is false, unless “him” is a form of “you”.

Hence, again, we have to explain the form of thinking of someone in the manner expressed by “you” by a way of knowing. We must specify a way of knowing that satisfies the following condition: if I know that someone is *F* or is doing *A* in the way in question, then I know that you are. For, then there is no room for a judgment identifying him of whom I know in this way with you. And then I know without identification that you are *F* or are doing *A*. Now, as “you” is an aspect of “we, you and I”, what I know of you without identification is an aspect of what I know of us, you and me, without identification. For example, if I know that we are doing *C* in that I am doing *A* and you are doing *B*, and know this in virtue of the fact that we are doing *C* in that I am doing *A* and you are doing *B*, then I know without identification that you and I are doing *C*, you *B* and I *A*. It is in this way that I know without identification that you are doing *B*. Now, I know that someone is *F* or is doing *A* in such a way as to know that you are if I know it in virtue of the fact that your being *F* or your doing *A* is a part or an aspect of an act of spontaneity in which we share. I know you without identification as the one with whom I am active together. “I” designates the thinker or doer as such. “You” designates the fellow-doer and fellow-thinker as such.

It might be objected that there are thoughts of a different kind about you, as well. If I say, for instance, “You have nutella on your cheek”, I do not express knowledge whose source is our joint

activity. Therefore—this is the objection—we must explain the manner of referring with “you” differently for such cases. That this objection is unsound becomes obvious when we apply it to “I”. When I say, reporting what I saw in the mirror, “I have nutella on my cheek”, I do not express knowledge from spontaneity. That does not show that I do not think of the person of whom I say he has nutella on his cheek as the one of whom I have spontaneous knowledge. It does not show that first person thought is not constituted by spontaneity. In the same way, the fact that “You have nutella on your cheek” does not express spontaneous knowledge is no indication that I do not think of the person I address as the one with whom I am active, and of whom you and I have spontaneous knowledge. It does not show that second person thought is not constituted by joint spontaneity.

e) You is he to whom I am speaking

Heck proposes to analyze “you” as “he to whom I am speaking”. That is wrong. But that does not mean that it is in every sense wrong to say that referring to someone with “you” is referring to him as to the one to whom one is speaking. Indeed, there is something importantly right in this.

“I” cannot be analyzed as “he who is speaking”. For, “I am the one speaking” is not a tautology. Yet there is something importantly right in saying that, with “I”, one refers to oneself as the speaker. That is because one knows that one is saying such-and-such in virtue of saying it. Speaking, under this description, is an act of self-conscious spontaneity. “I am the one speaking” is not a tautology, but something she who is speaking necessarily knows from spontaneity. What is right in saying that, with “I”, one refers to oneself as the speaker is that, as “I”, one thinks of oneself as the one of whom one has spontaneous knowledge.

We can see this from the other side. Wittgenstein writes:

If I listened to the words of my mouth, I might say that someone else was speaking out of my mouth.

(*Philosophische Untersuchungen*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 1984, II, x; translation by G. E. M. Anscombe)

I am listening to words coming out of my mouth, that is, I know receptively, through sense perception, that someone is uttering these words. I do not know who is uttering these words in virtue of being the one who is uttering them. And as long as this is so, I do not know without identification that *I* am uttering them. But if I do not know that, then I am not *speaking* in uttering these words. I might say someone else was speaking, out of my mouth. G. E. M. Anscombe makes the point in this way:

For example, an interpreter might repeat the “I” of his principal in his translations. Herein resides the conceivability of the following: someone stands before me and says: “Try to believe this: when I say “I”, that does not mean this human being who is making the noise. I am someone else who has borrowed this human being to speak through him.” When I say “conceivability” I do not mean that such a communication might be the truth, but only that our imagination makes something of the idea. (Mediums, possession.) (“The First Person”, *Collected Papers* vol. 1, *From Parmenides to Wittgenstein*, p. 33)

Speaking is not the same as making a noise. The former is necessarily an object of spontaneous knowledge; the latter is not. Therefore it is conceivable that he who is making the noise is someone other than he who is speaking.

“I” cannot be analyzed as “he who is speaking”. In the same way, “you” does not mean “he to whom I am speaking”. For, “I am speaking to you” is not a tautology. Yet there is something right in saying that, with “you”, one refers to someone as the one to whom one is speaking. For, just as speaking is an act of spontaneity, so speaking to someone is a joint act of spontaneity. When I speak to you, and not merely unsuccessfully attempt to do so, then we are speaking to each other. That I am speaking to you and you understand me are sides of one act, a joint act of spontaneity: conversation, Gespräch.

Thus it is right to say that, with “you”, one thinks of someone as the one to whom one is speaking. It is right in the sense that one knows that one is speaking to someone by speaking to her, or, better, with her. “I am speaking to you”, or, expressed the other way around, “You are speaking to me”, is not a tautology, but it is something that he who is speaking and she to whom he is speaking know spontaneously.

We can see this from the other side, varying Wittgenstein in this way:

If you must ascertain whose words affect your ear, you might think that I was speaking to someone else through your ear.

You seek to ascertain who it is whose words affect your ear, and find out, through sense perception, that they come from the mouth of a certain person. So you do not know that my words affect your ear (knowledge you would express by saying “*your* words affect my ear”) in virtue of my words’ affecting your ear. (If you did, you would have no need to find out whose words affect your ear; my affecting your ears would suffice for providing you with that knowledge.) And as long as this is so, you do not know without identification that *I* am affecting you (knowledge you would ex-

press by saying “*you* are affecting me”). And then I am not *speaking* with you. I may be speaking with someone else through your ear.

Or we adapt G. E. M. Anscombe as follows:

For example, someone might direct his “you” at the interpreter of his interlocutor. Herein resides the conceivability of the following: someone stands before me and says: “Try to believe this: when you say “you”, that does not mean this human being whom you affect by your words. You are speaking to someone else who is joined to this human being to converse through him.” When I say “conceivability” I do not mean that such a communication might be the truth, but only that our imagination makes something of the idea. (Mediums, possession.)

Speaking with someone is not the same as being affected by his utterances. The former is necessarily an object of joint spontaneous knowledge, while the latter is not. And thus it is conceivable that he who is affected by one’s utterances is someone other than he to whom one speaks.

“You” cannot be analyzed as “he to whom I am speaking”. But what is right in saying that, with “you”, one refers to someone as the one to whom, or better, with whom, one is speaking is this: speaking with someone is a joint act of self-conscious spontaneity, and as “you”, I think of someone as the one of whom you and I know spontaneously.

f) An implication

I end with noting an implication of the fact that “you” and “I” are one logical function, expressing plural first person thought, or joint self-conscious spontaneity.⁶ There is an extended literature that strives to specify conditions under which subjects are doing or know something together, that is, conditions under which there is a joint act of self-conscious spontaneity, of practical or theoretical reason. Any account will include among those conditions thoughts of the subjects acting together or sharing knowledge in which they think of each other. As “think”, “know”, “intend” create an intentional context, we must ask how the subjects think of each other, and whether they do so with “you” (“you and I”, “we”) or in some other way. I have not encountered explicit reflection on this question in the literature. But it is quite common to deploy, without commentary, “we” and “you” in specifying the thoughts in question. For example, Michael Bratman requires, in order for two people to be acting together, that each of them intends that they do *A*. He designates the content of this intention

⁶ This section, as indeed this essay as a whole, is deeply indebted to conversations with Michael Thompson.

by the phrase “we J”.⁷ This is not a measure taken for expository ease, which a more rigid presentation could drop. For, suppose that Livia is going to inherit Willbury Castle and Roquairol holds a rightful claim to the title “Count of Durberville”. If Livia intends that the heiress of Willbury Castle and the Count of Durberville do A , and, furthermore, Roquairol intends that the heiress of Willbury Castle and the Count of Durberville do A , then each of them intends that they do A . (Here we are using the ordinary reflexive pronoun.) Now, Bratman adds a host of further conditions to the requirement that each subject intends that they J. However, these do not change the nature of the intention governing each of the subjects’ action. And it seems clear that if each of several people intends that several people do something, then no matter what further relations obtain between them—so long as these do not involve joint acts of spontaneity—these several people do not act together in satisfying their intentions.⁸ We can say in Bratman’s words what is missing: “in shared intention each participant is committed to treating the other participants not merely as aspects of the world that need to be taken into account, but also as intentional co-participants in the shared activity”. The linguistic expression of the subjects’ apprehension of each other as fellow thinkers, and more specifically as “intentional co-participants”, is “you and I”. This is why “you” and “we” creep in so easily, and feel so natural, in accounts of joint action. However, an account of joint action or shared knowledge that requires that the subjects think of each other, not just in any old way, but in thoughts of the form expressed by “you” and “you and I”, is circular; the conditions by which joint action and shared knowledge are defined now contain what they are supposed to explain: a joint act of spontaneity. For, a plural first person thought (as opposed to botched attempts at such a thought) is not thought by each one of many subjects individually; there are not several acts of thinking such a thought, but one such act; a plural first person thought is thought by many, together.

Reflection on the constitution of the form of thought expressed by “you” and “I and you” reveals that it articulates a joint act of reason, practical or theoretical: it is the form of thinking of another subject internal to joint action, and the form of thinking of another subject internal to shared knowledge. Therefore this form of thought is not intelligible prior to, and independently of, an account of joint action or shared knowledge. The error here is analogous to an equally widespread mistake of

⁷ Cf. Michael Bratman, “Shared Agency”, in C. Mantzavinos: *Philosophy of the Social Sciences: Philosophical Theory and Scientific Practice*, Cambridge: CUP 2009.

⁸ In fact, Michael Bratman requires shared knowledge, that is, a joint act of theoretical reason. He refrains from asserting that shared knowledge can be explained in terms of thoughts whose subject is one, as opposed to many (cf. footnote 12). However, it would seem that he is committed to this claim; for, if there is knowledge that is irreducibly by many, why not intention?

attempting to give an account of intentional action in terms of mental states that are supposed to be—and must be lest the account be patently inadequate—first personal.⁹ Just as there is no way to give an account of action and knowledge that does not reveal them to be essentially self-conscious and the source of “I”, so there is no way to give an account of joint action and shared knowledge that does not reveal them to be essentially self-conscious and the source of “you”.

⁹ Compare, for example, David Velleman’s attempt to illuminate intentional action by appeal to “self-knowledge”, which must be knowledge of oneself as oneself. (*The Possibility of Practical Reason*, Oxford: OUP 2000.)