

**teorema**

Vol. XXXIII/3, 2014, pp. 7-30

ISSN: 0210-1602

[BIBLID 0210-1602 (2014) 33:3; pp. 7-30]

## **Identification-Free at Last Semantic Relativism, Evans's Legacy and a Unified Approach to Immunity to Error Through Misidentification**

Marie Guillot

RESUMEN

Un rasgo característico ampliamente reconocido de (un subconjunto nuclear) de auto-atruciones constitutivas del auto-conocimiento consiste en que estas son 'inmunes al error por mala identificación' (en adelante IEMI). En los últimos treinta años la noción de Evans de 'libertad de identificación' [Evans (1982)] ha sido central en la mayor parte de los enfoques clásicos de IEMI. Sin embargo, en el cuadro que presenta Evans no está claro si hay lugar para una descripción de lo que podría ser la variante más fuerte y más interesante de IEMI, a saber: lo que Pryor (1999) trajo a colación por vez primera con la denominación "Qué-objeto IEMI" y que yo preferiré llamar "IEMI *existencial*". Argumento que el desarrollo reciente de armazones relativistas en semántica y pragmática, particularmente en Recanati (2007a-b), (2009), (2010) y (2012a) pueden tener una naturaleza tal que superen esta limitación. La teoría relativista de IEMI y, en particular, su adecuación para habérselas con el existencial IEMI, pueden superficialmente parecer que surgen de un rechazo de los elementos nucleares del enfoque clásico de la libertad de identificación. Sin embargo, espero mostrar que, módulo una clarificación y una comprensión más rica de las nociones relevantes de identificación y libertad de identificación, la teoría relativista de IEMI puede verse como algo que hace avanzar y, a la vez, complementar, las intuiciones de Evans, más bien que algo que entra en conflicto con ellas.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *inmunidad al error por identificación errónea (IEMI) de re versus existencial; libertad de identificación; relativismo semántico; pensamiento de se.*

ABSTRACT

One broadly recognised characteristic feature of (a core subset of) the self-attributions constitutive of self-knowledge is that they are 'immune to error through misidentification' (hereafter IEM). In the last thirty years, Evans's notion of "identification-freedom" (Evans 1982) has been central to most classical approaches to IEM. In the Evansian picture, it is not clear, however, whether there is room for a description of what may be the strongest and most interesting variant of IEM; namely what Pryor (1999) has first brought to the fore under the name "Which-object IEM", and which I'll prefer calling *existential* IEM. I argue that recent development of relativist

frameworks in semantics and pragmatics, particularly in Recanati (2007a-b), (2009), (2010), (2012a), may be precisely of a nature to address this limitation. The relativist theory of IEM, and in particular its suitability to cover existential IEM, may superficially seem to stem from a rejection of the core elements of the classical identification-freedom approach. However, I hope to show that, *modulo* a clarification and richer understanding of the relevant notions of identification and identification-freedom, the relativist theory of IEM can be seen as both pushing further and complementing Evans's intuitions, rather than conflicting with them.

KEYWORDS: De re vs *Existential Immunity to Error Through Misidentification (IEM)*; *Identification-Freedom*; *Semantic Relativism*; de se *Thought*.

## INTRODUCTION

In the last thirty years, Evans's notion of "identification-freedom" [Evans (1982)] has been central to most classical approaches to the phenomenon of immunity to error through misidentification (hereafter IEM). In the Evansian picture, it is not clear, however, whether there is room for a description of what may be the strongest and most interesting variant of IEM; namely what Pryor (1999) has first brought to the fore under the name "Which-object IEM", and which I'll prefer calling *existential* IEM. In this essay, I argue that the recent development of relativist frameworks in semantics and pragmatics, particularly in Recanati (2007), may address this limitation. This success may superficially seem to stem from a rejection of the core elements of identification freedom approach. However, I hope to show that, *modulo* a clarification and richer understanding of the relevant notions of identification and identification-freedom, the relativist theory of IEM can be seen as both pushing further and complementing Evans's intuitions, rather than conflicting with them.

Section I presents the phenomenon of IEM, and Evans's now-classical account of it in terms of identification-freedom. Section II turns to a specific, 'existential' form of IEM, and to the difficulties it creates for the Evansian approach. Section III discusses Recanati's alternative theory of IEM, based on relativist premises seemingly incompatible with Evans's starting point, and argues that the new view succeeds precisely where Evans stopped short, i.e. in handling existential IEM. Section IV argues that, on a more careful interpretation of Evans's insight, the apparent conflict between the two approaches can be seen to yield to a deeper unity.

### I. THE STANDARD ACCOUNT OF IEM

#### *Immunity to error through misidentification*

Self-knowledge is not just the knowledge a subject has about herself, but, more demandingly, the knowledge she has about *herself as such* (i.e., as

*subject*). Rudolf Lingens, the famous amnesiac in Perry (1977), may know that Rudolf Lingens was born in 1876; but absent the additional knowledge that *he himself* is Rudolf Lingens, that doesn't constitute *self*-knowledge, only knowledge about the person he happens to be.

Defined in this restricted manner, self-knowledge stands apart from other, "third-person" kinds of knowledge, including third-person knowledge about the person one happens to be (like Lingens's knowledge *that Lingens was born in 1876*). It has long been noticed that self-knowledge enjoys a specific epistemic profile, characterized by an array of epistemic privileges. Some of those privileges apply to all forms of self-knowledge; some only apply to a core subset of it, which we may call "experiential self-knowledge", and which will be the focus of what follows. Experiential self-knowledge is the knowledge whose canonical expression consists in direct<sup>1</sup> self-ascriptions of occurrent experiences, be they perceptions ("I'm cold", "I see the teapot on my left"), or other phenomenally-rich states like episodic imagining and remembering ("I'm daydreaming of Japan", "I remember drinking Matcha tea in Japan"). These self-attributions of occurrent experiences are especially reliable, and come accompanied with a typically high degree of subjective certainty. Some take those self-ascriptions to bear on states that are "transparently" or at any rate preferentially accessible to us; many accordingly claim them to be, if not incorrigible, then at least especially authoritative to a degree<sup>2</sup>. Finally, there is a large consensus<sup>3</sup> that those experiential self-attributions are impervious to identity mistakes as far as their subject is concerned. This last property, which is the topic of the present essay, is known since Shoemaker (1968) as 'immunity to error through misidentification' or IEM for short.<sup>4</sup>

In intuitive terms, judgments that enjoy IEM are protected against errors having to do with the identification of the object they bear upon. They are impervious to the kind of mistake that would consist in attributing to the *wrong object* a property one knows to be instantiated. For instance, if I judge (on the basis of ordinary experience and introspection) what I would express by declaring:

(1) "I am hungry",

this judgment is IEM: while I *could* arguably be wrong in some ways (e.g. by misidentifying the relevant *property*, as I do if I take for hunger what is really a stomach ache), *one way I can't* be wrong is by misidentifying the *person* that my judgment applies to (if it can be known to apply to anything at all on this basis).

Restricting oneself to the case of self-knowledge, arguably the core area in which IEM manifests itself,<sup>5</sup> one can define  $IEM_{sk}$  as the property that at-

taches to an occurrent judgment  $p$  (and derivatively, to the person who makes it) if the following holds:

IEM<sub>sk</sub>: If I make, based on grounds  $G$ , a judgment  $p$  of the form “I am  $F$ ”, then one way I can’t be wrong is by knowing (based on  $G$ ) that property  $F$  is instantiated, where the bearer of  $F$  is a person  $s$  that is distinct from me.

### *Identification-freedom*

Following Evans (1982), most theorists of IEM claim that this property is the consequence of a specific kind of underlying justificational architecture, that is free of any reliance on identity judgments.

It is now standard to assume that the typical judgment  $p$  which enjoys IEM is characterized by three features. Firstly, (a) *a subject-predicate structure*: the judgment has the form “ $a$  is  $F$ ”; it bears on a particular object  $a$  (in the case of (1) above, myself) and predicates a certain property  $F$  of  $a$  (here, hunger). Secondly, (b) *a unity of grounds*. An IEM judgment, it is argued, is based on grounds that provide *simultaneously* the information that a certain property  $F$  is instantiated *and* that object  $a$  is the *locus* of the instantiation. Both components of the judgment, the subject-component  $a$  and the predicative component  $F$ , are asserted on the same basis. I am thus justified in asserting the subject-component to precisely the same extent that I am justified in asserting the predicative component, which rules out the type of error that would affect the subject-component alone. Inner perception is an example of the relevant sort of unitary ground: the information it gives me about the properties of my bodily experience (hunger, pleasure, a felt movement etc.) is inseparable from the information that *I myself* have these properties. All the modalities of perceptual experience, as well as, to some degree, other experiential epistemic attitudes such as episodic memory and situated imagination [Higginbotham (2003) Recanati (2007)], share this peculiarity: they yield some experiential content together with the information that *I* am the experiencer.

The unity of grounds, (b), sets IEM judgments in contrast with judgments of the same predicative form, “ $a$  is  $F$ ”, but whose two components – the subject-component and the predicative component – are asserted on distinct grounds. Take the following example: I see the presidential limousine pass me on the street in an American city, and get a fleeting glance of a tall man sitting at the back. I judge “Obama is passing by” (“ $a$  is  $F$ ”). This judgment is the result of a quick inference, based on two distinct premises yielded by two distinct epistemic grounds. I first judge, based on perception, “This tall man is passing by” (“ $b$  is  $F$ ”); then I judge, based on the background knowledge that Obama is tall and travels in the presidential limousine, “This tall man is Obama” (“ $b = a$ ”). From “ $b$  is  $F$ ” and “ $b = a$ ”, I conclude “ $a$  is  $F$ ” (“Obama is passing by”). Call the two premises the *predicative premise* (“ $b$  is  $F$ ”) and the

*identification-premise* (“ $b = a$ ”). They respectively ground the predicative component, F (“ $x$  is passing by”) and the subject-component,  $a$  (“Obama”), in the final conclusion. This conclusion is *not* immune to error through misidentification, as I could have been mistaken in taking the tall man to be Obama (it could have been e.g. Joe Biden). In such a case, Evansians argue, the vulnerable step in the inference is the identification-premise.

By contrast, in the case of an IEM judgment like (1), “I am hungry”, the unity of grounds (b), as Evans and his followers argue, means that there is no need for the support of a separate identity judgment of the form “ $a$  is  $b$ ”. The very same ground (here, inner perception) supports the presence in the assertion of both the predicate (hunger) and its bearer (myself). The resulting judgment  $p$  is thus ‘identification-free’: it doesn’t require the backing of an identification-premise. This *identification-freedom* is the third and most important feature, (c), of cases of IEM. Because there is no identification-premise at play, the now-classical argument goes, there is simply no room for a *faulty* identity claim that may result in a mistaken identification of  $a$  being what instantiates F.

## II. A PROBLEM RAISED BY EXISTENTIAL IEM

### De re IEM vs Existential IEM

Evans’s ingenuous account of IEM in terms of identification-freedom has become the standard approach. However, it sits uneasily with one particular form of IEM, first identified by Pryor (1999), and arguably the most fundamental manifestation of the phenomenon.

Pryor (1999) makes a distinction between two broad kinds of errors due to a mistaken identification; correlatively, he defines two types of immunity to such errors, which he respectively calls “*de re* immunity to error through misidentification” (or *de re* IEM) and “which-object immunity to error through misidentification” (or *wh*-IEM for short). I will, however, prefer the expression “existential IEM” to Pryor’s somewhat misleading label “which-object IEM” to refer to the second phenomenon.

A subject who enjoys<sup>6</sup> the first kind of immunity (*de re* IEM) in making a particular judgment of the form “ $x$  is F” is protected against the type of mistake that would occur in the following circumstances: knowing that “ $b$  is F” and falsely believing that “ $a = b$ ”, the subject would reach, on those grounds, the erroneous conclusion that “ $a$  is F”. The Obama scenario above is an example of this first kind of error through misidentification. Here is another one: Thomson and Thompson are identical-looking twins. Imagine that, from the other end of the street, I catch a glimpse of Thomson as he absent-mindedly collides with a lamppost. I judge: “That man is bumping into a streetlamp” (“ $b$  is F”). Because of the distance and their physical resem-

blance, I take the man I see (Thomson) to be Thompson (“ $a = b$ ”). Accordingly, I erroneously judge that Thompson collided with a lamppost (“ $a$  is F”).

In the second form of IEM, which I call “existential IEM”, one is protected against the kind of error that would occur in the following circumstances: knowing that something or other is F (“ $\exists x Fx$ ”), for instance because she detects an instantiation of the property F in her environment, the subject comes to believe falsely that it is, specifically,  $a$  which instantiates F, and concludes from those premises that “ $a$  is F”. Here, the conclusion is of the same subject-predicate form as in a case of *de re* error through misidentification; but the background justificational architecture differs, and crucially involves an existential premise. To make this clearer, here is an example of this second kind of misidentification. On entering the kitchen, I find an empty plate instead of the heap of shrimps I had just peeled. I thus come to know that *someone* stole the shrimps (“ $\exists x Fx$ ”). I then spot the cat, Fred, passing by with a sly expression and licking its chops. I come to suspect that it is Fred who is responsible for the disappearance of the shrimps, and reach the hasty conclusion that Fred stole the shrimps (“ $a$  is F”); but in fact, it is the dog, now cautiously hidden in the garden with its booty, who is guilty of the theft.

Pryor notes [Pryor (1999), pp. 280, 285] that while some forms of self-knowledge enjoy neither of those two forms of IEM, experiential self-knowledge clearly enjoys existential IEM, and plausibly (although more controversially) also *de re* IEM. It enjoys existential IEM because it is hard to see how an occurrent experience of mine could yield knowledge that *someone* is having an experience as of hunger, or as of seeing a canary, while leaving me in doubt as to *which person* is the subject of the experience.<sup>7</sup> In a normal situation, experiential self-knowledge exhibits *de re* IEM as well. If inner perception, for instance, yields knowledge of a particular body, then it is not easy to see how it could leave me in doubt as to whether this body is mine.<sup>8</sup>

Of the two forms of IEM, existential IEM is, according to Pryor, the more fundamental and the stronger, the more rare. While existential IEM entails *de re* IEM, the converse is not true. In a case of existential IEM (like the ordinary judgment that I’m hungry), my grounds for judging that *something or other* is F suffice to justify my judgment that it’s  $a$  that is F; therefore, *de re* misidentification is excluded too. This is because my knowing that  $a$  is F “does not depend on there being some particular object  $y$  [that I] antecedently know [...] to be F, and on [my] believing [...]  $a$  and  $y$  to be the same object” [Pryor (1999), p. 285]. By contrast, a judgment may exhibit *de re* IEM, and yet be vulnerable to existential misidentification. For instance, in the shrimp example above, my judgment that *Fred* stole the shrimps does not rest on any identification premise. There is no particular individual that I antecedently know to be the thief, and that I would re-identify as Fred. So the judgment is immune to *de re* misidentification. However, as we have seen, the judgment does exemplify existential misidentification. Existential IEM is thus a more

demanding condition to satisfy, since its presence secures that of the weaker, *de re* IEM, but not the other way round. The fact that the indisputable instances of existential IEM are those involved in self-attributions of experiences also suggests the possibility that this form of IEM might constitute a distinctive feature of self-knowledge. For Pryor, at any rate, existential IEM is “epistemologically more central – and more interesting – than the phenomenon of *de re* misidentification” [Pryor (1999), p. 286].

#### *A problem for the identification-freedom account*

The problem for the standard, Evansian account of IEM in terms of identification-freedom is that it doesn’t cover existential IEM. This is because this more fundamental form of IEM arises in epistemic situations where it is not clear *what* identification-premise could be dispensed with to secure the immunity to error through misidentification.

Recall the examples used to illustrate, respectively, existential misidentification and immunity to existential misidentification: the case of the stolen shrimps on the one hand; the case of judging, based on inner perception, that I’m hungry, on the other hand. In the first case, my grounds for judging that “someone or other stole the shrimps” (“ $\exists x Fx$ ”) leave it open whether I’m also right in further judging that “Fred stole the shrimps” (“ $a$  is F”). In the second case, my grounds for judging that “someone or other is hungry” (“ $\exists x Fx$ ”) are also legitimate grounds for further judging that “I am hungry” (“ $a$  is F”); if the existential premise can be known to be true on these grounds, so can the singular conclusion. But note that the “bad” case does *not*, any more than the good one, involve any identification-premise. In both cases, we move directly from a general, existential premise to a particularized conclusion. Since the absence of an identification-premise makes no difference as to whether a given case is one of existential misidentification or one of existential *immunity* to misidentification, it can’t play any role in explaining why the latter arises when it does.<sup>9</sup> The standard Evansian account seems inadequate to explain existential IEM because its third and most important condition (c), the freedom from an identification-premise, has no meaningful application there.

### III. SEMANTIC RELATIVISM: AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE STANDARD ACCOUNT?...

Recanati (2007a-b), (2009), (2010), (2012a) has developed an alternative approach to IEM,<sup>10</sup> very different, at least at first sight, from the Evansian model, and (as I’ll argue) more successful at tackling existential IEM. The guiding hypothesis is that IEM derives in large part from the semantic content of the judgments it attaches to; and that what distinguishes this content is its comparative poverty: it includes a predicate, but no particular object. More specifically, in the case of IEM<sub>sk</sub>, immunity to misidentification is tak-

en to derive from the *absence* of an explicit representation of oneself in the content of the thoughts constituting one's basic self-knowledge. Recanati thus rejects the first feature, (a), of the standard account of IEM in terms of identification-freedom, i.e. that IEM judgments have a subject-predicate structure.

In what follows, I'll present in broad outline the relativist analysis of self-attributions constitutive of self-knowledge, before describing its implications for the understanding of IEM.

### *The relativist framework*

Recent years have witnessed intense philosophical discussion of relativist semantics, and its application to an increasing number of representations, linguistic but also mental. In particular, several authors have proposed to extend the relativist framework to what are often called, following Lewis (1979), *de se* thoughts. Those are the thoughts we typically report with sentences of the form "I am F", and which yield (when they are true) self-knowledge in the strict sense – namely knowledge of oneself *as such*, as opposed to mere knowledge of the person one happens to be.

The relativist approach to *de se* thought is championed by a number of contemporary philosophers of language and mind, among whom Egan (2006a), (2006b); Ninan (2008); Recanati (2007a-b), (2009), (2010), (2012a); Stephenson (2007a), (2007b), (2010); Torre (2010); Lafraire (2012); and Stojanovic (2012).<sup>11</sup>

Common to all these theorists is the claim that *de se* thought is not generally a matter of (explicit) self-reference. Quite the opposite: *de se* thoughts are typically 'selfless' thoughts, i.e. thoughts that are not really *about* the subject who entertains them, but that are characterised, rather, by the absence of self-reference in their semantic content. (More about this in a moment.)

Recanati restricts this claim to the case of what he calls "implicit" or "basic" *de se* thoughts. His account starts with a distinction between two kinds of *de se* thoughts: explicit vs. merely implicit ones. Explicit *de se* thoughts can be directly identified with the contents expressed by sentences containing occurrences of the pronoun "I", or other terms designed for referring to oneself. These thoughts, in other words, include a dedicated representation of the subject (*as subject*).<sup>12</sup> Implicit *de se* thoughts, on the other hand, *don't* include any explicit representation of the subject. They are those mental states we have in having an experience, be it perceptual (e.g. seeing a canary in the left part of the bird cage) or quasi-perceptual, as in episodic memory (e.g. remembering tasting Matcha tea) and situated imagination (e.g. imagining being in Japan). While they typically bear on objects distinct from the subject (the canary, Matcha tea, Japan), these thoughts also involve *her*, because they are "perspectival". According to Recanati, when I perceive a visual scene, such as the canary being in the left part of the cage, I am not myself

represented explicitly in the content of my thought; only the canary and the cage are. Yet this still counts, in a basic sense, as a *de se* thought, for the content is represented *from my own perspective*: the information I get bears inseparably on the objects my attention is directed upon (the bird, the cage) *and*, implicitly, on myself, in so far as my own location in space is the point of reference relative to which the canary can indeed be said to be in the left part of the cage. (Seen from someone else's perspective, it would instead be in the right part of the cage.) In this manner, my experience as of the bird being in the left part of the cage *implicitly* marks my role as the experiencer; it is, in Recanati's words, *implicitly self-attributed*. Thoughts of this kind thus constitute, when they are true, the most basic form of what I have called 'experiential self-knowledge' in Section I. For Recanati, all modalities of experience, including inner perception, are both "*de se*" and yet not directly about the self, in the sense just sketched.

This intuition guides the semantic analysis Recanati offers for implicit *de se* thoughts, as follows. The content of experiences which would ultimately motivate<sup>13</sup> reports such as:

(1) "I am hungry."

(2) "I am feverish."

does *not* contain any constituent standing for the subject of those thoughts. Further, implicit *de se* thoughts are not even singular thoughts at all: they are *objectless*. Contrary to what the grammar of reports such as (1) or (2) suggests, the implicit *de se* thoughts they are grounded in are not to be identified with classical propositions, that could be decomposed into a subject and a predicate. They should be identified, more simply, in terms of the predicate alone (in the case of (1) and (2), the predicates "Hungry(*x*)" and "Feverish(*x*)", respectively). The information encoded by my mental state, when I entertain the thought whose final expression is sentence (1), takes the form of an impersonal content *à la* Lichtenberg, such as [[(1)], paraphrased as [[(1)]]'.<sup>14</sup>

(1) "I am hungry."

[[(1)] "Hungry!"

[[(1)]]'  $\exists x$  Hungry(*x*)

How could such selfless contents ever count (when true) as pieces of *self-knowledge*? The relativists' answer is the following. The subject is not represented at all in the (narrow) content of her implicit (perspectival) *de se*

thoughts; these thoughts, in other words, are not *about* her. However, the thoughts in question ‘*concern*’ her [Perry (1986)] in a privileged way, in so far as they cannot be evaluated as true or false in an absolute sense, but only relatively to their owner, or ‘at’ her perspective. That the canary is in the left part of the cage, for instance, is true or false only relative to *me*. The subject thus plays the same role as other ‘points of evaluation’ such as the world-, time- and space-parameters, against which relativistic truth assessments often have to be conducted. For instance, a judgment that “The economic crisis is over” is only true at certain times (although it is not *about* those times, only about the economy). A judgment that “It is raining” is only true at certain places (although it is not *about* those places, but only about the weather). Recanati (2012a), p. 192, glosses the analogy as follows:

(...) the content of an implicit *de se* thought is ‘person-relative’ and is evaluated with respect to the thinking subject, just as the content of the perceptual judgment ‘It is raining’ is location-relative and evaluated with respect to the place of perception.

In slightly more formal words, the subjectless contents that relativists ascribe to (implicit) *de se* attitudes are true or false, not just relative to possible worlds, but relative to more complex circumstances of evaluation: centred worlds. A centred world can be formally described as an “index”, i.e. an  $n$ -tuple that includes, besides a possible world  $w$ , several extra parameters: at a minimum, an individual of reference  $s$ , called the “centre”; but also, very often, a time  $t$ , a location  $l$ , or even further parameters of relative evaluation (collectively designated below by the letter  $k$ ), such as standards of taste or precision, moral or epistemic norms, etc.

Consider, for instance, the conditions that must be examined to assess the truth of the *de se* content a person  $s$  can express by saying:

(3) “It hurts!”

For the relativist, this content is to be individuated purely in terms of the predicate, approximately as follows: “ $\exists x \text{Hurt}(x)$ ”. The truth-making circumstance against which one should assess the truth-value of this simplified content (hereafter “centred content”), however, isn’t just the actual world  $w_{@}$  – indeed, it wouldn’t make much sense to ask whether “It hurts!” holds of the actual world – but a complex set of coordinates  $\langle w_{@}, s, t, l, k \rangle$  constituting a *centred* world. One only gets in a position to judge whether an assertion of (3) is true or false when one asks whether it is true that “there is pain” in the actual world, at time  $t$  and in the location  $l$ , for the person  $s$ , relative to the standards of sensitivity to pain  $k$  of  $s$ .

In a word, the overall relativist strategy consists in impoverishing the encoded informational content (replacing the subject-predicate proposition with a predicate-only content), while commensurately enriching the circumstance of evaluation with new parameters (replacing possible worlds with centred worlds).

*An ecological argument in support of relativism*

The main originality of the relativist account of *de se* thought, as we have just seen, is the claim that it can dispense with the notion of an explicit representation of the self. Attitudes *de se*, while they realise the most primitive kind of self-knowledge, are paradoxically taken to be, as Perry (1986) provocatively says, “selfless” [see also Recanati (2007), p. 176].

This claim is supported in part by considerations of psychological plausibility, in particular cognitive economy.<sup>15</sup> Every instance of thinking is embedded in a particular *context*. So when there is, across the contexts of all the thoughts we can form, a certain invariant feature, there is simply no need, in ordinary cases, to represent that feature explicitly in our thoughts. For instance, among a small community who never leave their village or even care to think about what lies beyond, the weather can be discussed by saying things like “It’s raining”, without having to specify a place: this is taken care of by the context. In Perry’s words:

Sometimes all of the facts we deal with involving a certain *n*-ary relation involve the same object occupying one of the argument roles. In that case, we don’t need to worry about that argument role; we don’t need to keep track of its occupant, because it never changes. We can, so to speak, pack it into the relation [...] [Perry (1998), p. 4].

The experiencing subject constitutes, for each of us, just such a fixed object: whatever experience I may have, *I* am always the experiencer. This structural constraint allows a cognitive economy on the part of the subject when she thinks implicit *de se* thoughts: representing the type of experience alone, i.e. the predicate (e.g. “hungry”, “hurt”) suffices in the simpler cases of experiential self-attribution, since the experiencer, absent further specification, can only be *herself*.

Representing the subject to whom the predicate applies, i.e. forming an explicit *de se* thought, is only needed when we specifically want to mark a contrast with *other* subjects (“I am more hungry than you are”), or when we examine reflectively our own thoughts (“I’m trying to decide whether I’m still hungry”). Primitive, non-contrastive *de se* thinking, on the other hand, should be expected to dispense with an explicit representation of the self, because such a specification would be idle, given that the structural constraint just mentioned fixes a default value for the subject. The latter can therefore

be innocuously packed away from the content of the thought and into the index, as its “subject-parameter” or centre, thus lightening the representational burden for the thinker.

A further consequence of the contextual invariance of the identity of the experiencer across all of my experiences is that, when I do need to make the subject explicit, this can be done without any new evidence or inquiry; all I need is a background mastery of the I-concept. The context has fixed all along a constant value for the centre of the centred world serving as the circumstance of evaluation of my implicit *de se* thoughts. When this centre is moved into the explicit content of the thought (as I go, for instance, from “It hurts!” to “I am hurting”), this is accordingly done in an automatic manner, without any need to ‘look for’ the relevant subject, as I would need to do if a range of alternatives exist.<sup>16</sup> This process is what Recanati calls “Reflection” [see e.g. Recanati (2012a), Section II]. As long as the original, implicit self-attribution and the corresponding explicit self-attribution are both made on the basis of the same experience, I can transition from “It hurts” to “I am hurting”, cognitively speaking, for free. This is why I can indifferently choose to say either sentence as a report on my experience, although only the former expresses its original content.

#### *The absent object: an alternative account of IEM*

The core relativist hypothesis is that no one at all needs to be represented in an implicit *de se* thought like “Hungry!” or “It hurts”, as the person concerned can be externalised as a fixed parameter of the circumstances of evaluation. This hypothesis opens up a new way of explaining why experiential self-attributions enjoy IEM, which, contrary to the traditional Evansian approach, covers both forms of immunity, existential and (by implication) *de re*.<sup>17</sup> The explanation proceeds in two steps to encompass both implicit and explicit *de se* thinking.

Firstly, at the level of implicit *de se* thoughts, such as reflect immediate experience, no misidentification of the subject instantiating the property *F* presented in the thought can occur, simply because the general issue of identification is irrelevant here. Since they involve no explicit representation of the self, implicit *de se* thoughts require no effort of self-identification on the subject’s part, which excludes *a fortiori* any risks of a misidentification. Or more simply:  $IEM_{sk}$ , as defined above, is trivially true of implicit *de se* thoughts, because the antecedent of the conditional, in their case, is false: when I think one of those thoughts I do *not* form a judgment of the form “I am *F*”.<sup>18</sup> Because they don’t refer to *any* object, implicit *de se* thoughts don’t fulfil the preliminary conditions under which the question of identifying the correct object of a predicative judgment can arise at all.

Thus, at the basic level of implicit *de se* thoughts, the problem of IEM is not so much solved as dissolved, in the Wittgensteinian fashion. Much of

the debates about IEM prove to have rested on a false assumption, namely that IEM generally has to do with something special about the way I think of myself when I self-attribute certain properties, so that I am immune to errors as to which person they apply to. Instead, as Recanati proposes, the impossibility of such errors (at the level of implicit *de se* thinking) has simply to do with the fact that I don't think of myself, in any way at all.

The second step consists in extending the account to explicit *de se* thoughts [see Recanati (2009), p. 12 and (2012a), Section II]. Not *all* explicit *de se* thoughts, however: as noted at the outset, only experiential self-attributions incontestably enjoy IEM, and this is precisely what Recanati's theory correctly predicts.<sup>19</sup> In his account, only those explicit *de se* thoughts which are elicited on the sole basis of an implicit *de se* thought, through a process of Reflection, enjoy, like their precursor, the property of IEM.

Take a case in which you and I are walking on coals. I say:

(3) "It hurts!"

at time  $t_1$ . Your astonishing reply is "No it doesn't"; but of course, that's only true as far as *you*'re concerned. I go on to say:

(4) "Well, *I* am hurting!"

at time  $t_2$ , registering explicitly this time that the predicament concerns *me*. At this point, the experience of pain, so far implicitly self-attributed, becomes the object of an *explicit* self-attribution. In (4), the identity of the person formerly *concerned* by the underlying implicit *de se* thought (3) is no longer left, as self-evident, to the context, but explicitly represented, so that the new thought is now *about* her. But remember that I get the "I" for free.<sup>20</sup> As no misidentification was possible at the implicit level, none is possible at the explicit level either, because *no new evidence* intervenes in the transition: the same ground (namely the experience) supports both my statements. In so far as this ground was of a nature to secure IEM for (3), it still does for (4). Recall that, for the relativists, the reason why there is no need for an explicit representation of the self in the content of a basic *de se* thought is that the identity of the subject who is concerned by this content is an *invariant* parameter of the context in which that subject thinks (or of her "perspective" on the world): whenever I have an experience, *I* am the experiencer. Hence, when it comes to making the identity of the subject explicit, as in reflective thought, the selection of the correct individual is *automatic*: the choice is architecturally constrained. There is simply no alternative, hence no room for error. Experiential, explicit *de se* thoughts thus inherit the IEM of the implicit *de se* thoughts they reflexivise.

The relativist account can thus be extended, from the case of the implicit *de se* thoughts deployed in experience, to the relevant subset of explicit *de se* thoughts which, being directly based on experience, also exhibit IEM. Can it be further generalised to cover other putative cases of IEM? Candidates that have been mentioned beyond the domain of self-knowledge strictly understood [see note 5 above] include demonstrative judgments [Shoemaker (1968)], spatial and temporal judgments [McGinn (1983)], as well as, more controversially,<sup>21</sup> second- and third-person judgments such as “You are very close” and “He is a long way off” [Wright (2012)]. Recanati (2009), (2012a) [see in particular Recanati (2012a), Section III] argues that his theory can be stretched to the case of demonstrative judgments; Wright (2012) raises objections. Rehearsing this ongoing discussion would take me beyond the scope of the present essay, which is concerned with IEM as a feature of experiential self-knowledge. While the possibility of extending Recanati’s account beyond the domain of the *de se*, which it was designed to illuminate, still remains to be further explored, I think it is fair to assess its merits within the scope of this domain.<sup>22</sup>

And in this domain, Recanati’s theory has a clear advantage over the competing Evansian approach. Recanati’s account of IEM has the rare (and so far mostly unnoticed) virtue of covering existential IEM, unlike most other available theories. In his (2012a), Recanati concentrates for the most part on what he calls “ETM-S”, for “error through misidentification based on singular grounds”, which closely resembles Pryor’s “*de re* misidentification.” Correlatively, the form of IEM he tackles is the one attaching to judgments based on singular grounds, i.e. *de re* IEM. I think, however, that his theory is in fact best suited to account for the more fundamental (but much less discussed) phenomenon of existential IEM (in Recanati’s own vocabulary, the form of IEM that precludes “ETM-G”, for “error through misidentification based on general grounds”), a phenomenon Recanati himself alludes to only passingly, at the very end of his paper.<sup>23</sup>

Remember that a case of existential misidentification is one in which one mistakenly thinks that “*a* is F” because (i) one knows that “something or other is F” and (ii) one wrongly takes *a* to be the thing that is F. An implicit *de se* thought, as analysed in the relativist framework, is predicted to be immune to precisely such mistakes. It is impossible that one go from the existential knowledge that there exists someone who is (e.g.) hungry, to the false belief that a particular person (distinct from oneself), say *b*, is hungry. This is simply because, when one forms an implicit *de se* thought, one does *not* explicitly take the second step, that would amount to upgrading the existential generalization (“ $\exists x Fx$ ”) into a particular instantiation (“*a* is F”). According to Recanati, one entertains a predicate-only, objectless content, instead of explicitly predicating something of a particular object. Hence the trivial conse-

quence that there is, *a fortiori*, no room for the wrong particularisation in those unparticularised thoughts.

But why is existential IEM sometimes retained when we do take the step of particularising the original existential judgment, as when we move from an implicit *de se* thought (“It hurts!”) to an explicit one (“I am hurting”)? Again, it is important to note that not all such transitions preserve IEM. They only do so when *no new ground* is required to make the transition, leaving intact the epistemic quality of the original, implicitly *de se* judgment. This is the case when the upgrade is not the result of an inference, which would introduce new grounds (and with them, the possibility of existential error through misidentification), but the outcome of a mere process of Reflection. This is what happens when I move from “It hurts!” to “I’m hurting” in the ordinary way, i.e. relying on the same evidence (an unchanged experience of pain) throughout the transition.

To make this clearer, let us compare this IEM-preserving transition with a non-IEM-preserving case. On coming home, I find the window open. Based on this observation, I make at  $t_1$  the existential judgment that “Someone left the window open” (“ $\exists x Fx$ ”), which trivially enjoys existential IEM. Remembering that I had to leave in a great hurry this morning, I go on to make at  $t_2$  the particularised judgement that “I left the window open” (“ $a$  is F”), which isn’t IEM (other members of the household could equally be responsible for the oversight). This transition rests on an inference, based on the addition of fresh pieces of evidence between  $t_1$  and  $t_2$ : the recollection that I was in a hurry this morning, the background knowledge that when in a hurry I’m prone to distraction, etc. Here, the “I” in the final judgment that  $a$  is F does not come for free; I had to select a culprit among a range of possible candidates, the selection required examining new evidence, and in this process errors just might have slipped in. But “I” does come for free in the transition from “It hurts” to “I am hurting”: nothing beyond the original experience of pain is needed for this upgrade, because the experience itself already constrains the choice of subject, as the invariant experiencer across all contexts in which my experiences provide justifications. Hence, in cases such as this, the epistemic standing of the original implicit *de se* thought, and in particular its existential IEM, is unaffected by the transition towards an explicit *de se* thought.<sup>24</sup>

#### IV. ... OR A DEVELOPMENT OF THE STANDARD ACCOUNT?

Is Recanati’s solution – or, better, dissolution – of the problem of IEM really a departure from the standard Evansian approach?

To be sure, the relativist theory relies crucially on the negation of the first step (a) of the standard account, namely, that IEM judgments generally have a subject-predicate structure. It is precisely from the contention that the

primitive kind of IEM judgments have, instead, a predicate-only content that the relativist theory derives most of its explanatory power; for, as we have seen, being objectless means that an implicit *de se* thought can't, *a fortiori*, latch on to the wrong object. Treating implicit *de se* thoughts as objectless is also, as I have just shown, what gives the theory its rare power to explain why they are, in particular, immune to *existential* misidentification (from which the more banal *de re* IEM logically follows; see section II.).

Note also that the relativist explanation doesn't need to rely on the key component (c) of the Evansian account, i.e. the absence of an identification-premise. As section II pointed out, the reliance on this component is ultimately what blocks the Evansian strategy from extending to existential IEM. By exploring a quite different route, relativism ends up being, by contrast, best suited to account for this most fundamental of forms of IEM.

However, as I'll now argue, a closer look at Evans's core insights reveals that the relativist theory of IEM is best understood as developing and complementing, rather than rejecting, the 'identification-freedom' strategy.

To show this, the first step is to clarify the notions of "identification" and "identification-freedom" at play in the debate. In the context of the theory defended in Evans (1982), the claim that self-attributive judgments enjoying IEM are "identification-free" is in fact a moderate one. It is useful to bear in mind here the distinction between two senses in which Evans uses the word "identification" [see for instance Evans (1982), § 7.2, p. 218].

(A) Firstly, by "identification" Evans means the act of asserting (mentally or with a sentence of the form " $a = b$ ") the identity of what formerly appeared as two distinct objects, but turns out to be a single object, given under two distinct modes of presentation.

(B) But as a precondition to such a complex operation, one must first have isolated in thought, under each of the modes of presentation " $a$ " and " $b$ ", the object in question. This is where the other, more primitive sense of "identification" comes into play. In this second sense, the word "identification" simply targets the ability to *discriminate* (attentionally or otherwise) an object among others, in an act of mental designation; the aptitude, in other terms, to make *it*, to the exclusion of all other objects, the intentional object of a given psychological state.

When Evans claims that IEM judgments are "identification-free", he has in mind the more demanding sense (A) of the notion of identification. What he means is that thinking a thought we would canonically express by an utterance of the form "I am F" – what I will continue to call a *de se* thought, for the sake of terminological coherence<sup>25</sup> – does not always<sup>26</sup> require that we go through a two-step process involving an identity premise, i.e. that we first think " $a$  is F" and then " $I = a$ " before we reach the conclusion that "I am F". Instead, when the judgment is based on certain epistemic sources, like inner perception, what happens is that *in* detecting the instantiation of the property

F (e.g. an experience of hunger), I am also immediately given the object that instantiates it (namely myself).

Thus understood, however, the identification-freedom thesis is compatible with the claim, independently defended by Evans, that the subject of a *de se* thought is the object of an identification in the weaker sense (B), namely the object of an individuating intentional act. (One must have, according to Evans, a “fundamental Idea” of oneself – an ‘I’-Idea – to be able to entertain *de se* thoughts, thereby distinguishing oneself from all other individuals.)

Recanati, however, goes one step further. He denies the involvement, in the formation of a *de se* thought that exhibits IEM, of any identification, either in the sense (A) or even in the more basic sense (B).<sup>27</sup> As we have seen, *de se* thinking, for him, is – at least in its simpler, implicit forms – an objectless, and in particular a *selfless* mode of thinking.

It is thanks to this more fundamental use of the now-classical principle of identification-freedom that relativism can account for existential IEM. Compare:

Evans can account for the fact that (some) *de se* thoughts are immunised against the more ordinary and less demanding kind of misidentification (*de re* misidentification), by supposing that such thoughts involve a form of identification of oneself (in the weaker sense B) that is independent from any judgment of identity (in the stronger sense A). Basic *de se* thoughts, according to Evans, are thus grounded on premises that are very different from those (“*b* is F” and “*a* = *b*”) that may yield, if one of them is defeated, an erroneous judgment of the form “*a* is F”. No substitution of the wrong object *a* for the correct object *b* (namely the object we *know* to be F) can surreptitiously take place, because the stage of the identity judgment (“*a* = *b*”) that would make the substitution possible never occurs. It is, therefore, the absence of any identification (in sense A) that excludes *a fortiori* the occurrence of an identification mistake.

Recanati takes one extra step,<sup>28</sup> which proves crucial in enabling his theory to account for the fact that some *de se* thinking (implicit *de se* thoughts, and explicit *de se* thoughts derived from them through mere Reflection) also warrants the second, stronger form of IEM, namely existential IEM (although, as I pointed out earlier, he doesn’t explicitly draw this consequence himself). Again, when I form (on the normal ground of inner perception) a belief which I would typically report by saying “I’m hungry”, it is impossible for this to be the result of the kind of mistake that would consist in transitioning from the knowledge that *someone* is hungry, to the false belief that a particular person *a*, distinct from myself, is the person who is hungry. In a relativist framework, this is simply a consequence of the fact that, in order to entertain a *de se* thought, *I don’t have to go through the second stage, namely particularising the original existential generalisation: the content of the experience motivating the report that “I’m hungry” is of the gen-*

eral form “ $\exists x F(x)$ ”, *not* of the instantiated form “ $a$  is  $F$ ”. In this account, it is the absence of *any* identification – even, this time, in the weaker sense B – that excludes in principle the occurrence of any kind of misidentification, existential as well as (consequently) *de re*. Even when I do go on to particularise the original implicit *de se* judgement – really, “Hungry!” – by morphing it into the explicit “*I* am hungry”, the existential IEM of the former is retained by the latter, as long as the transition is warranted by Reflection rather than new evidence.

One might want to insist on what separates those two strategies: while in both cases the explanation of IEM lies in the absence of an act of identification, the sense of the word “identification” is very different in the two accounts, from a two-term identity judgment in Evans’s view to the much more basic individuation of a single term in the relativist picture.

However, there is a deeper insight common to both approaches. In both cases, the source of IEM lies in the same kind of asymmetry in the pair consisting of an IEM judgment, and a minimally contrasting judgment which isn’t IEM. Take the following contrast pair:

(1) “I am hungry”

(5) “Fred is hungry”

Judgment (1), when made on the ordinary ground of inner perception, is IEM; judgment (5), by contrast, typically isn’t. For Evans, (5) is vulnerable to misidentification because it is usually the conclusion of an inference that involves an identity premise (e.g., an inference from “this cat is hungry” and “this cat is Fred” to “Fred is hungry”); judgment (1) isn’t so vulnerable because it doesn’t depend on such a premise. This difference can be rephrased slightly differently, by saying that in the case of (1) *only one* mode of presentation is applied throughout to the object (it is through the experience of myself as hungry that I refer to myself), while in the second case, the same object is grasped successively under *two* modes of presentation – as “this cat”, then as “Fred”. One less route of cognitive access is needed in a case of IEM, compared to a minimally different non-IEM case.<sup>29</sup>

The very same diagnosis could be made from within the relativist framework, albeit from different premises. Comparing, again, the thoughts we respectively report with (1) and (5), a relativist would say that the former is a selfless, implicit *de se* thought individuated in terms of the predicate alone (“ $\exists x$  Hungry( $x$ )”), while the latter is a subject-predicate thought referring to a particular, Fred, as well as a property, “Hungry( $x$ )”. The first thought rules out the risk of misidentification in a way that the second doesn’t, just because it doesn’t contain any object to identify in the first place. Again, the relevant difference is that one less mode of presentation, or

route of cognitive access, is needed in a case of IEM, compared to a minimally different non-IEM case. The judgment expressed by (5) contains two concepts for objects, the individual notion “Fred” and the concept “hungry”, creating the risk that their intersection prove empty. The implicit *de se* judgment behind (1), because it involves only one of the two concepts, “hungry”, gives rise to no such risk.

Both the classical Evansian account of IEM and the recent relativist take on the issue thus concur in locating the source of immunity, when it obtains, in a lesser degree of cognitive complexity, more precisely an economy in the number of epistemic routes to reality, by comparison to those closely similar cases where it doesn't obtain. For all its apparent departure from the identification-freedom approach to IEM, the relativist view thus reiterates its basic insight, transposing it at a more fundamental level and thereby extending it to one more form of IEM: existential IEM. Free at last, not just from identity premises but even from the more basic act of individuation, an implicit *de se* thought as analysed by the relativist thus vindicates the principle of identification-freedom, properly reinterpreted, more thoroughly than Evans himself did.

*LOGOS-Grup de Recerca en Lògica, Llenguatge i Cognició*  
*Universitat de Barcelona*  
*C. Montalegre, 6-8, desp. 4009*  
*08001Barcelona, Spain*  
*E-mail: marieguillot@ub.edu*

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank François Recanati, Manuel García-Carpintero and Gregory Bochner for illuminating discussions on relativism around the time I wrote this essay, and an anonymous reviewer for acute critical comments on an earlier version. Any remaining shortcomings are my own.

Work on this article has been supported by funding from the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme FP7/2007-2013 under ERC grant agreement n° 229441-CCC, by grants ANR-10-LABX-0087 IEC and ANR-10-IDEX-0001-02 PSL\*, and by the Spanish Research Council under grant FFI2013-47948-P. This work has also benefited from the support of the Fondation des Treilles (“Prix Jeune Chercheur”) as part of a research stay at SND and Institut Jean Nicod. The Fondation des Treilles, founded by Anne Gruner Schlumberger, supports the dialogue between the arts and science in order to promote the development of contemporary creation and research. It also offers residencies to researchers and writers in its Var (France) estate, “Les Treilles” ([www.les-treilles.com](http://www.les-treilles.com)).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In order to count as experiential self-knowledge in the sense that is relevant here, these self-ascriptions must be made on the basis of the experiences themselves (i.e. the perceptions, the imaginings or the memories).

<sup>2</sup> I may of course be wrong in believing that the teapot is on my left. But I can't so easily be wrong in believing that I have *an experience as of* the teapot being on my left. Similarly, I can be wrong in believing that I drank Matcha tea in Japan, but I can't so easily be wrong in believing that *I seem to* remember that event.

<sup>3</sup> The existence of IEM is largely, but not unanimously, accepted. For reasons of space, however, I'll assume here that IEM does exist. My claims in this paper can therefore be understood as conditional ones, as follows: *if* experiential self-knowledge is indeed characterised by IEM, then semantic relativism is in a position to provide a unified account of IEM<sub>sk</sub> (see below), which constitutes a reinterpretation and a development (in the sense explained in Section IV) of Evans's 'identification-freedom' principle.

<sup>4</sup> This is not the place to rehearse the very complex debate on the exact number and nature of the features that single out the special epistemic profile of self-knowledge. [Good surveys of this debate can be found in Alston (1971); in Quassim Cassam's introduction to his (1994); and in Gertler (2003).] Suffice it to note that there is a large consensus on the general observation that self-knowledge enjoys an epistemically special status, and that IEM is part of what is special about this status. (But see note 3 above.)

<sup>5</sup> Not all judgments that are IEM are, narrowly speaking, expressive of self-knowledge. It has often been noted, for instance, that demonstrative judgments formed in the normal way (i.e. based on experience) also exhibit IEM [Shoemaker (1968), Evans (1982), Wright (2012)]. This may also be true of temporal and spatial judgments [McGinn (1983)], and perhaps of indexical second- and third-person judgments such as "You are very close" and "He is a long way off" [Wright (2012)]. However, all of the above judgments are subtypes of indexical thinking, hence are deployed within an *egocentric* framework of representation. So there is still a clear sense in which IEM attaches primarily to judgments which reflect our own position in the world, and hence are relevant, broadly, to self-knowledge. (See Section III for further remarks on these cases.)

<sup>6</sup> Individual occurrences of attitudes, typically judgments, are the primary bearers of the property of IEM. (*Types* of attitudes, as defined by their content, are not *per se* capable of being IEM. As Wright (1998) and Pryor (1999) convincingly show, it is the combination of the assertion of a certain content and of the presence a certain epistemic ground that endow certain occurrent thoughts with the property of IEM.) However, a *person* can be derivatively said to enjoy IEM in so far as she is the subject of such an occurrent attitude.

<sup>7</sup> This presumably has to do with the nature of experience: my *having* the experience is enough to make it *my* experience. By contrast, where the object of the self-attribution, based on experience, is not the experience itself but e.g. a bodily property or bodily part, the judgment is less secure, since experiencing is not likewise equivalent to possessing. (In a science-fiction scenario, I could conceivably experience someone else's bodily condition.) This explains in part why the case for experiential

self-attributions being also characterised by *de re* IEM may seem less straightforward (see the next footnote).

<sup>8</sup> Pryor expresses some caution (e.g. in his note 54) in attributing the property of *de re* IEM to experiential self-knowledge, because of the far-fetched but theoretically possible cases of “quasi-perception” and “quasi-memory” described by Shoemaker (1970) and Dennett (1978), where it seems one could have, through deviant causal chains, knowledge of a particular body without being in a position to decide whether the body is one’s own, or someone else’s. (If my nerves were somehow hooked onto someone else’s organs, I could for example be right that “this body is reclining” but wrong that “my body is reclining”.) In the case of ordinary perception, ordinary memory (and ordinary imagining), however, there is no doubt that we enjoy *de re* IEM. It should also be noted that the deviant cases described in discussions of quasi-perception and quasi-memory are not ones of experiential self-knowledge strictly speaking (*cf.* the definition in Section I), since in these cases the property being self-ascribed (e.g. being in a reclining position), while attributed on the basis of experience, is not the experience itself, but a bodily property. As this essay focuses on experiential self-knowledge, these cases have no real import here. A further reason why these complications regarding *de re* IEM are largely irrelevant to what follows is that I wish to concentrate instead on *existential* IEM.

<sup>9</sup> Pryor (1999) points out on pp. 292-3 the difficulty that existential IEM poses for Evans, in slightly different terms which I’m simplifying here for reasons of space.

<sup>10</sup> Recanati’s relativist treatment of IEM has been mainly designed to apply to the case of IEM<sub>sk</sub>, which is my focus here; but see Section III below.

<sup>11</sup> Millikan (2004) also contains related ideas. Earlier proponents include Lewis (1979), Chisholm (1981) and Sosa (1983).

<sup>12</sup> While Recanati revives, in some respects, Wittgenstein’s and Anscombe’s ‘selfless’ accounts of *de se* thinking as far as implicit *de se* thoughts are concerned, he accepts, unlike them, that there is such a thing as an ‘I’-concept (or, as he calls it, a ‘self-file’); this is the concept we use in *explicit de se* thoughts. [See e.g. Recanati (2012b), (2014)]. His published work to date does not make it completely clear, however, how the content of our ‘selfless’, implicit *de se* thoughts comes to be inferentially integrated with that of our explicitly *de se* thoughts (how, for instance, I can infer from “I am walking on coals” and “It hurts!” that “I am walking on coals and in pain”). The exact role played by the ‘self-file’ in this integration, in particular, has yet to be fully spelled out. See García-Carpintero (2013b) for criticisms bearing on the articulation between Recanati’s relativist approach to implicit *de se* thoughts, and his recent work on mental files and the ‘self-file’.

<sup>13</sup> The contents of the first-person *reports* are explicit *de se* thoughts; but these explicit self-attributions are grounded in more basic, implicit self-attributions, i.e. the *experiences* themselves. More on this in the next sub-section.

<sup>14</sup> See for instance Lichtenberg (1971), ii, 412, §76.

<sup>15</sup> Lafraire (2011) contains a thorough survey of empirical data from cognitive science supporting Recanati’s relativist account of implicit *de se* thought, and of the fact that these thoughts are IEM.

<sup>16</sup> Of course, there is a sense in which I can *attribute* experiences to a range of subjects; being able to judge “I am hungry” is also being able to judge “You’re hungry” or “She’s hungry” [see Bermúdez (2005)]. However, when my *ground* for mak-

ing the attribution is the experience itself, these alternatives disappear. The only subject available for the ascription of an experience, based on *having* the *experience*, is myself.

<sup>17</sup> In Guillot (2013), I pointed out some independent limitations of the relativist account of IEM. While I stand by these reservations, I think it is important to acknowledge this particular strength of the relativist view that, alone of all existing accounts, it explains the hitherto mysterious phenomenon of existential IEM.

<sup>18</sup> This move makes Recanati an heir to the deflationary accounts of IEM in Wittgenstein (1953) and Anscombe (1975). However, where Wittgenstein and Anscombe take all self-attributive thoughts, as well as self-attributive ‘I’-sentences, to be selfless, Recanati restricts the claim to only *some* self-attributive thoughts (the implicit ones), and refuses to extend it to sentences containing “I”.

<sup>19</sup> Recanati also discusses self-attributions of bodily properties, such as “My legs are crossed”. But these are not, I would argue, the most primitive type of case. Their justificational architecture is more complex than that of self-attributions of experiences. My judgement that “My legs are crossed” depends not just on experience, but also on the presupposition that the situation is normal, so that my bodily experiences (e.g. my experience as of being in a cross-legged position) are a reliable guide to bodily properties (my actually being in a cross-legged position). Because of this extra presupposition, IEM is only derivative in this case; and because the presupposition can in principle be defeated (as in the science-fiction scenarios mentioned in notes 7 and 8), bodily self-attributions enjoy only a ‘conditional’ or ‘*de facto*’ form of IEM, weaker than the ‘absolute’ form of IEM attaching to the experiential self-attributions discussed here.

<sup>20</sup> Assuming my background mastery of the I-concept. No cognitive effort that would be special to this occasion, such as examining extra evidence, is required to deploy the concept and move from (3) to (4).

<sup>21</sup> The reason why I think this last type of case is more questionable has to do with the descriptive conditions encoded by “you”, “he” and “she” (respectively, “being the addressee”, “being a male individual”, “being a female individual”). These features may fail to be satisfied by the thing I correctly judge to be F, leaving open the possibility of a mismatch between the subject-component and the predicative component of the judgment that *a* is F. Here is a case involving “you”. You and I are in conversation; I suddenly feel something brushing my arm and say “You are very close”. In fact, what I felt was the curtain, not you. But *you* are the undisputable referent of “you” in this context. *De re* error through misidentification has thus occurred, which would be ruled out if I had used “this” instead. (Thanks to Conor McHugh for suggesting this example.)

<sup>22</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for pressing me to clarify this point.

<sup>23</sup> In his (2009), p. 11, Recanati makes the passing claim that his approach “is needed if we are to account for all forms of [IEM] (including immunity to what Pryor 1999 has called ‘which-object misidentification’)”; but he doesn’t elaborate or justify this claim in the rest of the article.

<sup>24</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for inviting me to elaborate this point.

<sup>25</sup> Evans himself prefers the term “‘I’-thought”, but the meaning is essentially the same as in the definition of *de se* thought given at the beginning of Section III –

where *de se* thoughts are those we typically report with sentences of the form “I am F”, and that yield (when true) self-knowledge in the strict sense.

<sup>26</sup> Shoemaker (1968) provides an argument to that effect. It is logically necessary to posit the existence of at least *some* self-attributions that are identification-free, in this sense. Insisting that a two-step justificational structure, complete with an identity premise, must always be present at the background of any *de se* thought, would lead to infinite regress. Reviewing Shoemaker’s argument, however, would take us too far from the present issue. See Shoemaker (1968) p. 561.

<sup>27</sup> This is also noted by García-Carpintero (2013a), (2013b).

<sup>28</sup> Recanati (2012a) and Wright (2012) both make related observations, but neither of them spells out this point in full.

<sup>29</sup> Related ideas can be found in Wright (2012) and García-Carpintero (2013a).

#### REFERENCES

- ALSTON, W. (1971), “Varieties of Privileged Access” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 8, 223-41.
- BERMÚDEZ, J. L. (2005), “Evans and the Sense of ‘I’”. In Bermúdez, J. L. (ed), *Thought, Reference, and Experience; Themes from the Philosophy of Gareth Evans*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 164-194.
- CASSAM, Q. (ed) (1994), *Self-Knowledge*; Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- CHISHOLM, R. (1981), *The First Person*; Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press.
- EGAN, A. (2006a), “Secondary Qualities and Self-Location”; in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 72:1, pp. 97-119.
- (2006b), “Appearance Properties?”; in *Noûs*, 40:3, pp. 495-521.
- EVANS, G. (1982), *The Varieties of Reference*; edited by John McDowell; Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- GARCÍA-CARPINTERO, M. (2013a), “Self-Conception: Sosa on *De Se* Thought”; in J. Turri (ed.), *Virtuous Thoughts: The Philosophy of Ernest Sosa*, Philosophical Studies Series, Springer, Dordrecht 2013, pp. 73-99.
- (2013b), “The *Self* File and Immunity to Error Through Misidentification”; *Disputatio* 36, (2013), pp. 191-206.
- GERTLER, B. (ed) (2003), *Privileged Access. Philosophical Accounts of Self-Knowledge*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.
- GUILLOT, M. (2013). “The Limits of Selflessness. Semantic Relativism and the Epistemology of *De Se* Thoughts.” *Synthese* Vol. 190, Issue 10 (2013), p. 1793-1816.
- HIGGINBOTHAM, J. (2003), “Remembering, Imagining, and the First Person”; in A. Barber (ed.), *Epistemology of Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 496-533.
- LAFRAIRE, J. (2012), *Connaissance de soi et immunité aux erreurs d’identification*; PhD thesis, Paris: Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.
- LEWIS, D. (1979). “Attitudes *De Dicto* and *De Se*”; in *The Philosophical Review* 88, pp. 513-43.
- LICHTENBERG, G.C. (1971), *Schriften und Briefe*, Carl Hanser Verlag.
- MCGINN, C. (1983), *The Subjective View. Secondary Qualities and Indexical Thoughts*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- MILLIKAN, R. G. (2004), *Varieties of Meaning*, Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press.

- NINAN, D. (2008), *Imagination, Content and the Self*. PhD thesis. Cambridge Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- PERRY, J. (1986), "Thought Without Representation"; *Supplementary Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 60, pp. 137-52.
- (1977), "Frege on Demonstratives"; *Philosophical Review* 86(4), pp. 474-497.
- PROSSER, S. and RECANATI, F. (eds) (2012), *Immunity to Error Through Misidentification: News Essays*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- PRYOR, J. (1999), "Immunity to Error Through Misidentification"; *Philosophical Topics* 26 (1/2), pp. 271-304.
- RECANATI, F. (2014), "First-Person Thought"; in Dutant, J., Fassio D. and Meylan A. (eds.) *Liber Amicorum Pascal Engel*, University of Geneva, pp. 506-511. URL: <http://www.unige.ch/lettres/philo/publications/engel/liberamicorum>
- (2012a), "Immunity to error to error through misidentification: What it is and where it comes from." In Prosser and Recanati (eds) (2012), pp.180-201
- (2012b), *Mental Files*; Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (2010), "Le soi implicite"; *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, n°4/2010, pp. 475-494.
- (2009), "De re and De se"; *Dialectica* 63, pp. 249-269.
- (2007a), *Perspectival Thought. A Plea for (Moderate) Relativism*; Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- (2007b), "Relativized Propositions"; In Michael O'Rourke and Corey Washington (eds), *Situating Semantics. Essays on the Philosophy of John Perry*; Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, pp. 119-154.
- SHOEMAKER, S. (1970), "Persons and Their Past", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 7, pp. 269-285.
- (1968), "Self-Reference and Self-Awareness"; *Journal of Philosophy* 65 (19), Oct. 1968, pp. 555-67.
- SOSA, E. (1983), "Consciousness of the Self and of the Present"; in J. E. Tomberlin (ed), *Agent, Language and the Structure of the World*; Hackett, pp. 131-43.
- STEPHENSON, T. (2010), "Control in Centred Worlds"; *Journal of Semantics* 27, pp. 409-436.
- (2007b), "Judge Dependence, Epistemic Modals, and Predicates of Personal Taste"; *Linguistics and Philosophy* 30; 4, pp. 487-525.
- (2007a), *Towards a Theory of Subjective Meaning*. Ph.D. Thesis, MIT.
- STOJANOVIC, I. (2012), "The Problem of De Se Assertion"; *Erkenntnis* 76 (1), pp. 49-58.
- TORRE, S. (2010), "Centered Assertion"; *Philosophical Studies* 150 (1), pp. 97-114.
- WITTGENSTEIN, L. (1953). *Philosophische Untersuchungen/Philosophical Investigations*; edited by G.E.M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, Oxford, Blackwell.
- WRIGHT, C. (2012), "Reflections on François Recanati's, 'Immunity to Error Through Misidentification: What It Is and Where It Comes From'"; in Prosser and Recanati (eds) (2012), pp. 247-280.
- (1998). "Self-Knowledge: the Wittgensteinian Legacy"; in Wright, C., Smith, B. C. and Macdonald, C. (eds) (1998); *Knowing Our Own Minds*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 101-122.