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The 'I' in First-Person Thought and What is Meant by Self-Knowledge

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The Role of 'I' in First-Person Thought and What Is Meant
by Self-Knowledge

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Philosophy

by

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Abstract

There has been a great deal of disagreement over what exactly it is that is being referenced by the first-person pronoun, 'I.' Immanuel Kant believed the 'I' associated with a thinking subject is just a formal representation of the substantially existing subject. This raises the question about whether or not 'I' is actually a referring expression? In this paper I explore two accounts from both sides of the debate which opens up a dialectical space for determining a positive answer for this question. On the one hand, 'I' is said to be a referring term for the speaker or utterer of a given thought or expression. In every instance, 'I' uniquely picks out its object. On the other hand, this account of 'I' as a referring term merely tells us the way that it refers to the person associated with it, but it fails to tell us how the reference takes place. What drives this second account, which ultimately says it is not a referring expression, is that when we consider how we are able to refer to an object is determined by the perspective we have on the object. When we refer to our coffee mug or to the cat on the windowsill, the reference is made possible by perception. Moreover, this kind of relationship to the object being referred is one that involves a criterion for getting it right about the object. When it comes to self-reference, the perspective I have of 'I' is in virtue of my being identical with it, not by perception. This means that there is no need for a criterion of identity since getting it right is already achieved through my unmediated first-person knowledge of myself.

The last part of this paper will consider what has been said about self-consciousness here, as well as in other views, and show that no account of self-knowledge is made possible through them. There has been a widely held misconception of self-knowledge which amounts to a conflation between this and self-consciousness. This is a problem because it obscures what is meant by the "self" and how we have knowledge of it.

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Introduction

The heart of this work draws a great deal of inspiration from one of the many insights found in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where he states that "Consciousness is aware of itself as *this actual individual* in the animal functions" (emphasis original).¹ What is important to take away here from Hegel is how deeply embedded the idea, or concept, of self-consciousness is within our idea of consciousness, as such. Even in our most mundane "animal functions", it is impossible for us not to be aware that it is *someone* who is performing these actions and, moreover, that this someone happens to be *ourselves*. I am aware that it is me, and no one but me, that is currently writing this sentence. Furthermore, it is me who is conscious of the computer screen and the way in which I press my fingers on the keys. There is no way in which I could be mistaken about who "I", or "me" in this case, refers to.

To recognize the concept of consciousness as understood through its two constituent facets, phenomenality and intentionality, already presupposes self-consciousness. When I am aware of an affection or action I am performing or something about myself or another object, I am aware that it is *I* who is conscious of these things. For example, when I go to the back of my house and start building a fire, I am fully aware of the fact that it is me and not some imposter currently putting everything together to get the fire going. I am, thus, immune to any error of misidentification when I think that the person building a fire is myself. Moreover, when I am asked what it is that I am doing and respond, "I am building a fire", I know without any reflection who the "I" is referring to. Even further is the fact that when I see the finished product (i.e., the fire burning in the firepit), I know that it was me who got the fire started because I am able to logically connect the facts of its origins to knowledge of my actions. Thus, when I make

¹ Hegel, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. §225.

the claim, “I built this fire”, I express my consciousness of the unity of my thoughts, as well as indicate that it is myself who is the agent of this unity of thoughts. In his Transcendental Deduction, this is precisely what Kant believes the role of ‘I’ in ‘I think’ is playing. Any claim or judgment of the kind involving first-person thought should be seen as one involving *a consciousness of the individual* predicated in the thought involving the ‘I’, or the self, associated with the thought. Therefore, we can, and should, accept the claim that self-consciousness is consciousness of consciousness.

We can see what this looks like through a helpful passage from Kant where he states thus, “Through this I, or he, or it (the thing), which thinks, nothing is represented beyond a transcendental subject of thoughts = x.”² Hence, we know ourselves as conscious, thinking creatures (i.e., that which wills, judges, and acts) by means of self-consciousness. One might wonder whether or not this knowledge of the thinking subject amounts to knowledge of the self. As a means for attaining self-knowledge, Kant immediately sees this as an inconvenient problem of circular reasoning since it is only through predications of thoughts that make us the subject that we come to understand anything about the self. This is true if we are searching for knowledge of the self by means of self-consciousness. We will make an important distinction between self-consciousness and self-knowledge in section 5 when we explore how knowledge of the self is possible.

From what has been said so far, there is good reason to understand the referent of “I” in I-statements as being the thinker of thoughts, or the bearer of knowledge, which we understand through our linguistic expressions. However, all this gives us is the beginning of an explanation for self-consciousness as a kind of awareness of one’s own awareness. It does not, to be sure,

² Kant, I. *Critique of Pure Reason*. A346/B404; p. 319.

provide any knowledge of the self. That is, an account of self-consciousness is not an account of self-knowledge. We find this distinction embedded within Fichte's *Science of Knowledge*, where we see knowledge as something shareable among all self-conscious I's. To posit a self, an 'I', is to express knowledge of a universal subject which is exactly what Fichte has in mind when he gives his explanation of the divisible self/not-self in the third tenet of the *Science of Knowledge*. I will give a brief explanation of Fichte's insight in the following section.

Throughout this work I will explore and discuss the role of 'I' in first-person thought while comparing and contrasting two opposing views on the matter as it is found in Béatrice Longuenesse and Sebastian Rödl. Although I am in agreement with various parts of both thinkers' theories as they are applied to the topic of this paper, it is important to see what significant differences there are in each view.

The main target of this paper will be (i) to show in what way(s) one does or does not refer when using 'I', and (ii) how views surrounding the topic of self-knowledge have conflated knowledge of the self with what is achieved and known in self-consciousness. We will see that we come to understand ourselves when we think about who we are in the same way we would any other object. Our first-person perspective takes on a kind of third-person observance of ourselves in order to know who we are. That is, through our private, first-person view we recognize that we are in the world of objects which we stand in a certain relation to as both a subject and object of knowledge to ourselves and others. This is in stark contrast to other views which believe we come to know ourselves through our own privileged access: by being the thing known. Getting these things right will help us to better understand the nature of self-consciousness and how we come to have knowledge of the self.

Section 1: Fichte and the Self

When considering the prolific figures associated with post-Kantian German Idealism, the ones that most commonly come to mind are Hegel, Schelling, and Fichte. While Kant's work is the propaedeutic for any transcendental philosophy from the modern era forward, the works of Hegel and Schelling have been viewed as a movement beyond Kant. Fichte, on the other hand, has largely been seen as more closely aligned with Kant than the other two figures. While this might be correct, there is an important feature in the *Science of Knowledge* pertaining to knowledge of the self which goes beyond Kant's own formulation of how self-knowledge is possible.

There are three key features found in what Fichte labels the *Fundamental Principles of the Entire Science of Knowledge*. The first is put quite simply, $I = I$; *I am I*.³ This may appear at first glance to just be saying that everything is identical to itself. However, this is not the case. To say of some object that "X is X" is to posit it under the condition of having whatever is predicated as X. The content of X is only conditionally true of X. In contrast, to say "I am I" is, according to Fichte, unconditionally valid in form and content. The "I" is able to be abstracted from everything outside itself since knowledge of what "I" is, is possible purely by being the self/"I". Thus, the term "I" here just means that there is a knower which is the only thing that is always, unconditionally identical to itself.

The second feature that is established is that $\sim A \neq A$ ⁴ (self \neq not-self). This states unproblematically, that there exists a reality outside of ourselves. We can easily include in this category of the not-self everything under the purview of the natural sciences. The reason for

³ Fichte, J.G. *The Science of Knowledge*. p. 96 (1797; 1991).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

including all mind-independent entities under the concept of a not-self is precisely because they are non-thinking things. Since we characterize such things as being mind-independent, that is, their existence does not depend on their being thought of, it follows that such things are absolutely objective. The *concept* of nature, however, is mind-dependent since it is precisely this concept which plays into our theories of reality and distinguishes the natural from the purely social order.

The distinction of self and not-self was intended by Fichte to show that the self was not to be considered a part of that which is purely natural. Although the human being finds itself as a product of, or object within, the natural world, the self is not reducible to its purely physical parts. This should in no way lead one into the temptation that the self can merely be explained away as an illusion produced within us in virtue of our natural hardware.

The third and most important principle introduced by Fichte is “*In the self I oppose a divisible not-self to the divisible self.*”⁵ The self describes a situation where it is possible to know something in virtue of the fact that in the self, there is a knowing subject. The not-self is the introduction of that which is opposite of or external to the self. Fichte introduces the notion of *divisibility* in order to account for how knowledge of the self and not-self is possible. Since this makes knowledge of everything falling under these two categories possible, in principle, this divisibility is what makes such knowledge available to, and shareable, among thinkers.

The divisible self is the kind of knowledge one has that is shareable or communicable among interlocutors. In the self, there is an unmediated first-person perspective where our thinking begins through a self-conscious awareness of our beliefs and actions. By unmediated, I mean here the kind of information that is directly known by an individual which cannot also be

⁵ Ibid., 110.

directly experienced by another person. This direct information is what we call the *representation* had by the individual. This is just a kind of information processing where we assess the information and ascertain what to believe. It is this process of assessing my representation which leads me to conclude that knowledge is derived from our representations because what we then come to believe is now shareable. We communicate our representations to one another, but we do not share them in the literal way that knowledge is shared.

Representations themselves are what provide cognitive access to the world while also possessing a sense of privacy. Knowledge, or beliefs, I come to have through my representations are by virtue of their very nature shareable and, thus, subject to certain conditions of correctness. When I tell you what I know, you thereby come to know it, as well. This is what Fichte means by the divisible self.

The divisible not-self is everything known independently of how we represent such things to be. It is what is knowable in an absolutely objective sense. My representation of the mass of an atom will not differ from yours since the objective mass depends on, likewise, objective calculations.

Although this sort of knowledge seems to be about that which stands in contradistinction to the self, that is, the opposite of self (*Entgegensetzen*), it is interesting to notice a feature of this third principle which is not made explicit, and possibly not recognized, by Fichte. Knowledge in the sense of what is represented and shared by everyone is not always about what is opposite (*Gegenteil*) to the self. The divisible self may contain information pertaining to oneself where the referent of a particular claim, such as “I have a headache”, delimits “I” as the object, and not merely subject, of knowledge. In cases where the utterer of the claim, “I have a headache”, who

then becomes the object of reference, the “I” still carries self-ascription while also describing itself through predication as the object of thought.

What is most interesting about Fichte’s account is that knowledge of any kind possesses the same form of intelligibility (i.e., subject to rational discourse and is topic-neutral). Although different kinds of knowledge have widely diverse content and means of coming to know them, all varieties of what we call knowledge are made possible in virtue of our shared cognitive capacity as rational animals. For our purposes, this makes self-knowledge something not confined to an internal self-inquiry which justifies itself as objective knowledge without the possibility of mediation from others. Since anything that counts as knowledgeable does not lie outside the intelligibility of other rational agents, knowledge of the self is as open to understanding as that of any other discourse. If I know something, whether it is of myself or something other, it is knowable by others in virtue of our shared capacity for rational thought and understanding. The only difference is the access we have to ourselves which has its own private dimension that others only get a glimpse of.

Self-knowledge, to be sure, is knowledge of who we believe ourselves to be and, moreover, who we are in light of our actions. Through this conception, the self is not something shackled to the interior of the mind, but rather an object of knowledge like any other. The self is on display like a public profile for others to make judgments which may conflict with what we believe about ourselves. It is in light of these judgments that our self-knowledge is altered and who we are, or who we believe we are, is presented anew. How this differs from thought involved in self-consciousness, which deals with self-reference, will be made clear in section 5.

Section 2: Who are We Talking About?

2.1: Introduction

When inquiring about self-consciousness, one of the key targets of inquiry is how, if in fact at all, does the first-person pronoun ‘I’ refer? Regarding the question of how one refers when using ‘I’, it is appropriate to say that it simply refers to the person uttering the word. This is what Longuenesse uses as her starting point for understanding the way(s) in which ‘I’ refers. She cites Christopher Peacocke’s Fundamental Reference Rule (FRR) for ‘I’ which states: “‘I’ refers, in any instance of its use, to the producer of the thought or the speaker of the sentence in which ‘I’ is in use.”⁶

Contrary to this, there are some philosophers who consider the notion that ‘I’ refers to be nonsensical. Among such thinkers whose views deserve attention are G.E.M. Anscombe, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Sebastian Rödl. When saying that ‘I’ refers to the person uttering the word, Rödl believes, for instance, this is just missing the point of the question about *how* it refers.

I will begin my discussion by elucidating Longuenesse’s two types of self-consciousness: consciousness of one’s own body and consciousness of the unity of one’s mental activity and the way they come together in most “I”-statements. These two types of self-consciousness are what Longuenesse believes grounds our use of ‘I.’

2.2: Longuenesse on “I” and Reference

In *I, Me, Mine: Back to Kant, and Back Again*, Longuenesse offers a worthwhile account of how our consciousness of ourselves as an embodied entity (i.e., spatially and temporally located) and consciousness of ourselves as engaged in mental activity as the two types of self-consciousness which support our use of the first-person pronoun ‘I.’ Conversely, in her *Spinoza*

⁶ Longuenesse, B. *Spinoza Lectures*. p. 7 (2019).

Lectures, Longuenesse explores the relationship between our stance on the world as (i) spatially and temporally located, (ii) biologically unique, and (iii) socially and culturally determined beings and the universally communicable standpoint we seek to share with other humans.⁷ Understanding this use of ‘I’ draws on Kant’s first section of the Paralogisms.⁸ The FRR which Longuenesse uses as her starting point for her own account of reference, identifies the one being referred to as the (transcendental) subject that Kant has in mind, as well.⁹

Her aim in the first lecture is to point out that not all of our uses of ‘I’ express an egoistic concern with one’s individual self. That is, the first-person standpoint in most of our ‘I’-statements is not an individual standpoint. Hence, not all of our uses of ‘I’ are delimited to the singular dimension. What this means is that in claims which express my judgement of something in or about the world, these claims express, as *this particular individual*, something which I endorse to be true. At the same time, my claim expresses the idea that I believe *everyone* should endorse this, as well. To make what has just been said clearer requires us to understand what it is to have knowledge, first, of ourselves as embodied entities and, secondly, knowledge of ourselves as engaged in mental activity. Let us examine these two in turn.

2.2.1: I Know That’s Me!

I may understand that it is me sitting at my desk right now typing this sentence without having to take the time to observe that it is really me sitting in this chair and pressing my fingers on the keys of the computer. But how do I know this?

⁷ Ibid., p. ix.

⁸ Kant, I. p. 319 (A346,347/B404,405).

⁹ See p. 2.

It seems we have a basic intuition about the state and position of our bodies which allows us to make claims, such as the one about me sitting in this chair, that would appear utterly nonsensical to refute. It does not require a third-person verification to know such things as “Who’s sitting in the chair?” or “Who’s slightly adjusting themselves in order to move away from the light coming through the window causing them to squint at the screen?” While one might agree with Kant that the recognition of space and time are intuited from our simply having an experience, we understand further that our location in space and its relation to other physical objects around us is largely due to proprioception and sense of balance.

As Longuenesse points out, in cases such as the one involving myself sitting in the chair or, in her case, standing at the lectern, we could never be correct in saying that there is someone sitting but mistaken in believing that it is me.¹⁰ Two important truths follow from this insight: (i) I could not know, *in this way*, of anyone else that they are sitting; (ii) and no one but myself can know, *in this way*, that I am sitting. This epistemological point of view is privileged to me alone. Likewise, I cannot know in the same way as you that it is you sitting/standing while reading this paper. This is the type of recognition that Hegel had in mind when he referred to knowing oneself in the animal functions – sitting, standing, walking, and so on. It is this sort of claim, e.g., “I am sitting”, that is *immune to error through misidentification* (IEM). Not only do I recognize that it is me being referenced in this claim, but I also acknowledge what I am doing. Of course, as Longuenesse recognizes, someone else may know that it is me sitting here typing by observing me doing so. However, that type of claim does not carry the same sort of IEM. That is, “...we can each be mistaken in identifying who is standing or who is sitting when we know it

¹⁰ Longuenesse, B. pp. 9-10 (2019).

in this way, by looking.”¹¹ The key point here is that one is always justified in knowing who is sitting, standing, etc. when the foundation of the judgment is based on proprioceptive information.

How this fits in with the discussion of reference using self-ascription is that our use of the first-person pronoun accurately refers to the person who is sitting because it picks out the thing in the world currently performing this action which is known from a privileged kind of available information to the individual making the claim: proprioception, sense of balance, and kinesthesia. These three ways of knowing oneself as an embodied entity are, as Longuenesse states, *immune to error through misidentification*. This entails the more philosophically substantive fact that we have an intuitive consciousness of ourselves as embodied entities.

An important feature to note about this sort of self-consciousness, which was hinted towards in the opening paragraph of this section, is that our proprioceptive experience is had while our attention is not directed at ourselves but at the world around us and the actions we are performing.¹² There are a great deal of useful examples that may be used here, but for the sake of explicating Longuenesse’s view I will take up her bicycling example.

While visiting Amsterdam, Longuenesse was impressed by the virtuosity of the many bicyclists she encountered: young girls jumping on the backs of their friend’s bicycle while it was in motion and sitting comfortably in a lop-side position. While the jumping on to the seat is taking place, the cyclist must maintain an awareness of the path they are pedaling along as well as pedestrians and other obstacles in the world around them. She notes that for this action to be

¹¹ Ibid., p. 9.

¹² Ibid., p. 11.

successful, the attention of the cyclist and the rider could not (or, at least, should not!) be directed at themselves. It must be, as she states,

...directed *at the seat you are going to jump on, at the bicycle path, or at the pedestrians that might be wandering onto it* to achieve this kind of feat. If you started watching yourself jumping or pedaling, you would lose your balance...So, the more laser-like the consciousness of what you are directing your attention *at* (not yourself, but the world around you), the more precise the proprioceptive awareness of the balance of your own body: precisely the kind of self-awareness needed for the action to be performed (11-2; emphasis original).

This consciousness of oneself as an embodied entity carries with it two types of information that grounds our use of ‘I’ in language and thought as a reference to oneself: on the one hand, there is the information of ourselves as an active body whose attention, qua active body, is always directed at the world. On the other hand, there is the information we have of ourselves as an object in the world among other objects. What is important is that our knowledge of the “I” in “I’m sitting” is not due to our attention being directed at the one/thing who/that is sitting (i.e., not from a third-person perspective of verification). Moreover, this type of self-consciousness is IEM when I say it is I who is sitting: the referent of “I”, is to the one thinking or saying, “I’m sitting” and not someone else.

Furthermore, Longuenesse considers this type of self-consciousness to not be entirely egoistic since it involves one’s attention to be directed *at the world*, rather than at oneself. This is a crucial point that seeks to support her central tenet in her *Spinoza Lectures*, that not all of our I-statements are egoistic. In the case of my recognition that it is me who is currently sitting in the chair, I have an intuitive awareness that it is not the lamp or my dog sitting here. Hence, my claim “I’m sitting in the chair” entails my recognition that I’m aware of other objects around me who are not what “I” refers to in my statement.

This is, in a broad sense, what it looks like to have a consciousness of oneself as an embodied entity. Furthermore, it lends to our understanding of how this sort of self-consciousness aids in grounding our use of ‘I.’

2.2.2: Everyone Agrees with Me, Right?

The second type of self-consciousness Longuenesse believes to be responsible for grounding our use of ‘I’ is a consciousness of oneself as being engaged in mental activity. This kind of self-consciousness does not involve a belief about one’s occupying a physical space. Rather, the only requirement is that one recognizes that it is herself currently thinking of something particular (e.g., “This is a good argument”).

Longuenesse uses an example of working out a logical proof in order to account for this. We should first note that our working out a logical proof or exclaiming our conclusion of a proof, does not require us to recognize ourselves as an embodied entity. This point should not lead anyone to the hasty conclusion that this type of self-consciousness is Cartesian which will become clear shortly.

She describes a scene where after working through the steps of an argument, she turns to her colleague and says: “The proof is valid.”¹³ Her colleague believes she is incorrect, so Longuenesse checks her steps and claims that “she thinks” the proof is valid. The proof is not something within her, but rather is something she has to observe outside of herself. Being able to go over the steps again is what grounds her claim and allows for the transition of “the proof is valid,” to “I think the proof is valid.”

What becomes interesting about this is that, just as in the sitting/standing cases, a person making a claim like this (i) does not have to examine what she is thinking to know what she

¹³ Ibid., p. 13.

thinks; and (ii) by checking the steps of the proof, it cannot be the case that she is mistaken about who it is that believes the proof is valid. Longuenesse supports this line of reasoning with a very Kantian flavor of explanation¹⁴ by specifying that when one makes claims such as the one in the example, it is not just one thought she is aware of and then another. Instead, she states:

I am aware of a specific *unity* of those thoughts, a unity *I take myself to be in a position to account for* insofar as I can account for the step by step sequence from premises to conclusion. This unity at the conscious level may be the manifestation of a thought that, at the sub-personal level, is distributed among discrete mechanisms and their material realization. It is nevertheless presented to the mind as unity, and thinking “I think” is referring to whichever entity, unified, or dis-unified, is the bearer of this consciousness of one’s logical unity of thoughts (14-5).

The further point that is central to Longuenesse is that these judgments are also normative, and hence, not purely egoistic. This is true since they involve content that the speaker would (likely) consider to be of the sort that others ought to believe, as well.

Certain claims, such as “It’s raining”, make intelligible to others (or simply entail, if no one else is around to hear the claim) that I - the utterer of the claim - have a belief about the world. Moreover, it refers to the speaker as the subject of the thought/judgment as well as object of thought for others. Following Longuenesse, these judgments are normative and fall under not only the singular (egoistic) dimension, but also the universal dimension. Pulling the curtains back or stepping outside will reinforce my claim and allow me to even more firmly assert, “I think it’s raining.” Notice how coming to this conclusion, like my conclusion about who is sitting in the previous section, does not involve turning my attention *inward*. Rather, my judgment was informed by directing my attention *outward*. This type of claim shows a combination of the two types of self-consciousness that have been discussed thus far.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

Section 3: Rödl's Transcendental Theory of Self-Reference

3.1: Introduction

In this section I will discuss an aspect of Rödl's theory of self-consciousness that deals with the nature of first-person thought and how it grounds self-reference in our thinking and judgments. There are two main takeaways from this discussion that will tie into the current project. First, we will see that the first-person pronoun is not a meaningfully referring term since it does not have an internal sense that is independent of its object. This is not to say that we misuse the term or have any confusion about who it represents when we use it to express our thoughts, but only that it is a merely formal referent for the experiencing and acting subject. By "formal", I mean an abstraction from the actual, persisting subject of experience. Secondly, that self-consciousness is grounded in first-person thought about what an agent believes and does. This first-person knowledge about beliefs and actions will have the consequence of delimiting knowledge of ourselves to an inner private space.

3.2: Self-Consciousness

In his illuminating text, *Self-Consciousness*, Rödl defines self-consciousness as "the nature of a subject that manifests itself in her thinking thoughts whose linguistic expression requires the use of the first-person pronoun, 'I.'"¹⁵ He goes on to say that thinking, referring, and predicating a concept of that which is thought and referred are all linked in a special way. That is, they bear a strict unity in self-consciousness, or first-person thought. To be sure, an inquiry into self-consciousness is an inquiry into a form of knowledge constituting a knowledge of oneself as oneself.

¹⁵ Rödl, S. *Self-Consciousness*. p. vii.

Self-consciousness is in an unproblematic way purely subjective since first-person thought is confined to the thinking subject. What does this mean for reference? According to Rödl, “The form of knowledge associated with first person reference will be, in the primary instance, a form of knowing acts of thinking.”¹⁶ First-person reference, on his account, is understood as a way of knowing an object of reference as oneself: identity.

Rödl believes that a theory of self-consciousness should be interpreted as a theory of belief, action, and knowledge. The reason for this is that the beliefs and actions of a thinking subject are known by her in a privileged, first-person way. The principle claim of the book is that this kind of first-person knowledge of one’s actions and beliefs is not receptive, but spontaneous. This is because one does not know about such things by being affected by them, but rather it is in virtue of the fact that they are responsible for their reality. To be sure, reason, freedom, and action are what define self-consciousness, our first-person thought, according to the Idealist model Rödl is endorsing.

Spontaneous knowledge, says Rödl, is identical with its object such that my knowing first personally that I am performing this or that action or that I believe such and so is the case is the same reality as my being engaged in an action or believing something to be the case.¹⁷ These may be found in conjunction as the same act of thought or as mutually exclusive acts. This type of knowledge is founded on thinking, where my knowing first personally what I believe or what I am doing is from *ascertaining what to do* or *what to believe*. What this does is allow us to provide explanatory reasons for why we do what it is we are doing or why we believe the things we do since we have a direct access to this kind of unmediated, first-person knowledge. This

¹⁶ Ibid., p. viii.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. ix.

definition differs slightly in form from where we find it in Anselm and Kant. For Anselm, an agent acts through spontaneous judgment or acts spontaneously when their actions can be traced back to their own rationally choreographed thought. For Kant, spontaneity is our capacity to produce representations within ourselves and is considered to be our faculty of understanding.¹⁸

Conversely, receptive knowledge is knowledge of something independent of ourselves. Our capacity for receptive knowledge is in virtue of our being affected by something not known by introspection alone. The information that allows for this kind of knowledge is mediated by the object and, thus, available to anyone. The way Kant characterizes receptive knowledge is as a kind of knowledge that comes from our ability to receive representations where the concepts involved are constitutive elements of our knowledge corresponding with empirical intuitions.¹⁹

Rödl says that the concept of knowledge is contained in first person thought which is found in “I know...”, and may also be captured in other I-statements/thoughts such as “I think...” or “I believe...” Since the concept of knowledge, or knowledge as such, depends on a subjective perspective in order for inquiry to take place, this assessment seems aright. By inquiry, I mean what takes place in our theory building processes. The concept of knowledge is empty if there is no one around to theorize. In this way there is a *sense dependence* on subjectivity and objectivity if we are to conceptualize anything at all. The “sense” in “sense dependence” should be thought of in Fregean terms as something thinkable or knowable.

This sets up the groundwork for Rödl’s approach to his theory of self-consciousness. Let us look at how it factors into what he believes to be the role of ‘I’ in first-person reference.

¹⁸ Anselm, *Three Philosophical Dialogues* (2002); Kant, I. *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781,1787; 2007). Interestingly, Anselm says that if an agent’s act is not spontaneous, then it is natural. Natural here means an act that is done and explained in virtue of the nature God gave the agent.

¹⁹ Kant, I. *Critique of Pure Reason*. (A50,51/B74,75).

3.3: The First-Person and the Schmeaningful Indexical

In a chapter on first-person thought, Rödl accepts what is asserted in the Fundamental Reference Rule where ‘I’ is a word or concept referring in any instance to the author of the thought or speaker of the utterance in which ‘I’ is being used. However, the issue surrounding the status of ‘I’ as a referring expression is not so cut and dry. The problem Rödl points out is that when understanding the role of ‘I’ in terms of reference it is not about the *way* the term refers, but *how*.²⁰ By saying that the use of ‘I’ refers to the speaker, the only thing satisfied is the meaning of ‘I.’ So while the FRR answers the question of who ‘I’ refers to, it fails to establish how it does so.

We are able to refer to the same object in different ways, such as “That mountain is huge!” and “Mt. Rainier is huge!” Both judgments grasp the same object through different referring expressions. To elucidate this Fregean point more deeply, Rödl writes that “Frege says “*a*” and “*b*” differ in sense if and only if “*Fa*” and “*Fb*” express distinct thoughts. So the way in which one refers with “*a*” is different from the way in which one refers with “*b*” if and only if thinking *Fa* is not the same as thinking *Fb*.”²¹ The act of thinking the one does not thereby constitute thinking the other insofar as there is room for a thought that distinguishes the two. To understand how ‘I’ refers, then, is to grasp the sense of the term.

The way one refers using ‘I’ in “I am *F*”, according to Rödl, is not the same as the way one refers with “the person uttering ‘I’” since “I am *F*” does not express the same thought as “The person uttering ‘I’ is *F*.” It is correct, then, to say that in the former, the sense of “I” does differ from that of the latter. Both sentences express a different thought or judgment about who

²⁰ Rödl, S. *Self-Consciousness*. p. 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

is *F*, and this means that the way each sentence refers to who is *F* expresses different thoughts.

3.3.1: Ways of Knowing the First Person

Rödl says reference to an object involves thinking a thought about it. This is correct since a thought must predicate something that is subject to certain truth conditions in order for the thought to have meaning at all. Referring, in itself, requires a thought to be present. Everything that exists falls under a concept and concepts are individuated by their senses. So when an object is referred to, it is given in the sense that it is brought under a concept(s). Therefore, the new methodological approach for ways of knowing the first-person starts out with the goal of developing an abstract conception of sense that includes various ways which sense can be understood.

To explicate the sense of reference by knowing in what way(s) things stand in relation to the object being referred to, Rödl explores an account inherited from Frege and Evans. This account seeks to understand the sense of a referring expression in terms of how its unique perspective affords one to know the relationship between the term and the object. This relationship is understood through the thought grasped by the thinker whose object of thought is known by its falling under certain concepts. We now need to unpack what it means for a reference to afford a perspective on an object that is grasped by first-person thought.

To understand this, we need to distinguish identification-free and identification-dependent judgments. A judgment of the former is one that can be applied to multiple objects at different times. For example, “That man is tall”, “This film is great”, and other judgments beginning with similar indexicals all fall within this category. While each occurrence picks out or describes a particular object, the same judgment could be used equally well to describe

another. “This film is great” could be used to describe either *The Phantom of Liberty* or *Lars and the Real Girl* or any other film that grounds the belief involved in this thought. That is, the referring expression “this film” does not have a fixed identity outside of particular uses, but the condition for any identification-free judgment to be meaningful is that my belief Fa must be grounded in my belief that $a=b$ (Fb). Conversely, an identity-dependent judgment such as, “*The Phantom of Liberty* is great”, has a unique referent which rests on an identity judgment.

Rödl wants to describe how the sense of an act of reference is a logical perspective on an object. This just means the sense of the referring expression is the way the object is apprehended to fall under concepts. He explains this by saying:

Suppose I make an identification-dependent judgment Fa , based on an identification-free judgment Fb . Then I bring a under the concept F only because I refer to it also as b . By contrast, as b , the object is given to me in such a way – referring to it with “ b ” makes it available to me in such a way – that I am able to determine it to be F . In order to ascertain whether the object comes under the concept, I need not refer to it in any other way. We can express this by saying that it is from the perspective of “ b ” that I place the object under the concept. (5).

This is supposed to aid in our distinction between mediated and unmediated judgments since it is these which have so much bearing on his idea surrounding the role and use of ‘I’ and, moreover, the sense of an act of first-person reference. It is through the distinction of these judgments, which will ultimately rests on the priority of sensation or thought, that he attempts to adduce where self-consciousness begins.

Returning to the above quote, I know an object to be F if my thinking it to be so involves an identification-free judgment which is afforded from my logical perspective on the object. What is important here for Rödl is that the logical perspective I am afforded is what determines the range of unmediated judgments such that my knowing some object to be F through an identification-free judgment is capable of being grasped or apprehended.

When I refer to an object through a definite description that is identification-free, that description refers only to that object and does not require any further justification since the description is unique to that object. The object is characterized by this description on the basis of my perspective when I judge that it satisfies the concept I am attributing it to. Since this description individuates the concept and is inferred from my particular perspective, it is unmediated. According to Rödl, “a judgment that refers descriptively is identification-free if and only if it follows from the object’s satisfying, or from its uniquely satisfying, the description.”²²

Demonstrative judgments are often unmediated since they begin with a first person thought about what is perceived. Descriptive forms of predication may include demonstrative judgments. Perceptual demonstratives are identification-free in virtue of the fact that when one perceives an object, they know the object they are referring to by the fact that it falls under a certain concept. A demonstrative reference is based on predication from a point of perception which is interconnected with perceptual demonstratives. Referring to an object is to do so demonstratively by perceiving the object. Perception *is the way* the reference occurs. I can perceive an object and make a judgment on the basis of my perception, such as “Falling Water is a perfect house.” This kind of statement, according to Rödl, does not constitute the sense of the statement, which is a mediated judgment, since it is based on an identification with Falling Water. Conversely, when I perceive an object and think to myself on the basis of my perception, “This house is beautiful”, I do not need to make a further judgment that identifies it in any other way. If I perceive something to be such-and-so, then I perceive *this* as such-and-so.

While the sense of an act of reference is the logical perspective it affords on an object as an individuating concept, Rödl acknowledges another kind of sense which is a relation to the

²² Ibid., p. 6.

object that is a source of many pieces of knowledge.²³ The first sense of an act of reference discussed above is one that is related to an individuating concept and has a descriptive sense. This new sense of reference is nondescriptive if the relationship with the object differs with regard to the form of knowledge made possible (e.g., not known through perception).

On Rödl's account, first-person reference is not demonstrative despite the fact that the FRR has this kind of implicit consequence. He illustrates this with the help of an analogy from Aristotle:

Aristotle explains that, although a doctor may heal herself, it is not in the nature of the art of healing that she who heals is identical with her who is being healed. If doctor and patient are the same person, then this is so only per accidens. Aristotle expresses this by saying that the art of healing is a principle of change in something other or in oneself *as other*... If the identity obtains in a given case, then it is not on account of the nature of perception; the perceiving subject and the subject perceived are identical only per accidens. (8).

A perception that is purely sensible depends on the object perceived as one that is not identical with the perceiver. This is analogous with Sartre's third ontological dimension of the body where a person is aware of themselves as other in virtue of being a body-for-others. To identify oneself with an object perceived is to make a separate judgment since the recognition in the first place is identity-free. Identifying the concept as "*this self*" or "*this thing*" is not internal to the sense, but external to the demonstrative thought where the object is identical to the subject. *The recognition of this is to make a further claim that identifies the referent with oneself.*

First-person reference is supposed to be a kind of unmediated knowledge. Thus, it follows on this account of perception that there is no way to refer to oneself with the first-person pronoun in the meaningful way espoused by those such as Longuenesse when the thinker of the thought is also its object since perception only constitutes knowledge of things as other.

²³ Ibid., p. 7.

Reference to something as other is receptive reference since it requires a mediated act of receptivity. Therefore, ‘I’ can only be said to *schmeaningfully* refer since whenever the subject of thought is the other, there is no mediation from an external object that takes place. To “schmeaningfully” refer only applies to first-person reference since the ‘I’ in I-statements only picks out its object accidentally.

3.4: Inside Baseball

How then does first-person reference take place? It must be through a knowledge-providing relationship between thinker and object, such that the nature of the relationship is one between the bearer of the thought and its object. Rödl says that “Unmediated first person thoughts articulate knowledge I possess, not by *perceiving*, but by *being* their object.”²⁴ Mediated knowledge or judgments require perceiving an object, hence the fact that our direct access is one that is mediated by external factors. Moreover, these judgments are accessible to anyone else who perceives the objects since they are something to be known as other. It should be clear that this is just not what takes place within first-person reference since the knowledge of “I” is had by being the object. The question of how to apprehend the sense of “I” now faces the further difficulty of trying to understand how being the object of thought allows one to refer to it.

Knowledge associated with first-person reference is what we might call a kind of *insider knowledge* or “knowledge from the inside.” I know that I am writing this sentence, not by perceiving myself do so, but because I am that thing. Someone may walk in and believe “That’s Aaron typing at his desk”, but their judgment is necessarily accompanied with a degree of potential error. Perhaps it is not really me, but an actor that looks strikingly similar. On the basis of perception, we can be wrong about the way things stand with an object. However, I am never

²⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

mistaken about who is typing right now because my knowledge is immune to such an error in virtue of being the person doing the typing. When I perform an act such as typing, I never have to wonder who the author of the act is since my knowledge is based on proprioception. There is no external relationship involved in my judging something to be the case based on knowledge from the inside. The object is characterized through the first-person unmediated thought which is an internal relation between subject and object. The relationship I have with an object is afforded by the way in which I know how things stand with it. It is precisely in this way that I refer to myself first-personally.

Rödl describes this relationship between first-person reference and predication from the position of unmediated first-person thought as being internally related in the same way as that of demonstrative reference and predication based on perception. He writes,

On the one hand, referring to an object first personally, I am in a position to know “from the inside” how things stand with it. It does not so happen that I know the object “from the inside”. Rather, this is how I refer to it. When I think on the basis of what I know “from the inside” that I am *F*, I need not refer to the object in any other way, for, as I refer to it, it is an object I know “from the inside”. On the other hand, if I know “from the inside” that someone is *F*, then there is no room for the question whether *I* am the one of whom I know this. (9-10).

Knowing from the inside seems to be a way of knowing such that the sense of my first-person reference is apprehended through the special relationship I have with the object: identity. Rödl believes that understanding the sense of ‘I’ is achieved by explicating first-person knowledge and the concepts that figure into such knowledge.

3.5: First-Person Knowledge and its Foundation

We are now faced with the problem of whether our conceptual thought should begin with thought or sensation? This question should already have been anticipated when the notion of perspectives was first introduced. If I know an object in virtue of being it, there must be a way of

knowing myself such that being the object fulfills the content of the concept involved (i.e., being myself). Being the object or subject of thought, I am afforded a special standpoint to know that I am one or both of these which should ground my first-person reference. For Rödl, understanding the way that being *F* places one in a position of knowing they are *F*, must be through some concept(s) involved in being *F*.

Such concepts that might fit this criterion are concepts of acts of sensibility and acts of thought. Examples of the former involve first-person physical states such as being cold, in pain, hungry, and so on. We know ourselves in these ways by being them and in this way, we know how things stand with them at any given time they arise.

In terms of understanding first-person reference, we must seek to know, say, how I know someone is in pain through my being in pain.²⁵ This cannot be the right way of beginning to understand the problem, according to Rödl, because these types of sensations are present in animals that are not self-conscious. If sensation is represented first personally in rational animals, then it must be because, “first, the power of thought includes a power of first person knowledge and, secondly, sensation is caught up in thought in such a way as to be brought within the purview of this power.”²⁶ He concludes that we must first consider thought, not sensation, in order to understand self-consciousness. One main reason for this conclusion is that although I know (or say) that I am hungry or in pain by being one or the other, where my saying this is an expression of my current state, we do not know how the physical state acquires this form of expression. That is, to comprehend our expressions we must know how our physical states reach the form of judgment or thought. It is not enough to say that the expression is available when the

²⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

thing experiencing the sensation has both the faculty of sensation and of thought. If this were the criterion, it would be too inclusive since it would leave open the possibility for a wide range of nonhuman animals to be self-conscious which is an undesirable consequence on Rödl's account.²⁷

To answer the question about how our physical states reach a form of expression characteristic of thought is to understand how thought is linked to first-person reference. Sensation involves the kind of subjectivity associated with the purely animalistic features of a sentient being which is a constituent feature of consciousness, but not self-consciousness. It might sound peculiar, or even dubious, to say that there is a subjectivity which stands apart from our physical or sensational representations since they are inherently self-intimated to us. This kind of subjectivity is what we ordinarily think of today as a kind of phenomenally subjective *feeling*. As mentioned above, this is the same sort of phenomenal experience had by creatures that do not share in the kind of self-consciousness had by other sentient beings with the power of thought. When Rödl considers subjectivity, he is operating from the viewpoint of Kant and post-Kantian figures, especially Hegel, where the synthesis of their ideas about the subject of thought establishes the understanding of subjectivity within the German Idealist tradition.

This line of thinking begins with something like this: Our awareness is dependent upon our self-consciousness since we cannot say of ourselves that we are aware of something without being self-aware that we are having this thought or experience. Likewise, we cannot recognize ourselves as being self-conscious without there being something responsible for our first-person

²⁷ That self-consciousness is limited to humans (and potentially a select few other nonhuman animals) is not a new strand of thought. We can find this same line of reasoning in a number of influential thinkers through the history of philosophy. In the current context, it seems that Rödl is most influenced here by Gareth Evans and John McDowell.

thoughts of them. It follows that the relation between our being aware of such-and-so and our being aware that we are aware of such-and-so (i.e., self-consciousness) is characterized by reference-dependence. That is, there is an internal self-referential structure contained in first-person thought and, moreover, thinking itself. Therefore, Rödl is right to say that the kind of subjectivity involved in self-consciousness is constituted by this special “relation a subject bears to herself by virtue of being a subject of thought.”²⁸ Self-consciousness, as understood here, has to do with the way a subject represents or thinks herself in her act of thinking.

What should be drawn from this is that first-person knowledge cannot be from observation of one’s actions or beliefs since this would involve a second order thinking of oneself as other in the way that is done with demonstrative reference. In light of our understanding of subjectivity, this would break apart the self from its acts of intellect and will thereby ceasing to be the kind of first-person knowledge we are after when trying to understand what grounds the “I”-reference in first-person thought or judgment.

The answer to the problem is that it is in the moment of reasoning about what to do or what we believe that we are able to assuredly say we are in possession of first-person knowledge. It is in this way that a subject directly thinks herself as that which is represented in a single act of thought. This leaves no room for recourse into a further judgment about who is represented by the thought even when the first-person pronoun is present. Saying that first-person reference is demonstrative because it picks out, or points, to the thinker or speaker of the thought is to overlook the fact that recognizing this requires a separate judgment from the original I-thought. The special concept that self-reference is subsumed by (i.e., “I”, “This self”, “This person”, and so on) “can only be explained in terms of a form of reference, which, formally, is to a self-

²⁸ Rödl, S. *Self-Consciousness*. p.12.

conscious subject and is sustained by a different sort of knowledge from that which underwrites reference to a nonrational substance.”²⁹ From this we can see that the sense of “I” is given through the perspective of first-person thought. Hence, there is no demonstrative reference because there is nothing in need of being pointed towards as the referent in order to account for the ‘I.’ We may only say that ‘I’ is a merely schmeaningfully referring term.

Section 4: The Difference and the Problem

4.1: Introduction

The previous two sections have allowed us to see both ends of the spectrum when it comes to self-reference and the kind of knowledge we possess through self-consciousness (i.e., first-person knowledge of our beliefs and actions). To be sure, both accounts set out to describe the kind of content involved in our self-conscious states that allows us to determine the way(s) one is (self)conscious of their representations, which amounts to being aware that one is aware of something. These states necessarily possess a self-referential character for the author of various first-person thoughts which is sustained by the first-person pronoun. In terms of reference, for a term or expression to refer is for it to pick out an object since all concepts are individuated, or differentiated, by what they pick out.

For Longuenesse, in any instance where one recognizes themselves as the bearer of a thought or judgment, the ‘I’ involved in such first-person thought always refers to the author of the thought. The indexical, ‘I’, is part of the content of the I-statement which, according to Longuenesse, incidentally or implicitly captures in a demonstrative way the author of the statement in its particular context. There is an identity-dependence between ‘I’ and the speaker which is determined by recognizing oneself as (i) being engaged in mental activity, (ii) an

²⁹ Ibid., p. 15.

embodied entity, (iii) or both. The first-person pronoun, then, is a meaningfully referring term since it picks out a unique object through a kind of private ostension by the speaker or thinker of a given judgment. Not only do we understand the referential status of ‘I’, but we also gain a picture on Longuenesse’s account about what kind of knowledge of ourselves we gain from the recognition of ourselves as self-conscious creatures. It is important to see that Longuenesse believes I-statements are identification-dependent despite their identification-free nature since within every context of its use there is an identification to be determined between the ‘I’ and its user.

On Rödl’s account, there is no dependency on the context of a given thought or utterance for the referent of ‘I’ to be determined in an implicitly demonstrative way. Knowing who ‘I’ refers to is not by fitting a description of who it is; it is known by being the ‘I’ involved. The bearer of the thought is identical with the thought itself where thinking of the referent of “I” would amount to a separate judgment. To say that ‘I’ demonstratively picks out its user is to think a separate thought about who the term is referring to when the knowledge of “who” is already known in virtue of thinking the thought in the first place. For something to demonstratively refer is to indicate separateness from its object and for Rödl this means that the ‘I’ and its user would be temporally disjointed. The self-reference is contained within the content of the self-conscious state leaving no ‘I’ to be referenced since the bearer of the thought is identical with its object. Given that I-statements fall within the range of unmediated first-person thoughts, thinking about the ‘I’ associated with any expression or thought is to make a separate judgment. Hence our conclusion in section 3.3 that ‘I’ only *schmeaningfully* refers since we know through our ordinary use of the term the way it refers to its author.

It may seem that the problem is that one believes 'I' is a referring expression while the other does not. This is true, but it does not get at the root of the problem. Both philosophers offer an account of a transcendental self who remains the same object over time through a logical unity of mental activity which is always aware of itself as this X. And it is true that both are largely in agreement about the way 'I' refers, but the primary contention is about how.

In this section, I will be addressing Longuenesse's reading of Kant's explanation of the concept 'I' in 'I think.' While much of the discussion espouses a parallel to her own theory of IEM, she also interprets Kant's analysis as an explanation of how 'I' refers to the thinker of the thought associated with a given predicate. It is through this analysis that she derives her grounding of the use of 'I' in the unity of apperception which includes, in most cases, an appeal to thought derived from the embodied or empirical self whose first-person knowledge is informed by the senses. This appeal to the kind of empirical self Longuenesse has in mind stands in contrast to Rödl's foundational account of pure thinking alone being the ground of all first-person knowledge. We will see that this last point will not help Longuenesse when it comes to the referential status of 'I', but it will help with our further discussion of self-knowledge.

Next, I will show that the main point of divergence on the referential role of 'I' between Longuenesse and Rödl is one that stems from the kind of identity 'I' has in relation to its user and the judgment involved. The difference will hang on whether or not 'I' is identity-dependent or identity-free. Bringing out the problem in these terms will allow us to understand the merely formal role of 'I' in self-reference which leads to the seemingly extreme conclusion that "I" is not a referring term. This conclusion immediately stands in contrast with Longuenesse's account which attempts to reify the 'I' in order to give it a more substantial referential capacity.

4.2: Thinking ‘I’ in ‘I Think’

In Longuenesse’s discussion of Kant’s idea of consciousness of oneself as subject, there are two things from her reading which she relies upon for her account of reference that she believes to be mutually conditioning. These two things are (i) having available the concept ‘I’ and (ii) processing and connecting one’s representations in order to form thoughts and reasons for certain judgments. The synthesizing, or binding for thinking, is a necessary condition for having available the use of the concept ‘I’ in ‘I think’, while on the other hand, having available the use of this concept is a necessary condition for the synthesizing/binding required for thinking.³⁰

Longuenesse derives these two conditions from three passages in Kant’s first *Critique*. The first condition, the synthesis/binding for thinking, is the condition which provides access to ‘I’ she calls the “I → SY principle” which from Kant states thus:

Only because I can comprehend the manifold [of my representations] in one consciousness [SY] do I call them all together *my* representations [I]; for otherwise I would have just as multicolored and diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious. (B134)
 I am...*conscious of the identical self* [emphasis original] with respect to the manifold of representations given to me in an intuition, because I call all of them *my* representations, which make *one*. But this is as much as to say that I am *a priori* conscious of an original synthesis of these representations, which is called the original synthesis of these representations, which is called the original synthetic unity of apperception, under which all representations stand but under which they must also be brought by a synthesis. (B135) (29)

The second principle, access to ‘I’ being a necessary condition for the activity of synthesis, is what Longuenesse calls the “SY → I principle, derives from Kant’s statement that:

The synthetic proposition that every different **empirical consciousness** [Kant’s emphasis] must be combined into a single self-consciousness is the absolutely first and synthetic principle of our thinking in general. But it should not go unnoticed that the mere representation **I** in relation to all others (the collective unity of which it makes possible) is the transcendental consciousness. Now it does not matter here whether this representation

³⁰ Longuenesse, *B. I, Me, Mine*. p. 29.

is clear (empirical consciousness) or obscure, even whether it be actual; but the possibility of the logical form of all cognition necessarily rests on the relationship to this apperception as a faculty. (A117n) (29)

The passages from Kant utilized by Longuenesse in order to capture these two principles, like most of Kant's work, are notoriously dense and require a brief bit of unpacking.

The first principle, $I \rightarrow SY$, brings out the idea that there would be no representation of 'I' unless the activity of synthesizing/binding representations that leads to such representations being recognizable under certain concepts were going on in our minds. Stated differently, the representation of oneself under the concept 'I' in the form of a judgment is conditioned by such an activity taking place in the mind. The second principle, $SY \rightarrow I$, states that representing oneself via the concept 'I', thereby expressing the logical form of cognition, is a condition for such an activity to be going on in one's mind, at all. Notice the last quote from Kant states that the empirical self must be a component of our self-consciousness in order understand ourselves as an acting and experiencing entity.

It is from the first principle ($I \rightarrow SY$) that a speaker is able to use 'I' as a *mode of presentation* which makes herself the referent of 'I' only in virtue of her being engaged in the activity of binding for thinking. Conversely, it is from the second principle ($SY \rightarrow I$) that there is binding for thinking insofar as the agent recognizes herself as the thinker or ascribes the present thoughts to herself (i.e., as the referent of 'I' in 'I think'). The (plausible) conclusion drawn from Longuenesse is that both have a common ground which makes it impossible for one to be present without the other. This common ground is Kant's transcendental unity of apperception: An individual agent and the world around her come together through the unity of experience. This unity hangs together by means of the transcendental and empirical self.

All of this being said, it is unclear how this helps to do more than justify the way ‘I’ refers while still leaving it inconclusive how it is supposed to achieve a referential status in the way envisaged by Longuenesse. In John McDowell’s discussion of this topic in Kant, he writes that, “In the Paralogisms of Pure Reason, [Kant] claims that if we credit this “I” with a persisting referent, the relevant idea of identity through time is only formal. It has nothing to do with the substantial identity of a subject who persists as a real presence in the world she perceives.”³¹ For something to have a substantial identity, or presence in the world, is to be picked out among other objects. A few pages later, McDowell writes, “If Kant’s connection between self-awareness and awareness of the world is to leave it open to us to regain the idea that the subjects of our ordinary experience are our ordinary selves, then the merely formal persistence of the I, in the “I think” that can “accompany all my representations”, had better be only an abstraction from the ordinary substantial persistence of the living subject of experience.”³² This insight from McDowell helps bring out the point made in the introduction of this section that Longuenesse’s attempt to exploit Kant’s analysis of the “I” in “I think” amounts to a reification of ‘I.’ It does so by attempting to justify how it refers to its author in every context of its use by demonstratively picking out the thinking and acting subject.

What has just been pointed out opens up the larger distinction to be made between Longuenesse and Rödl’s account which is how each conceives of the kind of identity involved in I-statements. Understanding what kind of identity-judgment I-statements fall under will be the decisive factor for understanding it is as a referring expression.

³¹ McDowell, J. *Mind and World*. p. 99 (1994).

³² *Ibid.*, p. 103.

4.3: Identity

Longuenesse discusses identity in response to Wittgenstein's claim that when it comes to thoughts or judgments involving self-ascription, whether they involve purely mental or physical predicates, there is no criterion needed to discern who or what the "I" is referring to. Following Gareth Evans, she writes that despite there being no criterion of identification, we should not assume there to be no identification at all. She states that not all identifications depend on knowledge of an identity proposition, or an application of some criteria for identity. Rather, there is a form of identification which is known by answering the question of 'Who or what entity the predicate is true of?'³³

In our first-person thoughts, we should understand ourselves as IEM. In such cases, Longuenesse believes that there is information contained in the proposition which provides the knowledge needed to answer the question of who the predicate is true of since knowing who is *F* in 'I am *F*' is in virtue of knowing *F* to be true of me. She goes on to say, following Evans, that mental predicates are not epistemically privileged over bodily predicates since both are known 'from the inside.' What is important in this discussion is that this 'knowledge from the inside' about who a given predicate is true of in I-thoughts is supposed to locate the subject within the objective order. While there is no reason in our discussion to deny that the thinker of a given judgment should be said to stand outside of the objective order, Longuenesse's recourse to identification makes any I-statement identity-dependent. Hence, her belief that 'I' is implicitly demonstrative. However, as we saw in our discussion of Rödl in section 3, demonstrative judgments are based on perception. Therefore, for "I" to be identification-dependent requires a separate judgment about who the predicate is true of.

³³ Longuenesse, *B. I, Me, Mine*. p. 5 (2017).

From this point in the discussion, Longuenesse brings in a feature of Sartre's discussion of the body that identifies oneself as "body-for-others-for-me." Let us take a moment to unpack Sartre's discussion of the body and how Longuenesse fits it into her own work.

4.3.1: The 3 Bodies of Sartre

In Sartre's seminal text, *Being and Nothingness*, he distinguishes two types of consciousness, *unreflective*, on the one hand; and *reflective*, on the other. For our purposes, the important one to understand is the former. The unreflective consciousness is also what is called *non-thetic consciousness* and is what Sartre considers to be absent of knowledge apart from an awareness that one is conscious. The importance of discussing this aspect of Sartre should be clear since it is synonymous with the definition of self-consciousness offered here. One other important reason for discussing this feature of Sartre is to see how non-thetic consciousness can become the object of thetic consciousness which will apply, both, to self-reference as well as self-knowledge by turning our consciousness inward, not on our mental states, but on our physical/empirical self. In relation to self-reference, it is here that Sartre believes there is no place for 'I.'

There is another term that will be of some importance in this discussion used by Sartre in his explication of the body: *ekstasis*. The term, as used by Sartre, keeps its original Greek form of "standing out" and is used to show how the for-itself stands apart from the Self. There are three uses of this term – temporality, reflection, and being-for-others – but the only ones of significance here will be with the latter two.

Sartre's taxonomy of the body begins with the body-for-itself which should come as no surprise since any sort of metaphysical inquiry ought to begin with what is essential to the entity

under investigation. The body, as opposed to consciousness³⁴, is subject to natural laws in terms of movement, deterioration, sickness, and so on. The body finds itself within nature and with a definite location in the same sense as other physical bodies. Consciousness, on the other hand, is not spatially located and, according to Sartre, "...surveys without perspective and contemplates without a point of view."³⁵ A conscious individual is aware of the various physical states of the body, both externally and, in some relevant respects, internally. We should immediately note that Sartre does not believe we should consider the relation of the body to consciousness from a 3rd person perspective. We are not conscious of our bodies in the way that an anatomist is when she wants to know certain features of the body. To be sure, according to Sartre, we should understand the body *as conscious body*. The body is a relation to the world as it finds itself in the world. It is in virtue of our non-thetic consciousness qua bodies that the things in the world acquire their form and structure (i.e., the way we organize the world of objects around us).

Longuenesse offers some insights on this topic and says that non-thetic consciousness of the body is the correlate of the thetic consciousness of objects.³⁶ This lines up with what was said in the last sentence of the previous paragraph since our thetic consciousness is our consciousness of the world that we are conscious of apart from our own awareness. Hence, the body finds itself among such objects and positions itself in relation to such objects. Therefore, consciousness of body is only due to there being other bodies which it stands in relation.

A body exists as a point of reference in which all other bodies appear while the particular body of an individual does not appear as one of those objects according to the way Sartre

³⁴ This point is contentious, but I will leave out a discussion of the mind's place in reality here and operate from the assumptions of Sartre.

³⁵ Sartre, J. P. *Being and Nothingness*. (1943; 1984). p. 405.

³⁶ Longuenesse, B. I, *Me, Mine*. p. 55.

describes the body-for-itself. Longuenesse acknowledges this point through an example Sartre gives of the eye. He states that the eye gives a visual perspective of objects in the world that it finds itself among, yet it does not observe itself as one of those objects despite recognizing itself as an object among others.³⁷ This is analogous to Rödl's conclusion from the analogy of Aristotle's doctor not perceiving herself as an object in the way she would another patient. The eye serves merely as a reference point, but never the object of reference when considered as being-for-itself because as being-for-itself it has no local point of perspective.³⁸

Next, the second type of body Sartre discusses is the body-for-others. This version of the body represents the third *ekstasis*, being-for-others. This is where the for-itself recognizes that it has a self that is knowable by other minds yet is unable to be fully known or grasped by itself. To be a body-for-others is for one to be aware of their body as an instrument for others in the world. Take for example medical students who watch their instructor operate on a patient. The students (and instructor) recognize the patient's body as an object of study or as an intelligible property of the world which stands in relation to them. This body-for-others is similar to Fichte's not-self discussed in section 2.

Lastly, Sartre develops and discusses what he calls the third ontological dimension of the body. It is here that we find another kind of *ekstasis* in the form of reflection, where the for-itself attempts to draw a perspective on itself as an intelligible object. As body-for-itself, I come to be informed by my body-for-others, or what we might call the passive self. Longuenesse sees this as a consequence of one's own knowledge of others and, thus, a difference one finds in the

³⁷ Ibid., 55; Sartre, J. P. *Being and Nothingness*. pp. 418-419.

³⁸ Although in the case of the eye there is an obvious relation between knowing or recognizing objects in virtue of spatial location, but this should be ignored for the purpose of the point being made by Sartre.

experience of their own body.³⁹ After explaining how knowledge of one's body is given to them by concepts through means/revelations of language provided by the Other, Sartre offers an example of physical pain (stomach pain) in order to show how as a for-itself we come to know our body-for-others. He writes:

The Illness which I suffer I can aim at in its In-itself; that is, precisely in its being-for-others. At this moment I *know* it; that is, I aim at it in its dimension of being which escapes me, at the face which it turns toward Others, and my aim is impregnated with the wisdom which language has brought to me – *i.e.*, I utilize instrumental concepts which come to me from the Other, and which I should in no case have been able to form by myself or think of directing upon *my* body. It is by means of the Other's concepts that I *know* my body. But it follows that even in reflection I assume the Other's point of view of my body; I try to apprehend it as if I were the Other in relation to it. It is evident that the categories which I then apply to the Illness constitute it *emptily*; that is, in [the second] dimension which escapes me. Why speak then of *intuition*? It is because despite all, the *body which* is suffered serves as a nucleus, as matter for the alienating means which surpass it. The body is this *Illness* which escapes me toward new characteristics which I establish as limits and empty schemata of organization. It is thus...that my *Illness*, suffered as psychic, will appear to me reflectively as sickness *in my stomach*. (465; emphasis original).

The illness suffered by the stomach is reflected upon and seen as illness from the psychic/mental perspective. The mind engages with the body in order to understand itself as an object in the world. Thus, the body-for-itself and the body-for-others are both experienced simultaneously. This is striking because it should clearly be seen as an analog to the conclusions about Kant's analysis of 'I' in 'I think' in the section 4.2. There are some differences, but both serve as a mode of access to knowledge of oneself as subject and in other cases as knowledge of oneself as object or a "psychic quasi-object" in Sartre's terms. In both cases, Longuenesse believes our use of 'I' is grounded in some form whether it be through Kant's unity of apperception or Sartre's phenomenological account of body. Sartre does not recognize this point and is led to the conclusion that there is no place for the 'I' in self-reference.

³⁹ Longuenesse, B. *I, Me, Mine*. p. 57.

This attempt to utilize Sartre for a means of understanding the ‘I’ as something reified in the form of the subject of experience is a mischaracterization of the point Sartre is making about the third form of the body. Longuenesse sees this as a reflection on ourselves as a perceivable object in the world in much the same way as other bodies are presented to us. However, the kind of reflection involved in this description Sartre offers is one that involves a kind of privation concerning one’s bodily sensations.

4.3.2: Where in the World is I?

We might look at this and think “What’s the big deal?” The problem is that by needing to understand who the “I” is identical to in a given expression is to refer to the object of my awareness as *this I* which amounts to a separate judgment. Moreover, it makes it seem as if the ‘I’ is such that it may be picked out as something we perceive. Although I may not be able to mistake who this “I” is in my first-person thought, if we say that I-statements are identity-dependent, then it makes it appear that I am thinking of an independent object as I would when making a perceptual judgment. Identity-dependent judgments are in need of some degree of justification in order to connect our thoughts with the object they are about. Contra to this, my knowledge of the “I” in my first-person thought stands in no need of justification since I know it in virtue of being it. When it comes to our first-person thoughts, there is an inner connectedness between self-consciousness and belief. When I say, “I am *F*”, I know who is *F* in virtue of being *F*. This leaves no need for recourse into a form of identification that answers the question of who the “I” is identifying as *F* in the first place. My belief about who is *F* falls under my unmediated first-person thought and, hence, is a kind of self-knowledge of which I am immediately aware. My ascertaining or reasoning that ‘I am *F*’ is the same as my being *F*. This excludes I-thoughts from the category of identity-dependent claims.

Let us wrap up this point by saying that when we feel a need to get the object right in our act of reference or predication, then this constitutes as what we said earlier was receptive reference. That is, a form of reference that is mediated by an act of receptivity which largely depends upon a perceptual standpoint or relation with the object. This kind of reference leaves room for error, where first-person knowledge of oneself as the thinker or speaker of a thought is not susceptible to such an erroneous mistake since its relationship is constituted by an identity with the object (e.g., *I, this self*, and so on).

The line of reasoning put forth here follows Rödl and G.E.M. Anscombe, where a condition of reference involves the notion of getting it right. Rödl says of this parameter that,

This is not an arbitrary restriction of the concept of reference. Reference is commonly represented as an act that contrasts with and complements an act of predication: in order to predicate a concept of an object, it is necessary, in an act distinct from the predication, to single out from a manifold of objects the one that must satisfy the concept if the thought is to be true. But first person thought, because it contains no act of receptive reference, *does not contain an act of reference distinct from the predication* (125; emphasis my own).

When it comes to the business of reference, there is a relation between myself and the object referenced such that I pick it out among the manifold of other objects. Reference traffics in specifications where the specifying is done through an act of perception whereby the perceiver is capable of being temporally disjointed from the object. This leaves it open to which object I know and the justification I have for knowing it. In the case of self-reference, the relation between thinker and object is one of identity, and hence, my way of knowing is settled in this way. As a self-conscious subject, I never cease to be me in the same way that I may cease to be in contact with my computer or cat. The kind of predication involved in self-referential claims leaves no room for a separate act of specification. Therefore, the 'I' does not refer.

Section 5: How Do We Know Ourselves?

5.1: Introduction

The problem of first-person thought and its relation to self-reference was solved by sketching a feature of self-consciousness whereby the object represented by the 'I' is known in virtue of being identical to the 'I.' This means that despite our ordinary way of understanding the way 'I' refers, we cannot say that it meaningfully picks out a substantially present entity. The reason is that such a reference to an object would require a different relation between thinker and object. This kind of relation would be constituted by one of perception, which would then have the consequence of breaking apart the thinker from the 'I.' However, this relationship can never come apart since it would violate what it means to be self-conscious. There is never a moment where my self-consciousness is somehow detached from me, since this would appear to be quite contradictory. By being self-conscious, we always have available a privileged kind of knowledge of ourselves whose immediate access is cut off from others. But should this be what constitutes our self-knowledge? That is, does our unmediated first-person thought inform us of who we are?

Many people have long believed that our being self-conscious gives us infallible access to who we are. But does knowing ourselves as this self-conscious 'I' actually tell us who this 'I' is? On the contrary, it is quite erroneous to believe that it does. To say that self-consciousness provides infallible access to who we are is to conflate what it means to be self-conscious with having self-knowledge. Being self-conscious, or having self-consciousness, puts one in a position to know that they are interacting with the world from a unique first-person perspective such that they recognize themselves as this 'I' involved in all their thinking. Self-knowledge, on the other hand, involves knowing oneself in the way we might know another object. There is nothing which counts as knowledge that is also cut off from others in principle.

We should notice that there is a second kind of immunity to error that has entered the picture once we, fallaciously, take up the belief that our being self-consciously aware of ourselves provides us with a God's eye view. To think that we are immune to error about who we are by being self-conscious is to conflate self-consciousness and self-knowledge. As mentioned above, self-consciousness provides us with first-person knowledge of the 'I' accompanied by all our thoughts, but it does not entail from this that we thereby have knowledge of who we are.

This final section will be comprised of three parts. First, I will offer a way of distinguishing between self-consciousness and self-knowledge. This distinction will be critical for understanding how we come to know the self without conflating self-consciousness with self-knowledge. The conflation occurs in most accounts of self-knowledge where the theory offers little more than a way of thinking about our self-authority in terms of access to our thoughts and decision-making processes. Accounts of self-consciousness, like we see with Rödl, include the kind of self-authority just described, but misleadingly label it self-knowledge. I will discuss the difference between self-consciousness and what I take self-knowledge to be, which will hang on recognizing the epistemological asymmetry between first and third-person knowledge.

Next, we will revisit Fichte to see how part of his account of knowledge in the *Wissenschaftslehre* can help us gain footing on understanding what is critical to knowledge acquisition and what counts as knowledge. This will help show that knowledge of myself is not something so deeply private which can only be accurately known by me. If it were the case that this was the way we thought about self-knowledge and how it is known, then there would always be a high degree of doubt when it came to others knowing who we are by our attempts to

communicate this information to them. It would be as if everyone was a perfect spy since knowing who we are would not be something that anyone else could tell us about.

Building up from this, I will conclude that self-knowledge is obtained in much the same way as knowledge of other objects. What is characteristic about self-knowledge, and sets such knowledge apart from that of others, is that it is this kind of knowledge that helps shape the way we live and interact with the world around us. The question of who we are is informed, not only by reflecting on ourselves, but by our interpersonal relationships and the ways in which we represent ourselves to the world. It is not as if who we are is always occupying space in the backwoods of our minds where the only access is solely through our first-person thought.

5.2: Who is Present and What is Known

What we found in our discussion of self-reference was that it is always subsumed by self-consciousness. To be sure, self-consciousness is being aware that one is aware of something. When we achieve self-consciousness, we immediately know who is thinking in virtue of being the object. When I say or think, “I am hungry”, I know who is hungry in virtue of being it. I am thereby immune to error from misidentification. I do not confuse myself with someone else when I think I am hungry. Moreover, I cannot know of someone else that they are hungry because I am. The problem that arises now is whether this immediate access, or self-intimation, with my thoughts makes me infallible about knowledge of myself. That is, does my self-consciousness grant me immunity to error about who I am?

It may be enticing to answer this question in the affirmative, because how could a person get something wrong about themselves when the content of the knowledge claim involves information pertaining only to them? My self-consciousness involves a kind of awareness that is metaphysically cut off from others. Therefore, it seems that no one is more authoritative than me

when it comes to knowledge of myself. The problem with this conclusion is that it confuses the privacy of self-awareness with knowledge. Yes, it is true to say that my awareness of myself is a kind of knowledge. Namely, knowledge that I am aware of my thought, belief, or action at any given time. However, this is not the kind of knowledge we have when we talk about having self-knowledge. When we undertake to know who we are, such information is not attained simply by being the object of inquiry. That is, it is not known from the inside in the way that knowing who is thinking this thought or typing this sentence is known. This is what leads Kant to be so pessimistic about self-knowledge. In the first *Critique* he writes,

This **representation** [self-consciousness] is an act of **thought**, not of **intuition**. Now, in order to **know** ourselves, we require, besides the act of thought that brings the manifold of every possible intuition to the unity of apperception, also a determinate kind of intuition, whereby this manifold is given; and thus, although my own existence is not appearance (much less a mere illusion), the determination of my existence can only take place in conformity with the form of inner sense and according to that special manner in which the manifold which I combine is given in inner intuition. This shows that I have no **knowledge** of myself **as I am** but only as **I appear** to myself. The consciousness of oneself is therefore very far from being a knowledge of oneself, in spite of all the categories which combine the thought of an **object in general**, by means of the combination of the manifold in one apperception (B157-159/A120-121; emphasis original).

The takeaway from Kant's passage is that our inner sense is a limiting condition for knowing ourselves in the way we know other objects. Knowing ourselves in self-consciousness is not the same as the kind of knowledge we are after when we inquire into who we are. Self-consciousness, or unmediated first-person knowledge, has very limited explanatory power regarding our self-portrait.

Now we must answer what we mean by self-knowledge and what exactly grounds it as a kind of knowledge at all. As I mentioned in the introduction of the section, self-knowledge is attained in the same way we come to know other objects. This means that it is not something known purely through introspection or subjective thought which is where an epistemological

asymmetry arises between knowing something through self-consciousness and knowing ourselves.

What we know through self-consciousness is that we are aware of ourselves as engaged in mental activity and that we are an embodied entity. How we come to have this knowledge is by being the particular thinking thing and by being this body. Having this kind of first-person perspective also provides us with immediate access to our beliefs, as well as our justification for believing. No one else can know my thinking or what it is like to be in my body the way that I do. I can let others know what I believe, and others can observe certain states of my body such as when I am walking, but they do not gain this knowledge the same way I do.

Although self-consciousness may be grounded in first-person thought about thought, self-knowledge cannot be determined by this inner perception alone. Views which regard self-knowledge as something known through inner perception, such as Rödl's⁴⁰, leads to an account of ourselves made up solely of isolated judgments. These views never consider the self as an object that is to be known much like any other which is how it is distinguished from the self-conscious subject. If we confine judgments about who we are solely to ourselves, then we are excluding a condition of what it is to know something: fallibility. This is where much of the conflation occurs between self-consciousness and self-knowledge.

One may object here and say that we could think of ourselves as an object and delimit knowledge of ourselves to our own judgments. Furthermore, our objector could say that since the object in question is herself, she sets the criterion of truth due to her authority. This criterion, incidentally, excludes judgments apart from her own and is *ipso facto* based on isolated judgments. The problem with this is that if we want to know ourselves the way we know other

⁴⁰ Rödl (2007), especially pp.163-4.

objects, we have to think of ourselves as something available to others. When an object is available to more than one person, room for error becomes present. However, if the object is available only to our inner perception, how error becomes possible is unclear. This is what we found in self-consciousness: we are infallible when it comes to self-reference since we are identical with the object being referred to. The identity superficially comes apart when we think of ourselves in the quest towards self-knowledge which is what is meant by saying we always think of ourselves at a distance.

We would be in the metaphysical dark, so to speak, if we took up the belief that our understanding of self-consciousness could give us a robust picture of the self. Kant already recognized this point by admitting it would amount to circular reasoning if we attempted to know the self from the purview of self-consciousness. He writes:

Through this I, or he, or it (the thing), which thinks, nothing is represented beyond a transcendental subject of thoughts = x. This subject is known only through the thoughts that are its predicates, and apart from them we can never have the slightest concept of it; therefore we revolve around it in a perpetual circle, since before we can form any judgement about it we must already use its representation (B404, 405/A346,347).

What Kant is saying here is that in self-consciousness, we only gain an understanding of the transcendental self which was pointed out by Longuenesse and Rödl. Why it is important in the discussion of self-knowledge is that it is an admission from Kant that an account of self-consciousness cannot yield a picture of who we are. Finding the self in this way just amounts to a regress where the termination of the chain is just to assume the object is found behind the representation of it in our first-person thought. As we saw in the discussion of Rödl's view about self-reference, in our first-person thought we do not observe ourselves like we would another object because our perspective on the bearer of the thought is given to us by being it. However, Rödl does erroneously believe that self-knowledge is limited to first-person self-ascription. He is

not very clear about whether this is confined to inner perception or is something made available by mediation. Despite a few occasions where he explicitly mentions something counting as self-knowledge⁴¹, it appears that self-knowledge amounts to having authority or ownership over what one believes and how they act which only takes place in self-consciousness. The opaqueness of his view makes him seem to be in line with Kant on the possibility of self-knowledge.

However intimate this kind of first-person knowledge is to me, it cannot be the way we attain self-knowledge. One of the main reasons is that when we consider our self-portrait, we tend to get things wrong about ourselves and even overlook certain details. Most of the time when we get things wrong about who we are, it is due to another person pointing it out to us. For this reason, knowing who we are is achieved by thinking about ourselves in the way we think about other objects. We are fallible when it comes to our beliefs about other objects. Therefore, if knowing who we are is undertaken in the same way as knowing something other, then knowing who we are cannot be done in a purely first-person way; we must take a perspective on ourselves that is similar to that of a third-person view. This is why there is an asymmetry between what we know when we achieve self-consciousness by being it, the thing known, and how we know ourselves as an object through a third-person kind of perspective. When we think of ourselves, it is always at a distance while, in the very act of thinking, we are always bound to our acts of thought.

5.3: Back to Fichte

Going back to section 1⁴², I discussed three major themes developed by Fichte in his *Wissenschaftslehre* which include the self, not-self, and divisible self and not-self. We can

⁴¹ Ibid., especially p. 164.

⁴² See pp. 7-11.

confidently assert that, on his account, the self is the transcendental 'I' found in self-consciousness, while the not-self is everything that is not identical with the self. So far this appears quite mundane, but then Fichte introduces the notion of divisibility. The reason is because he is aiming to ground our understanding of knowledge as such by way of showing how knowledge is possible only in virtue of its ability to be communicated or shared.

We should already anticipate that since we have said that the self is not something confined to the backwoods of the mind, it must be something that is available to the consciousness of others. Therefore, it is something that we can think and talk about such that when we do, what we say is brought under the condition of being right or wrong. This means that we should treat knowledge of the self like knowledge of any other object since our judgments fall under the net of fallibility. Our beliefs about who we are, are not immune to error in much the same way that our beliefs about other objects do not have any immunity to error. I can be wrong about whether Conor Oberst is in Omaha right now or about the ripeness of an avocado. Likewise, I can be wrong about whether or not I have a dairy allergy or about the root of my disdain for wearing cargo shorts. The connection among all of these cases is that the belief associated with any of them could either be right or wrong upon investigation. That is, they are not immune to error. Skeptical worries aside, I could see Conor Oberst at a concert which would uphold my belief that he is in Omaha; I could believe it is not the ice cream I eat every night causing my stomach problems, but my doctor could run tests to prove otherwise.

Getting things right is what we call having knowledge. We tend to think that our claims involving what we believe are pieces of knowledge that we possess and that others ought to believe as well. We should think, firstly, about what it means for something to count as knowledge. For something to be a knowledge claim, there must be certain truth conditions that

qualify my claim as knowledge. This entails that the only things I can know are things which are true. I can have a number of beliefs that turn out false because they do not meet whatever criterion is needed for the truth conditions to be met. For example, I might believe I see the same duck hanging out in the small pond I drive by every day. I point this out to a friend who happens to know the owner of the property and tells me that it is actually a decoy. Although I felt certain that my belief was correct, I was still wrong. Fallibility is a condition for the possibility of knowledge since for something to be the case, its contradiction must be possible. If the opposite of a claim were not possible, then it would seem odd to say we got something right whenever getting it wrong was not an option.

Despite having a deep degree of certainty or conviction about our beliefs, we still get things wrong. We convince people of false things all the time without realizing that they are indeed not factual. For instance, there is a portion of people in the United States that currently believe Joe Biden is not the actual president because the 2020 election was rigged, and that Donald Trump was the rightful winner. The basis of this belief involves a number of differing variables, but it is largely due to various biases and ideological convictions. This point leads us to the requirement of justification conditions for something to count as knowledge.

Belief explanation involves a justificatory process which includes assessing our reasons for believing this or that. When we say we know something, we usually have good or at least sufficient grounds for believing which can be used as a defense in the face of doubt. Whenever these reasons are unable to hold up against contradictory evidence, if we are epistemically responsible or not under the spell of self-deception, we abandon our belief and it is no longer considered knowledge.

What we gain from Fichte's notion of divisibility is that knowledge is something shareable. You and I have in common the fact that we are both a self which has the unique feature of being able to have and share knowledge of all kinds and not just merely representations that are captured in our self-consciousness. The divisible self is supposed to bring out the fact that we can all have knowledge of the same thing. How this informs our discussion of self-knowledge is this: if I can know myself, then you can know me since the way I know who I am is by recognizing myself outside of my head, so to speak, as an object like any other. More importantly, since knowledge of who I am is also available to you, it must be that you can know something about me that I am not aware. This is precisely the target of psychoanalysis. It is through this and other kinds of interpersonal relationships that we are able to rewrite the story of who we are by reevaluating the "data" we are provided with by others from our constant interaction.

5.4: A Community of Selves

Much of the work done in philosophy on the topic of self-knowledge involves the idea that self-knowledge is knowing oneself through first-person thoughts. This means knowing the self is achieved by being the authority over one's thoughts and actions: knowing yourself is to be the author of your thoughts and actions. This is a peculiar way of thinking about self-knowledge since it amounts to little more than decision making. The more we look at this picture, it becomes clear that this definition of self-knowledge appears to just be self-consciousness behind a thinly veiled disguise.

The definition of self-knowledge that I have been trying to make clear is that knowing who we are is to recognize ourselves as an object which things are either true or false of. I am fallibly in touch with the way things are, even when it comes to myself. Self-knowledge is based

on a perception of who I am or believe myself to be in light of the way I live my life. My knowledge of myself is informed by reflecting on and evaluating my beliefs, actions, and input from others. As humans, we determine ourselves and change certain parts of our lives when the way we understand ourselves is altered. This is why our self-portrait is periodically undergoing alterations in order for the picture to match up with what we know about who we are.

My beliefs and actions are the way I represent myself to others as an object. If I ride my bike to work and am diligent about recycling, then I am representing something to others about my beliefs regarding pollution. A person could believe that I care about the environment based on observing these things that I do. In fact, we could have a conversation about this topic which deepens their beliefs about the way I feel. It could also be the case that I have no conscious beliefs at all about the environment that influence my behavior. Someone may point out to me that my actions are commendable which leads me to believe that my actions are something right to do because I believe it is helpful for the environment.

There are two important ways to support the idea that knowing who we are is not a private affair which I would like to discuss. The first involves presenting ourselves as objects to the consciousness of others such that we are able to be known by them. This involves the way we represent ourselves through the exchange of goods. The second way that the self of every person is an accessible object to others is by the way we project our normative attitudes into our social spaces. This involves our attitudes towards others being exposed in a variety of ways which leads to others being able to uncover certain things about who we are that are sometimes not obvious to us.

5.4.1: The Self as a Profile Picture

We are constantly presenting ourselves like a public profile for others to see. This is especially clear when we think about the goods and products we acquire. The reason advertising agencies exist at all is because there is a need for retailers to be able to reach the consumer. Every consumer is egoistic in the sense that when they purchase something, they do so with themselves in mind. That is, we purchase goods that will make us feel good on some level and allow us to express ourselves in some way or another. Advertisers always try and reach us in a way that says “you can be this” or by convincing us that we need this or that whether it be through clothing, automobiles, foods, and so on. It is in this way that we are like walking advertisements telling others who we are or take ourselves to be.

The idea of thinking of ourselves as a public profile that we put together which expresses who we are and what we believe is nicely captured in David Lynch’s *Wild at Heart*. On more than one occasion, the protagonist of the film, Sailor Ripley (Nicholas Cage), says of his snakeskin leather jacket that it “is an expression of [his] individuality and [his] belief in personal freedom.” We say something about who we are by the way we dress, the books we keep on the shelf, what we buy at the grocery store, and so on. Through commodities such as these, we provide others with information so that they are able to form judgments about who we are and thereby come to know us. This makes knowledge of our internal mental attitudes a type of assessable information available to and communicable among all thinkers. This is what it means to say who we are is not confined to our mind; we exist outside of our head in certain ways.

The point of saying this is to show that the way we need to think of ourselves is as an object, which is diametrically opposed to the way we think of ourselves in our self-conscious thought. When we pick out clothing or food, we are saying something about our likes and

interests. At the same time, we are thinking about ourselves and what we would look like or how this dish might make us feel as if who we are is something we are making judgments about. I might think that I want to eat a big plate of chicken alfredo. Despite the delicious flavor, towards the end of the meal I start to have regrets. I then think to myself that I was wrong about what would make me happy. Suppose that at the same time, I had been trying to eat healthier because I wanted to lose weight. The people in the restaurant who saw me eat this meal would likely not think that I was someone that was concerned about their weight, at all. Moreover, I would have been wrong about myself since I know that chicken alfredo is not a healthy meal.

We must acknowledge the fact that how we present ourselves to others is not always an accurate representation of who we are. While we always want to believe that everyone is honest about who they are, there are ways in which we can be wrong about a person based on how they present themselves. This kind of false representation is rampant among politicians and people on dating websites. We can see this point brought out, satirically, by Larry David in his Aristophanes style show *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. In the season 10 premier, it is brought to Larry's attention that many people, especially within his own social community, would not be caught near a Trump supporter. In order to get out of a few socially unwanted situations, such as lunch with an acquaintance and a run in with an angry motorcyclist, Larry wears a MAGA hat in order to arouse disgust with the acquaintance to avoid the lunch and to form a mutual connection with the angry biker. In both cases, Larry was lying about who he was in order to not reveal the truth about who he is.

5.4.2: The Sociality of the Self

As human beings, we are continuously faced with things we do not like or agree with. We choose between opposing interests in everything we do: the news outlets we take to be truthful

and informative, music we listen to, people we surround ourselves with, what we do for entertainment, and so on. In all of these things we find ourselves, while others are able to know us through these activities just as well as we are. However, it is not just through the things we do or outwardly subscribe to that allows us and others to know who we are.

Consider an example of a person, Darcey, who believes she is a great driver and when she rides in a vehicle with anyone else, she becomes anxious or nervous. Darcey makes this a regular topic of conversation with others. She believes that other people drive poorly when she is in the vehicle and expresses her dismay at the fact that they do not have a lengthy record of traffic offenses. One day while having a conversation about her anxiety when it comes to being a passenger, Darcey's friend asks whether or not she has been in an automobile accident before. She answers "yes" that she had been in an accident as a child. The friend then points out that this one accident is likely to be the root of her nervousness and need for control of the vehicle. Darcey suddenly realizes something about herself which, as a result, reshapes the way she sees herself. This was due to the fact that sometimes, others can know us better than we do.

Put in a slightly different way, it is often the case that others know things about us which conflicts with something we already believe about ourselves. Such cases are typically considered to be a kind of cognitive dissonance on our part. The way we interact with others is a general guide to what we think and how we see ourselves. This sort of thing often plays out in the workplace, due to the fact that we spend so much time in this setting. A brilliant example of this is shown through the television series *The Office*. This documentary follows the work and social lives of the employees of a small paper company. The boss, Michael Smith (Steve Carell), is constantly portraying himself in ways that are obviously untrue to the coworkers and viewers. Many times, it is pointed out to him that his actions do not reflect his own attitudes about who he

takes himself to be. For instance, he regularly points out that racist stereotypes are hurtful and that we should all abandon our prejudices and so forth. However, he is guilty of such stereotypes in almost every episode. These are representations of an underlying disposition which goes unchecked by the self. While he is typically confronted by others about his behavior, he acts bewildered by the accusations and has to reflect on this information in order to reconcile it with his previously held belief about himself. This is an instance where the self is like a public object for others to tell us about. Furthermore, it is an example of how a change in our self-understanding can affect the way we lead our lives.

Examples involving the workplace are also useful when pointing out the way that we unconsciously adhere to and support certain rules and practices that may otherwise be contradictory to what we believe of ourselves. For example, a business owner may hold the belief that workers should be fairly compensated and receive certain benefits, yet they outsource their production of the goods they sell to countries with very relaxed labor laws. Another case may involve a business that creates energy efficient products but accepts cryptocurrencies which happen to be harmful to the environment due to the amount of e-waste they produce. These sorts of things show us who a person is and allows for that information to be communicated to them, thus resulting in a change to their knowledge of themselves.

5.5: Concluding Remarks

The point I have been trying to make is that we are like objects projected into society with a psychical map that shows us and others who we are. It is by understanding the self as an object that is capable of being perceived that we are able to come to know who we are. Our ability to know who we are is not by some privileged access we have by being the object. The self develops through external relations with other objects and, most importantly, other self-

conscious beings. It is for this reason that when it comes to knowing ourselves, we must think about who we are in the way we do other objects which forces us to think of ourselves as others do.

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