De Se Thought and Communication – An Introduction[1]

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I. INTRODUCTION

Philosophical literature contains many examples that try to establish the special status of first-person, or *de se*, thought: Ernst Mach realizes that *he* is the shabby pedagogue that he sees in the bus mirror[2], David Kaplan realizes that *his* pants are on fire[3], Winnie-the-Pooh realizes that the tracks he is following are *his own* rather than a woozle's[4], John Perry realizes that *he* is the one spilling sugar all over the supermarket floor[5]. The last of these is probably the best known and most influential among philosophers. In a well-known passage, Perry writes:

> I once followed a trail of sugar on a supermarket floor, pushing my cart down the aisle on one side of a tall counter and back the aisle on the other, seeking the shopper with the torn sack to tell him he was making a mess. With each trip around the counter, the trail became thicker. But I seemed unable to catch up. Finally it dawned on me. I was the shopper I was trying to catch... I believed at the outset that the shopper with a torn sack was making a mess. And I was right. But I didn't believe that I was making a mess. That seems to be something I came to believe. And when I came to believe that, I stopped following the trail around the counter, and rearranged the torn sack in my cart. My change in beliefs seems to explain my change in behavior.[6]

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[2] Ernst Mach. 1897. *The Analysis of Sensations,* Dover Edition, 1959, p. 4, n. 1.
[3] David Kaplan. 1989. "Demonstratives" in Joseph Almog, John Perry & Howard Wettstein (eds.), *Themes From Kaplan* New York: Oxford University Press, p.533.
[4] A.A. Milne. 1926. "Pooh and Piglet Go Hunting and Nearly Catch a Woozle" in *Winnie-the-Pooh* London: Methuen. I learned of this great example from R. Holton "Primitive Self-Ascription: Lewis on the *De Se*" forthcoming in Barry Loewer & Jonathan Schaffer (eds.) The Blackwell Companion to David Lewis (Blackwell)
[5] John Perry. 1979. "The Problem of the Essential Indexical" *Nous,* Vol. 13, No. 1.
[6] Perry 1979, p.3.

Perry's example concludes with what seems to be a new piece of information and a resulting change in Perry's behavior. But what is learned does not seem to be explicable in terms of a traditional proposition such as the proposition that John Perry is making a mess. In an elaboration of the above example, Perry sees the shopper who is making a mess in a mirror and but doesn't realize that it is himself. Perry believes of the man in the mirror, John Perry, that he is making a mess. Perry may well believe that John Perry is making a mess without realizing that he himself is making a mess. This case raises two important questions: is there, as appearances suggest, some new piece of information that is learned that leads Perry to change his behavior and adjust the bag of sugar in his shopping cart? And if so, then how is this new information best characterized?

Despite the apparent specialness of the information gained at the end of this example and others like it, there doesn't seem to be any difficulty in communicating it to others. Perry can turn to another shopper in the aisle and say "I am making a mess" and thereby successfully communicate what he has learned. When Kaplan communicates to others what he has learned by yelling "My pants are on fire!", not only will they successfully learn what Kaplan has learned, but their behavior will change as well.

These two observations: that there seems to be something special about first-person thought and that we seem to be able to successfully communicate what it is that we learn when we learn first-person information raise a number of puzzling questions that are the focus of this volume. If Perry's belief that he himself is making a mess is distinct from belief in the traditional proposition that John Perry is making a mess, then what does he communicate to his fellow shopper when he tells her that he is making a mess? If he communicates the traditional proposition that John Perry is making a mess, then it seems that what he communicates is not the same as what he believes when he changes his behavior and adjusts the bag of sugar. Some have claimed that first-person belief involves having a special way of accessing the self, or as Frege put it, being "presented to himself in a particular and primitive way, in which he is presented to no-one else."[7] However, as Frege goes on to note, this raises puzzling questions when we consider how we are able to

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[7] Gottlob Frege. 1918. "Der Gedanke." *Beträge zur Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus* 1: 58-77. translated as "Thought." In Michael Beaney. 1997. *The Frege Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 325-45. Page references are to Beaney 1997.

communicate such thoughts. Considering Dr. Lauben's first-person belief that he has been wounded, Frege writes:

> So when Dr. Lauben thinks that he has been wounded, he will probably take as a basis this primitive way in which he is presented to himself. And only Dr. Lauben himself can grasp thoughts determined in this way. But now he may want to communicate with others. He cannot communicate a thought which he alone can grasp. Therefore, if he now says "I have been wounded", he must use the "I" in a sense which can be grasped by others...Yet there is a doubt. Is it at all the same thought which first that man expresses and now this one?[8]

Perhaps this passage raises more questions than it answers, but it highlights the exact issues that this volume seeks to address: Is there indeed something special about first-person thought such that it requires a primitive mode of presentation that cannot be grasped by others? If there really is something special about first-person thought, what happens when I communicate this thought to you? Do you come to believe the very thing that I believe? Or is my first-person belief only entertained by me? If it is only entertained by me, how does it relate to what you come to believe?

In the next section, I will sketch the various influential accounts of *de se* attitudes. These accounts directly address the question of what it is that Perry learns when he realizes that he himself is making a mess. In section 3, I will outline a widely accepted and influential model of communication and complications that arise in applying this model to the communication of first person thought. In the final section I provide an overview of the papers in this volume.

II. ACCOUNTS OF *DE SE* ATTITUDES

A. *De Se Skepticism*

One way of responding to examples like Perry's messy shopper is to deny that there is anything new and special about what Perry believes when he comes to believe that he himself is making a mess. One version of this response has received considerable attention

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[8] Frege 1918, p.132.

lately, primarily due to Herman Cappelen and Josh Dever's recent book *The Inessential Indexical*.[9] Cappelen and Dever claim that positing essentially indexical and irreducibly *de se* phenomena is "philosophically shallow" and "the entire topic is an illusion."[10] Rather they claim that the phenomena pointed to by Perry and others are really "fragments of various different phenomena"[11].

Cappelen and Dever provide *se*veral arguments in defense of their position. I briefly consider here one substantial claim that they make: that explanation of action, such as the explanation for why Perry bends down to adjust the torn bag of sugar, does not require an appeal to irreducibly *de se* propositional attitudes. Cappelen and Dever consider a modified version of a case from Perry in which Dilip and Francois are walking in the woods, Francois is attacked by a bear, and Dilip witnesses the attack from a distance.[12] In the original example, Perry notes that in such a situation the two individuals will act differently; in our example, Francois will climb a nearby tree to safety, whereas Dilip will run for help. For Perry and for many convinced by the essential role of *de se* attitudes, *de se* beliefs and desires are required to explain why Francois climbs the tree and Dilip runs for help. According to the defender of essentially indexical propositional attitudes, belief in the singular proposition *that Francois is being chased by a bear* and the desire *that Francois not get mauled by a bear* are not sufficient for explaining the difference in behavior, since, let us suppose, both Dilip and Francois believe this proposition and have this desire, yet nonetheless their behavior differs. Rather, the defender of the essentiality of *de se* belief and desire claims that the difference in action is explained by the fact that Francois has the *de se* belief *that he himself is being chased by a bear* and the *de se* desire *that he himself not get mauled by the bear*. Dilip lacks this *de se* belief and *de se* desire but rather has a different *de se* belief, something like *that the person I am hiking with is being chased by a bear* and a different *de se* desire, something like, *that the person I am hiking with not get mauled by a bear*.

Cappelen and Dever claim that the move to *de se* belief and desire in giving an explanation of the differences in behavior is unmotivated. They claim that both Dilip and

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[9] Herman Cappelen and Josh Dever. 2014. *The Inessential Indexical: On the Philosophical Insignificance of Perspective and the First Person*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[10] Cappelen and Dever 2014, p.3.
[11] Cappelen and Dever 2014, p.3.
[12] The original case is from John Perry. 1977. "Frege on Demonstratives" *Philosophical Review*, p.494. Cappelen and Dever's discussion of the case is on p.53-54 of Cappelen and Dever 2013.

Francois have the same belief: *that Francois is being chased by a bear* and the same desire: *that Francois not get attacked by a bear.* They claim that both Dilip and Francois are rationally motivated to perform the action *that Francois climb the tree*, but only Francois can perform it. Similarly Dilip and Francois are both rationally motivated to perform the action *that Dilip run for help*, but only Dilip is in a position to perform it. They conclude that "It is because of the difference in their available actions that Francois and Dilip don't act the same."[13]

But it seems implausible that merely the difference in what actions are available to Francois and Dilip explains the difference in their actions. Not only do their available actions differ, but their *beliefs* about what actions are available to each of them also differ. It is true that Francois is in a position to perform the action *that Francois climb the tree* and Dilip is not, but this is not sufficient for explaining why, for example, Francois performs this action and Dilip does not. Francois performs the action *that Francois climb the tree* in part because, in addition to believing that *that Francois is being chased by a bear* and desiring *that Francois not get attacked by a bear,* he believes that *he himself is Francois* and *that there is a tree nearby him.* Dilip does not perform this action because, although like Francois he believes *that Francois is being chased by a bear* and desires *that Francois not get attacked by a bear,* he also believes that the action *that Francois climb the tree* is not available to him. Mere difference in available action is not sufficient for explaining the difference in behavior. Suppose that Dilip is able to cast a spell that would send Francois up the tree but he is unaware of his magical abilities. Then the action *that Francois climb the tree* is available to both Francois and Dilip.[14] Because of Dilip's ignorance that he has the requisite magical abilities, he does not perform the action *that Francois climb the tree*, but Francois does. So the explanation of why Francois and Dilip act differently cannot be given merely in terms of the fact that Dilip and Francois have the same beliefs and desires plus the fact that different actions are available to them. They must also have beliefs about who

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[13] Cappelen and Dever, p.51.
[14] To deny that this is a possibility by claiming that necessarily, the action *that Francois climb the tree* is only available to Francois, would seem to reintroduce some special first-personal feature that presumably Cappelen and Dever would find unwelcome.

they are and what actions are available to them and I am doubtful that these beliefs could be explicated in non-*de se* terms.[15]

B. The Fregean Account

Views that take traditional propositions to be the content of belief face difficulties when considering cases involving *de se* belief. According to the Russellian view, propositions are structured entities consisting of an individual and a property. The proposition that Perry is making a mess is a structured entity consisting of Perry and the property of *being an individual who is making a mess*. When Perry sees the messy shopper in the mirror and believes of him that he is making a mess, Perry's belief is about Perry, and, on the structured propositions account, the content of Perry's belief is the structured proposition consisting of Perry and the property of *being an individual who is making a mess*. When Perry has the belief that leads him to adjust the bag of sugar, his belief is also about Perry and is also the structured proposition consisting of Perry and the property of *being an individual who is making a mess*. So, on this account, the content of Perry's belief is the same when he believes of the man in the mirror that he is making a mess and when he believes that he himself is making a mess and bends down to adjust the bag of sugar. But claiming that the content of Perry's belief is the same in both cases seems like the wrong result, or at least not the complete story. First, the latter belief leads to a change in behavior: Perry bends down to adjust the bag of sugar that is spilling. Second, it seems correct to say that Perry learns something new when he learns that he himself is the messy shopper. Taking the content of belief to be the same proposition in both cases is, by itself, unable to explain these two facts.

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[15] Cappelen and Dever (2013) consider and respond to an objection along similar lines on pp.54-55. They respond by referring back to an "Impersonal Action Explanation" earlier in the chapter in which Herman and Nora are in the same room and both believe that *Nora is in danger* and that *if Herman closes the door, Nora will be safe* and they both desire that *Nora not be hurt*. The resulting action is that *Herman closes the door*. Cappelen and Dever write "Herman wasn't motivated to act for reasons having to do with Herman and beliefs about Herman didn't figure into the explanation or rationalization. It was all about Nora" (p.55). However *Herman closing the door* is in part explained by the fact that Herman believes that *Herman closing the door* is one of *his* available actions. If he hadn't believed that it was one of his available actions, he wouldn't have done it (if he believed, say, that he was too far away from the door to close it, when in fact he wasn't). And his belief that *Herman closing the door* is one of *his* available actions shows it is not "all about Nora". Thanks to Dilip Ninan for helpful discussion on this section. Ninan responds to Cappelen and Dever's account of action explanation in (This volume, pXX)

Frege's account of propositional attitudes provides some additional resources for accommodating the difference between Perry's two beliefs. As is well-known, Frege notes that whereas the sentence 'Hesperus is Hesperus' is uninformative and can be deemed true by introspection, the sentence 'Hesperus is Phosphorus' is informative and is learned by investigating the world. However, the terms in both sentences denote the same object, namely the planet Venus. From this, Frege concludes that in addition to denotation, names are associated with a *sense* or *mode of presentation*. The sense associated with 'Hesperus' differs from the sense associated with 'Phosphorus' and it is this difference in sense that explains the informativeness of 'Hesperus is Phosphorus'.

Suppose that Aidan does not realize that Hesperus is Phosphorus and he believes that Hesperus is divine and so deserving of worship, and he believes that Phosphorus is not divine and so not deserving of worship. Frege's account postulates that Aidan has two different thoughts, one corresponding to the sense of the sentence 'Hesperus is divine' and one corresponding to the sense of the sentence 'Phosphorus is divine'. These two thoughts are associated with different modes of presentation which can be thought of as different descriptions associated with the single object, Venus. The mode of presentation associated with 'Hesperus' might be something like 'the heavenly body that appears in the evening' and the mode of presentation associated with 'Phosphorus' might be something like 'the heavenly body that appears in the morning'. Suppose Aidan prays to Hesperus in the evening but he doesn't pray to Phosphorus in the morning. One could explain this difference in his behavior by appealing to the difference in his thoughts. Individuating thoughts in terms of modes of presentation allows one to explain why one might act differently towards one and the same object.

Aidan's neighbor, Kathrin, may have the same thoughts as him regarding Hesperus and Phosphorus. She might associate the same mode of presentation with Hesperus that Aidan does and she might associate the same mode of presentation with Phosphorus as Aidan does, and she might thereby believe the same thing as Aidan: that Hesperus is divine and Phosphorus is not divine. This sameness in belief between Aidan and Kathrin could figure into an explanation for why they act in the same way; why they both pray to Hesperus in the evening but not in the morning, assuming they are alike in other relevant beliefs and desires.

It seems like Frege's account has the resources to explain the differences in behavior in Perry's messy shopper example. Before and after his realization, Perry has beliefs about one and the same object, Perry, however the beliefs are individuated by different modes of presentation, and this difference in mode of presentation explains the difference in informativeness as well as in behavior. However there is an interesting and, in my mind crucial, disanalogy between the two cases; one that Frege was also aware of. The difference suggests that the phenomenon exhibited in the Perry example is not just a special case of the sort of phenomenon exhibited in the Hesperus / Phosphorus example. In the Hesperus / Phosphorus example it is possible for Kathrin to associate the same mode of presentation with Hesperus as Aidan does and to associate the same mode of presentation with Phosphorus as Aidan does. Consider the modes of presentation that Kathrin and Aidan associate with Hesperus and Phosphorus: 'the heavenly body that appears in the evening' and 'the heavenly body that appears in the morning'. These descriptions are public in the sense that anyone can think of Venus under these modes of presentation. But this doesn't seem possible in the Perry case. Suppose the mode of presentation associated with the first belief that Perry has upon seeing the trail of sugar was something like 'The shopper whose bag is leaking is making a mess'. This mode of presentation seems public in the sense that it can be believed by Perry as well as one of his fellow shoppers. But what about belief that leads Perry to adjust the bag of sugar in his shopping cart? What is the relevant mode of presentation associated with this belief? It seems that for any non-indexical description of the form 'The man who is such and such' Perry could have a belief about Perry under that description without thereby believing that he is the man who is such and such. Similarly, it seems that the fellow shopper could have a belief under this mode of presentation as well. So whereas the modes of presentation involved in Frege puzzles like the Hesperus / Phosphorus case seem to be sharable and public, this doesn't seem to be the case with the mode of presentation associated with *de se* belief. This leads Frege to deny that modes of presentation associated with first person thoughts like "I am wounded" are sharable or public. As noted above, he claims that everyone is "presented to himself in a particular and primitive way, in which he is presented to no-one else."[16] This unsharability of first person thought seems rather mysterious and calls out for explanation. What is this particular and

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[16] Frege, "Thought", p.132.

primitive way in which I am presented to myself and to no one else? Why can't I be presented to others in this way? The mysteriousness is increased by the fact that one seems perfectly capable of communicating this first-person thought to others such as when Perry says to his fellow shopper "I am making a mess".

C. The Belief State Account

After arguing for the essentiality of indexical thought, Perry considers various ways in which one might give an account of such thought.[17] The view that he defends in his 1979 paper involves distinguishing between the content of a belief and the belief state in which the content is believed. Like on the Russellian account, when Perry finally realizes that he himself is making a mess, the content of his belief is the same as the content of his belief when he believes of the man in the mirror that he is making a mess: in both cases it is the singular proposition that John Perry is making a mess. However Perry claims that the content is accessed in a different way in each case. Perry notes that, when he realizes that he himself is making a mess, he has something in common with anyone who has found themselves in a similar predicament and would be inclined to say "I am making a mess". He denies that what these individuals have in common is the same singular content: if, for example, Emar were to find that he himself is making a mess he would believe a different singular proposition, namely the proposition that Emar is making a mess. But nonetheless Emar would be in the same belief state as Perry despite believing a different content.

Exactly how belief states are to be understood is a matter of some debate and Perry's own understanding of this notion has evolved over time. Nonetheless, the basic idea seems clear enough: all those who are disposed to utter "I am making a mess" are in one belief state and all those who are disposed to utter "You are making a mess" are in another belief state, even though among those classified together by belief state, different propositions serve as the content of belief. Perry writes "We use sentences with indexicals or relativized propositions to individuate belief states, for the purposes of classifying believers in ways useful for explanation and prediction. That is, belief states individuated in this way enter into our common sense theory about human behavior and more

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[17] Perry 1979, pp.12-20.

sophisticated theories emerging from it."[18] It seems implausible to take a belief state to be *analyzed* in terms of a disposition to assert a particular sentence. There are well-known difficulties with such dispositional behavioral accounts and they seem unsatisfactory as an explanation of what is common to all those who are disposed to utter "I am making a mess". Perry himself notes that his belief state / belief content distinction bears certain similarities to and was influenced by Kaplan's character / content distinction.[19] All utterances of "I am making a mess" share the same Kaplanian character despite differing in Kaplanian content. However it is unclear whether this analogy between Perry's belief states and Kaplan's characters succeeds in elucidating the nature of belief states. Kaplanian characters are standardly taken to be properties of word- and sentence-types, whereas belief states are properties of a believer's psychology. In order for the appeal to Kaplan's notion of character to elucidate Perry's notion of a belief state, more needs to be said about the nature of these psychological states and the sense in which they are analogous to the property of linguistic entities described by Kaplan.

Like the Fregean account, the belief state account posits limited accessibility. Unlike the Fregean account, however, anyone can believe what Perry believes when he believes that he himself is making a mess. However no one can believe it in the state in which Perry believes it. When one of Perry's fellow shoppers sees that there is sugar spilling out of Perry's shopping cart, she believes the same proposition that Perry believes: that John Perry is making a mess, but she is in a different belief state from Perry. She is in a belief state that is classified by the sentence-type "You are making a mess". She could also be in the same belief state as Perry if she were disposed to utter "I am making a mess". But interestingly she cannot believe the proposition that Perry believes in the same way that Perry believes it. A natural question to ask is "why not?". At an earlier point in his paper, Perry criticizes a view that posits limited accessibility similar to the sort posited by the Fregean view. Perry criticizes such a view claiming that it would require positing "myriads of private perspectives" and that he believes "only in a common actual world."[20] Perry recognizes that his own account is committed to a form of limited accessibility, however he calls it "a metaphysically benign form" and he goes on to claim "Anyone at any time can have access

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[18] Perry 1979, p.18.
[19] Perry 1979, p.21, n.6.
[20] Perry 1979, p.16.

to any proposition. But not in any way."[21] But it isn't clear why this form of limited accessibility is benign whereas the sort posited by other accounts is not. It seems unsatisfying if the harmlessness merely lies in the fact that the things that Perry calls 'propositions' or 'contents' can be shared. Depending on what belief states turn out to be, they might play a role that is deserving of the name 'content'. Or one might take contents to be pairs of belief states and singular propositions. It seems that Perry, like Frege, will be committed to denying that contents, so construed, can be shared.[22]

D. The Property Account

In "Attitudes *De Dicto* and *De Se*" David Lewis provides an alternative account of *de se* attitudes.[23] On Lewis's account, traditional propositions are sets of possible worlds: to believe, for example, that bananas contain potassium is to stand in the belief relation to a set of worlds in which bananas contain potassium. In his 1979 paper, Lewis argues that traditional propositions are inadequate for characterizing the content of belief. Lewis considers two scenarios, one from Perry involving the amnesiac Rudolf Lingens who is lost in the Stanford Library and another involving two gods who are omniscient with respect to all the traditional propositions, but fail to know which mountain they are located on. The amnesiac Lingens has access to all kinds of books that teach him what traditional propositions are true. He even reads a biography of Lingens and a detailed description of the library he finds himself in. Lewis grants Perry's observation that despite all this propositional knowledge, Lingens can nonetheless remain ignorant about who he is: that he himself is the subject of the biography he is reading. Lewis takes such cases to demonstrate that traditional propositions are not sufficient for characterizing propositional attitudes such as knowledge and belief.

Lewis argues that the contents of knowledge and belief are sometimes properties. To have a property as the content of one's belief is to *self-ascribe* the property. What Perry believes when he realizes that he himself is making a mess is the property of *being an individual who is making a mess*. When Perry believes this property, he ascribes it to himself.

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[21] Perry 1979, p.19.
[22] Cf. Ninan, p.XX, this volume.
[23] David Lewis. 1979. "Attitudes De Dicto and *De Se*". *Philosophical Review* 88 : 513-43, reprinted (with a postscript) in Lewis 1983, 133-159.

Lewis's proposal differs in a number of respects from Perry's 1979 account. Whereas Perry distinguishes between the content of a belief and the state in which that content is believed, Lewis denies that there are different states or ways of believing. Rather there is one belief relation that relates a subject to either a traditional proposition or a property. In fact, Lewis proposes that more uniformity can be introduced into his account by taking the content of *all* belief to be properties. We can understand belief in a traditional proposition, p, as believing the property of *inhabiting a world that is a member of p*: according to this proposal, to believe that bananas contain potassium is to self-ascribe the property *inhabiting a world in which bananas contain potassium*.

Another significant difference between Lewis's proposal on the one hand, and Perry's and Frege's on the other, is that Lewis's account seems to posit no limited accessibility. The content of Perry's belief when he realizes that he himself is making a mess, namely the property of *being an individual who is making a mess*, can be believed by anyone. Anyone who believes this property takes him or herself to be making a mess.

One of the difficulties that has been leveled against Lewis's account is whether it is intelligible to talk of believing a *property*: what does it mean to believe the property of *having pants that are on fire* or *being an individual who is making a mess*? Thinking more about what properties are on Lewis's account may go some way in dispelling the intelligibility worry. As noted above, for Lewis, traditional propositions are sets of possible worlds: subjects stand in the belief relation to sets of possible worlds. On Lewis's account, properties are sets of possible individuals. The property of *having pants that are on fire* is the set of possible individuals whose pants are on fire. So just as believing a proposition involves standing in the belief relation to a set of possibilia (possible worlds), believing a property also involves standing in the belief relation to a set of possibilia (possible individuals). It seems that if one finds the former intelligible, one ought to find the latter intelligible as well.[24]

Another challenge facing Lewis's approach is that it seems at times to posit too much difference with regard to the content of propositional attitudes. We've noted that on Lewis's proposal there is no limited accessibility: anyone can believe what Perry believes when he believes that he himself is making a mess and anyone can be in the same belief

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[24] See Weber, p.XX, this volume.

state as Perry since there is only one belief relation. One of the nice features of Lewis's account is that it can explain what all people have in common when they believe that their pants are on fire: they all hop around and yell "help!" because they all believe the same thing: the property of *having pants that are on fire*. But there are other cases where the Lewisian account seems unable to capture commonality in belief. When Francois is being chased by a bear and Dilip sees that Francois is being chased by a bear, it seems that there is a straight-forward sense in which they believe the same thing: they both believe *that Francois is being chased by a bear*. But this cannot be straightforwardly captured on Lewis's account. What Francois believes is the property of *being chased by a bear* and what Dilip believes is a different property: something like *being uniquely perceptually acquainted with someone who is being chased by a bear*[25]. So whereas Lewis's account is able to nicely state the commonality in belief between all those who believe they are being chased be a bear, it has a more difficult time explaining the commonality in belief between Francois' and Dilip's beliefs. A related point is raised by Robert Stalnaker in the context of communication which I discuss in section 3.[26]

The views sketched above: the Fregean view, the belief state view, and the property view, are, perhaps, the most influential of the last 50 years. A number of recent accounts have been developed that bear certain points of contact with these earlier views but offer alternative accounts of *de se* attitudes and attempt to avoid some of the difficulties facing the views discussed above. Three such recent accounts: Robert Stalnaker's belief state account[27], Manuel Garcia-Carpintero's token-reflexive account[28], and Francois Recanati's mental files account[29] are developed in more detail in this volume.

III. COMMUNICATION AND *DE SE* THOUGHT

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[25] Lewis analyzes *de re* belief such as Dilip's belief of Francois that he is being chased by a bear in terms of the self-ascription of acquaintance properties. See Lewis 1979, p.538-543.

[26] Robert Stalnaker 1981. "Indexical Belief" *Synthese* 49 129-151.

[27] This view is developed in Robert Stalnaker. 2008. *Our Knowledge of the Internal World*. Oxford University Press.2008 and Robert Stalnaker. 2011. "The Essential Contextual" in *Assertion: New Philosophical Essays*. ed. by J. Brown and H. Cappelen. Oxford University Press, 137-50.2011 and Stalnaker, this volume.

[28] This view is developed in Manuel Garcia-Carpintero. 2013. in John Turri (ed.), *Virtuous Thoughts: The Philosophy of Ernest Sosa*. Springer. 73-99 and Manual Garcia-Carpintero, this volume..

[29] This view is developed in François Récanati. 2007. *Perspectival Thought: A Plea for (Moderate) Relativism*. Oxford University Press, François Recanati. 2009. "De Re and *De Se*". *Dialectica* 63 (3):249-269, François Récanati. 2012. *Mental Files*. Oxford University Press, and François Récanati, this volume.

Reflect on the various things that you communicated today. Here are some of the things I communicated: "I was busy yesterday; that's why I didn't write you back", "It's sunny here for a change", "Looking forward to seeing you tonight". It seems that most of what we communicate involves claims about ourselves, claims about our environment, claims about how things currently are, were or will be, claims about others around us. In our ordinary verbal and written communication personal pronouns, temporal and spatial indexicals abound. Upon reflection it seems that very rarely do we communicate information about what the world is like without any regard for our perspective within it.

Suppose that after realizing that he himself is making a mess, Perry turns to a fellow shopper and says 'I am making a mess'. Suppose that the fellow shopper understands and accepts what Perry says. I take this to be a paradigm case of what I will call '*de se* communication'. *De se* communication is successful communication involving first-person pronouns such as 'I' or 'my'. In calling such communication '*de se* communication' I intend to be as noncommittal as possible regarding the underlying account. I do not presuppose that *de se* communication involves essentially *de se* content: the *de se* skeptic can grant the existence of *de se* communication as I've characterized it and can go on to give an account of such communication in terms that do not appeal to essentially *de se* content.

All three of the accounts of *de se* propositional attitudes sketched above: the Fregean view, the belief state view, and the property view, face challenges in providing a successful account of *de se* communication. After outlining a widely accepted model of how communication in general works, I discuss how each of these views faces difficulties in upholding this model. I conclude that the phenomenon of *de se* communication just shows that this widely accepted model is too simplistic. This leaves us with the pressing question of how to develop an account of communication that can accommodate the exchange of *de se* information, a question that many of the papers in this volume seek to answer.

In "Assertion" Robert Stalnaker provides a model of communication that has been widely accepted within philosophy of language.[30] Central to Stalnaker's account is the notion that the content of an assertion interacts in an important way with the context in which the assertion was produced. Stalnaker's account for how the content of assertion

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[30] Robert Stalnaker. 1978. "Assertion". *Syntax and Semantics*, 9, 315-332.

affects the context relies heavily on the notion of presupposition. Stalnaker states, "Presuppositions are what is taken by the speaker to be the common ground of the participants in the conversation."[31] If a proposition, p, is among the propositions that the speaker presupposes, then, not only does the speaker accept p, but she takes her conversational partners to also accept p. She also takes her conversational partners to take her to accept p.

Stalnaker's proposal for how the content of an assertion affects the context is that successful assertion involves adding propositions to the stock of propositions presupposed by the conversational participants. Suppose that Isidora and Peter are on a bird watching expedition and both are looking at the same bird in the brush. The context will include various presuppositions that are common to both Isidora and Peter: such as that there is a bird in the brush, that they are both outside, that they are both bird watchers, etc. These are all claims that Isidora believes, that Peter believes, that Isidora believes that Peter believes, that Peter believes that Isidora believes, etc. Suppose Isidora says to Peter "The bird in the brush is a pied wagtail" and Peter accepts Isidora's assertion. On Stalnaker's account, this successful communication results in the addition of the proposition that the bird in the brush is a pied wagtail to the stock of propositions presupposed by Isidora and Peter.

This model of how communication works involves certain plausible assumptions about the relation between the content of the speaker's belief, the content of the speaker's utterance and the content of the belief that the hearer forms upon accepting the utterance. Andy Egan puts it as follows "In general, what's asserted will be something that the asserter believes, and which the other parties to the conversation come to believe after they accept the assertion. So, when [Isidora] makes an assertion, she utters some sentence the content of which she believes, and when [Peter] accepts her assertion, he comes to share the belief that [Isidora] expressed with her assertion."[32] This model of assertion involves the transmission of belief from speaker to hearer. Although Stalnaker formulates this transmission of content in terms of the elimination of possible worlds from the conversational context set, this is not essential and similar formulations have been given in

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[31] Stalnaker 1978, p.321.

[32] Andy Egan. 2007. "Epistemic modals, relativism and assertion". *Philosophical Studies*, 133, p.10.

terms of structured propositions. I follow Dirk Kinderman in calling this model the 'Simple Transfer Model' of communication.[33]

Following Clas Weber, we can take the Simple Transfer Model of communication to involve commitment to the following two principles:

1. The Mind-to-Speech Principle: the content of the utterance is identical to the content of a belief the speaker expresses.

2. The Speech-to-Mind Principle: the content of the utterance is identical to the content of a belief the hearer acquires.[34]

The Simple Transfer Model provides a plausible account of Isidora's successful communication to Peter: Isidora has a belief that she expresses in her utterance and Peter comes to believe this very belief. However, there are a number of cases in which the Simple Transfer Model seems to be too simple. [35] *De se* communication is one such case. Each of the views considered in the previous section: the Fregean view, the belief state view and the property view, face challenges when attempting to reconcile the Simple Transfer Model of communication with its account of *de se* propositional attitudes.

As described above, Frege holds that first person beliefs involve the subject being "presented to himself in a particular and primitive way, in which he is presented to no-one else"[36]. Interestingly Frege is aware of the challenges his account of first person thought raises for an account of communication since he immediately goes on to write that Dr Lauben "cannot communicate a thought which he alone can grasp. Therefore, if he now

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[33] Dirk Kindermann, "Varieties of Centering", *This Volume*, p.XX. This transmission model of communication has recently been given various names: Andy Egan calls it the 'belief transfer model'; Sarah Moss calls it 'the Package delivery' model; Clas Weber calls it the 'FedEx' model ; Richard Heck calls it the 'Naïve Conception of Communication' . See Andy Egan. 2007. "Epistemic modals, relativism and assertion". *Philosophical Studies*, 133, p.10. Sarah Moss. 2012. "Updating as Communication". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 85 : 225–48. Clas Weber. 2013. "Centered Communication". *Philosophical Studies* 166 : 205–223. Richard Heck. 2002. "Do Demonstratives Have Senses ?" *Philosopher's Imprint* 2 : 1-33.
[34] Weber 2013, p.3.
[35] It is important to note that even when providing his original account of assertion, Stalnaker was aware that the simple model was too simple. In the second half of the paper, Stalnaker considers cases in which the simple model seems inadequate: when the proposition asserted is necessarily false or necessarily true. Stalnaker took such cases to demonstrate that sometimes it is the diagonal content that interacts with the conversational context set. See Stalnaker 1978, pp.325-330.
[36] Frege 1918, p.132.

says 'I have been wounded', he must use the 'I' in a sense which can be grasped by others."[37] This involves an explicit rejection of the Mind-to-Speech Principle: Dr Lauben's utterance of "I am wounded" has a different sense than the sense associated with Dr. Lauben's first-person belief.[38] Whereas first person thought involves privately grasping a thought about oneself, communication involves a surrogate thought that is publically available. So Frege's account of *de se* communication involves a rejection of the Simple Transfer Model.

It seems that the belief state account can accept the principles of the Simple Transfer Model but must deny that the model provides the whole story of *de se* communication. When Perry turns to a fellow shopper and says, "I am making a mess", what he expresses, namely the proposition that John Perry is making a mess, is identical to the content of his belief. And the hearer also comes to believe the singular proposition that John Perry is making a mess. So it seems that the Simple Transfer Model is upheld. However on the belief state account, there is more going on than merely the transfer of a singular proposition from speaker to hearer; there is an additional story to tell about the coordination of the belief states of the speaker and of the hearer. The speaker believes the proposition in a belief state that can be classified by the sentence 'I am making a mess'. The hearer comes to believe the very same proposition that the speaker believes, but the hearer is not (and, in fact, *cannot be*) in the same belief state as the speaker. Rather the hearer believes the proposition that John Perry is making a mess in a belief state that can be classified by the sentence 'You are making a mess'. So the belief state theorist must grant that the Simple Transfer Model only provides a partial explanation of *de se* communication.

Again, it seems that the sense in which the belief state account can uphold the Simple Transfer Model stems from what the theory calls 'content'. If the characterization of belief states involves attributing to them a type of content, then the belief state account must also reject the Simple Transfer Model. For example, if belief contents on this theory are properly understood as pairs of belief states and singular propositions, then the account must reject either the Mind-to-Speech Principle or the Speech-to-Mind Principle. So, either

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[37] Frege 1918, p.133.

[38] Clas Weber (pc) correctly points out that this may be too quick. The Fregean may hold that "the speaker (implicitly) recognizes that the first-personal belief is unsharable, and intends to communicate the surrogate belief—which she also holds—from the start." This would at least show that the Mind-to-Speech Principle is overly simplistic in presupposing that there is a single relevant belief content.

the belief state account can maintain that there is a sense in which the Simple Transfer Model is upheld yet grant that the transfer of content only provides a partial account of *de se* communication, or, if the belief state theorist construes belief states as a type of content, she must deny the Simple Transfer Model in the case of *de se* communication.

Difficulties with the property theory and *de se* communication have been pointed out by Stalnaker in his 1981 paper "Indexical Belief."[39] Stalnaker writes:

> Lingens, still lost in the Stanford Library, meets Ortcutt. "I've lost my memory and don't know who I am," says Lingens. "Can you tell me? Who am I?" "You're my cousin, Rudolf Lingens," replies Orcutt.
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> This seems to be a simple case of direct and successful communication. Lingens requested a certain piece of information; Orcutt was able to provide it, and did…. If we take the objects of speech acts and mental states to be propositions, then our theoretical account of this act of communication can be as straightforward as the case seems to demand....But Lewis's account of the case must be more complicated. If Lewis holds that the objects of speech acts, as well as of attitudes, are properties— that to make an assertion is also to ascribe a property to oneself—then he will have to describe the case in something like the following way: Lingens asks which of a certain set of properties is correctly ascribed to himself. Ortcutt responds by ascribing a different property to himself. Lingens is then able to infer the answer to his question from Ortcutt's assertion.[40]

Stalnaker criticizes the property account for failing to provide a direct account of communication when it comes to assertions involving first person pronouns. Stalnaker's objection highlights the difficulty that Lewis's account has in upholding the Simple Transfer Model. Stalnaker presents Lewis with a dilemma: either he can take the content of assertion to be propositions or he can take the content of assertion to be properties. Either horn involves a violation of the Simple Transfer Model. Adopting the first horn involves rejecting the Mind-to-Speech Principle since the content of assertion is a proposition whereas the content of the belief that the speaker expresses with his utterance is a

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[39] Stalnaker 1981.
[40] Stalnaker 1981, p.146.

property. Adopting the second horn involves rejecting the Speech-to-Mind Principle since the hearer self-ascribes a different property than the one that is the content of assertion. If the content of Ortcutt's assertion "You're my cousin, Rudolf Lingens" is the same property that Ortcutt self-ascribes (something like *having Lingens as a cousin*), then Lingens doesn't self-ascribe this property, but rather a different property (*being Lingens*). If, according to the property account, *de se* communication involves the ascription of different properties to speaker and hearer (as it seems that it must), then the question arises as to what content is expressed by utterances involving first-person pronouns and how this content relates to the distinct properties self-ascribed by speaker and hearer.

I am inclined to think that the phenomenon of *de se* communication *just shows* that the Simple Transfer Model is too simple. It seems eminently plausible that differences in behavior are explainable in terms of differences in belief. Kaplan's utterance of "My pants are on fire!" is followed by different behaviors on behalf of the speaker and the hearers: Kaplan stops, drops and rolls, and the rest of us run to get a fire extinguisher. If differences in behavior are explainable in terms of differences in belief, Kaplan's stop-drop-and-roll behavior is explained by different beliefs than the beliefs that we come to accept from his utterance. The belief we form leads us to run and get a fire extinguisher rather than stop-drop-and-roll. Perhaps, following Cappelen and Dever, one could claim that we all believe that Kaplan's pants are on fire and desire that Kaplan's pants get extinguished quickly and the difference in behavior is explainable by the fact that different actions are available to Kaplan than available to us. But as I argued above, merely having different actions available to speaker and hearer is not sufficient for explaining the difference in their behaviors. They must also have *beliefs about* what actions are available to them and these will enter into the explanation of why our behavior differs from Kaplan's and it is difficult to see how these beliefs could be explicated in non-*de se* terms. At the very least, examples such as this one suggest that the Simple Transfer Model does not provide a satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon of *de se* communication: either the model fails to tell the whole story (one content is transferred from speaker to hearer but it alone cannot explain the resulting differences in behavior) or it is false (there is no single content transferred from speaker to hearer).

If this is right, then the failure of the Simple Transfer Model to satisfactorily explain *de se* communication ought not be seen as a theoretical cost, but rather a moral to be

learned from the phenomenon of *de se* communication. Regardless of what account of *de se* attitudes one adopts, the Simple Transfer Model is insufficient for explaining *de se* communication. However recognizing that the Simple Transfer Model fails to satisfactorily explain the phenomenon of *de se* communication leaves us with several pressing questions: Where does the Simple Transfer Model go wrong? How might it be modified or replaced in order to provide a plausible account of *de se* communication? Does complicating the Simple Transfer Model result in any theoretical costs for an account of communication more generally? What implications do the various accounts of *de se* propositional attitudes have for providing an account of *de se* communication? These are some of the questions that the papers in this volume seek to answer.

IV. VOLUME OVERVIEW

The volume begins by focusing on some of the foundational questions concerning *de se* content. The first concerns the epistemology of *de se* thought. *De se* thought is deemed by many to have a special epistemic status. It has also been noted that certain thoughts display immunity to error through misidentification. Suppose Clas sees a woman in the distance walking a terrier and he judges "Aunt Lillian is walking her terrier". There are two ways in which Clas's judgment might be mistaken. It might be mistaken in virtue of ascribing a property to Aunt Lillian that she doesn't in fact have; for example, she may be walking a neighbor's retriever. Or Clas might be mistaken not in the property he ascribes but in who or what he is ascribing it to: it might not be Aunt Lillian, but Aunt Lillian's neighbor. The latter type of mistake has been called an *error through misidentification*.

Many have noted that first-person judgments seem to be immune to this sort of mistake. When Clas judges that he himself has Groat's disease, he might be mistaken in his diagnosis, but it seems impossible for him to be mistaken regarding who he is diagnosing. This purported immunity to error through misidentification seems to grant a special status to first-person or *de se* judgments: they seem to be immune from error in a way in which judgments about others are not. In "Immunity to Error Through Misidentification and the Epistemology of *De Se* Thought" Aidan McGlynn claims that existing considerations fail to establish that immunity to error through misidentification highlights a distinctive epistemic feature of *de se* judgments. He considers what features might determine the distinction

between those judgments that are immune from error through misidentification and those that are not, highlighting various problem cases for drawing such a distinction. He then presents his positive account that arises out of a better understanding of the modality implicit in the notion of immunity to error.

Another foundational issue concerns the relation of *de se* content to perception. Just as we might hold that certain beliefs have an essentially first-person component, many have recently argued that certain features of perception motivate positing such a component.[41] In "Constancy in Variation: An Argument for Centering the Contents of Experience?" Kathrin Glüer-Pagin examines this question and whether the perceptual phenomenon of constancy in variation motivates positing centered perceptual content. She concludes that it does not and she argues that her uncentered account of perceptual content that she has developed and defended elsewhere is able to accommodate this phenomenon.

In "What is the Problem of *De Se* Attitudes?" Dilip Ninan considers whether there is a distinctive philosophical problem concerning *de se* thought. He responds to what he calls '*de se* skepticism' – the view that "any problem raised by *de se* attitudes is really just instance of a more general problem". Instead he argues in favor of *de se* exceptionalism— the view that *de se* attitudes raise a distinct philosophical problem. First he clarifies what the purported problem of *de se* attitudes is and then outlines a doctrine of propositions: a number of principles specifying central features of propositions while attempting to remain neutral on the question of what propositions are. He then argues that *de se* attitudes raise a distinctive problem for this doctrine of propositions. Towards the end Ninan discusses how various theories of *de se* attitudes can be seen as responding to the distinctive problem of *de se* attitudes he identifies.

In "Modeling a Perspective on the World" Robert Stalnaker further develops his recent account of *de se* attitudes put forth in his *Our Knowledge of the Internal World* and in "The Essential Contextual"[42]. In addition Stalnaker responds to a recent objection to his account by Clas Weber.[43] The target of Weber's attack is what he calls Propositionality—the

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[41] See Andy Egan. 2006. "Appearance Properties?" *Nous* 40, pp. 495–521 and Berit Brogaard. 2010. "Strong representationalism and centered content". *Philosophical Studies* 151, pp. 373–392.
[42] Stalnaker 2008 and Stalnaker 2011.
[43] Clas Weber. 2014. "Indexical Beliefs and Communication: Against Stalnaker on Self-Location," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 1-24.

view that *de se* ignorance always involves ignorance about what world one inhabits. Stalnaker denies that his view commits him to what Weber calls "Singular Self-Location"—the view that "self-locating beliefs are nothing but binary relations to singular propositions."[44] Stalnaker considers various ways of interpreting Weber's principle of singular self-location and he provides an elaboration of his account according to which propositionality holds but it bears no commitment to any of these interpretations.

The second part of the book focuses on providing an account of *de se* communication. In "Indexical Thought, Communication, and Mental Files" Francois Recanati further develops his account of *de se* thought in terms of the mental files framework and applies this framework to *de se* communication. Recanati argues in favor of what he calls 'mental indexicality' and argues that this feature of thought is best understood in terms of a two-tier account involving mental files and modes of presentation. Recanati then goes on to explain how this framework can accommodate *de se* communication. According to his proposal, the Simple Transfer Model of belief is to be rejected in favor of a 'coordination model': when Perry says to his fellow shopper "I am making a mess" the thoughts of the hearer and the speaker are coordinated via constraints on mental files that apply equally to both conversational participants. The result is an account of *de se* communication that is direct but rejects the Simple Transfer Model's assumption that there is a single belief possessed by the speaker that is replicated in the hearer.

In "Token-reflexive Presuppositions and the *De Se*" Manuel Garcia-Carpintero argues for an account of *de se* thought that expands upon and further develops Perry's belief state account. Garcia-Carpintero considers two interpretations of Perry's belief content / belief state distinction: the first interpretation involves taking the content of belief to be a token-reflexive proposition, for example: the addressee of this token of 'I' is making a mess. Garcia-Carpintero points out a difficulty with this account that is also noted by Perry. The difficulty is that this token-reflexive content can itself be accessed in different ways, giving rise to the same sorts of difficulties faced by accounts involving traditional singular propositional content. The second interpretation of Perry's belief content / belief state distinction involves characterizing the belief state in terms of a token-reflexive content; this is the interpretation that Garcia-Carpintero develops and defends in the remainder of the

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[44] Stalnaker, this volume, p.XX.

paper. On Garcia-Carpintero's account belief states themselves have content and this content is to be characterized token-reflexively. Garcia-Carpintero provides an account of the content of belief states in terms presuppositional content.

We've seen that Frege held that first-person reports do not involve a direct expression of our first-person thoughts—when Dr. Lauben says "I have been wounded" he uses the 'I' in a different sense than when he has the corresponding first-person thought. This raises a question about what is said by first person utterances. In "Speaking About Oneself" Isidora Stojanovic argues that first person speech raises a substantial challenge to the traditional Kaplanian view about what is said by an utterance. Stojanovic puts forth a new account of what is said claiming that the proposed account is better suited to make sense of our intuitions regarding same-saying in cases involving first-person speech.

In "Why My *I* is Your *You*: On the Communication of *De Se* Attitudes" Emar Maier tackles the challenge of *de se* communication by giving an account of such communication in terms of Discourse Representation Theory. Maier's approach involves taking seriously the difference in perspective between speaker and hearer in the case of *de se* communication. He provides an asymmetric model according to which there is a production algorithm that links the mental states of the speaker to the utterance produced by the speaker and a distinct interpretation algorithm that links the speaker's utterance to the hearer's mental states. So, for example, the 'I' in Perry's utterance of 'I am making a mess' is directly linked to the speaker's self-file, however it plays a different role on the part of the hearer, triggering a presupposition that modifies the hearer's mental file of the most current, salient speaker.

In "Being at the Center: Self-Location in Thought and Language", Clas Weber evaluates centered and uncentered accounts of propositional attitudes and communicated content. He argues that appealing to centered content provides a better account of both our beliefs as well as our utterances. He addresses and dispels some of the worries that have been raised about positing centered content at the level of belief and communication. The result, he argues, is a unified account according to which the content of belief and communication is centered.

Many have taken the phenomenon of *de se* communication to motivate adopting centered worlds content of some form or another. In "*De Se* Communication: Centered or Uncentered?" Peter Pagin evaluates the success of these appeals to centered content in

giving an account of *de se* communication. He considers the multi-centered approaches of Ninan and Torre[45], the recent account proposed by Sarah Moss involving *de dicto* surrogate propositions[46], Max Kolbel's recent account involving locally portable content[47], and Clas Weber's recentering account.[48] He argues that each of the proposals suffers from a unique difficulty and ultimately fails to provide a successful account of *de se* communication.

In "Varieties of Centering and *De Se* Communication" Dirk Kindermann considers four different ways of accommodating *de se* thoughts in communication: uncentering, recentering, multi-centering and no-centering. He argues that there is a common feature of all four accounts that involves what he calls a "shifting operation" on the part of the hearer. After a useful tallying of the vices and virtues of each type of account, Kindermann concludes that the empirical data fail to support one type of view over another and argues in favor of neutrality between the various alternatives.

Thirty-five years after the publication of Perry's messy shopper case, *de se* thought remains a fascinating and perplexing area of philosophical inquiry. A successful account of *de se* thought ought not merely explain what it is that Perry learns when he learns that he himself is making a mess. It must also explain the fact that Perry is able to easily communicate this information to others. Perhaps the phenomenon of *de se* communication forces us to further complicate existing theories of communication or of *de se* thought. Or perhaps it provides new insight into the nature of *de se* thought itself.

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[45] Dilip Ninan. 2010. "*De Se* Attitudes". *Philosophy Compass* 5, pp. 551–67 and Stephan Torre. 2010. "Centered Assertion". *Philosophical Studies* 150, pp. 97–114.
[46] Moss 2012.
[47] Max Kölbel. 2013. "The Conversational Role of Centered Contents". *Inquiry* 56, pp. 97–121.
[48] Weber 2013.

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