

# Impure ‘de se’ Thoughts and Pragmatics (and How This Is Relevant to Pragmatics and IEM)

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## 1 Introduction

A ‘de se’ thought is a thought such that the subject of the thought thinks about herself through a mode of ‘presentation’ which is distinctly ‘de se’ in so far as it does not include a descriptive component (other than a first-personal mode of presentation). Laborious though this presentation of the issue might be, it is a step forward in the right direction, as it points out that after the inclusion of the first-personal component, no descriptive components or modes of presentation like *proper names* have to be included. Typical reports of ‘de se’ thoughts are:

- 1) Mary thinks she\* is clever;
- 2) I think I am happy;
- 3) John thinks he himself is  
happy;
- 4) John remembers walking in  
Oxford.

It is interesting that the first-personal mode of presentation of the thinking subject need not include a name (even in the form of apposition), because even an amnesiac can have the thought:

- 5) I think I am happy

without having to recognize her name as part of the first-personal mode of presentation (of the subject) that she uses in thought. (We may return to this issue later).

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'De se' modes of presentation have a bearing on action (see Davis 2013, Perry (1979, etc. on this). If I realize that the chandelier is falling and there is an impending danger on myself, I may take action and escape; however, if I were to realize that the chandelier is about to fall on Alessandro Capone, whom I take to be someone possibly different from myself and were an amnesiac, I would fail to take action. A similar story was discussed by Perry (1979) to show the intimate connections between ('de se') thoughts and action.

In this paper we are going to discuss pure<sup>1</sup> and impure 'de se' thoughts. While (pure) 'de se' thoughts are associated with essential indexical modes of presentation (that have a bearing on action), which do not involve a descriptive component (they are pure indexical modes of presentation), impure 'de se' thoughts involve subjects that can be associated with descriptive components (the question arises whether 'pure' de se thoughts correlate with Davis (2013) generic self concepts while impure 'de se' thoughts correlate with Davis' specific self concepts (concepts which are determined by one's introspective awareness (does not one's introspective awareness include proper names as modes of presentation? I find evidence in Davis's text that they do)). Impure 'de se' thoughts are also associated with some actions in some related way (hence the definition of pure 'de se' attitudes as involving a motivational component (see Davis 2013) needs to be qualified further). Pragmatics is involved in this discussion because in context we need to know whether a purely 'de se' or an impurely 'de se' thought is involved and we need to distinguish between the two distinct modes of presentation through pragmatic information. Semantic information is not sufficient to discriminate among them. Pure 'de se' thoughts also have a characteristic which can be called IEM (Immunity to error through misidentification).<sup>2</sup> This characteristic depends on the fact that, as modes of presentations associated with subjects of thought are essentially indexical, in that they do not depend on any identification component (being associated with no descriptive component (Following Evans 1982)), the lack of a descriptive component leads to the impossibility of error through misidentification. However, if there is a species of 'de se' thoughts which are not purely 'de se' (in other words they need not exclude a descriptive component), it goes without saying that these should be associated with lack of IEM.

I shall start with some generic considerations on the pragmatics of 'de se' thoughts and I will then move on to the distinction between pure and impure 'de se' thoughts, which clearly involve some pragmatic discriminatory ability. Since impure 'de se' thoughts need not be IEM, it must be clear that IEM is not a semantic characteristic of psychological predicates but is available only after intervention of some pragmatic considerations. Anyway, the issue of IEM is to be considered

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<sup>1</sup>'Purity' in connection with reference unmediated by some descriptive component is a term used by García-Carpintero (2013, 76). Reasonably enough, the term 'impure' has been coined by myself in opposition to such a term.

<sup>2</sup>I am largely following Higginbotham (2003) in the thought that there is a connection between 'de se' thoughts and IEM.

as only tangential to the issue of 'de se' and thus, with the exception of the next section, I will only reserve a final section for the definitive demonstration that IEM applies to certain psychological predicates only in the background of contextual considerations. IEM, in other words, is only pragmatic in nature. Although this is an important conclusion, it is deduced merely as a consequence of the analysis of 'de se' thoughts. The D-tour we are making is considerable, but not improper and without consequences.

## 2 On the Connection Between IEM and 'de se' Thoughts

Before proceeding, I want to dwell briefly on the connection between 'de se' thoughts and IEM. This clarification will turn out to be useful in subsequent discussions. Consider an utterance such as:

6) I believe I feel a pain in my leg.

I may be wrong in so far as the pain is not in my leg but in my arm, but I cannot be mistaken in so far as it is not myself who feels the pain (wherever it is). This is immunity to Error through Misidentification. I cannot be mistaken about the identity of the person who feels the pain.<sup>3</sup> Now, it is interesting that (6) is a locus of the intersection of a 'de se' thought and of IEM. WE can provisionally say that if a thought is 'de se' then it must be characterized by IEM. However, if there is IEM, we are not 'ipso facto' confronted with a 'de se' thought. There are theorists like Evans (1982), who connect IEM with demonstrative utterances. These, according to Evans, illustrate the phenomenon of IEM, as these are cases in which a speaker makes a judgment about an object, as it takes a certain predicate to be instantiated in the object identified through a fundamental idea (controlled by an information link) (but not through a descriptive component).

So in a demonstrative thought, like 'P (a)', there is no question of identifying a through an equation like  $a = b$ , where b is a descriptive component. Now while demonstrative thoughts exhibit the feature of IEM, they are clearly not 'de se' thoughts. In the case of 'de se' thoughts the source of the information that controls the identification of the subject comes from 'inside', whereas in demonstrative thoughts like 'That is white' the source of information that controls the identification of the subject (through some fundamental idea) comes from outside.

It is true that Evans wants to demonstrate that knowledge of ourselves must be modeled after knowledge of the external world, as in utterances such as:

(7) I believe there is a tree

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<sup>3</sup>As Recanati (2012) says, "to be immune to error through misidentification, a first-person judgment must be truly subjective. The subject must not be thought of as an object which one identifies as oneself; for, if it is, the judgment rests on an identity ('b = myself') and is subject to identification errors".

the procedure utilized to obtain information concerning the external world is what controls the thought and gives us the content of the belief. Evans is categorical about semantic ascent, the procedure whereby by being confronted with thoughts about the external world, we automatically obtain thoughts about our own minds.

If such were always the case, there would be no doubt that there should be some overlap between ‘de se’ thoughts and demonstrative utterances, as, after all, saying ‘That is black’ would amount to accepting that the speaker thinks that he sees a black cat (if that is a black cat).

But the overlap is only partial.

There are cases in which we are disconnected from the outside world (either because we wear black spectacles or special earphones producing no sound), and yet we have thoughts about the world and about ourselves. In these cases, Evans’ semantic ascent procedure is not available. These are cases of purely ‘de se’ thoughts, in which a speaker is connected to the subject of thinking only in thought. He knows that he is thinking that  $p$  not because he is connected with the world which furnishes some information that  $p$ , but because the thinking (or the thought) is immediately available to him in his mind.

Thus, I would like to propose that these are genuinely ‘de se’ thoughts and that IEM, as occurs in such thoughts, is not necessarily identical to IEM as manifested in demonstrative utterances. A *précis* is required. In both cases, IEM is caused by the fact that the link with the source of information concerning a certain subject (or object) does not proceed through a descriptive component (if there is identification of the object, that is through a fundamental idea, as Evans says). However, in the case of a demonstrative judgment, the link with the information source which provides an identification (however fundamental) of the object is external to the mind. Instead, in the pure cases of IEM in ‘de se’ thoughts the source of information is inside the mind (or at least the body)<sup>4</sup> of the thinking subject (and an appropriate channel for this information source is the subject’s own thinking). So perhaps we could distinguish between type IEM1 and type IEM 2, or we could opt for an abstract type, remembering that it is instantiated differently depending on whether the thought is ‘de se’ or demonstrative.

Before closing this section, I briefly address a point made by Davis, in noting that Higginbotham says that “a characteristic of ‘de se’ beliefs is “immunity to error through misidentification”” (Davis 2013). Davis says:

Higginbotham is certainly on to something. With amnesia, Reagan can wonder whether Ronald Reagan is in pain without wondering whether he himself is. But Higginbotham overstates the difference. First, if I misidentified the sensation I am experiencing as pain, so that I mistakenly believe that I am in *pain*, then I also mistaken believe that *I* am in pain. (Davis 2013)

Now, I attach great importance to this example, because, even if it is different from the ones I will offer on contextual evaporation of IEM (or sensitivity of

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<sup>4</sup>The source of information may come from inside the body (proprioceptive information, as ‘I feel a pain in my leg’ (see Recanati 2012) or from the flow of thought (inside the mind).

IEM to context), it mainly shows the same point. In some contexts, IEM gets through, in some contexts it doesn't. This is a context in which a state cannot be falsely attributed to the subject without making an error about the identification of the subject (the subject is necessarily the subject of the pain if the ascription is successful and not the subject of the pain if the ascription is not successful). However, there is a context in which IEM is unscathed. I do not just believe that I am in pain but I also believe that I believe that I am in pain. (Luminosity, to use a term by Williamson 2000). Then, although I can be mistaken as to the identity of the subject of the pain, I cannot doubt (and it cannot be doubted) that I am the person of whom I think that I think 'I am in pain' (whether or not it is correct that I am in pain). Now, if adapting the example a bit could preserve IEM, it is open to us to believe that similar or related strategies could show that in some cases IEM evaporates or is not stable. So is the tie with 'de se' a semantic or a pragmatic tie? It could be useful to start with the assumption that it is a logical tie, related indirectly to the semantics.

The issue of the (possible) connection between 'de se' thoughts and IEM has also been the object of considerations by García-Carpintero (2013). Since these considerations are offered at different points in the paper, I need to extrapolate them (perhaps in a way which need not be approved of by the author). These considerations seem to me to be of considerable importance, though I think we are still some way from complete understanding of the issue. At one point, García-Carpintero says that the connection between 'de se' and 'IEM' is only indirect. I have myself said previously that the relationship is a logical one (or may be a logical one), although we are not clear yet how to define it. Provisionally I said that IEM need not imply a 'de se' statement (demonstrative utterances, which according to Evans involve IEM, if we follow García-Carpintero only involve circumstantial (and not absolute) IEM). Instead, a 'de se' statement seems to me to imply IEM (however, if the 'de se' statement is one in which the 'de se' component is added through pragmatics (e.g. John knows he\* is happy), I quite agree that the connection between the 'de se' statement and IEM is indirect. It could also be 'indirect, in the sense that a 'de se' statement implies some yet to be specified proposition and this implies IEM. We are open to this possibility as well.

Now, I believe that my view converges with García-Carpintero's in that I too believe that a conception of 'de se' which only takes into account token-reflexive thoughts (e.g. The person who has this thought) is necessarily incomplete (see Capone 2010). The reasons given in García-Carpintero's article are compelling. The author takes ideas by Recanati (2007) on schizophrenic subjects, who are capable of holding thoughts such as 'The owner of this thought is happy', while being skeptical on the possibility that the thought really belongs to the patient's mind (perhaps it was inserted there by someone else (a problem which is not only theoretical but practical as thought-insertion is part of the practice of indoctrination, but I cannot go into this). In normal human beings, 'the 'de se' thought has both a token-reflexive part and a component reflecting the mental state underlying the content of the thought (some perspectival character-like component). In Capone (2010) I argued that this component is central and is provided through conversational

implicature (being part of an explicature). García-Carpintero, instead, seems to be happy with the view that the coincidence of the token-reflexive component and of the perspectival component is a presupposition, which works in normal subjects but not in the schizophrenic patient. The other reason for thinking that the token-reflexive components cannot be part of a motivational account relating thought to action (through maximal rationality) comes from a dialogue between Perry and another customer in the supermarket (think of Perry's supermarket story). The customer says 'You are the messy shopper' and then it dawns on Perry that he\* is the messy shopper. However, there might be identification involved, as Perry needs to know that he is being addressed by the other customer who uses 'You are the messy shopper' (meaning 'The person I am addressing is the messy shopper'). I suppose the second explanation is a reason why García-Carpintero uses the term 'character-like' to describe the perspectival meaning of 'de se' statements. I have myself proposed in Capone (2010) that the word 'I' must appear in a 'de se' report of propositional attitude and this is probably what the author has in mind when he says that 'de se' perspectival states are character-like.

Now, the moral of this story is that, if we follow the considerations above, we are to connect IEM with token-reflexive statements, rather than with 'de se' statements (according to García-Carpintero). It follows that the link between 'de se' statements and IEM is indirect, as the author said (without explaining this if not by implication of his other considerations). Now, I believe that we should be clear that the story by Recanati is more a story about clinical pragmatics than a story about how the mind usually works in normal cases. Thus I suppose that the story about the dialogue in the supermarket seems to be more solid and foundational. So my idea that a 'de se' statement involves a report of IEM needs to be qualified with the view that the identification between a token-reflexive component and a perspectival component is due to a conversational implicature or a (pragmatic) presupposition.

But now I think we need an additional part of the story. I suppose the following must be true. Consider the possibility of using a genuinely 'de se' individuator (we may identify it through some symbol, such as #de se. This is a genuinely perspectival component. However, in ordinary conversation one may use, rather loosely, a non-genuinely 'de se' individuator, say \*de se. Let us call these individuators a and b respectively. Then we may suppose that the use of individuator b depends epistemically on a, just in case the reporter of the 'de se' thought believes or knows that for a property P, P applies to b in the thought by reported thinker on the basis of believing or knowing that the reported subject would attribute the thought he had to himself by applying P to a. But this means that if the reported thinker/speaker self-attributed an IEM thought, the reporter also attributed to her an IEM thought. Individuator b depends epistemically on individuator a if the reporting speaker in using b *simulates* some mental process of the reported speaker in which he is assumed to be using a. Now this reminds us of Sosa (1995)'s treatment of the attributive/referential distinction (reported in García-Carpintero 2013). There too pragmatic processes were involved, and I take Sosa's treatment as a basis for a treatment of indirect reports involving 'de se' thoughts and IEM.

## 2.1 *Is There Actually Any IEM?*

The issue of IEM as related to 'de se' thoughts is terribly complicated. Recently, two scholars have questioned its importance or real usefulness. Campbell (1999) and Howell (2007). Without getting into much detail, the main objection is that there is what appears as IEM only in the cases of psychological predicates, and this is highly suspicious, as the phenomenon may well be related (as I proposed) to such predicates. In short, Campbell proposes that IEM is related to the fact that the processes involved in the application of psychological predicates are dedicated. Now, the term 'dedicated' reminds us of issues pertaining to the Modularity of Mind (Carruthers 2006). A modular process is a dedicated mechanism, in that it has some dedicated procedure, and is encapsulated, in the sense that it cannot have access to procedures outside it (say what happens in other modules of the mind). Thus, to provide an example, perception is encapsulated from the reasoning module (reflective procedures that produce inference through reasoning and deductive devices). Certain optical illusions exploit and show this encapsulation. Now, activities such as thinking are dedicated, as they occur in the mind, they are probably based in some encapsulated module, and they are strongly constrained. One such constraint – or dedicated process – is that the 'I' needs no descriptive component information before or in the process of its operation in judgment. If there are descriptive components, these are necessarily 'thin' (see Rosenthal (2011) on the coindexing between different occurrences of mental tokens of 'I'). If there is any such coindexing, it works either on the basis of a presupposition (and again we bump into the notion that these processes are dedicated and thus presuppose identity of the thinker in every subsequent and linked act of thinking) or on the basis of a linguistic rule, the character of 'I' which allows the speaker (or thinker) and the hearer to refer to an objective body, whose persistence guarantees continuity and linking of the selfs (the Kantian transcendental self). The quality of being dedicated mental processes, allows attributions of psychological predicates to escape a potential objection to IEM, the fact that some identification, however thin, must be required.

But then, if these processes are dedicated, what is the role of IEM? Is that a mere consequence of the fact that the process (say, of thinking) is dedicated?

But, of course, a problem for Campbell (1999) could be that there are indeed cases of IEM which are not linked to psychological predicates, the cases of demonstrative judgments discussed by Evans in three chapters of his impressive book 'The varieties of reference'. In fact, contrary to Howell (2007), I have proposed that demonstrative judgments have in their grammar of use the application of psychological predicates, as any use of a demonstrative presupposes an information link between an object and the subject of thought – and this information link is, as Devitt (2013) says, a matter of being *in rapport* with an object, say through perception. In any case, Howell does well to say that IEM is a spurious category, including cases that are very different. I am inclined to side with Campbell who says that IEM is just the consequence of the assumption that a psychological process is dedicated – having its characteristic standard procedures. Nevertheless,

with this important qualification, I will continue to use the term IEM. This is not particularly problematic, since in this paper I want to show that IEM depends on genuinely ‘de se’ thoughts and that it is controlled by pragmatic information. Of course, the considerations by Campbell and Howell square perfectly well, with what I am going to say about IEM, since the cases of ‘pure’ ‘de se’ thoughts are genuinely cases where the processes in question are dedicated and work on a presupposition that the thinking subject does not need to know anything about itself. Instead, the cases in which the thinking subject needs to be associated with some descriptive component, due to pragmatic intervention (and we remember that according to Louise Cummings (2009) cases of pragmatic inference involving world-knowledge are not genuinely encapsulated, thus presumably they cannot really count as dedicated processes) cannot really be said to be cases of dedicated processes. Pragmatic information providing an identification component through a descriptive feature militates against the status of dedicated processes.

### 3 What Does It Mean to Have a Purely ‘de se’ Thought

When I have a ‘de se’ thought, I attribute a property to a subject of the very thought that occurs to me (and which I describe when I vocalize the utterance in the first person (a direct report) or which is described when someone else vocalizes the thought (by describing it through an indirect report based on what I said or on some behavior which licenses the indirect report). The property is instantiated in the subject of the thought (I may think ‘I am in pain’). When we have a demonstrative thought (or a thought involving an object which I can see), it will be said that I am in rapport with that object (Devitt 2013). To be in rapport with some salient object is to be governed (or controlled, to use Evans’ (1982) words) by information coming from that object. It is not clear whether it can be said (or whether it is useful to say) in the case of a ‘de se’ thought that the subject of the thought is in rapport with himself – certainly he must be aware of himself as a subject of thought – but this time this cannot occur through semantic ascent; in other words, it is not necessary that the subject of the thought becomes aware of some object which he perceives to come to the conclusion that there must be a subject of thought in addition to the experience of thinking that thought. I have already said that opting for semantic ascent and immediate introspective knowledge depends on the circumstances. Even if in some case it suffices for me to have the thought that the sky is blue that I have observed the sky and seen that it is blue, Evans’ position that semantic ascent also serves to identify the subject of thought sounds incredible, as the subject is always there from the beginning. Even if my senses were not functioning well or were not functioning at all, there is a subject of my thoughts and that is myself. Myself is available regardless of what I see or hear or of whether I really see something or hear something (Although in case I am tortured or humiliated too much, the self may come under attack and become so exiguous that it will run the risk of being annihilated (a consequence of this may be suicide)). Thus, I take that the subject of



thought is provided by the thinking activity in the sense that without the subject of thought, there could be no thinking activity. We could say that the subject of thought is presupposed by the thinking activity but also that the thinking activity (if we have evidence of it) is evidence for there being, somewhere, a subject of thought.

Thus, when we have a thought such as:

(8) Mary thinks she is happy

There must not only be happiness (instantiated, as Evans would say), but there must be a thinking subject thinking that she herself is happy. I suppose that a fundamental identification of the thinking subject is that it is somewhere, and exactly where the thought is, and that she is thinking something. Now, it is possible that a fundamental component of 'de se' is that it is a thinking subject, while other descriptive components would have to be expunged from this *fundamental* identification. Presumably this is a 'de se' mode of presentation – rather exiguous, one could say. I may be criticized for allowing into the 'de se' concept a minimal identification component – yet, if we follow Evans this is no great harm provided that we are prepared to allow that this is a fundamental identification component, which may involve some thin kind of identification but not an identification by description which would destroy IEM, which, we have said, is a necessary accompaniment of *pure* 'de se' thoughts. We have IEM when it is not reasonable to ask (after having the thought 'I think I am in pain') 'Someone is in pain, but is it myself who is in pain?'. Analogously we have IEM when it is not reasonable to ask (after one has the thought 'I think I am in pain') 'Someone thinks he is in pain, but is it myself who thinks he is in pain?' Here we have identified the thinking subject as someone who thinks, but nevertheless there cannot be any doubt as to who the thinking subject is, provided that he is characterized minimally, through a minimal and fundamental component (the person who is thinking this thought). (The objections by Davis apply to this characterization of IEM, but these can be surmounted by resorting to luminosity and to recursion (if one has the IEM thought 'I think I think that I am in pain', it is not legitimate to ask the following question: 'One(3) thinks(1) that one(3) (he) thinks (2) he is in pain, but is it myself who is doing the thinking (2)?)).

It will be helpful, to avoid confusion, to say that even if a fundamental identification of the thinking subject is required for a 'de se' thought to be occurrent, it is necessary that no additional, non thin (thus thick) identification components should be added (to the fundamental identification of the reference), especially if they are of a descriptive type. Thus, although I may have all sorts of knowledge about myself – such as names, status, jobs, relations – I will not be using these identification components as part of the identification of myself – apart from (or on top of) my mode of presentation as a thinking subject. The reason for this is that I can have pure 'de se' thoughts, in other words I can think of myself in ways that are neutral as to who I am, except for the basic information that I am a thinking subject. Thus, when I think that I am clever (or stupid), I am not (necessarily) thinking that Alessandro Capone is clever. This essential identification of the reference is useful – we will call it a *modest* or *pure* identification. It is useful when we want to

keep our thought skeletal – we may add information pragmatically, if needed. But in some cases it is useful to have a modest characterization of the self. For example, we must allow that an amnesiac in having the thought ‘I think I cannot remember anything’ has a modest or minimal mode of presentation of the self – certainly one that cannot include ‘John’ or ‘Mary’ or ‘Joseph’. In fact, the semantics of ‘I think I cannot remember anything’ is in potential conflict with the attribution of a mode of presentation such as ‘Alessandro Capone’. If the speaker/thinking subject cannot remember anything, she cannot remember her name either – general amnesia includes amnesia about names. But of course, we need not consider only cases in which the semantics of the sentence expressing the thought precludes us from having a mode of presentation that includes a name. Consider, in fact:

(9) Mary thinks she has pretty hair

In a background in which we know that Mary is amnesiac, we must exclude that she thinks of herself under the mode of presentation ‘Mary’.<sup>5</sup>

Now we understand, why Castañeda (1966) or Perry (1979) or the others were inclined to call ‘de se’ pronominals essential indexical. They certainly wanted to account for cases like amnesia or the absent-minded shopper who follows a trail of sugar and wants to find the person losing sugar. In Perry’s case, the problem is not caused by a mode of presentation equivalent with a Proper Name, but by a definite description like ‘the absent-minded shopper’. Perry can finally remedy the situation and remove the sack of sugar with a hole in it, when he realizes that he himself is the messy shopper. In this case, it appears that too much information (like: The messy shopper) will be a distraction, whereas when he realizes that he himself is the messy shopper, he will find a solution to the problem.

## 4 Towards a Pragmatics of ‘de se’

In two previous articles I have argued that ‘de se’ modes of presentation in many cases are provided through pragmatics. Now, I must admit the pragmatic demonstration is not easy. Surely there are easy cases, where there is an interpretative

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<sup>5</sup>García-Carpintero (2013, 80) says that “the amnesiac cases suggest also that descriptive individuat-ors, whether or not they allow for for ‘de re’ thought on the strictures of N, are unnecessary, for amnesiacs are able to think about themselves in a fully self-conscious way by using and understanding ‘I’ and related expressions for first-personal reference while ignoring everything about themselves”. However, this looks like a simplification. When I discuss Kant’s transcendental self, I present data to the effect that the ‘I’ must keep a file of what he said before to monitor his own speech for contradiction. Thus a truly amnesiac subject which only retains the ‘I’ mode of presentation of himself cannot successfully embark on the enterprise of making a coherent discourse devoid of contradictions. It is necessary that the ‘I’ should always come accompanied by a file on what he has said before.

ambiguity and pragmatics will be responsible for resolving the ambiguity in question. Thus, to illustrate an easy case, consider the following (from Capone 2010) :

(10) Mary thinks she is clever

Now, it is clear (at least to those who are familiar with the 'de se' literature and Castañeda) that the sentence (10) shows up an interpretative ambiguity and can be understood as:

(11) Mary thinks she herself (or she\*) is clever

(12) Mary thinks she (that woman there) is clever.

We may add a third interpretation which is both 'de se' and demonstrative:

(13) Mary thinks that she (herself/that woman) is clever.  
(The speaker points to Mary through a demonstrative gesture)

The interpretation (13) is not one that usually comes to mind and is possibly an interpretation which could only come to a logician's mind. I propose to ignore it, for the time being (there may be other places for this discussion). Now, if we only concentrate on (11) and (12), it is clear that, since there is an interpretative ambiguity, pragmatics must come into the picture to furnish an interpretation (either a default interpretation or a contextual interpretation). Here scholars may be at a fork, Relevance Theorists may invoke the power of the context to modulate meaning and to resolve interpretative ambiguities; neo-Gricean scholars, instead may opt for scalar mechanisms and, anyway, for default (conversational) implicatures/explicatures. Ambiguity resolution seems to me a matter of explicature, mainly following Grice (also Huang (2007) or Carston 2002)). Now, let us leave aside the issue of actual interpretation, as I said there might be controversy about this. What is indubitably clear is that 'de se' attitudes provide room for pragmatic treatments – and without pragmatics it would be difficult to assess what kind of thought is produced by uttering a sentence which is potentially ambiguous.

Another pragmatic problem, to be sure, is offered by sentences such as:

(14) Mary believes that she is happy

Even when we know, for some reason, that the interpretation the speaker has in mind is:

(15) Mary believes that she herself is happy.

The problem here, of course, is that (15) is an indirect report of some utterance by Mary or of some thought by Mary which we were somehow able to deduce. This interpretative issue is not easy. We are at a quandary. Which is the source of the indirect report, an utterance or some salient state by Mary which allowed some inference on the part of the speaker?

In other words, the choice here is between an indirect report or a description. After all, if something similar to semantic ascent is a strategy available at least

sometimes (as Evans says), an observer, by seeing Mary happy and believing that she cannot herself fail to notice that she is happy, comes to the conclusion that Mary believes she herself is happy. The issue is not uninteresting from a theoretical point of view, although we may be inclined to settle this issue by adopting the view that since Mary said that she is happy, someone reported that Mary believes she is happy (in case contextual clues militate in favor of this direction in interpretation (see Dascal 2003). And thus (15) is something like an indirect report. Some pragmatic explanation must lie behind these considerations. It is not impossible that the hearer will run a simulation process and come to the conclusion that (15) is an indirect report. As I implicated, this might be a superficial explanation, but for the time being it will do. Because if we establish that this is an indirect report, then the pragmatic problems besieging indirect reports will recur.

Now suppose we can establish that the subject ‘she herself’ corresponds to ‘I’ in the equivalent direct report (remember that part of the pragmatic machinery concerning indirect reports consists in simulating the direct report which is the basis for the indirect report). Thus, we think that the original speaker used ‘I’ (corresponding to ‘she herself’) in the ‘de se’ thought and that ‘I’ was first-personal. Now we should warn our readers that we cannot easily equate ‘first-personal’ with a ‘I’-mode of presentation, even if to begin with I was inclined to think them equivalent. It cannot be doubted that if a thought is ‘de se’, it requires a first-personal mode of presentation. However, as Higginbotham (2003) says, there are modes of presentation which are more first-personal than ‘I’ or ‘she herself’ (for example ‘PRO’ is more first-personal than ‘I’ or ‘she herself’). Other authors warn us against too easy an identification of ‘first-personal’ with ‘I’ (see Coliva 2003; but also García-Carpintero (2013) based on Burge 2007). Bezuidenhout (1997), for example, lets us notice that ‘I’ could be ambiguous between a referential and an attributive interpretation (The Founding Father attributed these powers to me = The President).<sup>6</sup> Jaszczolt (2013) also warns us against the equivalence between ‘I’ and ‘first-personal’. There may be controversy about these uses – could not, in fact, someone claim that these are loose uses? If these uses are loose, they are not grammatical, and the equivalence between ‘I’ and ‘first-personal’ is not jeopardized. I will opt for the solution for which I have least sympathy, aware as I am that an obstinate opponent might want to argue against the equivalence of ‘I’ and ‘first-personal’. Thus I adopt the view that ‘I’, which undoubtedly has a semantic potential for being first-personal, in some cases is interpretatively ambiguous and may sometimes receive interpretations that are not first-personal. But then this amounts to accepting that a ‘de se’ thought, even though first-personal, need not be expressed by ‘I’. But this, despite all my concessions, I am not inclined to accept. And the reason for my obstinacy is that, after all, in context it is clear whether ‘I’ is first-personal or not. Given that we have accepted so far that a ‘de se’ interpretation

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<sup>6</sup>García-Carpintero (2013) says that “believers in a substantive singular/general distinction will have to accept that some ‘de re’ ascriptions (those meeting Quine’s criterion) report what in fact are general thoughts and viceversa . . .”.

in some context or in some default case is the consequence of a pragmatic process of interpretation (or disambiguation) resulting in an explicature, there is no reason not to accept as well that 'I', even if it occurs in the course of interpretation, may itself be in need of interpretation – the explicature consists in fixing not only the 'de se' interpretation but also the mode of presentation of the 'first-personal' component of the 'de se' thought. Since I am confident that when we say that Angela thinks she is sad, we report a situation of the type: Angela thinks: 'I am sad'. I have a presumption that 'I' is of paramount importance in 'de se' interpretations, because it reflects our usual mental processes and the mental words that are used in those processes. Even if we are not quite ready to adopt the mentalese hypothesis, we may safely adopt the view that in thinking, people use mental occurrences of words. Now, this may not necessarily occur, but it may occur in some cases, and thus it would be realistic to describe those cases by using the words which the thinkers had in mind when they thought something. Now, although there are points that would deserve deepening, this rather sketchy view of the pragmatics of 'de se' attitudes will do (I have written more in Capone (2010)).

Before closing this section, I want to discuss a case brought to our attention by Recanati (2012). This too is a case where pragmatic information is essential to bring out the dimension of a thought's being first-personal. Recanati discusses the example: My legs are crossed. This is a case of an implicit 'de se' utterance. Contextual information must be brought to bear on the utterance to bring out its 'de se' meaning. The utterance can be construed as 'de se', if it receives the following interpretation: I feel as if my legs are crossed. The alternative interpretation could be: I see those legs crossed, which happen to be mine. In seeing those legs crossed, which I judge to be mine, I could make a mistake of identification: in fact they may not be my legs but someone else's legs. Only in the case of a 'de se' thought (the subject is thinking about himself that he feels as if his legs are crossed) can there be no error of identification and thus IEM is guaranteed. However, notice that only a pragmatic interpretation can bring out the 'de se' interpretation, hence IEM depends on pragmatic information. (Notice that no talk of IEM as a merely epistemic condition is going on; we are talking of IEM as being expressed through the statement. This is NOT surprising since if IEM is an epistemological state, then it can be transmitted through statements (although I agree that talk about IEM being communicated through a statement has not been standard; however, Recanati's point made me think of this issue).

## 5 The Pragmatics of Impure 'de se' Thoughts

I got the impression that to press a pragmatic story, we need to go beyond the boundaries of ordinary views about 'de se' attitudes. There is a consensus that 'de se' thoughts are pure 'de se' thoughts involving essential indexicals as modes of presentation of the reference. Essential indexicals are first-personal modes of presentation, more or less coinciding with 'I' or with other formal ways of marking

the fact that they are essential indexical (e.g. *he\**, according to Castañeda). The fact that there are essential indexicals as modes of presentation is a guarantee of IEM, because such pronominals are very skeletal from an informational point of view and do not include a descriptive component (if not a minimal one). Now that I think of it, even a pronominal may carry more information than an essential indexical may provide; thus '*she\**' is not good enough to be an essential indexical because we may have a case like:

(16) Mary believes *she\** is happy

which does not fit well the case of the essential indexical. Given that '*she\**' includes information that the subject of the thought is female and considering that the subject of thought may be amnesiac (or may not have noticed sex differences), Mary<sub>1</sub> may believe that X<sub>1</sub> is happy without believing that she is female or that happiness can be predicated of her body, which is female. This is not a trivial point, one which was probably not noticed by philosophers who mainly write in English, because after all, as I have myself insisted many times, she herself or *she\** is equivalent to a first-personal pronoun and first-person pronouns in English are not inflected for the (gender) feature female/male. Perhaps it is an accidental fact about English that things stand in this way, but if we were to find a language which has a first-personal pronominal inflected for male/female features, then the first-personal pronominal could no longer be an essential indexical.

But now my question is: is it really important or indispensable that a '*de se*' thought should be a pure '*de se*' thought (expressible through a first-personal pronominal (non inflected for female/male features))? The answer should be that sometimes a purely '*de se*' thought is required, as without it we could not grasp the thought in question. This is the case of the amnesiac. Or the case of John Perry's messy shopper, who must discard all other forms of modes of presentation, to come to the identification the messy shopper = myself. This must surely be also the case of '*now*' because if I must go to an appointment at 12 o' clock and I do not realize that '*now*' is 12 o' clock, I can miss the appointment (also see Davis 2013).

But are all cases like this? And are not there cases where the use of the essential indexical allows us to come to conclusions that cannot be applauded (by the proponents of the essential indexical)? Consider the following case.

Mary asks me: Are you John Smith?

I reply: Yes, I am John Smith.

Then she insists: Are you sure you are John Smith?

And I reply: Yes, I think I am John Smith (Or: Yes, I know I am John Smith).

And now I wonder what role does the essential indexical play in all this. If I thought that I (the person I only know through '*I*') was John Smith, then my answer would appear like a guess.<sup>7</sup> On the one hand I am saying I know who I am, on

<sup>7</sup>'Am I John Smith' and 'I am John Smith' would have to share a neutral (or minimal) mode of presentation of '*I*'. But this neutral mode of presentation needs saturating information in the

the other hand it must be assumed, to follow the essential indexical story, that I am allowed to think of myself only through the mode of presentation 'I' and attribute a Proper Name to this thin mode of presentation (plus reference). And this is a bit surprising, because a person who attributes himself the name 'John Smith' must at least know himself to have the name 'John Smith' and must use a first-personal mode of presentation which is not exactly an essential indexical. Of course, John can repeat the words just uttered by his sister, who knows he is amnesiac and say 'I am John Smith' (roughly meaning, I am John Smith, if what you say is true). In this further case, it is not implausible that 'I' should be the mode of presentation usable by an amnesiac and, thus, that 'I' should ONLY be first-personal and an essentially indexical mode of presentation. But the two cases appear to me to be different. We now also have a third case: 'Am I John Smith?', said by John. Here John, though not amnesiac, may be open to the possibility that he has another name (say in a different island, where he was brought up, he was known by a different name). And in this case John may use 'I' associating it with the mode of presentation 'Fred' and may possibly mean 'Is Fred John Smith?'. Now, this interpretation, perhaps a bit stretched but not impossible, is not that of an essential indexical.

Now consider a different kind of case.

John believes he is rich. Can John just think of himself in a first-personal way? For sure, supporters of 'de se' attitudes will insist that John has just been imparted the information that he is rich (that he has become rich), thus, although he does not know anything about whether in the past he was rich or poor, he now believes that he himself is rich. The case is, I admit, thorny because this is not just a belief report, but a case of belief-change. It may well be interpreted as 'John has come to the belief that he is rich'. There was a change in the beliefs and thus John who initially believed that he was poor now believes that he is rich. In this case he may use a neutral mode of presentation. Despite the complexity of this contrived explanation, my considered opinion is that John cannot believe that he is rich if he thinks of himself through a neutral mode of presentation (neither rich nor poor) expressible as 'I'. If you think of it a bit, if John had available in thought such a neutral mode of presentation (I, who know of myself nothing, let alone that I am poor or rich), he could not think that he is rich, because such a mode of presentation is compatible with his being poor. According to such a mode of presentation, for all he knows he could be poor, but then how can he believe that he is rich? There is clearly a clash between 'rich' (or believe-he-is-rich) and the presuppositions of his neutral mode of presentation of himself (for all he knows of himself, he could be either poor or rich).

Now consider John Perry's example again. Why is it that John Perry cannot have knowledge that the messy shopper is himself by saying or thinking 'Oh, John Perry is the messy shopper'? Surely there are cases like amnesia, but why should we be ready to concede so hastily that one of the most famous philosophers in the world

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question 'Am I John Smith?', while in the answer the information in the predicate comes through antecedent knowledge that the speaker knows the identity of the subject.

should be amnesiac? Certainly he could be amnesiac, in which case the mode of presentation ‘John Perry’ will not switch on any light in his mind and he may fail to take appropriate actions to remedy the problem (sugar would continue to be spilled on the floor). But why should we invoke cases of amnesia so easily, if we know that in the real world where we and John Perry lives, these cases are extremely rare? In the normal cases, I may very well think ‘I think I John Perry<sup>8</sup> am the messy shopper’ and nothing wrong occurs. The thinking subject – despite the thick and non-necessarily indexical mode of presentation can obtain knowledge of the appropriate facts and take action.

The last – but decisive – case I want to discuss derives from Rosenthal’s (2003, 2011) considerations on Kant’s transcendental self. The ‘I’ I consider in thought, whenever I have thoughts of the type “I believe that p” is not a single, unrelated occurrence of the mental token ‘I’ and is not merely referring to the self, intended as Davis (2013) says, as an event of introspective awareness (I am responsible for introducing (or adding) the word ‘event’ in association with ‘introspective awareness, which is mine and not Davis’). The occurrence of the word ‘I’ in other words does not merely select a slice of my mental life (which has some continuity) but should be identified (and this identification is taken by Rosenthal to be thin) with previous occurrences (in thought) of the word ‘I’. The identification between the various slices of mental life selected by different occurrences of ‘I’ is crucial in eliminating contradictions (or in attributing contradictions).<sup>9</sup> Suppose I

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<sup>8</sup>Where the apposition ‘John Perry’ may be an implicit constituent, something one does not have an occurrent thought of (to use words by Davis) but one could have an occurrent thought of, had one a chance to make this constituent explicit.

<sup>9</sup>Rosenthal (in a p.c.) writes the following:

You assert that the I in the the ‘I think’ that Kant thinks must be able to go with every thought is not a sequence of tokens of the mental analogue of ‘I’, but something that has the capacity to tie all one’s thoughts together.

I certainly agree that that’s something like what Kant had in mind. But there’s a question about whether any such thing is there to be had. Simply stipulating that there is a mental item that will do the relevant unifying job doesn’t show that there is any such mental item.

Note in that connection Kant’s methodology: Establishing what is necessary for what is actual even to be possible. Kant takes the relevant unity of the self through time and across thoughts to be actual. He therefore argues that a unifying ‘I’ is necessary for that unity even to be possible.

That’s fine – except that assuming that strong unity – we might in the context of my own article call it a thick unity – is question begging. I argue that there is an appearance of such strong unity, but that we have no reason to suppose that that strong unity is also real, in addition to being apparent.

My reply to Rosenthal is that from a philosophical point of view, I am certainly sympathetic to Kant’s considerations, which derive, on a priori grounds, the unity of different slices of the thinking subject. However, in a linguistic paper, like the present one, not as much as this is required. We can be sympathetic with Rosenthal that only a thin identification is required, as this may well occur through anaphoricity, that is to say coindexation. Coindexation need not involve stipulation, but is normally a pragmatic interpretative matter (the hearer associates the ‘I’ of a thought with the producer of that thought and then anaphorically links one ‘I’ to the next). Of course, the thinking subject need not interpret occurrences of ‘I’ (in his own thoughts) as anaphorically linked. They are already linked by the fact that they are uttered by the same voice (if just thought is considered,



have, in my past, supported the view that the environment comes before everything else. The person who issued this kind of statement can be identified with an environmentalist's position. However, today I argue that a certain speedway running from France to Northern Italy, must be built and this has priority over everything. The person who holds this second position, in contradiction with my previous position, is a different slice of myself and one who cannot easily be identified with my previous self. When I say: I believe the speedway between France and Northern Italy must be built, some kind of pragmatic intrusion must occur at the level of the subject. And this pragmatic intrusion must aim at reconciling my previous self with my subsequent self. Unless the two selves are reconciled, it can hardly be said that there is continuity between the two different slices of 'I'. For continuity to occur (or for non-contradiction to hold) it is necessary that some identification component must be added to the subject. Rosenthal thinks this identification component is thin. Instead, as I have demonstrated, it is not thin at all, but thick, since non-contradiction depends essentially on this identification component. If eliminating contradiction can be considered an action (albeit of a mental type, some kind of hygienic action as Igor Douven (2010) proposes), then it is clear that the impure 'de se' thought is relevant to action.<sup>10</sup>

In short, if we have to decide case by case whether 'de se' thoughts are genuinely first-personal (through an essentially indexical mode of presentation) or, otherwise, are associated with thick or impure 'de se' modes of presentation (which can be associated with rich information on top of the essentially indexical mode of presentation) a strong case has been made for pragmatics which will intervene to decide case by case whether we are faced with an essential indexical or not. Nothing but pragmatic information can tell us whether 'she' is a merely essential indexical or otherwise associated with rich information (a description). Now, it is interesting that these considerations are backed up independently by García-Carpintero's (2013) general considerations:

The content is just a traditional proposition, *de dicto* or *de re*. The state is a specific condition of the subject by being in which a content is believed. Contents help accounting in coarse-grained way, for the role that propositional attitudes constitutively have in appraising the rationality of the subject, the adequacy of his beliefs to his evidence and of his actions to his beliefs and desires . . . but only in a coarse-grained way. To have a full account of rational

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we may just assume that the thinker remembers whether his thoughts are his own and coindexes the 'I's of his thoughts with his own thoughts, from which it follows that the different occurrences of 'I' of his thoughts refer to the same person).

<sup>10</sup>Rosenthal (in a p.c.) replies that the case of a person who cares (or actually manages) not to contradict herself is pretty rare. I agree with that. I agree that people can change their minds, over time. However, there are cases to conform to the one I have described, such as that of the rational law-maker who has to avoid and eliminate contradictions (Dascal 2003; Capone 2013). There are, furthermore, also contexts in which one is held to certain assumptions, as in the course of a logical demonstration.

action, for instance, we need not just the content but also the specific *state* through which the content is accessed, because, as Frege's puzzles already established, traditional contents are not enough to appraise rationality and cognitive significance, ways of accessing them should be taken into consideration (p. 82).

Now, this quotation appears to me extremely important, because even if it was presumably intended to cover cases like Frege's puzzles, and is presumably aimed at showing that a first-personal mode of presentation can explain its motivational force in action, it can be used for the opposite purpose, to show that even a first-personal ('de se') mode of presentation is not enough and this must be accompanied by other modes of presentations, such as e.g. proper names or files on information previously accepted by the subject of thought and which would allow the subject to monitor his speech for self-contradiction. After all, a coherent non-contradictory discourse is a way of instantiating the rationality of the speaker (or thinker) and considering that contradiction-elimination can be considered a mental action aimed at preserving the rationality of the speaker, we probably need to have tighter requirements than making use of a pure 'de se' mode of presentation of the subject. Other additions (additional baggage) is needed, as we are often faced with impure 'de se' thoughts. However impure 'de se' thoughts can be, they must still retain a feature of the 'de se' thought, which is anaphoricity to a self which preserves the self-reflexive nature of the thought. However many additional modes of presentation we can use in referring to ourselves, we need in a sense to keep track of the self by some anaphoric coindexation of the thinking subject with the subject of the thought (e.g. I think I am happy). In this sense, this paper is in line with Higginbotham (2003).

## 6 Conclusion: IEM Again

And now we are back to the issue of IEM. How can we know whether a thought (and thus a statement) is IEM? It is IEM if a descriptive component is lacking from the mode of presentation used. Thus if a genuinely 'de se' pronominal is being used, there is likely to be IEM associated with it. But if the 'de se' thought is not really a pure 'de se' thought, then pragmatically a descriptive component can accrue on top of the first-personal mode of presentation. If we accept considerations by Evans, the presence of descriptive features in a mode of presentation guarantee that IEM is destroyed. Why is it destroyed? It is destroyed because due to a descriptive component, questions about the identity of the referent can be asked. We have seen that IEM can be sensitive to pragmatic information. But this is, of course, a consideration that is based on a communicative approach to language – since language can be used to model mental representations, as Devitt (2013), says, it should not be excluded that epistemology and linguistics intersect at some point.

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