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## *The Nature and Role of First and Second Person Content*

BY CHRISTOPHER PEACOCKE

Naomi Eilan's comments raise some fundamental issues. I hold that for creatures at Level 1 and above, their perceptual states have a first person, *de se* content. Eilan holds that my position on the *de se* content of perceptual awareness is incompatible with the position stated by Evans in this passage from *The Varieties of Reference*:

... a subject can know he is in front of a house simply by perceiving a house. Certainly what he perceives comprises no element corresponding to 'I' in the judgment 'I am in front of a house': he is simply aware of a house. (Evans 1982: 232)

There is no incompatibility. Evans's claim is about what the subject perceives. That is a claim about the objects of perception, something concerning the level of reference, rather than the level of intentional content, here understood as the level of the way in which things are given in such a perception. The crucial point in dissipating any sense of incompatibility is that an intentional content (a notion) can feature in the representational content of a

perception without the entity to which it refers being an object of that perception. I noted that a subject can know about his spatial relations to objects and events, on the basis of his perceptions, without perceiving himself (36). The point is consistent with some perceptions having a *de se* intentional representational content.

The first person is not the only notion to enter perceptual content without the entity to which the notion refers being an entity that is perceived. Perceptual experience has a present tense content, it represents something as being the case *now*. But there is no such thing as perceiving a particular time, however fuzzy its boundaries: times are not amongst the objects of perception. We can equally truly say, in parallel with the passage from Evans,

a subject can know it's raining now simply by perceiving the rain. Certainly what he perceives comprises no element corresponding to 'now' in the judgment 'It's raining now': he is simply aware of the rain.

The occurrence of 'certainly' in both the displayed passages is justified only because they concern the objects of perception, rather than intentional content.

The reference of *here* (the subject's point of view) is not perceived either. So the phenomenon of notions in the intentional content without perception of what the notion refers to is present at Eilan's Level 0.5 too.

For thinking, for action-awareness, and for many other mental states and kinds of event, the first person and the present tense also enter their intentional contents without the references of those distinctive intentional contents being perceived. All of this is possible because the fundamental rules of reference for these intentional contents do not fix their reference via a perceptual relation. In this they evidently differ from perceptual demonstratives. The references of genuine perceptual demonstratives must be perceived, in whatever kinds of states those demonstratives features as intentional contents. So it ought not to be seen as problematic or puzzling that the references of the first person and the present tense need not be perceived when these intentional contents enter the content of a perception.

There must of course be some account of what it is for the first person to enter the intentional content of a perception, just as there must for any content and for any state or event. What then is constitutive of the difference between Level 0, and Eilan's Level 0.5, on the one hand, and the self-representation of Level 1 on the other? The issue is only sharpened if we say *that tree is to the left of here* is sufficient for first-person registrations, in normal circumstances. The issue is sharpened, because of this challenge: the first person is not just a stylistic variant of *here*. Nor is the first person a stylistic variant of 'this body', for which similar points could be made (*this body is seated* is equally sufficient for registration of *i am seated* in normal circumstances). The fundamental point is that first person content needs to bring not just a place, and not just a body, into the representational content at the level

of reference. It needs to bring in a subject, at the level of what the content is about.

A clear way to formulate the issue is to ask: what is it for an arbitrary notion  $c$  to be  $i$ , the first person notion, rather than to be *here* or *this body*? What condition has to be met for it to be the case that  $c = i$ ? I suggest that the only way for this to be ensured is for  $c$  to be involved in the ascription of actions, such as  $c$  is *running*,  $c$  is *lifting an arm*. . . where truth conditions of these contents require that the reference of  $c$  actually be the agent who is running, is lifting an arm. *This body* does not meet this condition – *this body is moving* could be true because the body in question is on an elevator or escalator, but understood as a predication of action by the subject, the corresponding content would be incorrect, because the subject is not the agent of the motion. This requirement of a connection with attributions of agency brings in a subject at the level of referential content, and not a mere body, or a place. I call this the agency-involving account of the first person. There is much more to be said about it on some other occasion.

It is only when optic flow experiences have a content that is integrated with other first person contents that involve ascription of agency that those optic flow experiences should be attributed a first person content. This background possibility of integration must be there. *Here*-experiences justify first person judgements, and properly ground first-person registrations, only if this background and these connections are in place. This is an explanatory difference between optic flow experiences at Levels 0 and 0.5 on the one hand, and at Level 1 on the other. When the first person is present in the phenomenology, the explanatory difference will also be present.

Since we have now touched on J.J. Gibson, here are some responses to Eilan's entirely understandable questions on where I stand in relation to him. My initial mention of Gibson in the book (36) was merely to make the point that optic flow can, in the case of a subject at Level 1 or above, be a case in which there is *de se* content without any perception by the subject of her body. But to say that optic flow 'specifies' properties of a subject should not be taken to imply that the subject is in representational content of experience, not even at the level of intentional content, let alone the level of reference. There could be optic flow experience even for subjects at Level 0. When Gibson says the environment and the subject are co-specified, if this is meant to be carried over to a claim about representational content (*viz.*, that neither kind of content can be present without the other), that is something with which I am already committed to disagreeing simply by recognizing the existence of cases at Level 0. I adapted examples from Gibson, but am not at all in agreement with his generally negative views about representational states and computation. I hope Eilan finds these comments reassuring.

Though I certainly have some disagreements with Evans on the first person, I think Eilan overstates the difference from Evans when she writes, 'In contrast, Evans says that I can come to know that I am on the left of a

tree, on the basis of my perception, even though the perception has no element that corresponds to the ‘I’. On the one side, I am also agreeing that the subject need not be perceived in such an experience, and that in normal circumstances, such experiences do give first person knowledge that I am on the left of a tree. On the other side, Evans would certainly equally have held that there is more to possession of the first person than simply sensitivity to such experiences with purely spatial content – there is an essential additional background that needs to be mentioned in an account of why such spatial content justifies first person judgements. The divergence from Evans would relate rather to the nature and extent of this background.

The later parts of Eilan’s piece discuss the topic, which has received so much lively discussion recently, of the relation between the first and the second person. I would distinguish sharply between the claim that there is a distinctive kind of *you*-awareness available to both parties in face-to-face interaction and the claim that this awareness involves a second person notion that cannot be explained in terms of the first person (as I argued it can be). I agree that there is a distinctive kind of interpersonal *you*-awareness, and I hold also that it is explicable in terms of a coordinated interaction of uses and references to the first person notion. Eilan writes, ‘The radical line I think we need to take if the idea of primitive you-awareness is to so much as to get off the ground is to say that the way A is aware of B in such cases constitutively depends on B meeting the first-person pickup requirement. In cases where such pickup is on the conceptual level, we need to refer to B’s use of the first person concept in meeting this requirement in specifying how things are for A, from her perspective, in thinking about B in this way. That is, there is no saying what is going on in A’s mind in such cases without referring to B’s use of the first person concept in response to A, and vice versa’. Far from supporting an irreducibility claim about *you*-awareness, this is precisely an elaboration of the coordination of uses and references to the first person notion that is present in you-awareness that is congenial to the explication of you-representation in terms of the first person notion.

The reducibility claim would be unsustainable if the first person notion were not explicable philosophically except by reference to the second person. Some theorists do go that far, but Eilan does not here make any such commitment. It is an essential element in the case for explaining the second person in terms of the first that there is some autonomous account of the first person notion and concept. The agency-involving account of the first person outlined above is precisely such an autonomous account. That account does not mention any representation, on the part of the *i*-user, of other subjects. But the account does have this highly congenial implication: that once a subject does come to represent other subjects, and think of them as things of the same kind as herself, then she will think of them as agents too. The autonomous, agency-involving account of the first person notion does fit

it with everything that is required for a proper account of the states of interpersonal self-consciousness, once the subject attains them.

Karen Neander doubts that there is a first person non-conceptual notion, *i*, at all. In the early parts of *The Mirror of the World*, I took it to be relatively uncontroversial that, if there is non-conceptual content at all, then there is a non-conceptual version of the first person. So before I consider the specific sources of Neander's scepticism about the existence of *i*, I will discuss some of the phenomena for which recognition of *i* seems to me to be essential.

I suggested above that what distinguishes Level 1 from Level 0 is the subject's ability to ascribe to itself actions, and that this brings a subject, not just a body or a place, into the referential content of the subject's perceptual and other representational states. There is also a range of representational capacities, important in the explanation of a creature's actions, that for constitutive reasons presuppose the subject's ability to self-represent, to be in states whose content contains *i*. Here is a selective list of such capacities.

- (a) Subjects experience their body, and parts of their body as their own – as *mine*. This is possible only for subjects who self-represent (more on this below).
- (b) A creature sometimes represents, or even is merely sensitive to, another creature's seeing him. This can involve representation, or else mere sensitivity, to the other's representing him as an agent, a genuine subject. But this is possible only if the creature represents itself in the first person. The state is not fully characterized as representing, or merely being sensitive to, the other creature's seeing a body.
- (c) Similar points apply to representing the other as registering information about one's own actions as such, something possible only for creatures at Level 1, and not at Level 0.
- (d) Emotions about oneself, and not just about events and states of affairs, are possible only at or above Level 1.
- (e) Representations and emotions involving the fact that some other agent has done something good or bad to *me* require the attainment of at least Level 1.

Some of (a)–(e) are individual matters, some are social. All the of the states they cite can influence action. As far as I can see, these phenomena involve an explanatory role for *i*-contents that does not at all involve a subject's needing to keep track of itself in some way analogous to that in which we can keep track of perceived objects.<sup>1</sup>

I hope these remarks give some idea of how I would address Neander's very reasonable request that an advocate of *i*-content must fit the account

1 Contrast Neander: 'Perry's point raises the question of why a Level 1 creature would need an *i*-notion, if not to keep track of the subject.'

into some more general theory of content. The requirement that content do explanatory work ought be congenial both to those who endorse a form of naturalism about content and to those who do not.

Neander has three more specific doubts about the need to acknowledge *i*-content. On two of these, I actually agree with her points, but think they do not tell against *i*-content. She writes, 'I suggest that a creature that lacks an *i*-notion could still have egocentric representations of its surroundings and could still represent its own somatic or mental states from a subjective point of view.' A subject at Level 0, if it is conscious, has a subjective point of view. There is something it is like to be that subject, and what it is like involves a point of view on the world. The way in which current objects and events are given to it will involve the spatial relations of those objects and events to the position which is in fact its point of view. I agree too that for a creature at either Level 0 or Level 0.5 in Neander's sense, it may be legitimate (though loose) to say that it sees something as coming towards it. When legitimate, that just means that it sees something as coming towards *here* (or better, *centre*).<sup>2</sup> But if there is not, at Level 0.5, the sort of explanatory significance that is present when we do have *i*-contents, this is a level without self-representation as such.

Neander acutely notes that the fact that something is mentioned in the fundamental reference rule for a notion or concept does not mean the notion or concept refers to that thing. I agree with this too, in part for reasons independent of present issues. For example, the reference rule for perceptual demonstrative notions or concepts of individual objects and events will certainly have to mention perceptual experience. But a subject can employ perceptual demonstratives for objects and events without being capable of representing the perceptual experiences themselves. The same point applies to memory demonstratives too. No part of the case for recognizing the existence of the *i*-notion should rely on a principle that what is mentioned in a reference rule for a notion must also be the reference of that notion.

Neander's third specific objection does involve a substantial disagreement. I claimed that when, to take John Perry's example, a person is washing his hands, he enjoys a state with a representational content *those hands are mine*, a conscious state in ordinary human cases. Neander writes, 'Do I see or feel the hand as *mine* in a way that requires representing *me* without involving my first person concept? A possibility worth considering is that I see or feel the hand as mine and yet only in a way that requires a representation of a part of me – my hand – plus maybe that representation's relations to other sensory representations of other parts of me and to my motor systems and so

2 Better because *here* and *centre* are not equivalent, if *centre* refers *de jure* to the creature's point of view on the world. A creature who feels cold may desire that *that fire is closer to centre*. This is different from desiring that the fire be closer to here, something the creature may not want.

on. Again, to represent a part of something does not necessarily require representing that something.' I think this understates the phenomenology and representation of ownership, and also likely places it at the wrong level. Precisely the dramatic phenomenology of the rubber hand illusion is that it seems, of a rubber hand that one knows is not one's own, that *that hand is mine* (Botvinick and Cohen 1998: 756). The content of the illusion involves both ownership and the first person. Neander suggests that maybe only the first person concept may be involved in the representation of ownership. This seems implausible, given that the illusion is below the level of judgement, and is in fact overruled by judgement involving the first person concept when the subject is knowingly enjoying the rubber hand illusion. (I see no hidden contradiction in the possibility of an ingenious animal psychologist creating a rubber limb illusion in an animal that enjoys states with only non-conceptual contents.) Adding, as Neander carefully does, that experiencing a hand as mine may involve 'relations...to my motor' system seems to me to concede the point, if the right relations are included. The hand must be represented as under *my* motor control.

There is certainly a way of representing a hand in perception, as *that hand*, which does not require any impression of my ability to control it, and in which it is given in the same kind of content as any other perceptual demonstrative. But that way of representing the hand would be available if you were in a tangle of bodies, and did not have any sense of whether the hand so given is your own. It would also be available if you were suffering from somatoparaphrenia with respect to that hand. That minimal way of perceiving a hand has no special connection with action explanation involving the hand, in sharp contrast with the case in which one experiences the hand as one's own, and takes the experience at face value.

Neander also discusses the unity of consciousness and *i*-states. At three points in her article, Neander attributes to me the view that the unity of consciousness is dependent upon the integration of *i*-states into an *i*-file. This is not my view. I held in *The Mirror of the World*, and still hold, that the unity of consciousness is present even for creatures at Level 0. From this it follows that attempts to explain the unity of consciousness in terms of *de se* contents would be insufficiently general. That was the basis of my objection to one of Tim Bayne's proposals (74). The idea that co-consciousness could be a non-transitive relation seems to me as unintelligible for organisms at Level 0 as it does for those at Levels 1 and 2.

To conclude this part on an important note of agreement with Neander, there is nothing in *The Mirror of the World* that is opposed to the idea that some form of computation is involved in the integration that leads up to representations entering into an *i*-file. I did emphasize (29–30) that we should not conceive of this integration as one that involves integration of the contents of two or more temporally prior conscious experiences to yield an integrated later conscious experience. There is only one total experience for a subject at Level 1 or 2,

with an integrated content. But computational mechanisms can operate on the content of the non-conscious states leading up to the integrated state. There can be a distinctive variety of computation involved here even when, as in the normal case, the states involved have an imagistic or scenario-style content.

I accept Susanna Schellenberg's main point: that there is a much wider range of important and interesting examples at Level 0 than I considered in *The Mirror of the World*, and (by implication) that I was much too timid in my characterization of this range. I would like to strengthen the case for Schellenberg's main point by noting three phenomena that are present at Level 1 that also have significant analogues at Level 0.

- (i) At Level 1, much of our interaction with the world involves knowledge of such conditions as *If I move in such-and-such way, I will be at so-and-so location* and the location in question may have desirable or undesirable properties. But there are analogues of this available at Level 0, of the form *when such-and-such movements occur, so-and-so location will be central*. It is not true that knowledge and practical reasoning involving the movements of the subject are available only at Level 1. There are versions of such knowledge and practical reasoning available at Level 0.
- (ii) A subject can also represent particular individual actions, and action-types, without representing itself – such forms as *this step, this way of moving* will suffice. For these Level 0 contents concerning particular actions and action-types to refer, there must really be a subject who is performing the actions in question. But it does not follow that that subject has to be representing himself in using these action-notions. I would argue that what is partially distinctive and constitutive of Level 1 is an appropriate sensitivity of the *de se* action self-ascriptions to these more primitive action representations at Level 0.
- (iii) In the nature of the case, a subject who is merely at Level 0 will not have a historical atlas of the world with an *i was there* label attached to a particular point. Nor will he grasp a content *this was my route through the world*. But it is striking how close we can approach even this last content with the resources of Level 0. A subject at Level 0 can represent it as being the case that *that place was the centre then*, where *centre* at any given time in this subject's representation refers to what was in fact the subject's location at that time. The subject can know, of a sequence of places over time, that they were the successive centres. One of the consequences of this point is that there will even, at Level 0, be analogues of the representations at Level 1 of what route the subject took through the world, how he reached various places by taking various turns and travelling various routes, and the like. There will be versions of all of these contents that can be formulated by past tense time-indexed contents concerning *the centre*.



Points (i)–(iii) all provide further illustrations of Schellenberg’s main point. While on points of agreement, I should note explicitly that I agree that there is a notion of a point of view applicable at Level 0 (see the above discussion of Neander); that attributions of perceptual content are answerable to their role in action explanation, including bodily actions; and of course that there is a wide range of conscious states and events that a subject can enjoy, including perceptual experience, sensations and even some kinds of internal bodily perception, without employing the *de se*.

There are some subsidiary claims in Schellenberg’s characterization of representational states with *de hinc* (*here*) content that I question. Schellenberg has a thesis about how *de hinc* content is represented, and a further thesis about the relation between the representation of locations and the capacity to represent what are ‘intrinsic’ properties in her sense, that is, properties that are not dependent upon the perceiver’s location. Both theses are stated in this passage: ‘perceiving the intrinsic spatial properties of objects requires moving from egocentric to allocentric frames of reference. Moving from egocentric to allocentric frames of reference in turn requires representing one’s location so as to abstract from that location. The cognitively most minimal way to represent one’s location is as the location from which one both perceives objects and acts in relation to these objects were one to act.’

This last claim about how a subject represents its own location seems to me to involve the kind of over-intellectualization that, in my view, Schellenberg rightly rejects elsewhere. A subject at Level 0 or 0.5 need not employ any notion of perception at all but may nevertheless be a perceiver. Schellenberg’s ‘cognitively most minimal way’ also embeds the notion ‘the location from which one perceives’, and this ‘one’ looks like an importation of *de se* content after all, which would undermine the view that we are here below Level 1. So there is more than one reason for not putting the notion of perception into the characterization of the way in which the *here* is represented by subjects below Level 1. My own position is that the material that Schellenberg puts into her account of the way the subject is representing the *here* should rather be featuring in the fundamental reference rule that individuates the notion *here*. As I noted, in agreement with Neander, not everything mentioned in the fundamental reference rule for a notion *N* is a notion or concept that has to be possessed by the subject who possesses *N* (and there would be threats of regress were that to be so).

On Schellenberg’s thesis that perceiving the intrinsic spatial properties of objects requires the use of allocentric frames of reference, I make two comments. First, there are ways of computing some spatial properties that are intrinsic in Schellenberg’s sense that do not seem to involve allocentric frames of reference at all. For example, the distance between two objects is not dependent upon the perceiver’s location, but the distance between two objects at different depths may be computed by a mechanism dependent either upon disparity between two retinal images, or by binocular convergence.

Whether a part of an object protrudes outwards, or is rather an indentation, can be computed from the direction of illumination, which can itself be computed without reliance on allocentric frames of reference. The allocentric-based account that Schellenberg mentions is one conceivable computational mechanism for constancy but it seems to me far from the only one. Second, we also have to be very careful in distinguishing genuine allocentric representation from cases in which there is representational sensitivity that would be produced by genuine allocentric representation but would also be produced by path integration – computing direction and distance from a starting point – with correspondingly adjusted motor sensitivities. A creature moving from an initial location may over time have the capacity to move back, even along a new straight line not previously travelled, to that initial location. Information gained on its journey may allow it to compute that it is presented with an objectively shaped circle, rather than an ellipse. Path-integration and corresponding motor sensitivities could allow the creature to do this without the creature employing allocentric representations. I do not think that we can settle purely a priori the means by which a creature is computing spatial properties that are independent of the creature's location.

These points of disagreement with Schellenberg concern her theses about the nature of the notions and computations below Level 1, with its *de se* contents. They do not touch her well-taken points about the range of examples at Level 0 and Level 0.5, and the involvement of bodily action in some such cases.

I conclude with a brief final comment on Schellenberg's inclusion on her list of maps that do not have *de se* content 'a map with a dot that is labelled but not in an indexical way, perhaps even by a name (e.g. 'Sam')'. If the dot is meant to be a dot referring to a subject, in a third personal way, then one of the other theses of *The Mirror of the World* would rule this out. I argued that to think of another subject as such is to think of it as something of the same kind as oneself (143). On this view, third person thought about another subject has a tacit first person component. So such a map would after all involve the *de se*.

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