

## IV—SHARING THOUGHTS ABOUT ONESELF

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This paper is about first-person thoughts—thoughts about oneself that are expressible through uses of first-person pronouns (for example, ‘I’). It is widely held that first-person thoughts cannot be shared. My aim is to postpone rejection of the more natural view that such thoughts about oneself can be shared. I sketch an account on which such thoughts can be shared and indicate some ways in which deciding the fate of the account will depend upon further work.

### I

*Introduction.* Thinking about oneself as oneself is distinctive. Such first-person thinking is typically reflected in one’s uses of the first-person pronoun and its analogues. For example, right now I believe that I am standing in front of you. And my belief can be reflected in my now saying, somewhat redundantly, ‘I’m standing in front of you’. It involves thinking of oneself in ways that differ from one’s ways of thinking of all other things. And it involves thinking of oneself in ways that differ from many, if not all, of the ways that others have of thinking of one.

On a natural construal, my believing that I am standing in front of you is treated as my standing in the attitudinal relation of belief to the thought that I am standing in front of you. Thoughts are viewed as the contents of attitudes, and thus as the loci of rational relations amongst those attitudes, so that, for example, the rational coherence of an individual’s beliefs depends upon relations amongst the individual’s thoughts. So construed, the distinctiveness of my first-person thinking traces to the distinctiveness of the first-person thoughts to which I am thereby related. Just how distinctive are my first-person thoughts? The more specific version of that question to be addressed here is this. Is it possible for me to share those

thoughts with others, so that they can stand in the same kinds of attitudinal relations to them as me? I shall refer to the thesis that such sharing of first-person thoughts is possible—that nothing in the nature of first-person thoughts precludes their being shared—as the *Shareability Thesis*.

It's been something of a commonplace of recent discussion that the Shareability Thesis is false.<sup>1</sup> Some appear to take it to be obvious that there are first-person thoughts that cannot be shared. Others have offered considerations in support of that view. My modest aim is to present one of those considerations in argument form and to suggest that the argument does not, without supplementation, decide the issue. In doing so, I shall sketch out a view about first-person thoughts on which they are shareable. It won't be possible here either to defend the view that I sketch or to bring it into contact with the full variety of considerations that have been, or might be, offered against the Shareability Thesis. However, my present aim is not to decide the issue. Rather, my hope is to postpone the decision until the view I'll sketch has been elaborated and assessed.

I proceed as follows. In §II, I provide some background to the discussion by articulating some basic principles of the Fregean approach to attitudinal psychology that will figure in the remainder. In §III, I present the basic argument against the Shareability Thesis and explain two assumptions on which it depends. The remainder of the paper in effect pursues one of those assumptions. In §IV, I present a proposal due to Gareth Evans on which an analogue of the target assumption fails. In §V, I consider a simple way of extending the proposal presented in §IV in order to sponsor the Shareability Thesis. I argue that the simple extension must be rejected. In §VI and §VII, I develop a more nuanced extension of the simple proposal explained and rejected in §V, and indicate how it can deal with the objection that led to rejection of the simple proposal.

## II

*Basic Principles of Fregean Psychology.* I shall discuss the Shareability Thesis in the context of an account of psychology due to Gottlob

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Evans (1981), Heck (2002), Kripke (2008), Küne (1997), McDowell (1984), Peacocke (1981; 1992, p. 221), Perry (1977a; 1977b). For resistance, see Bermudez (2005a), Rödl (2007).

Frege. In its simplest version, Fregean psychology is concerned with propositional attitudes—instanced, for example, in Lauben's believing that snow is white and Peter's knowing that  $7 + 5 = 12$ . It holds that a subject's propositional attitudes are constituted by their standing in relations to *thoughts*, where thoughts by nature determine reference to one of the two truth-values: the True or the False. For instance, Peter's knowing that  $7 + 5 = 12$  consists in Peter's standing in the relation of knowing (by contrast with the relation of believing or desiring) to the thought that  $7 + 5 = 12$ . The thought that  $7 + 5 = 12$  refers by nature to the True. Thoughts themselves are composed of *senses*, corresponding to elements that may recur in a variety of otherwise different thoughts. For example, the thought that  $7 + 5 = 12$  embeds the sense (or a sense) 7, which recurs in the thought that  $7 + 2 = 9$ . Senses themselves determine reference, in the present example reference to the number 7. Two thoughts are the same just in case they are constituted by the same senses combined in the same structure. Two subjects' psychological attitudes are the same just in case they consist in the subjects standing in the same attitudinal relation to the same thought.

The following necessary condition on sameness of sense is a central principle of Fregean psychology, which I'll refer to as Principle I:

- (1) *Basic Principle of Sense Individuation.* Necessarily, for all subjects  $S$ , times  $t$ , attitudes  $\Phi$ , thoughts  $T_1, \dots, T_n$ , senses  $C_1, \dots, C_n, D_1, \dots, D_n$ , and ways of structuring senses  $W$ , if it is possible that: ( $S$  at time  $t$  bears attitude  $\Phi$  to thought  $T_1$  with constituent senses  $C_1, \dots, C_n$  structured in way  $W$ ) and it is not the case that ( $S$  at  $t$  bears  $\Phi$  to  $T_2$  with constituent senses  $D_1, \dots, D_n$  structured in way  $W$ ), then  $C_1, \dots, C_n \neq D_1, \dots, D_n$ .

Suppose that an individual appears to meet the antecedent condition. There are then two options.

First, we might accept that they do meet the antecedent condition. In that case, we have that the subject bears a relation,  $R$ , to  $T_1$  at a time and fails to bear the same relation,  $R$ , to  $T_2$  at the same time. That requires that  $T_1$  and  $T_2$  are different, since there is a time at which only one of them is related  $R$ -wise to the subject. It follows that either the sense-constituents of the thoughts, or the way those constituents are combined in the thoughts, must differ. Since we are

holding the latter fixed, the two thoughts must differ with respect to at least one of their respective sense-constituents.

Second, we might deny that a single subject really meets the antecedent condition, by arguing that the apparent subject of the pattern of attitudes is disunified. In that case, the subject  $S$  would be treated as divided into a subject  $S_1$  that bears the attitude to  $T_1$  and a subject  $S_2$  that fails to bear the attitude to  $T_2$ . That would leave open that  $T_1$  and  $T_2$  are the same thought. But it would do so at considerable cost, for—in so far as one retained the view that  $S$  is a subject rather than a plurality of subjects—it would require convicting them of a form of irrationality. For short, then, the principle tells us that where a subject appears both to accept and fail to accept a particular thought, either they are subject to a form of irrationality or there is not a single thought that they both accept and fail to accept.<sup>2</sup>

A derivative principle is the following, which I'll refer to as Principle II:

- (II) *Derivative Principle of Sense Individuation.* Necessarily, for all *rational* subjects  $S$ , times  $t$ , pairs of *conflicting attitudes*  $\Phi$  and  $X$ , thoughts  $T_1, \dots, T_n$ , senses  $C_1, \dots, C_n, D_1, \dots, D_n$ , and ways of structuring senses  $W$ , if it is possible that: ( $S$  at time  $t$  bears attitude  $\Phi$  to thought  $T_1$  with constituent senses  $C_1, \dots, C_n$  structured in way  $W$ ) and ( $S$  at  $t$  bears  $X$  to  $T_2$  with constituent senses  $D_1, \dots, D_n$  structured in way  $W$ ), then  $C_1, \dots, C_n \neq D_1, \dots, D_n$ .

Pairs of conflicting attitudes are pairs of attitudes such that a rational subject would not hold both towards the same thought. Crudely, bearing one of the pair of attitudes to a thought would, amongst the rational, lead to the extinction of the other. The operation of the principle is easiest to see with respect to an example. Suppose we have evidence that a subject accepts  $T_1$ , rejects  $T_2$ , and is rational. Our first principle fails to apply to this individual, since the indiscernibility of identicals fails to preclude that a subject bears two *different* attitudes to a thought. However, rejecting  $T_2$  ought rationally to lead one *not to accept*  $T_2$ . So, evidence that the subject is rational and rejects  $T_2$  is evidence that the subject does not accept  $T_2$ . And now our opening principle applies: assuming that the subject is

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<sup>2</sup> I'm indebted here to the discussion in Salmon (1986, pp. 57, 77, 80).

rational—in this case, bears the required pattern of attitudes *in propria persona*— $T_1$  and  $T_2$  must be distinct.<sup>3</sup>

It is often possible for individuals to grasp thoughts about an individual in such a way that they are in a position rationally to accept a thought to the effect that the individual is some way while rejecting a thought to the effect that the individual is the same way. For example, Hesperus is the same planet as Phosphorus. However, one might have an ability to recognize the planet as Hesperus only when one sees it in the evening and an ability to recognize it as Phosphorus only when one sees it in the morning. Failing to realize that they are one and same planet, one might rationally accept the thought that Hesperus shines brightly this morning while rejecting the thought that Phosphorus shines brightly this morning. Principle II would then entail that the thought that Hesperus shines brightly is distinct from the thought that Phosphorus shines brightly. On plausible assumptions, this would in turn be explained by appeal to the different ways in which one thought about the planet in having the two thoughts—that is, by appeal to one's thoughts embedding different constituent senses.<sup>4</sup>

There are views about thoughts on which the distinctiveness of first-person thinking would be explained by appeal to a parameter in addition to the thoughts to which one is thereby related: for example, by appeal to ways of thinking or guises, conceived as distinct from thoughts.<sup>5</sup> On such views, thoughts themselves may be viewed as composed of their constituent referents. For example, the thought that I am standing in front of you might be treated as partly comprising me, the relation of standing in front of, and you. Differences in the thinking of individuals who stand in the same attitudinal relations to a thought would then be explained by appeal to their different ways of thinking of the thought's constituents or the guises under which they think of those constituents. On the face of it, there

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<sup>3</sup> Frege puts the point as follows, in considering the options available to one engaged with the question whether  $p$  or not- $p$ : 'This opposition or conflict is such that we automatically reject one limb as false when we accept the other as true, and conversely. The rejection of the one and the acceptance of the other are one and the same' (Frege 1879–91?, p. 8). See also Frege (1897, p. 149).

<sup>4</sup> For core elements of Frege's position, see Frege (1892; 1897, pp. 144–5; 1914, p. 241; 1918–19; 1980, pp. 80, 126–7, 152–3). General defences of broadly Fregean attitudinal psychologies may be found in Burge (2005, pp. 27–59), Dummett (1978), Salmon (1986). See also Kremer (2010).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Perry (1977a; 1977b), Salmon (1986).

is no principled impediment to more than one person standing in attitudinal relations to thoughts when so construed. Questions about the distinctiveness of first-person thinking would become questions about the distinctiveness of the ways of thinking or guises involved in that thinking. So, from the perspective of such views about thoughts, the Shareability Thesis is liable to seem uncontroversial; or, at least, to seem no more controversial than the containing view of thoughts. However, the focus of interest would then shift to natural successors to the Shareability Thesis—for example, to the thesis that more than one person can bear the same kinds of attitudinal relations to the combinations of thoughts and ways of thinking to which one is related in thinking of oneself as oneself. For reasons mainly of expository convenience, I shall therefore treat thoughts as the sole loci of explanation and efface the niceties involved in treating separately the major alternatives.

The task of the next section is to present a basic argument against the Shareability Thesis, set against the background of Fregean psychology.

### III

*The Basic Argument Against the Shareability Thesis.* Each of us possesses a range of capacities for thinking thoughts of various kinds. The upshot of successful exercises of those capacities is our coming to stand in attitudinal relations to thoughts. The capacity to think a thought to the effect that a particular object is a specific way depends on sub-capacities: in particular, it depends on a capacity to think of the particular object in question and a capacity to think of particular things being the specific way in question. We can think of these capacities as more or less tightly associated with linguistic capacities through which the thinking that the capacities enable is expressed. Some of our capacities to think about particular objects are standing capacities to think about one particular object independently of whether the object is currently present to one. For example, I have a standing capacity, associated with my use of the name 'Frege', that enables me to bear attitudinal relations to thoughts about Gottlob Frege. In addition to those standing capacities, we have more episodic capacities to think about particular objects, for instance, only as they are present to us through perception. For example, right now I have

an episodic capacity to think about that person, a capacity that will last for the duration of my perceptual contact with the person. The latter episodic capacity is associated with a more generic, standing capacity to think in that type of way about perceptually presented persons (for example, to think demonstratively about persons): a capacity the exercises of which, on an occasion of perceptual contact with a person, enable one to think of them as *that person*. Both the episodic capacity and the standing capacity that underlies it are associated with uses of ‘that person’: the former with uses contemporary with this particular episode of perceptual contact with the person; the latter with a standing capacity to use the expression during any of a range of particular episodes of perceptual contact with persons.<sup>6</sup>

Capacities to think thoughts about a particular object are not to be confused with the thoughts and their constituent senses attitudinal engagement with which the capacities enable. For instance, I might have a perceptually grounded capacity to think about an individual as *that person* without ever exercising the capacity by, for example, forming beliefs about the person, making suppositions about them, and so forth. Moreover, I might have the capacity and not be in a position to exploit it due to misleading beliefs about my circumstances, say, that I am hallucinating and there is no person there. However, such capacities are more or less closely correlated with the thoughts whose attitudinal engagement they enable. In particular, some differences in the capacities through the exercise of which we relate to thoughts correspond with differences in the thoughts to which we thereby relate. Suppose that one were in perceptual contact with Gottlob Frege. One might then be in a position to think of him either through exercising one’s episodic capacity to think of him as *that person* or through exercising one’s standing capacity to think of him as *Frege*. And it is easy to come up with examples of cases in which the thoughts engaged through exercises of those different capacities would be different. Through failing to recognize that the person who is perceptually present is Frege, one might rationally accept the thought that that man is in London while rejecting the thought that Frege is in London. An application of Principle II delivers the result that the thought engaged on the basis of an exercise of the first capacity is distinct from the thought engaged on the basis of an exercise of the second.

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<sup>6</sup> I’m indebted here to Martin (2002).

Now consider the standing capacity, or capacities, that enable each of us to think first-personal thoughts about ourselves. Considered as a kind of capacity that each of us possesses, this capacity has similarities and differences with both the standing capacity to think of a particular person by name and the standing capacity to acquire episodic capacities to think about a particular person as that person. Like the former capacity, its possession puts one in a position, without more ado, to think about precisely one individual. It is to that extent dissimilar to the latter capacity, which can enable thought about any of a variety of individuals. Like the latter capacity, in cases in which the same kind of capacity is exercised on relevantly different occasions—in this case, where the kind of capacity is possessed and exercised by different individuals—the upshot is thought about different individuals. It is to that extent dissimilar to the former capacity, which can enable thought only about the named individual.

The question at issue, then, is the following. Consider the senses that one individual, let's say Lauben, engages through their exercises of the kind of capacity that enables one to think first-personal thoughts about oneself. Can anyone else think thoughts involving the constituent sense that Lauben engages through his exercise of that self-referential capacity?

The basic argument that no one else can do so turns on the following simple principle. A constituent sense is individuated, in part, by a combination of the reference that it determines and the kind of capacity that enables one to think it. If two cases in which senses are grasped differ either with respect to the references that the senses determine or the kind of capacity underlying the grasp of those senses, then the senses that are grasped in the two cases must be different. It is then apt to seem that no one else can grasp the same first-person thought as me. In order to do so, they would have to meet two conditions: first, they would have to essay a thought about me; second, they would have to do so on the basis of an exercise of the same kind of capacity that I exploit. But if they were to use the same kind of capacity as me, they would be using a capacity to think thoughts about oneself, and so would think first-personal thoughts about themselves rather than thoughts about me.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Versions of the basic argument can be found in, for example, Heck (2002), May (2006), Peacocke (1981; 1992, p. 221), Perry (1977a; 1977b).



The basic argument against the Shareability Thesis rests on two undefended assumptions. The first assumption is that there is a way of individuating kinds of capacities to think thoughts on which difference in kinds of capacities, on that way of individuating capacities, determines difference in the thoughts engaged through exercise of those capacities. The second assumption is that, on the way of individuating kinds of capacities that figures in the first assumption, it is impossible for anyone other than me to meet the required pair of conditions: to exercise the kind of capacity that I use in order to think first-personally about myself, and thereby to think thoughts about me. Now there are ways of individuating kinds of capacities according to which the second assumption would be false. For example, my capacity to think about myself, and your capacity to think about me, are alike in both being capacities to think about me. Indeed, if we don't beg the question against the Shareability Thesis, it is left open that they are both capacities to think the very same thoughts about me. Hence, the opponent of the Shareability Thesis has more work to do in support of their basic argument.

#### IV

*Dynamic Senses.* The opponent of the Shareability Thesis is required to support the assumption that senses that are grasped through the exercise of a capacity to think of oneself as oneself can only be grasped through exercise of that capacity. Now, one might expect that providing such an argument would be routine. As Gareth Evans puts it, in a closely related context,

[I]t is natural to think that this difference in ways of thinking can be exploited to produce the possibility of differing [read: conflicting] epistemic attitudes to the thoughts, which would then preclude [by virtue of Principle II] their being the same thought, if thoughts are intended to be the object of propositional attitudes. (Evans 1981, p. 307)

The natural thought is that, since different capacities underwrite the respective thinking of a thought  $T_1$  and a thought  $T_2$ , it is bound to be possible to exercise one of those capacities in accepting (rejecting)  $T_1$  while exercising the other capacity in rejecting (accepting)  $T_2$ . Thus, it would be natural to expect that the view that different

capacities are involved in thinking a single thought will conflict with the requirement, enforced by Principle II, that it is impossible rationally to take conflicting attitudes to a single thought.

Evans's remark occurs in the context of a discussion of the claim that it is possible for a sense that is grasped through exercise of a capacity to think of a day as *today* to be grasped on the following day through exercise of a capacity to think of a day as *yesterday*. Evans seeks to defend the claim that it is possible to preserve grasp of such a sense from one day to the next, albeit only by exercising slightly different thinking capacities across the two days. He is therefore required to respond to the natural thought that this is bound to conflict with principles governing the individuation of thoughts. Evans's initial response is that

... the natural suggestion is not correct; there is no headlong collision between Frege's suggestion that grasping the same thought on different days may require different things of us, and the fundamental criterion of difference of thoughts which rests upon the principle that it is not possible coherently to take different [read: conflicting] attitudes towards the same thought [that is, the analogue of our Principle II]. For that principle, properly stated, precludes the possibility of coherently taking different [read: conflicting] attitudes towards the same thought *at the same time*. (Evans 1981, pp. 307–8; my interpolation)<sup>8</sup>

The fact that the exercise of different capacities funds the thinking of a thought on two different occasions is in no immediate conflict with the requirement that one cannot adopt conflicting attitudes to the thought on an occasion. Evans doesn't take this response to foreclose on the possibility that a collision ultimately arises. Rather, his more limited aim is to show that what might have seemed to be a short route to collision is closed off. For closely analogous reasons, the natural suggestion as applied to first-person thoughts and senses

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<sup>8</sup> See also Dummett (1981, p. 106). Edward Harcourt questions the probity of the temporal restriction on Principle II, according to which it applies only *at a time*. He claims that Evans includes it only 'in order to ensure that the Criterion applies to indexically expressed thoughts' (Harcourt 1999, p. 352 n. 5). But the point of the restriction is more straightforward and begs no important question: there is no bar on someone rationally changing their mind; and there is no bar on someone ceasing to endorse a thought through forgetting and then coming to reject the thought. That is, there is no bar on someone's endorsing a thought at a time and then ceasing to endorse the thought, or coming to reject the thought, at a later time. Similarly, there is no bar on someone's having no attitude to a thought at some time and then coming to endorse or to reject the thought at some later time.

is not immediately decisive: just as the operative principles for the individuation of thoughts and senses are confined in their application to particular times, they are confined in their application to particular thinkers. Hence, the principles of individuation for thoughts are in no immediate conflict with the view that different thinkers' engagements with a thought are underwritten by the exercises of somewhat different capacities.

Evans goes beyond his initial response and defends an account on which the exercise over time of capacities to think of a day as *today* and then as *yesterday* can underwrite the preservation, over that time, of a single way of thinking of a day. Evans contrasts his account with one on which there is no such preservation of attitudes. Rather, on the latter type of account, in cases in which one thinks of a day as *today* and then, on the following day, thinks of the same day as *yesterday*, that must be because one has different belief states on the two days—albeit belief states that are closely related and that both determine reference to the same day. Evans holds that the latter type of account is quite unnatural. He argues, first, that the proponent of the latter account will have trouble providing a good explanation for why a subject in the *today* belief state on one day will, in normal circumstances, come to be in the *yesterday* state on the following day. For instance, it is clear that inference cannot provide the required link, since that would require that the *today* belief state were preserved in order for it to provide the basis for the inference. Second, Evans argues that thinking of a day as *today* requires a propensity to retain a capacity to think of the day as one's relations to the day change—as it recedes into one's past. We would not think of someone who had a capacity to think of a day only on that day, and no capacity to retain a capacity to think of the day on succeeding days, as having anything like our normal capacity to think of a day as *today*.

Evans highlights these links between the respective capacities to think of a day as *today* and then as *yesterday* as supporting his alternative view. According to Evans's alternative, the capacity to think of a day as *today* is an abstraction from a more basic, dynamic capacity the possession of which is extended over time and which also includes, as a sub-capacity, the capacity to think of the same day as *yesterday*. Now one might have at a time, and preserve over time, different ways of thinking of a day, say, as the day on which one's first child was born. But those ways of thinking will typically be dis-

tinct from that which is underwritten by one's capacity to think of a day as *today* and then as *yesterday*. For instance, one might retain grasp of the thought that the day on which one's first child was born was the first of the month, whilst losing track of time, so losing track of the fact that the day in question was yesterday. In that case, by contrast with a case in which one kept track of the day in question through one's *today–yesterday* capacity, one would not be immediately in a position to infer that *today* is the second of the month. By contrast, the ways of thinking of a day that are engaged through the exercise over time of a single dynamic capacity figure in the same way in a subject's cognition throughout that period, as modulated by shifts in the subject's relations to the day in question. Believing that an important event is to take place today may have an impact on one's subsequent activities different from that of believing that the event took place yesterday. But that is to be expected, given the way in which preservation of grasp of the thought over time depends on sensitivity to one's changing relations to a particular day. In that way, the interlinked sub-capacities that make up the temporally extended capacity to preserve thought about a day over time underwrite grasp, for the duration over which they are exercised, of a single *dynamic sense*.<sup>9</sup>

The dynamic capacities to which Evans appeals are episodic capacities of the type described earlier. In this case, the episodic capacities in question last only as long as one retains a cognitive fix on a particular day, together with an appropriate sensitivity to the number of days that intervene between one's current thinking and the day in question. Evans accepts that where the capacities through which thoughts are grasped are relevantly different, that makes it so that distinct thoughts are grasped. However, he makes clear that not every difference is relevant. In particular, the difference between the capacity to think of a day as *today* and the capacity to think of a day as *yesterday* need not be relevant, given the ways in which those capacities are interconnected in normal thinking about days. And that is so even though bearing attitudes to a dynamic sense on the basis of exercises of the capacity on different days will impact differently on one's subsequent cognition and action. In that way, his account of dynamic senses opens up the possibility of giving a similar account of the capacity to think of oneself first-personally and ca-

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<sup>9</sup> Evans (1981, pp. 306–11). See also Hoerl (1997), McDowell (1984, pp. 216–17).

capacities that others can use in order to think of one. Perhaps, that is, those capacities sometimes figure as different sub-capacities of a more expansive capacity that is shared by persons who think of themselves first-personally and others.

At this point, the opponent of the Shareability Thesis has two main options. First, they might accept Evans's account of the *today–yesterday* case but argue that there is no way of extending that type of account in order to explain the sharing of first-person thoughts. Second, they might argue directly against Evans's treatment of the *today–yesterday* case. I shall focus here on the first option. In the next section, we'll consider and reject a first attempt to extend Evans's account in order to include the *I–you* case.

## V

*A Simple Extension of Evans's Proposal.* As was noted, there is no immediate collision between Evans's proposal and the Fregean principles. The reason for this is that the principles apply only to an individual at a time, while Evans's proposal is that different sub-capacities enable an individual to grasp a single dynamic thought only at different times. One way of attempting to argue that Evans's account cannot be extended to the first person case would involve trying to show that the different sub-capacities involved in such an extension would be such as to allow a single individual to exercise both capacities at a time in a way that would collide with the Fregean principles.

One natural extension of Evans's proposal would be the following. Consider someone who thinks of themselves first-personally on the basis of exercises of a sub-capacity associated with their uses of the expression 'I' (their *I*-capacity). Another can grasp the very same thought second-personally on the basis of exercises of a sub-capacity associated with their uses of the expression 'you' (their *you*-capacity). Now different sub-capacities are in play here, so the pair might adopt attitudes to what they grasp that are in conflict. For example, it might be that one of them believes a thought they would express by saying, 'I am wounded' while the other rejects a thought they would express by saying, 'You are wounded'. However, that is no cause for concern, since such cases would not involve a single individual at a time adopting conflicting attitudes to a thought.

Further reflection reveals that that is too quick. Consider the following case, involving an arbitrary pair of individuals, Lauben and Peter. Lauben believes a thought to the effect that he himself is wounded, on the basis of exercise of his *I*-capacity. Peter believes a thought to the effect that Lauben is wounded, on the basis of exercise of his *you*-capacity. Now it is obvious that Peter cannot think a thought about Lauben on the basis of exercise of his *I*-capacity, so no immediate collision with the Fregean principles is in the offing there. However, the situation is different with respect to Lauben. For it seems that Lauben might think a thought about himself on the basis of exercise of his own *you*-capacity. Suppose, for example, that Lauben catches sight of himself in a mirror and, mistaking himself for Peter, essays a belief about himself that he would express by saying, 'You have not been wounded'. Lauben appears rationally to accept a first-personal thought to the effect that he himself has been wounded, thought  $T_1$ , and to reject a second-personal thought about himself to the effect that he has been wounded, thought  $T_2$ . According to the natural extension of Evans's proposal,  $T_1 = T_2$ . Yet a straightforward application of Principle II delivers the result that  $T_1 \neq T_2$ . The extension conflicts with the principle, and therefore must be rejected.

Thus, that an exercise of a *you*-capacity and an exercise of an *I*-capacity both sponsor grasp of senses that determine reference to the same person isn't, yet, sufficient for the exercises of both to sponsor grasp of the same sense. The condition appeared sufficient in the case of *today*- and *yesterday*-capacities because of a special feature of those capacities. Each of the *today*- and *yesterday*-capacities is such that it is transparent that any pair of exercises of one of those capacities at a time will underwrite grasp of senses that determine reference to the same day. That is why it is impossible for a single thinker rationally to adopt conflicting attitudes towards simultaneous *yesterday*-thoughts by basing grasp of those thoughts on distinct simultaneous exercises of their *yesterday*-capacity. By contrast, pairs of exercises of the *you*-capacity at a time are not so bound: two such exercises can determine reference to different individuals, and thus (since sense determines reference) underwrite the grasp of different senses. The use of a *you*-capacity on an occasion does not, without supplementation, transparently determine reference to a particular individual, and the required supplementation can take different forms. Because of this, it is possible for someone

to base a thought about themselves on exercise of their *you*-capacity without it being transparent to them that the thought determines the same reference as a simultaneous thought based on exercise of their *I*-capacity.

What is required, then, are additional conditions on exercises of a *you*-capacity if they are to underwrite grasp of the same senses as are grasped through exercises of an *I*-capacity. The natural place to begin looking for such conditions is cases in which different exercises of a *you*-capacity by one person about a single other person might reasonably be taken to underwrite grasp of a single dynamic sense.<sup>10</sup>

## VI

*Dynamic You-Capacity-Based Senses.* Consider, then, a case in which Peter is perceptually keeping track of Lauben over the course of a two minute conversation. Let's suppose that, at the start of the conversation, Peter exercises his *you*-capacity, on the basis of perceptual contact with Lauben, in thinking a thought to the effect that Lauben is then standing. Suppose also that Peter preserves perceptual contact with Lauben throughout the conversation and treats his thinking as based on preserved contact with Lauben. In that case, it's plausible that Peter can think of Lauben in precisely the same way—that is, that he can grasp the same sense in thinking of Lauben—later in the conversation.<sup>11</sup>

Peter's preserved perceptual contact with Lauben for the duration of the conversation can make transparent to him that his thinking throughout the duration concerns the same individual. It can thereby entitle him to treat each stage in that thinking in the same way, as suitably adjusted to take account of his shifting temporal relations to Lauben's conditions at particular times throughout the period. For example, Peter might begin the period in question thinking a *you*-capacity-based thought to the effect that Lauben is standing. As

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<sup>10</sup> Evans (1981) considers in passing a similar proposal with respect to perceptual demonstrative thinking.

<sup>11</sup> The case here is similar to, and perhaps identical with, perceptual demonstratives engaged through a *that-person*-capacity. In so far as there are differences between a *you*-capacity and a *that-person*-capacity, those differences may emerge only in the special ways in which exercises of a *you*-capacity can connect with exercises of an *I*-capacity.

the conversation progresses, grasp of that dynamic thought might be preserved, through the offices of slightly different sub-capacities related to tense, as a *you*-capacity-based thought to the effect that Lauben *was* standing. The slightly different capacities involved at each stage in Peter's thinking are appropriately connected, through the operation of his memory and his sensitivity to his own progression through time, so as to respect his changing relations to Lauben and to Lauben's momentary conditions. It is therefore plausible to hold that the different capacities constitute phases of a more extensive episodic capacity to think dynamically about Lauben throughout the period. Peter exploits the entitlement afforded by preserved perceptual contact with Lauben in treating his thinking throughout the period as concerning a single individual—so setting aside worries he might otherwise have had about Lauben's instantaneous replacement by a ringer. It's therefore plausible that he thinks about Lauben in the same way throughout the period. That is, it's plausible that Peter can thereby preserve grasp of a single dynamic sense throughout the period.

The claim, then, is that for the duration of Peter's conversation with Lauben, Peter's connected exercises of his *you*-capacity amount to exercise of a single episodic capacity to grasp a single dynamic sense. The claim gains plausibility from reflection on a connection between the epistemic powers afforded by Peter's episodic capacity and those afforded in less controversial cases in which an individual grasps the same sense in thinking different thoughts at a time.

To begin with the less controversial case, suppose that Peter now believes both that Lauben is standing and that Lauben is wearing a hat (we can assume that Peter thinks of Lauben in the same way in thinking both thoughts). Both of Peter's beliefs involve the same way of thinking about Lauben. It is therefore transparent to Peter now that both beliefs are about the same individual. Put another way, it would not be rational for Peter to preserve grasp of the two thoughts while treating the thoughts as about different individuals. By virtue of that connection amongst Peter's beliefs, and assuming that he retains the beliefs through the deduction, he is now in a position immediately to deduce that Lauben is standing and wearing a hat and that someone is standing and wearing a hat.

Moving, then, to the more controversial case involving the preservation over time of an episodic capacity to grasp a dynamic sense, suppose that, at the outset of his conversation with Lauben, Peter



forms a *you*-capacity-based belief to the effect that Lauben is standing. On the basis of the same episodic *you*-capacity, Peter preserves grasp of the same way of thinking about Lauben until later in the conversation, at which point he has a *you*-capacity-based belief to the effect that Lauben *was* standing. Moreover, on the basis of the same episodic capacity, together with perceptual sensitivity to Lauben's differing momentary conditions, Peter at the later time comes to have a *you*-capacity belief to the effect that Lauben is sitting. Because the same episodic capacity is in play, based on preserved perceptual contact with Lauben, it is plausible that Peter is entitled immediately to deduce a *you*-capacity-based thought to the effect that Lauben was standing and is sitting.<sup>12</sup>

The case would be quite different if a component of Peter's later thinking had not exploited a preserved episodic capacity to think about Lauben. For example, suppose that at the later time, Peter's *you*-capacity-based belief to the effect that Lauben is sitting had been based, not on preserved contact with Lauben, but rather on an unconnected episode of perceptual contact with Lauben via a mirror. In that case, Peter might fail to realize that the new belief was about the same individual as his other *you*-capacity-based thoughts. Moreover, it's plausible that in such a case Peter would not be entitled to rely on presumed sameness of reference across his thoughts. Thus, Peter might preserve his earlier *you*-capacity-based belief, now to the effect that Lauben was sitting, and now also essay a *you*-capacity-based belief to the effect that Lauben is standing, without thereby being in a position to deduce a *you*-capacity-based belief to the effect that Lauben was standing and is sitting.

## VII

*Extending Evans's Proposal.* The proposal at this point is that an exercise of a *you*-capacity and an exercise of an *I*-capacity might underwrite grasp of the same dynamic sense on condition that both exercises were phases in a single episodic capacity to think about an individual. The proposal is apt to raise questions both of principle

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<sup>12</sup> This is a version of what John Campbell (1987–88; 2002, pp. 84–113) calls 'trading on identity'. Campbell makes use of the possibility in defending a view about intra-individual preservation of perceptual demonstrative senses that is similar to the view proposed here about *you*-capacity-based senses. See also Dickie and Rattan (2010).

and detail.<sup>13</sup> Questions of principle include the following two. First, is it possible for two individuals jointly to possess the same episodic capacity? Second, supposing that that is possible, is it possible when the episodic capacities in question are capacities to grasp a single dynamic sense? Questions of detail include the following two. First, supposing that it is possible for two individuals to share possession of a single episodic capacity to grasp a dynamic sense, what are the mechanisms underwriting the required connections amongst phases of such an episodic capacity? In the case of intra-individual preservation of grasp of a dynamic sense, the mechanisms include preserved perceptual engagement with a referent, preservation of an appropriate sensitivity to one's shifting relations to the referent, and, crucially, the operation of memory in connecting and preserving one's thinking over time. Since memory cannot serve in the inter-individual case, an account is required of mechanisms that can. Second, what are the mechanisms responsible specifically for inter-individual preservation of an individual's *I*-capacity-based senses? It is impossible fully to address these questions here. However, for the immediate purposes of this paper, a sketch will suffice.

The first question of principle concerns the possibility of episodic capacities in general being the shared possession of more than one individual. In response, consider the following plausible case of shared capacity. Peter lacks the capacity to get to Jena by car. Although he has expert knowledge of relevant parts of the German road system, he cannot drive. Similarly, Lauben lacks the capacity to get to Jena by car. Although he is an excellent driver, he is both ignorant of the German road system and cartographically illiterate. However, Peter and Lauben are capable of communicating with one another. (We can leave open whether that is a shared capacity of theirs.) While they are together, their communicative abilities mean that they share an episodic capacity to get to Jena by car. For Lauben can drive them both to Jena, drawing on Peter's knowledge of the road system. Now an attempt might be made to argue that in this case, and in similar cases, there is no genuine sharing of capacity, but rather a certain sort of interlocking of individual capacities. I

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<sup>13</sup> Evans (1981, pp. 312–21) rejects the Shareability Thesis without considering explicitly the prospects of extending his proposal about *today*- and *yesterday*-capacities to include *I*- and *you*-capacities. John McDowell considers and rejects a version of such a proposal, but doesn't make explicit his grounds for rejecting it. See McDowell (1984, pp. 216–17, especially n. 12).

won't attempt to decide the issue here. However, I take it that the case is sufficiently plausible that it would require argument to demonstrate that redescription is required. For present purposes, that is enough.<sup>14</sup>

The second question of principle concerns the extension of the possibility of shared episodic capacities so as to include episodic capacities to preserve grasp of senses. In this case, the intra-individual case can provide a useful approximation to the inter-individual case. Recall Peter's thinking about Lauben over the course of their short conversation. At the beginning of the conversation, at  $t_1$ , Peter exercises his *you*-capacity in forming a belief to the effect that Lauben is then standing. Later in the conversation, at  $t_2$ , Peter exercises his *you*-capacity in having a belief to the effect that Lauben is now sitting. Now we can try to think of the portion of Peter's career that is present just at  $t_1$  and the distinct portion of his career that is present at  $t_2$ . (I don't wish to suggest that those portions are anything other than abstractions.) In so far as it is possible to do that, one would be thinking of Peter-at- $t_1$  as exercising a *you*-capacity in order to think of Lauben at  $t_1$ , but as lacking a capacity to think of Lauben at  $t_2$ . And one would be thinking of Peter-at- $t_2$  as exercising a *you*-capacity in order to think of Lauben at  $t_2$ , but as lacking a capacity to think of Lauben at  $t_1$ . However, one can nonetheless think of the various conditions and capacities of Peter-at- $t_1$  and the various conditions and capacities of Peter-at- $t_2$ , together with interconnections amongst those conditions and capacities, as underwriting Peter's possession of the capacity to preserve a sense that determines reference to Lauben from  $t_1$  to  $t_2$ . In that way, one would be thinking of Peter-at- $t_1$  and Peter-at- $t_2$  as distinct individuals sharing a single episodic capacity to grasp a sense that determines reference to Lauben from  $t_1$  to  $t_2$ .

Although that way of thinking about Peter is fictive, it can help illuminate what is at stake in the claim that genuinely distinct individuals share a single episodic capacity to preserve grasp of a sense. In the intra-individual case, this requires that earlier exercises of the various sub-capacities involved in grasp of the sense are connected appropriately with later exercises of sub-capacities that are then in-

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<sup>14</sup> The issues here connect with more general issues concerning the existence of irreducibly plural predication, and also with issues about joint or collective action. For the former see, for example, McKay (2006), Ruffitt (2005); for the latter see, for example, Bratman (1993), Ludwig (2007), Roth (2004).

volved in grasp of the sense. In that case, the operation of memory figures centrally in connecting up the various time-bound exercises of capacity so that they constitute an extended episodic capacity. The type of memory that is involved here is plausibly that which figures more generally in the preservation of attitudes like belief.<sup>15</sup> Obviously, memory cannot figure in the same way in connecting up exercises of capacities by distinct individuals. In its place, what is wanted is a mechanism that ensures that the distinct individuals involved are entitled to rely on the preservation of a single reference throughout the course of their thinking.

In the case of inter-individual preservation of *you*-capacity-based thinking about a single individual, it's natural to think that the required mechanism will be some form of joint perceptual engagement (or joint attention). For what is wanted is a mechanism that connects each individual's selection of a referent for their thinking in order to ensure, in a way that is transparent to each individual, that each of their thinking preserves the reference of the others. In the case of individuals' independent exercises of their proprietary *you*-capacities, we've noted that exercises of a *you*-capacity per se do not select a particular referent. The basic mechanism of selection is perceptual engagement with an individual, plausibly as enhanced through the offices of perceptual attention to that individual. Now in cases in which two individuals are involved, and in which the aim is to preserve reference amongst them, each individual's selection of a referent must be appropriately sensitive to the other's selection. Furthermore, each must be guided in their selection of a referent by sensitivity to the other's selection, and to the other's sensitivity to their own distribution of attention. In that case, the way in which the individuals' selections of referents interlock can ensure each of their entitlements to rely on sameness of reference. Thus, it is natural to hold that a form of joint attention will be involved in securing preservation in the inter-individual case.<sup>16</sup>

Let's suppose that an account of that sort can underwrite preservation of grasp of a sense in the inter-individual case involving only *you*-capacities. The account to be offered of cases involving both

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<sup>15</sup> See especially Burge (1993; 1997; 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Dickie and Rattan (2010) make a similar proposal about perceptual demonstratives. For discussion of philosophical and psychological issues surrounding the nature of joint attention see, for example, Campbell (2002, pp. 157–76) and Eilan, Hoerl, McCormack and Roessler (2005).

*you*-capacities and *I*-capacities is bound to differ in one important respect. For, unlike *you*-capacities, exercises of *I*-capacities do not rely on perceptual attention in order to select a particular referent.<sup>17</sup> Any exercise of an *I*-capacity is such that—if it secures a reference at all—it is bound to secure reference to its exerciser. In this case, then, the person who bases their thinking on an exercise of a *you*-capacity must be sensitive, not to the *I*-thinker's distribution of perceptual attention, but to the fact that their thinking is based on an exercise of an *I*-capacity. The *I*-thinker, by contrast, has no alternative thereby but to think thoughts about themselves. However, in recognizing that that is the appropriate capacity to exercise in order to preserve a piece of *you*-capacity-based thinking about them, they must be appropriately sensitive both to the fact that that other's thinking is about them and also to the fact that the other is appropriately sensitive to their own exploitation of the *I*-capacity in order to preserve the thinking. In that case, there is in this case an analogue of the type of connection witnessed in a genuine case of joint attention. The more general condition that both cases meet is that each of the participating individuals bases their thinking on joint sensitivity to the exercises of capacities underlying the other's selection of a referent. Where that condition is met in an appropriate way, it is plausible that two individuals can share an episodic capacity to grasp a single dynamic sense that one of them grasps on the basis of exercise of an *I*-capacity and the other grasps on the basis of exercise of a *you*-capacity.<sup>18</sup>

This extended reflection on dynamic senses, and the episodic capacities through which they are grasped, was triggered by an objection to the simple proposal with which we began. According to the simple proposal, an *I*-capacity and a *you*-capacity would sponsor grasp of the same sense just in case they sponsored grasp of senses

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<sup>17</sup> For discussion of the perception- and attention-independent functioning of the *I*-capacity see, for example, Campbell (1998), Martin (1997), Peacocke (2008, pp. 77–112).

<sup>18</sup> To a good first approximation, it is the propensity of *you*-capacities to connect in the required way with *I*-capacities that distinguishes them from *that-person*-capacities. Note that, on the proposed view, *you*-capacities are not obviously associated with a proprietary type of thought. *You*-capacities may be exercised in either of two ways, and neither of those ways obviously sponsors engagement with senses that cannot be grasped except on the basis of exercises of those capacities. First, they may be exercised autonomously; in that case, they sponsor grasp of senses that might, perhaps, also be grasped on the basis of exercises of a *that-person*-capacity. Second, they may be grasped dependently on another's *I*-thinking; in that case, they sponsor grasp of senses that are also grasped on the basis of autonomous exercises of an *I*-capacity. Compare Heck (2002, p. 16).

that determine the same reference. The simple proposal was rejected because it failed to rule out the possibility that a single subject could think of themselves on the basis of independent exercises of both an *I*-capacity and a *you*-capacity in a way that made it possible for them rationally to adopt simultaneous, conflicting attitudes to the same thought. The upshot of the extended reflection is that exercises of *I*- and *you*-capacities can underwrite grasp of a single sense only in cases in which those exercises are connected as sub-capacities in an episodic capacity that is shared amongst the possessors of the sub-capacities. The nature of the episodic capacity in question is such that those who possess it partly on the basis of their *you*-capacity can do so only in so far as the operation of that capacity is suitably responsive to the operation of an *I*-capacity. Thus, the case that forced rejection of the simple proposal is ruled out in one, or both, of the following ways. First, it might be argued that the case is ruled out because it is impossible for anyone to grasp senses on the basis of exercises of their *you*-capacity that are connected in the required way with exercises of their *I*-capacity. For it might be argued that one can think of oneself on the basis of exercises of one's *you*-capacity only in so far as one remains ignorant that one is thereby thinking about oneself. More specifically, it might be argued that such *you*-capacity-based thinking about oneself cannot be dependent in the required way on one's *I*-capacity-based thinking about oneself. Alternatively, and for present purposes more importantly, even if it is possible for a single thinker to base thoughts about themselves on suitably connected exercises of their *I*- and *you*-capacities, the required connection between their exercises of the capacities will ensure that they cannot rationally and simultaneously adopt conflicting attitudes to the thoughts they grasp.

## VIII

*Conclusion.* My aim in the foregoing has been to motivate a postponement. I've tried to show that one basic argument against the Shareability Thesis—the thesis that it is possible for others to grasp one's first-personal thoughts about oneself—rests on assumptions that are non-trivial. I've attempted to bring out the non-triviality of those assumptions by sketching an account on which the assumptions fail in a way that leaves the Shareability Thesis intact. In doing

that, I hope to have done enough to show that more work will be required before we are in a position to reach a robust verdict on the thesis.

The required work might take any one of a variety of forms. For a start, the sketched account requires elaboration and defence. Less positively, the account might be attacked on a range of fronts. For instance, an attempt might be made to argue that the general views about dynamic senses and episodic capacities to which the sketched account appeals are objectionable. Alternatively, an attempt might be made to argue that, although those views are acceptable in some intra-personal cases, they cannot be extended to include any inter-personal cases. Finally, an attempt might be made to argue that, although some inter-personal cases are acceptable, the proposed extension to *I*-capacity-involving cases is distinctively problematic. I take no stand here on the outcome of further discussion. My aim here has been to motivate that discussion, not to pre-empt it.<sup>19</sup>

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