

Knowing and understanding other minds: on the role of communication

DRAFT

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I. Introduction

Over the past decade or so there has been increasing interest, in both philosophy and psychology, in the claim that we should appeal to various forms of social interaction in explaining our knowledge of other minds, where this is presented as an alternative to what is referred to as the dominant approach, usually identified as the ‘theory-theory’. Such claims are made under a variety of headings: the ‘social interaction’ approach, the ‘intersubjectivity approach’, the ‘second person approach’, the ‘collective intentionality’ approach, and more. A multitude of claims are made under these various headings, both about the kind of social interaction we should be appealing to, and about how exactly this or that interaction provides an alternative to this or that ingredient in the ‘dominant approach’. Faced with this plethora of claims and characterizations one may well find oneself wondering whether there is an interesting, well-formulated debate to be had in this area

I believe that there is at least one such debate, and in what follows I begin to sketch out how I think it should be formulated, and why I think it reveals fundamental issues about the nature of our knowledge of other minds. The debate turns on pitting two claims against each other. I will call one the ‘Observation Claim’, a claim that does, I think, capture a very widely held view about the basis and nature of our knowledge of other minds, and is rightly labeled ‘dominant’. The other I label the ‘Communication Claim’. It says we should give particular forms of interpersonal communication a foundational role in explaining our knowledge of each other’s minds. Although I think some version of the Communication Claim is right, my main aim is not so much to argue for it but, somewhat programmatically, to put on the table some of the central claims I believe would need to be made good if it is to be an interesting and serious alternative to the Observation Claim.

II. The Observation Claim

The specific version of the Observation Claim I want to have before us is the following.

The Third Person Observation Claim

Our knowledge of other minds is based on observation, in one of the following two ways: either perception reveals other minds to us, directly, or it provides the basis for inferences about them. Knowledge and thought about others thus based are 'third personal', expressed in propositions such as: 'She (or 'this person') is in pain'.

In effect, it says that our knowledge of other minds has the same source as our knowledge of everything else in the world -- perception -- and the knowledge based on it is either direct or inferential. In recent years we find increasing appeal to the idea that perception delivers non-inferential knowledge both of the existence of other minds, and of the nature of particular mental states, it is revelatory of both. Some versions of such claims seem to me not only true, but importantly so. From our perspective, though, so long as they are subsumed under the Third Person Observation Claim they are, or should be, the target of any appeal to social interaction as an alternative, and are included in the target of the Communication Claim I am interested in.

For the purposes of this paper, I begin with a brief sketch of the most popular inferential version of the Observation Claim, which says that our knowledge of other minds is based on abductive inferences from observed data. The sketch is intended to bring into view the assumptions about knowledge and understanding shared or not explicitly challenged, by most versions of the Third Person Observation Claim, as I will understand it, and which will be key to the debate I will be setting out with the Communication Claim.¹

Suppose, then, the question is: how do I know on a particular occasion that

someone is angry? On the abductive model, we should think of the question along the lines of: how do we know, on a particular occasion, that streaks on the glass surface of the Wilson cloud chamber are caused by the movement of high charged particles? This is the example Chihara and Fodor use in what I think is the first explicit appeal to inference to the best explanation to explain the structure of our knowledge of other minds, and they use the analogy with charged particles to drive home two main points.

1. ‘Our mental concepts are interdependent, and get their meaning through their place in an explanatory predicative theory of behaviour.’

2. ‘[O]ur success in accounting for the behavior on the basis of which mental predicates are applied might properly be thought of as supplying *evidence* for the existence of the mental processes we postulate. It does so by attesting to the adequacy of the conceptual system in terms of which the processes are understood. The behavior would be, in that sense, analogous to the cloud-chamber track on the basis of which we detect the presence and motion of charged particles. Correspondingly, the conceptual system is analogous to the physical *theory* in which the properties of these particles are formulated.’²

The primary virtue of having before us Chihara and Fodor’s early formulation of the abductive model is that it makes vivid the two main issues on which the debate I am interested in will turn. The first is obscured in many discussions, where the focus tends to be on particular pieces of propositional knowledge, knowing that someone is in pain or angry and so forth. This practice is not unique to other minds discussions. The general practice in epistemology is to focus on the question of what it is to know particular propositions. What the account just sketched shows is the implicit link between questions about our knowledge of individual propositions and questions about understanding, or, better, kind of understanding. Though not expressed in these terms, what they are putting centre stage is something like Aristotle’s notion of ‘episteme’. As various writers have pointed out, whether we translate this as knowledge or understanding, the questions he was concerned with under the ‘episteme’ heading were what it is to understand the way the world works, where to have

² C. S. Chihara and J. A. Fodor, Operationalism and Ordinary Language: A Critique of Wittgenstein *American Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. 2, No. 4 (Oct., 1965), pp. 281-295, p. 293

such understanding is to have a grasp of the dependency relations appropriate to the domain in question.³ Chihara and Fodor are giving us an account of episteme in the mental domain and saying that knowledge of particular propositions should be slotted into this account. To endorse the abductive model for particular cases, as they present it, is, at the same time, to commit to the claim that the kind of understanding we bring to bear in the mental domain is the same as we do in the natural sciences.

The question of how exactly scientific understanding should be characterized is, of course, very much open to debate. But what matters for my purposes here, first, just is the claim itself. The understanding we bring to bear in expressing knowledge about others' minds is scientific. As to the details: one might argue about the kind of inferences required for achieving such knowledge, and might even maintain that in many cases perceptions are 'soaked with theory', in such a way to yield non-inferential perception-based knowledge. But on the level of abstraction I am interested in, the core idea I want to take away from Fodor and Chihara, which I will treat as an essential elaboration of the Third Person Observation Claim, is the following. Individual pieces of propositional knowledge about other minds are based on the observation of behaviour, and the concepts we use in expressing such knowledge have their home in a causally explanatory and predictive theory, of the kind we find in science.

This is the first claim, which, I will take it, an interesting Communication Claim will reject. Correlatively, in explaining why it should be rejected, the first challenge it must meet is to explain both why treating communication as the basis for our knowledge of other minds invokes a different kind of understanding, and how this different kind of understanding should be characterized.

³ On this, see e.g. John Greco 'Episteme: Knowledge and Understanding' in *Virtues and their Vices*, eds., Kevin Timpe and Craig Boyd. Questions about what understanding is, and how it is related to knowledge have begun to be debated in current epistemology, not always in ways that bear on the contrast I will be drawing, which will, I hope, be intuitively sufficiently clear to count as a datum to be further explained and does not depend on any particular account of the nature of understanding in general, or of the relation between knowledge and understanding.

The second issue on which debates between the two claims will turn is linked to a second virtue of having before us Chihara and Fodor's version of the abductive model. In tying explanations of knowledge to claims about understanding they also serve, at the same time, to link the epistemological question about other minds to a problem that is much less discussed now than it was during the second half of the last century, the so called 'conceptual problem'. Although questions about what it is to understand a particular concept and questions what it is to have the episteme appropriate to the domain can come apart, to some extent, they cannot do so wholly, if one holds, with Chihara and Fodor, and everyone else, that mental concepts are interdependent--'light dawns gradually on the whole'. To endorse such interdependence is to hold that in grasping a concept one at the same time has some insight into, some general sense of, the kind of understanding appropriate to thought and knowledge about the domain to which these concepts apply.

For our particular purposes, the importance of the traditional conceptual problem is that it serves to bring to the fore the second central challenge which any appeal to communication must meet, in my view, if appeal to communication is to be a serious alternative to The Third Person Observation Claim. To introduce it will help to have before us the following fairly standard presentation of the conceptual problem.

- i. *The Background Datum.* We take it that other people have mental states like our own.
- ii. *The Third Person Observation Claim*
- iii. *The First Person Introspection Claim.* Our knowledge of our own minds is based on introspection. Knowledge and thought thus based are 'first personal', expressed in propositions such as: 'I am in pain'.
- iv. *The Unity Requirement.* For us to so much as make sense of the existence of other minds like our own, it must be the case that our mental concepts have the same meaning when applied to others and to ourselves.
- v. *The Bridging Challenge.* There is a problematic gap between first and third person conditions of application/acquisition. An explanation is needed of how the gap is bridged if the Unity Requirement is to be met.

There are various ways of developing the First Person Introspection Claim in filling in the details of the Bridging Challenge. For the purposes of setting up the Bridging Challenge in its most acute form, I will read it as claiming that knowledge based on introspection is ‘non-observational’ (this does not exclude appeal to additional characterizations). Thus formulated, we can distinguish, very crudely and generally, three main strategies one might adopt in meeting the Bridging Challenge. The first two treat the Third Person Observation Claim as non-negotiable, and I think this is rightly called the dominant approach to this question. Under this heading, we can distinguish, again very crudely, between two sub-groups. The first endorses some version or rather of Strawson claim in *Individuals*, that it is just a brute fact about our mental concepts, and, moreover, constitutive of our grasp of our concept of a person, that first and third person applications differ in the way described under the Third Person Observation Claim and the First Person Introspection Claim (roughly speaking -- I return to Strawson in a later section.)

One major challenge for such an approach is to explain how the understanding, episteme we bring to bear in our own and others’ cases can be the same if the bases for our knowledge in both cases are so radically disparate. The second subgroup can be seen as a response to precisely this challenge, which it meets by rejecting key elements in the First Person Introspection Claim, as formulated. This is the route implicit in Chihara and Fodor and currently adopted by, to choose two of many examples, Alison Gopnik in developmental psychology and Peter Carruthers in philosophy. This strategy rests on two steps and it is worth setting them out briefly. The first makes explicit the link between the account we should give of what it is understand mental concepts and the notion of ‘episteme’, the kind of understanding we have of the domain in general. The second says that our account of understanding in the mental domain should begin with the third person case, the way we apply concepts to others, and then claims the understanding here is the kind we bring to bear in science. Call this the ‘third-person-first’ approach. In making these claims, the structure of the problem, as it is often stated, is reversed. It is not so much: how do we explain extensions of our mental concepts from first person to third

person applications, but, rather: how do we explain how this model, applied to others, extends to the use of mental concepts to express self-knowledge. The invited conclusion is that it applies to ourselves in exactly the same way -- self-knowledge is, e.g. a matter of abductive (or other) inference from internal 'observation' of, e.g., 'internal promptings' as Peter Carruthers puts it.

Resistance to the third-person-first approach in the case of self-knowledge will turn on the claim that there is an ineliminable, constitutive link between mental concepts and distinctive, non-observational ways of applying them in the first person case. The First Person Introspection Claim is, on these views, non-negotiable in any account we give of the nature of mental concepts and what is required for understanding them and using them to express self-knowledge. I will take this as a starting point for the Communication Claim I am interested in. But then we are back with the challenge to which the 'third-person-first' approach is a response, of giving a uniform account of the understanding informing both first and third person knowledge, a challenge *prima facie* not met, as noted above, by simply endorsing the kind of brute fact move made by Strawson.

This is the second challenge to which the Communication Claim I am interested in should be seen as responding. The challenge is to show how appeal to communication can show how our self and other knowledge exploits the same kind of episteme, assuming the non-observational version of the First Person Introspection Claim

Combining the two challenges, I will take it that treating the Communication Claim as a serious alternative to the Third Person Observation Claim requires showing, at the very least, how appeal to communication (a) slots our knowledge of particular propositions about both our own and others' minds into a different kind of episteme from the scientific one; (b) delivers, as integral to that episteme, an account of how the Unity Requirement is met in a way that holds onto the First Person Introspection Claim; is unavailable if we adhere to the Third Person Observation Claim; and essentially exploits communication. For the remainder of this paper I will be making what I take to be very preliminary first steps in addressing these challenges.

III. The Communication Claim

Much if not most of what we learn about what others feel, believe and so forth is acquired through verbal or nonverbal communication. It is therefore *prima facie* surprising that communication is rarely referred to in discussions of our knowledge of other minds.⁴ There is a dense network of interlocking presuppositions underlying this absence, in epistemology and the philosophy of mind—but to focus on communication, I suspect the most common reason, as far as knowledge is concerned, is that communication is subsumed under the Third Person Observation Claim. That is, what we learn about others through communication, on what is arguably the dominant, loosely Gricean model of communication, can be explained by material made available under that heading, in particular inferential versions thereof, so there is no need to single it out for special attention. Another, related, reason for the absence of appeal to communication is that, as far as our understanding of mental concepts is concerned, the Gricean model presupposes an independently explained source for our understanding of the mental concepts used in the production and understanding of communicative intentions. The appeal to observation in the case of others, and introspection in one's own case as the source of such understanding is made explicit, for example, in Michael Tomasello's developmental application of the Gricean model to explain the beginning of communication, at about nine months.⁵

There is much to say about why, if you endorse the Communication Claim I will be sketching, you will reject such accounts, but I'm going to abstract from such issues here, and, first, give an informal, introductory illustration, to be developed as we proceed, of what I take to be the central difference between

⁴ For an account of scepticism-related objections to appealing to communication, and for suggestions as to how to overcome them, see Anil Gomes, 'Testimony and other minds', *Erkenntnis*, vol. 80, issue 1, 173-183. For the claim that we should give communication explanatory priority over perception in the case of emotions, very much in keeping with some of the suggestions I will be developing, see Rowland Stout, 'What someone's behaviour must be like if we are to be aware of their emotions in it', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 11 (2): 135-148.

⁵ Michael Tomasello, *Origins of Human Communication*, MIT, 2008.

appeal to observation and communication, as I will be appealing to it, in explaining the nature of our knowledge of others' minds.⁶

When, in the course of conversation, someone tells me that she is sad, say, and I take myself to have gained knowledge about her by her telling me so, I thereby necessarily take myself to have gained an additional piece of knowledge. In treating the communication as an instance of telling, I am taking it that the speaker takes herself to have told me, in a sense that entails that I am thereby told, and in so doing I am committing to the speaker knowing that I know how she feels. So I am committing to her knowing at least this much about me. More generally, my knowing another through communicative exchanges comes with *being known by that other*, and knowing that one is. Moreover, the knowledge we both of each other has the familiar structure of shared, mutual knowledge -- our knowledge of each other is mutually manifest to us, all is out in the open.

The fact that communication can yield such knowledge not only introduces a fundamental disanalogy between knowledge of other minds and our knowledge of anything else, for which there is no possibility of shared knowledge; it also introduces a fundamental disanalogy between knowledge of other minds gained through communication and knowledge about other minds gained through perception or through inference. If I take myself to know you are sad because I see you crying there is no entailment from that to shared, mutual knowledge; and there is no internal link back to being known by you. Observation-based knowledge is 'unidirectional'. In contrast, in communication, or, rather, on the notion of communication I will be suggesting we should be appealing to in setting up the contrast with observation, knowledge and understanding are essentially reciprocal.

⁶ The backdrop to my approach is to be found in accounts of speech acts such as telling which emphasise their essential reciprocity, and also contain materials for a critique of various ingredients in the Gricean model. See for example Jennifer Hornsby. 1994. "Illocution and Its Significance." In *Foundations of Speech-Act Theory: Philosophical and Linguistic Perspectives*, edited by Savas L. Tsohatzidis, 187–207. London: Routledge; Richard Moran "Getting Told and Being Believed." *Philosophers' Imprint* 5 (5), 2005; "Testimony, Illocution and the Second Person, *Aristotelian Society, Supp. Vol.* Volume 87, Issue 1, June 2013 Pages 115–135; *The Exchange of Words*, Harvard, forthcoming. I return to some aspects of these in the last section of the paper.

I have used telling as an example, and, in the last section of the paper, I will return to the question of how we should think of telling, and communication more generally, if our account of it is to have this essentially reciprocal structure (not all accounts of telling do.) Ahead of that, though, and of much of what is to follow, there is a general point implicit in what I have said so far about the difference between observation and communication that I want to highlight. A very striking feature of much discussion of our knowledge of other minds, with the notable exception of Cavell's, is that the question of what it is to be known by another doesn't make an appearance. The materials used for addressing various formulations of the problem are restricted to what I know about myself in the first person way and what I know about others, usually the third person way. However, as Cavell points out in describing what he calls the 'passive skeptical recital' in Part Four of *The Claim of Reason*, asking what it would take for me to think that I am known by another at the very least introduces a useful guide to what one should say when the tables are turned. This is important advice, and it reveals much about how we should be thinking of our knowledge of others. The central idea informing the Communication Claim I will be sketching takes this one step further (in a way very much in keeping, I believe, with key insights of Cavell here): being known by others comes into the basic, essentially reciprocal structure that delivers knowledge of others. We need to solve for both simultaneously.⁷ This is the central difference between observation and communication, and I will be drawing on it, in one way or another, in the sketch of the Communication Claim that follows.⁸

I will say that a way of acquiring knowledge about a domain is foundational

⁷ For an illuminating account of how something similar should be read into the point (or, rather, one of them) of Cavell's exploration of the passive sceptical recital, see Richard Moran's 'Cavell on Outsiders and Others', *Revue internationale de philosophie*, no 256, 2011/12, pp. 239-254.

⁸ This also distinguishes the kind of appeal to communication I will be developing, from most appeals to empathy in the Phenomenological tradition, often under the 'intersubjectivity' heading, which focus on uni-directional emotional engagement with others, without introducing communication-based reciprocity as an essential requirement on what is being proposed as an alternative to the Third Person Observation Claim. Such appeals emphasise the importance of rejecting scientific inferential models of our knowledge of other mind; but they do not introduce reciprocity, and being known by the other into their accounts of the foundation of our knowledge of other minds, thereby arguably failing to engage directly with the Bridging Challenge. I say more on this in section VII.

if exploiting it is essential for the kind of understanding appropriate to that domain. It is plausible to say that a combination of perception and inference are foundational in this sense with respect to the physical world, whereas testimony, and hence communication might be considered as secondary. Consider now the following two propositions, which, together, constitute the Communication Claim, in its most general formulation

The Communication Claim

1. There are forms of face-to-face communication, verbal and non-verbal which can deliver shared, mutual knowledge and understanding.
2. Such forms of communication are foundational with respect to our knowledge and understanding of other minds -- without them we would not have the kind of episteme appropriate to this domain.

The first challenge for the Communication Claim is to provide an account of what this alternative form of episteme is, which links it essentially to communication. I make first moves in this direction in the next section. I then turn to a sketch of how this provides materials for beginning to respond to the Bridging Challenge in a way that appeals essentially to communication.

IV. The Missing Epistemological Question

I noted earlier that an advantage of Chihara and Fodor's way of formulating the abductive account of our knowledge of other minds is that it brings to the fore the link between claims about the nature of knowledge in a given domain and understanding. So far, the implicit assumption has been that if we are to explain the link, we should focus on propositional knowledge. In an unjustly, in my view, under-discussed paper on 'Person Perception and our Understanding of Others'⁹ David Hamlyn argues that a proper account of the link between knowledge and understanding in the mental domain should take as its point of departure a distinct epistemological question: what is it to know a person?

⁹ In Mischel, ed., 1974, *Understanding Other Persons*, Reprinted in David Hamlyn, *Perception, Learning and the Self*, Routledge 1983.

I will take it as uncontroversial both that in order to be said to know someone one must know some facts about her, but, also, and more importantly, that knowledge of people is not reducible to knowledge of propositions (on pain of claiming, for example, that we each know all the people we read about in the newspapers, see on TV and so forth). So this is a genuinely distinct question, a question that has so far not figured in our discussion. Hamlyn makes two general suggestions that are of particular interest relative to our concerns. (1) Our account of what it is to understand mental concepts should focus on the way they are used to express our knowledge and understanding of particular persons. (2) By thus linking questions about understanding to questions about what it is to know a person we can begin to counter the view that our understanding of mental concepts can be captured by appeal to their use in the kinds of explanations of human behaviour we find in the social sciences. The point generalizes, though, to any claim to the effect that our understanding of mental concepts can be exhaustively accounted for by appeal to any observation-plus-theory model. I will call this the Knowledge of Persons Claim.

There are two claims Hamlyn argues for in developing these suggestions that I want to single out, and endorse. The first, general one, states that it is a 'necessary condition of being said to know X is that we should actually stand to X in relations which are appropriate to the kind of things that X is'. He also holds that the appropriateness must be registered by the knower, which in turn requires that one grasp the concept of the kind of thing it is. So, in the case of persons, to know a person one must grasp the concept of a person.

Knowing a person requires understanding of the concept of a person, or, as Hamlyn puts it developmentally, the gradual acquisition of mental concepts comes together with the acquisition of the concept of person. In contrast, it is a feature of most observation-plus-theory accounts, certainly those that explicitly endorse scientific model, that the concept of a person makes no appearance -- the focus is on mental properties, and the concepts that refer to them, unconstrained by the question of what persons are or what is required for grasping the concept. To insist on the link with the concept of a person is, at the very least, to introduce the potential relevance of a range of morally significant

concepts not usually included in the observation-plus-theory model.

I will return to this general idea soon, but I turn now to the three specific claims he makes in developing his account of the appropriate relations that underpin knowledge of persons. Such relations, he suggests (1) must be potentially reciprocal; (2) must involve some degree of emotional involvement with the other, or, as he puts it ‘personal feelings’ towards the other, and (3) the relational emotions are potentially morally relevant.

Bracketing, for the moment, his reciprocity claim, the second two claims about knowledge of persons say that our knowledge of persons is ‘thick’, inextricably bound up with emotions of potential moral significance. To say our knowledge of people is thick in this way is to say that when we subtract such emotions we are left with nothing that would count as a knowing a person.

A dramatic illustration of the kind of connection between knowledge of persons and the kind of understanding I am gesturing at is to be found in Hervey Cleckley’s 1941 *The Mask of Sanity*. Summarizing how, after countless hours of interviews with dozens of psychopaths, he was left with a sense of their unknowability, he writes that ‘...No-one who examines him can point out in scientific and objective terms why he is not real. And yet one knows, or feels that he knows. Reality, in the sense of full healthy experiencing of life, is not there. Cleckley 1941, 20). His patients felt nothing of the morally relevant emotions for him (or anyone else) and he could feel nothing in return, and with the absence of this came a sense of their unknowability and unreality.

If this is true about our knowledge of people, such knowledge takes place against a background episteme or understanding that is radically different from that which underpins the Observation Claim. Rather, it is the kind of understanding that informs what Strawson, in ‘Freedom and Resentment’, calls our ‘participatory attitudes’. The distinction Strawson is interested in that paper is that between ‘the objective attitude’ we may adopt as policy makers, say, or in the social sciences, and the attitude we take to persons in virtue of our ‘inter personal human relationships with them’. Our participatory attitudes are founded on such relations, and include attitudes such as ‘resentment, gratitude, forgiveness, anger, or the sort of love which two adults can sometimes be said

to feel reciprocally, for each other'. What the Knowledge of Persons proposal says is that it is to these relations and these reactive attitudes that we should look in explaining our concepts of a person, and, hence, the background understanding into which our grasp of mental concepts slots.

The import of this, relative to the Observation Claim, can be put in terms of a contrast, though not necessarily an opposition, between the Strawson of 'Freedom and Resentment' and the Strawson of *Individuals*. In *Individuals*, the proposal that we treat the concept 'person' as primitive is put forward as a way of linking third person observation-based ascriptions of mental properties to others with first-person non-observational self-ascriptions. Treating the concept of person as primitive on Strawson's account there is intended to block the idea that there is a problematic first/third person gap to be bridged. The claim is that it is a condition on understanding 'person predicates' that we understand that they are ascribed both to others, on the basis of observed behaviour, and to ourselves, without observation.

To put the issue in this way is to endorse what I called the Third Person Observation Claim with respect to our knowledge and understanding of others. Now Strawson himself would not have endorsed the abductive account, he favoured a version of the criterial account of the link between behaviour and mental states. And there is every reason to suppose, more generally, that he would have rejected the claim that the kind of understanding we bring to bear in our thought of others, and ourselves, should be conceived of as conforming to the scientific model. What the Knowledge of Persons Claim says, in effect, is that the first step in resisting it is to put centre stage the kinds of relations he appeals to in 'Freedom and Resentment'. It is not to our observation of others, but to our interpersonal relations with them that we should turn in grounding our understanding of the concept of a person (and, relatedly of mental concepts).

For this proposal to take hold, though, to be a 'move in the game', what is required is an alternative to Strawson's appeal to observation in addressing the Bridging Challenge. This is where we must come back to Hamlyn's reciprocity requirement, about which he says not very much, which, in turn, introduces the

question of the role of communication in our knowledge of persons. By way of introduction to these issues, consider what you would say if you discovered that you have been under intense non-stop surveillance, spied on, by someone you have never met, over years. I suggest it is more than convention to insist that as you have never met, he doesn't count as knowing you, however much he might know *about* you. For at least one ingredient in knowing a person, in a sense which the spy doesn't know you, as we think of it, turns on a framework of consenting, willing, potentially mutual disclosure (even if what is revealed about you within that framework is not entirely up to you) -- that is, on communication. This is, *inter alia*, another place where ethical concepts, such as respect, which includes respect for privacy, come into an account of what it is to know a person. But for my purposes, the main point the example serves to illustrate is the idea that for knowledge of a person, as we ordinarily conceive of it, to be so much as in the offing, at least some kind communication is required.

There is much that we can and do learn about people by observing them, but none of this suffices on its own for knowing them. Knowing people requires communication, in a way that knowing facts about them doesn't. My first proposal is that the justification for claiming that communication manifests or exploits a different kind of episteme from the kind exploited in observation and theory rests, in part, on the essential role played by communication in getting to know, and sustaining knowledge of, people. I now turn to the task of taking first steps in showing how appeal to communication in addressing the Bridging Challenge draws on the kind of understanding I have been gesturing at, and, at the same time, provides an alternative to Strawson-like, and other, appeals to observation in responding to the Bridging Challenge.

V. Communication and the Second Person

The Unity Requirement, as so far formulated, which is the way it normally is, refers only to the predicative component in thoughts such as 'I am in pain' and 'She/this person is in pain'. The challenge is to explain how those predicates, or the concepts they express, can have the same meaning given the radically different conditions of application in both cases. The singular

components, the ‘this person’ vs. the ‘I’ tend not to appear, at least not explicitly, in formulations of, and responses to, the challenge. But if you endorse the First Person Introspection Claim, you will hold that there is a constitutive, internal connection between ‘I’, taken as expressive of self-consciousness, and the distinctive conditions of application in the first person case. So in making sense of the existence of others like oneself, to whom the same mental predicates apply, one must, at the very least, make sense of the existence of other self-conscious subjects, who apply mental concepts to themselves in the same way one does to oneself. One must make sense, as one might put it, of the existence of other ‘I’s. I will call the challenge of explaining how others shows up as a self-conscious subjects in the contents of thoughts about them the ‘singular version’ of the Bridging Challenge.

In response to this way of putting the challenge, the proposal I want to have before us says that the difference between the Communication Claim and the Third Person Observation Claim in the case of propositional knowledge about others turns, in the first instance, on the difference between the singular component in the propositional contents of the knowledge each holds is foundational for understanding other minds. When the knowledge in question is based on observation, the singular component is underwritten by perceptual relations to the person I encounter, and I am aware of her as ‘this’ (person), I will say that in such cases the demonstrative is an expression of perceptual knowledge of the person, often referred to in the literature as ‘perceptual acquaintance’. I will take it that the Third Person Observation Claim is committed to treating propositional knowledge that contains such demonstratives as the basis for our knowledge of others’ minds.

Turning now to communication: the general form of the Communication Claim introduced earlier says that there are forms of face-to-face communication which provide for the possibility of mutual knowledge. The specific version I want to have before us here makes two further claims. First, the notion of communication we should be appealing

to in making good the foundational role of communication is one on which A and B stand in a communicative relation with each other when they adopt attitudes of mutual address towards one another. (I return in the last section to some implications of this definition for the general concept of communication in play here, and for accounts of telling). Second, and this is the contrast with the singular component in observation-based thoughts, when we stand in such relations we are aware of each other as 'you'. I will say that you-awareness is an expression of second person knowledge of a person, in contrast to the perception-based knowledge that underlies the singular, demonstrative component in perception-based thoughts.

I take it that no-one would say that in thinking a demonstrative thought about a person one perceives, that person's self-consciousness, her I-thinking is just given to one, pops out, so to speak, simply in virtue of one's perception of her. In contrast, one central intuition informing the Communication Claim is that thinking of another as 'you', does, in some way, make the other's first person perspective directly present to one. One of the basic challenges a defence of the Communication Claim must meet is that of explaining what this comes to.

The singular version of the Bridging Challenge is the one I will be considering for the remainder of the paper. I will not have the space, here, to address implications for how we approach the predicative version, once the response I will be sketching to the singular version is in place. So I will not, here, be giving an account of the sense in which, in communicating, we share knowledge of each other's mental states; or of the way in which, according to the Communication Claim, this enters into the account we should give of the basis for our understanding of the concepts that refer to these states. This is one of the respects in which I am making only very preliminary moves in spelling out the kinds of claims needed for a full articulation, let alone defence, of the Communication Claim. Here I will make do with the following assertion. A condition on treating such shared knowledge of mental states as the basis for our understanding of mental concepts is that the singular component in each person's knowledge meet

the conditions I will spell out on singular you-awareness.¹⁰

For the purposes of drawing out the key difference between the observational and communicative approaches to the singular version of the Bridging Challenge, I will draw on Buber's famous distinction between the I-it and the I-you relation.¹¹ I should note in advance that I am being selective, Buber was not consistent, and what he said varied with points he was trying to drive home, in different contexts, where this in turn is one, but certainly not the only, source of the great variability of what people say under the 'second person' heading about the nature of second person awareness. The stipulations I will be proposing answer to only some of the many concerns that inform these differing accounts.¹² The following three (somewhat gnomic claims) give a flavour of the ideas I will be drawing on.

I "experience" the it. I bring back from the encounter with things "some knowledge of their condition." I experience "what there is to things."

But my relation to the You is different than this... "The basic word I-You establishes the world of Relation. Whoever says You does not have something as his object...he stands in a relation.

Relation is reciprocity. My you acts on me as I act on it.

"When one says You, the I of the You is said too."¹³

There are (at least) three ideas here. The first can be illustrated as follows. Suppose I am at a department meeting. I may look across at a colleague in order to acquire information about her, how she is taking the proceedings, say, and, seeing her glazed eyes acquire knowledge that she is bored witless. In so doing I stand in what Buber calls the 'I-it' relation to her; she enters into my 'world as

¹⁰ Work by Henrike Moll and her colleagues on the way pre-schoolers treat mutuality as a condition for the self-ascription of perceptions is highly pertinent to developing the kind of response that the Communication Claim should give to the predicative version of the Bridging Challenge. See e.g. Moll, H., Arellano, D., Guzman, A., Cordova, X., & Madrigal, J. A. (2015). Preschoolers' mutualistic conception of seeing is related to their knowledge of the pronoun 'each other.' *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 131,170–185.

¹² On the general difficulty of distinguishing stipulation and discovery in debates about whether there is such a thing as second person thinking, and on different ways of motivating stipulations about what it is and what should count as paradigmatic cases see my 'The You Turn', in *The Second Person, Philosophical Explorations Special Issue*, ed. N. Eilan, 17, 346-357, 2014, reprinted in *The Second Person: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed., N Eilan, Routledge, 2016.

¹³ Buber, M. (1958). *I and thou* (2nd ed., R. G. Smith, Trans.). New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons. PP

experienced', or the world observed. Alternatively I may look across at her in order, as we say, to catch her eye, to connect, and, perhaps, once connected, either to indicate by raised eyebrow or gesture that I want to know how she is taking it, and/or to let her know, by similar means that I am as bored as she is. In so doing I seek to establish a communicative, or dialogical relation with her. When that is the aim of my looking, and I succeed in fulfilling it, thereby 'establishing the world of relation', I am aware of my colleague as 'you'. Call this the *Relation Claim*.

The second point concerns the success conditions for you-awareness. Such awareness is, as Buber puts it, reciprocal, or, better, mutual. Returning to the colleague example -- you may look across at her in order to catch her eye, but fail to do so, say because she is studiously avoiding your gaze. You are only aware of her as 'you' when she reciprocates -- 'you' thinking is a kind of thinking about a person you can only engage in when that person thinks about you in the same way, it exhibits a property I will call 'mutual interdependence'. Call this the *Mutual Interdependence Claim*

To adopt this claim is to say that just as I may essay in a perception-based demonstrative thought about a person, but fail, say because there is no-one there to be perceived, so I may attempt a second person thought about a person, but fail, because she fails to think of me in the same way as I aim to be thinking of her. There is a kind of world-dependence here, but the world one is depending on is the world of the other thinking about me in the same way as I am of her. This dependence is unique to second person awareness and, on the account I propose, constitutive of it.

The final claim is expressed in the passage quoted in the claim that 'When one says you, the I of the... I-You is said, too.' If we translate 'saying' to 'thinking', perhaps the easiest way to bring out the point being made about the link between you-awareness and the first person is by means of the following comparison.

Suppose I am aware that someone is watching me. The most immediate expression of my registration of this awareness is in the first person -- I am the object, accusative, of her awareness of me, something that will be expressed in

thoughts such as: ‘She (that person) is aware of me’. But it is not a requirement on successful demonstrative or third person thought of another that I think of the person thus singled out as someone who is aware of me. Contrast this with my awareness of someone when she is aware of me as ‘you’, on the account of Mutual Interdependence just sketched. Here too, the immediate registration of such awareness will take a first person form. The main difference is that such registration *is* a condition on my awareness of her as ‘you’, as is her first person registration of my awareness of her as ‘you’. It is essential to awareness of the other as ‘you’, in contrast to demonstrative and third person awareness of others, that one employ the first person in registering the other’s awareness of oneself. I-you thinking is at least sense essentially relational. I will call this the *I-you Claim*.¹⁴

VI. The second person and self-consciousness

Taken together, the three claims capture the bare minimum we need to have in place for capturing the sense in which appeal to communication-based ‘I-you’ thinking introduces an essential reciprocity absent in observation-based thought, and, hence, I suggest, the bare minimum required for appeal to communication to provide a serious alternative to the Observation Claim.¹⁵ Each of the claims requires much elaboration and defence. Here I will make do with two very brief, programmatic comments concerning self-consciousness. In the next section, I return to the Communication Claim itself and to the concept of communication we should be appealing to if the line I have been pursuing is to be made good, and to brief comments about telling.

(1) So far, in elaborating the I-you claim, I have said only that self-consciousness comes into the specification of the success conditions of you- awareness: each subject must employ first person thought of herself in thinking of the other as

¹⁴ The closest current account of this kind of essentially relational I-you self-conscious activity is to be found in Sebastian Rödl’s ‘Intentional Transaction’, in *The Second Person, Philosophical Explorations Special Issue*, ed. N. Eilan, 17, 346-357, 2014/2014.

¹⁵ This is also the minimum, I suggest, we need to have in play to respond to the challenge posed by Richard Heck’s denial that there is such a thing as an irreducible ‘you’ way of thinking (Heck, R. G. 2002. “Do Demonstratives Have Senses?” *Philosophers’ Imprint* 2 (2): 1–33). On the role played by essential appeal to communication in responding to this challenge see my ‘The You Turn’, op cit.

'you'. As I said earlier, a recurring theme in much writing under the second person heading is that when I think of another as 'you', her first person perspective, is, somehow, immediately present to me --she is present to me as subject. How does what I have said so far bear on this issue? The short answer is that these conditions of success are registered by the participants, and for someone to be present to me as addressee and addresser just is for her be present to me as a self-conscious subject. I say more about this in my second set of comments. Here, I want to note a particular aspect of the way Buber himself developed this idea. He held that registering the other's first person perspective, her 'I', when I am aware of her as 'you', requires adopting an attitude of 'confirmation' towards her. There is much that goes into this notion, but it bears a close family resemblance to Cavell's appeal to 'acknowledgement' and to others' appeal to 'recognition'. In common with these, confirmation includes mutual recognition and respect for the other's autonomy, freedom and so forth. Given the reciprocity condition, my self-conscious registering of the other's 'you' awareness of me involves registering such acknowledgement or confirmation by her. However exactly one develops these ideas, one thing that is clear is that 'confirmation' is 'ethically loaded'. This is one of the many places where the Communication Claim, as I have so far developed it, and the Knowledge of Persons Claim, as sketched in the previous section, meet, are interdependent. Knowledge of persons wouldn't be inextricably tied to the kind of morally-laden episteme I was gesturing at if the basic communicative mechanism for acquiring and sustaining it wasn't itself inextricably linked to morally significant attitudes. Equally, though, I suggest, the justification for building this into a way of being aware of someone, rather than as a tag-on to an independently specified kind of awareness, say demonstrative awareness, will turn, at least in part, on the role such awareness plays in making possible our knowledge of people.

(2) The second point about self-consciousness and you-awareness is the most difficult -- and, in many respects, the most important in developing the contrast between the way the Observation and Communication claims address the Bridging Challenge. I will here make do with a brief pointer at the kinds of issues

I have in mind. There are many places in which Buber suggests that self-consciousness is, at its root, rather than on occasion, essentially relational. (As in: “The inmost growth of the self does not take place, as people like to suppose today through our relationship to ourselves, but through being made present to the other.”¹⁶) Such ideas are sometimes read, wrongly, as being akin to things Mead says. Self-consciousness, on Mead’s account, consists in awareness of myself as object, and his idea is that this is achieved only in virtue of others’ treatment of me as such, which in turn allows me to see myself as an object, from the outside, thereby achieving self-consciousness. The main reason this is wrong as an interpretation of Buber on relational self-consciousness is that it misses the point of Buber’s distinction between I-It and I-Thou relations. When I register the other’s awareness of me as ‘you’, in the first person, I am aware of being an addressee for the other, and in virtue of that a subject, an ‘I’ for the other. Or, more accurately, I am simultaneously aware of myself as addresser and addressee, a partner in dialogue, so aware of my being treated as a self-conscious subject (by you). That is what being treated as ‘you’, as opposed to an observed ‘it’ involves. So, it is, if you like, I-as-subject rather than I-as-object that is being claimed to come into being, or be founded on, standing in a relation to another. It is true that in being treated as an addressee/addresser I must take cognizance of the fact that I am being singled out physically -- so much is required for dialogue with me to get going, at least in face-to-face situations. This raises hard and fascinating questions about the way we should describe the contribution of such awareness of oneself and others ‘as object’ to communication; about the role of perception here; and about the role communication can play in unifying awareness of oneself as subject and object. But the immediate point is that it is awareness of oneself ‘as subject’ that is brought into play in responding, as addressee and addressor, to the other’s ‘you’ thoughts about oneself.

It is, then, I-as-subject that is said to be, at root, essentially relational.¹⁷

¹⁶ Buber, M. (1988). *The knowledge of man: A philosophy of the interhuman* (M. S. Friedman, Ed.; M. S. Friedman & R. G. Smith, Trans.). Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International. p. 61.

¹⁷ For a discussion of closely related ideas to be found in Husserl, which links them specifically to the role of communication in constituting substantive self-consciousness, see Dan Zahavi 2016. “Second-

If something along these lines can be made good, we have here materials for the most radical critique of Cartesian intuitions possible, but, more specifically, of the way such intuitions inform most formulations of the problem of other minds. This is, in my view, where the full import of treating essentially reciprocal communication as the foundation of both self and other understanding lies; and it is, thus, the central claim that needs developing if the Communication Claim is to provide a response to the Bridging Challenge which is both a truly radical alternative to, and provides the materials for a radical critique of, the Third Person Observation Claim.

VII. On the Communicative Relation

I end with some comments on the notion of communication I believe we need to appeal to in developing the Communication Claim. I said earlier that we stand in a communicative relation when we adopt attitudes of mutual address towards one another, and that standing in a communicative relation thus defined is necessary for being aware of the other as ‘you’. So, on this account, if S shouts out to A in the supermarket that he is spilling sugar this doesn’t put him in a communicative relation with A unless A responds to S in a way that involves his adopting an attitude of address towards S.

This requirement on communicative relations is quite strong. Much turns, for the purposes of making it good, on the notion of communication appealed to. On one, commonly used definition, communication is the transmission of information. On this notion, so long as A picks up the information transmitted by S they stand in a communicative relation, whether or not A adopts an attitude of address towards S. On this account, A may mutter to himself ‘There goes that interfering busy-body, again’, and either do something or not about the sugar, without in any way acknowledging, to S, that the information has been taken up. S may be left wondering, and have to rely on observation and inference in reaching any conclusions on this front. There is, of

Person Engagement, Self-Alienation, and Group-Identification.” *Topoi*. doi: 10.1007/s11245-016-9444-6.

course, nothing wrong with such a definition of communication, but it is not the one we need in play in order to explain the sense in which you-awareness is underpinned by a communicative relation.

On the account sketched in the previous section, communication of this kind does not suffice for S to count as thinking a ‘you’ thought, as A is not thinking a ‘you’ thought about him (he figures in A’s mind as ‘that busy body’). Some other notion of communication is needed if we are to justify the mutual address requirement. To work up to it, consider the question of whether the kind of communication I have described should count as a case of S telling A that he is spilling sugar. I introduced the Communication Claim, informally, by appeal to the sense in which telling yields shared, mutual knowledge. In the case described there is no mutual knowledge, because the minimal conditions for it to be in place, mutual address, are lacking. But many of the conditions specified, for example, by Richard Moran, for A’s assertion to count as a successful telling are, *prima facie*, at least, consistent with treating it as such.¹⁸ Thus, it is, on the face of it, consistent with the story that S, in uttering what he does, assumes responsibility for the truth of what he says; and in directing his assertion at A takes it that A can recognize this. Moreover it seems consistent with the story as told that A treats S’s assertion, interpreted in this way, as his reason for believing that he is spilling sugar, and his treating it as such suffices for the communicative act to have succeeded. All of this, without A so much as casting a glance at S, let alone adopting an attitude of address towards him.

Now, I think there is a quite natural hearing of ‘telling’ on which the story just told does not suffice for treating S’s act as one of telling. On this reading, in the case described, we may imagine S treating his own utterance as an attempt at telling which failed and was, instead, merely a case of getting the information across, say. Similarly, on this way of treating telling, we may imagine that A doesn’t treat S’s saying what he does as an instance of telling either, but, rather,

¹⁸ See “Getting Told and Being Believed.” *Philosophers’ Imprint* 5 (5), 2005; “Testimony, Illocution and the Second Person, *Aristotelian Society, Supp. Vol.*, Volume 87, Issue 1, June 2013 Pages 115–135; *The Exchange of Words*, Harvard, forthcoming.

as an authoritative announcement about the state of his shopping trolley (which may as well, from A's perspective, have been boomed out by a tannoy). Correlatively, on this hearing of 'telling', what is missing in the case described is a context of mutual address. It is only when we do hear it in this way, on the particular account of second person awareness I have been sketching, that appeal to the second person in characterizing telling would be warranted. And it is only when thus heard that telling can deliver, solely through its execution, mutual knowledge.

I'm not sure considerations about the distinctive nature of testimonial knowledge, including those that reject evidential versions thereof, can, on their own, warrant this stronger reading of 'telling'. But, whether or not this is the case, I think it is clear that when we do understand telling in this way, we are thinking of it as embedded, essentially, in a conversation (however minimal--a telling in response to a question about the time, a telling responded to by quizzical look and so forth). Telling apart, conversation is the paradigm joint communicative activity we need to have in place in making good the Communication Claim. The sense of 'communication' we would need to be appealing to in so doing, is not one on which people stand in a communicative relation if information is transmitted between them, but, rather, the etymologically older, and more diffuse notion, on which to communicate is to be in touch, to connect, or 'commune', which does entail some form of mutual responsiveness. I label this notion 'communication-as-connection'. There are many ways of achieving connection -- dancing or playing music together, holding a conversation (in the course of which one might exchange information), sharing a joke and so forth, that is, the kind of activities Georg Simmel had in mind when he described 'playful association for its own sake' as the basic form of sociality.¹⁹

There is much to be learned about the nature of connection by

¹⁹ As in: 'Sociability' in humans [of the kind exhibited in I-Thou relations] is the impulse to construct play-forms of association, in which satisfaction is obtained in the very fact that one is associated with others and that the solitariness of the individual is resolved into togetherness, a union with others. Simmel, G. 1949. 'The Sociology of Sociability' *American Journal of Sociology* 55(3):254--61, p. 255.

investigating these different ways of achieving it. But however it is thus filled out, the proposal I want to have before us says that we should treat ‘communication-as-connection’ as a basic psychological concept, which cannot be reductively analyzed -- one of the concepts, along with those of perception, belief and the like, that we should take as basic when explaining our engagement with the world, in this case the world of other persons. On this approach, fully self-conscious I-you verbal communication, with all the capacities it entails, is a species of the genus ‘communication-as-connection’.²⁰

Communication-as-connection is also the notion of communication we need to have in play when explaining the link between knowing people and communication. Although we can imagine outlying cases in which, stretching it, two people might be said to know each other even if they are both, constantly, ‘stuck on transmit’, communicating only to relay information to the other, this is not how we normally think of the kind of communication involved in knowing people. It is precisely connecting, in many ways and on different levels, that provides for knowledge of others (and precisely what was lacking, I suggest, in Cleckley’s communications with his psychopaths).

²⁰ Arguments for treating it as developmentally basic are to be found in the literature on early ‘proto-conversations’, and in what Edward Tronick calls the ‘basic urge to connect’, which on his view, we need to appeal to in explaining the baby’s participation in these exchanges. See e.g. Tronick, E. Z. ‘Why is connection with others so critical? .In J. Nadel & D. Muir (Eds.), *Emotional development: Recent research advances* (pp. 293–315). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Work on such proto-conversations is a rich source for combatting appeal to proto-Gricean intentions in explaining the development of the capacity for communication. This literature also brings out an additional critical role for emotion. It is not just attitudes to others that are potentially emotionally-laden in second person communicative interaction, but the relation itself, the connection, can arguably only be fully explained by giving the feeling of connection an essential role.