

You and Me

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1. Introduction. Are there distinctively second personal thoughts? One way of beginning to address that question is by reflecting on connexions between the meaning of the second person pronoun and the thoughts that it can be used to express. As we'll see, pursuing the question in that way raises more specific questions about the relations in which those thoughts stand to first person thoughts, and about whether first person thoughts can be shared. I'll present a view on which some second person thoughts are distinctive in being other-directed first person thoughts.

In contemporary English, the second person pronoun—"You"—is, in effect, number neutral, and performs roles once distributed over singular "Thou" and plural "You". I shall focus here on singular uses of the contemporary form. The appropriate singular use of "You" is subject to distinctive constraints. In its most typical uses, one is permitted to use "You" to make reference to something only if one's use meets two conditions. First, one is permitted to use "You" to refer to a thing only if that thing is animate, and perhaps, more specifically only if it is a person. Thus, it would typically be inappropriate to use "You" in order to try to refer to a lampshade or, perhaps, to a cat. Second, one is permitted to use "You" to refer to an individual only if they are the *addressee* of one's remark—only if, that is, they are the individual to whom one is thereby speaking. Thus, it would typically be inappropriate to use "You" in attempting to refer to someone other than the individual to whom one's remark was addressed. (In less typical cases, one can perhaps use "You" to refer to a person to whom one is merely making as if to address. For example, one might use "You" in making as if to address someone who is in the distance, or on television.) Those conditions figure in the standing meaning, or character, of "You" in such a way that in cases in which one uses "You" in order to (make as if to) address a person, one normally thereby makes reference to that person. Subject to those distinctive constraints, "You" is akin to a demonstrative—for example, "That" or "That *F*"—in that it may be

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used, from occasion to occasion, in order to make reference to any of a variety of individuals.

When one makes appropriate use of “You” in order to refer to an individual, one typically thereby gives expression to a thought about the individual. For example, if I address a person by saying to them, “You are in danger,” I will typically thereby give expression to a thought to the effect that they—that is, they who are being addressed—are in danger. For the purposes of this discussion, it will be useful to make three assumptions about thoughts. The first assumption is that thoughts determine a range of referents, including a truth-value. The second is that if it is possible for a thinker reasonably, or rationally, to bear conflicting attitudes towards thoughts—for example, accepting one and rejecting the other—, then those thoughts are different. Since it is possible for a thinker to bear such conflicting attitudes towards pairs of thoughts even though those thoughts determine the same range of referents, it follows from the second assumption that referents do not determine thoughts. The second assumption furnishes a necessary condition on sameness of thought, but not a sufficient condition. The third assumption is that normal and suitably informed thinkers are reasonably reliable both in their application of the above necessary condition on sameness of thoughts, and also in judging whether thoughts that meet that condition are the same or different. With those assumptions about thoughts in place, we can specify in slightly more detail the questions pursued in the remainder. (The questions will be specified in yet further detail as we proceed.) What is the relationship between, on the one hand, the thoughts that are so expressed—“You”-thoughts—and, on the other, the constraints on so expressing thoughts that are determined by the standing meaning of “You”? More specifically, is there a range of thoughts that can be expressed by use of “You” such that inclusion in that range is distinctively associated the meaning of that expression? Or is it rather that a wide variety of types of thoughts can be so expressed, none of which is distinctively associated with “You”?

Some other demonstratives and indexicals are subject to constraints akin to those that control the appropriate use of “You”. For example, a speaker’s use of the indexical “I” is confined to, and normally results in, the speaker’s making reference to the speaker. It has been argued that the entertainment and expression of thoughts that can be expressed by occasional uses of some such expressions is subject to analogous constraints. One such claim has been made about thoughts expressed by the use of “I”. It has been argued that such thoughts about an individual are available to be entertained, or expressed, only by someone who meets conditions akin to those on which the appropriate use of “I” to refer to the same individual would depend. It would follow that only the referent determined by such a thought—the person using “I” in order to self-refer—would be in a position to entertain or express such an “I”-thought.

The central question to be pursued in the remainder concerns the extent to which thoughts expressible by the use of “You” are similar, in the respect just characterised, to thoughts expressible by the use of “I”. As we’ll see, some answers that have been offered to that question about “You”-thoughts have been shaped, in different ways, by three ideas. The first idea is that there are first person thoughts—“I”-thoughts—about individuals that can be entertained only by the

individuals that they are about. It follows from the first idea that if it's possible to understand another's use of "I", then it cannot be a requirement on understanding that use that one entertains such an "I"-thought about them. The second idea is that the most distinctive features of the use and understanding of "You" derive from its associations with "I". For instance, it might be held that in a case in which someone addressed one by the use of "You", understanding that use would require that one thought an "I"-thought about oneself. And it might also be held that in a case in which someone addressed one by using "I", understanding that use would require that one thought a "You"-thought about the speaker. Now one seemingly natural explanation for the obtaining of such constraints on understanding would be that, in such cases, "I" and "You" are used to express the very same thought. However, that natural explanation seems to be precluded by the first idea, since the explanation seems to require that "I"-thoughts can be entertained by those who can express them only by using "You". The third idea is that the distinctive associations of "You" are to be explained, not by appeal to its use to express a distinctive range of "You"-thoughts, but rather as a consequence of the types of circumstances in which it is appropriate to use "You"—that is, circumstances in which one seeks to address someone. In addition to gaining apparent support from the first idea, according to which "You"-thoughts cannot be "I"-thoughts, the third idea gains support from reflection on the second idea. For it is apt to seem as if the second idea would support the existence of a range of distinctively "I"—"You"-thoughts only if understanding a use of "You" to refer to an individual is subject to a specific condition. The condition is one to the effect that, in order for one to understand someone's use of "You" to refer to an individual, one would have to entertain a thought that one would express either by the use of "I"—if the referent were oneself—or by the use of "You"—if the referent were someone other than oneself. And now, since that condition is apt to seem implausible—because, that is, it seems possible to understand someone's use of "You" to refer to an individual even when one's own relations to the individual would make it inappropriate for one to use "You" in order to refer to the individual—we have apparently converging evidence in favour of the third idea.

In pursuing the standing of the third idea, I shall consider, in some detail, Richard Heck's defence of a view about "You"-thoughts or beliefs according to which, as he puts it, "...in the sense that there is such a thing as a self-conscious, first-person belief, there is no such thing as a second-person belief, or so it seems to me...." (Heck 2002: 16). I will defend a version of Heck's claim about some "You"-thoughts, and then outline a position that disagrees with Heck about "I"-thoughts. According to the alternative, Heck is right about some "You"-thoughts. However, about some other "You"-thoughts, Heck is at best partly right; and in being half right about those "You"-thoughts, he is partly wrong about "I"-thoughts. For according to the alternative, some "You"-thoughts are also "I"-thoughts and so some "I"-thoughts can be shared. I won't attempt here to demonstrate that the alternative is correct. However, I will develop one intuitive motivation for the alternative, building on the second idea scouted above—according to which there are distinctive constraints on understanding "You"—and an apparent tension between that idea and the first idea, according to which "I"-thoughts cannot be shared.

I'll proceed as follows. In §2, I'll explain some of Heck's claims about self-conscious thoughts, expressible by the use of "I". I'll spend some time in that section discussing various things that might be meant by claiming that such thoughts are *essentially indexical*, and then homing in on what Heck means by the claim. In §§3–4, I'll turn to Heck's discussion specifically of thoughts expressed by the use of "You". In §5, I'll sketch an alternative view about thoughts expressed by the use of "You" and "I", according to which some of them are "I"–"You"-thoughts. I'll then develop an argument against the alternative and explain how the argument can be resisted.

2. Heck on self-conscious thoughts. Let's follow Heck in approaching "You"-thoughts indirectly, via consideration of "I"-thoughts. Heck characterises the relevant range of "I"-thoughts as "self-conscious thoughts". About them he writes:

Self-conscious thoughts...are thoughts one can entertain only if one is in an appropriate context, i.e., suitably placed with respect to one's environment. (Heck 2002: 10. I've taken the liberty of removing his majusculation of "Thought".)

We can see why this is so by considering the following line of argument. The key premise in the argument is that thinking about oneself first personally, or self-consciously, in a way one would naturally express by the use of "I", seems to be distinct from any way of thinking about oneself third personally. For one might have any piece of third personal knowledge about oneself without thereby having the analogous piece of first personal knowledge about oneself. For example, I might see someone in the mirror and come, on that basis, to know that that person looks tired. Unbeknownst to me, I am that person. In that case, I might fail to realise that I look tired. Thus, it's plausible that we should distinguish my thought that that person looks tired from my thought that I look tired.

Now suppose that self-conscious thoughts of this kind were not context bound in the way Heck characterises: in that case, it would be possible to entertain them whatever one's context, and however one were placed with respect to elements of one's environment. In particular, one would not need to be me, or to be related to me in any specific way, in order to think the thought that I look tired. But now, given that supposition, it's apt to seem inescapable that someone would be able to think the thought that I look tired by thinking, about me, that that person looks tired. And now if their thought, about me, that that person looks tired were the same thought as my thought, about me, that that person looks tired, our supposition would conflict with the key opening premise of our argument. For according to that premise, my thought, about me, that that person looks tired is distinct from my thought that I am tired. Hence, since that premise appears unassailable, we should reject the supposition, and instead endorse the claim that self-conscious thoughts are, as Heck puts it, "essentially context-bound". (See e.g. Heck 2002: pp.9–10. The argument form derives from Perry 1977.)

The claim that a thought is context-bound is, minimally, the claim that thinkers must stand in specific relations to the referents determined by the thought if those thinkers are to entertain or express the thought. That claim seems to fit, not only self-conscious thoughts, but also third-person demonstrative thoughts, like the thought that might be expressed by a particular use of “That person” in order to make perceptually-based reference to me. For instances of the latter kind of thought would seem to be available to be entertained by a thinker only if the thinker were suitably related to me—in a range of typical cases, only if they were related to me as perceiver to perceived. However, we’ve seen reason to impose more stringent conditions on self-conscious thoughts, given the premise that no third personal thought is at the same time a self-conscious thought. Given that premise, the range of relations to a referent in which a thinker must stand in order to have self-conscious thoughts about that referent must be such that it is possible, when in those relations, to have thoughts about the referent that are not third-personal thoughts about it. And that would seem to preclude relations to a person in which one is in a position to think only thoughts that one would express by use of “That person”. Heck suggests what may turn out to be an even more exigent condition. He writes:

The self-conscious thought that I am a philosopher is one that only I can entertain: at least, it is the self-conscious thought that *I* am a philosopher only when I entertain it. (Heck 2002: 10.)

The condition that Heck states here is a version of the first idea mentioned in the introduction. It may turn out to be more exigent than the conditions sustaining thought that is not merely third personal. That may be so since it may turn out that there are ways for others to think about me which, unlike third personal ways of thinking about me, are ways of thinking the same thought that I think when I think that I am a philosopher, or that I am tired. (The qualification that Heck enters after the colon is not intended to permit that possibility. Rather, that qualification is required because Heck wants to leave open that thoughts might not determine reference, at least independently of their being entertained on particular occasions. Thus, he wants to leave open that you and I might think the very same self-conscious thought, but that when I think it, the thought is that *I* am a philosopher, while when you think it, the thought is to the effect that *you* are a philosopher. We will later consider a different way of understanding the qualification that does permit the possibility that others might entertain my “I”-thoughts.)

We can distinguish, therefore, at least three strengths of claim that may be made in claiming that the self-conscious thought that I am a philosopher is context-bound—claims we will call *context-dependence claims*. One weak form of context-dependence claim would be the first one stated above, according to which such thoughts can be entertained or expressed only by someone who is related in specific ways to the referents of those thoughts. The weak claim would be true of a thought if it could be entertained or expressed only by someone in a position to express it by the use of one or another indexical or demonstrative expression, but where the thought might be expressed by any of a variety of such expressions.

One strong form of context-dependence claim would be the second one stated above, and endorsed by Heck with respect to “I”-thoughts. According to the strong context-dependence claim, such thoughts are, not only minimally context-bound, but context-bound in precisely the same way as is the appropriate use of a particular expression. On Heck’s view, the strong context-dependence claim is true of “I”-thoughts. An intermediate form would be stronger than the weak form. For, it would go beyond the claim of minimal context-dependence in applying to a thought only if that thought could be entertained or expressed only by someone able to think about its referent in ways that are not merely third personal. But the intermediate claim might be weaker than the strong form, in that it would not tie the conditions on entertaining or expressing a thought to those governing the appropriate use of any particular expression.

To this point, we’ve considered Heck’s claim about “I”-thoughts, to the effect that those thoughts can be entertained, or expressed, only by someone who is in a position to express them by an appropriate use of “I”. A distinct, albeit related, range of claims might be made about the expression “I”, to the effect that comprehending engagement with a use of that expression depends upon grasping a specific type of thought, or one amongst a specific range of types of thoughts, about that individual. We will call these claims *uniform-understanding claims*.

If we assume that someone expressing a self-conscious thought through the use of “I” comprehends that use on the basis of grasping that very self-conscious thought, then Heck’s strong claim about the context-boundedness of such thoughts has, as a consequence, that no one else can comprehend the use in the same way that I do. Thus, Heck’s claim entails either that no one else can comprehend the use at all, or that there is no particular thought grasp of which is required for comprehension of the use. Similarly, as Heck himself stresses, his claim about “I”-thoughts entails that interpersonal communication by the use of “I” cannot require—indeed, cannot ever involve—there being a single thought that is grasped as a self-conscious thought by the speaker, and also grasped by the hearer. Heck therefore endorses, and seeks to defend, a less demanding model of communication, on which interpersonal communication requires, not the sharing of a particular thought by speaker and hearer, but rather that their different thoughts are appropriately related. (Heck 2002: 19–32.)

In addition to context-dependence claims and uniform-understanding claims, a further range of claims can be considered, to the effect that there are thoughts that can be expressed only through the use of “I” (or its equivalents), or only through the use of other particular expressions. Claims of that sort—to the effect that “I”-thoughts are distinctive, at least to the extent that they differ from thoughts that are expressible by any other expression—are typically referred to as *irreducibility claims*. One way of trying to defend such an irreducibility claim would be via appeal to the specific form of context-dependence to which those thoughts are subject. For if it could be shown that that specific form of context-dependence differed from, and could not be reconstructed on the basis of, the forms of context-dependence attending thoughts expressed by any other expression, that would show that the target thoughts are irreducible to forms of thought that are expressible by other means. Here, again, we might want to distinguish different strengths of irreducibility claim. A strong irreducibility claim

would be one to the effect that none of the thoughts expressed by a target expression—say, “I”—is expressible by the use of any expression with a meaning different from the target. A weaker claim would be one to the effect that each of the thoughts expressed by the target expression is expressible by the use of one or another alternative expression the meaning of which determines different constraints on appropriate use from those that are associated with “You”. A claim that is weaker still, and that coincides with a weak form of context-dependence claim, would be one to the effect that any alternative means of expression for thoughts expressible by the target expression must be a means of expressing context-dependent thoughts.

3. Heck on second person thoughts. We’ve seen various types of claim that might be made about the thoughts expressible through the use of indexicals or demonstratives, and about the associations of those thoughts with one or another means of expressing them. The claim that the thoughts expressed by a particular expression are *essentially indexical* might reasonably be used to make any of those claims. With the variety of such claims in mind, let’s turn to Heck’s discussion of thoughts that are expressible by the use of “You”. It will be worth quoting him at length:

Consider the indexical ‘you’. As a matter of its standing meaning, an utterance of ‘you’ refers to the person addressed in that utterance. But in the sense that there is such a thing as a self-conscious, first-person belief, there is no such thing as a second-person belief, or so it seems to me. Of course, I can identify someone descriptively, as the person to whom I am now speaking, and may have beliefs whose contents involve that descriptive identification. But that is not what I mean to deny: I mean to deny that there is any such thing as an essentially indexical second-person belief. The phenomenon of the second-person is a linguistic one, bound up with the fact that utterances, as we make them, are typically directed to people, not just made to the cosmos. (If there were speakers of a language who never directed their utterances to their fellows, they would have no use for the second-person.) The word ‘you’ has no correlate at the level of thought: if not, then the contents of the beliefs we express using the word ‘you’ have very little to do with its standing meaning. (Heck 2002: 12)

Heck claims here that, while there is such a thing as an essentially indexical first-person thought, there is no such thing as an essentially indexical second-person thought. Given the wide variety of claims that might be made about a range of thoughts in claiming them to be essentially indexical, a natural question to ask is, which such claims about “I”-thoughts and “You”-thoughts does Heck mean, respectively, to endorse and to reject?

One hypothesis would be that Heck wishes to endorse a uniform-understanding claim as made about “I” and to reject that claim as made about “You”. The grounds for rejection of such a claim with respect to “You” might then be that it is possible for different speakers comprehendingly to engage with a

use of “You” without there being a single thought that both thinkers associate with that thought. However, it would be natural to hold that a speaker’s own comprehending engagement with their use of “I” would involve their associating with that use a self-conscious “I”-thought. Furthermore, it would be natural to hold that other thinkers can engage comprehendingly with that use of “I”. So, given that Heck holds that no one other than the speaker can think of the speaker by entertaining an “I”-thought, it would be natural equally to deny such a uniform-understanding claim about “I”. Hence, given that Heck commits to an asymmetric treatment of “I” and “You”, respectively, there is reason to doubt that he has in view a uniform-understanding claim.

Perhaps, then, Heck has in mind a reducibility claim. A strong form of such a claim would be to the effect that thoughts that can be expressed by the use of “You” can be expressed equally well without the use of any indexical or demonstrative expression. For example, it might be claimed that thoughts expressible by the use of “You” can be expressed instead by the use of a purely qualitative definite description. It would be natural to hold that the thoughts that such purely qualitative descriptions can be used to express are not context-dependent. At least, it would be natural to hold that they are not context-dependent in the same way that thoughts expressible by the use of indexicals or demonstratives other than “You” are. So, it would be natural to hold that a successful reduction of that type would reveal that thoughts that are expressed by the use of “You” are not really context-dependent—or, at least, that they are not context-dependent in the ways that thoughts expressible by “I” or “You” are. (The natural view about qualitative descriptions would be in conflict with an alternative take on such a reduction, according to which—given the obvious context-dependence of thoughts expressible by the use of “You”—such a reduction would serve to reveal a hitherto concealed element of context-dependence in descriptively expressed thoughts.) Such a claim would certainly count as a denial that “You”-thoughts are essentially indexical. The problem, of course, is that the prospects for such a reduction are bleak. And moreover, Heck is clearly not in the market for defending such an implausible view. (The description that Heck mentions in the target passage—“the person to whom I am now speaking”—is replete with indexicals. Heck later considers, and rejects, an alternative according to which thoughts expressible by the use of “You” are also expressible by the use of proper names. (Heck 2002: 14–15))

An alternative hypothesis, then, would be that Heck has in mind a less ambitious reductive claim, to the effect that thoughts that can be expressed by the use of “You” can also be expressed by the use of expressions not involving “You”. One way of pursuing that hypothesis would be the following. One would begin by reflecting upon the constraints on appropriate use built into the meaning of “You”, and that figure in determining reference for a use of that expression. One would then attempt to simulate those constraints by means of a combination of expressions other than “You”. The attempt would terminate in a complex expression subject to certain conditions for appropriate use, where those conditions figure in a specific way in the occasional determination of reference. If the attempt were successful, then those conditions would be equivalent to the conditions governing the use of “You”. One might then attempt to make a case

that equivalence with respect to those conditions suffices to make it so that the complex equivalent can be used to express the same thoughts as are expressed by uses of “You”.

That is certainly a project that someone might undertake. And, unlike the first reductive project that we considered, it is not obviously doomed to failure. However, one might reasonably wonder at its significance. For one thing, it is plausible, independently of the success or failure of this reductive project, that thoughts expressed by use of “You” can be expressed without the use of “You”, for it is plausible that those thoughts can be expressed by the use of translational equivalents in other languages. So, a case would need to be made for thinking that it would be of special significance to discover that the same trick can be turned within a single language, through some combination of other expressions. For another thing, although such a reduction might plausibly reveal a difference between “I” and “You”, it would nonetheless be odd to characterise that difference as indicating that “I” is essentially indexical in a way that “You” is not. For the difference would seem to concern, not the forms of context-dependence to which “I” and “You” are, respectively, subject, but rather to concern the articulacy of the mechanism by which that form of context-dependence is brought about. For a third thing, it’s not clear why such a reduction would reveal anything about “You” that it didn’t, at the same time, reveal about its purported equivalent. For the equivalence relation required to obtain for successful reduction is symmetrical. So, insofar as the availability of a complex equivalent would show that “You” were not essentially indexical, the availability of the simple equivalent “You” would equally show that the complex is not essentially indexical. Finally, fourth, Heck’s main objective in the target passage is to establish that the standing meaning of “You” doesn’t figure in—and, presumably, that it doesn’t determine—the nature of the thoughts that are expressed by its use. To that end, he is required to make a case that those thoughts can be expressed by the use of expressions the meanings of which determine different constraints on appropriate use from those that are associated with “You”. And the case for that would not be advanced by showing that the constraints embodied in the meaning of “You” can be simulated by means of other expressions.

Heck’s objective suggests a further hypothesis, this time bringing into alignment reducibility and context-dependence claims. Heck’s claim, according to this hypothesis, would be that thoughts expressible by “You” could be expressed also by the use of expressions that were subject to different appropriateness constraints. Such a claim would amount to the rejection of a strong form of context-dependence claim, considered above with respect to “I”, according to which the relations in which a thinker must stand towards an individual in order to entertain a type of thought about that individual coincide with those in which a speaker must stand in order to express such a thought by the use of “I”. In this case, the claim would be that, in order to think thoughts about an individual that are expressible by “You,” one is not required to be so positioned with respect to the individual that one could express those thoughts by the use of “You”, or by the use of an expression with the same meaning as “You”. (Henceforth, I’ll suppress the qualification.) On this hypothesis, Heck’s central claim about “You” would express a version of the third idea mentioned in the introduction.

Such a claim would seem to fit Heck's suggestion that, as he puts it, "The phenomenon of the second-person is a linguistic one...." (Heck 2002: 12) One natural analogy here would be case constraints on the appropriate use of pronouns. For there are restrictions on the appropriate use of pronouns in particular cases that seem not to be reflected at the level of thought. Thus, for example, suppose that Flo seeks to give expression to a thought to the effect that Jill loves Mary. Supposing that Mary is perceptually salient, Flo might do so either by saying, "Jill loves her", or by saying, "She is loved by Jill." And it's plausible that either might be used in such a circumstance to give expression to the thought in question. However, case conditions preclude Flo from giving expression to that thought by saying, "Jill loves she," even though she could have said, "She is loved by Jill," thereby using "She" in order to refer to Mary. It seems clear that this phenomenon is merely linguistic, and that this difference between "She" and "Her" need not be reflected at the level of thought. Similarly, Heck's claim would be that the special appropriateness constraints to which the use of "You" is subject might figure in helping to make salient to an audience that to which one means to refer, and might also help one to satisfy norms of politeness. However, those constraints would have no reflection at the level of thought. (One might usefully compare here Geach 1957: 117–121 and Strawson 1959: 99–100, both of whom, in different ways, make the claim that "I" has a purely linguistic function. citation.)

4. Heck's argument. Let's suppose that it is a context-dependence claim of that type that Heck wants to defend. What reasons does he provide for endorsing such a claim? At first, he is reticent:

I don't really know how to argue for this claim: it just seems right to me, even obviously so. (Heck 2002: 12)

However, he later provides the basis for such an argument:

Reflection on reports of what has been said reinforce this conclusion. [The conclusion is that the standing meanings of demonstratives and indexicals, including "You", are not reflected at the level of what is said—GL.] If someone says to Bill Clinton "You are a philosopher," I can truly say, "He said that that person is a philosopher," demonstrating Bill Clinton—as truly as if he had demonstrated Bill Clinton and said "That person is a philosopher." (Heck 2002: 17–18)

Since our concern is with what is thought, rather than what is said, the case we are interested in should be framed in those terms. Furthermore, since our concern is with what is thought, rather than with reports about what is thought, Heck's case requires further amendment in order to align it with that concern. For it is well known that reports of what someone said or thought can be reflectively acceptable even though they fail precisely to specify their subjects' thoughts. And that is so especially when the reports involve indexicals or demonstratives. So amended, the following would be a version of the consideration that Heck offers.

Suppose that one person—say, Flo—says to Bill Clinton, “You are a philosopher,” and thereby expresses a thought she also entertains, thought *A*. And suppose that, at the same time, someone else—say, Eliza—demonstrates Bill Clinton and says, “That person is a philosopher,” thereby expressing a thought that she also entertains, thought *B*. Suppose, further, that although Eliza is in broadly similar circumstances to Flo, Eliza’s relation to Clinton, unlike Flo’s, would make it inappropriate for her to use “You” in order to refer to Clinton. Minimally, Eliza is not in a position appropriately to address Clinton. By contrast, both Eliza and Flo are positioned with respect to Clinton in such a way as to enable either appropriately to refer to Clinton by means of “That person.” In that case, we can suppose that, since Eliza is capable of entertaining and expressing thought *B* about Clinton, and since she is not capable appropriately of using “You” to express a thought about Clinton, thought *B* is not context-bound in the same way as the appropriate use of “You” to address, and so refer to, Clinton is context-bound. Finally, that characterisation of Flo’s and Eliza’s respective circumstances is consistent with the possibility that thought *A* is the very same thought as thought *B*: that Flo and Eliza are thinking about Clinton in the same way. For instance, it is plausible that that might be so in a case in which Flo and Eliza were jointly attending to Clinton, and governing their respective uses of “You” and “That person” in accord with their jointly so attending. Arguably, it follows that thought *A*—the thought, recall, that Flo expressed by her use of “You are a philosopher”—is not content-bound in the same way as the appropriate use of “You” to address, and so refer to, Clinton is context-bound. (One might be willing to allow that the conditions of appropriate use of “You” to refer to someone permit, as fully appropriate, the atypical case of making as if to address someone, for instance when the target is too distant to be addressed. On that basis, one might want to challenge the alleged distinction between the constraints governing “You” and those governing “That person”. I shall not attempt to plug that hole in the argument here.)

Now, although I’ve developed an argument to Heck’s conclusion on the basis of a sketch that he presents, it’s not clear to me that he would accept the development. For with respect to at least some cases, he seems willing to allow that subjects in similar positions to Flo and Eliza with respect to some individual might both be able to think thoughts that both would express by the use of “That person is a philosopher,” but unable thereby to think the same thought. (Heck 2002: 21–25) If there were reason to deny that thinkers so placed are *ever* in a position so to think the same context-bound thought, then that would serve to block the argument. Indeed, the argument would be blocked if there were reason to claim that, although pairs of thinkers can be in such a position, they can be so only if they are also both in a position to express the thought by the use of “You are a philosopher.” However, it seems to me very plausible that the conditions specified in the case are co-tenable. (For discussion and defence of related claims about “That”, see Dickie and Rattan 2010.) And, so, it seems to me plausible that the argument supports a version of Heck’s claim, to the effect that there are thoughts that can be expressed by the use of “You” that are not context-bound in the way that the appropriate use of “You” is context-bound. Furthermore, it’s not clear to me how an analogous argument could be run for thought—as opposed,

perhaps, to some notion of what is said—without taking an analogous view about the possibility that Eliza and Flo might think the same thought. So, if I were precluded from taking that view, I would find myself in the unfortunate position that Heck characterised of not knowing how to argue for his claim about “You”.

5. Back to me. To this point, I’ve attempted to articulate the claim about “You” that Heck seeks to defend. Furthermore, I’ve tried to develop a defence of that claim, based upon material that he supplies. However, as we saw, Heck wishes to conjoin his claim about “You”-thoughts with a contrasting claim about “I”-thoughts. And I now want to suggest grounds for doubt about the latter claim. Heck’s claim about “I”-thoughts was that they—unlike thoughts expressed by the use of “You”—are, in the sense we delimited above, essentially indexical. That is, Heck claims that only those who in a position to express “I”-thoughts by using “I” are able to entertain them. Our findings about “You”-thoughts open up the possibility of challenging that assumption.

The argument about “You”-thoughts that we derived from Heck was to the effect that “You”-thoughts could be entertained and expressed by someone who was not in a position to express such thoughts by the use of “You”, as long as they were in a position to express the thoughts by using “That person”. An analogous claim about thoughts that can be expressed by the use of “I” would be the following. There are thoughts expressible by the use of “I” that can also be entertained and expressed by someone not in a position to express those thoughts by the appropriate use of “I”. For example, it might be that, in certain conditions, those thoughts can be entertained and expressed by someone other than the referent of the thoughts. Since no one other than the referent can use “I” appropriately in order to express those thoughts, someone other than the referent would have to make use of other means to express their thought. And a natural hypothesis would be that—again, in certain conditions—someone other than the speaker might make use of “You” in order to do so.

John McDowell endorses a related claim in the following passage:

Suppose someone says to me, “You have mud on your face”. If I am to understand him, I must think an “I”-thought, thinking something to this effect: “I have mud on my face: that is what he is saying.” (McDowell, 1984: 222)

McDowell’s claim here is that understanding someone who addresses one by using “You” can require that one entertains a thought that one would express by the use of “I”. And that claim, a version of the second idea mentioned in the introduction, seems very plausible. But why should it be that understanding someone who makes use of “You” requires that one think a self-conscious thought about oneself? A natural hypothesis would be that that is so only because one is thereby thinking a thought that they expressed and, moreover, because the thought that they expressed was one that they also entertained. For if things were not like that—if, for example, the thought about one that they entertained were distinct from any thought that one would express by the use of “I”—then it

would be difficult to see why it should be required of one, in order to understand them, that one entertain a thought that one would express by the use of “I”. For example, consider a case in which someone addresses me by using “You”. Suppose that the thought that my interlocutor expressed were a thought that they could equally well have expressed by using “That person has mud on their face”. In that case, it is hard to see why it wouldn’t suffice for my understanding them that I thought something about myself that I would express by using “That person” rather “I”. And my entertaining such a thought would seem to be possible even in cases in which I failed to realise that it was about me. For example, it would seem to be possible for me to entertain such a thought about myself on the basis of seeing myself in the mirror, whilst failing to realise that that I was that person. In that case, my understanding the speaker might involve my thinking something—in fact, but unbeknownst to me, about myself—to this effect: “That person has mud on their face: that is what he is saying.”

McDowell would not accept the proposed explanation for the observation he makes about conditions on understanding uses of “You”. For he agrees with Heck that someone can entertain an “I”-thought only if they are in a position to express it by using “I”. Thus, he agrees with Heck that only the referent of an “I”-thought can entertain that thought. However, he provides no reason for endorsing that claim about “I”-thoughts, and so no reason to reject the explanation. And for the reasons just sketched, it is not obvious how else the requirement that he endorses on understanding “You” is to be explained. McDowell joins Heck in arguing that communication or mutual understanding depends, not on the shared entertaining of thoughts, but rather on the entertaining of thoughts that, as he puts it,

...stand and are mutually known to stand in a suitable relation of correspondence. (McDowell, 1984: 222)

But he doesn’t explain why mutual knowledge of that sort must be absent in a case in which one responded to someone addressing one as “You” by thinking a “That person”-thought about oneself. Thus, there is an apparent tension between McDowell’s endorsement of the second idea mentioned in the introduction—according to which the most distinctive features of the use and understanding of “You” derive from its associations with “I”—and his endorsement of the first idea—according to which “I”-thoughts cannot be shared.

Let’s suppose, then, that McDowell’s claim about understanding another’s use of “You” in addressing one is at least sometimes correct. And let’s suppose, moreover, that the truth of McDowell’s claim is to be explained by the fact that such a use of “You” would manifest the speaker’s entertaining of a thought about one that one would express by use of “I”. In that case, we would be endorsing the following analogue of Heck’s claim about thoughts expressible by the use of “You”. Thoughts expressible by the use of “I” are, in at least one reasonable sense, not essentially indexical. That is because it is possible for those thoughts to be entertained by someone who is not in a position to express them by use of “I”, but only by use of “You”.

The hypothesis to be considered, then, is this. There are thoughts that thinkers can entertain, as self-conscious thoughts about themselves. Those thinkers would express their thoughts by the use of “I”. Those very thoughts are also available to be entertained, and expressed, by other thinkers. Presumably, when other thinkers entertain those thoughts, they do not entertain them as self-conscious thoughts, so we have grounds for a version of the qualification that Heck entered about the way in which self-conscious thoughts are context-bound. (“The self-conscious thought that I am a philosopher is one that only I can entertain: at least, it is the self-conscious thought that *I* am a philosopher only when I entertain it.” (Heck 2002: 10.)) Moreover, since the constraints on the appropriate use of “I” mean that it can be used only to express thoughts that determine reference to the speaker, other thinkers will not use “I” in order to express such thoughts. Rather, I’ve suggested, they will use “You”.

The hypothesis might seem difficult to square with the idea that a given attitude to a specific thought must figure in the same way in the psychology of whoever adopts that attitude. Thus, insofar as two individuals adopt the same attitude to an “I”-thought about one of them, one would expect their doing so to have the same effects on their cognition and action. Yet, that natural assumption seems to conflict with obvious differences between the behaviour of those who think of someone as “I” and those who think of the same person as “You”. For example, it is obvious that one of them will seek to express their thought by using “I”, and not “You”, while the other will seek to express their thought by using “You”, and not “I”.

The issue warrants more discussion than I can give it here. However, the initial concern can be somewhat assuaged by reflection on plausible cases of intra-personal preservation of an attitude to a thought in cases in which the subject’s preserving their grasp of the thought requires accommodation to their shifting relations to the referent of the thought. One such plausible case, described by Gareth Evans, is the preservation of an attitude to a thought about a day as the day recedes into one’s past. On the day in question, one would act towards that day in ways that were appropriate to one’s relations to it at that time, where those ways would include expressing the thought by using “Today”, rather than “Yesterday” or “Tomorrow”. On the following day, preservation of the attitude to the thought would lead one to express the thought by using “Yesterday”, rather than “Today” or “Tomorrow”. As Evans characterises the case, the differences in the behavioural upshot of one’s grasp of the thought that emerge over time can be explained by differences in the conditions that one must meet in order to grasp, and preserve grasp, of the thought as one’s relations to its referent change. (Evans 1981) That is just an analogy and not yet a developed account of the “I”–“You”-case. However, it can serve to weaken initial resistance to the hypothesis based upon the concern about explanatory functions. For according to the hypothesis, the differences between thinkers who both grasp an “I”–“You”-thought about an individual are to be explained in an analogous way, by appeal to their differential accommodation to their different relations to the thought’s referent. Thus, Evans’ proposal suggests a way in which it might be possible to accommodate the pattern of symmetry in thought and asymmetry in action exhibited by pairs of “I”–“You”

thinkers. (For a more detailed development of the hypothesis, see Longworth 2013.)

That's the hypothesis. However, one might think that the hypothesis can be refuted by means of considerations we've already developed on the basis of Heck's discussion. For in our initial discussion of self-conscious thoughts, we presented grounds for thinking that those thoughts cannot be expressed by the third personal use of "That person". And, more recently, we've presented an argument that depended upon the assumption that thoughts that are expressible by the use of "You" *can* be expressed by the use of "That person". It might seem, then, that those considerations can be combined, by appeal to the transitivity of sameness of thoughts, in order to deliver the conclusion that the thoughts that thinkers entertain as self-conscious thoughts about themselves cannot be expressed by the use of "You".

Consider Eliza's self-conscious thought, *A*—a thought that Eliza would express by using the sentence "I am a philosopher". And consider Flo's second personal thought about Eliza, *B*—a thought that Flo would express by addressing Eliza with "You are a philosopher. According to the present hypothesis, there are circumstances, *S*, in which *A* is the same thought as *B*. Now consider Kim's third personal thought about Eliza, *C*—a thought that Kim would express by saying, about Eliza, "That person is a philosopher". According to the assumption we made in the earlier argument about "You", there are circumstances, *T*, in which *B* is the same thought as *C*. Now assume that there are such cases in which circumstances *S* are the same as circumstances *T*. By the transitivity of sameness of thought, it would follow that *A* is the same thought as *C*. And yet, the initial argument that self-conscious thoughts like *A* are essentially context-bound seems to preclude the possibility that *A* is the same thought as *C*. For it seems that Eliza could (in circumstances $U = T = S$) come to understand Kim's use of the sentence "That person is a philosopher" on the basis of entertaining a thought, *D*, in fact about herself, that she would express by saying, "That person is a philosopher", even though Eliza failed to realise that she was the referent of "That person". Arguably, there are cases of that sort in which *C* is the same thought as *D*. However, in those circumstances, Eliza might, for example, reasonably accept *A*—since she knows that she herself is a philosopher—while rejecting *D*—since she doesn't realise that *D* is about her, and believes that she is the only philosopher present. So, there are grounds to deny that *A* is the same thought as *D*, even though *D* is the same thought as *C*. And, so, given that there are grounds to accept that *C* is the same thought as *B*, there are also grounds to deny that *B* is the same thought as *A*. There are therefore grounds to reject the target hypothesis.

There are various ways in which an attempt to resist the argument might be mounted. For instance, one might revisit the assumption that Kim's "That person" thought can be the same as Flo's "You"-thought. More subtly, one might allow that Flo's "You"-thought can be the same as Eliza's "I"-thought in circumstance *S*, but deny that Flo's "You"-thought can be the same as Kim's "That person" thought in the same circumstances. That is, one might deny that a case like the one presented is possible in which $S = T$. However, I want to conclude by suggesting a more straightforward way of resisting the argument.

The more straightforward way of resisting the argument is to reject an assumption, made in the course of the argument, to the effect that there is precisely one thought, B , which Flo entertains and seeks to express by her use of “You”. If we were to allow instead that Flo entertains *two* thoughts about Eliza, B_1 and B_2 , and gives expression to both thoughts by her use of “You”, we would be in a position to resist the argument in the following way. We would accept a version of the claim made in the first stage of the argument, that Flo entertains and expresses the same thought as Eliza, by identifying A with B_1 . And we would accept a version of the claim made in the second stage of the argument, that Kim entertains and expresses the same thought as Flo, by identifying C with B_2 . Since B_1 is not the same thought as B_2 , the principle of transitivity is not applicable, and the remaining elements in the argument present no difficulty for the hypothesis that one thinker’s “I”-thoughts can be entertained and expressed by another thinker as expressible by the use of “You”.

In the absence of reasons to hold that uses of “You” are associated with the entertaining and expression of at most one thought, the argument against some such thoughts being the same as other’s self-conscious thoughts can be resisted. Furthermore, we can now see how the conclusion about “You”-thoughts at which we arrived in §4 is, in one respect, slightly weaker than it might have seemed. For it might have seemed as if the conclusion was that *any* “You”-thought could also be expressed by means of a use of “That person”. However, we can now see that in order to draw that conclusion, we would need to rely on an assumption akin to the assumption the rejection of which we are now considering. We might allow that with respect to any use of “You” that expresses a thought, that use will express a thought that is also expressible by the use of “That person”. However, we should deny that every such use must express only a thought that can be expressed in that way. For it is possible that such a use of “You” will also express a thought that cannot be expressed by a use of “That person”, but only by another use of “You,” or another’s use of “I”.

6. Conclusion. Let me summarize the foregoing. In §2, I explained some of Heck’s claims about self-conscious thoughts, expressible by the use of “I”. I spent some time in that section discussing various things that might be meant by claiming that such thoughts are essentially indexical, and then homing in on what Heck might mean. I suggested that his claim is most plausibly taken to that “I”-thoughts are distinctively context-bound: such thoughts can be entertained only by someone who would use “I” to express them. Thus, Heck endorses a version of the first idea mentioned in the introduction. In §§3–4, I turned to Heck’s discussion specifically of thoughts expressed by the use of “You”, and developed an argument that there are “You”-thoughts that are not context-bound in the way that the appropriate use of “You” is context-bound, but rather can be entertained and expressed by someone not in a position to express them by the use of “You”. That conclusion amounts to version of the third idea mentioned in the introduction. In §5, I exposed an apparent tension between Heck’s claims about “I”- and “You”-thoughts and a version of the second idea mentioned in the introduction, according to which the use and understanding of “You” is

distinctively associated with the use and understanding of “I”. In light of that tension, I sketched an alternative view about thoughts expressed by the use of “You” and “I”. I then developed an argument against the alternative view, and explained how that argument might be resisted.

I haven’t attempted here to defend, or fully to develop, the alternative view about “I”- and “You”-thoughts that was sketched in §5. (It’s developed and defended in more detail in Longworth 2013. See also Bermudez 2005; Rödl 2007.) My aims here have been more limited. One aim has been to expose a tension between views on which first person thoughts cannot be shared and plausible constraints on understanding uses of “You” and, thus, one intuitive motivation for pursuing the alternative hypothesis presented here. Another aim has been to isolate an assumption about the thoughts that “You” can be used to express—the assumption that uses of “You” express at most one thought—that proponents of the alternative view presented here might consider rejecting.

The alternative view is one according to which there are no thoughts that are distinctively associated with the use of “You”—no thoughts that are context bound in precisely the way that the use of “You” to express those thoughts is context-bound. All the thoughts that are expressible by means of “You” are also expressible by other means: some are expressible by the use of “That person”, and some others are expressible by the use of “I”. However, in at least one respect, that makes “You” special: for only someone who entertained a “You”-thought self-consciously, as a thought about themselves, could express that thought by using “I”; so, according to the view sketched here, “You” provides the only means for others to express such a thought.

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