

Being Known to Each Other

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Abstract: What is the character of our epistemic relation to others? Focusing on tensions arising in the work of John McDowell, we present a series of puzzles about this relation. We argue that the various problems we uncover have one and the same source—namely, the failure to appreciate that the terms articulating our epistemic relations to other minds are defined by their paradigmatic deployments in whose light their derivative uses are to be understood. As we argue in the paper, the logically fundamental way in which a mind comes to be known is by making itself known. The very idea of an epistemic relation to another mind depends for its intelligibility on the case of successful communication between parties known to each other in mutual address. Through reflection on such cases, we introduce conditions of adequacy on a proper account of the logical grammar of the second person pronoun. Furthermore, we argue that the essential expressivity of the human body is to be conceived by reference to the nexus between “I” and “you.” Focusing on the work of McDowell, we bring out how a resolutely disjunctivist approach to the epistemology of other minds is incompatible with the Fregean notion of logical complexity that shapes certain regions of his work.

Key words: knowledge, other minds, first person, second person, recognition, reciprocity, address, testimony, expression, speech act, communication, disjunctivism, John McDowell

1. KNOWING SOMETHING AND KNOWING SOMEONE

It has often been noted that the verb “to know” can take a personal name instead of a propositional clause as its grammatical complement. Yet the significance of this point is easy to miss since the grammar of English allows for all sorts of terms to appear as the complement of that verb. To know the time is

to know that the time is, say, six o'clock. Hence, one might think that to know x is to know the truth of propositions about x . It has been argued that the propositional analysis of "to know x " fails when " x " is replaced by a singular term such as "Patricia," "Paris," or "this pebble." Another question to consider is whether the corresponding epistemic relations—to persons, to places, and to pebbles—ought to be treated on a par. Going by ordinary parlance, there is reason to be wary of assimilating the various uses where the verb "to know" is coupled with a singular term. One can be said to know Paris like the back of one's hand. But if someone were to say this of a pebble, we might worry about their state of mind. And to say that I know *you* like the back of my hand, if not meant poetically, would be either presumptuous or just plain perverse. As a flat-footed declaration, it bespeaks disrespect—not because it would be impossible to "really" know a person, but because knowing a person is not at all like knowing one's way around a familiar place or region of reality.

The special sort of name that originally "belongs"—that is ownmost [*eigen*]-to persons intuitively indicates the distinctiveness of the kind of attention that one who is called by such a name is to be accorded. Of course, it does not follow that this should be of any concern to the logician or epistemologist. Within the analytic tradition, it is generally taken to make no difference to the logical notation of a singular judgment whether the respective concept is predicated of a person, a place, or a pebble. As Frege has it, the resulting statements will exhibit the same logical nexus between object and concept, expressible as " x is F ," or " $F(x)$." Indeed, his own general term for object-expressions is "proper name" (*Eigenname*).¹ A consequence of the Fregean treatment of these matters is that his notation leaves no room for a logical contrast between *knowing x* and *knowing that x is F* .² Russell famously insists that the former should be construed as presenting an irreducibly distinct way of knowing: "knowledge by acquaintance," in his terminology. Yet he too regards it as a matter of logical indifference whether the respective object of acquaintance is a person, a place, a thing, or some other sort of mere particular.³ The radical disagreement between them on the character of knowledge of particulars notwithstanding, what the two fathers of analytic philosophy have in common is that their logical notations obliterate the ordinary contrast between any old nominatum and the special sort of name

1. "[B]y . . . name I have here understood any designation figuring as a *proper name*, which thus has as its meaning a definite object (*this word taken in the widest range*)" [our emphases]. Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Reference," in *Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic and Philosophy*, (ed.) Brian McGuinness (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 158.

2. Frege, "On Concept and Object," *Collected Papers*, op. cit., 189.

3. Bertrand Russell, "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 11 (1910), 108–128.

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that originally belongs to persons. This has shaped analytic approaches to the epistemology of other minds. In consequence, the logical grammar of knowing *someone* has been misconstrued. Or so we shall argue in what follows.

One wants to say that a person is not just another *thing* one might know something *about*. Of course, morality prohibits regarding persons as mere things. But that is not what we mean. The point we are after can be developed from within epistemology. In contrast with a thing, a person can figure on either side of an act of knowing: as *knower* and as *known*—as subject of knowledge and as object of knowledge. It is possible for a person to know something, and it is possible for a person to be known by someone. Knowing someone thus contains the possibility for the “object” known to be a knowing subject. By the same token, it is also possible for two people to be *known to each other*. Intuitively, the case in which this possibility is realized should take center stage in an investigation of what it is to know another. When considering what such knowledge comes to, it seems sensible to begin by focusing on cases where the known subject fully successfully exercises capacities characteristic of having a mind. As the capacity for knowledge belongs to what it is to have a mind, the scenario that the philosopher ought to consider first is the one in which the other figures in one’s knowledge as another knower—a knower not only of the world and *their* own mind but also of *other* minds. This suggests, in turn, that the epistemic relation to a person should be approached by reflection on the shape it takes in successful acts of communication whose subjects figure for one another both as knower and as known. Here, the relation appears as the nexus of being known to each other in mutual address.

The thought that the meeting of minds in the exchange of words plays a central role in how human beings come to know one another is, of course, a truism. At any rate, the idea is hardly alien to a tradition in which philosophical reflection on language takes center stage. The question is, however, whether the respective epistemic relation between persons can be adequately captured by a theory couched in a logical framework that appears to obfuscate the very contrast between personal names and other *nominata*. In this connection, it is instructive to consider the work of John McDowell. For one, McDowell regards Russell’s view of singular thought as giving rise to skepticism about knowledge of other minds. His own account of singular thought is designed to provide the conceptual resources for averting such skepticism.⁴

4. John McDowell, “Criteria, Defeasibility and Knowledge” (1982) [henceforth CDK]; reprinted in John McDowell, *Meaning, Knowledge and Reality* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). According to McDowell, Russell’s own variant of a theory of acquaintance is an empiricist version of a misguided “Cartesian picture”—one according to which our knowledge of other minds and of things in the external world can each be at best “indirect”

Furthermore, McDowell also stresses the epistemological significance of the meeting of minds in the exchange of words. In a short paper on Donald Davidson, he writes:

It is essential to language that it . . . enables us to make our own minds known to others and to know the minds of others. This mutual intelligibility between ourselves and others requires us to conceive objective reality as common ground between ourselves and our interlocutors, potential and actual.⁵

The essence of language, McDowell here suggests, is in part defined by its role in enabling thinking subjects *mutually* to come to know each other's views of the world. Note that the proposed account of language presents at the same time a characterization of a specific manner in which a mind can come to be known—namely: by *making* itself known. Speaking to one another is a way for two people to be known to each other. On the preceding page, McDowell claims that “knowledge of the nonmental world around us, knowledge of the minds of others, and knowledge of our own minds are mutually irreducible but mutually interdependent.”⁶ Against this background, it seems natural to think that the appeal to the meeting of minds in the exchange of words is meant to bring out what is irreducibly distinct about knowing another mind.

Since the main agenda of the paper lies elsewhere, McDowell does not elaborate on this point there.⁷ Yet it is an enticing claim worth considering. If knowledge of things in the external world, knowledge of one's own mind, and knowledge of the minds of others are indeed “mutually irreducible” and “mutually interdependent,” then understanding any member of the triad requires an account of the fundamental difference between them, as well as

because all that is “directly” known to us takes place in a self-standingly intelligible mental realm. Overcoming skepticism, McDowell insists, requires making space for the idea of *direct* knowledge with respect to both sorts of objects of knowledge: things in the external world and other minds. For his argument that Russell's account of singular thought presupposes a Cartesian picture of the relation between mind and world, see John McDowell, “Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space” (1986) [henceforth STEIS]; reprinted in *Meaning, Knowledge and Reality* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). Indeed, the most detailed account anywhere in McDowell's work of what precisely he means by “Cartesianism” is to be found on pp. 236–252 of STEIS, while in CDK he argues that it is precisely such a picture that simultaneously gives rise to the ostensibly parallel modern philosophical problems of skepticism about the external world and skepticism about other minds.

5. McDowell, “Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective” (2003) [henceforth SIO]; reprinted in John McDowell, *The Engaged Intellect* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 153.

6. Ibid., 152. In the quoted passage, McDowell ascribes the claim to Donald Davidson. But in the next sentence, he endorses the thesis himself.

7. Nor does it receive much attention elsewhere in his work.

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an explanation of the impossibility of having any one of them without also having the other two.

One dimension of interdependence within this threefold nexus is developed in McDowell's considerations on the relation between mind and world. He famously argues that understanding that relation requires reflection on two fundamentally distinct and yet internally related kinds of knowing: one of mind and one of world.⁸ On the one hand, one's own mind is not just another thing one might know something about. For knowledge is *self-conscious*. Accordingly, knowledge of world essentially involves knowledge of mind. On the other hand, the converse also holds: to have a mind is to be *onto* the world. So, unless one has knowledge of the world one could not have knowledge of one's own mind. As McDowell conceives it, the capacity for perceptual judgments with demonstrative expressions referring to things in the external world and the capacity for spontaneous self-ascription of thought through judgments in the first-person are equally fundamental.

Now, were one to approach epistemology through an exhaustive binary division between knowledge of *world* and knowledge of *mind*, this would threaten to give rise to a puzzle about knowledge of *other minds*. After all, such knowledge appears to partake of both kinds. Insofar as I encounter other people in the external world, my knowledge of them would seem to belong to knowledge of world. Yet insofar as they have a mind, my knowledge of them would seem to belong to knowledge of mind. One might try to model knowledge of other minds on one of the other two kinds. But each attempt is intuitively confronted with a difficulty. If one were to assimilate knowledge of another to knowledge of world, the question would arise how their *mind-edness* figures in my knowing. If one were to assimilate knowledge of another to knowledge of mind, then the question would arise how their *separateness* figures in my knowing.

Such difficulties could be avoided if it could be shown that knowledge of other minds is a *third* form of cognition, standing to the first two as they stand to each other. This would require demonstrating that knowledge of other minds is as radically distinct in character from both as McDowell takes knowledge of one's own mind to be from knowledge of things in the external world. And it would require showing, at the same time, that those two are just as intrinsically connected with awareness of others as McDowell holds self-consciousness and object-consciousness to be with one another. This sounds like an ambitious research program. The above-quoted passage about the meeting of minds in the exchange of words seems to provide a clue for

8. See John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); especially Lectures I and II (pp. 3–45).

how the project would have to be carried out. My “interlocutor” is someone whom I address as “you.” Now, on McDowell’s view, the concept of knowing one’s own mind is to be approached through reflection on the logical grammar of the first person pronoun, just as the idea of knowing things in the external world is to be elucidated by investigating the logical grammar of demonstratives. Accordingly, one would expect the concept of knowing other minds to be approached through reflection on the logical grammar of the second person pronoun. Yet whereas McDowell scrutinizes “I” and “this,” he hardly mentions “you.”⁹

In what follows, we argue that this curious asymmetry is related to a tension that runs systematically throughout McDowell’s reflections on epistemic relations between persons. First, we will consider several junctures in his work where the tension becomes salient (§§2–4). Then, we will turn to the question whether the underlying difficulty is related to the Fregean framework in which his theory is couched (§§5–7). We will end with the rough outline of a possible solution (§8).

2. KNOWING ABOUT ANOTHER AND KNOWING THROUGH ANOTHER

It is possible to know something *about* another person. The idea of an interlocutor introduces a further way in which another mind can be epistemically significant. Learning is coming to know; and one way to learn is to be told. In that case, one acquires knowledge *through* another. A person can thus be not only the *object* of one’s knowledge; they can also be the *source* of one’s knowledge. Each topic has generated an area of inquiry in contemporary epistemology. But what is the relation between these two epistemic roles in which another mind can figure?

When what I learn from you is about you, then the object of my knowledge is the source of my knowledge. So, a philosopher might argue that the logically fundamental case is the one where those two epistemic roles coincide. Indeed, that is what the above-quoted passage from McDowell’s paper on Davidson suggests—that the paradigmatic way of coming to know

9. McDowell has written a series of seminal papers on demonstratives, beginning with the seven papers collected together in Part II of *Meaning, Knowledge and Reality*, op. cit., of which “On the Sense and Reference of a Proper Name” (1977) has arguably proven to be the most influential. Several further papers of his are devoted specifically to the first-person pronoun; see in this connection especially “Referring to Oneself” (1998) [henceforth RTO]; reprinted in *The Engaged Intellect*, op. cit. The second-person pronoun, by contrast, is discussed only briefly at one point in his work, namely in passing in “De Re Senses” (1984) [henceforth DRS]; reprinted in Part II of *Meaning, Knowledge and Reality*. And what he does have to say about that pronoun is, arguably, rather puzzling. See §5 below for further discussion.

another mind is their making their mind known. One would thus expect the author's work to put the spotlight on the scenario of two people openly sharing their inner lives in conversation. Curiously, however, McDowell devotes surprisingly little attention to this sort of scene. In both areas of epistemology, he has written a seminal paper proposing a "disjunctivist" view of the respective sort of knowing. Yet each essay appears to studiously sidestep the topic treated in the other. The notion of communication seems to play no significant role in his famous treatment of skepticism about knowing other minds.¹⁰ And his influential account of acquiring knowledge by being told focuses on the transmission of information about things in the external world.¹¹ Considering this pair of essays, those two epistemic roles in which another mind can figure appear as topics best treated separately. Yet that seems incompatible with the remark from the paper on Davidson.

Let us begin with McDowell's reflections on skepticism about knowledge of other minds in his "Criteria, Defeasibility and Knowledge." As he presents it there, the source of the difficulty is the following assumption: even in the best case, all one has available for ascertaining whether a mental predicate applies to a person is their outer behavior, which can also occur without the relevant act or state being present in their mind. Once the assumption is in place, it looks as if psychological judgments about others require an inference lacking a proper basis. McDowell's response turns on the observation that the alleged difficulty runs parallel to the argument from illusion with respect to perceptual knowledge about the external world. A proper diagnosis of the mistake that gives rise to the latter doubt is supposed to provide us with the conceptual resources for treating the former worry.

The argument from illusion, McDowell contends, implicitly rests on the assumption of a "highest common factor" between veridical and non-veridical perception. Thus conceived, a veridical perception is a conjunction of two elements: a mere seeming *plus* something else. In the resulting picture, *merely apparent perception* is simple and thus logically basic, while *veridical perception* is composite and hence logically derivative. According to McDowell, averting skepticism requires rejecting such a conjunctivist conception in favor of a disjunctivist one. On this alternative view, one *either* enjoys a veridical perceptual experience *or* one has a non-veridical one. There is no highest common factor across the two cases. Instead of conceiving the successful

10. See CDK. At one point, McDowell notes in passing that the account presented there is supposed to encompass "knowledge that someone else is in an 'inner' state on the basis of experience of what he *says* and does" [our emphasis] (CDK, 387). The mention of "what he says" would seem to invoke the concept of communication. We discuss this in §3 below.

11. John McDowell, "Knowledge by Hearsay" (1993) [henceforth KBH]; reprinted in *Meaning, Knowledge and Reality*.

case as composite and hence logically secondary, the unsuccessful case is to be defined in terms of privation. Perceptual illusion is the result of a defective exercise of our capacity for perceptual knowledge. So, when we exercise this capacity non-defectively, our perception does not stop short of the world itself. On a properly disjunctivist account of our perceptual capacity, the relations of logical priority thereby come to be reversed: the fully successful exercise of the capacity is to be treated as the fundamental case through which its other exercises must be comprehended.

This treatment of skepticism about knowledge of the external world provides, according to McDowell, the template for the proper response to the traditional epistemological problem of other minds. On closer inspection, the claimed parallel is not just an analogy. The aim of the considerations is to make space for the thought that we can “literally perceive” the mental states of others.¹² In effect, McDowell presents his account of knowing other minds as a special “application” of his disjunctivist conception of perceptual knowledge. He writes:

The idea of a fact being disclosed to experience . . . rejects the thesis that what is accessible to experience falls short of the fact in the sense . . . of being consistent with there being no such fact. In the most straightforward application of the idea, the thought would indeed be . . . that the fact itself is directly presented to view. . . . But a less straightforward application of the idea is possible also, and seems appropriate in at least some cases of knowledge that someone else is in an “inner” state, on the basis of experience of what he says and does. Here we might think of what is directly available to experience in some such terms as “his giving expression to his being in that ‘inner’ state”; this is something that, while not itself actually being the “inner” state of affairs in question, nevertheless does not fall short of it in the sense I explained.¹³

According to this passage, the respective knowledge of the other’s mental state is a species of perceptual knowledge. The application of the disjunctivist account of perception to this case is here characterized as “less straightforward,” since it depends on the thought that the respective mental state *itself* becomes available to perception through the subject’s *expression* of that state. Yet, according to the view McDowell espouses in the paper, that thought will seem mysterious only if one endorses a Cartesian conception of the body. Once one recovers the idea that the human body is *essentially expressive*, there is nothing strange about a claim such as that one can *directly* see someone’s pain in their facial expression.¹⁴

12. See, for instance, CDK, 370.

13. CDK, 387.

14. McDowell insists that this is all that talk of “directly seeing someone’s pain” can sen-

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In his essay on testimony, McDowell also brings disjunctivist considerations to bear. Here, however, he does not present the respective knowing as a species of perceptual knowledge.¹⁵ The disjunctivist considerations rather enter in service of vindicating the claim that coming to know *by being told* is a way of knowing *sui generis*.¹⁶ McDowell writes:

The idea of knowledge by testimony is that if a knower gives intelligible expression to his knowledge, he puts it into the public domain, where it can be picked up by those who can understand the expression, as long as the opportunity is not closed to them because it would be doxastically irresponsible to believe the speaker. That idea seems obvious enough to stand on its own epistemological feet; the formulation makes as much sense of the idea that knowledge can be transmitted from one subject to another as any purported explanation could hope to confer on it.¹⁷

According to this passage, the idea of the communicative transmission of knowledge is a notion that “stands on its own epistemological feet.” That is to say, such cognition is to be recognized as an irreducibly distinct way of coming to know—fundamentally different from knowledge *by perception*.¹⁸

sibly be taken to mean. The assumption that such a case falls short of “seeing the pain *itself*” tacitly rests upon a Cartesian conception of the relation of the inner to the outer—one according to which the body inexorably screens the mind off from view. It is this Cartesian picture that gives rise to the thought that judgments about the mental states of others always require an inference from what is merely outwardly perceivable to what is really going on inside their mind. For McDowell’s discussion of the Cartesian conception of the human body, see CDK, 384–385.

15. This has escaped some of his commentators; see note 18 below.

16. On the opening pages of that paper, McDowell characterizes his topic in the following terms: “acquiring knowledge by way of understanding what one is told.” See KBH, 415.

17. KBH, 438.

18. In the literature, McDowell is often taken to apply his disjunctivist account of perception to testimony. Richard Moran, for example, charges McDowell with treating testimony as “the extension of the senses.” (See *The Exchange of Words*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, see pp. 102–103) But the very features of testimony that Moran complains go missing in McDowell’s putatively perceptualist theory of testimony play an essential role in McDowell’s own account of testimony. Throughout KBH, McDowell emphasizes that it is the speaker’s *epistemic authority* which enables him to *entitle* his audience to repeat what he says with an authority derivative from his own, and which confers upon the audience a *right to defer challenges* back to the speaker (see, for example, KBH, 417). For McDowell, these are all features of testimony that render it a *sui generis* form of cognition. In this paper, McDowell does not even point to the parallel with a disjunctivist treatment of perception. He does draw an analogy with a disjunctivist account of memory—but clearly not to suggest that testimonial knowledge is a form of memory. The evidence Moran adduces for ascribing a perceptualist account of testimony to McDowell rests on an overreading of a single passage (concerning the sensory aspect of communicative uptake), which occurs in a different essay—namely: “Meaning, Communication, and Knowledge” (1980) [henceforth MCK]; reprinted in *Meaning, Knowledge and Reality* (the passage in question is on p. 45). In the very same essay, however, McDowell

As those two papers are written, their topics are kept separate. Yet bringing them together with the remark from the paper on Davidson appears to leave us with an inconsistent triad:

- (1) The concept of knowing other minds is to be understood through reflection upon the scenario of acquiring knowledge *by communication*.
- (2) Acquiring knowledge *by communication* is a way of knowing sui generis, irreducibly distinct from knowledge *by perception*.
- (3) Skepticism about knowledge of other minds is to be treated by appeal to the idea that the mental states of others come to be known *by perceiving* their expression of those states.

Thesis (1) is the claim put forward in the paper on Davidson. Thesis (2) is entailed by the passage from “Knowledge by Hearsay.” And thesis (3) is suggested by the reflections from “Criteria, Defeasibility and Knowledge.” As attractive as each of those claims may be, it is hard to see how they could be held together in one mind. Thesis (1) would be compatible with thesis (3), if one took knowledge by communication to be a species of knowledge by perception. But this is ruled out by thesis (2). To avoid inconsistency, McDowell would need to insist that the topic denoted by the phrase “knowing other minds” in the context of his reflections on communication differs radically from the subject matter he discusses under that heading in the context of his treatment of skepticism. In the next section, we argue that such a maneuver turns out to be clearly hopeless once one considers a corresponding triad focused on the notion of expression.

3. EXPRESSING ONE’S MIND AND ADDRESSING ANOTHER

The talk of “giving expression” plays a central role in both of the passages quoted in the previous section. The one on knowing *about* another mind turns on the phrase “giving expression to an ‘inner’ state.”¹⁹ The one on knowing *through* another exploits the term “giving expression to *knowledge*.”²⁰ However, the work assigned to talk of giving expression seems to differ across these two cases. In the former, the verb “to give expression to *x*” figures in an

explicitly says that he means to draw an *analogy* between the proper treatments of these two distinct forms of knowledge: just as we should hold that “the concept of misperception is, precisely, the concept of a defective exercise of a capacity whose non-defective exercises issue in knowledge,” so too we should hold that “the essential character of the assertoric use of language lies in its availability for communicating, in the sense of transmitting knowledge about the subject matter of assertions” (MCK, 45). We will discuss this essay in §4.

19. See CDK, 388; our emphasis.

20. KBH, 419; emphasis.

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explanation of how x can be *perceived*. In the latter, the verb “to give expression to x ” figures in an explanation of how x can be *transmitted*. Both passages purport to explain how one can acquire knowledge by being receptive to an expression of x . And yet the acquired bits of knowledge are said to have different sources. In the one case the knowledge is marked as *perceptual*, in the other as *testimonial*. Wherein lies the ground of this putative difference?

Here is one way in which the two formulas evidently differ—namely, with respect to *what* is expressed: “an ‘inner’ state” or “a piece of knowledge.” Yet knowledge is often described as a mental state. Accordingly, one might think that “giving expression to knowledge” is a species of the genus “giving expression to an ‘inner’ state.” But that is not how McDowell can conceive of the relation. For, whereas he affirms that giving expression to an ‘inner’ state makes it possible for others to perceive that one is in *that* mental state, he evidently denies that my giving expression to knowledge by telling you p makes it possible for you to *perceive* that I know p .²¹ In the one case “giving expression to x ” makes x perceivable; in the other, it doesn’t. Given this contrast, it seems reasonable to wonder what McDowell’s uses of the phrase across these two essays have in common.

On reflection, expressing one’s mind can take different shapes so that one may speak of different modes of expression. Among the many distinctions that can be drawn within the genus, the following three will strike most people as especially significant: first, the expression may or may not be *couched in words*; second, the expressing may or may not be *known to its subject*; third, the expressive act may or may not be *directed at another*. Note that the three contrasts do not fall together. Not all linguistic expression is self-conscious; and not all self-conscious expression is linguistic. Whether or not it is couched in words, the expression may be performed knowingly or, instead, slip out unbeknownst to its subject. Similarly, not all self-conscious expressions are directed at someone; and not all directed expressions are self-conscious, let alone self-consciously directed. Just as one can knowingly express one’s mind without expressing it to someone, it is possible to be unaware of directing an expressive act at someone. Since these three dimensions of specification do not automatically go together, it seems sensible to

21. The denial of the one is just as central to his teaching as the affirmation of the other. See footnotes 14 and 18 above. If someone’s giving expression to knowledge that p made that person’s knowing p perceivable to others, then there would be no need to recognize acquiring knowledge by being told as a distinct way of knowing. Yet that is precisely what McDowell seeks to establish in his essay on testimony. A guiding question of that paper is how one can acquire knowledge from another, even though one lacks an independent basis for ascertaining that what the person expresses is, in fact, knowledge. See KBH, 339–340; see also “Meaning, Communication, and Knowledge,” 46, for a similar point.

wonder how they are meant to be related if a philosophical deployment of the term “giving expression” moves between these registers.

When the two discussions in which McDowell uses the term are considered in light of these three distinctions, matters get quite intricate. The first example in his treatment of knowledge by testimony is the following scenario: A visitor to a city asks someone on the street for the way to the cathedral. The respective person is a well-informed resident and readily provides the requested information by giving verbal directions. As McDowell has it, the visitor leaves the encounter being in the position to say that they know the way by having been told. In this case, the relevant act of expression is *couched in words*, *known to its subject*, and *directed at another*.²² Yet it is anything but obvious that these features of the example are captured by the formula through which McDowell presents his account: “[I]f a knower gives intelligible expression to his knowledge, he puts it into the public domain, where it can be picked up.”²³ That formulation seems to allow for all sorts of variations on the example. First, we can envisage a scenario in which the native informant does not speak but instead points in the relevant direction. Second, a philosopher can arrange for a lost country bumpkin in search of a place of worship to stumble upon a city dweller who happens to be in the act of unwittingly giving voice to their own deliberation about how to get to church. Third, we can imagine that the native resident writes it on the wall to keep track of the steps in their practical syllogism. In the first case, the expression is *not couched in words*; in the second, it is *not done knowingly*;

22. In CDK, as we noted above, specification with respect to these three features appeared to be a matter of indifference to the overall shape of the account offered there of perceptual knowledge of other minds. That essay starts its investigation with a comparatively undemanding case—my happening to see that someone is in pain—where what is thus known by me is *known to him*, but neither *couched in words* by him nor *directed* at me. KBH, by contrast, begins with a comparatively demanding case of testimony, where all three of these features are in play. Yet in the main body of the paper, McDowell focuses on less demanding cases, for which questions as to whether the one who “tells” also knows that the one he addresses thereby comes to know (or whether the addressee knows that the speaker knows this) have no natural place. Reflecting back on his discussion in the essay, McDowell writes “I have been using examples involving retaining knowledge that was first acquired by testimony, in the broad sense in which one acquires knowledge by testimony in listening to a news broadcast or reading a newspaper. But the point is obviously not restricted to such cases” (KBH, 424). An account of testimony should certainly not be restricted to such cases. But what ought to be their place within the account? KBH tends to treat such cases and the one with which it starts as equally paradigmatic of the phenomenon. The case in which addressor and addressee fully occupy a nexus of reciprocal knowledge of one another thus figures in the investigation merely as a species of the genus—hence not as one to be accorded any special logical priority in the order of comprehension.

23. KBH, 438.

and in the third, it is self-conscious and linguistic but *not directed at another*. Arguably, however, knowledge is given intelligible expression in all three variations on the original example. So, if all one had to go on was the formula quoted above, it would be reasonable to wonder which of those cases would allow for the sort of “picking up” that is supposed to amount to the relevant transmission of knowledge.

Analogous questions can be raised about the expressions that are said to afford the perceptual uptake of another’s mental state. Here, the first example is the scenario of seeing the pain of another in their facial expression.²⁴ In fact, *immediate bodily* expression of feeling is explicitly described as a paradigmatic case.²⁵ Yet *linguistic* expression is also included. In a passage of the paper, McDowell suggests that, in this domain, a proper answer to the question ‘How do you know?’ generally takes the following form: “By what he says and does.”²⁶ The knowledge thus accounted for is characterized as *perceptual* and not as *testimonial*. But the relevant expressive behavior is allowed to be either a *doing* or a *saying*. The long passage quoted in the previous section makes the same point: there, the “knowledge that someone else is in an ‘inner’ state” comes under the heading of that which is acquired by “experience” of “*what he says and does*.”²⁷ Since *facial* expressions were introduced earlier as a central example, the phrase is evidently meant to cover both: *linguistic* and *non-linguistic* modes of expression. Specification with respect to this contrast appears to be a matter of indifference to the overall shape of the account of perceptual knowledge of other minds.

The same appears to hold for the other two contrasts: whether the expressing is *known to its subject* and whether it is *directed at another*. A man may not notice that his facial expression displays how he feels. He may not even be aware of the awful feeling to which he gives expression. Yet it is certainly possible to knowingly express one’s feeling by smiling or frowning. And one can also show one’s feelings *to* another: one can laugh at someone or smile at them, and one can look them lovingly in the eyes. For all McDowell says, his disjunctivist conception of perception may find application to all those modes of bodily expression: these could all be cases where it is possible and indeed appropriate to speak of “knowledge that someone else is in an ‘inner’ state, on the basis of experience of *what he . . . does*.” After all, what is directly available to experience is each time describable in some such terms

24. CDK, 370.

25. See CDK, 384–385.

26. See CDK, 379.

27. CDK, 387; our emphases. In the next line, we are told that “what is directly available to experience” can here be captured in terms of “his giving expression to his being in that ‘inner’ state.”

as “his giving expression to his being in that ‘inner’ state.”²⁸ Whether or not a loving gaze is directed *at you* would, consequently, make no difference to *how* you know the love expressed therein. A bystander could know it in the same way: by perceiving its expression. That the love expressed is for you rather than the bystander would thus just be a matter of the *content* of what you know rather than a characteristic of the *way* in which you know it.

Let us then consider the parallel series of cases within the domain of *linguistic* modes of expressing the inner. A man might think out loud without noticing. He may not even be aware of that to which he gives expression with his words (e.g., Freudian slips). Alternatively, he may knowingly shout just to let it out. On the face of it, these should all be cases where McDowell’s account allows for the possibility of “knowledge that someone else is in an ‘inner’ state, on the basis of experience of *what he says*.”²⁹ Now, imagine that the man turns around and says to you: “I am in pain.” This should also be an occasion for you to acquire “knowledge that someone else is in an ‘inner’ state” in virtue of “his giving expression to his being in that ‘inner’ state.” At the same time, it looks to be a case which fits McDowell’s other formula: namely, one of a “knower giving intelligible expression to his knowledge.”³⁰ Moreover, it would seem that McDowell must also allow for the rest of the account connected with that formula to find application such that (given an absence of countervailing evidence making it doxastically irresponsible to believe the speaker), it should be possible for you to come to know *by being told*.

Once one countenances this possibility in the case of *linguistic* expression, it ought to seem strange to rule out intentional knowledge transmission through *non-linguistic* modes of expression. Say, the man emits a cry of pain that is inarticulate but *directed at you*—like a longing gaze straight into your eyes. Or what if the man silently endures his pain but lets you see his suffering in the stoicism of his countenance? It might well be that such forms of performativity have no place in what McDowell calls “traditional” epistemological analysis. Yet they would seem salient to the account of the expressive nature of the human body that McDowell himself proposes. In this context, his use of “giving expression to *x*” seems to undergo a curious constriction:

28. The phrases are taken from the passage on CDK 387 that we quoted in the last section; our emphasis.

29. Once again, CDK 387; our emphasis.

30. The phrase is taken from KBH, 438. In that paper, all the examples for the expression of knowledge concern things in the external world (e.g., the location of a cathedral). Yet McDowell does hold that in mature rational human beings the experience of pain is essentially known by its subject; see John McDowell, “One Strand of the Private Language Argument” (1989), in *Mind, Value and Reality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

here, the phrase conveys only that x becomes *available* for perception in virtue of being manifest in outer behavior. What is thus expressed is “given” in a sense that does not require an actual recipient—any more than sticks and stones require the current presence of a perceiver for their perceivability.

In his reflections on knowledge transmission, McDowell’s talk of “giving expression” appears to take on a richer sense. Now the expressive acts seem to have a performative dimension. The shift is easy to miss since central formulations run parallel. Consider, for example, the line where we are told that “if [someone] gives intelligible expression to his knowledge, he puts it into the public domain, where it can be picked up.”³¹ (If one replaces “knowledge” with “inner state” and “picked up” with “perceived,” the sentence could figure as a statement of McDowell’s perceptual account of knowing other minds.) Yet the term “giving expression” figures here in the statement of a condition that must be met if it is to be possible to come to know by being told—namely: the respective telling must be an expression of knowledge. On closer inspection, it looks as if the converse is also meant to hold: the respective expression of knowledge must be an act of telling, if it is to be possible for the knowledge to be transmitted by way of its expression. In the next paragraph, McDowell swiftly moves to the assertoric use of language in a speech act performed *for an audience*.³² This swift transition appears to exploit a way of hearing the phrase “giving expression” where the expression *of* something is given *to someone*—in a sense of “given” that has no application to sticks and stones that can be perceived or, for that matter, picked up.

The relevant sense of “giving” is contained, *inter alia*, in the verb “to give testimony.” There is no giving testimony unless it is given to someone. Of course, the phrase “giving someone something” can also be heard in different ways. Notoriously, one can give someone a headache by giving expression to one’s knowledge. One might even do it intentionally. In order to give testimony by giving expression to one’s knowledge, the mode of expression must be of a certain sort. It is not enough for the expressive act to be *couched in words or signs, known to its subject, and directed at another*; it must also be *understood by its intended audience*. Testimony belongs to the sort of thing

31. KBH, 438; our emphasis. Similarly, in an earlier passage: “[I]f a knowledgeable speaker gives intelligible expression to his knowledge, it *may become available* at second hand to those who understand what he says” (KBH, 417; our emphasis). Once again, it seems to be all about what is *available* to others.

32. McDowell writes: “[I]n speaking in such a way as to commit oneself to the truth of what one says, one entitles *one’s audience* to repeat what one says with an authority derivative from one’s own so that if the audience repeats it and is challenged, he has the right to refer the challenge to the original speaker. Claims of that sort make it fully intelligible (if explanation is needed) how, if the authority of the original speaker was that of a knower, that same status can be inherited by a comprehending audience” (KBH, 438; our emphasis).

that can be *given* only when it is *received* in the right way: Just as you succeed in giving someone a gift only if that someone accepts it as a gift, so too, you will fail to have given testimony unless your intended audience takes it as testimony. This is particularly clear in the case of testifying in court: one is not doing it unless the other parties involved understand that this is what one is doing. Specified in this way, the phrase “to give expression to *x*” describes an act whose success requires the recipient to be party to the proceedings.³³ Let us call this the *demanding sense of “giving expression.”*

In “Knowledge by Hearsay” it remains unclear how exactly we are meant to hear the phrase “giving expression.” Whereas McDowell’s examples suggest the demanding sense, his characterization in terms of “putting knowledge in the public domain where it can be picked up” does not. However, there is a formulation used by McDowell that clearly entails the demanding sense of “giving expression.” It is the remark from his paper on Davidson that we quoted in §1: the phrase “to make our own minds known to . . . our interlocutors” clearly describes an act of giving expression where the giving comes to pass only insofar as it is properly received. Accordingly, we can restate the inconsistent triad from the last section in the following terms:

- (1) The epistemology of other minds is to be understood through reflection on the act of making one’s mind known to another.
- (2) The act of making one’s mind known to another requires an act of giving expression in the demanding sense of the phrase.
- (3) The epistemology of other minds is to be understood through reflection on coming to be known by another, which does *not* require an act of giving expression in the demanding sense of the phrase.

4. THE ACT OF COMMUNICATION

The ambiguity in McDowell’s use of the verb “to give expression” is related to a tension in his account of communication. The remark from his paper on Davidson suggests that in the successful case, the speech act amounts to the audience’s coming to know the speaker’s mind. The formulation from his essay on testimony, by contrast, appears to imply that all that a speaker can accomplish by expressing herself is to make her mind *knowable*. The tension comes to the fore in a passage from an early paper on communication. Having argued that communicative intentions are “intentions whose content is the publication of themselves,” McDowell writes: “The intention to make

33. Intuitively, this more demanding sense of “giving expression” is not restricted to juridical testimony but has a wider application, even when it comes to the domain of bodily modes of expression. We will return to this point in §8.

such an intention public is the intention to let an audience know what speech act is being performed.”³⁴ On reflection, this equation does not hold: making something public is not the same thing as making it known. As any academic is well aware, the publication of one’s thoughts only makes them *available* for others to take up. It is a further question whether what was thus put in the public domain comes to be known. So, if mere publication were to suffice for an act to qualify as communicative, then making one’s mind known to others would not be something one achieves by communicating. Yet, according to the view McDowell sets out to defend in the paper, it is precisely such an achievement that defines the act of communication.

The paper officially aims to establish that “communication is the instilling of knowledge.”³⁵ In this connection, McDowell argues for the following three priority claims. First, the concept of linguistic behavior should be approached by reflection on the assertoric use of language. Second, when considering the verbal expression of what one holds true, the focus should lie on acts of *telling* someone something. Third, the concept of telling is to be understood by reference to the successful case: *informing* someone about how things stand. As McDowell puts it, “the essential character of the assertoric use of language lies in its availability for communicating, in the sense of *transmitting knowledge* about the subject matter of assertions.”³⁶ The claim gives rise to the question of how we are to think of communicative acts that do not amount to informing (whether it is because the speaker does not succeed in her aim, or because she intends to deceive, or simply because the speech is not assertoric in the first place). McDowell approaches the issue by arguing that the successful act of informing someone about, say, the weather involves two levels of knowledge transmission: (a) the transmission of information about the subject matter of discourse (e.g., that it is raining) and (b) the transmission of information about the speaker’s intention (e.g., the intention to tell the audience that it is raining). Now, McDowell holds that the latter sort of knowledge transmission “always” takes place in successful communication (even if the information concerning the topic of discourse fails to be transmitted or if the speech act is not assertoric in the first place).³⁷

The account of communicative knowledge McDowell puts forward in this early paper runs parallel to his later treatment of perceptual knowledge sketched in §2. With respect to the latter, McDowell argues that the successful act of perception must not be decomposed into a “highest common factor” (also present in the case of error) and an additional veridicality condition.

34. MCK, 42.

35. MCK, 40.

36. See MCK, 39; our emphasis.

37. MCK, 42.

For in that picture, perception will always fall short of capturing the facts. Properly conceived, the successful act of perceiving yields knowledge. In the early paper, McDowell makes the same point about communication—except that here the successful case issues in *shared* knowledge. Communicative success amounts to speaker and audience arriving at common knowledge (i.e., “mutual awareness”) of the nature of the speech act. McDowell writes:

[T]he appropriate mutual awareness is actually what is aimed at by the speaker’s primary communicative intention, so that securing the mutual awareness is not . . . a fallible means to communicative success, but rather constitutes it.³⁸

According to this passage, the constitutive aim of the speaker’s expressive act is to *make* their intention known *to* the intended audience *by way of* this very act. Now, if it is to be possible for that aim to be *internal* to this act, then it must hold that this sort of act is to be defined by reference to the case in which the relevant mutual awareness is thereby attained. Accordingly, McDowell maintains that what the speaker does in the successful case is *not* merely a “fallible means” to achieving her end. It would appear to follow that in the logically prior case, the communicative act of the speaker does not fall short of making her mind known to the intended audience. Put in terms of the four conditions defining what we called the *demanding sense of “giving expression,”* the proposed disjunctivist treatment of communication thus comes to the following claim: the condition that the act of giving expression is *actually understood by the audience* must *not* be regarded as something added to the other three requirements (i.e., that the expressive act is *couched in words or signs, known to its subject, and addressed to another*). For, that would mean conceiving of communicative success as the conjunction of those four conditions. And that is precisely what an advocate of disjunctivism must reject—for it is a version of *conjunctivism*. In the present context, this amounts to holding that the fourth condition belongs to the specification of the nature of the expressive act at hand: it defines its *mode of expression* as *communicative*.

38. MCK, 41. In the paper, McDowell develops this point to criticize the view of language put forward by Strawson in his “Meaning and Truth” (reprinted in P. F. Strawson, *Logico-Linguistic Papers* (London: Methuen, 1971).). The specific target of McDowell’s objection is Strawson’s assumption that any account of how language functions must rest upon an *analysis* of the concept of *meaning*. McDowell maintains instead that it suffices to keep in view the “importance language has in human lives”—in other words, to appreciate that “language is *essentially* communicative”: it does not merely enable us to express true thoughts; rather, “speaking and understanding are *primarily* the issuing and the reception of communication” (MCK, 36; our emphases).

Being Known to Each Other

Yet when McDowell elaborates what success in communication involves, his explanation appears to take a *conjunctivist* form.³⁹ As he presents it, communicative success seems to comprise two separate acts—the act of the speaker and the uptake by the audience. McDowell writes:

Speech acts are publications of intentions; the primary aim of a speech act is to produce an object—the speech act itself—that is perceptible publicly, and in particular to the audience, embodying an intention whose content is precisely a recognizable performance of that very speech act. Recognition by an audience that such an intention has been made public in this way leaves nothing further needing to happen for the intention to be fulfilled.⁴⁰

The passage specifies the roles of speaker and hearer: while the office of the former is to *produce* something, the office of the latter is to *recognize* it. Even in the best case, communication thus appears to be composed of these two separate moments. Yet if what the speaker does is nothing more than a mere act of publication, then it would always be a further question whether what has thus been made public will be recognized. One might still insist that we should speak of a “successful communicative act” only where the audience does pick up what has been placed in the public domain. But the term “communication” would then just be the name for a conjunction of two separate acts. What the speaker herself does would, consequently, have to be regarded as something that can *never* be more than a “fallible means to communicative success.”

The present issue bears on the question of what to make of McDowell’s claim that acquiring knowledge *by being told* is to be recognized as a way of knowing *sui generis*—irreducibly distinct from knowledge *by perception* (or *by inference*). On the assumption that what the speaker does inevitably falls short of achieving mutual understanding, it would seem to follow that the act of telling *per se* can never amount to the audience’s coming to know what they have been told. By the same token, their coming to know that *p* could not be explained simply by reference to their having been “told” that *p*. What explains their acquiring such knowledge would thus have to be some

39. For a related criticism focused solely on McDowell’s disjunctivism about perception, see James Conant, “Resolute Disjunctivism,” in *Reason in Nature: New Essays on Themes from John McDowell*, (eds.) Matthew Boyle and Evgenia Mylonaki (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022). The target of that criticism is McDowell’s idea that the most that the respective source of knowledge can ever achieve is “to get us in position” to endorse the content of something independently made available to us. In this case, too, McDowell’s account is structurally conjunctivist: what is presented to the experiencing subject through one act (in this case: of her perceptual capacity) must be accepted by her through a second act (in this case: of her capacity for judgment) for it to amount to a case of knowledge.

40. MCK, 41.

additional act performed *in response* to having been “told.” So, despite his insistence that knowledge by testimony cannot be reduced to knowledge by perception or inference, McDowell’s account still implies that the communicative transmission of knowledge necessarily comprises a conjunction of acts: one on the part of the speaker and one on the part of the recipient. The resulting tension in McDowell’s epistemology can be stated in the form of a third inconsistent triad:

- (1) Capacities for knowledge are to be treated disjunctively.
- (2) Knowledge by communication is a *sui generis* capacity for knowledge, irreducibly distinct from knowledge by perception (or by inference).
- (3) The mutual knowledge achieved through successful communication is composed of a pair of distinct unilateral cognitive acts on the part of each of the interlocutors.

5. ONE ACT FOR TWO SUBJECTS

Since the inconsistent triad consists of three theses, there are three ways in which one might try to resolve the tension: one might give up the disjunctivist conception of knowledge, one might deny the thought that communication is a distinct form of knowledge, or one might try to reject the doctrine that communication is composed of unilateral acts. In this connection, it is worth noting that the three claims have a very different status in McDowell’s work. Whereas theses (1) and (2) are both introduced through extensive arguments, thesis (3) seems to enter his theory as a matter of course. McDowell appears to take it for granted that if an activity involves the actualization of the conceptual capacities of *two subjects*, then it must be composed of *two separate acts*.⁴¹

Even though widely shared among analytic philosophers, this assumption is not without alternative in the history of philosophy. One does not even have to turn to the usual suspects from the Continent to find thought to the contrary.⁴² For the present purposes, Scottish Common-Sense Phi-

41. What enters McDowell’s theory here as a matter of course we will occasionally refer to below as the *two subjects/two acts principle*.

42. Famously, a range of thinkers from the Continent have challenged this assumption in one context or another, including Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Rosenzweig, and (depending upon how you classify him) Wittgenstein. For Kant, Fichte, Hegel, see footnote 46 below; for Wittgenstein, see footnotes 63, 71, and 100 below. For Rosenzweig, see especially his criticisms of Buber’s characterizations of the “I-Thou” nexus (regarding, e.g., why an “it” cannot occupy one of the poles of the nexus—hence why one cannot, pace Buber, “I-Thou” a tree!). These are scattered across the Buber-Rosenzweig Correspondence, collected in Martin Buber, *Brief-*

losophy will suffice: a denial of the assumption can be found in the work of Thomas Reid. According to his view, the genus “act of mind” divides into two species: the “solitary” and the “social.” While the former can be performed when one is alone, the latter essentially involves the participation of a second person. Reid writes:

A man may see, and hear, and remember, and judge, and reason; he may deliberate and form purposes, and execute them, without the intervention of any other intelligent being. They are solitary acts. But when he asks a question for information, when he testifies a fact, when he gives a command to his servant, when he makes a promise, or enters into a contract, these are social acts of mind, and can have no existence without the intervention of some other intelligent being, who acts a part in them. Between the operations of the mind, which, for want of a more proper name, I have called *solitary*, and those that I have called *social*, there is this very remarkable distinction, that, in the solitary, the expression of them by words, or any other sensible sign, is accidental. They may exist, and be complete, without being expressed, without being known to any other person. But, in the social operation, the expression is essential. They cannot exist without being expressed by words or signs, and known to the other party.⁴³

Arguably, it is a truism that giving testimony essentially involves someone to whom the testimony is given.⁴⁴ What is striking about the passage is *how* Reid characterizes the involvement of the second person. As he defines it, a “social operation” is an “act of mind” that “can have no existence without the intervention of another human being, who acts a part in them.”⁴⁵ We will call this the *Participation Condition*: it is a mental act that exists only if another

wechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1972); for an English translation of a small but relevant selection of these dating from 1922, see *The Letters of Martin Buber* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996).

43. Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of Mind*, (ed.) Knud Haakonssen and James A. Harris (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 330–331; 447–448 in the original pagination. See also Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, (ed.) Derek R. Brookes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), 68; 77 in the original pagination).

44. For an argument to the effect that the capacity to give promises to oneself presupposes that of making promises to others, see Matthias Haase, “Am I You?,” *Philosophical Explorations*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (September 2014).

45. As Reid uses “intervention” and “intervene,” the terms do not signify the narrow sense of “interfere” or “interpose” that they mostly retain in contemporary English. Instead, they signify *the direct participation of an intelligent agent* in the bringing about of an event. This use of the term can also be found in Berkeley’s and Hume’s receptions of Malebranche’s occasionalism—the doctrine that all causation depends upon Divine “intervention” in the sense that God too must *play an active part* in bringing about the event for any creaturely act to be causally efficacious.

mind partakes in it. Thus conceived, a social operation is a *single* act of mind for *two subjects*.⁴⁶

In the passage quoted above, Reid goes on to elucidate this point by articulating two further dimensions of the contrast between “solitary” and “social” operations. One of the further aspects of the difference between them concerns the role of expression: while being *accidental* in the case of solitary operations, expression in words or other sensible signs is *essential* for social operations. It is possible for solitary acts such as seeing or remembering to be expressed in signs, but the act of seeing or remembering itself is “complete” without being expressed. Consequently, the expression is here a further act distinct from the mental operation itself. In the case of social operations, by contrast, the respective act of mind “cannot exist without being expressed by words or signs.” Let this be called the *Expression Condition*: being expressed in sensible signs is constitutive for this sort of mental act. Reid immediately ties this point to an analogous claim with respect to the recognition by the other subject: while being *accidental* in the case of solitary operations, such recognition is *essential* for social operations. It is possible for another to come to know that one is seeing a flower; yet one’s act of seeing is itself “complete” without being known by another. Accordingly, the other’s knowledge is here *external* to one’s mental act. In the case of social operations, by contrast, the other’s knowledge is *internal* to one’s act: a social operation “cannot exist . . .

46. The formula suggesting that there can be a *single act of mind for two subjects* is more familiar from the writings of German Idealists. The formula is central to Hegel’s famous presentation of the sort of mutual awareness he calls “recognition.” In his characterization of the notion, Hegel stresses that it is *not* enough for each of the subjects to knowingly relate to the other and, furthermore, to know of the other as relating to them; rather, the respective act must be “inseparably the doing of one as well as the doing of the other.” Where this condition is satisfied, it is true to say of the two parties that “they recognize themselves as *mutually recognizing each other*” (G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. and tr. by Terry Pinkard, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2018, §183 and §184). Similarly, Fichte argues that the concept of a thinking individual (i.e., a person) is a “reciprocal concept”—that is to say, a concept that, in the logically fundamental case, is thought together with the other in *one* relational act of mind. Fichte writes: “This concept can exist in a rational being only if it is posited as *completed* by another rational being” (J. G. Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, ed. Frederick Neuhouser, tr. Michael Baur, 45 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000]). According to Fichte, further reflection on *acts of mind for two* is required to answer a question he thought Kant failed to treat—namely: how it is possible to know the existence of other wills (ibid., 75). Kant himself deploys the formula in his theory of exchange and contract. §§18 and 19 of Kant’s *The Doctrine of Right* contain a beautiful expression of it in connection with contract. (See the volume in the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* titled *Practical Philosophy*, (tr.) Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 421–423, Akademie pagination 6: 271–273.) In all three cases, the formula is embedded in an intricate dialectic of the respective system. Reid’s doctrine on social acts of mind, by contrast, appears in a simple and immediate guise that makes it easier to discuss in a concise way.

without being known to the other party.” Let this go by the name of the *Recognition Condition*: being recognized by the other is constitutive for this sort of mental act.⁴⁷

Unfortunately, Reid does not further elaborate on these three conditions and the relation between them. However, he *does* insist on the irreducibility of the concept he aims to elucidate by appeal to those conditions. We are told that, contrary to the “common opinion of philosophers,” it is impossible to “resolve social operations into any modification and composition of the solitary.”⁴⁸ This insistence on irreducibility would appear to suggest that those three conditions are meant to be internally related such that they can be understood only together. Indeed, it is natural to read the Recognition Condition and the Expression Condition as specifications of the notion of *partaking* that figures in the Participation Condition. Arguably, we are meant to think of the second person as *knowingly* partaking in an *expressive* act. Now, if the three conditions are indeed internally related, then an analogous point should hold for the notion of *knowledge* that figures in the Recognition Condition. Read in this way, the respective way of knowing is meant to be specified by the Participation Condition and the Expression Condition. As a result, the notion of a social act of mind would introduce an irreducibly distinct *form of knowledge*—one defined through the idea of two subjects actively *partaking* in the act in which one *expresses* their mind to the other.

Admittedly, there is no passage where Reid explicitly puts forward this epistemological thesis.⁴⁹ However, there is a passage where he appears to en-

47. For a discussion of the three conditions in Reid’s definition of a social act of mind, see, Haase, “Am I You?,” op. cit.

48. Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of Mind*, op. cit., 330; original pagination 448–449.

49. In fact, Reid says very little in his two treatises about the nature of the knowledge internal to social operations. Several passages suggest that any act of cognition would have to be conceived as a *solitary* operation. For Reid cites not only “apprehension” but also “judgment” as paradigmatic examples of solitary operations (*Essays on the Active Powers of Mind*, op. cit., 330–331; 447–448 in the original pagination). The former is Reid’s genus term for the range of mental acts philosophers variously term “conceiving, imagining, apprehending, understanding” (*Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, op. cit., 296). None of these acts is *per se* an act of knowing. Yet for any one of them to figure in an act of knowledge, it must be taken up in an act of judgment (cf. *ibid.*, 296, 326, 408). So, if knowledge always requires judgment and all acts of judgment are solitary operations, then it would seem to follow that all acts of knowing are *solitary* operations. Another difficulty is that sometimes Reid appears to characterize the nexus of social operations as *pre-intellectual* in nature. In one passage, we are told that “social operations . . . are found in every individual of the species, even before the use of reason” (*Essays on the Active Powers of Mind*, 331; original pagination 449.) This might be taken to imply that social operations are *never* exercises of a capacity for knowledge. That would be in tension with the Recognition Condition where Reid explicitly speaks of knowledge. Settling these matters of Reid exegesis lies beyond the scope of this paper. We return to one aspect of this tension in §7.

dorse the parallel claim with respect to the notion of *expression* that figures in his second condition. For he connects the very idea of social acts of mind with the linguistic signs of address. He writes:

In all languages, the second person of verbs, the pronoun of the second person, and the vocative case in nouns, are appropriated to the expression of social operations of mind, and could never have had a place in language but for this purpose.⁵⁰

Understanding the logical grammar of “you” requires recognizing that the same function can also be marked through other grammatical forms: in the second-person conjugation of the verb or in the vocative form of the name. According to Reid, these are all ways of making explicit the act of *address* which has its proper home in what he calls “social operations of mind.” This suggests that the relevant notion of expression is meant to be understood by reference to the Recognition Condition and the Participation Condition. Taken together, these two requirements imply what we characterized in §3 as the *demanding sense* of “giving expression”—i.e., the sense in which the phrase describes a self-consciously directed act that requires the addressee to *knowingly partake* in it. Thus conceived, a social operation of mind is an act of *making* one’s mind known to the other party.

It is precisely in McDowell’s remarks on the second person pronoun that one can see most clearly his commitment to what Reid calls the “common opinion of philosophers”—i.e., the assumption that if a mental operation involves *two active subjects*, then it must be composed of *two separate acts*. McDowell’s remarks occur in the context of his discussion of a difficulty that arises in Frege’s work with respect to the communicability of “I”-thoughts. Since Frege defines “I” as expressing the “special and primitive way” in which the subject is presented only to herself, first-personal thoughts threaten to come out as incommunicable.⁵¹ As a solution, McDowell proposes an exception to the rule that communication requires the sharing of thoughts. He writes:

50. Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, op. cit., 70; original pagination 80. Another central passage makes clear that Reid takes social operations to be paradigmatically expressed by using language: he suggests that “nature” making “man capable of social operations of mind” goes together with nature furnishing man with “a language to express them.” See Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of Mind*, 330; original pagination 448.

51. Frege, “Thoughts,” in *Logical Investigations*, trans. P. T. Geach and R. H. Stoothoff (Blackwell, Oxford, 1977); 12. Frege notes that to communicate her “I”-thoughts, the speaker “must use ‘I’ in a sense which can be grasped by others, perhaps in the sense of ‘he who is speaking to you at this moment’” (Ibid., 14). But, as McDowell points out, this will not do. The proposal implies that the only sense available for the addressee of “you” to grasp would be the one expressed by “he who is being addressed.” Yet unless the addressee notices that *she herself* is the one who is being addressed, she does not understand what was said.

Frege's troubles about "I" cannot be blamed simply on the idea of special and primitive senses; they result, rather, from the assumption—which is what denies the special and primitive senses any role in communication—that communication must involve a sharing of thoughts between communicator and audience. That assumption is quite natural, and Frege seems to take it for granted. But there is no obvious reason why he could not have held, instead, that in linguistic interchange of the appropriate kind, mutual understanding—which is what successful communication achieves—requires not shared thoughts but different thoughts that, however, stand and are mutually known to stand in a suitable relation of correspondence.⁵²

According to McDowell, "mutual understanding" requires less than a "sharing" of the thought. In the resulting picture, the respective mental acts of the interlocutors are *separate* in that each of them thinks a thought unavailable for the other to grasp. At the same time, their mental acts are supposed to be *intrinsically interconnected* in that the correspondence relation between their thoughts is "mutually known." The problem is that it is hard to make sense of the talk of mutual knowledge here. For, how could the assumed "relation of correspondence" between their thoughts be known to them? After all, it would seem that for me to know the relation between your thought and my thought, both of them would have to somehow figure in my thinking. Yet, following Frege, McDowell denies that one can grasp the "I"-thoughts of another.⁵³ Rather than providing a solution to Frege's troubles, McDowell's proposal seems only to deepen the puzzle. In effect, addressor and addressee seem like ships that pass in the night. Strictly speaking, their minds never get to meet. All that the exchange of words like "you" and "I" can ever achieve is that each interlocutor presents their own "I"-thought in relation to something corresponding to their thought that is *unthinkable* for them. In light of such difficulties, it seems attractive to explore whether there is room for the idea that "I" and "you" articulate the reciprocal poles of a single act of mind in which the interlocutors partake.

6. THE MEETING OF MINDS IN THE EXCHANGE OF WORDS

The formula that communication is a *single* act of mind for *two* subjects holds open the hope that there may be a way to resolve the third inconsistent triad without giving up either on the disjunctivist conception of knowledge

52. DRS, 222.

53. For objections along these lines, see Sebastian Rödl, *Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), especially 195–196; Michael Thompson, "I and You," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, podcast episode, May 21, 2012 (<https://podbay.fm/p/proceedings-of-the-aristotelian-society/e/1338397590>); and Michael Thompson, "Propositional Attitudes and Propositional Nexuses: A Hieroglyphical Elucidation," in *Sinnkritisches Philosophieren*, (eds.) Sebastian Rödl and Henning Tegtmeier (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013).

or on the idea that communication is a form of knowledge *sui generis*. At this point, however, talk of *one act for two* amounts to little more than a slogan. The question is how it is to be spelled out. The difficulty of that task comes into view when one considers the ways in which Richard Moran and Sebastian Rödl take up the formula.⁵⁴

The respective renderings they propose are both shaped by the assumption of a binary contrast that divides the genus of cognition into two mutually exclusive species: *from within* or *from without*—by *receptivity* or by *spontaneity*. Moran and Rödl both argue that the mutual awareness that interlocutors have of each other must not be conceived as knowledge *from receptivity*, since that would mean assimilating it to knowledge of things in the external world. Given their shared background assumption, both conclude that it must be knowledge *from spontaneity* and thus fall into the same epistemic category as knowledge of one's own thinking or doing.⁵⁵ In effect, both appear to neglect the possibility that mutual awareness in communicative exchange might be a *third* form of knowing, irreducibly distinct from both *self-consciousness* and *object-consciousness*.⁵⁶

Upon closer inspection, each proposal threatens to obscure a central element of the formula it means to elucidate. While Rödl's account threatens to eviscerate the *separateness of the subjects*, Moran's account threatens to dissolve the *unity of the act*.

The starting point of Rödl's considerations is the observation that it is mystifying to hold, as McDowell does, that interlocutors each think a thought

54. Both criticize McDowell's view of interlocution for failing to do justice to the fundamental *relationality* of the communicative act. And both insist that the mutual knowledge of the interlocutors must be conceived as having its source in the active relation between them—in the *one* act in which the *two* partake. Moran presents his account directly by appeal to Reid. (See Moran, *The Exchange of Words*, op. cit., 1–5.) Rödl does not refer to Reid, but he works with an analogous formula, describing the act of address as a “thought for two.” The slogan makes its first appearance as a heading on p. 187 of *Self-Consciousness*, op. cit., with the argument concluding in the claim that “second-person thought is thought for two” (190).

55. See Moran, op. cit., 12; Rödl, op. cit., 189. In chapter 4.2 of *The Exchange of Words*, Moran argues that a perceptual account of knowledge by testimony “provides no place for the social act that two people in verbal communication with each other are engaged in” (104). In chapter 4.4, he then maintains that such knowledge should instead be modeled on the agent's spontaneous self-knowledge of what she is doing. In *Self-Consciousness*, Rödl proceeds in a similar fashion. In chapter 1, he presents the exclusive contrast between *receptive* and *spontaneous* knowledge. In chapter 6, he then argues that since second person thought is not *from receptivity* it must be *from spontaneity*.

56. In this respect, the views of Moran and Rödl are the reverse of McDowell's position. While McDowell affirms that knowing another *by communication* is a form of cognition *sui generis*, he denies that communication is a single act for two subjects. Moran and Rödl, by contrast, affirm that communication is a single act for two subjects, while denying that the knowledge thus acquired is a form of cognition *sui generis*.

the other cannot grasp and nevertheless have mutual knowledge of the correspondence between their thoughts.⁵⁷ Accounting for the nexus between “I” and “you,” Rödl goes on to argue, requires making space for the idea that addresser and addressee think the *same* thought. Furthermore, he maintains that this, in turn, requires regarding first person thought and second person thought as two guises of the same form of predication. This leads him to the conclusion that second person thought *is* first person thought. Rödl writes:

[M]y ‘You’ addressed at you and your ‘I’ that receives my address express the same act of thinking. This case is fundamental in that without it, there would be no such thing as thoughts expressed by ‘You . . .’ and, consequently, by ‘I . . .’ As ‘You . . .’ said by me to you and ‘I . . .’ said by you in taking up my address, express the same act of thinking, they express the same thought. Therefore, it is wrong to oppose second person thought to first person thought. This is a difference in the means of expression, not in the thought expressed. Second person thought is first person thought. It is thought of the self-conscious.⁵⁸

Yet if the epistemic relation to an interlocutor is to be conceived as a function of *self-consciousness*, then it seems reasonable to wonder why such cognition should still count as knowledge of *another* mind. As Rödl presents it, the distinction between the subjects appears to be secondary to a prior unity of self-consciousness. In effect, there may be *one* act. Yet *why* is it for *two*?

On the face of it, Moran’s account runs into the reverse difficulty. He frames his investigation by alluding to Reid’s talk of social acts of mind—explicitly affirming all three conditions through which Reid characterizes such operations.⁵⁹ Yet when Moran presents his own account, he seems to define Reid’s “social act of mind” in terms of a system of epistemic “deferrals” between the parties involved. What Moran calls a “single act” for two subjects appears to consist in a multiplicity of unilateral acts containing the acts of the other in their *content*. He writes:

The simple act of telling involves an interlocking system of authority and dependence on, or deferral to, the role played by the other person. As Reid says, social acts of mind are distinctive in that they ‘can have no existence without the intervention of some other intelligent being, who acts a part in them.’ . . . For the speaker to be able to say, ‘I promise,’ ‘I claim,’ etc., her reflective understanding of her action must incorporate the point of view of her interlocutor and assume that he is indeed playing his part for the com-

57. See Rödl, *Self-Consciousness*, 196.

58. *Ibid.*, 197.

59. See Moran, *The Exchange of Words*, 1–5.

pletion of the speech act, just as her interlocutor's uptake must incorporate her own understanding of the meaning of her utterance.⁶⁰

Going by this passage, the mutual knowledge that interlocutors have of the act of interlocution is a matter of each *incorporating* the other's perspective within their own self-consciousness. This ensures that there are *two* separate subjects. By the same token, however, it seems sensible to ask why one should speak of *one* act. For, as Moran describes it, the "incorporation" of the other's perspective is something that *each* interlocutor does on her own.

Where Rödl seems to secure the oneness of the act by running the risk of eviscerating the separateness of the subjects, Moran appears to preserve the separateness of the subjects by running the risk of dissolving the oneness of the act. The effect threatens to be the same. Once again, it looks as if the minds of the interlocutors never get to meet. In the one case, because they cannot be kept apart from one another. In the other, because they cannot reach each other. Upon further reflection, the two difficulties turn out to be intricately related such that trying to avoid the one threatens to lead into the other. The dialectic comes out more clearly when one notices that as each of these two approaches appears to water down Reid's *Participation Condition*, it thereby threatens to undermine one of the other two requirements. As we shall see, the *Expression Condition* seems hard to place in Rödl's account, while Moran's view appears to leave no room for the *Recognition Condition*.

Given the assumption that incorporating your perspective into my self-consciousness is something that I do on my own, it seems reasonable to wonder how I *know* of your perspective—let alone of your incorporating my perspective into your self-consciousness. At this juncture, Moran shifts between talk of *knowing* and talk of *assuming*. In the above-quoted passage, we are told that the speaker's "reflective understanding of her action must incorporate the point of view of her interlocutor and *assume* that he is indeed playing his part." Similarly, in his final account:

The distinction of roles in the accomplishment of a single social act means that each participant's knowledge is grounded in deference to the other. . . . The possibility of "hereby" as the mark of the illocutionary signals the formal dependence of acts of this kind on the participants' shared knowledge and understanding of it, a form of knowledge which involves each incorporating the perspective of the other, and where each participant's knowledge is only possible on the assumption of the other participant's knowledge, and their shared recognition of this very dependence.⁶¹

60. Moran, *The Exchange of Words*, 34.

61. Moran, *The Exchange of Words*, 188–189.

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The first sentence describes interlocution as “a single social act” in which two subjects participate. Note, however, that their mutual knowledge is *not* explained by reference to the oneness of the act in which they are said to partake. Instead, we are told that the knowledge of each is “grounded” in an act of deferring to the other. The second sentence begins with the thesis that interlocution is formally characterized by the “participants’ shared knowledge.” Yet, in the very same statement, Moran goes on to characterize such knowledge as comprising reciprocal acts of “incorporating the perspective of the other.” Finally, we are told that the knowledge each has is “only possible on the *assumption* of the other participant’s knowledge, *and* their shared recognition of this very dependence.” The talk of “assumption” suggests that the participants do *not* have knowledge of each other’s knowledge; yet the final clause implies that without “shared recognition” neither of them qualifies as knowing.

On the face of it, Moran’s proposal confronts a dilemma. Once the “single social act” gets resolved into unilateral acts of incorporating the perspective of the other, there seem to be only two options. One is to maintain that the respective act of incorporation must be recognized by the other. But that would appear to lead to a vicious regress, since such recognition would seem to require a further act of incorporation, and so on. Alternatively, one might try to stop the regress by weakening the requirements for cognition so that the speaker’s initial “assumption” qualifies as “knowledge” once the audience’s uptake comes to pass. This seems to be what Moran suggests, at least in some passages.⁶² Yet, arguably, this would mean giving the skeptic everything they want.

62. On the previous page, Moran seems to suggest that the speaker’s *assumption* about the hearer’s uptake can be regarded as knowledge if the assumption is true and the speaker was justified in making it. Moran writes:

Now you, in virtue of the fact that I have communicated this to you, my reflective knowledge of how I am declaring myself to you in this very utterance, you are thus in a position to know that I do in fact perform the very illocution named in my utterance. . . . Hence insofar as I am entitled to the assumption that you hear and understand me, I can say with confidence and in one breath “I refuse, apologize . . .” (Moran, *The Exchange of Words*, 187–188)

Note that the speaker is here characterized as having “communicated”—even though the intended recipient of the communication remains in nothing more than a mere “position to know.” Since Moran argues on the same page that the “reflective knowledge” of the speaker must include the hearer’s uptake, it follows that notwithstanding the absence of knowledge on the part of the hearer, the speaker may be regarded as having *made their mind known* through the speech act and, furthermore, as having *knowledge that they have done so*—merely on the ground that they are “entitled to the assumption” of having been heard.

In this connection, it is instructive to consider a remark McDowell makes in a different, though not unrelated context: there, he insists that one must not allow the regress to start in the first place.⁶³ In the same vein, Rödl would adamantly reject the weakening of the requirements for knowledge. Instead, he proposes to ensure that the difficulty cannot arise in the first place by identifying the awareness of *each* interlocutor with *one and the same* exercise of knowledge *from spontaneity*. As Rödl puts it in the passage quoted above, the contrast between “I” and “you” is “a difference in the means of expression, not in the thought expressed.” Note, however, that the way in which the respective act of thinking stands to its expression seems to be precisely what generally distinguishes *address* from *self-consciousness*. At any rate, one of the three dimensions along which Reid draws the distinction between solitary and social acts of mind turns on this very point: while being accidental in the case of solitary operations, expression is essential to social operations.

Of course, Rödl does not deny that the second person nexus is mediated by expression and perception; yet he does insist that their role is “subordinate to an intellectual relationship.”⁶⁴ Due to this subordination, he goes on to suggest, the knowledge the interlocutors have of each other is not *from receptivity* but rather *from spontaneity*. Expression and perception appear, in effect, as mere means or aids to a form of cognition officially introduced by reflection on the way in which an individual subject knows her own judgments and intentional actions.⁶⁵

On the face of it, Rödl’s proposal, too, is threatened by a dilemma. If one takes expression and perception to be strictly subordinate to a prior notion of a *purely* intellectual relationship, then it looks as if the two subjects are

63. With the view to the famous regress that threatens to arise in the context of rule-following, McDowell notes: “What do we learn from this regress? We learn that it is disastrous to suppose there is always a conceptual gap between an expression of a rule and performances that are up for assessment according to whether or not they conform to the rule. . . . [I]f we let the gap open at all, it will be unbridgeable.” (McDowell, “How Not to Read Wittgenstein: Brandom’s Wittgenstein,” *The Engaged Intellect*, 100–101). There is reason to wonder, however, when it comes to McDowell’s own account of testimony—beholden as it is to the two subjects/two acts principle—whether it, too, is not threatened by just the sort of regress Moran’s account faces on this horn of the dilemma.

64. Rödl writes: “This does not mean that perception . . . plays no role in second person thought. It means that its role is subordinate to an intellectual relationship and can only be understood through it” (*Self-Consciousness*, 188–189).

65. See the first three chapters of *Self-Consciousness*. Chapter 1 introduces the thesis that the logical grammar of the first person pronoun is to be understood by reflection on a distinct form of cognition—knowledge *from spontaneity*. The subsequent chapters articulate this form of cognition by reflection on how an individual agent knows *from within* what she is intentionally doing (chapter 2) and on how an individual thinker knows *from within* what she is judging (chapter 3).

united on a higher level such that their separateness and the corresponding need for expression are secondary to what explains their mutual knowledge. In consequence, the question will arise on what ground the knowledge thus explained can count as an epistemic relation between separate subjects. Yet if, on the other hand, one takes the mediating role of expression and perception to be *essential* to the respective form of cognition, then it becomes unclear how the notion of mutual recognition could be modeled on the spontaneous knowledge a subject has of her own judgments and intentional actions.

Given the difficulties canvassed above, one might conclude that there cannot be an act of mind that meets all three conditions of Reid's "social operations." Indeed, that is the common opinion among philosophers. Yet we find thought to the contrary in our ordinary intuition. Let us consider an example. As G. E. M. Anscombe famously notes, "it is essential to getting married . . . that someone who is doing it should think he is doing it."⁶⁶ Intuitively, it is not enough to think it; the subject must *know* it. Of course, Anscombe takes this to hold for intentional action in general. Yet in the case of marrying, the relevant knowing obviously involves a second party: it is not a wedding unless it ends with the couple's mutual knowledge that they are married. The example provides a helpful illustration, since the special importance commonly assigned to this specific exchange of words sharpens intuition and thereby brings features into focus that arguably characterize the second-personal nexus in general.

Obviously, marrying is one of those things that one cannot do on one's own or to oneself. It should be equally clear that the parties involved do not act as one subject. According to the traditional conception, they *become* one person as a result; yet in the wedding ceremony they do not act as one but rather towards each other. Accordingly, an account of this exchange of words must respect the *separateness of the parties*. This is immediately connected with a further difference between the way an individual agent knows her own action and the way in which two subjects know they are marrying each other. In contrast to the former case, it is essential to the latter that the mental acts of the parties involved are *expressed in sensible signs of address*. A little exercise in imagination shows, furthermore, that the respective acts of mind cannot be treated as separate. Imagine an event which looks like a marriage

66. "On Promising and its Justice, and Whether it Need be Respected in *Foro Interno*" (reprinted in G. E. M. Anscombe, *Ethics, Religion and Politics* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981]),

61. Anscombe's discussion of her marriage example is, of course, not unknown to Moran or Rödl. (Indeed, its subsequent influence on treatments of our topic is discussed by Conant and Rödl in their "Introduction" to a Special Issue on *The Second Person* (*Philosophical Topics* Vol. 42, No. 1; Spring 2014), 6–8.) However, in our view, the lessons that can be drawn from her discussion of the example have not been sufficiently appreciated.

ceremony—just that I never told you that I cancelled the dress rehearsal and scheduled the real thing for today, and you never told me that you still have your doubts.⁶⁷ In effect, I mean to be marrying you today, and you are only going through the motions because you think that it is just a rehearsal. What is the result? The result is not that we are now half married. A “full” marriage cannot be analyzed as the product of a pair of independently intelligible unilateral acts—one in which you marry me and one in which I marry you. Marrying is irreducibly *a single act for two*.

Reflection on this point suggests three theses about the character of the knowledge constitutive of the act in question. First, what the two parties must know to qualify as marrying one another cannot be distinct realities, specifiable through that-clauses with different contents; rather, what each knows in virtue of doing it *must be one and the same reality*. Second, a home movie of the defective case imagined above and one of a real wedding could be outwardly indistinguishable. Hence the one and the same reality that each of the parties know cannot be something merely given; their *knowledge is part of the reality they know*. Third, there is no such thing as my marrying you without knowing that I am doing so, and without my knowing that you know that you are marrying me, and vice versa. The crucial point is that this series of “ands” cannot be construed as a mere conjunction. A regress looms if one tries to analyze the mutual knowledge in terms of a hierarchy of embedded unilateral mental acts of the two parties. Accordingly, the form of the nexus required here is, rather, that of *a relational act of reciprocal consciousness*.

7. SOMEONE AT A DISTANCE

In a proper development that accommodates all three conditions of Reid’s definition, the notion of a *single* act of mind for *two* subjects would make sense of the idea that the way in which we are for one another in conversation presents a form of knowing *sui generis*, irreducibly distinct from both knowing things in the external world and knowing one’s own mind. By the same token, the question would arise how this third sort of cognition stands to the other two. In the remark quoted in §1, McDowell declares that the three are not only “mutually irreducible” but also “mutually interdependent.”⁶⁸ Reid, by contrast, appears to deny interdependence as he claims irreducibility:

If nature had not made man capable of such social operations of mind, and furnished him with a language to express them, he might think, and reason, and deliberate, and will; he might have desires and aversions, joy and

67. This is a variation on the case Anscombe considers; see Anscombe, “On Promising and Its Justice,” op. cit., 62.

68. See SIO, 152.

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sorrow; in a word, he might exert all those operations of mind, which the writers in logic and pneumatology have so copiously described; but, at the same time, he would still be a solitary being, even when in a crowd; it would be impossible for him to put a question, or give a command, to ask a favor, or testify a fact, to make a promise or a bargain.⁶⁹

In effect, Reid allows for the possibility of creatures who think and reason but never talk to each other. This provides a clue for how he conceives of the contrast between “solitary” and “social” operations: all three respects of the distinction are, evidently, meant to apply not only to the respective *acts* but also to the corresponding *powers*. So, thinking and reasoning are called “solitary operations” not just because it is possible to keep one’s thoughts to oneself; they bear that name because developing the capacity to think and reason does not require communication.

In some places, Reid makes the point by imagining a thinker who knows of no other intelligent being.⁷⁰ The above passage introduces a striking radicalization of the theme of solitude: we are told that the imagined creature “would still be a solitary being, even when in a crowd.” Thus construed, “solitary” thinkers might come in multitudes. Hence one may wonder what each of them could know about the others. By hypothesis, they could not be known to each other in mutual address: they would be distant from one another, even when they stand together. By the same token, it would be impossible for them to openly share what they think and feel. But there might be other ways for them to find out—say, by perceiving *what someone does*. The passage even allows for those creatures to have language, as long as they use it only as a medium of thought and never as a means of communication.⁷¹ Perhaps they can only think out loud.⁷² So, each of them could overhear the soliloquies of others. Since it would thus be impossible for them to hide their

69. Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of Mind*, op. cit., 330; original pagination, 449.

70. Reid writes: “A man may understand and will; he may apprehend, and judge, and reason, though he should know of no intelligent being in the universe besides himself” (*Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Mind*, op. cit., 77).

71. The passage simply rules out the idea that the imagined creatures are endowed with language to express *social operations*. This affirms the intelligibility of the scenario Wittgenstein invites us to try to imagine in his thought experiment of the first paragraph of §243—concerning whether we can imagine beings who engage only in *monologue* and never in *dialogue* (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953). The ramifications of trying to imagine such beings—ones who use language to “say things only to themselves”—are further explored in §344ff. His interlocutor counters there through an appeal to what Wittgenstein calls “the easy transition from some to all”: Wouldn’t such beings “merely be doing always” what we already do *sometimes*? This sets up an exploration of the question whether the human capacity for expression through words and signs presupposes the capacity for expression *to* and *with* another.

72. *Ibid.*, §331.

thoughts and feelings from each other, that would be a direct way of finding out—by experience of *what someone says*.

The way in which Reid draws the distinction between “solitary” and “social” operations thus turns out to introduce a fundamental opposition between two ways of knowing another mind. On the one hand, there is the knowledge *interlocutors* have of *each other* in virtue of participating in *social operations*. On the other hand, there is the knowledge a *thinker* might have of *someone at a distance* in virtue of engaging in *solitary operations* of perception and inference. In the conceptual framework of Reid’s theory, the opposition between these two epistemic relations appears in the guise of the possibility of imagining a crowd of minded creatures who know of each other but cannot conceive of meeting in the exchange of words. Yet, as we shall see in a moment, the opposition can also take the form of a picture in which the reciprocal recognition of interlocutors is sealed off from the knowledge they might have of each other at a distance. We will argue that these are two sides of the same distortion. Properly conceived, the concept of another mind can be rendered intelligible only by reference to the meeting of minds in the exchange of words or signs. At the same time, it is only a meeting of minds when I know you as someone who may be distant from me. The whole difficulty is to understand how these can both be true.

The second form of the opposition threatens to arise in the account of mutual recognition that Michael Thompson proposes.⁷³ Initially, his proposal seems attractive because it promises to avoid the pair of complementary problems into which the accounts of Moran and Rödl appear to run. On closer inspection, however, the very move that seems to provide the solution also appears to introduce a version of the gulf that opens up in Reid’s picture. In what follows, we first sketch Thompson’s proposal and then turn to the difficulty to which it seems to give rise.

What Moran and Rödl share with McDowell is that their theories are couched in a neo-Fregean framework, according to which “I” and “you” are to be conceived as referring terms.⁷⁴ Thompson rejects this neo-Fregean

73. See Thompson “Propositional Attitudes and Propositional Nexuses,” op. cit., and “I and You,” op. cit.

74. See McDowell, RTO, 190–193. Rödl explicitly endorses this view (see *Self-Consciousness*, op. cit., 100–101), appealing to a remark by Gareth Evans (see *Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 225.) Moran’s account of his transparency conception of belief takes its point of departure from the same passage in Evans that Rödl quotes (see Richard Moran, *Authority and Estrangement*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001, 61). In effect, Moran is also committed to the claim that all pronouns function in a logically uniform referring manner. This is evident throughout his treatment of the concept of belief. For he operates with the assumption that the utterances “*p*” and “I believe *p*” (or “I judge *p*”) must always differ in subject matter. The assumption is explicit in the following remark:

framework and adopts instead Anscombe's teaching that "I" does not refer. Doing so, he argues, makes room for conceiving of the mutual recognition expressed by "I" and "you" as an active relation which cannot be resolved into a multiplicity of unilateral acts.⁷⁵ According to Anscombe, statements in the first person do not express complete thoughts where an object is brought under a concept. In this sense, they do not articulate thoughts *about* oneself. They are, rather, "subjectless predications" which, in the logically fundamental case, articulate the subject's immediate knowledge of the respective acts or states.⁷⁶ Analogously, Thompson suggests that the nexus between "I" and "you" expresses *relational predications* that are equally "subjectless": they do not articulate thoughts that the relevant parties have *about* each other; they rather articulate the immediate knowledge the parties have from *within the relation* thus expressed.

As Thompson conceives it, the recognitive nexus of second-personal address is *essentially linguistic*—it exists *only* through its *expression* in sensible signs.⁷⁷ In this way, his formal notation provides a rigorous logical articulation of the idea that Reid's slogan gestures towards—a *single* act of mind for *two* subjects. By the same token, Reid's opposition between the two ways of knowing another mind now appears in the guise of a strict logical division: wherever knowledge of another does not take the shape of a *dyadic* act of mutual recognition, the knowing must be regarded as a *monadic* act. The

It will be common knowledge, among anyone with the concept of belief, that although one believes something as true, the fact believed and the fact of one's belief are two different matters. . . . I acknowledge the two questions as distinct in virtue of acknowledging that what my beliefs are directed upon is an independent world, and they may therefore fail to conform to it. (Richard Moran, *ibid.*, 61–62)

No doubt, it is *possible* for a logical gap to open between belief that *p* and *p*. Yet the claim that there is *always* such a gap implies that whereas "*p*" is about whether something is the case, "I believe *p*" is "about" me and my beliefs.

75. See Thompson, "Propositional Attitudes and Propositional Nexuses," *op. cit.*, 235–236.

76. See Anscombe, "The First Person," collected in G. E. M. Anscombe, *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1981), 36.

77. This comes out in a passage where Thompson comments on Richard Heck's discussion of the second-person pronoun. Heck remarks that, by contrast to the first-person pronoun, the second-person pronoun has no correlate on the level of belief (Richard Heck, "Do Demonstratives Have Senses?," *Philosophers' Imprint* 2 (2), 2002). The point of Heck's remark is to suggest that there is not anything here for a logician or philosopher of mind to study. In his comment, Thompson affirms the remark but denies the lesson Heck wants to draw from it. That is to say, Heck is right when he claims that there is no such thing as a second-person belief or propositional attitude; but he is wrong to conclude that the second-person nexus is to be regarded as a mere surface-phenomenon that need not concern the logician. For, according to Thompson, the following holds: "It is in propositional relations or nexuses, not in propositional attitudes . . . that we find an opposition of first and second person" (Thompson, "Propositional Attitudes and Propositional Nexuses," *op. cit.*, 239–240).

division does not just effect a separation between our perceptual and our dialogical relations to others; it effects one within the domain of dialogue itself. On the one hand, there is the knowledge I have *by* currently partaking in interlocution. On the other hand, there is the knowledge I have *about* interlocutions (whether exchanges between other people or *past* exchanges in which I participated). Thompson's notation requires distinguishing the two as utterly different ways of knowing. The one is *dyadic*, the other is *monadic*. While the former is "subjectless," the latter may contain singular terms. Hence it seems sensible to ask how we are to understand logical links between these two ways of knowing.

A related issue in connection with the first-person is precisely the one McDowell points to as part of an argument for why "I" must be conceived as a referring term. In his discussion of Anscombe, he criticizes her doctrine of the first person for failing to account for the validity of the inference from "I'm *F*" to "He is *F*" or to "Someone is *F*."⁷⁸ McDowell, in effect, argues that if we want to preserve such inferential links while taking Frege to have correctly captured the logical form of "*x* is *F*," then we must reject Anscombe's teaching on the logical asymmetry between paradigmatic uses of the first person and the third person. A parallel insistence on the need to preserve the inferential links with respect to "you" would issue in an analogous verdict about Thompson's attempt to display the logical grammar of the second person via his notation.⁷⁹

What McDowell does not notice is that his neo-Fregean insistence on the logically uniform referential import of all uses of pronouns involves a departure from Frege's own view—at least when it comes to the case of *judgment*. In fact, Anscombe's teaching on the first person can be reconstructed as an attempt to hold on to an insight in the orthodox Fregean doctrine that gets lost in the neo-Fregean reception. In Frege's *Begriffsschrift*, the judgment stroke expresses the logically fundamental use of the words "I judge" or "I assert." Since what that stroke expresses for Frege is a logical *act*, it cannot be embedded within the content of what is judged (i.e., the thoughts or propositions that appear on its right-hand side). Hence, the "I judge" symbolized by the judgment stroke cannot be analyzed in terms of object and concept. In this way, there is a fundamental asymmetry between the conjugation of

78. See RTO, op. cit., 190–193; Kripke reports that this is a common objection to Anscombe (in "The First Person," reprinted in Saul Kripke, *Philosophical Troubles* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 312). Kripke cites Christopher Peacocke as an example of someone who claims that it renders her conclusion "barely credible" (Christopher Peacocke, *Truly Understood* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008], 80).

79. This is, of course, also implied by McDowell's remark on "you" (see DRS, 222) that we discussed in §5.

cognitive verbs in the first-person present indicative and third-person statements like “She judges.” Anscombe’s treatment of the first person could be reconstructed as a kind of radicalization or generalization of this point, now not only with respect to sentences that express what I believe or judge, but also those in which I say what I am doing. Hence she holds that the same sort of asymmetry separates action sentences in the first-person present indicative and the corresponding statements in the third person.⁸⁰

This way of construing Anscombe’s teaching on the first person is suggested by the manner in which Thompson models his logical notation for the “propositional nexus” of the “I”-“You” on Frege’s use of the judgment stroke in his *Begriffsschrift*. On the face of it, the formal symbolism Thompson develops can be taken as the suggestion that the “I”-“You” relation of mutual recognition is to be conceived on analogy with what one might call the *logical “I”* encapsulated in Frege’s judgment stroke. While Frege’s judgment stroke stands for the *monadic* logical act of *the thinker*, Thompson’s symbol of reciprocal address would, accordingly, stand for the *dyadic* logical act of *two speakers*—if you will, the *dia-logical* relation of interlocation. The analogy is attractive precisely because it promises to provide a rigorous solution to the puzzle about mutual recognition. The act of mind symbolized by Frege’s judgment stroke is as such *self-conscious* precisely because it is a *logical act*. So, if the analogy holds, then one could say that we are constitutively known to each other in virtue of standing in the nexus of “I” and “you” because the relation thus expressed is a logical act for *two*.

Yet if Thompson’s proposal is construed along these lines, then his notation threatens to inherit a problem that besets the orthodox Fregean conception of the judgment stroke. For Frege, one must sharply distinguish “I judge” qua *logical act* from “judgment” qua *logical content*—i.e., qua element of a thought *about* a psychological act (“I judged,” “She judges,” etc.). In the *Begriffsschrift*, these two notions of “judgment” are not just represented by different signs; they require two fundamentally different kinds of symbols. For, as the symbol for the logical act of acknowledging the truth of a judgeable content, Frege’s judgment stroke cannot be embedded within the content of what may be judged; it can do nothing more than express the logical act of the logical “I.” An occurrence of the verb “to judge” in ordinary language that expresses one’s acknowledgment of the truth of the thought prefaced by the words “I judge” can, accordingly, be translated into the notation only

80. See Anscombe, “The First Person,” collected in G. E. M. Anscombe, *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 36. We are not claiming that this is the correct interpretation of Anscombe’s teaching. For the present purpose, it is enough that, on the face of it, her text allows a reconstruction along these lines. For further discussion, see footnote 84.

through the employment of a symbol that plays an utterly different role in *Begriffsschrift* than one that signifies a judgeable content. Any uses of the ordinary verb “to judge” that figure within the context of what is judged must be represented in the notation by a sign for something that plays a logically predicative role—something that must be strictly distinguished from the judgment stroke. Frege’s notation thus encodes a philosophical conception according to which any shift in the conjugation of the cognitive verb away from the first-person present indicative (i.e., any shift along the dimensions of person, tense, or grammatical mood) is a shift not only in the meaning but in the very logical character of what is thus meant. In consequence, Frege’s notation cannot display the validity of inferences from the “I judge that *p*” symbolized by “ $\vdash p$ ” to “ $\vdash$ Someone judges that *p*” or even to “ $\vdash$ Yesterday I judged *p*.”⁸¹ In effect, Frege’s judgment stroke seals the judging “I” within the logical act it expresses.

When construed on analogy with Frege’s judgment stroke, Thompson’s symbol for his “propositional nexus” threatens to similarly seal the respective pair of interlocutors within the *dyadic* logical act in which they partake. For if the claimed parallel is strict, then what holds for Frege’s judgment stroke should equally apply to Thompson’s symbol: it too should not be embeddable in the content of what can be judged or communicated; all that the symbol could do would be to express that logical act for two. This would force a strict distinction between “address” qua *dia-logical act* and “address” qua *logical content* (i.e., as an element of thoughts *about* interlocutions). Any shift in the conjugation of the respective *re-cognitive* verbs away from the second-personal present indicative would require a shift to a symbol that plays an utterly different role in the notation. The consequence would be the same as in the *Begriffsschrift*: just as Frege’s notation severs the inferential links between the “I judge” (symbolized by the judgment stroke) and “He judges,” “Someone

81. As Frege conceives it, this is a shift from a *logical* to a *psychological* use of the verb. For an explanation of why he does so, see Maria van der Schaar, “Frege on Judgment and the Judging Agent,” *Mind* 127, no. 505 (2018). As van der Schaar argues, the purpose of the judgment stroke in Frege’s notation is to mark the *essentially first-personal* engagement with the content of what is judged. Anything that is not “first-personal” in *this* sense is consigned to a single all-encompassing category of the third-personal. Frege’s notation, in effect, does not allow for a distinction between (a) a “third-person” perspective on matters of mere empirical fact (including merely psychological facts) and (b) a third-person perspective which is internally related to the first-person perspective, such that there is a logical link between “I judge *p*” said *by* me and “He judges *p*” said *about* me. By the same token, there is no room for a perspective that, on the one hand, is third-personal (in that it is concerned with another judging subject) while remaining, on the other hand, fully within the purview of the logical. This has the consequence that “S judges that *p*” must be regarded as an entirely different form of expression from “I judge that *p*.”

judges,” or “Yesterday I judged”; so too, Thompson’s notation would lack the resources to display the validity of the inferential links between “I address you” and “He addresses her,” “Someone addresses another,” or “Yesterday I addressed her, and she addressed me.”⁸²

While Frege is, indeed, prepared to bite the bullet and sever the inferential links between “I judge” and “She judges” to account for the fundamental asymmetry that sets apart the logical act, there is no indication that Thompson is equally prepared to give up the respective inferential links.⁸³ However,

82. One can flatly declare that Frege’s notation *severs* the logical links between all of these cases because it is clear how the respective statements are to be rendered in his *Begriffsschrift*. Thompson’s notation would, indeed, appear to sever some of these links (between, for example, the first person present and the past conjugations of the verb). Yet for others—such as between the “I”-“You” and the third person perspective onto the “I”-“You” nexus—the issue seems less straightforward. This is because it is anything but obvious how the respective sets of statements are to be differentially rendered in Thompson’s notation. On the face of it, his symbolism for what he calls a “propositional nexus” differs from Frege’s judgment stroke in the following crucial respect: whereas the latter has no argument places (i.e., it consists simply in a stroke), the former appears to feature argument places for *names*. (See Thompson, “Propositional Attitudes and Propositional Nexuses,” 244–246.) In Frege’s notation, the identity of the one whose logical act the judgment stroke expresses is simply *the logical agent using the notation*—i.e., the one who is writing or reading the line of *Begriffsschrift* in question. This does not seem to hold for Thompson’s notation. In its employment, the identity of Smith’s act of marrying Jones and Jones’s act of marrying Smith appears to be expressed through a nexus in which the names of Smith and Jones are permitted to occur—neither of whom need be identical either with anyone who writes or anyone who reads that line of Thompsonian *Begriffsschrift*. Construed in this way, the notation’s manner of symbolizing the identity of the act expressible in ordinary language through a pair of sentences such as “I am marrying you” said *by me* and “I am marrying you” said *by you* would require the deployment of my name and yours. If I am Smith and you are Jones, it would then be unclear how the rendering of those two sentences into the notation would differ from the manner in which “Smith and Jones are marrying” is to be rendered. Yet this would mean that Thompson’s notation bears an irremediable third-personal perspective on the “I”-“You” nexus. And this would clearly be in tension with Thompson’s own insistence on the logical priority of the perspective of the parties involved. After all, the whole point of the notation is to capture a relation between two subjects that holds only insofar as the two subjects think towards one another in terms of this relation.

83. At the outset of his talk “I and You” (op. cit.), Thompson discusses the relation between the following three statements:

- (1) “I have a bruised nose.”
- (2) “Hannah has a bruised nose.”
- (3) “This girl has a bruised nose.”

If Hannah herself is the one with the bruised nose, Thompson observes that her knowledge of the matter is naturally expressed through proposition (1); and if she informs someone that (1) is true, then from this they can infer (2) and/or (3). Thompson further points out that if Hannah herself comes by knowledge of (1) only indirectly, as it were—say, by first seeing herself in a mirror and noticing that there’s someone with a bruised nose—then she might start from

the question is whether his formal notation that makes space for the idea of an act of mind for two can also display the validity of those inferences.⁸⁴ It is precisely the insistence on the need to preserve such inferential links that McDowell cites to justify a neo-Fregean rendering of the pronouns. Ap-

knowledge of (3), but upon realizing she is looking in a mirror, by inference work her way to knowledge of (1). Presumably, Thompson would equally not hesitate to acknowledge all sorts of related inferential relations that obtain with regard to the “I”-“You” nexus.

84. We are *not* claiming that either Anscombe’s teaching on the first person or Thompson’s teaching on the second person must be read through the lens of a *strict* analogy with an orthodox Fregean understanding of the judgment stroke. However, it is worth noting the following parallel: Anscombe’s reflections on “practical knowledge” are shaped by the assumption of a *strict* asymmetry between action sentences in the first-person present indicative and *any* other conjugation of the respective action verbs along the dimensions of person, tense, and grammatical mood. So, just as the logical act symbolized by Frege’s judgment stroke is restricted to what can be expressed by the “I judge”; so too, the agent’s practical knowledge is, in effect, limited to what can be expressed by the “I’m doing.” As Anscombe presents it in her final account, anything that cannot be articulated by first-personal action sentences in the present progressive must be conceived as falling outside the ken of the agent’s practical knowledge and will thus have to be relegated to an all-encompassing category of “observational knowledge” (see G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 2000, §48). Arguably, the puzzle that stands at the center of her treatise—i.e., the question of how there can be “two ways of knowing” of “one and the same object” (see Anscombe, *Intention*, §32)—is just another guise of the issue of how to do justice to the asymmetrical character of the first-person present indicative case without severing logical links—in this case, those between the special use of action verbs in the expression of practical knowledge and all other uses of those action verbs. Just as in Frege’s doctrine on the verb “to judge,” the uses of action verbs that Anscombe’s theory opposes to the expression of practical knowledge do not encompass merely their deployment in the third person (e.g., “She is crossing the street”); they equally include first-personal deployments in the simple past (e.g., “I crossed the street”) or in the perfect (e.g., “I have crossed the street”). In taking up Anscombe’s account of practical knowledge, Thompson explicitly stresses the analogy with judgment or belief: he argues that just as self-consciousness of belief is restricted to what one currently believes and does not extend to what one believed yesterday; so too, practical knowledge of one’s action is strictly limited to what one is currently doing and does not extend to what one did yesterday or a moment ago. (Michael Thompson, “Anscombe’s Intention and Practical Knowledge,” in *Essays on Anscombe’s Intention*, ed. A. Ford, J. Hornsby and F. Stoutland. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2011, 198–210, esp. 209.) Arguably, this restriction of the scope of practical knowledge gives rise to a difficulty in understanding how what the agent is said to know *from within* (i.e., to know *practically*) can count as a movement or change unfolding in the material world. (For a criticism of Anscombe and Thompson along these lines see Matthias Haase, “Knowing What I Have Done,” *Manuscripta*, 41, 2018, 196–253.) Given that Thompson treats practical knowledge in such a way that there is an epistemological gulf separating the knowledge articulated by action sentences in the first-person present indicative and all other conjugations of the respective action verbs, there is reason to think that his treatment of what he calls a “propositional nexus” is similarly governed by a strict opposition between knowledge articulated by sentences in the second-person present indicative and all other conjugations of the respective verbs of communication, interlocution, or transaction. The challenge to Thompson we raise in this paper is an elaboration of this point.

proaching communication through this register, McDowell can see no way to avoid resolving the *dyadic* nexus of mutual recognition into distinct *monadic* acts of the parties involved.

8. KNOWING ONE ANOTHER, KNOWING ANOTHER, AND KNOWING ONESELF

The multiple problems and puzzles we assembled in this paper have one and the same source. Or so we would like to suggest in this final section. Put most abstractly, the basic mistake is the failure to properly appreciate that the terms articulating epistemic relations to a mind are what Aristotle calls *analogical* terms: they are defined by their paradigmatic deployments in whose light their privative uses are to be understood.⁸⁵

In contemporary epistemology, the treatment of cognitive verbs along these lines tends to be thematized under the title of *disjunctivism*. McDowell famously holds that there is no highest common factor between the Cartesian notion of “seeing” a hallucinated oasis and really *seeing* an oasis. Yet if one cannot allow for a distinction between logically fundamental and logically derivative uses of that verb, this claim too will sever inferential links between sentences of ordinary language. To propose a disjunctivist treatment of a topic is to hold that one must strictly distinguish uses of a term pertaining to that topic without regarding it as a mere homonym across those uses. A Fregean conception of logical complexity leaves no room for this sort of shift in the use of a concept. So, to insist that a concept is governed by a Fregean conception of logical complexity is to hold that the concept in question does not admit of disjunctivist treatment. It is the tension between these two commitments of McDowell’s (his disjunctivism and his Fregeanism) that gives rise to the three inconsistent triads with which we began.

In a conceptual framework that does not allow for an *analogical* treatment of the relevant term, one is inevitably confronted with the following sort of choice: either one denies the radical asymmetry that sets apart its paradigmatic deployments or one severs the inferential links to its secondary uses. The dispute between the Fregean orthodoxy on “I judge” and the neo-Fregean insistence that all pronouns function in a logically uniform referring manner is a case in point. Reflection on the parallel issue with respect to “I tell you” will provide us with the outlines of a strategy for resolving the three inconsistent triads.

85. The so-called “focal” meaning of such a term is revealed by that which is said with reference to the primary case of its use (*pros hen legomenon*); see Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1003b12ff., *Topics* 106b.33ff. This allows one to comprehend the unity within a range of uses of a concept, while allowing for diversity in logical character across that multiplicity.

It is essential to Frege's *Begriffsschrift* that the judgment stroke expresses a *cognition*—a fully successful exercise of a capacity for knowledge. There is no provision within the notation for the expression of *privative* exercises of that same capacity.⁸⁶ This leads to the severing of yet another inferential link. The sharp distinction Frege draws between “I judge” *qua* logical act and “He judges” *qua* content of a thought *about* a psychological act has the implication that his notation cannot display *defective logical acts*, such as falsely judging that *p*.⁸⁷ In Frege's *Begriffsschrift*, there is consequently no way to express the validity of the following inference that Irad Kimhi calls the *sylogism of thinking and being*:⁸⁸

- (1) S judges that *p*.
- (2) Not-*p* (*p* is not the case).
- ∴ S falsely judges that *p*.

Insofar as it is modeled on Frege's *Begriffsschrift*, Thompson's “propositional nexus” threatens to issue in a parallel consequence. The only sort of deployment of a dyadic cognitive verb that Thompson's notation is designed to capture is its logically fundamental use. Now, he presents “informing” as an example of a verb whose logical form his notation is meant to display.⁸⁹ So, just as Frege's judgment stroke expresses cognition, Thompson's notation for the dyadic act of telling encodes the fully successful case: the transmission of knowledge through the act of informing another. Given a strict parallel with Frege's notation, the defective exercise of the same capacity would thus have to be represented by an entirely different sort of sign.⁹⁰ In consequence, the

86. On Frege's view, it holds that for me to assess my own act of judgement (as a case in which *I judged falsely*) requires stepping outside the act and assessing the truth of the judgeable content from a perspective that bears no internal relation to that act. This requires converting the act into a content of a further act of judgment of the form: “+S judges *p* ∧ not-*p*”—thereby rendering the predicate “judges” a relational expression that, for Frege, signifies the psychological notion of judgement. The negation operator, like any other sign for a logical constant in Frege's notation, can be attached only to an expression for a judgeable content. There is no way to attach any expression to the judgment stroke to signify the privative character of the act.

87. In Frege's *Begriffsschrift*, my logical act of judging is expressed by attaching the judgment stroke to a logical content. However, expressing a thought or judgment regarding a *privative* exercise of the capacity for judgment (even my own) requires the employment of an entirely different kind of logical sign—one for a content. Any such employment of a sign for someone's *manner* of judging can signify for Frege only a merely *empirical psychological fact* about someone—hence not something logical.

88. See Irad Kimhi, *Thinking and Being* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 10.

89. Thompson, “Propositional Attitudes and Propositional Nexuses,” op. cit., 238.

90. By a “defective” exercise of a cognitive capacity we mean one that issues in *error*. We will distinguish this below from (what we will call) an *attenuated* exercise—one that partakes

notation cannot display the validity of the following inference pattern that one might call *the syllogism of telling and being*:

- (1) X tells Y that *p*.
- (2) Not-*p* (*p* is not the case).
- ∴ X falsely tells Y that *p*.

Since telling as symbolized by the sign for the “propositional nexus” is an act of informing, we cannot express the act of “telling that *p*” where *p* is false through that same sign. That we cannot do so captures the insight that so long as one restricts oneself to the success sense of the verb, there is no such thing as “falsely telling.” However, there obviously is something to mean by that combination of words—as is shown by the syllogism above. Moreover, that use of the verb “to tell” is hardly unrelated. Otherwise, *falsely telling* could not be characterized as a defective case of telling. Without securing the validity of the inference pattern, it is impossible to capture the idea that successful and defective acts of telling are exercises of one and the same power.

One might conclude that securing the validity of the syllogism is essential, and that securing it requires giving up on the idea of the logical asymmetry that was said to set apart the paradigm case. This would mean analyzing *successful telling* as consisting of a highest common factor shared with the unsuccessful case and some additional element. Then, however, it would become mysterious how telling someone something can ever amount to an act of informing them about what is the case. In other words: successful and unsuccessful acts of telling would become intelligible as exercises of one and the same capacity; but that capacity could *not* be conceived as the power to *impart knowledge*. That is exactly how things appear in McDowell’s account of acquiring knowledge by being told.⁹¹ Since McDowell presents “telling” as a monadic act of making something public, securing the validity of the above syllogism presents no problem. By the same token, however, the act of the “informer” ends up always falling short of the audience’s coming to know. For, if your “telling” me that *p* is to qualify as an act of informing me, then your *telling* me that *p* must coincide with my coming to *know* that *p*.

of some degree of privation but as such issues in neither knowledge nor error.

91. Indeed, this is a problem that besets McDowell’s disjunctivism generally. It is equally present in his account of *perception* as a capacity for knowledge. Just as on McDowell’s account of testimony your “telling” me *p* puts me at best only *in a position* to know—still requiring a separate act of *uptake* on my part for knowledge to be transmitted—so too, on his account of perception my “seeing” that *p* requires a separate act of *judgment* on my part for me to know that *p*. So even perception, on such an account, is not as such a power of knowledge. For further discussion, see Conant, “Resolute Disjunctivism,” *op. cit.*, 124–148.

A proper “disjunctivist” treatment of *knowing by being told* would thus have to meet the following two conditions of adequacy. First, the account needs to make space for the idea of telling as a *single* act of mind for *two* subjects where one informs and the other thereby comes to know. Second, the account needs to secure the validity of the above syllogism by explaining how defective acts of telling are related by privation to the logically primary dyadic nexus of *informing*. To satisfy these requirements, the verb “to tell” must be conceived as an analogical term: it is defined through the paradigmatic use in the sense of “informing” while the other uses are understood in terms of privation. In the case of “falsely telling,” that is exactly what ordinary language suggests. The concept of telling contains the idea of the power to impart knowledge. So, in its successful exercise, telling someone that *p* is an act of *informing* in which they thereby come to know that *p*. Yet, if *p* is false, then telling someone that *p* is an act of *misinforming*.

An analogous point holds where the knowledge transmitted by telling concerns not the stones on the ground or the stars in the sky, but rather my own mind (to begin with, my intention for the speech act to be an act of telling—or, more generally, my thoughts and feelings that I might express to you by way of a speech act). A proper “disjunctivist” treatment of this dimension of telling would have to meet two conditions of adequacy. First, the account needs to define the concept by reference to the paradigmatic case where the telling is a *single* act of mind for *two* subjects who thereby stand in a relation of mutual recognition. Second, the account needs to show how successful and defective cases of someone’s *speaking to* someone are internally related through a single concept of communication. Once again, it looks as if the notation offered by Thompson and the treatment McDowell proposes each fail to meet one of the two requirements.⁹²

Given the parallel with Frege’s *Begriffsschrift*, Thompson’s notation for what he calls a “propositional nexus” encodes the mutual recognition that two interlocutors enjoy in virtue of standing within the “I”-“You” nexus expressing the *dyadic* logical act. This threatens to imply that any case where the relation between the two subjects falls short of such full mutual knowledge—i.e., any case in which some form of logical distance opens up between them—must be represented in the notation by a sign that plays an utterly

92. McDowell’s account meets the second requirement because it treats the defective exercise of the capacity as standing to its successful exercise disjunctively. We properly comprehend how what is said in the first line of the syllogism of telling and being and what is concluded in its last line—how “I tell you *p*” and “*p* is not the case”—can *both be true* because the kind of “telling” at issue throughout is a defective exercise of the capacity. That is to say, the form of analysis that allows McDowell to capture the inferential links here turns on a rejection of a highest common factor assumption.

different role. In consequence, it looks as if Thompson's notation is unable to display the validity of inferences between a statement containing a *dyadic* cognitive verb expressive of full mutual recognition and statements describing some degree of privation in the cognitive relation between the parties. For instance, if Barack "tells" Michelle that *p*, but she fails either to hear or believe him, then Thompson's notation seems to leave us no option but to represent the logical form of Barack's act of "telling" as *monadic* rather than *dyadic*. In consequence, it would be unclear how we are to characterize such a case as falling short of a standard internal to the very concept through which the scene is adequately described.

As we have seen, McDowell's treatment of communication runs into the reverse difficulty. Since he treats the act of the speaker always as a *monadic* act of putting something in the public domain, he *can* account for the logical links between descriptions of successful and descriptions of defective acts of telling. By the same token, however, it becomes impossible for him to conceive of successful telling as itself constituting an act of *making one's mind known*. This has the further consequence that McDowell ends up systematically assimilating paradigmatic cases of acquiring knowledge by being told with other sorts of derivative exercise of that same capacity. Take the cases just considered where Michelle did not hear or did not believe what Barack told her. Now, imagine that she later registers what he said—or later realizes that she had no reason not to believe Barack—and so thereby comes to know it. In McDowell's classification these will have to be treated as perfectly good cases in which Michelle acquires knowledge by being told. After all, the capacity for communication is exercised by Barack and it eventually leads to Michelle coming to know.

Yet, if one has even the least sympathy with the idea that primary and secondary cases are to be distinguished here, then this result ought to strike one as strange. For, intuitively, these, too, are derivative cases, precisely because Michelle had to perform a *further act* of reflection to arrive at the relevant bit of knowledge.⁹³ Explaining why these are derivative cases requires

93. The transmission of knowledge from Barack to Michelle in such a case still counts as a fully successful exercise of the capacity for "telling" on McDowell's account. On the form of disjunctivist account proposed below, it is to be classified as an *attenuated* exercise of the capacity. Note that this case involves the same form of exercise of the capacity as in the following scenario:

Barack "tells" Michelle *p*, thereby, indeed, "telling" her the truth, but she fails to take advantage of the opportunity for knowledge with which he affords her; since she remains unsure as to whether *p* is true, neither knowledge nor error is instilled.

On the account proposed below, this, too, is equally to be classified as a case of an attenuated exercise of the capacity. (On McDowell's scheme, it simply eludes classification since it eventu-

Thompson's insight into the asymmetry of the logically fundamental case of the "I"–"You" nexus. If one wants to account at the same time for the inference patterns that Thompson's notation threatens to sever, then one must treat "telling" as an analogical concept that yields a complex hierarchy of derivative cases. Not only the logically *defective* cases where the hearer is being *misinformed* are to be treated as involving privation, but so too the logically *attenuated* cases where the hearer does end up coming to know but only thanks to the mediation of an additional act on their part—one that is *monadic* rather than *dyadic*.

A fully articulated account of the analogical hierarchy of ways of "telling" would provide a solution not only to the third inconsistent triad we stated in §4 concerning McDowell's account of communication; it would also furnish the requisite resources for resolving the other two inconsistent triads—the one stated in §3 concerning differences in forms of expression and the one stated in §2 concerning differences in ways of knowing another mind.⁹⁴ Here, we must restrict ourselves to sketching the bare outline of such an account.

The difficulty underlying the tension articulated in §3 was to understand the unity of the different forms of expression. We would like to suggest that a proper way to treat this matter has to meet, once again, two conditions of adequacy. First, the very idea of human expression is to be understood by reference to the logically prior case where one makes one's mind known to another in a single act of mind for two. Second, the varieties of expression (canvassed in §3) are to be shown as belonging to a single concept of human expression; yet they relate to one another not as species to genus but rather as *non-privative* to *privative* cases. Once one appreciates that the very idea of human expression is to be understood through the form it takes in the case of successful communication, it becomes difficult to avoid the conclusion

ates in neither error nor knowledge.) The case involving Michelle and Barack in which knowledge is (eventually) transmitted presupposes this case and supplements it with the provision of a further act of reflection on Michelle's part, in which she overcomes the doubts she had in the scenario envisioned above. These two scenarios—the inconclusive and the supplemented one—involve the same act of "telling" as a highest common factor. So, whereas McDowell's account explicates the inferential links between successful and defective exercises of the capacity by *rejecting* a highest common factor assumption, here, it can explicate the inferential links involving attenuated exercises of that same capacity only by *affirming* a highest common factor assumption. It is the disconnect between these two different ways of accounting for logical continuities across the distinct types of derivative cases that yields the three inconsistent triads we uncovered above.

94. That the same set of resources suffices for resolving all three triads should be unsurprising in light of what we noted in the previous footnote: namely, that McDowell explicates the logical links between non-defective and defective cases, on the one hand, and between logically primary and merely attenuated cases, on the other, in a manner that, in effect, ensures a collision between the conjunctivist and disjunctivist strands in his philosophy.

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that the same holds for the corresponding ways of knowing other minds. The relation between non-privative and privative cases of the act is not one that holds merely between successful and defective cases of telling or address: a parallel structure is in play across *the full range* of kinds of expressive behavior a human being may exhibit. The paradigmatic case through which we are to understand the very idea of knowing another mind is the case of being known to each other in a *single act for two subjects*. At the same time, the various ways of *perceiving* another's expression of their mind (canvassed in §2) are to be shown as relating to one another through a single concept of *knowing another mind*.

To make sense of this latter claim requires getting properly into view the relation of the paradigmatic case of knowing another mind to the further range of cases previously distinguished. In §3, we distinguished three dimensions along which privation could thus be introduced: in the degree of *self-consciousness* of the expression, in the degree to which it is *directed* at another, and in the degree to which it is mediated through the use of *words or signs*. If we regard all such cases as constituting species of equal standing within the genus of knowing other minds, then we saddle ourselves with the assumption that even the best case of such knowledge must be conceived as a case where the activity consists of a combination of unilateral acts of the parties involved.

Yet just as the notion of human expression points to communication, so too does non-communicative knowledge of other minds. The parallel McDowell draws between skepticism about other minds and skepticism about the external world tacitly suppresses a feature of the former scenario standardly invoked to raise doubt about the possibility of knowing the mind of another—namely: the case of someone's *pretending* to be in pain.⁹⁵ Yet on reflection, *deceptive* behavior is a *self-conscious* expression *directed* at another: it is an act in which the subject strives to render herself apprehended by another in a very particular manner. The deceiver is thus epistemically *active* with respect *to* the deceived.⁹⁶ Against this background, the following cases turn out to be in a certain respect on a par: (a) the case of deceptive behavior which is often taken as threatening the possibility of knowledge of other minds; and (b) the sort of case which McDowell singles out as a perfectly

95. The parallel rests on the following observation: "In the traditional approach to the epistemology of other minds, the concept of pretence plays a role analogous to the role of the concept of illusion in the traditional approach to the epistemology of the "external" world" (CDK, 380).

96. Hence the role played by pretence in the skeptical scenario about other minds is not analogous in the following respect: when I perceptually mistake the reflection of the sun against a light patch of sand for an oasis in the desert, it is not because the object of my perception has actively undertaken to deceive me.

fine candidate for illuminating what constitutes a best case of knowledge of another mind—namely: the case in which the other's expression of, say, pain is unwilfully exuded by the other and not addressed to anyone in particular. There are, of course, significant respects in which (a) and (b) are not on a par. The former is a *logically defective* case of the epistemic relation to the other, if the envisioned form of expression gives rise to *error* on the part of an unsuspecting addressee at whom it is directed. The latter is a *logically attenuated* case of knowledge of the other.⁹⁷ In what respect then are they on a par? Both are *logically derivative* cases in relation to the logically fundamental case of the epistemological relation of two subjects to one another.⁹⁸ In ordinary language both can be described in terms containing the concept of telling in its extension to the non-linguistic domain. The former can be characterized as an *intentional act of misinforming*. The latter can be described as an "*unintentional tell*."⁹⁹ The logically prior case of knowing another is the case in which we are *known to each other in mutual address*.

Might an analogous point hold for a proper treatment of *self-knowledge*? This would mean not only that the logically prior case of expression is that of *addressing* someone, but also that the logically prior case of knowing oneself is the one in which one makes one's mind *known to another*.¹⁰⁰ A claim along

97. For further discussion of this distinction and how it puts pressure on McDowell's understanding of how one ought to distinguish "the good case" from "the bad case" along disjunctivist lines, see Conant, "Resolute Disjunctivism," op. cit.

98. By thus treating attenuated and defective cases as on a logical par—i.e., as both logically derivative in relation to the fundamental case—it becomes possible to attain something that, as our footnotes above indicated, eludes McDowell's form of disjunctivist account: namely, an internally consistent overview of the logical links across the diversity of uses that characterize the field of employment of verbs of mutual cognition.

99. Employments of the verb "to tell" admit of the same degrees of logical privation as the verb "to express"—logically derivative acts of telling, too, can be unwilfully and hence non-addressively exuded by the one who divulges knowledge. Moreover, both verbs admit of the same further degrees of privation. The exercise of the capacity can not only be not wilful and not directed, but also *not even self-conscious*—as, for example, with a poker "tell": the case of a behavioral pattern that reveals behind a player's own back, as it were, whether she has a strong or weak hand. Note: the concept of such a "tell" involves the retention of the following logical feature of the *success* sense of the verb: Something counts as a "tell" in this sense only if it really does *tell* whether the player has a good or a bad hand. The retention of this feature notwithstanding, mastery of the verb's employment in such a context requires appreciation of the extreme degree of logical privation introduced into its sense. Neither the logically defective nor the poker "tell" sense of the verb admit of a first person present indicative employment, but for opposite reasons: in the one case, because the "knowledge" to be communicated is self-consciously revealed by the speaker to be false; in the other, because the knowledge that is in fact communicated is *unself-consciously* revealed to be true.

100. This is a central theme of Wittgenstein's reflections on privacy in *Philosophical Investigations*, op. cit., §§244–308.

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these lines is, arguably, what is required to make good on McDowell's tantalizing interdependence claim—the claim that knowledge of things in the external world, knowledge of one's own mind, and knowledge of the minds of others are “mutually irreducible” yet “mutually interdependent.”¹⁰¹ That is to say, a properly unified treatment of the full scope of the topic of knowledge of other minds—where this encompasses *knowledge of another* along with *knowledge through another*—is a condition of the possibility of an adequate treatment of how either self-knowledge or knowledge of the world is possible.

Within the body of this paper, we have argued that the meeting of minds in the exchange of words is essential to the very idea of being known to each other. We then went on to suggest that the capacity for communication is internal to the very idea of knowledge of other minds. We have just concluded with the thought that further reflection might show that the same goes for knowing one's own mind. Showing this would establish the truth of the formula with which we began: knowing *someone* is not like knowing Paris or, for that matter, the back of one's hand, for the paradigmatic case of knowing *someone* is being known to each other in mutual address.

101. SIO, 152.