

*Reflections on François Recanati's
Immunity to error through misidentification:
what it is and where it comes from'*

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I THE BASIC CASE

Singular judgments – thoughts of the form: *a is F* – involve the exercise both of a *subject concept*: the concept, *a*, of the object which the judgment concerns, and a *predicate concept* associated with the characterization, *F*. As a species, therefore, one would expect them to be associated with two broad possible kinds of mistakes, respectively associated with misapplication of the subject concept and with misapplication of the predicate concept. Mistakes of the former kind do not, however, invariably amount to errors meriting the term “misidentification.” One type of subject-concept mistake is when one successfully directs one’s thought upon a certain object and correctly thinks *of that object* that it is *F* but mistakenly brings it under the concept *a* in thinking that thought. Such a case is the analogue in thought of the linguistic case where a speaker’s intended reference fails to coincide with the actual semantic reference of the term he uses, or where there is no such actual semantic referent, but where he nevertheless affirms something true of the object he *intends* to be speaking about. But another kind of case – our primary interest here – is where the intended object of the thought is indeed the object, *a*, conceived as such, but where the thinker judges falsely in thinking that *a is F* because he mistakes *a* for a different object that he truly thinks is *F*. It is the latter kind of case that constitutes what I suggest we regard as the *Basic Case* of error through misidentification.

I have had it in mind to write a full-length discussion of this topic for a long time (it was planned for inclusion in *Rails to Infinity*, but I never got around to it) and am grateful to the editors for giving me the opportunity, and to François Recanati for allowing me to focus it on his own thought-provoking and original treatment of the issues. The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Community’s Seventh Framework Programme FP7/2007–2013 under grant agreement no. FP7-238128. I’d like also to acknowledge old debts to two of my former graduate students, Andy Hamilton and Annalisa Coliva, who wrote their Ph.D.s on IEM under my supervision, a process from which I learned at least as much (if not more) than, I hope, they did.

To illustrate. We are strolling in Washington Square Park and I see a very tall, elderly woman in the distance wearing a huge, cardinal red, wide-brimmed hat. I mutter, “God, she is wearing an extraordinary hat.” You ask, “Who?”, and I reply, “The woman over there, walking a greyhound” – ignorant that the dog concerned is actually a Weimaraner. Here it is natural to say that the only judgment I have actually *made* is true (granting that the hat really is extraordinary) but that I have represented it infelicitously. We may term such a judgment an *error of misrepresentation* of its subject. But for an example of the Basic Case of error through misidentification, suppose that in response to your question I reply instead, “My Aunt Lillian,” having wrongly taken the woman I see in the distance to be her.¹ In both cases, there is a sense in which I misidentify the object of my original thought in the report that I give you. But in the second case, “My Aunt Lillian” correctly identifies the object of the thought I *intend* to convey to you, and my thought, about her, is false because I have mistaken the dog-walker for her. In the first kind of case, by contrast, “The woman over there, walking a greyhound” merely misrepresents the object – *She* or *That woman* – of my true thought.

The difference, in sum, is that between misrepresenting the object of a *true de re* thought in the way one articulates the thought, to oneself or others, and thinking a *false de re* thought as a result of mistaking its object for someone/something else.

The datum that has attracted all the fuss is provided by the wide class of judgments by selves about themselves – *I-thoughts* – which present as immune to this kind of error through misidentification (IEM). There seems to be no sense to be made of the notion that, for example, the thought that I have a headache, affirmed by myself in normal circumstances, could be mistaken as the result of my misidentifying the sufferer; or that the judgment that I am concussed, made in normal circumstances on the basis of a bump on the head and a sense of dizziness, could be mistaken as the result of a misidentification of who it is that is concussed. In the latter case, to be sure, but not (or not so straightforwardly) in the former, there can still be a mistake – a diagnostic mistake. But in neither case, at least *prima facie*, does it seem intelligible that a mistake could occur comparable to what happens in the example of Aunt Lillian.

¹ Misidentification of distant hatted aunts is a popular illustration among writers on this topic. Cf. Coliva 2006.

2 TWO REMINDERS, AND THE SELF-KNOWLEDGE
HYPOTHESIS

The first reminder is that IEM is not a universal feature of I-thought. There are evidential circumstances in which particular thoughts about oneself are not immune to error through misidentification. Seeing a reflection in a shop window, I mistakenly judge, “Gosh, I look shabby,” not realizing that the person whose reflection I am seeing, and whom I rightly judge thereby to look shabby, is not myself.²

The second reminder is that it is incorrect to suppose that IEM I-thoughts are restricted to the psychological – to what can be conveyed by an *avowal*, in Rylean terminology: a self-ascription of mental states and goings-on. The range of cases is wider. One can perhaps, at a stretch, extend the notion of the psychological to include the situation of the IEM report, “I can see a jay on the crab-apple tree,” offered in response to the question, “What birds are visible in the orchard?” – hardly a psychological question. But as the example of concussion suggests, IEM I-thoughts embrace also certain kinds of self-ascription of bodily states: think, for another example, of “My hair is blowing in the wind,”³ affirmed blindfolded on the basis of sound and sensation on the ears, face and scalp, and “My arm is raised,” affirmed on the basis of kinaesthesia. There seems no room in such cases for the idea that I might be wrong about such a judgment because, although I correctly judge, of someone else, that his hair is blowing in the wind, or his arm is raised, I then mistake him for myself and so misappropriate those properties in false I-thoughts.

² Might one correspondingly construct plausible cases of I-thought *error through misrepresentation*? It seems not. An analogue of the dog-walker case would involve my affirming a thought that is, so to say, primarily directed upon the person answering to a certain mode of presentation, [*a*], in the way in which the extraordinary hat thought is, in the first case, primarily directed upon *that woman* – so that my thinking [*I am F*] merely infelicitously articulates the thought that is my real focus, [*a is F*], in the way in which my use of “The woman over there, walking a greyhound” infelicitously specifies the object of the extraordinary hat thought. But, as remarked above, error through misrepresentation turns on something like the distinction between speaker’s and semantic reference. The speaker/thinker has to be mistaken about the referent of the secondary mode of presentation employed in the mis-articulation. And it is doubtful that there is any scope for a distinction between speakers’ – or thinkers’ – reference and semantic reference when it comes to tokens of “I.” Rather, in any comprehending use of “I,” it seems that the intended referent will be exactly what one actually refers to, and indeed that it is part of an understanding of the first person to know this. Cf. Coliva 2003.

³ Wittgenstein (1933–5/1988:66–7) famously distinguished between uses of “I” (or “my”) “as subject” and “as object” and proceeded to elaborate in ways that suggest that the distinction he had in mind is that between IEM and non-IEM I-thoughts. But, interestingly, he cites “The wind blows my hair about” as an example of the latter.

The nature of the evidence I have is that it is evidence that *my* hair is blowing in the wind, etc., or it is not evidence of anything.

The issues around the second reminder go to the heart of the matter. Let the *Self-knowledge Hypothesis* be the idea, vague as it may be, that the IEM of I-thought is an epiphenomenon of some aspect of the special nature of psychological self-knowledge, and needs to be explained under that aegis. Gareth Evans took examples like the above straightforwardly to refute the Self-knowledge Hypothesis, and thereby to provide “the most powerful antidote to a Cartesian conception of the self.”⁴ But there is a line of thought that may be taken to suggest that the matter is not so straightforward. It may be observed that, in the kinds of case noted, there is still a *psychological basis* for the IEM claim: it *feels to me* as if my hair is blowing in the wind, it *feels to me* as if my arm is raised. The explicit self-attribution of these underlying experiences is IEM. And it may be suggested that the roots of the phenomenon of IEM I-thought, even in cases where the subject matter is not psychological, still always reside in the relationship of the subject to his own psychological states: the IEM of these objective judgments about my bodily condition should be understood as an *inheritance* from that of the underlying I-thoughts, whether or not articulated, that specify the evidence for them.

Now, as Recanati notes, there certainly is a phenomenon of IEM-inheritance across inference; we will touch on it in [Section 5](#) below. It is displayed, for example, when I infer from an IEM judgment that *I am F* to another judgment about myself, that *I am G*, solely via lemmas which have to do generally with the relationship between the properties *F* and *G*. But *this* phenomenon is not straightforwardly applicable to the proposed line of resistance against Evans’s point. Indeed, unless more is said, that line of resistance may seem to betray confusion. For, in the mooted kind of explicit articulations of the psychological grounds for non-psychological IEM claims about oneself, there are *two* occurrences of the first-person concept: the template, roughly, is that of an ampliative inference from something of the form:

My experience is as if *I am F*,

to the conclusion that

I am F.

And of course it is the IEM of the latter, the embedded claim, that, for suitably selected non-psychological *F*, poses the challenge to the

⁴ Evans 1982: 220.

Psychological Hypothesis. Whereas it is the occurrence of the first-person concept in the wide-scoped “*My experience*” that is comfortable for someone defending the claim that IEM is an epiphenomenon of psychological self-knowledge. Why should the IEM of the latter have any tendency to rub off on the former? Suppose, again blindfolded and groping about, I report that:

My experience is as if *your arm is raised*

When the blindfold is off, I may be surprised to find that the raised arm I am clutching is that of a stranger, and that you are standing by, smiling, with your arms by your sides! In general, the truth of the first-personal IEM judgment

My experience is as if *a is F*

for some or other given object of my thought, *a*, will have no tendency to ensure that my judgment, *a is F*, when affirmed on that basis, is IEM. Why should it make any difference when the embedded singular concept is *I*?

There is, though, a correct thought in the neighbourhood of the inferential-inheritance defence of the Psychological Hypothesis. That is the thought not that the IEM of certain bodily self-ascriptions is an inferential inheritance from the IEM of a statement of their psychological grounds, but that it is a by-product of the way those grounds *actually work*. My grounds while blindfolded – psychological though they indeed are – for thinking that *your* arm is raised work by being evidence that someone’s arm is raised, whom I then have some collateral, and as it turned out, mistaken reason to identify with you. But my kinaesthetic, or proprioceptive, grounds for thinking that *my* arm is raised do not work that way. The way they work to support the claim about my arm, though defeasible, leaves no space for the intrusion of a misidentification. How they do work is one of the things we need to understand. But the reader will have to press on to uncover my reasons for saying that this, as far as it goes, perfectly sound point has no tendency to support the Psychological Hypothesis.⁵

⁵ The foregoing paragraphs are not quite the flat contradiction they may seem to be of views about IEM and the Psychological Hypothesis that I expressed in the first of my Whitehead lectures. (See Wright 2001: 325–9.) I do there side with the Psychological Hypothesis, on the basis of an argument about inheritance. But the reader will best interpret the ‘inheritance’ point made there in terms of the immediately preceding paragraph of the present essay. In the Whiteheads, I don’t think I grasped its distinction from the confused idea of inferential inheritance that here, I trust, I have clearly distinguished it from.

All that said, there is no doubt that, historically, it is because the phenomenon of *IEM* has been viewed through the lens of the Psychological Hypothesis – as an I-thought phenomenon somehow deriving from the nature of psychological self-knowledge – that it has provoked the extreme metaphysical and semantic (over-)reactions which have characterized the philosophical discussion. Perhaps most extreme is the notion that first-person *IEM* is sustained by, as it were, the unmistakability – the transparency – of the self to itself: that the thinking ego has an ultra-reliable capacity of self-recognition, which is manifest in *IEM* judgment about itself. On this account, the source of immunity to error through misidentification, in the relevant class of I-thoughts, is that while such judgments do indeed rest on an identification of their subject, the specific cognitive capacities involved in that are proof against breakdown. (Someone who thinks this will, of course, need to say something to explain cases like that of the shop window.)

A polar recoil from this Cartesian conception is illustrated by the tendency of Wittgenstein in the *Blue Book*, and yet more clearly by Elizabeth Anscombe,⁶ to propose that “I” as it features in the expression of *IEM* I-thoughts, is *not a device of reference at all*. On this view, first-personal thoughts that are immune to error through misidentification are so simply because they involve reference to no subject, so no identification of one. To think otherwise is to make a mistake comparable to one who, misled by the grammatical subject–predicate form of simple weather reports like, “It is raining,” “It is sunny,” etc., wonders about the referent of such uses of “It.” On this account, *IEM* I-judgment is, in Strawsonian terms,⁷ properly viewed as a kind of *feature-placing* judgment, so not genuine singular thought at all.

I won’t here elaborate on the costs and difficulties of these extreme reactions.⁸ We may take it that they are both completely misguided. But in order to be clear why, and to do better, we do indeed need the explanation called for by François Recanati’s title. However, I am skeptical both about some of the detail and about the generality of Recanati’s proposed explanation, and indeed about whether it is appropriate to expect any single general template, of the kind he ventures, for the generation of *IEM* judgment at all.

⁶ Anscombe 1975. The idea is perhaps ultimately traceable to the famous criticism of the *Cogito* by Lichtenberg.

⁷ Strawson 1959: ch. 7.

⁸ There is an excellent and very entertaining early discussion of them in Hamilton 1987.

3 THE SIMPLE ACCOUNT

Let us look more carefully at the Basic Case of error through misidentification, as typified by the Aunt Lillian example. In the case as illustrated, the thinker makes an *inferential* singular judgment, [*a is F*], on the basis of a *parent* singular judgment, [*b is F*], and an identification, [*a is b*]. Analogous cases involving a more complex inferential structure are possible, of course. The thinker might, for example, judge that [*b is G*] and, since he holds that [*everything G is F*], again proceed via the judgment that [*a is b*] to judge that [*a is F*]. In that case, the parent singular judgment would be that [*b is G*]. However, I will classify all such cases within the scope of the Basic Case, whose crucial feature is that the original judgment, [*a is F*], is arrived at on the basis of a complex of judgments which somehow configure a singular mode of presentation, [*b*], distinct from [*a*], a parent singular judgment that *b* has some particular property, and an inferential move from that and the subject's judgment that [*a is b*], together perhaps with other relevant premises, to the output judgment that [*a is F*]. Error through misidentification affects the latter when the judgement, [*a is b*], is mistaken and when – to distinguish the case from error through misrepresentation – it is the object *a* that is the intended object of the resultant thought.

Now, a judgment could have this kind of structure of grounds and still in principle be immune to error through misidentification if the relevant judgement, [*a is b*], were somehow proof against mistake. The Cartesian notion of an 'infallible capacity of self-recognition' is presumably a confused gesture in that direction. But it is indeed egregiously confused, for the relevant kind of infallibility would have to pertain to the bringing together of *two* singular modes of presentation, whereas the fact is that there is in general no mode of presentation of myself other than [*I*] or [*myself*] and their kin, featuring in the justificational architecture of the I-thoughts that concern us. Those of my I-thoughts that are immune to error through misidentification are so not because they involve super-sure identification of myself, conceived on the model of knowledge of an identity, [*I am a*], but because no such judgment – and no other germane singular mode of presentation, [*a*] – features in their justificational architecture.

Does that mean that Wittgenstein and Anscombe were right? Well certainly, another way for a *prima facie* singular thought to be immune to error through misidentification, conceived on the model of what happens in the Basic Case, would be if there were in fact *no* singular mode of

presentation featuring in the justificational architecture of the thought. That – and indeed more: that there is no genuine singular mode of presentation featuring in *the thought itself* – is the Wittgenstein–Anscombe diagnosis. It is also, with a significant qualification that we will come to, close to the proposal of Recanati. But that there is absolutely no need for this proposal should be evident. There is a much less radical and obvious explanation of how a genuine singular judgment, [*a is F*], can enjoy immunity to error through misidentification of the Basic Case variety. It will do so if its grounds do not include any *identification* – if no *other* singular mode of presentation, [*b*], that it is presumed to single out the object, *a*, features in its justificational architecture. And one circumstance that ensures that, one might suggest, is simply if the judgment concerned is non-inferential!

I take what is in effect this last, very simple diagnosis to have been mooted by Gareth Evans in *The Varieties of Reference* (1982).⁹ On this model, immunity to error through misidentification is simply a feature of all *basic* singular-thought – singular thought that is grounded non-inferentially in observation or other forms of experience. If this is on the right lines, nothing distinctive is implied about self-knowledge, or self-awareness, by the fact that the phenomenon embraces certain kinds of I-thought. Indeed, once alerted to this model, it rapidly becomes apparent how wide the relevant class of basic singular judgments is. Basic demonstrative judgments will be IEM.¹⁰ So will wide ranges of second- and third-person judgments. “You are standing very close,” based on observation, will be IEM. “He is a long way off,” based on observation, will be IEM. Judgments of the form “So-and-so is happening here,” based on observation, will typically be immune to error through misidentification *of place*. Immunity to error through misidentification *of time* will hold for the general run of judgments about what is happening now.

Nor, it seems, do matters stop with basic singular judgments grounded in observation and experience. Suppose I run through some process of calculation and conclude that a particular number, *n*, has *x*, *y*, and *z* as

⁹ The reader may want to browse the surroundings of the following passage from p. 218: “The word ‘identify’ can do us a disservice here. In one sense, anyone who thinks about an object identifies that object (in thought): this is the sense involved in the use I have just made of the phrase ‘demonstrative identification’. It is quite another matter, as we saw, in effect, in 6.6, for the thought to involve an identification component – for the thought to be identification-dependent. There is a danger of moving from the fact that there is no identification in the latter sense (that no criteria of recognition are brought to bear, and so forth) to the conclusion that there is no identification in the former sense. I am not sure Wittgenstein altogether avoids this danger.”

¹⁰ Cf. Wright 2001: 327.

prime factors. The grounds supplied, *prima facie*, for that claim by the calculation need deploy no mode of presentation, $[m]$, such that I take it that $[m = n]$, and conclude that n has x , y , and z as prime factors, by calculating in the first instance that m does. If, as may easily be so, n is specified throughout the calculation only by the single mode of presentation, $[n]$, and my eventual judgment is wrong, it will be miscalculation, not misidentification, that is the root of the error.

Let us call this the *Simple Account* of IEM. According to this account, IEM is a phenomenon of singular judgment in which no significant identification, associating one singular mode of presentation with another, features as part of the grounds. It is thus, in particular, a feature of basic singular thought. Clearly there has to be such a phenomenon, since singular thoughts cannot in general rest on other singular thoughts. Moreover, a proponent of the Simple Account may continue, there is absolutely nothing here that is peculiar to the first person. IEM I-thoughts are simply one kind of basic singular thought – basic singular thoughts which concern oneself. Non-IEM I-thoughts, like the shop window example, are not basic, that's all. And the general run of IEM thoughts can be about anything at all about which non-inferential singular judgment is possible.

The Simple Account liberates us from any need for metaphysical or semantic extravagance in trying to account for the phenomenon. It is a pleasingly deflationary account. It has nothing special to do with self-knowledge or “privileged access.” The question is whether we need to say anything further.

My thesis is that we do, on several counts. But only by way of clarification and qualification. The basics of the Simple Account are correct.

4 WHICH-MISIDENTIFICATION

One clarification is occasioned if we recognize a second model of error through misidentification (though it is not, I think, entirely happily described as error *through* misidentification). This is the case where a thinker goes into a situation equipped with grounds for a *unique existential* claim – a claim that there is exactly one object meeting a certain condition – and then, on receipt of additional (mis)information of a certain kind, proceeds to misidentify a particular object as the witness of that claim. James Pryor has called this phenomenon *Which-misidentification*.¹¹

¹¹ Pryor 1999.

He gives an example where, assaulted by the unmistakable odour, I come to believe there is a skunk in my garden (I take there to be probably only one of them), and then, not knowing much about the appearance of skunks, misidentify what is in fact a groundhog as the smelly beast in question. Another case: I am lost in sandy desert and, attempting to walk out, come across footprints which I misidentify as my own, concluding somewhat desperately, “I am going round in circles.” Here the footprints give me reason to think that someone (maybe with feet about my size) has passed this way already; and I then misidentify – mistake myself for – the witness of that true existential claim.

This kind of example is the subject of a further distinction by Recanati, which is of some importance in the revision he now proposes of the account of IEM that he gave in *Perspectival Thought*. I’ll come back to this.¹² The reason that the terminology of “error through misidentification” is infelicitous in such a case is simply that the error consists *in* a misidentification, rather than being caused by one. But there is a point of overall analogy with the Basic Case which is worth remarking. In the Basic Case, when a singular judgment involves error through misidentification as a result of the presence, in its justificational architecture, of a false judgment of the form $[a = b]$, defeating evidence to that effect will leave intact sufficient grounds for the fall-back existential claim, “Well, something is F.” That is because the so-far undefeated *parent* singular judgment, $[b \text{ is } F]$, remains sufficient for that existential claim.¹³ In which-cases, the thinker starts out with grounds for a unique existential judgment; if he then mistakes something as a witness for that judgment, he will in general still retain whatever grounds he had for the unique existential. So a shared facet of both Basic Case misidentification and

¹² Recanati wants to distinguish between cases where the background existential claim is grounded in a purely general way – as when (his example) I believe just on general grounds that someone is going to win the lottery, and then erroneously take the winner to be you – and cases, like the skunk example, where the “grounds for making the judgment are undoubtedly singular: there is an x (namely the skunk . . . whose odour the subject smells) such that [the subject] has grounds for holding that x is a skunk in [the subject’s] garden” (this volume, p. 182). Recanati holds that, for this reason, the skunk example is actually not an example of which-misidentification in the sense that Pryor intends, since the subject’s error involves taking the groundhog for *the unique object such that I have grounds for believing that it is a skunk in my garden*. I find the line of thought here difficult to follow. On the face of it, it slides from the singularity of the *source* of the grounds for belief in the existential to the idea that the above italicized singular mode of presentation is somehow in play in the justificational architecture of my mistaken judgment that the groundhog is the skunk in my garden. I’ll come back to this.

¹³ I ignore, for ease of exposition, the point noted earlier that the parent singular judgment need not take that form.

Which-misidentification is that defeat of the singular judgment concerned will in general leave intact the subject's warrant for a corresponding existential generalization of the defeated judgment. In that respect, Which-misidentification stands comparison to the Basic Case.¹⁴

As Recanati notes, Annalisa Coliva has argued that Pryor's which-misidentification is not an independent phenomenon; that the examples that seem to suggest a new "variety" of IEM here can be readily subsumed under the Basic Case, but with the proviso that the singular modes of presentation that will feature in their justificational architecture will not in general be *de re*. For example, we may recover the justificational architecture of Pryor's skunk example under the template characteristic of the Basic Case by reorganizing it as:

- (1) The animal (in my garden) which is actually responsible for this odour I can smell is a skunk (*b is F*)
- (2) This animal (I can now see) = the animal (in my garden) which is actually responsible for this odour I can smell (*a is b*)

So:

- (3) This animal (I can now see) is a skunk (*a is F*)¹⁵

The error involved in (3) results from the mistaken identification (2). The difference from, e.g., the Aunt Lillian example is merely that the mode of presentation, *the animal (in my garden) which is actually responsible for this odour I can smell*, though singular, is not *de re* – is not such that my grasp of it is mediated by some kind of identifying knowledge of the object it presents.

If this were right, there would be no need here for a separate discussion of Which-misidentification. But it is not right. Suspicions are roused when we try to repeat the trick for the sandy desert example. What should we choose for *a*, *b*, and *F*? Well, since the conclusion is that *I have passed this way already*, we should take *a* as *I* and *F* as: *has passed this way already*. But then what is *b*? And what is the parent singular judgment from which, misidentifying myself as *b*, I falsely conclude that I have passed this way already? It can only be something like: *the person who caused these footprints in the sand*. But then, *b is F* becomes *the person who caused these footprints in the sand passed this way already*; so the superimposition of the

¹⁴ This – the survival of the corresponding existential generalization under defeat of the relevant singular judgment – was actually my characterization of IEM in the Whitehead lectures (chapters 10 and 11 of Wright 2001).

¹⁵ See Coliva 2006: 412.

Basic Case template results in a representation of the grounds of my mistaken conclusion that has it proceeding from a parent singular judgment that is, near enough, a tautology!

Coliva's implicit recipe for finding *b* is to compose a definite description on the model: the unique object that caused – or is perhaps in some other way suitably related to – the thinker's grounds, *G*, for taking it that something is *F* (that the relevant existential is true). The recipe may seem not to do too badly when there is a reasonable presumption that there is such a unique object and the grounds for thinking so are indirect, in the fashion in which the smell, *G*, provides indirect grounds for the presence of something *F* (a skunk). But the recipe will fail to provide any plausible kind of justificational architecture in two other kinds of case. The first is when *F* is, or approximates, the predicate: *the very cause of the grounds G*. The second, as Recanati observes (see note 11), is when the grounds are purely general, and the presumed actual witness of the existential stands in no sort of special productive relation to them. In the first kind of case, *b is F* will become something quasi-tautologous, on the model of: the *x* that is the source of traces which indicate that something is *F* is *F*! A further example of this is provided if we recast the skunk case as the transition from:

Something has made an awful smell in my garden (unique existential)

to, on seeing the groundhog:

This animal (I can now see) has made an awful smell in my garden (misidentification of witness)

Superimposing the Basic Case template, the best we can do is:

- (1) The thing that has made an awful smell in my garden, has made an awful smell in my garden (*b is F*)
- (2) This animal (I can now see) = the thing that has made an awful smell in my garden (*a is b*)

So:

- (3) This animal (I can now see) has made an awful smell in my garden (*a is F*)

As a recovery of a plausible justificational architecture of the misidentification, this is a non-runner.

In the second kind of case – for example Recanati's lottery case – where the grounds for the unique existential are purely general, Coliva's recipe won't apply at all. Suppose I know that, one way or another, someone this week has to win the roll-over jackpot. I consult a palmist, who

persuades me that something extraordinarily fortunate is going to happen to me this week, and jump to the conclusion that I am going to win the roll-over jackpot. Then *a* is *I* and *F* is will win the roll-over jackpot. But what is *b*?

Which-misidentification is a bona fide discrete phenomenon, and we have to give separate consideration to its bearing on I-thought. Now, once again, I-thoughts are not, as a class, immune to Which-misidentification. To illustrate, take a situation where, in a variation on John Perry's well-known example, I notice a trail of sugar running along the aisles in a supermarket and think, *Some numpty has been leaking sugar all round the supermarket*. Then, finding an empty sugar bag in my trolley with a hole at one corner, I embarrassedly conclude that *the numpty who has been leaking sugar all round the supermarket is me*. I can be wrong about that: It may be that the trolley I picked up was the one the "numpty" had used, leaving a holed but empty sugar bag inside, and that my own sugar purchase is perfectly intact. But what is notable is that all the stock kinds of examples of first-person judgments that are IEM are immune to Which-misidentification also. And the Simple Account can straightforwardly explain why. For – as we have in effect just confirmed in reviewing Coliva's attempted reduction of them – judgments that are liable to Which-misidentification also have a distinctive inferential architecture, consisting of an interaction between the unique existential and whatever putatively supports the identification of its witness. And this architecture too is at variance with the kind of warrant that, on the Simple Account, sustains IEM. Specifically, when a singular thought is warranted as per the Simple Account, there will not be the distinction in one's relevant information between that component which justifies the associated existential claim and that component which, presumptively, justifies the identification of a witness. When, for example, I affirm, based on proprioceptive sensation, that my legs are crossed, there is no dividing up my information in such a way that the claim that someone's legs are crossed is justified by one part of it, and the identification that that person is myself by another.

So, granting that it is useful, following Pryor, to distinguish Basic Case misidentification and Which-misidentification as two different species of error through misidentification, the Simple Account still provides the resources not merely to explain why certain I-thoughts are immune to both kinds of error, but why exactly the same I-thoughts are immune to both kinds of error. Judgments that are liable to either kind of misidentification involve an inferential justificational architecture involving the

synthesis of multiple items of presumed information: in the Basic Case (at least), a parent predication and an identification; in the Which-case, a unique existential and some evidence which (perhaps when taken in conjunction with that for the unique existential) supports the identification of a witness. The relevant kind of I-thoughts by contrast have no such synthesis-involving justificational architecture but are grounded directly in the observations or experience of the subject.

5 INFERENCEAL IEM

According to the Simple Account, IEM is, at root, a phenomenon of basic – non-inferential – singular thought. Errors of misidentification, by contrast, are possible only when – the feature common to both the Basic Case and examples of Which-misidentification – the justificational architecture of a singular thought (is inferential and) exploits, or warrants, a false identification. But we cannot just characterize the IEM singular judgments as those based immediately on observation or experience and leave it at that.¹⁶ For we need to allow for IEM singular thoughts which are not based purely on observation or experience but are inferentially grounded – though, of course, lacking the inferential architecture specific to the Basic Case or to the Which-case. When will such inferentially grounded singular thoughts be immune – what kinds of inferential grounding will be safe?

Recanati speaks in this context of “derivative” IEM, citing the example of the inference from:

That man is running

to:

That man is in a hurry

where the former is based simply on observation and the latter, which is also IEM, inherits its immunity from it. That seems correct, but how does the inheritance work?

The particular example suggests the following proposal: IEM will be inherited across a sound inference to a singular judgment, *C*, if some of its premises, {*A*, *B*, etc.}, are themselves singular IEM judgments, each featuring the same mode of presentation, *a*, as *C*, and any remainder,

¹⁶ The kind of arithmetical example noted earlier already showed this. But the point is more general.

{ G_1 , G_2 , etc.}, are *purely general*. (In Recanati's example, the general premise concerned is presumably something like: anyone running (like that) is in a hurry.)

The suggestion is merely of a sufficient condition: in the simplest kind of case, if you make a singular judgment, *a is F*, in circumstances that ensure it is IEM, the inference from it to another singular judgment, *a is G*, though it may introduce possibilities of error, cannot introduce possibilities of error through misidentification if any mediating premises are all purely general – provided we can take it that the survival of grounds for a corresponding existential after a defeat of a singular judgment is the hallmark of all forms of error through misidentification. For in order for one's information state, after correction for the falsity of *C*, to continue to provide such grounds, it would seem – in view of the generality of { G_1 , G_2 , etc.} – that it must provide grounds for the existential generalization of at least one of {*A*, *B*, etc.}, which premise will then not have been IEM in the first place.

No doubt a fully adequate characterization of the circumstances under which *IEM* can be inherited across inference will have to be more complex. The matter needs further thought, but I will not attempt to take it on here. At any rate, the shape of the resulting perspective is clear: *IEM* will be a feature of thought concerning any kind of object whatever about which singular judgments can be based directly on observation and experience; and it will be inherited by singular judgments which can be soundly inferred from other *IEM* judgments in certain safe ways. The kinds of inferential grounding that open up possibilities of misidentification – the Basic Case and the Which-case – are not of the relevant, safe sorts.

Let's take stock. If we accept this overall view of the matter, there are two corollaries. First, *IEM* is a by-product not of epistemic security as such but of the fact that certain singular thought/grounds pairings lack the articulated structure necessary to make space for certain specific kinds of mistake. That does not entail that *other* kinds of mistake are not possible, or even likely in such cases – that is an entirely separate issue. So on the Simple Account, the *IEM* of much I-thought is not to be viewed as a creature of the authority of self-knowledge as that is normally conceived. I'll return to this at the end.

Second, as remarked, it emerges as something of an historical accident that the phenomenon of *IEM* was first salient to philosophers in connection with thoughts of selves about themselves and taken to reflect something distinctive about that class of thoughts. On the contrary, it is a completely general phenomenon, manifest in all basic – non-inferential – singular

thought. The Wittgenstein of *The Blue Book* should have heeded the motto of the Wittgenstein of the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* to “take a wider look round.”¹⁷

6 RECANATI’S ACCOUNT: SOME PROBLEMS

Recanati’s account contrasts with the Simple Account both by its relative complexity and by its assumption of a perspective whereby first-personal IEM is once again centralized and taken as paradigmatic. In Recanati’s view, IEM is an epiphenomenon of *thetic* experience, that is, experience in whose content no object is represented, and of the consequential fact that the object of an IEM singular thought grounded by such an experience has to be contributed, so to say, from outside – specifically by what Recanati likes to call the experience’s *mode*.¹⁸ That the object of such a thought is contributed by the mode in which the grounding experience occurs is what, in his view, explains its immunity to error through misidentification.

To unpack this a little. Consider Recanati’s favourite case: that of proprioceptive experience, and the fashion in which it can ground a judgment of the form, say, “I am sitting.” The experiencing subject receives certain proprioceptive sensations and these sensations, according to Recanati, carry a certain thetic – that is, subject-less – content. There is some unclarity in Recanati’s exposition about how the reader is meant to conceive such a content. Sometimes he writes as though his preferred model were that of an open sentence, “. . . is sitting,” or a property, *sitting*; sometimes he seems to prefer the feature-placing model of weather descriptions, “It is raining,” “It is sunny,” etc.¹⁹ The unclarity is disconcerting but I am not sure how important it is. What is important is that the thetic content, while not itself *truth-evaluable*, is something that can be true *of* an object or evaluated *at* an object – and that an object therefore

¹⁷ Wittgenstein 1978: 6.

¹⁸ The mode of an experience, in Recanati’s understanding of the notion, is something along the axis: visual, auditory, tactual, olfactory, kinaesthetic, proprioceptive, etc. But more generally, a mode is a manner in which a content is present to or entertained by the mind, so that in addition to the modes of experience, states like belief, desire, intention, hope, etc., also count as modes. In Recanati (2007) the notion is described as if in affinity to Searle’s notion of an illocutionary mode: a mode of saying like assertion, command, and question.

¹⁹ A third possibility, not canvassed by Recanati, is that thetic content be conceived as *gerundive*, as the content of a picture can be gerundive – *A green vase resting on a pink table cloth* – which can then be converted to a truth-evaluable content by taking it to a “circumstance of evaluation”: a particular vase, a particular table cloth, a particular time.

needs somehow to be supplied if the experience is to support the judgment that that object satisfies the thetic content. But of course not any old object will do. The object selected has to be such that the occurrence of the relevant thetic experience is evidence precisely that *it* satisfies the content carried. Recanati's thought is that it is the mode of the experience that delivers the *appropriate* object: the object at which, so to say, the evidence supplied by the experience is evidence that the content of that experience is satisfied.

Thetic content, then, however we model it, is not *per se* truth-evaluable. It is content carried by certain kinds of experience. Such experiences are apt to support certain kinds of truth-evaluable singular judgment only in virtue of the provision of an object, as point of evaluation, by the mode of experience concerned. It is thus a central point for Recanati's purposes that no object is represented in the content of the relevant experience. This contrasts with what one should anticipate on the Simple Account, that IEM arises when a singular judgment, *a is F*, is supported directly by an experience that represents *a* as *F*, and thereby, naturally, represents the object, *a*.

The "objectlessness-aspect" of Recanati's model makes for a *prima facie* point of resonance with the Wittgenstein–Anscombe proposal that the I-thoughts that interest us are not actually object-directed thoughts at all – that they no more concern a putative referent of "I" than ordinary weather descriptions, like "It is sunny," concern a putative referent of the third-personal pronoun, "It." But Recanati's account is distant from this in two respects. First, for Recanati, it is the content of the grounding experience, rather than the content of the judgment it grounds, that is objectless. And second, the content of a thetic experience is, as I stressed, not truth-evaluable, whereas Strawsonian feature-placing contents, like *It is raining*, or perhaps *There is a headache*, are conceived as a form of primitive but still complete truth-evaluable thought.²⁰ Still, I think it fair to say that Recanati's proposal captures something of the spirit of that of Wittgenstein and Anscombe, while finessing some of the difficulties involved in making coherent philosophy of language out of the latter; and, as may have occurred to the reader, it also responds to a pressure in the direction of their (misplaced) proposals which the Basic Account, applied to I-thought, may seem to leave unacknowledged.

²⁰ It is no knockdown objection to the Strawsonian idea that, if it is raining, it has to be raining somewhere. If I am running, I have to be running in some manner or other, but it can still be true *simpliciter* that I am running.

The point I have in mind is in effect that made famous in the following passage from Hume:

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*; I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception . . .²¹

The last remark is the crucial matter. The subject of an experience qua subject – the experiencer – is not normally represented in an experience: the content of my experience, when I see a pair of blue tits on a bird feeder, is: *There are blue tits on that bird feeder*, and not: *I am seeing blue tits on that bird feeder*. Yet the experience grounds the latter claim all the same. This Humean point, elusive as it can easily seem, strikes me as the basic strength of Recanati's proposal. The IEM of judgments like *I have my legs crossed*, *I have a headache*, and *I can see blue tits on that bird feeder* is very plausibly taken to have something to do with the fact that, in all three cases, the experience on which the judgment is based involves no representation of the subject.

That is not, however, to say that Recanati's model delivers the right account of this "something to do with" or even applies smoothly to all three types of case. There are several unclarities. First, what is the "mode" in the case of the headache? If proprioception, hearing, taste and smell, touch and vision are modes of experience, what is the mode of an experience of pain, or, in general, of bodily discomfort? Or does Recanati intend that we recognize a general mode of *sensation*? If so, how do we sustain the idea that different modes of experience are manifest in the case, say, of touch and vision – for are these not, after all, just distinctive types of sensation? Second, is it plausible, or defensible, to think of all three types of case as involving experience with *thetic* content? Thetic content is representational content that needs augmentation with a circumstance of evaluation in order to be truth-evaluable. Maybe that is arguable as a characterization of proprioceptive experience (Recanati doesn't, actually, argue for this), but it has little plausibility as a characterization of experience in general. One might well think that pain is just an unpleasant sensation and carries no representational content, even thetic content, whatsoever;²² whereas the visual experience of the blue tits on the feeder presumably carries not thetic content but the *propositional* content that there are blue tits on that feeder. It seems at best an

²¹ Hume 1888: 252.

²² To be sure, this is contestable. See e.g. Tye 2000.

over-generalization to say that the manner in which an I-thought is grounded in experience is via the delivery of a thetic content from which a truth-evaluable content, grounded by the experience, emerges via the provision by the mode of experience of the self as the appropriate point of evaluation.

But third, what exactly, in any case, does the proposal that the appropriate object is delivered by the *mode* of the experience amount to? Suppose I undergo a certain proprioceptive experience. Let the thetic content be something like, *Crossed legs*, or . . . *has crossed legs*, or *Legs being crossed*. Recanati's picture is that such an experience directly justifies the judgment, *My legs are crossed*. It does so because its (proprioceptive) mode contributes an appropriate object for the judgment (myself? Or my legs?) collaterally, alongside the thetic content that intimates *what* judgment about myself (or my legs) I should base thereon. But *how* exactly is the mode supposed to deliver the object? Recanati speaks here of a process of *reflection*²³ but he is inexplicit about the detail: how is this reflection is supposed to work?

Perhaps the inexplicitness doesn't matter. Whatever exactly Recanati has in mind, his proposal must require that the mode of an experience be available to the thinker who has the experience if he is to combine the claims that it is the mode that determines the appropriate point of evaluation with the idea that, in reflection, a thinker is enabled to identify the appropriate object for the associated singular judgment. The mode of an experience has to be something that is available to a thinker just in virtue of his having the experience, as part of its overall phenomenology. Otherwise the account cannot begin to fly as a proposal about the epistemology of the relevant I-thoughts. But then it would seem that "reflection" need involve no more than learning to, as it were, tie certain modes of experience, phenomenologically identified, to singular thought about oneself.

²³ "The transition from the simple to the more complex thought I call 'Reflection' . . . it is non-inferential and requires no new evidence on the part of the subject. Thus a subject who, on the basis of perception, forms the thought 'It is raining' is automatically entitled to judge 'It is raining here', without any extra evidence being required on his or her part. (The subject only needs to have the conceptual resources required to entertain a thought explicitly about his or her current location.) That is so because perception is bound to concern the place where the perceiver is. 'It is raining here' simply makes explicit something that is already implicit in the experience which grounds the simpler judgment 'It is raining'. Similarly, if, on the basis of his proprioceptive experience, the subject forms the explicit first-person judgment that his own legs are crossed (in contrast to his neighbour's), the content of that judgment differs from the simpler, selfless content of the experience (and of the primary judgment that goes with it), but nothing in addition to the experience in question is required to ground the more complex judgment: it simply makes explicit what was already conveyed by the mode of the grounding experience" (this volume, p. 192).

To be sure, this is a cruder idea than Recanati's language suggests he means to advance. Recanati writes, with Brandomesque resonances, of reflection as "making explicit" the implicit involvement of the self in thetic experience. I moot it only as a default interpretation of Recanati's proposal that reflection on the mode of an experience delivers an appropriate object for a singular judgment based on that experience. On the crude proposal, I undergo an experience of certain thetic content, whose mode, phenomenologically appreciated, is such that I am mandated – for that is how I have been trained – to take that thetic content to myself as a point of valuation, and so arrive at the appropriate I-judgment. If Recanati is making a richer, or subtler proposal than this, I have not been able to be sure what it is.

The most serious question for Recanati in all this is the following: Whatever exactly the manner in which the mode delivers the object, how is it ensured that it does not deliver the *wrong* object? Why does delivery by the mode ensure IEM? Recanati's proposed justificational architecture for IEM I-thought ensures that, in the presence of a suitable thetic experience, there is only one object – myself – that I can justifiably take its content to as the point of evaluation. That ensures that only the relevant I-judgment is *competent*. But how does that ensure that there is no scope for misdirection? – that the association of proprioceptive or, say, kinaesthetic experience with self-directed judgment can incorporate no (Which-)mistake?

Consider this analogy. Imagine that you have a text from which all occurrences of singular terms have been removed, so that you have, in effect, a narrative of open sentences. It is your understanding that the text as a whole is satisfied – that there is some completion of the sentences, drawing on some finitely specifiable list of singular terms, that brings them all out true. The sentences are written in a number of different fonts – modes of inscription – and now you are given a key that associates each mode of inscription with a particular object. We can elaborate the story so that the grounds for thinking that the narrative of open sentences is collectively fully satisfiable and the grounds for thinking that the decoding key, associating fonts with particular terms, will produce a set of satisfiers, are independent: you have good but independent reasons for accepting these two claims. Then you are in a position when your only justified choice, in framing a singular judgment based on one of the open sentences, is to take as its subject the referent of the appropriately keyed term. At the same time, however, none of the judgments that you thereby make will be immune to error through misidentification, since the key may be wrong.

Recanati's model, if it is to work, must somehow build in a safeguard missing in this simple analogy. What one might be inclined to say – and what Recanati's play with “reflection” suggests he thinks – is that, in the case of I-judgment based directly on experience, the connection between the mode and the self as the appropriate subject to select for the relevant singular judgment is not, as it is in the case of the analogy, an *empirical* connection; that there is simply no scope for the mode of a thinker's experience to misdirect his attention onto the wrong object for an associated singular judgment in the way in which one might systematically be taken to the wrong object in singular judgments based on the font-key. But if that is true, Recanati has not, it seems to me, succeeded in explaining why.

In any case, I shall argue that it is not, in general, true.

7 INFERENCEALITY AND PRESUPPOSITION²⁴

According to the Simple Account, IEM is predicted to be a feature of all non-inferentially grounded singular thought. We need to give some attention now to what this means. Revisit the Washington Square Park scenario but this time let my thought that *Aunt Lillian is wearing an extraordinary hat today* be based on a close encounter, so that the judgment is based on directly observing my aunt and her extraordinary titter a few feet in front of me. Surely this is not, on any plausible construal, an *inferential* judgment – unless almost all routine observational judgments are to count as inferential. But still, the judgment is not immune to error through misidentification. The person before me might be not my esteemed Aunt Lillian but her twin sister, whom I have never met or heard of, or some other look-alike. In that case my judgment would be wrong, and wrong as a result of a misidentification; but it is not inferential.

That's a *prima facie* counterexample to the Simple Account. Is there any room for manoeuvre? Well, if we understand “inferential judgment” to require a self-conscious processing of propositional reasons for the judgment concerned, then nothing of the kind need be involved, and the counterexample will stand. I need not think, “This woman right in front of me is wearing an extraordinary hat; she is my Aunt Lillian; so my Aunt Lillian is wearing an extraordinary hat”. I just recognize my Aunt Lillian and cannot but notice her extraordinary hat. But such a

²⁴ In this section, I draw on and pursue Coliva's insightful discussion (2006: 415ff.).

“self-conscious process” view of inferentiality is anyway surely too crude. Ordinary thinkers form beliefs and take decisions all the time on the basis of complexes of reasons that they do not self-consciously articulate. (Think, to take an extreme example, of skilled chess-players playing against the clock. This involves inferential judgment par excellence, but there is, as it were, no time to think – or at least, to think fully explicitly.) We need a more sophisticated notion of what constitutes a subject’s grounds for a particular inferential judgment than is comprised simply by the considerations that she consciously runs through in coming to that judgment.

Such a more sophisticated account will, at the least, need to include within the scope of a subject’s actual reasons for a judgment a range of considerations by which she *would* support that judgment if it were challenged. You ask me, “Why do you judge that your Aunt Lillian is wearing an extraordinary hat today?” and I might reply: “Well, this is she – this woman is my Aunt Lillian – and, as you can see, she is indeed wearing the most extraordinary hat”. Of course there is some murkiness about this. The notion we want is that of the grounds on which a thinker *actually bases* a given judgment, even if she doesn’t think them through in a fully explicit fashion, rather than of things she might, as it were extemporaneously, say in support of it if pressed – which may, of course, encompass a much wider class of considerations, once she has the opportunity to re-marshal her thoughts and her information. In effect, an account is being called for of the *basing relation*, a familiarly recalcitrant issue in epistemology. Still, the point remains that a defender of the Simple Account of IEM, confronting the kind of apparent counterexample provided by Aunt Lillian close by, does have the option of pursuing this tack: of trying to make a case that my apparently directly observational judgment about my aunt and her hat, in circumstances where she stands in full view and but a few feet away, is an inferential judgment nonetheless, with a justificational architecture consonant with the Basic Case.

But I think this would be a mistake. The right account of IEM should be consistent with the non-inferentiality of simple, local observational judgment of the kind illustrated. To suppose otherwise is to offer up too major a hostage. So the Simple Account needs a further qualification.

Suppose I look out of the window and, so it seems to me, see that jay once again in the crab apple tree. And consider any view in the broad spectrum of possible views that agree in allowing that my judgment, *There is a jay in the crab apple tree*, is one for which my experience provides

justification. On any such view, the question arises: what if any part in the justificational architecture of my belief is played by certain collateral but obviously relevant-seeming propositions like that my visual system is currently working effectively, or indeed that the orchard is currently visible through the window – that I am not looking at a clever *trompe l'oeil* painted upon the glass? These are propositions that I do, no doubt, believe; and if I doubted them, I would doubt that my experience justified my belief about the jay. But are these beliefs included in my *reasons* for the belief about the jay? Do they contribute to its justification?

Two broad views on the matter are possible. For *liberals*,²⁵ a proposition can be a mere potential *defeater* for a certain belief: something such that, although reason to regard it as true would potentially undermine one's reasons for the belief, there is no requirement that one have reason to regard it as false if the belief in question is to count as justified.²⁶ I might take such a liberal view of the possibilities of defective visual function or painted-over windowpanes. But equally I might take the *conservative* view, that I need to be in a position to discount such possibilities before I can be justified in taking my experience as sufficient reason for the belief about the jay. This is a normative distinction: it concerns what a thinker has to have collateral reason for if she is to be justified in certain specific circumstances in coming to a certain belief. Which view – conservative, or liberal – should I take of the two collateral propositions bruited, or others?

Now I do not think that any satisfactory account has so far been given of what should determine that a liberal, or a conservative attitude is appropriate towards a particular defeater in a particular context. But one thing is clear: conservatism cannot be sustained generally if “being in position to discount” a defeater is interpreted as requiring possession of independent evidence against it. For that independent evidence too will no doubt have potential defeaters, and further independent evidence will then be required in turn to discount those . . . So any conservative account that allows that justified belief on the basis of defeasible evidence is possible must allow that a thinker may sometimes justifiably discount a defeating possibility without possessing specific evidence against its obtaining. It has, in certain circumstances, to be possible *rationally to take it for granted* that a defeating possibility doesn't obtain.

²⁵ I take this terminology, of course, from the debates generated by James Pryor's 1999.

²⁶ Ram Neta's 2010 provides an excellent overview and constructive discussion of the issues.

Liberalism, for its part, must presumably accept the same point. For even if the justification provided by my experience for the belief about the jay needs no support from evidence that my visual system is working normally, e.g. I can hardly rationally profess an open mind about the latter proposition and still consider myself justified in the belief about the jay. Rather it seems that I should recognize that I am *committed* to the effective functioning of my visual system in taking it that my experience justifies my belief about the jay. And this is a commitment that had better be rational.

What I have just gestured at is, of course, a major epistemological point, requiring a developed defence going well beyond the scope of this chapter. But I trust that the little I have said is sufficient at least to motivate an interest in its bearing on the Simple Account of IEM. Briefly, a belief may be non-inferentially justified – say on the basis of sense-experience, or memory – and still *rest on* a range of propositional commitments of the kind gestured at. We may term such propositional commitments the *presuppositions* of the given form of non-inferential justification. The crucial reflection is then that these presuppositions may, in a particular case, include *an identification*, [*a is b*]. Should that presupposition fail, the singular judgment at issue may suffer error through misidentification even though it is a non-inferential judgment and thus has the justificational architecture neither of the Basic Case nor the Which-case.

What I propose, then, is that in the original Aunt Lillian scenario, my belief, *Aunt Lillian is wearing an extraordinary hat* is inferentially justified, in part, by the belief that *That woman is Aunt Lillian*, exactly as may be articulated on the model of the Basic Case. But in the close-by Aunt Lillian scenario, although I do indeed believe that the woman standing in front of me is Aunt Lillian, this belief is *not* something by which my belief that *Aunt Lillian is wearing an extraordinary hat* is inferentially justified, as one of its actual reasons, but is rather a presupposition on which that – non-inferentially (observationally) justified – belief *rests*. And the possible falsity of the identification will still be a possibility of error through misidentification, even though the grounds for the belief, properly so termed, are non-inferential. That is exactly the possibility that the twin-sister case opens up for the judgment about Aunt Lillian close-by.

So the Simple Account needs this further modification. A singular thought, *a is F*, may be open to error through misidentification even though its grounds are directly observational or experiential. It will be so

when although directly supported by a certain form of experience or observation, the judgment that *a is F rests upon* an identification which that experience, or observation, is powerless to support.

8 COROLLARY: A NARROWING OF THE SCOPE
OF IEM I-THOUGHT

This qualification to the Simple Account is important. But it does nothing to compromise its general deflationary idea that IEM is a phenomenon of basic singular thought in general, rather than something distinctively first-personal or supportive of the Psychological Hypothesis. Simply: a singular judgment will be IEM when its justificational architecture is non-inferential, and when it rests on no identification.²⁷ The wider field of IEM examples earlier noted – certain demonstrative thoughts, you-thoughts, he-thoughts, even the arithmetical example – all pass the revised test.

However, the reflection that an identification can feature as something on which a singular judgment rests, rather than as part of its grounds, does enforce a qualification of Recanati's main contention that immunity to error through misidentification is ensured whenever the object of a judgment is contributed by the mode of the experience that delivers its grounds. Consider the proprioceptively based judgment that *My legs are crossed*. In Recanati's view, this judgment is grounded in a pure experience with a thetic content – *Legs crossed*, or whatever – with the proprioceptive mode of the experience serving to deliver the object – myself – for an appropriate singular judgment to be based thereon. But however that may be, the judgment does nevertheless *rest on* an identification, namely that it is my body – my legs – that are the source of the proprioceptive sensations that I am having – or perhaps better: *The person whose arrangements of limbs is the causal source of my current proprioceptive experience is myself*.

One consequence is that such judgments are not IEM – not if that is to be a property ensured a priori by the content of a judgment and its grounds. Another is that if, as we assumed, the mode of an experience is fixed by the phenomenology of the experience – if that an experience is proprioceptive is a function, roughly, of what it is like to have it – then the

²⁷ I shall henceforward understand the notion of *basic* singular thought to incorporate both non-inferentiality and freedom from presupposition of identity.

mode may strictly underdetermine at which object is it appropriate to evaluate the content of the experience. Determining which object that is that may take collateral information – for instance, in bizarre but possible background circumstances, I may need to have information that I am not, today, being smitten with proprioceptive experiences originating from someone else’s body. Or it may simply be an entitled presupposition. But that is not the same as saying that the object in question is supplied by the mode.

On Recanati’s picture, a thinker undergoes a certain kind of experience, carrying a certain thetic content, and the mode of the experience, recognized – or so I argued – by its distinctive phenomenology rather than anything to do with the particular content that it carries, provides her with an appropriate point of evaluation for the thetic content involved, and so brings her to the judgment, “*My* legs are crossed,” “*My* arm is raised.” In Recanati’s view IEM arises because the judgment merely makes explicit what is implicit in the mode, so that there is no room for error. Above, I already reported some nervousness about how to understand the notion of reflection that, for Recanati, delivers what is “implicit in the mode.” But the possibility of certain bizarre cases – all involving non-standard information links to other peoples’ bodies – show that, in general, the appropriate point of evaluation is in no sense *implicit* in the mode of the experience, at least in so far as the mode is given to the subject phenomenologically. Rather, it is fixed as a matter of collateral, perhaps unreflective, presupposition that one is not operating under such bizarre circumstances – and indeed, in circumstances where such possibilities needed to be reckoned with, it might easily become a matter of required collateral information.

All such cases thus belong with the Aunt Lillian close-by case: the singular judgment concerned will rest on a presupposition of the identity of the experiencer with the person the disposition of whose limbs is at the causal source of the present experiences, or the person whose actions in the past are at the causal source of the present apparent memories, or the person whose perceptual interaction with her local environment is at the causal source of the present apparently perceptual experience, etc. And of course these presuppositions are things which (i) the experiences in question have no power to certify – just my visual experience of Aunt Lillian cannot distinguish her from her twin-sister; and (ii) may be false consistently with the mode of the experiences in question being exactly what they are. So these are counterexamples to Recanati’s account of the source of I-thought IEM.

9 RECANATI'S ATTEMPT TO GENERALIZE HIS ACCOUNT

Let's take stock again. Recanati's core proposal is, in a way, perfectly consistent with the Simple Account. The original Simple Account said that IEM is a phenomenon of non-inferential singular thought. We have observed that this needs qualification – on the one hand, there are inferentially based thoughts (inheritance cases) that are IEM and, on the other, non-inferential singular thoughts that rest on presuppositions that open them to error through misidentification. But Recanati's proposed account of the relation between experience and IEM I-thoughts – the play withthetic content and a mode-delivered object – is both non-inferential and (relevantly) presupposition-free, and so will indeed suffice, wherever applicable, to explain why such thoughts meet the conditions for IEM specified in the (revised) Simple Account. His proposals can thus be viewed not as explaining the origins of the IEM of many I-thoughts – no special account of that, departing from the Simple Account, is needed – but as an attempt to characterize the distinctive justificational architecture of those I-thoughts that are IEM in a fashion that does indeed explain why the Simple Account applies.

This is some way, however, from Recanati's own view of the matter. In part three of his paper, he tries to show how the justificational architecture that he has outlined for IEM I-thoughts –thetic content-carrying experience together with a point of evaluation supplied by (reflection on) the mode – may be extended to encompass *demonstrative* IEM judgment. Now, if Recanati believes that this kind of justificational architecture lies at the root of IEM whenever it occurs, then I have to say that the proposal strikes me as hopeless. As we briefly noted, not only demonstratives, but a large class of you-thoughts, he-thoughts and even certain arithmetical thoughts will, when affirmed on perfectly routine grounds, qualify as IEM, and the “routine grounds” concerned simply are not plausibly thought of as consisting in the occurrence ofthetic content-carrying experiences, in which no representation of the object concerned is involved. When I judge, *You are looking lovely today*, my experience represents *You*, before me, looking lovely. Its content is not, on any plausible construal,thetic. The object – *You* – features *in* the experience: You are not delivered by the mode of the experience, but are part of the scene that the experience represents.

So what is going on? Why is Recanati tempted to generalize his account in so implausible and extravagant a fashion? I do not have an explanation to offer of that. The fact of the matter, it seems to me, is

that while all basic singular thought will be IEM, the explanation of its being so is, so to say, negative: It is because the justificational architecture of *basic* singular thought lacks certain kinds of complexity that the immunity is ensured. And it is consistent with the lack of those kinds of complexity that there should be variations in the kind of justificational architecture that different kinds of basic singular thought have. If Recanati is right about the first-person case, then that just makes the point, since there is then an immediate contrast with cases where the justifying experience represents the object of the thought – *that thing, he, You* – as being a certain way. Indeed the Humean point that in experiencing one's own mental states, one does not experience oneself as having such states but rather just experiences the state, implicitly draws the contrast from the start.

It seems to me, therefore, that the interest of the final part of Recanati's paper lies not with the question whether his account of first-personal IEM generalizes to IEM in the round – it doesn't – but whether it generalizes to any other cases at all: whether, that is, there are other kinds of basic singular thought whose objects are delivered not by the content of the experience, or observations, which justify them but by the mode of the experience concerned – or, should Recanati be quite wrong in his positive account, in a fashion analogous in any case to the manner in which the self is somehow delivered as the appropriate object for judgments directly based on a subject's inner experience.

Recanati reverts to Pryor's skunk example to try to illustrate how this might work, notwithstanding the point that the example was originally intended to illustrate a certain form of error through misidentification. His proposal has affinities to Coliva's suggestion that the example can be plausibly represented as featuring a justificational architecture deploying a pair of singular modes of presentation and a false identification – and hence in effect put under the aegis of what we have been calling the Basic Case.²⁸ The core idea is that my olfactory sensations, as I smell the skunky odour, no more represent an object than my visual experience as I look out of the window represents me as its subject. But, so says Recanati, the olfactory mode allows me to recover an object by reflection and thereby arrive at a singular judgment about it on the basis of the experience of the odour. He writes:

²⁸ He is not, though, endorsing Coliva's suggestion that all which-misidentification can be so construed. Recanati's interest is rather in the recovery of an object from a thetic – in this case, olfactory – experience.

the initial judgment (immediately based upon the smell experience) is not *de re* in the classical sense – it does not have the form “*a* is *F*” . . . it would be more revealing perhaps to catch the content of the judgment in impersonal form: ‘It is skunky’, on the pattern of “It is raining”. Or, even better, we can think of it simply as the content of a predicate: ‘Skunk!’ . . . In the case of a smell experience (in contrast to the case of proprioception), the properties that are detected on the olfactory mode are properties of the object or objects that one is smelling. Just as in the proprioception case, the experience, with its thetic content, can give rise to two judgments: one (the primary judgment) that has the same thetic content, and one that makes explicit the contribution of the mode. So, on the basis of your smelling experience, you can judge “Skunk!”/“It is skunky”, or more explicitly: “That [which I smell] is a skunk”.²⁹

The last thought is singular and, it appears, IEM. Of course, the transition to it from “It is skunky” is precarious in ways in which the transition to judgments about the subject of experience, conceived as on Recanati’s model, is not. Maybe I am not smelling anything but suffering from some olfactory disorder; maybe I am smelling the effect of your very amusing aerosol spray, purchased at the joke shop; maybe I am smelling the messages of a whole family of skunks. There are no analogous risks attending the transition from my visual experience to the judgment that *I* am seeing certain things, or from the experience of a headache to the judgment that *I* have a headache. Still, these risks in the skunk case are not risks of *misidentification*. So if we grant that Recanati’s putative singular judgment, “That [which I smell] is a skunk”, is indeed justified by my experience of the smell, and that the smell itself represents no object, then is that not in effect to grant his point? For it seems that all that one has to go on in making such a judgment is the phenomenology of the smell itself and the kind of experience – smelling – in which it consists. So if the object is not delivered by the former, then do we not have to grant that it is somehow yielded by the latter – the mode?

We do not. I have already remarked that I don’t think Recanati succeeds in explaining how exactly the mode of an experience is supposed to determine the object of an appropriate singular judgment to base on that experience, nor what the epistemology of this determination is – how exactly the judging subject is taken to the thought about that particular

²⁹ See this volume, pp. 199–200. One might wonder here whether the upshot is a truly *demonstrative* thought. Prima facie, one could just as justifiably move from the olfactory experience to the descriptive thought “The thing which I am smelling is a skunk”; and one might wonder whether the latter is a genuine singular thought at all. For I don’t, in the circumstances of the example, know which object it is that I am smelling, nor am I so far in position selectively to attend to it. So what renders my thought about it *de re*, as Recanati is suggesting? However I won’t pursue this.

object. But he does say enough to point up a serious problem with his extended proposal. The problem arises with the contention that in the transition from the judgment *It is skunky* to the judgement *That (which I smell) is a skunk*, the epistemological situation is in no way altered, that no extra evidence is needed to make the more complex judgement. It is simply a matter of making explicit what was already implicit.³⁰

For it thus appears to be a mark of the way Recanati is thinking about the contribution of the mode that the transition from the thetic judgment to the object-directed one is licensed a priori. What is then immediately striking is there are cases where a justifiable transition is made from a thetic judgment to an IEM singular thought which are manifestly not licensed a priori, but draw on collateral empirical information. Suppose we are walking in the jungles of Uganda and hear a bloodcurdling roar close by. Our guide says, "That's a gorilla!" He can hardly be supposed merely to have made explicit what was implicit in the – auditory – mode of the experience and the thetic judgment, "There is roaring going on." But then, is not exactly the same point good for the skunk example? The transition seems shorter than it is because Recanati exploits the connotation of the *sortal* concept, *skunk*, in his characterization of the thetic content, *It is skunky*. In a suitably rich but purely phenomenological characterization of smells, one might fully appreciate what smell one was smelling and that one was indeed *smelling* it, and yet have no basis whatever for the inference to the singular judgment. That inference demands the collateral information that one was smelling *something*. That information is not available a priori.

Recanati is right that there are cases of IEM judgment about external objects that are properly based on experience that carries no content that represents those objects. The skunk, and the gorilla, are such examples. But the involvement of the objects is in no sense implicit in the "mode" of the experiences concerned. It takes more than "reflection" to warrant the assumption that a smell, or a sound, has an external source to which demonstrative reference may thereby be effected. It is quite otherwise with the nature of the transition from experience to the subject of experience, from my perceptual experience of the jay in the apple tree to the judgment that *I am seeing a jay in the apple tree*. As emphasized above, there was never really any prospect of a generalization of Recanati's account of the IEM of first-person thought to cover IEM demonstrative thoughts

³⁰ See this volume, p. 200.

in general. But if the foregoing is correct, even the limited range of demonstrative cases that might seem to invite such a generalization do not really do so.

IO IEM AND THE AUTHORITY OF AVOWALS

The cardinal philosophical problem of self-knowledge is twofold: first, to account for what present as certain epistemological advantages which each of us has in knowing about our own mental states and properties but which go missing when it comes to knowing about the mental states and properties of other people; and, second, to account for them, moreover, in such a way that our putative knowledge of others' mental states and properties is not seriously degraded, or even falls into doubt. Has anything been accomplished in the preceding that might assist with this problem?

Prima facie, the immunity to error through misidentification of many thoughts about oneself is exactly one such epistemological advantage. And it has been a central point of the preceding discussion that this is a misunderstanding. Selves are proof, when they are, against this kind of error not because their epistemological situation makes them very good at avoiding it but because the kind of error in question is possible only in the context of a justificational architecture which the relevant I-thoughts do not possess. The mistake in the opposing way of thinking, very roughly, is akin to that of congratulating a non-inferential judgment for being immune to error through inferential fallacy. Such immunity it certainly has; but that point does not make such a judgment especially secure or epistemologically advantaged. The issue concerns the *variety* of kinds of error to which a judgment, made upon a certain type of ground, is susceptible. That, in a particular case, the variety is relatively restricted does not make errors unlikely of the still admitted kinds.

Selves are credited with authority about a large range of their mental states and properties; and conversely, for a large such range, it is accepted that a subject who exemplifies such a state or property will know that she does. A large class avowals are, we conceive, not merely immune to error through misidentification but also *immune to error through mispredication*: putting the point at the level of the attitude, rather than the speech act, if I believe that I have a headache – if I have a belief whose content is properly so represented – I will be right; and if I have a headache, and have the conceptual resources to believe that I do, then I will

believe that I do. These somewhat stark formulations no doubt require some fine-tuning.³¹ But the fine-tuning will be a matter of giving an adequately nuanced description of the datum, not of showing that it is an illusion.

Does our discussion of IEM hold any potential to illuminate the authority of such avowals, and of the associated I-thoughts? Let me close with one very promissory suggestion about how, our rejection of the Psychological Hypothesis notwithstanding, it might. One kind of error of mispredication is made possible when a predicate is properly but defeasibly applicable on the basis of the application of another. One might, for example, predicate “green” of an object on the basis of the predicability of “looks green” to it. The former might then be defeated by considerations concerning abnormal lighting, or some other source of colour illusion. So there will be an immunity to mispredication of this sort if the predicate concerned does not have this kind of structure of grounds and potential defeaters – if no provision is made for a mere appearance that it applies, apt to be overridden by considerations which undermine the evidential force of that appearance.

A possible analogy suggest itself with the justificational architecture of the Basic Case. When I make a singular judgment that is open to Basic Case error through misidentification, what I take to be two modes of presentation of a single subject are in play. I correctly judge that *b is F*, take it that [*a is b*], and so judge *a is F*. But the identification can be wrong. Likewise in the case of the envisaged kind of mispredication of “green,” I correctly judge that *That object looks green*, take it that, in this context, *Looking green is being green*, and thereby judge *That object is green*. And here once again, naturally, the “identification component” – that in this context, looking green is the same thing as being green – can feature either as a component in an inferential justification, or as a presupposition on which the observational judgment *That thing is green* rests.

Broadly speaking, an instance of Basic Case error through misidentification involves being right about a parent singular thought and wrong in the transition from that to the erroneous singular thought. There is no scope for this kind of error when there is, so to say, only a parent

³¹ An excellent discussion of the need for at least fine-tuning, if not discarding, many things philosophers have tended to assume about “avowals,” and the associated I-thoughts, is Snowdon 2012.

singular thought in play – that is, when the singular thought in question is, as I have been saying, *basic*. Likewise with predication: in the kind of situation just described, there is a parent predication – *a looks green* – about which one is correct, and the mispredication occurs in the transition from that to the stronger predication *a is green*. Moreover it is not essential, in providing space for this kind of possibility of mispredication, that we make play – as I did in setting up the analogy – with the idea of the *identity* of the two qualities, looking green and being green, in suitable circumstances. It is enough that the truth of one predication defeasibly suffices for the truth of the other. In general, then, a judgment will be liable to error through mispredication when the basis for the application of the predicate concerned resides in the application of another, conceived (or presupposed) as defeasibly sufficient for it.

So, a singular thought will be immune to errors of mispredication of this kind when the predication it involves neither is defeasibly grounded in a parent predication in this way nor rests upon it as a presupposition. And this, once again, is a point about the character of the justificational architecture of predications of the relevant sort, not a point about their special epistemological security or our ability to be especially good at them. It is merely that certain *forms* of error are pre-empted by their justificational architecture; it is a different question how secure we are against those error-possibilities that remain.

The reader will by now have foreseen the suggestion on which I want to close. It is that predications of mental states that are individuated by their phenomenal character – like twinges, tickles, and headaches – are, as it were, *sans parent*: they are neither defeasibly grounded in parent predications nor do they rest upon them. In this respect they are like predications of appearance – *looks green*, and its ilk. A normal sincere self-ascription of such a state, affirmed purely on the basis of one's experience, will thus be immune both to error through misidentification and to error through mispredication in the kind of way just outlined.

The effect is to invite a comparison between the authority of *I have a headache*, and the credibility of a judgment like *That looks green*. Roughly speaking: when, as in both cases, the justificational architecture is such that no space is provided for errors of inference via mistaken collateral premises or errors of mistaken presupposition, there remains little clearly intelligible scope for error consistent with normal conceptual and cognitive

competences. For at least some kinds of avowals, then – those expressing *parentless* judgements – it would be via that consideration that one would seek to account for their authority, and not by appeal to something putatively especially epistemically robust about the inner gaze.³²

³² It may seem that there is still a key disanalogy in that, with the former judgment but not the latter, there is in addition no provision for *reference-failure*: no possibility of an *illusion* of I-thought comparable to the illusion of a demonstrated object and of demonstrative reference to it. But that is an artefact of a particular understanding of the comparison – that it is of I-thought with *putatively* demonstrative thought. We are entitled to insist that the comparison involve *genuine* judgments of both kinds. And with that, the analogy is restored.