



THE ESSENTIAL INDEXICAL AND SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS: 'I', 'NOW', AND 'HERE' AS ASPECTS OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

Abstract: *This paper aims to analyse egocentric indexicals 'I', 'now', and 'here' as different aspects of the same self-conscious or self-referential act emphasising the underlying phenomenological structure of the essential indexical 'I'. What makes an indexical essential is not its indexicality but the egocentric mental state indicated by its use. Therefore, interpreting them only in the confines of language severely limits the scope of the investigation. First, I will define the pure use of 'here', 'now', and 'I', which will consequently lead to the relation between the indexical 'I' and the pure I, and to the transcendental designation of the subject. In the second part of the paper, the focus will shift towards the phenomenological notions of primal I with its contextualisation and to the dimensions of 'now' and 'here', analysed through the character of *nunc stans*. Through some ideas of Husserl and Heidegger, 'here' and 'now' will emerge as amalgamated with the I. It will be shown that they acquire their formal meaning, along with the empirical content, through the I, which is the actual I of immediate presence that is purely self-referring, and that other indexicals and pronouns are thus derivative. It will be concluded that the essentiality of the indexical 'I' originates in the very structure of pure self-consciousness. In that regard, the theory of the essential indexical 'I' could be interpreted as an extension of the doctrine of the pure or transcendental I.*

Keywords: *the I; 'now'; 'here'; self-consciousness; indexicality; phenomenology.*

“‘This’, ‘here’ and ‘now’ cannot be learned or understood except by one who has general, acquired awareness about him- or herself.”

(Frank 1999, 207–208)

“A self is what is referred to in the first person: what the first-person pronoun denotes in its proper and correct use. Hence, the structure of the mechanisms of self-reference reveal at least part of the structure of the self.”

(Castañeda 1981, 62)

What makes an indexical *essential*? According to some, it is their ineliminability and irreplaceability – the speaker’s belief cannot be fully expressed in language that does not contain indexicals. Those are locating beliefs, i.e., beliefs about “where one is, when it is, and who one is” (Perry 2001, 145). They are essential in the sense that replacing them with a nonindexical term destroys the explanation or requires further assumptions. If we replace ‘I’ with another designation of me, we no longer have attribution of the same belief. I shall call this description a third-person description, one which can be given by any individual about any object and where the meaning is preserved. Perry’s statements “Someone is making a mess” or “John is making a mess” belong to this category, while “I am making a mess” would belong to a first-person description. ‘I’, when I utter it, cannot be replaced by a third-person description in such a way that I recognise *myself* in that description as the subject (i.e., as John or as ‘someone’).¹ In other words, the “translation” from third-person to first-person is not without a loss in meaning or ambivalence. It cannot be replaced even with a complete description or a thing (Shoemaker 2001). They are also necessary for action, as shown in the example of the careless shopper (Perry 2001) or being attacked by a bear (Perry 1977), and also in Lewis’ example of two gods (Lewis 1979).

This view, however, has been challenged. It is not their indexicality that makes them essential, but the structure of egocentric mental states and first-person redundancy (Prosser 2015). Alternatively, in Millikan’s words, “[it] is not their semantics that distinguishes [indexicals], but their function, their psychological role” (Millikan 2001, 163). In this paper, I shall be leaning towards this interpretation and offer my take on the idea that the theory of the essential indexical ‘I’ could be interpreted as an extension of the doctrine of the pure or transcendental I.² Interpreting ‘I’ only in the confines of language severely limits the scope of the investigation. I argue that ‘I’ and the I are both essentially and structurally tied together with the first-person perspective and that all other indexicals formally refer to or have their content determined by

¹ One could argue that it is *vice versa*. I can recognise myself in a third-person description of myself based on some implicit cognitive elements and immediate acquaintance with myself. If someone says, “John made this mess”, and I know that my name is John and am already aware in the indexical form that *I* made that mess, then I can be fairly certain that he is talking about me. However, the “jump” from third-person to first-person, i.e., nonindexical to indexical, is more problematic, as shown in the case of Rudolf Lingens (Perry 1977).

² I shall be using the term ‘I’ when discussing the indexical, focusing on the word, expression, or a first-person pronoun, and ‘the I’ to refer to the pure or transcendental I or ego.

the relation to the I, whilst it transcendently designates the subject of thought (Brook 2001). I shall also be focusing on what I believe are three main egocentric indexicals, ‘I’, ‘now’, and ‘here’. Firstly, what I term a “pure” use of ‘now’, ‘here’ and ‘I’ will lead to the doctrine of the pure I, after which the relation between ‘I’ and the I will be sketched. In the second part, I will analyse themes from phenomenology, such as notions of *nunc stans* and primal I.

1. The pure use of ‘now’ and ‘here’

Under the term ‘pure’, I understand in the widest sense that which is free of experience or can have experiential or sensible content. To that end, the “purity” will be shown to be a mode of self-referentiality.³ It could also be followed along the lines of Kaplan’s distinction between linguistic meaning or character and the content of an indexical; or Millikan’s “indexical adapting relation” (Millikan 2001, 165). Roughly, the main difference between pure indexicals and other demonstratives is that the former have their content determined by their meaning. ‘I’ has a single meaning, it “refers to the speaker or writer” (Kaplan 1989, 505) or “the producer of the token” (Millikan 2001, 165), but it can have different contents depending on the context. ‘I’ refers to the subject uttering it, and it cannot *not* refer to it, or refer to someone or something else. On the other hand, demonstratives often require additional information or cognitive element in order to know what the subject is referring to; they merely constrain semantic reference. If I point my finger at a chair and say “This”, it (hopefully) refers to the same thing for you as it does for me.⁴ By contrast, ‘I’, ‘now’ and ‘here’ are self-oriented and from the first-person perspective. Thus, their content is dependent on the same self-evidence that Descartes employed in his *Meditations*, which is to say, it is undoubtedly true that ‘I *am*’, as it is that ‘I am *now*’ or ‘I am *here*’. We could try and take the opposite to be true by saying “I am not here” or “I am not now” and see that it is formally impossible. Interestingly, it is precisely the indexicals for context’s speaker, time, and location, i.e. ‘I’, ‘now’, and ‘here’, that have *automatically fixed references*.

There are cases of ‘now’ and ‘here’ without content, i.e., I am able to say ‘here’ without explicitly thinking of any location. If I am in a search group and find something, I can yell to others, “Over here!” or simply “Here!” without looking where I am or orienting myself. I do not need to know where I am in order to call someone to me. My utterance does not contain “The place

³ I understand self-referentiality in the broadest sense of something making a reference to itself as it is.

⁴ This is also problematic, for I can say, “This is a strange situation we find ourselves in”, referring to the very context, or “That is a good point”, referring to the previous argument, without any pointing or visualisation, cf. (Millikan 2001, 169). Or, perhaps, our “field” of thought or consciousness carries in it some remnants of structural spatiality, like the one found in locating an event in time (i.e., representing time and events as an x-axis) or having one thought “next” to another. But this is a topic for another paper.

between the hollowed oak tree and the ditch”, etc. It simply means ‘Come to *me*’ or ‘Follow *my* voice’, ‘I want you to come to my immediate presence, to stand next to *me*, or ‘I have found *x* at the location from which *I* am yelling’. At any moment, I can look around myself and offer a description “I am in between the hollowed oak tree and the ditch”.⁵

However, that only comes after the reflection and empirically determining the location in the relevant context or current situation. Formally, I am determining the location as *my immediate surrounding* or, more precisely, that the location where I found *x* is identical to the location where I am (now). Needless to say, that is a tautology and does not say anything in detail. Still, it does not have to, because it will have all the meaning to someone who heard me. They would know where to go (to the direction in which they heard my voice) and would not need any more descriptive or precisely detailed account of the location. In a report I give the day after, I would have to say, “I have found *x* next to the hollowed oak in the ditch”. I cannot say that I found *x* ‘there’ or ‘here’. The only way I could use ‘here’ afterwards is if I took the detectives to the same place and said, “I found *x* here”. ‘Here’ does not tell us *where* it is and accordingly is of no use uttered in a dark room to a person with one deaf ear who cannot localise sounds (Millikan 2001, 168). Even so (as I will soon emphasise), it does formally tell us about the location based on self-referentiality. In other words, the only reason why anyone would follow the sound of “Here!” is because they are aware that ‘here’ in “Here!” refers to the place of origin of the sound. What differentiates the pure use of ‘here’ from the aforementioned accounts is precisely its *use*; it is not just a linguistic convention or rule for it.

As Prosser formulates, “[if] *S* refers to a place *l* using the word ‘here’, then normally *S* believes that *l* is where *S* is located. *l* is, as *S* might put it, *hereabouts*” (Prosser 2015, 215). Both Smith and Jones could believe that there is danger at *l*, where Smith is, but “Smith also believes that *l* is hereabouts, which is true if, and only if, *l* is where Smith is located”. While I agree with Prosser’s insight, I do not think that the ordering is correct. Smith does not believe that *l* is ‘here’, or hereabouts, but ‘here’ is *l* in that particular occasion. In other words, ‘here’ is not a property of *l*, or that the empirical content of ‘here’ is firstly thought, instead I would believe that there *is* danger (here), because it is in my immediate presence (or vicinity), and for practical reasons of conveying information to someone, I would describe ‘here’ as *l*. I am not where ‘here’ is; instead, ‘here’ is where I am. More so, ‘here’ is a self-reference to *my* location; *l* just happens to be that location. It follows ‘I’ as the circumference of a circle follows its centre. ‘Here’ could also be interpreted

⁵ Note that I could have used ‘here’ meaningfully even without reflecting on my precise surroundings, i.e., knowing explicitly and propositionally where I am (I could have been stupefied by what I found and started screaming).

as the “presentness” of the I, in a sense that it becomes (contentwise) that location which ‘I’ “illuminates” by being present.⁶

The same holds for ‘now’. ‘Now’ does not just so happen to be the time *when* I am, i.e., I am not when ‘now’ is; instead, ‘now’ is when I am. If this were not the case, we would have a colossal task of explaining why everyone, every ‘I’, is at the same time, i.e., in the same ‘now’. We could disagree on what time exactly ‘now’ is, I could strongly believe that it must have passed noon by now, and you might argue that it is probably still around 11 am. Nevertheless, we will never disagree that ‘now’ is precisely now, as we are speaking about it. Our “inner clocks” do not have to be synchronised, but my ‘now’ cannot be a couple of minutes (or some “time”) behind or ahead of yours.⁷ ‘Now’ has nothing to do with time but with self-referentiality.

In both cases of ‘here’ and ‘now’, in the same way as “indexicals do not *tell* what they point at [...] what is in their contexts” (Millikan 2001, 169), I argue that *nothing in the content tells about the indexical*. Nothing in *l* contains that it is ‘here’, or that some date and time are ‘now’, or that John or Rudolf Lingens is me. ‘Here’ is not a property of a location. There is nothing in my office (or at *l*) that makes it ‘here’ – my office was ‘here’ only because I was there. Spatial and temporal self-localization is an ability independent of any concrete location or time; it follows the I or self-reference and one’s “‘I’-Idea and one’s ‘here’-Ideas are really two sides of a single capacity, each wholly dependent upon the other” (Evans 2001, 140).⁸

Still, they are more than simple linguistic terms or what is expressed by egocentric mental states as *formal vehicles of the first-person perspective, self-conscious subject*. The pure use demonstrates that indexicals ‘now’ and ‘here’ are “placeholders” in the self-conscious mental act (Castañeda 2001). In essence, I propose that ‘here’ does not refer to some (empirical) *l*, but to my whereabouts, my Here, the presentness of the subject, whatever that location might be, in the Now. It is contingent that ‘here’ at t_1 (or *now_1*) is my office and at t_2 (or *now_2*) my home. Their content is not just fixed by their meaning, but also, formally and empirically, they relate to the I. Their meaning is independent of any context (or content), and their formal or pure use is also

⁶ English language has that peculiarity that the term ‘present’ can have both *temporal* meaning, that something is now occurring; and *spatial* meaning, but not in a straightforwardly locating sense, i.e., denoting a place, but in a case of more abstract presence or absence, that something is at hand, attending or simply here. For example, a doctor has to be present during the operation, but it is not specified where exactly he has to be – if it is in the same room or if he, in some futuristic setting, could act through a robot or oversee through a video call from the other side of the country. He just has to attend.

⁷ This strain inevitably leads to the metaphysics of time.

⁸ Self-localization is the ability to locate oneself in the environment, to identify the immediate surroundings. Immediate surroundings are always (formally) identified: it is the space or place around *me*. If I wake up in a strange place, I will try to identify *where* ‘here’ is.

without one. In this sense, they are self-referring and indicative of an objective, formal structure of mental states or consciousness, irrelevant of the content.

Let us now turn to the pure use of 'I'.

2. The pure use of 'I'

Suppose we differentiate between 'I' when I use it and when others use it. In that case, for others, I can know for certain that formally it refers to the subject of utterance, but materially (contentwise), I do not need to know *who* it is. Imagine the following scenario. A night security guard is on the watch when he hears some noise. He yells, "Who goes there?!" and hears me reply, "I!". If the guard recognises my voice and knows me, he can know my identity. However, if he does not know me, the word 'I' bears no meaning for him other than that it is indeed a person, i.e., a subject that can meaningfully use the indexical 'I', and not some wild animal that is making the noise. However, from my first-person perspective, I have told the guard everything. I have identified the person who is trespassing by admitting that it was indeed me and not someone else. The difference between this kind of admitting and, e.g., if the schoolmaster asks, "Who broke the window?" is that in the second example, the schoolmaster can see me uttering the word 'I', whilst the guard only hears the voice coming from the darkness. 'I', in the case of the schoolmaster, means that it was not "him, or him, or her, or them (a gang of mischievous students)", but that the perpetrator is the one speaking. Just the same as with 'here' and 'now', "a token of 'I' does not tell me who the originator of that token is" (Millikan 2001, 168), except, I add, in the first-person perspective.

We can differentiate between the indexical's formal (pure) aspect and its (empirical) content. With 'this', I could refer to an unlimited number of things. Similarly holds for 'now' and 'here', albeit limited. If I say, "This is red", you can, if you are not looking, be mistaken as to what necktie I am exactly referring to (Shoemaker 2001, 84). On the other hand, for 'here' you cannot be mistaken, although you have to see where I am or be able to orient yourself. If I hear a voice saying, "It is cold here", and I cannot precisely determine if I heard it coming from the outside, through an open window, or from down the hallway, through an open door, I could only be sure that it is cold at the place from which the person in question is uttering the sentence. But this kind of error is impossible with 'now'. You do not have to look at me, at what I am pointing or what exactly am I doing to know that 'now' refers to the very moment at which it is being uttered. We can derive a gradation of certainty. For 'now', I only need to hear the sentence being uttered because there is only

one current now.⁹ For ‘here’, I am also to perceive the location of the subject that utters it or to be able to orient the direction from which the sound is coming (albeit, formally, I already know where it is, i.e., it is the whereabouts of the I uttering it). For ‘this’, absolute certainty is impossible. Consequently, I can choose the reference of ‘this’ (this table, this problem, etc.), and I can select the reference for ‘here’, but I cannot choose the reference for ‘now’ or ‘I’. I argue that ‘I’ falls in the first category, with ‘now’; they are permanently fixed.¹⁰

Is ‘I’ a placeholder for *me*, i.e., this person I am? ‘I’ can only have one object that it is placeholder for. Opposed to every other indexical, the content (or referent) of ‘I’ is always identical – *it is me*. I can never use a different subject for ‘I’, nor can I designate any other subject different from the one *who is designating*. One day I could be standing in front of an audience in the amphitheatre and say, “I am here, now”, and the next day at home and say, “I am here, now”. ‘Here’ said in the amphitheatre means, contentwise, the amphitheatre or, formally (i.e., in relation to the I), the location where I am uttering it; and the same goes for my home – and I can choose it. ‘Now’ can also mean, contentwise, one time or date or the next one or, in relation to the I, the moment at which I am uttering it – but I cannot choose it. However, in both cases, the referent of ‘I’ is the same, unchangeable – *and I cannot choose it*. On both occasions, it means the same thing, *me*. Effectively making its role as a placeholder redundant. What is more, if ‘here’ is where I am now, and ‘now’ is when I am uttering it, then ‘here’ is tertiary, for it depends on the ‘I’ and ‘now’. ‘Now’ is secondary because it only depends on the actuality of consciousness, i.e., ‘I’ or the moment of self-reference. And ‘I’ is primary, for it does not depend on anything; it simply is or is not. Self-reference is either occurring, or it is not, and if it is, then *when* it is occurring is ‘now’, and the result is unchangeable, it is ‘I’. There is no self-reference occurring in the past or future, one that is not actual. That kind of self-reference has happened or will happen. The self-reference that *is* occurring is the one that is “underway”, the actual one.¹¹ The same can be said for existence, for there cannot be my

⁹ What is more, ‘now’ at which I am hearing it is the same ‘now’ as that of the utterance. My ‘now’ and your ‘now’ are the same ‘now’ if the utterance is actual; they are the same actuality. If someone says, “It is raining now”, it means that I am also going to get wet if I step outside. But if I hear a recording of the utterance or read it, I know that that ‘now’ is not the actual Now, ‘now’ of the act of hearing, which can never be a nonactual Now.

¹⁰ This is in agreement with Descartes’ evil demon. He can deceive me of where ‘here’ is or if ‘here’ even exists (if I am only a brain in a vat or a subject of solipsism). Virtual reality can already do this. Noteworthy is that even in that case, a talk of a presence or absence of something (to me) would still be valid. Yet, he could not deceive me that he is deceiving or that he is not deceiving me now, at my moment of doubting it or thinking about it; i.e., he cannot deceive me that ‘now’ is not exactly this moment. And, finally, he cannot deceive me that I am not me.

¹¹ This does not mean that we cannot talk about the notion of self-reference or the act in general. Nevertheless, if there is actual self-reference, it cannot be divorced from time, more precisely, from the Now.

existence outside of me actually existing.¹² If there is an actual I, there also is a ‘now’, and *vice versa*.

I contend that ‘I’, ‘now’, and ‘here’ are formal vehicles in the perspectival structure of consciousness. Their equivalents in language simply have indexical or demonstrative nature. It is not because of their indexical nature that terms like these influence the development of our consciousness, but *vice versa* – it is because they are formal elements “operating within” our consciousness that they have indexical nature.¹³ This only means that ‘now’ and ‘here’, or their nonlinguistic mental equivalents (the Now and the Here, if we ought to term them in accordance with the I), have nothing empirical or contextual tied to them. Consciousness operates on the level which is pure, i.e., abstract from any context or relevant occurrence. And if that is the case, then self-relation must also be pure, hence, the pure I. It would also imply that ‘I’ is not (just) an indexical or that the source of its essentiality lies within pure self-consciousness.

3. The I as an ‘I’: transcendental designation

How are we to understand the pure I? There is a range of interpretations in the continental tradition, but it will suffice to define it in Kantian and Husserlian terms.

I take myself as the pure Ego insofar as I take myself purely as that which, in perception, is directed to the perceived, in knowing to the known [...] there lies a ray of directedness [that] takes its point of departure in the ‘Ego’, which evidently thereby remains undivided and numerically identical while it lives in these manifold acts. (Husserl 2000, 103–104)

Suppose I am perceiving an object, thinking about *x*, etc., then I am in all these acts that which perceives, thinks. Being the pure subject means being defined only by the act in which one is found. Yet, the subject of different acts is not itself different or separate; there is no multitude of subjects. It is one and the same in different *cogitationes*. It is nothing outside of the mental act, and in it, it is intentionally directed toward the object. It could also be interpreted as a primitive but necessary centre of relations, a centre of unity of consciousness, an I-pole.¹⁴

For Kant, in the original synthetic unity of apperception, “I am conscious of myself not as I appear to myself, nor *as* I am in myself, but only that I am”

¹² See note no. 27. I believe that this kind of self-referentiality is what is nested deep in the *cogito* argument.

¹³ See “an *egocentric mental state*, which is essential for action, is indicated by the use of an indexical term” (Prosser 2015, 212). More on this later.

¹⁴ For Husserl’s notion of the pure I, see (Husserl 1983).

(Kant 1998, 259). The consciousness of oneself is not the same as the cognition of oneself. In another place,

Through this I [...] nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of thoughts = x , which is recognised only through the thoughts that are its predicates. (Kant 1998, 414)

This subject of thoughts is “designated only transcendentially through the I that is appended to thoughts, without noting the least property of it, or cognising or knowing anything at all about it” (Kant 1998, 419). In this I, nothing manifold is given; it is simply an awareness of oneself as a subject without the need to know anything (empirical) about oneself. Brook, with whom I am much in agreement, develops the idea of transcendental designation as an “awareness of oneself as oneself” (Brook 2001). It is not enough to be aware *of* oneself, I can do that and not realise that it is me (as in the case of Rudolf Lingens or Ernst Mach). Instead – one has to be aware of oneself *as* oneself. And *vice versa*, I can refer to myself not just as John or Rudolf Lingens, but as *myself*. Awareness *of* oneself *as* oneself is, thusly, tautological. Precisely what this ‘as myself’ is or means is, I believe, the pure I, the single common subject of several different mental states. Therefore, it would seem that ‘I’ functions in the way in which the guard or schoolmaster hears it – it *purely or transcendentially designates the subject of its utterance*, i.e., we do not have to attribute any other way of referring to oneself “aside from his ability to use the pronoun ‘I’ or his ability to be conscious of himself” (Castañeda 2001, 60).

Let us consider a follow-up example. The guard hits me on the head, and I lose consciousness. I wake up later in a hospital with complete amnesia. I cannot remember who I am, what had happened, or how I got there. If I say to the doctor, “I cannot remember anything”, I will be correctly referring to myself or self-referring as the-one-who-cannot-remember-anything, without any empirical content or knowledge other than my immediate surroundings and state of affairs (that it is true of me that I cannot remember). I will also know that I am referring to *myself* by saying ‘I’, even though I do not know *who* I myself am. The reason being that ‘who’ I am does not have anything to do with my self-consciousness and self-referring. Me being self-conscious makes me being a ‘who’ (this or that person) possible. For what can an amnesiac think under ‘I’? – Surely, the answer would be that he thinks himself (he is not thinking the doctor or the patient next to him by uttering ‘I’); except, what empirical knowledge is contained under the label ‘himself’? It cannot be his personal name, a representation, or some kind of a mental image of himself, his preferences, face, and all the things that constitute personal identity. With ‘I’, he can only refer to himself and ‘himself’ is the I as an object for itself. In other words, ‘himself’ is ‘the one who is uttering (this word) ‘I’’, or these words, meaning the subject of ‘this here utterance’ or, more poetically,

‘the subject of this voice’. ‘I’ refers purely to the subject of the utterance of the ‘I’, or I objectify myself.¹⁵

That would not be all of which I would be a subject, as it would also be true of me that I am in a hospital, lying in bed, or talking to the doctor, etc. I would also have my ‘here’ and ‘now’ without any content (especially if I cannot recognise where I am the moment I wake up). I could say to the doctor, “I, who am now speaking to you, the doctor, cannot remember anything”. However, these kinds of contextualisations would, in a sense, be analytic *a priori* judgments; even so, they would still convey meaning to me. And without any context, empirical or analytical, I would still “know” that I am me, myself. This tautology is necessary for self-consciousness. Just as ‘here’ means my immediate surroundings, my hereabouts, wherever it may be, ‘I’ means me, myself – *whoever that may be*. And because it lacks any empirical or sensible content, it is defined tautologically, i.e., “I am the one who does not know who he is”.

Beyond this ‘information’ that the thing presented is me, the representation tells me nothing about myself. This barrenness in one’s awareness of oneself as subject was perhaps one of the things that led Hume to think that no subject is to be found in self-awareness at all (Brook 2001, 29).

Therefore, even though ‘I’ has no (empirical) content, it is not without a referent. The referent of ‘I’ cannot be contextual, for it would be different in different situations. Indexicals depend upon the context,¹⁶ changing with it. Indexical thought would imply that it has its content and referent determined in a context and that we have a way of identifying them. However, the first-person context never changes, nor is it transformative. This is precisely why ‘I’ cannot be simply an indexical. If in ‘perceiving *x*’ I am the one who is perceiving, then its content would always be dependent on its context. However, in all mental states, the I as pure I remains self-identical and numerically one, as Husserl and Kant stated. Yet, I do not require any identification procedure to identify myself *as* that subject, the subject of thought. It is not identified simply by the context. In which case ‘I’ could still be an indexical, but one which content for me does not vary in contexts – *essential*. Yet, the I as pure I is the I-orientation of every context and every situation (Husserl 1970, 171; 2000, 111).¹⁷ The referent point will always be

¹⁵ This also cannot be Wittgensteinian use of ‘I’ as subject, for it is not simply an expression as in “I have pain”.

¹⁶ But they do not tell anything *about* it (Millikan 2001).

¹⁷ Cf.: “dare I call it ego-orientation?” (Kaplan 1989). It is the “anchoring point” of each person’s system of reference (Shoemaker 2001, 93). Even after amnesia, the I as the centre of system of reference is preserved. And, if that is the case, what makes me assume that before amnesia, I was referring with ‘I’ to anything other than this pure centre, the I?

the pure I which follows all my representations. It is the I-centre towards which all synthesis is directed, and which can follow with Kantian ‘I think’ (Husserl 1977, 158ff). We experience the world from a first-person perspective. Intersubjectively, ‘I’ depends for its content on the subject uttering it (as with the guard), but subjectively, its meaning is fixed, “static”. It will never signify any individual other than myself in my conscious mental life. In other words, indexicals are dependent on the perspective except ‘I’, which *is* that perspective or orientation. If the perspective changes, ‘I’ has to transform into ‘you’ or ‘he’.¹⁸

We can now return to previous examples. ‘Here’ does not convey the place where it is, and ‘I’ does not say who is the originator or the speaker of ‘I’. This is peculiar because, in both example of the guard and amnesiac, it does not say anything *to you*, but it does say everything *to me*. Still, my pure I or my use of the indexical ‘I’ and your pure I or your use of ‘I’ have to be the same; only what we later think under this ‘I’ is entirely different. After all, there is a reason why we can understand each other by saying the same word but thinking or meaning completely different things. They have to be identical (which is already implied by them being formal and pure) and with varying empirical content, making them essentially empty. There is nothing “personal” in ‘I’, even though it refers to this person. Person A uses ‘I’ to refer to person A, and person B uses it in just the same way to refer to person B. Nevertheless, I argue that person A does not think of himself *as* ‘person A’ but as ‘I’ or ‘me’ (as oneself), as in the example of the amnesiac. Paradoxically, ‘I’ would be an indexical that is *only mine*; something private, opening the *Me* for me, objectifying myself for me, and at the same time public, intersubjective, and meaningful to any range of self-conscious beings.¹⁹ The I, in this sense, functions similarly to a mirror. If I stand in front of the mirror, I would see myself, and the same goes for you; you would see yourself. But the mirror functions identically in both cases by showing me to myself (and you to yourself). It “opens up” the Me as an object for myself – I can see that my hair looks messy, that I do not like how this shirt looks on me because it is making me look fat or that my face is dirty, etc., and I can act on myself accordingly. My use of ‘I’ has to be accompanied by underlying self-relation, which is not present in your use of ‘I’. Hence, we can think of ourselves empirically (as John, this concrete person, etc.) and purely (as the I, the one who thinks). Here nothing is contained as ‘the one who thinks’ is identified transcendently. At the same time, there is something indexical in the I, that it can signify different subjects in different contexts, and something essential, that my ‘I’ purely designates me in my self-conscious act.

¹⁸ More on contextualisation and transformation of the I will be said in the next section.

¹⁹ Which could, to some extent, be associated with Mead’s idea of internalising the structure of the Self (as with language and symbols), particularly the I-Me relation. If each Self had a different structure, we would not be able to interact with each other; and yet, the Self is something private and introspective, see (Mead 1972).

Furthermore, ‘I’ is not simply a linguistic term because it must be used. A machine can replicate the sound ‘I’, which will not have any meaning. Similarly, in the first example, the guard only hears ‘I’ being uttered (which could have very well been a recording placed there), and in the second, I do not hear ‘I’ being spoken (like I would from the room next door); instead, *I* am uttering it, *I* am using it. I am consciously self-referring, in which case I know about whom I am speaking. Proper use of ‘I’ implies self-consciousness or an egocentric mental state.

Let us now turn our attention to Husserl’s notion of the primal I, where these ideas are further developed in the light of contextualisation.

4. The primal I: contextualisation of the referent of ‘I’

For Husserl, the I occupies a special place in opposition to the world and objects. When it achieves that through *epoché*, ‘you’, ‘we’, and the entirety of intersubjectivity becomes a phenomenon for me, “the whole distinction and ordering of the personal pronouns, has become a phenomenon within my epoché” (Husserl 1970, 184–185). The I, because it does not have a ‘you’ opposed to it, is an I only by *equivocation*. It is the primal I, the I of my *epoché*, which can never lose its uniqueness and personal indeclinability. Indeclinability in the sense of absence of change or transformation into other perspectives, i.e., I cannot abandon my first-person perspective.²⁰ Living in the world, “I am necessarily an ‘I’ that has its ‘thou,’ its ‘we,’ its ‘you’ – the ‘I’ of the personal pronouns” (Husserl 1970, 335–336). In other words, the use of ‘I’ in language or ‘I’ as a pronoun is based upon the I. This I then is the first-personal character of consciousness, absolute formal individuation of the subject’s consciousness (Zahavi 2014, 84); a structural perspectivity that is an indeclinable and ineliminable aspect of consciousness. Therefore, the I is still not an ‘I’ among others (with ‘you’, ‘we’, etc.), “all such distinctions as ‘I’ and ‘you’, ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, first ‘constitute’ themselves in the absolute ego” (Husserl 1970, 82). This would mean that indexicals have meaning *for me* and that the I can still exist for itself, i.e., be self-conscious, with or without intersubjectivity.

The consequence is that the I does not depend on intersubjectivity for its original structure. First-person consciousness cannot be “learned” or “internalised” in socialisation. The I has its formal, pure structure (e.g., self-referentiality, which could be a purely logical function) but constitutes its concrete individuation in contexts. The I makes itself declinable by *entering into contextualisation*. It integrates itself into a context of intersubjective

²⁰ Differently, the nominative case ‘I’ refers to the subject, but accusative or objective ‘me’ (or any other) is the subject taken as an object. It is not a subject *proper* but a reference to the subject. The subject can never be in any other case than nominative and still *be* the subject.

relations between I's. The human being develops in society, but the structure of its consciousness does not come into being. In other words, it simply means that we have a logical and psychological side or aspect of consciousness, the latter being empirical, concrete, and personal, and the former pure, objective and functional. Taguchi interprets self-contextualization in Husserl's words as a "change in signification of [the form] 'I' – just as I am saying 'I' right now – into 'other I's,' into 'all of us,' we who are many 'I's,' and among whom I am but *one* 'I'" (Husserl 1970, 182). This change in signification is a modification of the primal I.

We can again return to the example of an amnesiac. It could very well be Rudolf Lingens, who cannot remember who he is and is reading a complete biography about Rudolf Lingens (Perry 1977, 492). In this case, we can interpret Rudolf Lingens before amnesia as the contextualisation of his pure I – he is this, and not some other person, with this name, history, etc. After the accident, however, what is left is empty consciousness with preserved I, i.e., self-reference. The pure I contextualises itself into an ego.²¹ The most important thing to note here is the fact that after being contextualised or modified,

the 'primal I' does not dissolve into its modification. It still remains as 'primal I;' and the contextualized ego constantly refers back to the 'primal I' whose modification it is. In other words, the 'primal I' places itself in a context that is composed of a relationship with many others and finds itself in a contextualized form, but at the same time, it does not lose its fundamental trait (Taguchi 2018, 36).

Rudolf Lingens used 'I' to refer to himself *as* Rudolf Lingens. In that use of the egocentric indexical, in the persona of Rudolf Lingens, there was embedded his pure I. After the amnesia, everything empirical got "removed", yet the I remained. More precisely, the persona of Rudolf Lingens was built upon and sedimented around the core I. The contents of consciousness, his beliefs and knowledge about himself, were lost, but that it is still *he himself* (who cannot remember, who is laying in a hospital bed, etc.), is retained. If that aspect of self-consciousness were also lost – *he would not have woken up from the coma*. There would be no consciousness in that situation, not because of some lack of content, but because the very processes of consciousness or the way in which it functions would have been disrupted.

Precisely this I, pure self-consciousness, that remained is indeclinable and ineliminable, original self-givenness or first-person perspective of consciousness. In every context or situation, it is the same. If in 'perceiving *x*', I refer to myself *as* the one who is perceiving, or as Rudolf Lingens in

²¹ For Taguchi's example, see (Taguchi 2018, 37). This interpretation in some views could be wrong because what Husserl thinks under this contextualisation, and especially habituation, is "deeper" into the structure of consciousness than the level of memories and personality. Still, it suffices for the needs of this paper.

identification, etc., in all those cases, the relation I-myself or I-Me has to be maintained. In the contextual self, or ego, personal I, it is the I that is constantly referring back to itself as indeclinable, pure I. The same kind of self-reference occurred when Rudolf Lingens uttered “I am Rudolf Lingens” and when now, as an amnesiac, utters “I cannot remember who I am”. The I’s self-reference to itself *as itself* is context-independent. The case of the amnesiac is just an extreme case of retaining this ability. I am both a non-contextual primal I and an individual ego among others – *at the same time*, and I experience myself as such.

In Zahavi’s view, when Husserl speaks about this, he does not have in mind the metaphysical status of the I; rather he is “pointing to its indexical nature” (Zahavi 2015, 6). As he mentions further, this does not mean that Husserl speaks of or reduces the I to indexicality, and, in my opinion, goes to show that the use of ‘I’ is deeply rooted in the pure I, as a part of the structure of consciousness.

What is more, according to Husserl, in remembrance, “to what is recollected, what is past [...] belongs also a past ‘I’ of that present, whereas the actual, original ‘I’ is that of immediate presence [...] Thus the immediate ‘I’ [...] constitutes a variational mode of itself as existing (in the mode of having passed)” (Husserl 1970, 185). If I remember a fire, I do not simply remember an event or an object, ‘a fire’ (without a mode in which it was given to me) or a (nonegological) ‘*seeing* a fire’, rather egological ‘*I saw* the fire’ – I remember that *I* have witnessed it (Husserl 2019, 297).²² If this is the case, there is a kind of identification in every mental act with the subject of that state.²³ In our examples, it would mean that ‘There is such a subject as Rudolf Lingens’ followed with ‘*I am Rudolf Lingens*’ and ‘There is such a subject who had witnessed the fire’ followed with ‘*I am that subject*’. If there has to be such a connection between ‘Rudolf Lingens’ and me, then we can assume that it is also necessary for the act of remembrance. In every instance of self-knowledge, there should be implicit self-identification, the same one as in the case of always-returning essential indexical ‘I’, i.e., if I replace “I am making a mess” with “John is making a mess”, then I would believe that ‘*I am John*’, which brings me back at the start (Perry 2001, 144). Or, the iterations *in infinitum* of third-person propositions, until first-person redundant mental representation is reached (Prosser 2015, 227). Indexical statements are impossible without self-consciousness, or propositions with indexical elements are impossible without self-conscious entities. The functioning of the essential indexical ‘I’ would be retained in the very structure of consciousness after amnesia. If some futuristic treatment for amnesia would be to simply reinsert or download memories back into the brain after an

²² Cf. Shoemaker’s example of “I see a canary” and “I saw a canary” (Shoemaker 2001, 85).

²³ For an insightful paper on the topic of I-splitting, and simultaneous differentiation and identification of the I with itself, see (Cavallaro 2020).

accident, then they would have to be in the mode of ‘I’ or that I of the immediate presence, of the Now and Here, would have to be able to recognise (and identify) myself as their subject.

I don’t say ‘someone ate oatmeal for breakfast this morning,’ but rather ‘I ate oatmeal for breakfast this morning.’ By using the first-person pronoun, I am affirming that the identity of the one who ate the oatmeal and the one who is now recalling the episode is phenomenologically given (Zahavi 2021, 272).

In the next section, we will return to the relation of the I and the Now of the actual I.

5. The absolute actuality of the Now and self-referentiality

The I is a subject, but it cannot objectify itself if not to transform itself into an object for itself, i.e., the Me. In Mead’s words, “the self can not appear in consciousness as an ‘I,’ [...] it is always an object, *i.e.*, a ‘me’” (Mead 1913, 374ff). I am a subject, yet I think about myself as an object, thus ceasing to be the actual subject who is thinking.²⁴ The I gets transformed into the Me as it enters the experience or the past. I have my past, but I am not *in* my past as an actual I – in that past, there is a subject, and the subject of that past is *me*, and Me is an objectified I. Nevertheless, the I is always “in the now”; at this moment, it always remains actual. It is the subject, ‘I’ of ‘now’ and ‘here’. Once the connection between the I and the Now is severed, the I can freely move into the past or project itself into the future. But this I is not the actual I of immediate presence. It is a Me – an I without the Now. The I and the Now cannot fall out of synchronisation; they always come together. It is self-referring and actual, as it comes into being at the very moment it refers to itself, i.e., Now.

Having that in mind, Descartes’ *cogito* argument has a rather implicit presupposition. Indeed, if I think I must exist, because thinking, in this case, is self-referential – I am thinking that I *am* thinking, i.e., I am thinking *now*. Self-referentiality implies that that which is referring exists at the same time as that to which it refers, as they are the same thing. My thinking would not lead to the conclusion about my existence if it were not self-referential, which is precisely what is contained in ‘I think’. Lichtenberg’s critique (Lichtenberg 2013, 152), that *cogito* should be *cogitatur* is out of place not because of the disagreement if consciousness *per se* is egocentric or egoless, but because it lacks self-referentiality of thinking.²⁵ Without it, it would mean ‘thinks therefore exists’, which does not follow. There is no thinking (without a self

²⁴ By using ‘I’, we refer to or identify “a thing which is not part of the experience” (Castañeda 2001, 64).

²⁵ Cf. (Zöller 1992).

or ‘I’) which is occurring and will lead to existence. We can here use Lewis’ example of two gods with full propositional knowledge of the worlds they are in, but not in an indexical form (Lewis 1979). I argue that *they would not know if they themselves exist*. They would know something along the lines of ‘God A exists’ and ‘God A thinks’, but nothing would make them utter “I exist”. To that extent, the *cogito* argument in such a world would be false. I exist as long as I think, but I think as long as I can think myself, as I can self-refer, as long as I am *actually* thinking in the present. The validity of evidence is in its very (moment of) execution.

These instances show that there cannot be an actual I “outside” of Now or one that is not in the present. Husserl formulates a similar idea in the *nunc stans* character of the I. *Nunc stans* is usually translated as ‘standing now’ to describe eternity, or what remains unchangeable in the change of time. Husserl uses it to designate the timeless essence of the I. We have pointed out that the pure I must remain identical in every mutability or context. It remains unchangeable in the streaming of life, as always present. The I has temporalisation as its form by which it becomes an enduring, self-constituting, concrete I.

The same ego, now actually present, is in a sense, in every past that belongs to it, another – i.e., as that which was and thus is not now – and yet, in the continuity of its time it is one and the same, which is and was and has its future before it. The ego which is present now, thus temporalized, has contact with its past ego, even though the latter is precisely no longer present: it can have a dialogue with it and criticize it, as it can others (Husserl 1970, 172).

Again, we come across a moment of alterity in one’s consciousness. The content of ‘here’ and ‘now’ can change, but of ‘I’ cannot. I can now say, “On Friday, I was in my office, but I spent my Saturday at home”. Empirically speaking, I am (currently) a person enriched by those two memories or experiences. Still, at the same time, on both of those occasions, I was an I for myself, the pure subject identical to the I speaking at this moment (or, in the example of amnesiac, the one who woke up in a hospital). I have both increased my experience (my history, memory, personality, experience, etc.) and remained the same identical I that is now remembering those experiences. The I is always “now actually present”, as it was on Friday and Saturday. It is temporalising, i.e., being “inserted” into time, having its past and future, and simultaneously persists as the same, identical and immutable I. “To change the conviction is to change ‘oneself.’ But throughout change and unchange the Ego remains identically the same precisely as pole” (Husserl 2000, 324). It remains numerically identical (Husserl 1977, 161). All of my history is present for me, in the Now, and all of my future opens up for me from this moment onwards. Therefore, the *living present* manifests itself as permanently flowing and streaming and, on the other hand, has a character of

or remains *nunc stans* (Kockelmans 1977).²⁶ It is the original, actual I of immediate presence, which is “flowingly-statically present” (paradoxically, permanently present and continuously flowing) and is “enduring through ‘its’ pasts” (Husserl 1970, 185). By being structurally linked with the Now, the I is always actual; it is atemporal yet temporalised.

The I of the past is just a variational mode of the I “as existing”, “as having passed”, i.e., the Me. The I divorced from the Now cannot be an I; rather, it is the Me. ‘I am’ means exactly the same thing as ‘I am now’. In fact, ‘I am’ is the abridged version of ‘I am now’.²⁷ The I experiences itself in the living present, and in this way, it grasps itself, including retention, the now moment and the anticipation. Everything is an object for the I, as the known, for-me or for-I, more precisely, *for-I-now*. It is not the ‘now’ moment of something because nothing empirical has as its property that it is ‘now’ (same as no place is ‘here’ in virtue of being that exact place). It means the continuous, atemporal, absolute now-actuality. On a similar track was Husserl’s student Landgrebe.

‘I am’ in everyday speech, namely, in the natural attitude, means I am here (*Ich bin da*). This here, this *da*, is made up of those two moments: here (*hier*) and now (*jetzt*). If then one applies the phenomenological reduction to this I-am-here, taken naturally, one will find the

²⁶ For Husserl’s notion of *lebendige Gegenwart*, see (Olbromski 2018).

²⁷ There is a curious medical case of Clive Wearing, a man who, after sustaining brain damage, lost the ability to form long-term memories (Sacks 2007). His anterograde amnesia hinders him from having memories longer than a few seconds. In an effort to grasp his situation, his last conscious moment, he keeps a journal where he often writes of having just woken up, as if being in a coma for years. He looks at his watch, writes down the time “5 pm. I am awake now” or “I am *now*”, and in the next instance, a few minutes later, that date is crossed out and replaced by a new time and “I am now *perfectly awake*”, “I am conscious”, commenting, “First diary entry I’ve made consciously”, *in infinitum*. This shows his ability to refer to the present moment, being ‘now’, which for him is the moment of his self-consciousness, his self-reference that he himself is now. Each subsequent crossing of the previous entry is caused by his lack of memory of it, and he is living entirely in the present moment. Each ‘now moment’ is replaced by another, actual or current ‘now moment’. Lines are successions of now’s, the awakenings of his self-consciousness. For him, everything is for the first time, even himself. He does not exist in his past, as he is unable to temporalise himself, to have more than just one moment at a time. His ‘I’ is stuck in the immediate present, in the now. It is a Sisyphus’ work, anguish in trying to grasp the flow of actual ‘now’s’ and the stream of consciousness. In one sense, this case could be compared with Wittgenstein’s idea that “the eternal life belongs to those who live in the present”, for our life has no end in the same way as visual field has no limits (Wittgenstein 2001, 87). In another, Sartre, as if anticipating Wearing’s case, argued that consciousness, as impersonal spontaneity, at “every instant of our conscious lives reveals to us a creation *ex nihilo*. Not a new *arrangement* but a new existence. There is something that provokes anguish for each of us in thus grasping, as it occurs, this tireless creation of existence of which we are not the creators” (Sartre 2004, 27).

transcendental *cogito* as transcendental I-am-here. [...] being transcendental, it is this here (*da*) that makes up the ordinary here and now as such (Yamagata 1998, 13).

This ‘here’ and ‘now’ no longer indicate a ‘here’ and ‘now’ in the world. Heidegger also opens up a similar topic, invoking Humboldt. In ‘I here’, the locative personal designation must be understood in terms of the existential spatiality of Dasein.

W. v. Humboldt has alluded to certain languages which express the ‘I’ by ‘here,’ the ‘thou’ by ‘there,’ and the ‘he’ by ‘over there,’ thus rendering the personal pronouns by locative adverbs, to put it grammatically (Heidegger 2010, 116).

Locative adverbs “have a relation to the I qua Dasein”; they are primarily existential, not categorical, as “determinations of Dasein”. Meaning that they are not primarily locative adverbs or personal pronouns; rather, their “significance is prior to the distinction of locative adverbs and personal pronouns.” At yet another place, ‘here’, ‘over there’ and ‘there’ are not pure locative designations, yet “characteristics of the primordial spatiality of Dasein”. If we interpret Dasein without theoretical distortions, we will see it “immediately in its spatial ‘being-together-with’ the world”. Heidegger also talks about *nearness*, *farness*, *distancing*, *directionality*, and others, all in relation to Dasein (Heidegger 2010, 102ff). Thus, the question of whether the primordial meaning of locative expressions is adverbial or pronominal is eliminated. In this analysis, ‘I’ and ‘here’ are understood as having a deeper foundation, in some sense, as *presence*. There is no immediate differentiation between ‘I’, *me being here*, and ‘here’, *where I am*. Again, ‘here’ is not a property of place; in Heidegger’s words, “The here does not mean the where of something objectively present, but the where of de-distancing being with ... together with this de-distancing” (Heidegger 2010, 105). In Heidegger’s example, we see that the I and Here are amalgamated, and in Husserl’s, that I and Now are.

6. Conclusion: other indexicals as derivative from the I

In van Peursen’s interpretation of Husserl’s idea of the I, it is “the fundamental ultimate point of reference” departing from which a structural declination towards intersubjectivity is possible (Peursen 1959, 38). Which is compatible with Shoemaker’s idea that each person’s system of reference has that person as an “anchoring point” (Shoemaker 2001, 93). And, as we have seen, it is the centre of every context and situation. Only ‘I’ has its referent permanently fixed, formally and contentwise, and not dependent on anything. I cannot mean with ‘I’ one thing one day and another the next. The referent of ‘I’ remains continually the same throughout the life and stream of my consciousness. The ultimate point of reference cannot refer back to itself *as*

anything else except the ultimate point of reference or *to* anything other than itself. Its self-reference is outside of any context or is contextual only in the sense that in self-referring it is that which self-refers. If in ‘perceiving *x*’ I refer to myself as the one who is perceiving, or in remembrance as the one who is remembering, then there ought to be something pure in these cases, i.e., that in all of them I refer to myself as their subject. I refer to myself as the one who refers to himself. The very *act of self-reference is the context*; it is what defines ‘I’ in its entirety.

We could conclude then, as was the paper’s motto, that all indexicals are dependent on the I for their content – ‘now’, ‘here’, even ‘I’ in the empirical sense. ‘Here’ “refers” to the I in a sense that it represents the place where the I is located; it is the Here of the I, and the same holds for the Now, as the moment at which ‘now’ is being uttered. Therefore, they also get their formal meaning, along with the empirical content, through the I, i.e., deduced from the act of self-consciousness. On the objective side of things, my office becomes ‘here’ when I enter it and stops being when I leave; however, from the subjective side, I “carry” my ‘here’ with me, my hereabouts. The difference with ‘now’ is that we are stuck with it; the I is “flowing” with the ‘now’, making it actual. They are meaningless and impossible without ‘I’, for there is no ‘here’ if there is no I here.²⁸ We cannot define them unless “through” the I, and the Now and Here are intertwined amongst themselves and with the I, the latter being the pure designation of the subject.

All indexicals rest on self-consciousness, and self-consciousness on actuality. This could be compared with Perry’s notion that other indexicals can be eliminated in favour of ‘I’ and ‘now’, but that conversely is impossible (Perry 2001, 155). As such, ‘I’ has a referential, ontological and epistemological priority over all other eliminable pronouns and demonstratives (Castañeda 2001); it is also more fundamental than them, and “other sorts of reference are possible only because this sort of self-reference, that involving the use ‘as subject’ of ‘I’, is possible” (Shoemaker 2001, 93). There is no self-consciousness outside of the Now; it is always actual. ‘I’, ‘now’ and ‘here’ are thus all results of the same self-referential or self-conscious act, which further implies that self-consciousness, first-person perspective, and essential indexical cannot be divorced notions. In McGinn’s words, “all the indexicals are linked with *P*”, and ‘I’ comprises the unique perspective a person has on himself – “to think of something indexically is to think of it in relation to *me*, as I am presented to myself in self-consciousness” (McGinn 1983, 17). And also, if ‘I’ does not change its content in all of these contexts, those relations are not simply indexical but self-referential. They are always about the same referent, the subject or a thinker, with the world. According to Millikan and Prosser, there is no indexicality in self-referential mental states, and that the error is a result of conflation of egocentricity with

²⁸ There would be no ‘now’ and ‘here’, and they would amount to nothing because there would be no self-referential system “pinpointing” itself in time and space.

indexicality. Smith's mental state represents Smith standing in relation to the object, and there is nothing indexical there (Prosser 2015, 228). I do not fully agree, for as we have seen in the pure use, and in the example of the amnesiac, Smith's mental state does not have the content 'Smith stands in R to o ', but 'I stand in R to o '. Prosser continues that "their mental states represent each of them as being an x such that x stands in R to o ". However, if that is the case, if both Smith's and Jones's mental state represent them to themselves as x , then we can replace x with 'I' and be back at the start. Alternatively, we can say that Smith's relation to Smith, expressed with 'I' is identical with Jones's relation to Jones, also expressed with 'I', which in turn brings us to the aforementioned pure I.

Furthermore, one could argue that there is only one "real" pronoun and indexical, 'I', all others being derivative and contextual, and having their meaning in relation to the I, by being grounded in self-consciousness – 'you', as posited over and against the I, and together constitutive of 'we' (by saying 'we', I gather others around me); 'he' being opposed but not necessarily present to the I or direct addressee, etc. However, this requires further investigations into the phenomenology of intersubjectivity, i.e., the realisation that another is the Other, *alter ego*, different yet at the same time identical to me. I can address both Smith and Jones with 'you'; however, my use of 'you' implies that they are both 'I' to themselves. It is not simply the case of an indexical, meaning one person in one context and another in the next, being defined solely by the context; but my use of 'you' presupposes something, the lack of which will not motivate me to utilise it in addressing an animal or inanimate object.

In this paper, I aimed to outline the idea that the I, Now, and Here and their egocentric counterparts in language, 'I', 'now', and 'here', are structurally intertwined in self-consciousness. They are constitutive parts of the first-person perspective of the subject that uses egocentric indexicals and, as such, are all but impossible without a self-conscious subject, which is, in turn, impossible if not being able to purely self-refer. All paths lead to the actual I of immediate presence, flowingly-statically present, that is constantly purely self-referring, in which it finds its 'now' and 'here'. Meaningfully using the indexical 'I' does not mean correctly referring to oneself, but to *be* self-conscious; correctly referring already presupposes self-consciousness. Connecting phenomenology with indexicality was intended to give a grounding to the essentiality of the indexical in self-consciousness. This would mean that the essentiality is nothing other than (pure) self-consciousness and the foundation for other indexicals.

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