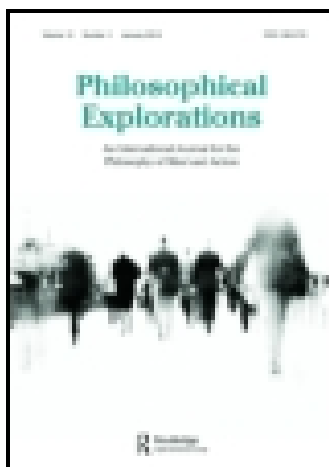


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Matthias Haase<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Institut für Philosophie, Universität Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany

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## Am I You?

Matthias Haase\*

*Institut für Philosophie, Universität Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany*

It has been suggested that a rational being stands in what is called a “second-personal relation” to herself. According to philosophers like S. Darwall and Ch. Korsgaard, being a rational agent is to interact with oneself, to make demands on oneself. The thesis of the paper is that this view rests on a logical confusion. Transitive verbs like “asking”, “making a demand” or “obligating” *can* occur with the reflexive pronoun, but it is a mistake to assume that the reflexive and the non-reflexive use exhibit the same logical grammar. The thesis that they do is in part motivated by the assumption that to show that my relation to you bears the same form as my practical self-relation is to show that, fundamentally, you are not an *object* for me to think about and act on, but a *subject* with whom to think and act together. I argue, to the contrary, that if my addressing you exhibited the same form as a relation I could literally be said to stand in to myself, then the nexus between us would be such that I am irretrievably alienated from you. To allow the possibility of addressing oneself is to assume one of the following accounts of the second-person pronoun. Either one has to follow R. Heck and conceive it as a merely linguistic phenomenon whose content can be analyzed in terms of “the person to whom I’m now speaking”; or one has to internalize the second person and follow Ch. Korsgaard in taking its prior use to be entirely within and independent of its linguistic expression. But to account for the idea of mutual recognition requires a third view according to which address is an act of mind *sui generis* for which linguistic expression is essential.

**Keywords:** second person; mutual recognition; testimony; justice; Darwall; Korsgaard

Imagine, *X* says to *Y*: “You are *F*.” *Y* responds: “Yes, I’m *F*.” Obviously, *X* and *Y* are in agreement about who is *F*. A philosopher might express this point in the following way: You are “you” to me; and I am “you” to you. The question of this paper is: Can I be “you” to me? My answer is: No. – It might be replied, nothing is easier: fix your gaze in the mirror and say the words, “Hey, you!” But my question is whether in doing such things I stand to myself in the very same kind of relation I stand in to you in address.

There are many things you can do to me that I obviously cannot do to myself: pulling me up by my bootstraps, for instance. Marrying is, I take it, another example. The received view on address in general appears to be that we can do it to ourselves. The later Wittgenstein seems to grant this possibility, at least for dialectical purposes. He notes: “A human being can encourage himself, give himself orders, obey, blame and punish himself; he can ask himself a question and answer it” (Wittgenstein 1997, Sec. 243). Traditionally, the man in front of the proverbial mirror takes central stage. In the *Theaetetus*, Plato has Socrates say that thinking is the mind engaging in a dialogue with itself. Judging, then, is speaking, “not aloud to someone else, but silently to oneself” (Plato 1990, 189e). And

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\*Email: Matthias.Haase@uni-leipzig.de

Kant famously holds that reason in its practical deployment is the power to give oneself a law, which, as a finite being, one represents in the form of an “imperative”. The talk of self-legislating is often suspected to be paradoxical, sometimes rejected as patently absurd. With regard to the entries on Wittgenstein’s list, it is hard to deny that they figure as reflexive verbs in ordinary parlance. It seems to me that there is nothing wrong with either, as such. Here, in any case, I only take issue with a specific rendering. According to this rendering, the deployment of those transitive verbs exhibits the *same* logical nexus whether or not their grammatical object is a reflexive pronoun. This, I say, is confusion.

Recently, it has been suggested that the rendering is needed to make sense of the very idea of morality. Say, *X* demands of *Y*: “You must  $\Phi$ !” And let the “must” express the force of the relevant kind of deontic necessity. In this case, the following is said to hold: *Y*’s response, “You are right, I must  $\Phi$ ”, is only sincere if *Y* adopts the *very* perspective from which *X* spoke and makes the demand on herself – that is, if she, as it were, thinks to herself, “You must  $\Phi$ !” or “ $\Phi$ !” And her having the capacity to do so is supposed to be the condition of her being subject to this kind of necessity. Stephen Darwall endorses a version of this thought. He puts it like this:

To intelligibly hold someone responsible, we must assume that she can hold herself responsible in her own reasoning and thought. And to do that she must be able to take up a second-person standpoint on herself and make and acknowledge demands of herself from that point of view. (Darwall 2006, 23)

According to Darwall, being subject to moral obligations requires the ability to represent them in the right kind of practical perspective. And to do the latter means to be “motivated by internally addressed demands” (23). This is not to be read as a metaphor. Darwall insists that the second-personal standpoint is “irreducible” (12). And this is supposed to mean that it is fundamentally different from both the third-person perspective and the first-person perspective. Christine Korsgaard appears to agree with Darwall on this point. In a commentary on his work, she writes: “I think that every rational agent stands in what Darwall would call a second-personal relation to herself – she has a second-personal voice within” (Korsgaard 2007, 11). In the respective passage in her book, Korsgaard arrives at a formulation that explicitly rules out interpreting the remark as an analogy. We are told that for rational beings like us, the following holds: “acting is quite literally interacting with yourself” (Korsgaard 2009, 202).

It belongs to the ambitions of both authors to provide an account of the special status that another human being has among what one encounters in the world and that traditionally bears the title “dignity of a person”. Ultimately, the talk of self-address is supposed to be in the service of explaining the special way of relating to each other *as* persons that tends to appear under the headline “mutual recognition”. The idea is that to show that my relation to you bears the same form as my practical self-relation is to show that, fundamentally, you are not an *object* for me to think about and act on, but a *subject* with whom to think and act together (see Darwall 2006, 243; Korsgaard 2009, 202). I argue, to the contrary, that if my addressing you exhibited the same form as a relation I could literally be said to stand in to myself, then the nexus between us would be such that I am irretrievably alienated from you.

We may distinguish two ways of talking about self-address. Richard Heck suggests that “you” can be analyzed in terms of “the person to whom I’m now speaking”.<sup>1</sup> Given this formula, the following should count as an act of addressing oneself. Enter the man known from the familiar discussions on the first person. In some complicated arrangement

of mirrors he sees someone whose pants are on fire. And so he shouts: “Your pants are on fire!” What he does not notice is that he is that someone. Obviously, this is not what Darwall and Korsgaard have in mind when they speak about standing in a “second-personal relation to oneself”. Since this nexus is presented as the perspective from which one acts if all goes well, it has to be regarded as somehow including the subject’s awareness of her act as *self*-address. The subject of morality is supposed to address herself *as herself* – and not *as other*, as our man in hot pants did.

Using the notations familiar from the literature on the first person, one might try to characterize the envisioned moral self-address with the following formula: that in addressing herself the subject must know that *she*\* or *she herself* is the one who is addressed (see Geach 1957; Castaneda 1966). But this will not be sufficient. Consider Aristotle’s remark that the art of healing is a principle of change in something other or in oneself *as other* (see Aristotle 1924, 1019a15–18). A doctor who treats her foot knowing that it is her own would not be a counterexample. The point is this: as far as this form of activity is concerned, it is a *mere accident* when agent and patient are the same person. That it is the doctor’s own foot that needs treatment can, accordingly, only be a *fact on which she acts*. It cannot be like that in the alleged act of self-address. If this is to be the perspective *from which one acts*, the subject’s knowledge that *she*\* is addressed must somehow be an intrinsic feature of her act of address.

This sort of characterization is precisely what Heck rejects. He writes:

Consider the indexical “you”. As a matter of its standing meaning, an utterance of “you” refers to the person addressed in that utterance. But in the sense that there is such a thing as a self-conscious, first-person belief, there is no such thing as a second-person belief, or so it seems to me. Of course, I can identify someone descriptively, as the person to whom I am now speaking, and may have beliefs whose contents involve that descriptive identification. But that is not what I mean to deny: I mean to deny that there is any such thing as an essentially indexical second-person belief. The phenomenon of the second-person is a linguistic one, bound up with the fact that utterances, as we make them, are typically directed to people, not just made to the cosmos. (If there were speakers of a language who never directed their utterances to their fellows, they would have no use for the second-person.) The word “you” has no correlate at the level of thought: if not, then the contents of the beliefs we express using the word “you” have very little to do with its standing meaning. (Heck 2002, 16)

As Heck has it, the second person is just a linguistic phenomenon. In the framework he puts forward, there is no space for the idea of being “motivated by internally addressed demands”.

The scenario of soliloquy that Heck invokes in passing – “speakers of a language who never [direct] their utterances to their fellows” – resembles a thought experiment Wittgenstein introduces right after the remark I quoted at the outset. Wittgenstein writes: “We could even imagine human beings who spoke only in monologue; who accompanied their activities by talking to themselves.” Those people have a language. And we are told that an observer could come to understand what they are saying. They just never speak to each other. Considering this thought experiment for a moment will help give us an overview of the accounts on offer.

One way to interpret the scenario is to hold that for them language is just a “vehicle of thought”, never a “means of communication”. Their speech is just a “thinking out loud”.<sup>2</sup> Thus understood, they would indeed have “no use for the second-person” – just as Heck imagines. On closer inspection, it turns out that Heck’s account of address depends, in fact, on the intelligibility of this scenario. The proposed analysis of the second-person

pronoun would be circular, if it turned out that *speaking* could not be rendered intelligible independently of the thought that this is an act that is paradigmatically addressed to a person. To avoid circularity, what is needed is some notion of speaking that is independent of the concept of communication and that yields the relevant concept *speaking to someone* – given that it is suitably combined with the equally independent concepts *interpreting the thoughts of an observed other* and *intentional activity directed at an object*.<sup>3</sup>

A competing conception of the second-person pronoun can be characterized as arising from an alternative interpretation of the thought experiment. It rests on a *literal* reading of the preceding remark about the possibility of asking oneself a question and answering it. Against this background, one might think that the monologue that accompanies their activities is not undirected, but self-directed. So they have a use for “you”. They do not talk to each other. But each of them talks, quite literally, *to herself*. Following Socrates’ hint that such things might also be done “silently” when one does them “to oneself”, this rendering of the scenario points to an account of the second person that is, as it were, the reverse of the one Heck puts forward. For now it looks like linguistic expressions are not even necessary for the act of address. It can be performed entirely *within*. This is the view Korsgaard proposes. She writes: “Thinking [...] is just talking to yourself. And since meanings are public, talking is just thinking in the company of others” (Korsgaard 2009, 197). What one does in addressing another in speech, one can already do in one’s head to oneself.

The talk of the “public” character of “meanings” is, of course, a reference to what has come to be called Wittgenstein’s “private language argument”. In fact, the function of the thought experiment in Wittgenstein’s text is to get the relevant sense of “private” into focus. Whereas the language of those monological creatures was said to be one that could be understood by an observer, what will turn out to be inconceivable in the subsequent sections is the idea of a language whose words refer to something that “can only be known to the person speaking” so that no one else could ever come to understand them. It is an interesting question how the resulting notion of publicity is related to the scenario that helped define the relevant notion of privacy. Korsgaard uses the term “public” to mean *communicable to others*; it does not entail any *actual* communication with others (see Korsgaard 1996, 136–137). Understood in this way, it is compatible with the possibility of monological creatures.<sup>4</sup> On her view, one can address oneself independently of *actually* addressing, or being addressed by, others. The original home of the second person is thus the inner realm of self-address.

I want to reject both views in favor of a third. In the abstract, it can be introduced by determinate negation of the two just sketched. Pace Heck, the second-person pronoun is not *just* a linguistic phenomenon; it marks a kind of thinking *sui generis*. Pace Korsgaard, this form of thinking is only exhibited by entering into a relation to an actual other and therefore necessarily involves the production of written, spoken, gestured or otherwise materialized sign tokens. This is how Reid defines what he calls a “social operation of mind” (2010, 330): it is an act of mind that requires for its reality the participation of another thinker and is, therefore, an act of mind that is necessarily expressed in material signs.

There is *a* sense in which one can ask oneself a question and answer it. It does not follow that this is the *same* sense in which one can ask another and get a response. On the face of it, the former is just another way of saying that one wonders, say, whether *p* and then settles the question. And that formulation does not invoke the picture of an interaction with oneself. In any case, the application of the concept *asking someone* presupposes the intelligibility of the scenario in which the one who answers *informs* the one who asked – by telling her, by teaching her or by giving testimony to her. And if it is to be possible for

$X$  to inform  $Y$  in one of these ways, it has to hold that  $X$  already knows before the exchange so that after the exchange  $Y$  might say that she knows, because  $X$  told her. There is also the reflexive use of “informing”: “I should inform myself about the developments in the park”,  $Y$  might say. But this does not mean that there is a second person within whom she intends to tell or from whom she intends to learn. That is not how the words are used in English. To inform another is to impart knowledge. To inform oneself is to acquire knowledge – and not by giving testimony to oneself.<sup>5</sup> Functioning as the generic term for such things as teaching another or giving testimony to another, the transitive verb “informing someone” signifies a relation between two subjects that connects them as agent and patient. It expresses a concept of transaction, as I shall say. As the grammatical subject of “ $Y$  informed herself” does not refer to someone who already knew before the act, its grammatical object does not signify the recipient of a transmission. In its reflexive use, “informing” does not express a concept of transaction.

One may object that they are surely not just homonyms. But this is beside the point. Consider “winning”. There is a sense in which I can win when I play Solitaire. But when I do, I have not beaten myself and have not been defeated by myself. There is no place for *winning against someone* in this game. So appealing to it is useless when you want to illustrate the concept of a competitor. Similarly, you will not always find an informant where the verb “informing” has application.<sup>6</sup> Of course, observations about English will not decide the philosophical question whether it is *ever* possible to impart knowledge to oneself. However, it is hard to see what that could come to. If I do not know, then I am not the one to ask. And if I do, there is no point in telling me. On the face of it, “I told myself” can no more be an answer to the question how I know, then “I gave it to myself” can explain how I came to have this pen.

Concepts of transaction require for their application a distinction between agent and patient. So in order to make a case for the reflexive use, one has to situate the respective version of the distinction *within* the subject. The crucial point for my present purpose concerns the implications this has for the relevant concept of transaction. Shah and Velleman, for instance, suggest that we know our standing beliefs through the following procedure: “by posing the question *whether p* and seeing what one is spontaneously inclined to answer” (2005, 506). To ensure that the results of this procedure are not falsified by any present doxastic deliberation, the question is supposed to figure as a “brute stimulus”, “rather than an invitation to reasoning” (506). In the resulting picture, there is a distinction between the thinker considered as the active subject of reasoning or doxastic deliberation and the thinker considered as the bearer of standing beliefs.<sup>7</sup> In this way, it becomes possible to speak of an interaction of the thinker with herself. But the very move that opens this logical space rules out the possibility of conceiving of the “response” as an act of reason; it was defined as the manifestation of a reliable responsive disposition. If *that* were the sense in which you and I ask each other questions and answer them, then we would be *automata* to each other.

Alternatively, one might think that time introduces the relevant distinction. Say, I write a note in case I forget. Later I read it and remember. Does not that amount to giving testimony to myself? But if anything is clear about the envisioned relation between my “past self” and my “present self”, then it is this: their minds can never meet; mutual recognition is not for them. So given that that is what giving testimony to myself would amount to, my receiving yours better not exhibit the same form of relatedness, if our minds are to ever meet. To the extent that the concept *imparting knowledge to someone* is rendered so as to have a reflexive use, it cannot figure as a resource for understanding the idea of having a dialogue with a person.

This is not to deny that it is possible to write a note in order to remind myself, nor to insist that this shows no parallels to your writing one for me. This has to do with the fact that the second-person pronoun cannot be understood through reflection on theoretical reason alone. Teaching and testimony presuppose that we relate to each other as persons (see Moran 2005). But one cannot explain what it is to do that by appealing to these acts. For the relation exhibited by the transaction of informing does not persist. Rather, as a result of your imparting the knowledge that *p* to me, there is, epistemologically speaking, no difference anymore between us with respect to *p*. As knowers of *this* fact we are interchangeable. Once the knowledge has been transmitted, it does not matter who acquired it first. When you forget, I can inform you about what I learned from you.<sup>8</sup> For the source of my knowledge is the same as yours – namely, the act through which you acquired knowledge and which your testimony made available to me as the ground of mine. In this respect, testimony is like memory. They are not sources of knowledge, but the two modes of its persistence: the intra- and the interpersonal one. The difference between them is explained by the concept of a person.

To understand what it is to relate to each other as persons, one has to investigate a form of relation that holds us apart while connecting us with each other. The latter kind of interpersonal nexus can be found on the side of practical reason. One of its guises is the kind of demand that persons can make on each other – the one about which Darwall and Korsgaard claim that it presupposes the capacity to make them on oneself in the same way.

Another proponent of the view appears to be P.F. Strawson. In the course of arguing that the very idea of freedom is tied to what he calls the “participant” view within the “social” relations between the members of a moral community, he claims that the very idea of the “reactive attitudes” that constitute those relations is only intelligible on the assumption that they are also adopted in relation to oneself. Strawson writes:

[...] the picture is not complete unless we consider also the correlates of these attitudes on the part of those on whom the demands are made, on the part of the agents. Just as there are personal and vicarious reactive attitudes associated with demands on others for oneself and demands on others for others, so there are self-reactive attitudes associated with demands on oneself for others. (2008, 16)

One can make a demand on one’s own behalf. And one can make a demand in the name of another. Strawson suggests that, *just in the same way*, the demand can either be addressed to oneself or to another. The proposed picture appears to be this. There is the three-place relational predicate “\_\_ makes a demand on \_\_ for \_\_” whose argument places can be filled in different ways while retaining the same logical grammar.<sup>9</sup> In the form of a conversation, the three options Strawson mentions can be written in the following way: (1) “*I make a demand on you for myself*”; (2) “*I make a demand on you for her*”; (3) “*I make a demand on myself for her*”. These three sentences are supposed to exhibit the same form of relatedness, such that the differences lie only in the *relata*.

Once they are presented in this way, it seems natural to wonder about the following option that Strawson does not mention: (4) “*I make a demand on myself for myself*.” Can I protest against myself on my own behalf? This last one might sound a little excessive to the innocent. On the face of it, however, it looks like it will have to be part of the proposed picture. As Strawson points out, the paradigmatic case is the reaction to injury. And on closer inspection, it is clear that we are talking about a certain kind of “injury”: the one that has to do with the special status that a human being has among what one encounters in the world. The thesis that, to be “complete”, the account must include “self-reactive”

attitudes on the part of those on whom demands are made, points to this status. The thought might be put like this. To enter into the three-place relation at all, one must, in virtue of one's nature, be such that one could also take its other places. The one for whom a demand is made is the kind of being that could, in principle, also make and receive demands.

In other words, the idea of making a demand *for* or *on behalf of* someone belongs to the idea of a certain form of obligation. Arguably, I have an obligation to not pollute the environment. It does not follow that I owe this *to* the environment. It is for this reason that you cannot demand anything of me on its behalf. Your obligation to not kill me, by contrast, is not just a duty you have *with respect to* me, but one that you have *to* me. This is why it is possible for someone to fight on my behalf. These two cases exhibit, as one might put it, two different forms of normativity: a *monadic* and a *bipolar* or *dyadic* one. Monadic normative thought brings, in principle, an unlimited multiplicity of individuals under a general standard that sorts each of their acts into those that are wrong and those that are right. Bipolar normative thought, by contrast, groups the subjects in its domain into pairs and relates them *to each other* in such a way that they either *wrong each other* or *do right by each other*.<sup>10</sup> The traditional name for this form of normativity is justice. Here, the obligation or *duty* I have to you to (not)  $\Phi$  is identical with your *right* towards me that I (do not)  $\Phi$ . And the latter is just your power to make the demand on me to (not)  $\Phi$ .

So if I can make a demand on myself in just the *same* way as you can make a demand on me, then it would seem to follow that I can obligate *myself* and, in consequence, have an obligation *to myself*. At least, Darwall and Korsgaard seem to be committed to this claim. Darwall tries to develop the concept *owing something to someone* out of the bare idea of addressing someone. The ambition is to show that the fundamental moral obligations we have to each other can be derived from the counterfactual presuppositions of the act of address: it is said to presuppose that the parties are free and equal and thus stand in reciprocal relations of rights and duties to one another (see Darwall 2006, 114). So if I can, literally, address myself, then it would seem to follow that I stand to myself in all those relations that are said to be presupposed in every act of address. In the case of Korsgaard's theory, it is not just an implication. Rather, it seems to be part of the official program to explain my deontic relations to others by modeling them on my self-relation. She describes her project like this: "[...] some duties really are owed *to* others, we may be obligated by others, I will argue, in much the same way that we may be obligated by ourselves" (Korsgaard 1996, 134).

In this connection, Korsgaard appeals to Kant's derivation of the concept of duties to oneself in *The Metaphysics of Morals*. There we are told that there have to be such duties if there are to be any duties at all. For, "I can recognize that I am under obligation to others only insofar as I at the same time put myself under obligation" (6:417). For the purposes of this paper, the crucial question is whether the reflexive and non-reflexive uses of the verb "obligating" exhibit the same form of relatedness. In the way Korsgaard presents it, the argument depends on the assumption that they do (2007, 11). But, as we have seen, it cannot be taken for granted that the reflexive and the non-reflexive use of a verb exhibit the same logical grammar. Otherwise it could be argued that, since one cannot inform another unless one informs oneself, every act of imparting knowledge presupposes that one first gives testimony to oneself. In other words, there is no reason to deny that there is *a* sense in which one can make demands on oneself, obligate oneself or give a law to oneself. But it does not follow that it is the very same sense in which one can do such things to, suffer them from, others. Perhaps the former are just different ways of saying that one adopts a principle for action or makes a resolution. These formulations do not seem to invoke the image of a second person within to whom I am obligated as a result.

It should be uncontroversial that there is a limit to the self-application of the concepts articulating our practical relations to others. Take promising, for example. For the obligation to be created, the promise must be accepted by the addressee. It is a condition that the recipient, *Y*, wants what *X* promises to do. This entails that *Y* can release *X* from the obligation if she does not want it anymore. Otherwise *X*'s act of promising would bind not just *X*'s, but also *Y*'s will. If you could not release me from the obligation I have to you in virtue of promising to cut your hair tomorrow, *my* promising would obligate *you* to getting your hair cut by me. Of course, we might promise each other to have a hair-cutting session tomorrow. But if my promise could bind your will, your acceptance would not be required in the first place. Now, suppose I venture to promise myself to cut my hair on Monday. Can I refuse to accept the offered promise? And once I accept it, can I release myself from the obligation? And how would that be different from simply changing my mind? Or let us say it is Tuesday now. So I am late. And I only have myself to blame. Should I apologize to myself? And if I do, should I forgive myself? How do I make myself trust myself again? Perhaps I have already damaged my relation to myself too severely and it is time to part ways. The last bit is patent nonsense. No one would be left after that divorce. The other verbs are, in fact, used reflexively in ordinary parlance. But whatever the proper interpretation of such talk might be – that much should be clear: the application of such concepts as *forgiving someone* or *apologizing to someone* presupposes the intelligibility of the question whether justice has been done to the other.

Aristotle says that one cannot wrong oneself and thus cannot do right by oneself either. Justice is a relation that a subject cannot enter into with herself. In the case of acts done out of the desire to have more than others, it seems fairly obvious. One can fake it. But one cannot *really* steal from oneself. The philosopher explains it like this: “For if one could, the same person could lose and get the same thing at the same time. But this is impossible; on the contrary, what is just or unjust must always involve more than one person.”<sup>11</sup> Intuitively, the point is not restricted to what is *externally* “mine” and “yours”. It belongs to the obligations I have to you that I need your permission to move your limbs or to touch you. But if there is a problem with touching myself, giving myself permission surely will not help. The same goes for suicide, at least according to Aristotle: when *X* kills himself out of anger he does something wrong. And he does commit an injustice. But the wronging is against the *polis* and not against himself. It could not be. As he kills himself willingly, he willingly suffers being killed. And “no one willingly suffers injustice” (1138a12–13).

Famously, Kant claims that suicide is a violation of a “duty to oneself”. Two points are worth noting in this connection. First, it should give one pause that in the very section in which the doctrine is stated, Kant cites with approval the ancient formula just rehearsed.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, he does not take it for granted that it makes sense to speak of duties to oneself. To the contrary, we are told that, without further elucidation, it will inevitably appear as a “self-contradictory concept”.<sup>13</sup> Let us begin with the latter point. The talk of obligating risks becoming empty, if the one who obligates and the one who gets obligated are identical – for the one who puts a subject under an obligation can also release this subject from the obligation. But if the one who has the power to release is the same as the one who is under the obligation, then there is no obligation. There must be a difference between the agent and the patient if the concept of obligating is to have application. Yet how can there be this difference when it is oneself who one is obligating? To solve the “apparent antinomy”, as Kant calls it, some sort of distinction or division within the agent has to be introduced.

Even though neither Darwall nor Korsgaard explicitly discuss the issue in terms of a solution to a threatening paradox, they both work with a distinction between the addresser and the addressee of the act of self-address. In the picture Darwall proposes, the two are

distinguished as general and particular. We are told that to make a moral demand on oneself is to adopt a standpoint that abstracts from anything that distinguishes oneself from others: “[ . . . ] the second-personal perspective of a member of the moral community is as much one’s own as it is anyone else’s” (Darwall 2006, 35). Given the assumption that there is, strictly speaking, *no individuality* on the side of the addresser of moral demands, it would seem that there should be no difference between “you”, “me” and “us” in that perspective. So why should it be called “second-personal”? The elevated standpoint of the moral view is said to be a counterfactual presupposition of the very act of addressing another in any mundane way that can be imagined. Somewhat strangely, however, we are not told why one has to address anyone in the first place. This is peculiar. It would seem that the necessity of morality cannot be derived from the presuppositions of an act that one can simply avoid performing (see Korsgaard 2007, 21–22).

Darwall explicitly denies the possibility of showing that engaging in acts of address is constitutive of rational agency.<sup>14</sup> His response to the difficulty introduces the thought that those who do not adopt the second person standpoint will fail to “appreciate” the “reasons” that those who do can recognize (see Darwall 2006, 277). In consequence of this move, the idea of a moral demand being “in force” gets freed from the requirement that it is *actually* issued by anyone. Darwall writes:

[ . . . ] we might think of moral demands as being “in force” if members of “the moral community” are prone to make them. But the moral community as I understand it is not any actual community composed of actual human beings. It is like Kant’s idea of a “realm of ends”, a regulative ideal that we employ to make sense of our ethical thought and practice. So, as I am seeing it, it takes neither an explicit actual demand nor a demand that is implicit in actual human beings being prone to make it, either individually or collectively, in order for a claim or demand to be in force. The demand is made by the “moral community” and by all of us insofar as we are members. (2006, 64–65)

The moral community in scare quotes is *not* an “actual community”; it is an “ideal”. And we “make” the relevant “demand” only “insofar as we are members” of this *ideal* community – that is, only insofar as we act *ideally*. Whether we, *in fact*, ever act in this way is another question. For a “moral demand” to be “in force” means that, *if* we were to act like representative members of that *ideal* community, we *would* address a demand with the relevant content to ourselves and everyone else. Read in this way, the thesis that moral obligations have the form of “second-personal” demands is compatible with there being moral obligations without anyone ever *actually* demanding anything of anyone, whether of another or of oneself.<sup>15</sup>

There can hardly be an *act* of address without anyone making it. Accordingly, *content* and *force* of moral “demands” have to be regarded as strictly independent from the aspect of *address*. But then it looks like Heck was right in claiming that the latter has “no correlate at the level of thought”. And given Heck’s account of the second-person pronoun, the standpoint it signifies cannot be the perspective from which one acts. For we have seen that in Heck’s framework, it is not ruled out that a man might address himself without realizing that it is *he\** or *he himself* who is addressed thereby.

Korsgaard presents her account as providing an argument for the inescapability of address. On her view, to be a person is to address oneself as one. She writes:

[ . . . ] the second-person standpoint is unavoidable, because I do not have to discover, by making and responding to demands on others, that I am answerable to myself. That fact is made clear to me by the voice of the second person within. (Korsgaard 2007, 23)

In the case of *obligating someone*, it is supposed to hold that doing the relevant thing to oneself is conceptually “prior” to doing it to, or suffering it from, others (11). For the former can be shown to be constitutive of rational agency, whereas the latter depends on something I have to “discover” – namely, that there are in fact others. The first deployment of “you” is in the original act of self-address. The concept of this inner nexus is supposed to provide the model for the philosophical account of the relations to others. It is the same concept – *obligating someone* – that is deployed. The only difference is that the domain of its deployment gets expanded and the relation thereby externalized. But whether it is the second person *within* or the one *without*, the task remains the same: “[...] for a creature who must constitute her identity [...] acting is quite literally interacting with yourself. The requirements for unifying your agency internally are the same as the requirements for unifying your agency with others” (Korsgaard 2009, 202).

Korsgaard’s version of a distinction between agent and patient that is required for the reflexive use of “obligating” is introduced through the notion of self-constitution. In the abstract, the picture is this. Self-consciousness is born through an original split within. In stepping back from desires or inclinations I find within me and in asking for reasons to act accordingly, I “divide” myself. I reconstitute myself as a whole person by making demands on myself and thereby unifying myself (see Korsgaard 2009, 130). Now, on the face of it, there appear to be different candidates for the parties to be brought into unity. Some passages seem to invoke the idea of selves at different times (see Korsgaard 2009, 198 and 202). But it is clear that this could not help solve Kant’s “apparent antinomy”. If every act of “obligating myself” constituted a “past self” to whom I am obligated and who in virtue of having receded into the past can never release me from my obligation, then there could be no such thing as changing one’s mind in such matters. If this were so, we probably all would have ruined our lives by our adolescent resolutions.

According to the official story, addresser and addressee are distinguished through the contrast between reason and sensibility. However, there appear to be different ways of interpreting this contrast. One of them suggests that they are both “parts” – “conscious inhabitants of my body” – that could, in principle, be grafted onto another body (see Korsgaard 2009, 199–200). Other passages suggest that they are related as “whole” to “part” (see Korsgaard 2009, 129–130). Finally, there is Kant’s own proposed solution: the distinction between the “phenomenal” and “noumenal” self (6:418). Kant’s view on the matter comes out when he discusses the principle for the division into “man’s duties to himself as an animal being” and “man’s duties to himself merely as a moral being”. There it is stressed that the distinction between “sensible being” and “intelligible being” cannot be conceived as a distinction between two “different substances” (6:419). That is, it is not that there is a brute within with whom the thinker interacts. Rather, according to the rendering Kant proposes, both terms refer to *one and the same individual*: the human being as a whole. It is just that it is considered in two different respects or under two different attributes: under its “formal” and under its “material” aspect.<sup>16</sup>

Each of these renderings of the distinction reason and sensibility within the subject leads to its own specific problems. But the crucial difficulty, it seems to me, applies to all of them. With respect to the relation between reason and sensibility, Aristotle grants that one might speak of a “sort of justice”. But in the very sentence in which this way of talking is allowed, there are two clauses that restrict its significance. We are told that this is only “by similarity and transference” – that is, this is not a *literal* use of the word “justice”. Furthermore, it is said that this is *not a* proper relation between equals, as true justice would require, but rather a relation between “ruler and ruled” (see Aristotle 1999, 1138b6–9). Reason and sensibility are related to each other as the one who commands

and the one who obeys. Mutual recognition as free and equal is not a possibility for them. So if it is to be a possibility for you and me, then the nexus between us cannot exhibit the *same* form as those alleged second-personal relations within each of us.

Kant is aware of the difficulty. When it comes to the concept of right, he agrees with Aristotle's point: it describes a nexus into which one cannot enter by oneself; there has to be an actual second person. The first condition of Kant's definition of *right* is that it has to do "only with the external and indeed practical relation of one person to another" (6:230). Still, one might think that the notion of right, and the idea of reciprocity it entails, can be accounted for in terms of the contrast between "internal" and "external hindrances" to one and the same form of autonomous activity or self-legislation. However, the difficulty is this. The idea of *X* having a right against *Y* that she does not  $\Phi$  requires the intelligibility of the scenario in which *X* stops *Y*'s  $\Phi$ -ing *directly* through a protest of the form, "You can't  $\Phi$ ; this is my ...", such that *Y* refrains from  $\Phi$ -ing because she recognizes *X*'s demand addressed to her.<sup>17</sup> This requires that in refraining from  $\Phi$ -ing *Y* acts from the very demand that *X* makes on her and that *Y* would express with the sentence "I can't  $\Phi$ ; this is your ...". In this case, the relation between *X* and *Y* includes, as one might put it, their thinking towards each other through its terms.

Given the accounts discussed so far, this will seem impossible. When the second pronoun is reduced to a linguistic phenomenon and analyzed in third-personal terms, as Heck proposes, then it follows that *Y* has to form an intention in the face of what *X* says. In consequence, *X*'s demand can only be a *fact on which Y acts* and never the *perspective from which she acts*.<sup>18</sup> If, on the other hand, the second-person pronoun is internalized, as Korsgaard suggests, then there is no space any more for the other in this perspective. For the claim was that the recognition of a practical necessity is represented in the second-personal perspective by addressing an imperative to *oneself*. And that is supposed to be the perspective from which one acts. So in the present scenario, *Y* would have to say (or think) to herself: "You can't  $\Phi$  ...". Now it is impossible for her to represent, within the same act, the other – the source of this necessity – second personally. As this demand is not addressed to *X*, she has to deploy the *third person* for the second half of the statement: "because it is *his* ...". So what she ultimately *acts from* is not the demand *X* made on her, but a posture of mind that is, as it were, turned away from him. Accordingly, it will not be true to say that *X*'s protest stopped her *directly*; it will be just a fact on which she acts.

The puzzle would dissolve if we were to make space for what Reid calls "social operations of mind". By contrast to their "solitary" correlates, they require, *as acts of mind*, the "intercourse with some other intelligent being who bears a part in them". And whereas the former can be "complete without being expressed", in the case of the latter "the expression is essential". That is to say, when one performs an act of this kind, the fact in the world, the representing act of mind and its material expression are *one reality*. As Reid points out, this entails that the relevant act of mind depends for its very existence on the other's uptake: it "cannot exist [ ... ] without being known to the other" (2010, 330). Conceived in this way, the act of address is a relation between two individuals that only holds insofar as the poles of the relation think towards one another in its terms. Accordingly, the second-personal act of mind is, literally, *an act for two*: my addressing you is only real through your addressing me in return. The notion of a person elucidated by appeal to such acts is what Fichte calls a "reciprocal concept" (Fichte 2000, 45): one only falls under it by addressing one another through it.

This would not be to deny that having, say, learned to play Chess with a partner, I can reenact this kind of transaction on my own: by switching between two roles. This might be a very useful training. Still, it will not be competition with myself. It is derivative of and

dependent on the real game played with another and points to it at all times. Against this background, one might arrive at a reading of the Socratic formula about thinking that is, as it were, the reverse of the one Korsgaard puts forward. According to this alternative reading, thinking is indeed the mind talking to itself. But this inner dialogue is derivative of and dependent on actual communication with others. Once I have been in conversation with you, I can, as it were, reenact such exchange in soliloquy. Still, when I do so, this does not involve the imparting of knowledge that gives sense to the very idea of asking and answering questions. So too on the practical side of things, once I stand in relations of mutual recognition to others, I can, as it were, see myself through their eyes and, if you will, even adopt the standpoint of a representative member of the “moral community” towards myself. Still, in doing so I am not claiming rights against myself. That is for you to do.

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### Notes

1. Heck characterizes the second person as “a special kind of demonstrative, one that always refers to the addressee” (2002, 20, FN 39).
2. Compare Section 331 where we get the thought experiment of people who can only “think aloud” – like some people can only read while uttering the words.
3. These are, of course, the very conditions that the Gricean account of meaning and communication aims to satisfy. In fact, the reverse holds as well: the Gricean account of communication presupposes the possibility of a Heckian account of the second-person pronoun. The proposed analysis of *meaning* and *communication* would be hopelessly circular if the second person pronoun would mark an irreducible communicative act of mind and could not be eliminated from the thoughts that the account ascribes to speaker and hearer. On this point, see also (Thompson 2014; Rödl 2007, Chap. 6).
4. That Wittgenstein’s own view on the matter is more intricate is suggested by Section 268 of the *Philosophical Investigations*.
5. We could, of course, imagine a use of ‘giving testimony to oneself’ that functions just like ‘informing oneself’.
6. The latter case is admittedly more intricate than the first, since *Y* might inform herself by asking *X* to inform her. But she might also go to take a look for herself so that the resulting knowledge is by observation rather than testimony.
7. For a critique of this distinction between *forming* and *having* beliefs and the picture of self-consciousness that comes with it, see Boyle (2011).
8. This shows that it is a mistake to think that the interpersonal relation of the act of imparting is inscribed into the bit of knowledge imparted such that my current knowing rests on you. (For a view along these lines, see McMyler (2011).) If I would have to defer to you in this way, my knowledge would vanish when you forget. Furthermore, making it a condition of knowledge by testimony that the one is in the position to name, point to or even remember one’s informant would disqualify most things we know by hearsay.
9. As there is also the demanded action, we are actually dealing with a four-place predicate. I leave this aside here.
10. On this distinction, see Thompson (2004).
11. Aristotle (1999, 1138a19-21). The analogous point holds when one connects, as Aristotle does in the next paragraph, the idea of justice with the idea of retaliation. When the one who inflicts is the same as the one suffers, the act of injustice would be its own retaliation.
12. See Kant (1996, 6:422): “It seems absurd to say that a human being could wrong himself (*volenti non fit iniuria*).”

13. See Kant (1996, 6:417). Contemporary Neo-Kantians are often less worried about the concept of duties to oneself (see, for instance, Velleman 2006). For a critical discussion of the latter conception of self-related obligations, see Vogler (2014).
14. Darwall takes it that one's "dignity" as a person must be independent from what anyone else is *actually* doing (2006, 144). Furthermore, he thinks that other forms of agency cannot be ruled out (see Darwall 2006, 287).
15. See also Lavin's contribution in this volume.
16. The point comes up again when Kant argues that it is a confusion of the "concepts of reflection" to think that obligations could be had to anything other than *rational animals*. We are told that what occurs on the right side of the 'owing to'-nexus has to meet two conditions: it must be a whole *person* and it must be "given in experience" (6:442).
17. On the connection between concept of right and stopping modals, see Anscombe (1981, 142).
18. On this point, see Thompson (2013, 247).

### Notes on contributors

Matthias Haase is Assistant Professor at the Universität Leipzig. He received his PhD at the Universität Potsdam (2007). He taught at the Universität Basel (2006–2010) and was a Visiting Scholar at the University of Pittsburgh (2003–2006) and Harvard University (2010–2012). His research interests include philosophy of mind, action theory and ethics as well as Aristotle, German Idealism and Wittgenstein. His recent publications include: "The Laws of Thought and the Power of Thinking," in: *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, supplementary volume 35, *Belief and Agency*, edited by David Hunter, 2011, 249–297; "Three Forms of the First Person Plural," in: G. Abel, J. Conant (eds.), *Rethinking Epistemology*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 2012, 229–256; "Die Wirklichkeit meiner Tat," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 61(3), 2013, 419–433; "Life and Mind," in: Thomas Khurana (ed.), *The Freedom of Life: Hegelian Perspectives*, August Verlag, Berlin, 2013, 69–109.

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