It is a striking feature of philosophical reflection on the self that it often ends up being revisionary of our commonsensical intuition that it is identical to a living human being with, intrinsically, physical and psychological properties. As is well known, Descartes identified the self with a mental entity, Hume denied the existence of such an entity and Kant reduced it to a transcendental ego—to a mere condition of possibility for experience and thought. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein followed Kant—or, at any rate, the Kant made available to him through reading Schopenhauer—then, later, denied the existence of such an entity and proposed the no-reference view about at least some uses of “I”. Finally, Anscombe radicalized Wittgenstein’s views and claimed that no use of “I” is ever referential.

It must be acknowledged that, despite the oddity of these views, philosophers have always arrived at their respective positions on the nature of the self through rational reflection: being impressed with some feature allegedly special to the use of “I” (either in speech or in thought) they have felt compelled to account for it by postulating a realm of super-entities (or non-entities) which could explain such seeming peculiarities. Confronted with this tradition of revisionary accounts of the self, at least some contemporary theorists are now approaching the issue with a diagnostic eye, trying to identify the features that have led philosophers to embrace such positions, with the aim of offering a better understanding of them that could “give philosophy peace”. That is to say, that could make them compatible with the commonsensical view that selves are identical to living human beings and that “I”, either in speech or in thought, is a genuinely referential expression. So, for instance, Christopher Peacocke opens his influential and thought provoking “Self-knowledge and illusions of transcendence” with the following remarks:

* “The Key to All Mythologies” is Mr. Casaubon’s monumental, never-ending, basically pointless work aimed at uncovering the alleged kernel of truth common to all mythologies in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, I, vii; III, xxix; IV, xlvi.


Philosophical problems about the self and the first person provide a salient illustration of the challenge of integrating the epistemology and the metaphysics of a domain. There has been a persistent impulse amongst thinkers about the self to postulate a transcendental subject of experience and thought. It is an impulse to which Kant, Schopenhauer, Husserl and the early Wittgenstein all yielded. The impulse results from a combination of genuine insight and genuine error. The insight consists in the appreciation that there is an Integration Challenge which calls for philosophical solution. The error consists in trying, in this domain, to achieve integration by postulating an exotic domain of the transcendent, rather than by revising and deepening one’s epistemology. (p. 263)

Rightly, Peacocke points out that “there is probably more agreement on the preceding description of the situation than there is on the correct positive solution to this instance of the Integration Challenge” (ibid.). Hence, he sets the agenda for further work in this domain:

The first task in this area is to identify adequately and precisely the distinctive feature of some first person thoughts which has led to illusions of transcendence. Once the feature is properly identified, the next task is the explanation of the existence of this feature, and some elaboration of its significance. (Ibid.)

While I agree both with Peacocke’s description of the situation and with the issues he puts on our agenda—although I would specify that also the Cartesian and the Humean accounts of the self originate from the same kind of error—I disagree with much he says in carrying out this project. In particular, Peacocke identifies what he calls “representational independence”—viz. the fact that psychological self-ascriptions are not grounded in first personal contents, yet they feature the first person concept—as the “key to all mythologies” about the self. He then takes representational independence to be a genuine phenomenon, which any account of first person thoughts will have to explain and, finally, he provides such an explanation. By contrast, it seems to me that there can be more than one key to the mythologies about the self and here I will take time to

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2 For example: “I am thinking about Pythagoras’s Theorem” is grounded in one’s thought about Pythagoras’s Theorem, not on “a mental event or state whose representational content is that one is thinking about Pythagoras’s Theorem” (p. 267, emphasis mine). Similar considerations would hold for “I see the phone is on the table”, “I remember that Russell was born in 1872”, “I fear that the motion will not be carried” (p. 266).

3 So, for instance, Peacocke claims that representational independence is the key to the no-reference view about “I” held by Wittgenstein (p. 290), as well as to Lichtenberg’s view that Descartes’ cogito should be replaced with “There is thinking going on now” (p. 291), and to those reductionist views about the self such as Hume’s and Locke’s (pp. 291-2).

4 In my “The first person: error through misidentification, the split between speaker’s and semantic reference, and the real guarantee”, The Journal of Philosophy, 2003, C, 8, pp. 416-431, I have exposed another such key, which I called “the real guarantee”. That is, the idea that any competent use of the first person pronoun (either in speech or in thought) is such that one can’t fail to know which person one is thinking about (or referring to) when one uses it. Another key is, obviously, the fact that “I” is guaranteed of reference (although, notoriously, Evans, op. cit., pp. 249-55, contested it). Such a feature of first person thought seems paramount in explaining Descartes’ position.
expound on another one: namely, the distinction—originally introduced by Sydney Shoemaker—between de facto and logical immunity to error through misidentification. Such a discussion will allow us to propose a dilemma for Peacocke’s account. Either representational independence is a genuine phenomenon but the rationality of the corresponding psychological self-ascriptions Peacocke wishes to vindicate is spoiled; or else, one should reject the view that representational independence is a genuine phenomenon which should be accounted for by any suitable account of first person thoughts.

Furthermore, I will claim that the distinction between de facto and logical immunity to error through misidentification will allow us to vindicate Wittgenstein’s intuition—discarded by Peacocke and generally fallen into disrepute—that, when it comes to such an immunity, there is an important difference between non-psychological and psychological self-ascriptions. Such an asymmetry—I submit—can in its turn account—at least in part—for the illusions of transcendence about the self. For, if it is conceivable that the body one is receiving information from, or the memories one is storing be not one’s own, while it is not conceivable that the mental states one is immediately aware of be someone else’s then the temptation will arise of identifying the self with either a mental substance, as Descartes did, or with a sequence of appropriately related mental states, as neo-Lockeans do nowadays. Reacting to these ideas, one may then be led to embrace either the view that there is no bearer of such mental states—as Hume did; or else, the transcendental view about the self—viz. the Kantian idea that, after all, the self remains as a mere condition of possibility for experience and judgment; or, finally, the Wittgensteinian semantic version of the Humean position, according to which “I” does not genuinely refer. I will then show why, granted the asymmetry between non-psychological and psychological self-ascriptions, which are immune to error through misidentification, no such revisionary conclusions should follow.

**Immunity to error through misidentification**

As is well known, Wittgenstein, in the *Blue Book*, identifies the source of the temptation to think that at least some uses of the first person don’t refer in what has been subsequently called by Sydney Shoemaker “immunity to error through misidentification”. Wittgenstein’s idea was that all and only psychological self-ascriptions are such that, although one could be wrong about the property one is ascribing to oneself, one couldn’t be wrong about the fact that it is indeed oneself who has (or seems to have) the property in question. So, for instance, one’s self-ascription “I am seeing a tree” could be wrong because, in fact, one is having a hallucination and, thus, isn’t seeing a tree, but it can’t be wrong because one has made a mistake about the fact that one oneself is (or seems to be) seeing a tree. Now, Wittgenstein thought that since misidentification is always possible when empirical objects are at stake, only a super entity, which could be transparently present to the mind, such as a Cartesian, transcendent ego could have secured immunity to error through misidentification of psychological

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self-ascriptions. Recoiling from the idea of a Cartesian ego, he then claimed that psychological self-ascriptions are such that the occurrence of “I” in them is not genuinely referential and, in fact, similar in its function to “it” in “It’s raining”.

Notoriously, Wittgenstein’s claims have been subject to a number of criticisms. The key element behind them has been the shift of the attention from the subject-matter of the self-ascription—its being a psychological as opposed to a non-psychological one—to the grounds on which these self-ascriptions are made. So, for instance, Gareth Evans has claimed that also some psychological self-ascriptions can be liable to error through misidentification, when, for instance, they are based on inference. Hence, varying Evans’ example to make the point clearer, it is perfectly conceivable that a subject’s self-ascription “I hate my sister” could be affected by error through misidentification if, for instance, it was made in the following circumstances. A subject takes part to psychoanalytic group sessions; she hears the therapist say “You hate your sister” while looking pretty much in her direction. She believes anything the therapist tells her and, therefore, forms the belief “I hate my sister”. In this case, the grounds of the subject’s judgment would be: “I am the person referred to by the therapist”, “That person hates her sister”, therefore “I hate my sister”. Since her final judgment is grounded in a suitable identification component—viz. “I am the person referred to by the therapist”—it can be affected by error through misidentification: after all, the person referred to by the therapist could have been the one sitting next to the subject who is making the judgment.

Furthermore, Shoemaker, Evans and, more recently, John McDowell and Crispin Wright have made a convincing case that also bodily self-ascriptions, based either on perception or somatic proprioception, can be immune to error through misidentification, as well as self-ascriptions based on occurrent memories. So, for instance, when a subject judges “I am in front of a tree”, or “My hair is blowing in the wind”, or, finally, “I was in Scotland five years ago”, either on the basis of her perceptions, or of somatic proprioception or of her occurrent memories, then she may be wrong about the properties she is attributing to herself, but she cannot be wrong about the fact that she herself is the person who has (or seems to have) them.

Finally, all these theorists have pointed out that also demonstrative and indexical judgments can be immune to error through misidentification and yet no temptation would arise of thinking that there is nothing, or only something extraordinary, to which they refer. Hence, “That tree is in blossom”, “It’s cold here”, or “It’s raining now” are all such that, although there is no possibility of misidentifying the object, the place, or the time in question, no temptation arises of thinking that there is no object, place or time to which “that tree”, “here” and “now” respectively refer. Of course in the case of “that tree” a subject could be wrong about the kind of object demonstratively referred to. Yet this would be a mistake of predication, not of identification. That is, the subject would be wrong about the sortal identity of the object but not because she would have taken another object to be identical to the one she is currently perceiving. Moreover, in the case of demonstrative judgments, the object referred to could fail to exist, if, for instance, one were having a hallucination. Yet again, the subject wouldn’t be wrong because she has

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8 As noted at the beginning, Wittgenstein’s position has been extended by Elisabeth Anscombe to all uses of “I”. See her “The first person”, in Guttenplan, S. 1975 (ed.) Mind and Language: Wolfson College Lectures 1974, New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 45-64.

9 Evans, op. cit., pp. 219-220.
taken another object to be the one she is aiming to refer to. For, if there is no object in the first place, then, a fortiori, there is no object to be misidentified either. Finally, as the case of here and now judgments makes clear, it is not even the combination of immunity to error through misidentification with the impossibility of reference failure that could lead to the view that “I” does not refer. For here and now judgments would have both these features and yet there would be no temptation to think that “here” doesn’t refer to a physical place and that “now” doesn’t refer to an instant in (objective) time.

For all these reasons, Peacocke discards immunity to error through misidentification as the source, or, at least, as one of the possible sources of the illusions of transcendence. However, let me offer some considerations to resist this conclusion. First, historically, Wittgenstein himself identifies immunity to error through misidentification both as the source of the Cartesian view about the self and of his own position, so it must be acknowledged that it was significantly operative at least in his way of reaching his own position. Secondly, to point out that it isn’t true that all and only psychological self-ascriptions are immune to error through misidentification (and come up with an explanation of why this is so) belongs more to the “cure” of the “disease”, rather than to its diagnosis. For it is only when we realize that, perhaps contrary to appearances, immunity is a feature also of bodily self-ascriptions, and come up with an explanation of why this is so, that we can see that the fact that some I-judgments are immune to error through misidentification is no obstacle to the fact that they could be genuinely about a living human being. Finally, I think there is a further, deeper reason why immunity to error through misidentification cannot easily be discarded while trying to account for the illusions of transcendence. Namely, although it is been widely remarked that also some bodily and memory-based self-ascriptions can be immune to error through misidentification, it has somehow been overlooked that, as Shoemaker once noticed, they are only de facto so. By contrast, psychological self-ascriptions, when they are so immune, are logically so. Now, by saying that this asymmetry between non-psychological and psychological self-ascriptions that are immune to error through misidentification has somehow been overlooked, I don’t want to suggest that

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10 See Peacocke, op. cit., pp. 269-70, 286-89.

11 Wittgenstein, op. cit., p. 69: “We feel then that in the cases in which ‘I’ is used as subject, we don’t use it because we recognize a particular person by his bodily characteristics; and this creates the illusion that we use this word to refer to something bodiless, which, however, has its seat in our body. In fact this seems to be the real ego, the one of which it was said, ‘Cogito, ergo sum’”. And at p. 67: “And now his way of stating our idea suggests itself: that it is impossible that in making the statement ‘I have toothache’ I should have mistaken another person for myself, as it is to moan with pain by mistake, having mistaken someone else for me. To say, ‘I have pain’ is no more statement about a particular person than moaning is”.

12 Notoriously, the cure is to argue that there is immunity because there is no identification going on in the first place, where “identification” is understood in the thick sense of involving an identity judgment. Roughly: while there is identification in the sense of an individuation of a human being—one oneself—which one refers to by means of ‘I’, there is no identification in the sense of an identification of a person with oneself, viz. “I = that person/the such-and-such”. For a fuller treatment of the distinction individuation/identification, see Evans, op. cit., pp. 179-191 and ch. 7 (although he doesn’t make use of the label “individuation” and simply talks of the various immediate—that is, unmediated by any identity judgment—ways in which we can gain and store information about ourselves which allow us to have the first person concept). See also my (and Sacchi, E.) Singular Thoughts. Perceptual Demonstrative Thoughts and I-Thoughts, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2001, ch. 4.

philosophers have failed to remark or acknowledge it.\textsuperscript{14} Rather, what I mean is that they have systematically failed to provide an \textit{adequate} explanation of it and to appreciate its \textit{philosophical significance}. Hence, for instance, Peacocke himself recognizes that asymmetry but then concludes that since logical immunity to error through misidentification is compatible with a genuinely referential use of “I”—as the comparison with the case of demonstrative judgments shows—it can’t be a genuine source of the illusions of transcendence and, correctly, of the no-reference view.\textsuperscript{15} As we will see, however, this judgment is based on failing to appreciate the deep philosophical significance of this asymmetry. Moreover, the reason offered to discard logical immunity to error through misidentification as one of the keys to the mythologies about the self seems to depend, once more, on the conflation between the diagnosis of the problem and its cure. For it is only when we see that demonstrative (and indexical) judgments can be so immune and yet make genuine reference, that we will be able to reconcile the existence of this phenomenon with a non-revisionist conception of the self and of the role of “I” in the relevant judgments.

\textbf{De facto immunity to error through misidentification}

The notion of de facto immunity to error through misidentification has been introduced by Sydney Shoemaker in the following way:

[In the case of] “I was angry” [said on the basis of memory in the ordinary way], a mistake of identification is impossible. It goes with this that (…) past-tense, first-person judgment does not rest on observationally based re-identification of the person referred to with ‘I’ (…). [But] one might “quasi-remember” past experiences or actions that are not one’s own (…). To allow that this is possible is to allow that \textit{in a certain sense first-person memory judgments are subject to error through misidentification}.\textsuperscript{16}

Evans then defined quasi-memories as follows:

A subject quasi-remembers an event \( e \) iff (i) he has an apparent memory of such an event and (ii) that apparent memory in fact embodies information deriving from the perception of that event by a person who is not necessarily himself.\textsuperscript{17}

So, we are usually asked to imagine cases of (partial) brain transplant which may not be physically possible, yet—all parties agree—are logically so. Since quasi-memories are subjectively indistinguishable from ordinary memories, it follows that the latter are in principle open to error through misidentification, although \textit{contingently} not actually affected by it.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{14} See Evans, \textit{op. cit.}, ch. 7; McDowell, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 372 and Peacocke, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 269-70.

\textsuperscript{15} See Peacocke, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 286-289.

\textsuperscript{16} Shoemaker 1986, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 15, emphasis mine.

\textsuperscript{17} Evans, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 247-48.

\textsuperscript{18} Similar considerations could be made in the case of bodily self-ascriptions based either on perception or on somatic proprioception.
The problem is to explain why, despite the fact that the relevant judgments aren’t arrived at by holding in place any identification component of the form “I am identical to the person whose past is responsible for the memory impressions I am now having”, they are only contingently immune to error through misidentification. To put it otherwise: what is it about these judgments that makes it the case that, although they don’t depend on an identification of the subject, they remain open to the possibility—in deviant scenarios—of error through misidentification?

Elsewhere, I have proposed to account for this problem by deepening our understanding of the epistemological structure underlying these judgments. Accordingly, I have proposed to distinguish between an occurrence of an identification component as part of a subject’s own grounds for a given judgment, or as part of the background presuppositions of it. The idea, in very general terms, is this. In the former case, a body of information, while not necessarily part of a conscious inference, may be what a (rational and appropriately conceptually equipped) subject would appeal to if she were requested to justify her final judgment. By contrast, in the latter case, that very information, while neither entertained in a process of conscious inference, nor part of what the subject would appeal to in order to justify her judgment, may be such that, were it to be called into question or doubted, a (rational and conceptually equipped) subject would be prepared to withdraw from her final judgment.

This distinction has applications in various domains. Think, for instance, of visual perception and of judgments about material objects made on that basis. Take for instance the judgment “There is a pole in front of me”, made on the basis of my current visual experience. My ground for that judgment would be my visual experience as of a pole in front of me. Yet, this provides a warrant for “There is a pole in front of me” just in case it is not called into question that there is a material world or that my sense organs are working reliably. “There is a material world” and “My sense organs are working reliably”, however, certainly don’t, nor need to feature as part of my own grounds—as my own avowable reasons—for my final judgment “There is a pole in front of me”. Yet they are the background presuppositions on which my original judgment rests. For, if they were somehow to fall into question, I ought (rationally) to suspend from “There is a pole in front of me”.20

Similarly, think of the recognition-based judgment “John is wearing a white shirt”. If I were asked to justify my judgment I would offer the following grounds: “That

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19 See my “Error through misidentification: some varieties”, forthcoming.
20 It’s then a further issue whether in order for my final judgment to be warranted those presuppositions should in turn be warranted—as a skeptic would maintain—or not. For opposite views on this issue, see Wright C. 2002 “(Anti-)sceptics simple and subtle: G. E. Moore and John McDowell”, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 65, 2, pp. 330-48 and Pryor, J. 2000 “The skeptic and the dogmatist”, Noûs 34, pp. 517-49 and his 2004 “Is Moore’s argument an example of transmission-failure?”, Philosophical Issues 14, forthcoming. For a “third way” which is alternative to both Wright’s and Pryor’s see my “A puzzle about Moore’s Proof of an external world”, forthcoming. (An Italian, slightly earlier version of this paper is forthcoming in Epistemologia).

But notice that a skeptic could agree that a particular subject need not be able to appeal to those presuppositions, while offering her grounds for her judgment, and still insist that for the judgment to be warranted those presuppositions ought, in general, to be warranted. The disagreement between Wright and Pryor hinges on the latter point: while Wright sides with the skeptic, Pryor thinks that it is merely sufficient that they aren’t called into question or doubted. For an elaboration and defense of this latter view, see Peacocke, C. 2004 The Realm of Reason, Oxford, Oxford University Press, ch. 2 and 3.
person is wearing a white shirt” and “That person is John”. Yet it is obvious that that very judgment also rests on the background presupposition that John is immediately visually recognizable. Surely, however, I am not required to appeal to that, in giving my grounds for my judgment. Yet, were it turn out that John has an identical twin brother who is in town and wears pretty much the same clothes, then I ought (rationally) to withdraw from my initial judgment.

With this distinction in hand, we can now account for the fact that memory-based self-ascriptions while not grounded on any identification component, are nevertheless only contingently immune to error through misidentification. For, although an identification component such as “I am identical to the person whose past is responsible for the memory impressions I am now having” is not and need not be part of the subject’s own grounds for her memory-based I-judgments, it is nevertheless part of their background presuppositions. So, we may now say either that the judgment is immune to error through misidentification relative to the subject’s own grounds, yet open to misidentification relative to its background presuppositions, thereby distinguishing between two different kinds of error and immunity to error through misidentification. Or else, we may say that there is just one kind of error through misidentification—viz. relative to one’s own grounds—and hold that in abnormal metaphysical and epistemic conditions the relevant identification component could be moved from the background to the subject’s own grounds for her judgment, thus making the judgment liable to error through misidentification after all. For instance, if we gave the subject the information that she might be storing memory impressions deriving from someone else’s past prior to making her past-tense self-ascriptions, she could then offer the following grounds for her judgment: “I seem to remember being in Scotland five years ago”, “I am the person whose past is responsible for the memory impressions I am now having”, hence “I was in Scotland five years ago”, where the identification component could be wrong and the final judgment affected by error through misidentification (relative to the subject’s own grounds).\(^\text{21}\) Either way, the crucial point is that an identification component is being allowed to be part of the background presuppositions of one’s judgment. For, no matter whether we take a liberal or a more conservative view on error through misidentification—allowing for two kinds of it, or just for one—, it is the presence of such an identification component in the background presuppositions of one’s judgment that allows us to account for the widely shared intuition that the relevant past-tense self-ascriptions are only contingently immune to error through misidentification.\(^\text{22}\)

\(^{21}\) Notice though that the role of the identification component, contrary to usual cases of error through misidentification is not to ground an otherwise ungrounded self-ascription. Rather, the role of that component is to ground the passage from the self-ascription of the logically weaker property of having memory impressions of being \(F\), to the self-ascription of the logically stronger property of having been \(F\). By contrast, Evans explicitly denies that identification components of the relevant kind could be part of the background presuppositions of one’s memory-based judgments (see, op. cit., p. 186). Yet he insists that these judgments are only de facto immune to error through misidentification. But it is not clear to me how he—or anyone following him on this—could account for this latter intuition once he has deprived himself of the means to address it. For, if there is no room for any identification component as part of the underlying epistemological structure of the relevant judgments, how could they be liable to error through misidentification? They could only be wrong because of a mistake of predication, but then there would be no genuine distinction between de facto and stronger forms of immunity to error through misidentification. Thus, if there is such a distinction—as Evans himself thinks there is—, an identification component must be acknowledged somewhere in the epistemological structure underlying the judgment.
**Logical immunity to error through misidentification**

Shoemaker introduced the notion of logical immunity to error through misidentification as follows:

In being aware that one feels pain one is, tautologically, aware not simply that the attribute *feels pain* is instantiated, but that it is instantiated in *oneself*.\(^{23}\)

Shoemaker’s point seems to be this. Contrary to non-psychological self-ascriptions which are immune to error through misidentification, psychological ones are so in all possible situations, since it is a “tautology” that, in being aware that the property of feeling pain is instantiated, one is immediately aware that one oneself is instantiating it. This is so, according to Shoemaker, because awareness of pain is, tautologically, awareness of *oneself* being in pain. Similarly, awareness of the thought that today is a sunny day is awareness of *oneself* thinking that thought; again, awareness of the perception of a tree is awareness of *oneself* perceiving a tree and so on and so forth.

A profitable way of interpreting Shoemaker’s claim is this: psychological self-ascriptions that are immune to error through misidentification are so because there is no identification component in their background presuppositions, which could then be moved from the background into the grounds. If there is no such identification component as part of their background presuppositions, then this explains why psychological self-ascriptions that are immune to error through misidentification are so in any possible circumstance. Hence, Shoemaker’s position entails a denial of Peacocke’s representational independence, viz. a denial of the fact that the awareness of a thought, of a perception, or of a memory is not immediately identity committed. I will presently offer an explanation of why this is so which will capitalize on Shoemaker’s initial claim. But, before arguing to that conclusion, let me dwell on Peacocke’s views a bit more.

Peacocke claims that psychological self-ascriptions are grounded in the mere awareness of a mental state—let it be a perception, a thought, or a memory—, which, as such, does not manifest the owner of the mental state. So, for instance, my judgment “I am thinking about Pythagoras’ Theorem” is based on having a thought about that theorem which, however, does not in turn contain a representation of the owner of that thought. Similarly, I could have the perception of a phone on the table, which, as such does not manifest myself as its owner and yet judge that I am seeing the telephone. Finally, I could have a memory whose content is simply that Russell was born in 1872 and yet judge “I remember that Russell was born in 1872”. On this view, the difficulty is to explain the *rationality* of the self-ascription: if no subject is manifested, how can the self-ascription of the mental state be rational? And Peacocke’s answer is that the self-ascription is rational because it is made in accordance with the possession-conditions of the first person concept, which, in turn, require one to be prepared to employ it when one is introspectively aware of a given mental state. According to Peacocke, concepts are individuated by their possession conditions. In particular, on his view, the first person concept is individuated by the identity “I = the thinker of this (introspectively available) thought”. To clarify: one’s possession of the first person concept is grounded in the disposition to use it when one is aware of a given thought as the conceptual role of “I” is

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\(^{23}\) Shoemaker 1968, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
precisely that of identifying the thinker of that, introspectively available thought. So, if one is aware of a given mental state, one is rationally entitled to self-ascribe it, because, although such an awareness does not manifest the subject as the owner of the mental state, it is part and parcel of having the first person concept that one be prepared to self-ascribe that mental state on the basis of being introspectively aware of it.

On this view introspection-based psychological self-ascriptions would be logically immune to error through misidentification not because they aren’t grounded on any identification component, but because “I = the thinker of this (introspectively available) thought” is a priori true. Hence, no matter whether that identification component stays in the background or gets moved into the subject’s own grounds, it will always give rise to judgments that are immune to error through misidentification.24 In contrast, as we have seen, non-psychological self-ascriptions are only de facto immune because the relevant identification components are only contingently true.

However, the problem for a proponent of this strategy is to motivate the a priori truth of this claim. For why is it a conceptual necessity that I should be identical with the thinker of this introspectively available thought? Notice that I don’t want to deny that “I = the thinker of this (introspectively available) thought” holds as a matter of conceptual necessity and that is known a priori—contrary to what has been proposed, for instance, by John Campbell.25 Rather, what I think we should further inquire is simply why this is so. Now, it seems to me that the only reason we can give in favor of this claim is that being introspectively aware of a given thought amounts to being aware of the fact that one oneself is thinking that thought.26 Indeed it is because the awareness of the thought can’t be divorced from the awareness of the fact that that thought is being thought and, therefore, from the awareness that that is what one oneself is doing, that we can grant the a priori truth of the identity between oneself and the thinker of a given introspectively available thought. For, if at any time one is aware of a given thought one is aware of oneself thinking it, it is obviously a priori true that the thinker of that introspectively available thought is identical to oneself.

Yet, if this is so, all the problem of justifying the self-ascription of a thought starting from a representationally independent mental state seems, really, a pseudo-problem. For we have just seen—ironically, since we were trying to motivate the central claim of Peacocke’s strategy to redeem the rationality of the relevant self-ascriptions—that we can’t divorce the awareness of a thought from the awareness of the fact that one oneself is thinking that thought. But this is precisely what representational-independence would require us to do.

24 Notice, however, that a revision of the definition of immunity to error through misidentification will then be needed. For, usually, immunity is defined in terms of the absence of any identification component (either in the background presuppositions, or in the subject’s own grounds), whereas here it will depend on the presence of an identification component that is a priori true.
25 Campbell, J. 1999 “Schizophrenia, the space of reasons and thinking as a motor process”, The Monist 82, pp. 609-625. For a reply, see my “Thought insertion and immunity to error through misidentification” and my “On what there really is to our own notion of ownership of a thought” both in Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology, 2002, 2, 1, pp. 27-34 and pp. 41-46.
26 Or else, to the awareness that one oneself is having that thought. This revision would be needed if one were somehow skeptical of the fact that being the thinker of a thought and being the person who is introspectively aware of it are co-intensional notions (as Campbell, op. cit., is). This, in the end, will not make any difference to the complaint that I am going to raise against Peacocke.
So, here is a dilemma for Peacocke. Either he insists on representational independence as a genuine phenomenon, but then he should give up the attempt to motivate the a priori truth of “I = the thinker of this (introspectively available) thought” and, consequently, the hope of providing a rational reconstruction of psychological self-ascriptions. Thus—in effect—joining Lichtenberg in the claim that the only rationally sound judgment would be “There is thought going on now”. Or else, he should maintain that representational independence is a pseudo-phenomenon, which a mature account of first person thought shouldn’t try, constructively, to account for and should rather denounce as brought about by a misleading conception of what introspective awareness amounts to.

I, obviously, recommend doing the second, but it is important to clarify what kind of conception of introspective awareness may lead one to be genuinely impressed with the appearance of representational independence. It seems to me that it is only when one thinks of mental states as objects presented to the subject in her mental arena that one can be seduced into thinking that representational independence is a genuine phenomenon that stands in need of explanation. For, if in being introspectively aware of a thought what one is aware of is: here is a belief that \( p \), here is a desire that \( q \), and those mental states, as such, obviously don’t manifest their owner, then of course it will seem mysterious and worth of philosophical explanation how one could ever be rationally entitled to their self-ascription. Preoccupations with representational independence, which, according to Peacocke, have led astray Hume, Wittgenstein, Kant, Lichtenberg and others, if and when they have been operative, are, therefore, the vestige of a way of thinking about self-knowledge that is deeply Cartesian. If I am right, however, Peacocke himself is not immune to the seduction of that model and that is why he is profoundly impressed with representational independence and tries to reconstruct the rational path which should lead us from there to the corresponding self-ascriptions. The problem is that the reconstruction can’t work if one accepts its starting place.

The corrective will be to think of introspective awareness differently. Here I will not attempt to give this different account of self-knowledge. This—really—will have to be left for another occasion.\(^{27}\) All I wish to point out is that whatever that account will ultimately be like it will have to place crucial emphasis on the fact that introspective awareness is awareness of states of affairs in progress—of feeling/thinking/perceiving that \( p \) is going on—; that such awareness is, therefore, necessarily an awareness of oneself being enjoying those states.

**A little quietist coda**

If the above is correct we can finally see why introspection-based, psychological self-ascriptions are logically immune to error through misidentification. They are so because they are not rationally grounded in any identification component, being, rather, immediate expressions of the psychological states a subject finds herself in.

But, now, if the distinction between de facto and logical immunity to error through misidentification is in good standing, we should ponder a bit on its philosophical significance. Essentially, what it amounts to is this: while it is readily conceivable that the body one is receiving perceptual and proprioceptive information from, or the memories one is storing, be not one’s own, it is not conceivable that the sensations, perceptions, emotions and thoughts one is immediately aware of be not one’s own. That—I submit—is why it remains a strong temptation to identify the self with the bearer of those psychological properties only. For while one’s awareness of bodily and physical properties could, conceivably, depend on someone else’s body being affected in various ways, one’s awareness of psychological properties can’t (logically) but depend on one’s having them. Hence, those latter properties would be the only essential properties we do have. And we could either construe this idea as implying that we are mental substances, or else, recoiling from Cartesian egos, as implying that we are mere sequences of appropriately related mental states; or else, in a Kantian mood, as implying that the self is a mere condition of possibility for perception and thought. Finally—with Hume and Wittgenstein—we could go so far as to think that no such self exists and, relatedly, that psychological self-ascriptions are not genuinely about a subject.

However, if logical immunity to error through misidentification is one powerful source of the illusions of transcendence, we know, by now, what the cure is. The cure is to remind us of the fact that immunity to error through misidentification of all stripes and sorts is perfectly compatible with genuine reference—as the cases of demonstrative and indexical judgments suggest. Moreover, it is compatible with reference to an ordinary physical entity, which exists in space and time such as a human being. Hence, acknowledging the de facto/logical distinction is totally compatible with holding that in any case the relevant judgments are about a living human being with both physical and psychological properties.

No doubt many will become impatient with this quietist conclusion, thinking that an “animalist” conception of the self is a view that, if it can be maintained at all, it can only be earned through philosophical spadework. It is the brief of this paper that if one is such an “animalist” then what one will be holding is, as a matter of fact, the default view. A view which, moreover, is entirely compatible with acknowledging the characteristic—and prima facie perplexing—features of self-reference and self-awareness, which may give rise to illusions of transcendence, such as logical immunity to error through misidentification of some psychological self-ascriptions, the impossibility of reference failure and what I have elsewhere dubbed “the real guarantee”. If so much is right, then, the burden of proof lies entirely on revisionists’ shoulders.

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28—like any non-revisionist.
29 See fn. 4.
30 As remarked in 1fn McDowell, who is probably the most fervent quietist in philosophy nowadays, strikingly follows Evans in arguing from immunity of non-psychological self-ascriptions in favor of an animalist conception of the self and against Parfit’s neo-lockeanism. This attempt seems to me misguided on a number of fronts. Specifically because it isn’t clear that Parfit’s position can’t accommodate this feature of memory-based self-ascriptions. And, more generally, because the right attitude for an “animalist” is to diagnose and dissolve the temptations to deviate from the default view. A full diagnosis (let alone a “cure”) of what led Parfit to his revisionist position falls outside the scope of this paper.