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# 17. Meta-Representational *Me*

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## 1. Introduction

The topic of this paper is the notion of the first person (singular), namely the notion *me*. Let us begin by distinguishing it from a different notion which is often confused with it, namely the notion *self*.

The notion *me* applies to me and me alone absolutely, whereas the notion *self* applies to me relative to me, applies to you relative to you, applies to Jill relative to Jill, applies to Jack relative to Jack, and so on. Everyone is the self relative to her/him; for every  $x$ ,  $x$  is the self to  $x$ .<sup>1</sup> But only I am me, period. Of course, you may assert correctly, “Only I am me.” But the content of your assertion when you say this does not deal in the notion *me*; for your word “me” does not express the notion *me*. Only my word “me” does. It is not even that your word “me” expresses the notion *me* to you. To you your word “me” expresses a certain notion, which you call “the notion *me*.” But what you call “the notion *me*” is not the notion *me*, any more than the person you call “me” is me.

It might be suggested that the notion *me* is reducible to the notion *self* in the following way:

Start with “For any  $x$  and any  $y$ ,  $x$  is self to  $y$  iff  $x$  is  $y$ ” and then let  $y$  be me. The result is “For any  $x$ ,  $x$  is self to me iff  $x$  is me,” which may be understood as the definition of “ $x$  is *me*” as “ $x$  is self to me.”

This suggestion for reduction does not succeed, for the alleged *definiens* “ $x$  is self to me” contains word “me,” which expresses the notion *me*. Replacing “me” in the *definiens* with “Takashi Yagisawa” will not do, for “ $x$  is self to Takashi Yagisawa iff  $x$  is *me*” cannot be said even by me to be true by definition, as I might not know that Takashi Yagisawa is me.

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<sup>1</sup> If for every  $x$ , the relation of selfhood relates  $x$  to  $x$  and to nothing else, then the relation of selfhood is indistinguishable from the relation of identity. I do not see any harm in this, but if one wishes to maintain that selfhood applies only to individuals capable of conscious awareness of some sort, one may restrict the range of the variable “ $x$ ” to such individuals.

The notion *me* is expressed by the word “I,” which belongs to a semantic category David Kaplan calls *pure indexical*. (Kaplan 1989) This category also includes the words, “now,” “here,” and “actual.” They are called “indexicals” because their extensions are determined by contextual factors. They are called “pure” because the determination is achieved without reliance on any specific action (e.g., pointing) or intention (e.g., referential intention) of the agent (speaker, writer).

Let us review the best Kaplanian indexical theory of meaning for “I” briefly and note some shortcomings of that theory viewed from the perspective of someone who is interested in explicating the notion *me*. I shall then propose an explication which overcomes the shortcomings. The explication articulates the logical origin of the notion *me* as a certain way things are represented. Thus, our investigation will start with semantics and proceed to conceptual explication.

## 2. Indexical Theory

The standard Kaplanian indexical theory of “I” is a broadly Fregean theory of meaning, according to which meaning determines reference.<sup>1</sup> The “indexical” part of the theory introduces a theoretical machinery called a “context of utterance,” which is an ordered  $n$ -tuple, where  $n \geq 4$ . A *minimal context of utterance* is an ordered quadruple (4-tuple),  $\langle a, t, p, w \rangle$ , where  $a$  is an individual (agent),  $t$  is a time,  $p$  is a place, and  $w$  is a world, where  $a$  is at  $t$  located in  $p$  at  $w$ .  $\langle a, t, p, w \rangle$  is minimal in the sense that any ordered  $n$ -tuple that is a context of utterance must include these four members in its initial segment. The four members correspond to the four indexical words, “I,” “now,” “here,” and “actual,” respectively. These words are said to be pure indexicals because their reference is completely determined by a minimal context of utterance.

A sentence type is said to express a proposition relative to a context of utterance. Note that expression is a three-place relation among a sentence type, a proposition, and a context of utterance, rather than a two-place relation between a sentence token and a proposition. The proposition expressed by a sentence type relative to a context of utterance will be subject to truth-value evaluation with respect to a *circumstance of evaluation*. If the sentence contains the word “I” (“me,” “my,” or “mine”), the word refers to the agent of the context of utterance and the expressed proposition concerns that individual, irrespective of who the agent is in the circumstance of evaluation. That is, the agent of the context of utterance relative to which

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<sup>1</sup> In my exposition I depart from Kaplan’s original terminology slightly for simplicity’s sake.

a particular proposition is expressed by the sentence in question is the referent of the word “I” as it occurs in the sentence, and in the evaluation of the proposition in question for its truth-value with respect to any circumstance of evaluation, the original agent of the context of utterance figures in the same crucial way, no matter what individuals are involved in whatever manner in the circumstance of evaluation.

The indexical theory of “I” has many virtues, one of which is its well-known capacity to explain the contingent but *a priori* nature of

(1) I am here now.

The separation of a context of utterance and a circumstance of evaluation allows a discrepancy between the spatiotemporal location of the individual who is the agent in a context of utterance and the same individual’s spatiotemporal location in a circumstance of evaluation, which explains the contingency. As for the apriority, the theory explains it by making it the case that in whatever context of utterance relative to which (1) expresses a proposition, that proposition is true relative to any circumstance of evaluation with the same agent, time, place, and world as the context of utterance.<sup>2</sup>

Like (1), the following (2) also does not express a necessarily true proposition:

(2) I am making an utterance here now.

Even if I am in fact making some utterance here now, there is no necessity about my doing so; I could easily be silent here now. But is (2) not a truth of indexical logic just like (1)? That is, is (2) not true with respect to every ordered *n*-tuple as regarded simultaneously as a context of utterance and as a circumstance of truth-value evaluation? The answer is “No.” For some *n*-tuple that is a context of utterance, no utterance is made by the first member (agent) at all — the label “agent” is just a label, nothing more—hence no utterance needs to be made by the first member at the second member (time) in the third member (place) at the fourth member (world). The negation of (2) is indexical-logically coherent. Indexical logic does not treat the predicate “utter” (“make an utterance”) as a logical constant, for the notion of uttering—unlike the technical notion of context of utterance (ordered *n*-tuple)—is not an indexical-logical notion. This is where the *naïveté* of Hans Reichenbach’s phrase “token-reflexive” in his pioneering

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<sup>2</sup> Some might question the apriority of (1) on the basis of examples such as the announcement, “I am not here now,” as part of an outgoing message on a telephone answering machine. But such examples only highlight a temporal gap between the time of production of a sentence token (the time of the recording of the message) and the time of utterance (the time of the playback of the message).

work looms large. (Reichenbach 1947) The Kaplanian indexical theory sheds this *naïveté* and deals with expression types instead of tokens.<sup>3</sup>

Another virtue of the indexical theory is that it clearly distinguishes “I” and “self” in the way noted in the opening section. “I” refers to the agent in the context of utterance (the first member of the ordered quadruple), and this reference does not vary from one circumstance of evaluation to another. By contrast, “self” is not even a referring expression; it usually occurs as fused to a pronoun (e.g., “herself”). For example, “the speaker herself” denotes whoever is uniquely speaking in a given circumstance of evaluation, independently of who is speaking in a given context of utterance. When the accompanying singular term is a proper name or a pronoun, the context of utterance determines reference, but the reference need not be to the first person; “Jill herself” refers to Jill, and “she herself” refers to the female person most saliently featured in the context of utterance.

The indexical theory is quite attractive, and with its rigorous formulation as a formal semantic theory of the linguistic meaning of “I,” it is difficult to find a serious defect. But as a philosopher, I am interested in more than just the linguistic meaning of the word “I” and its formal semantics. I am also interested in the notion *me*, which the word expresses. Providing a satisfactory formal semantic theory of the word “I” is one thing; elucidating the notion *me* satisfactorily is another. Impressive and useful as is, the indexical theory of “I” is not quite sufficient for giving a fully satisfactory explication of the notion *me*.

### 3. Shortcomings of the Indexical Theory

Let us consider what is lacking in the indexical theory when regarded as an explication of the notion *me*. Even though the Kaplanian indexical theory sheds the *naïveté* of Reichenbach’s theory, it still has three important shortcomings.

First, if someone who is unfamiliar with English is told that “I” refers to the agent in the context of utterance, she will not be given sufficient information for associating the notion *me* with the word “I.”<sup>4</sup> Will it help if she is told more fully that “I” refers to *x* relative to any context of utterance in which *x* is the agent? No, it will not. Remember that according to the formal semantic theory of indexicals, a context of utterance is simply an ordered *n*-tuple, where the first member is located at the other three mem-

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<sup>3</sup> By contrast, the sentence, “The one who is making this utterance here now is making an utterance here now,” is a truth of indexical logic, unless the reference of “here” or “now” is allowed to vary within a single sentence. (see Yagisawa 1993)

<sup>4</sup> Saul Kripke makes a similar complaint in Kripke (2011b).

bers. The first of the members included in the  $n$ -tuple is an individual, and the label “agent” is attached to that individual as such. Do not forget that for the formal semantic purposes, the label is a mere tag without connotation beyond “the first member of the  $n$ -tuple.”

Second, the indexical theory makes the meaning of “I” invariable from speaker to speaker. Whether I use the word “I” or you use the word “I” or Jill uses the word “I,” the meaning of the word “I” as so used remains constant. This is what we should expect of the meaning of “I” and linguistic meanings in general. But this clearly fails to capture the uniqueness of the notion *me* noted in the opening section. I can use the word “I” to refer to me, you can use the same word “I” with the same meaning to refer to you, and Jill can use it in the same way to refer to Jill. But the notion *me* applies to me and only to me, not to you or to Jill or to anyone else. The notion you express by your word “me” is not the notion *me* (the notion I express by my word “me”), even though the meaning of the word “I” (“me”) you use is the same as the meaning of the word “I” (“me”) I use.

Third and most importantly for our purposes in this paper, rigidity is left unexplained. The key idea of the indexical theory, as we have seen, is that the reference of the word “I” is relative to a context of utterance, and for any context of utterance  $c$ , “I” refers to the agent in  $c$ . This reference is rigid in the sense that it remains constant (to the agent in  $c$ ) with respect to any circumstance of evaluation. This is as it should be and perfectly acceptable as the basic idea anchoring a formal semantic theory of “I.” But it falls short of laying out the notion *me* in an informative way. The indexical theory, as it were, simply declares “I” to be a rigid designator. Distinguishing propositional expression relative to a context of utterance and truth-value evaluation with respect to a circumstance of evaluation enables the theory to treat “I” as rigid, and the theory goes ahead to treat “I” as rigid. But the theory offers no explanation why “I” should be treated as rigid in the first place.

The original categories of linguistic expressions on which Saul A. Kripke, who introduced the notion of rigidity, focused in introducing the notion of rigidity were proper names and natural-kind terms. Proper names and natural-kind terms lack descriptive meanings—or so Kripke (1972) argued. Kripke also sketched a causal picture of reference for these expressions, which is widely accepted by those who agree with Kripke on the non-descriptiveness of these expressions. But this picture of rigidity does not fit “I.” It is not plausible at all to think that causation plays the same, or even similar, role in determining the reference of “I” as it is claimed to play in determining the reference of “Aristotle” or “tiger.”

It is also unsatisfactory to say that proper names, natural-kind terms, and “I” are all rigid because they are all directly referential. “Is directly referential” is ambiguous between “refers without conceptual mediation” and “contributes the referent to the expressed proposition.” The first understanding of direct reference plays a heavy role in Kripke’s discussion, whereas the second is emphasized by Kaplan. The indexical theory is tailor-made to respect the direct referentiality of “I” in the second sense, but as we have seen, we want philosophical justification for respecting it. As for the first sense, it is not at all clear that “I” is directly referential in that sense. It may well be that the reference of “I” is determined by some non-trivial notion. My working hypothesis is that it is indeed so determined and that the notion *me* is that notion.

#### 4. Representation

As already noted, the notion *me* is not, and does not entail, any linguistic notion, including the notion of linguistic utterance. Kaplan’s retreat from Reichenbach’s idea of token-reflexivity by regarding the bearers of semantic values to be linguistic expression types rather than tokens is a move in the right direction. What is essential to the notion *me* is not any notion of linguistic act but the notion of cognitive act, i.e., act of entertaining a content. The Cartesian conception of the first person as *res cogitans* (thinking thing, i.e., thought-content-entertaining thing) comes close. The Cartesian *cogito* argument is a good example of a traditional argument concerning the first person, which is internalistically driven. It starts by methodologically dispensing with the external world, and the ensuing solipsistic reasoning is supposed to suffice for the postulation of the Cartesian ego as an existent being. I propose instead that the first person be postulated in a way that is externalistically driven, in particular, that the notion *me* be regarded as having its conceptual origin in representation.

Representation involves three elements in addition to what does the representing: *content*, *object*, and *recipient*. Representation puts forth some content. Suppose that Jill has a visual experience of perceiving a spider descending from the ceiling by the door, that Jack has a qualitatively indistinguishable experience, and that Jill is actually perceiving a real spider, while Jack is merely hallucinating. What is common to their experience is the representational content. Jill’s perceptual experience has a certain representational content, and Jack’s perceptual experience has the same representational content.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Should someone think that the word “content” is inappropriate in view of the recent emergence of so-called *disjunctivism*, we might wish to choose a more neutral word.

Representation is about, or of, something, and that something is the object of representation. In the case of Jill's experience, there are a number of different objects of representation but the most prominent among them is the spider (the other objects of representation include the ceiling, the door, etc.). In the case of Jack's experience, even though there may be some objects of representation (e.g., the ceiling, the door, etc.), a spider is not one of them. There is a spider Jill is perceiving, but there is no spider Jack is perceiving.

Representation is to someone. Jill's perceptual experience has a certain content, which is put forth to Jill, and Jack's perceptual experience has a certain content, which is put forth to Jack. Perceptual experience without a perceiver is unintelligible. The perceiver is the recipient of the content represented by the perceptual experience. Generally, representation without a recipient is unintelligible.<sup>6</sup>

Should Jill fail to grasp the contrast between appearance and reality, she might be unable to distinguish one of the objects of representation (the spider) and a certain part of the content of representation (the "spider"-part of the "a-spider-is-descending-from-the-ceiling-by-the-door" content). Furthermore, if her self-consciousness were underdeveloped, she might not be able to realize that representation was occurring to some recipient.

## 5. *Me*-Way of Representation

Representation with the same content, with the same objects, and to the same recipient may occur in different ways. It may occur by the recipient's direct perceptual encounter with the objects, by her hearing about the objects, by her reading about the objects, or even by her dreaming about the objects. It may occur in such a way that the content is put forth clearly or in such a way that the content is put forth obscurely. It may occur in a way that is harmful to some of the objects or in a way that is beneficial to them. It may occur in a way that is threatening to the recipient or in a way that is inviting to the recipient.

Each of these and various other ways of representation divides into many overlapping sub-ways. For example, the content may be put forth clearly in different languages (English, Hungarian, etc.), in different font styles (block letters, cursive letters, etc.), at different decibel levels (loudly, quietly, etc.), in different emotional modes (angrily, calmly, etc.), through different kinds of behavior or tool (speech, writing, gesture, flag sema-

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<sup>6</sup> A map of a city might be said to represent the city even when nobody is looking at it. But the map is intended to represent the city to whoever looks at it, so in that sense its representation requires a recipient.

phore, etc.), and so on. Cartographic representation of geographical information may be done by different methods of map projection (Albers Projection, Mercator Projection, etc.), in different colors (in blue ink, in red ink, etc.), and so on.

Among these and numerous other crisscrossing ways of representation is the *me*-way. What is the *me*-way? How is a given representational content put forth when the representation occurs in the *me*-way? Unlike the various example ways of representation mentioned above, which can be analyzed in more basic terms, the *me*-way is primitive, so no informative analysis can be offered. The notion “*me*-way” is not a compound notion made up of two more basic notions, “*me*” and “way”; I use an apparently syntactically compound noun phrase to designate the way for obvious expository reasons, but the notion expressed by the noun phrase is not conceptually compound. Conceptual analysis is not possible here. But I can be informative in other ways.

It might be helpful to compare my proposal with a well-known adverbial theory of perception by Roderick Chisholm (1957). According to Chisholm, when I see a red shirt, I sense the shirt in a particular way, namely *redly*. While Chisholm would say that I am sensing the shirt *redly*, I would say that the content of my perception is put forth in the *me*-way, or *me-ly*. For him, the shirt is sensed *redly*; for me, the entire content of visual perception is put forth *me-ly*. When the whole of my visual space is filled with the color red uniformly, Chisholm would say that I am appeared to *redly*, and I would say that a uniformly red content of visual perception is put forth *me-ly*. Chisholm would not speak of the visual content but would presuppose the notion *me* and predicate the property of being appeared to *redly* of me, whereas I do not presuppose the notion *me* but speak of the visual content and predicate the property of being put forth *me-ly* of it.<sup>7</sup>

If I directly saw a spider descending, then representation of the content that a spider is descending would be occurring in the *me*-way; the content that a spider is descending would be put forth *me-ly*. Suppose that as she directly sees a spider descending, Jill tells me that a spider is descending, while I keep my eyes closed. In such a case, the representation of the content that a spider is descending occurs with Jill as the recipient but not in the *me*-way. Representation can occur in the *me*-way only to me, that is,

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<sup>7</sup> The point of comparing my proposal to Chisholm’s theory is not ontological. Chisholm attempts to dispense with purely perceptual objects which are presumed to be the immediate objects of perception, such as sense data. He prefers to speak of ordinary physical objects as directly perceived, and I share his anti-phenomenalist ontological stance. But it is Chisholm’s adverbial theory, in which he expresses ways of perception by adverbs, that I am drawing attention to.

only when the recipient is me. Jill might appropriately say, “Representation is occurring in the *me*-way.” But what she calls “the *me*-way” is not the *me*-way, any more than she is me. At the same time, representation with a different content occurs in the *me*-way; a different content is put forth *me*-ly, namely the content that Jill is saying that a spider is descending.

When I speak of a way of representation, one might be reminded of Gottlob Frege’s mode of presentation. (Frege 1980) Is a way of representation the same as Frege’s mode of presentation? No. Frege’s mode of presentation is associated with a linguistic expression and is identified as the sense of the expression, which determines the reference of the expression and the referent is the object presented. This forms the core of Frege’s philosophy of language. I do not propose ways of representation as reference-determining linguistic properties of expressions, as should be clear from the examples I have given. Also, unlike Frege on his mode of presentation, I am not committed to the compositionality of ways of representation, namely, the principle that for any representation composed of sub-representations, the way of that representation is functional on the ways of the sub-representations plus how the sub-representations are put together to form the whole representation.

It is important to be clear about the relation between the *me*-way of representation and the notion *me*. The notion *me* applies only to me if it applies to anything at all, whereas there is no need for the *me*-way of representation to be a way of representing me. When I see a spider descending from the ceiling, the objects of the perceptual representation are the spider, the ceiling, etc., and not me. I do not figure in the content of the representation, which is put forth *me*-ly.

It would be a mistake, however, to infer from this that the *me*-way of representing the spider descending from the ceiling does nothing to help pick me out. It would be a mistake even to think that since all objects of representation in the *me*-way here are objects in the external world (the spider, the door, etc.), the *me*-way contributes nothing toward postulating me as an entity. If this were not a mistake, my proposal might be said to be Humean in some sense. But it is in fact not Humean in any sense; identifying the *me*-way as the conceptual origin of the notion *me* is not meant to be a step in an argument for Humean skepticism about the first person. By noticing and attending to the *me*-way of representation as I see the spider descending from the ceiling, I do succeed in picking out myself as the recipient of the representation. The *me*-way does successfully lead me to the notion *me*, hence the postulation of myself as an entity. I call this the

“way-to-thing shift,”<sup>8</sup> a transition from recognizing a way of representation to postulating the corresponding entity, the recipient of representation. This is done through extraction of the notion *me* from the *me*-way of representation.

## 6. Way-to-Thing Shift

The way-to-thing shift is a kind of phenomenon that is not unheard of elsewhere. For example, if a dancer and her partner move in tandem in a certain way, they may be said to be waltzing, and their dance a waltz. They move in a waltzing way, and they end up dancing a waltz. You might say that this is not an example of a way-to-thing shift, for a waltz is not a concrete thing. A waltz may not be a concrete thing, but “waltz” is a noun so that we have an example of an adverb-to-noun shift at least. Moreover a waltz may be defended as a thing on the ground that not all things are concrete and waltz is a non-concrete thing. Another example is a constellation. Betelgeuse, Rigel, Bellatrix, etc., are positioned in a certain way in the night sky seen from Earth. Because of that way of positioning, they are the constellation of Orion. It might be objected that a constellation is not a thing but a mere appearance of things. There is much to be said about the metaphysical status of constellations, but again we should note that “constellation” is a noun. Another example of a way-to-thing shift is a curve ball in baseball. A ball is thrown in a certain way, and because of the way it is thrown, it is a curve ball. Surely, a curve ball is a thing.<sup>9</sup>

Suppose that I see myself in a photograph and in it I am looking at a spider descending. Suppose that I fail to realize that the person in the photograph is myself. I understand that my visual perception of the photograph represents the situation of a spider descending in front of someone with a certain appearance, but fail to conceptualize that someone as myself.<sup>10</sup> What is the difference between this case and the case in which I realize that I am looking at myself in the photograph? How does the realization arise?

As my visual experience of the spider represents it as being thus-and-so to me, I may or may not realize that representation is occurring to someone. If I do realize it, I come to the realization by recognizing the *me*-way of representation as one of the ways in which the current representation is

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<sup>8</sup> Or, to put it metalinguistically, the “adverb-to-noun shift.”

<sup>9</sup> A curve ball is not an event, for one could not hit an event out of a ballpark.

<sup>10</sup> We might also say that my visual perception of the photograph represents the situation of there being a photograph of the scene of a spider descending in front of someone with a certain appearance. We might be able to point out other instances of the representation relation holding in this example, but we shall ignore them for simplicity’s sake.

occurring. It is grasping this connection between the *me*-way and the presence of the recipient of representation that gives me the notion *me*.

Here, an analogy with time may be helpful. In particular, take the notion *now*.<sup>11</sup> We have been working under the assumption that representation is a many-place relation the *relata* of which are what does the representing, a content, an object(s), and a recipient. We may add one more *relatum*, a time. Assume that my perception of the spider is occurring at a particular time (moment or period) *t*. We may then say that my perceptual experience represents at *t*, with the content that a spider is descending, and the spider as the object and me as the recipient. It is important to note that the time *t* need not figure in the represented content as any specific time. Let *t* be noon on (a particular) Tuesday. I may not be aware of this, and my perceptual experience may not represent *t* as noon on Tuesday. That is, the content of representation may not be the “a-spider-descending-at-noon-on-Tuesday” content.

If I were yet to develop an explicit system of temporal notions, my perceptual experience would not put forth to me any content in which a particular time figured, so it would not only fail to put forth to me at *t* the content that a spider is descending at noon on Tuesday, but also fail to put forth to me at *t* the content that a spider is descending at *t*. Even so, the representation occurs in a certain way, which may be called the *now*-way. No matter how ignorant I may be of the temporal matters, as long as I experience the spider’s descent as taking place at some particular time, my experience puts forth at *t* the “a-spider-is-descending” content *now-ly*.<sup>12</sup>

Contrast this with the case of my looking back later to *t* and remembering my experience at *t*. I will have a recollecting experience in which the “a-spider-is-descending” content is put forth not *now-ly* but *then-ly*.

<sup>11</sup> See Kamp 1971.

<sup>12</sup> Compare Kriegel 2015. Also, in footnote 68 on page 317 of Kripke 2011 (a), we read: “Suppose someone wonders what time it is now ... So, in some sense, he is wondering what time it is, and the answer is given by the clock. Or he may be wondering when it will be noon, and the answer may be ‘now’, or ‘two minutes from now’. ‘When did she die?’ ‘Just now’. Both forms of question are legitimate, and equally so. In the first case, the very same situation is regarded in two ways. In my own opinion, the relativity and indeterminacy of ‘*wh*-questions’ like this is exaggerated in the philosophical literature, but it exists and the present instance is a strong case.” Kripke is saying that in the first case one and the same “situation” (what time it is now) is “regarded” in two different ways, which are such that depending on which way the “regarding” is understood, the correct answer is either (i) what the clock says, or (ii) how much temporal separation there is between now and noon. What I find important in this passage is that Kripke explicitly contrasts the “situation” and the way of “regarding” the situation; one and the same “situation” may be “regarded” in different ways. This distinction between a “situation” and a way of “regarding” it corresponds to my distinction between a content and a way of representing it.

As I become conscious of temporality of matters, I become able to entertain in the *now*-way not only the thought that a spider is descending but also the thought that a spider is descending now. When I do entertain the latter thought, the notion *now* both characterizes part of the represented content and is inherent in the way of the representation. Likewise, when I realize that I am looking at a spider descending, the notion *me* both characterizes part of the content of my perceptual representation and is inherent in the way of the representation; my perception represents not just the content that a spider is descending but also the content that I am looking at a spider descending (or the content that a spider is descending in front of me), in the *me*-way.<sup>13</sup>

## 7. Rigidity Explained

I see my own reflection on a large glass door at a pool party. Without realizing that I am seeing myself, I remain calm on the patio and say,

(3) His pants are on fire.

A moment later I come to the inevitable realization and jump into the pool, shouting,

(4) My pants are on fire!<sup>14</sup>

The truth conditions of what is said by me using (3) and (4) are not different; what is said is true if and only if Yagisawa's pants are on fire. The reference of "his" and "my" is to the same man and equally rigid. But something important is different, for my behavior is importantly different. Obviously what is different is the crucial involvement of the notion *me* in the case with (4), which is absent in the case with (3). The rigidity of "I" ("my") is

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<sup>13</sup> We may expand the analogy between *me* and *now* to include *actual*. David Lewis proposes an analysis of actuality in Lewis 1970 and distinguishes two senses of the word "actual," one rigid and the other non-rigid. It is customary simply to say, when discussing Lewis' analysis, that on that analysis every world is actual relative to itself: e.g., Leuenberger 2015: 111. When interpreted appropriately, such an analysis is correct for "actual" in the non-rigid sense only. The word "now" parallels the rigid sense of "actual," and for the non-rigid sense we may use the word "present": every time is present relative to itself. It is false to say that every time is now relative to itself. 1916 is not now in 1916. It is false even to say that 1916 was now in 1916. No time is, was, or will be now except *now*., viz., *this very time*. Likewise, nobody is me except *me*, and it is false to say that, say, Jack is me for Jack. The point may be made even more strongly if we replace "me" with "myself": nobody is myself except myself, and it is false to say that Jack is myself for Jack. The non-rigid sense is carried by just "self": Jack is the self for Jack, and everyone *x* is the self for *x*.

<sup>14</sup> This example is due to David Kaplan in Kaplan 1989. I have added the pool party setup.

explained if this involvement is explained. (In order to explain the rigidity of “his,” one needs to offer a separate explanation.)

My perceptual experience in the case with (4)<sup>15</sup> represents the “Yagisawa’s-pants-are-on-fire” content to me in the *me*-way. But this is not the crucial involvement of the notion *me* that distinguishes this case from the case with (3), for my perceptual experience in the case with (3) also represents the same content to me in the *me*-way; remember that all of my direct perceptual experiences represent contents to me in the *me*-way. The crucial involvement is the link between the *me*-way of representation and the “Yagisawa”-part of the represented content. The *me*-way of representation remains invariant from content to content; it is a way a given content is represented, rather than part of a given content. The *me*-way transcends particular contents in that sense and therefore has the effect of maintaining constancy through vagaries of differing circumstances of evaluation. Rigidity is none other than this effect. Once the “Yagisawa”-part of the represented content is linked to the *me*-way of representation, the rigidity effect kicks in. When I utter (3) calmly on the patio, the “Yagisawa”-part of the content is not linked to the *me*-way of representation. The rigidity effect kicks in only when the *me*-way of representation gives rise to the first-person conception of the recipient of the representation as a result of the way-to-thing shift, and also the recipient is identified as the individual corresponding to the “Yagisawa”-part of the content.

It might be objected that this explanation of the rigidity of “I” cannot be right because given the analogy with “now,” if it is right it should also explain the rigidity of “now” but it does not. The reason why it might be said to fail to explain the rigidity of “now” is that once the way-to-thing shift occurs, *now* immediately gets incorporated into the represented content: “a-spider-is-descending” becomes “a-spider-is-descending-now.” The objection might be fortified by the observation that the content without the *now* element can be a temporally neutral content whose truth-value is evaluable relative to different times with possibly different results, whereas the content without the *me* element cannot be a recipient-neutral content whose truth-value is evaluable relative to different recipients with possibly different results.

This objection misunderstands the proposed explanation. The proposed explanation acknowledges the disanalogy in question between *me* and *now* but only claims to explain the rigidity of “I” on the basis of the understanding of the notion *me* as primarily a meta-representational notion. Since *now* is also primarily a meta-representational notion, the same explanation

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<sup>15</sup> The crucial mode of perception is unlikely to be visual.

of the rigidity of “now” applies. The disanalogy between “I” and “now” is not relevant to the explanation of the rigidity of either term.

The rigidity of “I” has quite a different basis from the rigidity of a proper name or a natural-kind term. The rigidity of a proper name or a natural-kind term arises from the semantic fact that such an expression has precisely the semantic role of inserting its referent into the propositions expressed by sentences containing it. The rigidity of “I” arises from the conceptual origin of the notion *me* in the *me*-way of representation, which makes the notion *me* transcend the represented contents, or the propositions expressed by sentences containing the word “I,” and therefore the represented contents cannot shift from one circumstance of evaluation to another, as long as I am the one who is evaluating the content. The evaluator remains constant, for he remains to be I, as different circumstances are considered for evaluation, and since the referent of “I” is the evaluator (as the joint result of the way-to-thing shift and the infusion of the recipient of representation into the represented content), the referent of “I” remains constant. In this sense, the rigidity of “I” is meta-semantic in origin.

It should be remembered that I am not proposing a rival to the indexical theory. Nor am I casting doubt on the adequacy of the indexical theory as a semantic theory of “I,” as far as it goes as intended by its proponents. The linguistic meaning of “I,” like the meanings of other indexical terms, is shared by many speakers, and the indexical theory captures that meaning well. My concern is not linguistic but conceptual. My proposal is aimed at capturing the nature of the notion *me*, rather than capturing the linguistic meaning of the word “I.” In fact, my proposal explicitly denies the public shareability of the notion *me*, and therefore misses the publicness of the linguistic meaning of the word “I.” This, however, does not mean that my proposal is incompatible with a satisfactory theory of the linguistic meaning of “I.”

What you express by the word “me” stands in a parallel (the same?) relation to you as the relation in which the notion *me*—which I express by the word “me”—stands to me. This might be sufficient for making my proposal adequate as a basis for an acceptable theory of linguistic meaning. In order to serve as such a basis, my proposal needs to be augmented by a theory linking the notion *me* and the notion you associate with the world “me” on one hand and the publicly shareable linguistic meaning of the word “me” on the other.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> I thank Naoya Fujikawa for pushing me to clarify this point.

I hope that it goes without saying how my proposal overcomes the other two shortcomings of the indexical theory noted in section II. I leave it to the reader spell out how it its done.<sup>17</sup>

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