

# The SELF File and Immunity to Error Through Misidentification

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There are two diverging views on singular thoughts: a ‘latitudinarian’ or ‘liberal’ one (Sosa 1970, Hawthorne & Manley 2012) appealing to Fregeans, on which thinking a *de dicto* proposition that predicates some property *f* with respect to some individuating concept *a* of *x* suffices for having a singular thought about *x*; and a narrower one attractive to Millians, on which it requires *acquaintance* — some special relation binding the thinker with the object of reference, a causal psychological relation like perception or memory. In *Mental Files*, François Recanati advances a liberalization of the acquaintance view which, even if I do not find it fully convincing, I will not question here; I will assume that it deals well with Millian concerns from a perspective hospitable to the Fregean.<sup>1</sup>

Now, in the 1960s and 1970s Castañeda, Perry and Lewis argued that thoughts about oneself ‘as oneself’ — *de se* thoughts — raise special issues. In the first section I briefly survey the data, and Perry’s and Lewis’s contrasting proposals: while Lewis aims to account for *de se* thoughts by taking the subject away from such contents, which are thus properties instead of complete traditional proposi-

<sup>1</sup> Recanati allows that one may have a singular thought when one opens a file merely on the basis of descriptive information. Thus, Leverrier had singular thoughts about Neptune when he introduced the name, as I (2008) have argued is correct. However, against what I (2010) think, Recanati does not allow for singular thoughts in cases of merely imagined acquaintance, or in cases in which the acquaintance is expected but never materializes, because there is no object or because the subject never comes to be in the relation with it: ‘The acquaintance relation may be anticipated without undermining the reference relation which is based on it, but if the acquaintance relation never comes about, the reference relation does not either’ (2012a: 164).

tions, Perry offers an account compatible with traditional views. I also discuss Stalnaker's argument for a form of the latter view, and Recanati's take on it in *Mental Files*. In the second section I take up Recanati's (2007, 2009) arguments for a subjectless view of the content of 'implicit' *de se* thought, on the basis that we can thus better explain the phenomenon of *immunity to error through misidentification*. I argue that this is not the case, and I suggest that such a view is in tension with Recanati's mental files approach to *de re* thought in general and the SELF concept in particular. I will thus take advantage of the occasion of this symposium on *Mental Files* to air a perplexity I have been harboring with regard to the compatibility of Recanati's Lewisian account of *de se* contents and the mental files approach to content-ingredients he has been developing in his work, which are fully articulated in *Mental Files*.

### 1 *De se* thoughts

Following Castañeda 1966, Perry 1979 and Lewis 1979 showed that thoughts about oneself 'as oneself' — *de se* thoughts — require special treatment, and advanced rival accounts. Perry introduces the problem with a celebrated example:

'I once followed a trail of sugar on a supermarket floor, pushing my cart down the aisle on one side of a tall counter and back the aisle on the other, seeking the shopper with the torn sack to tell him he was making a mess. With each trip around the counter, the trail became thicker. But I seemed unable to catch up. Finally it dawned on me. I was the shopper I was trying to catch.' (Perry 1979: 33)

Before his epiphany, Perry has, according to latitudinarian accounts of *de re* thought, a belief about himself (under the individuating concept *the shopper with the torn sack*) to the effect that he was making a mess; but this is insufficient for him to have the reflexive, self-conscious belief that he would express in accepting 'I am making a mess', the one that leads him to rearrange the torn sack in the cart.

As Perry points out, it will not help to opt for a narrower account of *de re* thought:

'Suppose there were mirrors at either end of the counter so that as I pushed my cart down the aisle in pursuit I saw myself in the mirror. I take what I see to be the reflection of the messy shopper going up the aisle on the other side, not realizing that what I am really seeing is a

reflection of a reflection of myself.' (Perry 1979: 42)

Given that he is perceiving himself in the mirror, the narrower conception allows for Perry to have a *de re* belief about himself, to the effect that he is making a mess; but this still falls short of the reflective, self-conscious belief manifested by acceptance of 'I am making a mess' and the cleaning up behavior. Castañeda's amnesiac cases suggest that rich descriptive concepts are also unnecessary; for they *are* able to think about themselves in a fully self-conscious reflexive way, by using and understanding 'I' and related expressions for first-personal reference while knowing precious little about themselves.

Propositional attitudes and speech acts are individuated by representational contents that are taken to be propositions with absolute truth-values: given a full specification of a possible way for the world to be, propositions thus understood get a definite truth value with respect to it. Alternatively, propositions can be simply identified as classes of possible worlds, those with respect to which they are true. Thus, in believing that snow is white one represents worlds in which snow is white, and places the actual world among them. Lewis and Perry take *de se* thoughts to question this picture.

Lewis proposes to abandon the traditional theory of contents, and to take them to be *properties* instead of propositions: entities which are true or false, given a full characterization of a way for the world to be, only relative in addition to a subject and a time. Alternatively, the contents of propositional attitudes are, or at least select, not just classes or worlds, but rather classes of *centered worlds*: worlds together with a designated subject and a time. In coming to believe what he would express by accepting 'I am making a mess', Perry locates himself among all subjects making a mess at a given time and world.

On the traditional conception of contents the actual world is not part of the believed content, but in believing a proposition one ascribes it to the actual world at which the believing occurs; it is the attitude of believing, or the act of judging, which, as it were, as part of its 'illocutionary' nature, brings the world at which it occurs as the relevant one to evaluate the truth of the belief. A mere *imagining* with the same content would not similarly bring the actual world to bear, because imaginings are not evaluated as true or otherwise relative to whether the actual world where the imagining occurs is

correctly represented by their contents. Similarly and by analogy, on Lewis's view it is the attitude of believing itself, as opposed to its content, which brings to bear the subject and time relevant for the evaluation of its truth or falsity. Subjects who come to believe what they would express in English by uttering 'I am making a mess' believe the same contents, in the way that subjects who believe that snow is white at different worlds believe the same contents. This provides a nice solution to the initial problem of *de se* thought: if no descriptive conception of the subject (including ones allowing for *de re* thought on the narrow conception N) is sufficient for *de se* thought, and none appears to be needed, this is on Lewis's view because the subject is not represented as part of the content, but is brought to bear for purposes of evaluation by the act of judging itself, not by its content. These *perspectival contents* that Lewis's account posits have made a strong comeback to the philosophical scene in recent years, in the so-called *relativist* accounts advanced by writers such as Kölbel 2004, Egan 2007, 2010 or McFarlane 2003 for different areas of discourse: judgments of taste, epistemic modals, future-tense claims on the assumption of indeterminism, among others.

On Perry's alternative view, we should distinguish the *content* or object of the belief from the belief *state* through which it is accessed. The content is just a traditional proposition, *de dicto* or *de re*. The state is a specific condition of the subject, by being in which a given content is believed. Contents help to account for the role that propositional attitudes constitutively have in appraising the rationality of the subject, the adequacy of his beliefs to his evidence and of his actions to his beliefs and desires, the desirability of his desires, etc. But only in a coarse-grained way: for a full account of rational action we need not just the content, but also the specific *state* through which the content is accessed. In line with Frege's puzzles, the previous cases involving *de se* thoughts show that traditional contents are not enough to appraise rationality and cognitive significance; ways of accessing them should also be taken into consideration.

Belief states themselves must hence have some kind of meaning or significance, if they are to have a role in appraising the rationality of actions or inferences. In his original account, Perry 1979 appeals to Kaplan's 1989 distinction between *character* and *content* to characterize the significance of states. Utterances of 'he is making a mess' and

'I am making a mess' might have, in their contexts, the same singular content, but they have different characters. Similarly, Perry's belief state when he looks at what is in fact his own reflection in the mirror, and later when he catches up, are different states with the same content; given the differences in rational action to be expected from one and the other, states themselves must have a role in the explanation of action and the cognitive significance of the belief in virtue of their character-like meaning.

Now, Stalnaker (1981: 145-8) objected to accounts such as Lewis's and the original one by Perry just presented on the grounds that they cannot capture an 'informational content' that is an essential feature of utterances including essential indexicals, and advanced an alternative account appealing to the 'diagonal propositions' that he (1978) had introduced earlier. Like Perry, I prefer to think in terms of structured propositions, as opposed to possible-world ones (and in fact take them to be ontologically more fundamental), so I will not present the Perry-Stalnaker debate in terms of diagonal propositions; I will present it instead in terms of what I take to be essentially equivalent token-reflexive structured propositions.<sup>2</sup>

Let us imagine a variation on Perry's supermarket story in which, contemplating the situation and realizing what is going on, a kind shopper warns Perry, which leads to Perry's epiphany. He thereby comes to accept 'I am making a mess' after being told 'you are making a mess'. On Perry's original view the *contents* of the beliefs thereby expressed are the ordinary, coarse-grained *de re* propositions which are conveniently identical for the two utterances. However, as we know, this singular content does not account for what Perry comes to know after the epiphany: he already believed it beforehand. Nevertheless, it seems that whatever explains Perry's distinctive behavior after the epiphany was in this variation of the story communicated to him by the other shopper's utterance.

How could Perry's or Lewis's proposals account for this? The character-like contents corresponding to the shopper's utterance, 'you are making a mess', are very different from those corresponding to the ones by means of which Perry would express his acquired knowledge, 'I am making a mess'. The properties that the shopper

<sup>2</sup> The reader might find further elaboration in my 2006a.

and Perry rationally self-attribute differ (*addressing someone who is making a mess*, *making a mess*, respectively), and the corresponding perspectival contents are similarly different. Alternatively put, it would be absurd for Perry to ascribe to himself the property that the samaritan shopper expresses — to wit, that of *being addressing someone who is making a mess*. For Lewis and Perry to deal with this consistently with their accounts, they should elaborate them so as to explain how it is that, in virtue of the shopper expressing a certain *de se* content, Perry comes to learn a different one.

On the simplest account of successful communication, the episode should be explained by Perry's learning *the very same content* that the samaritan shopper expressed. This is what Stalnaker's account in terms of diagonal propositions or token-reflexive contents purports to offer. We can think of the meaning of indexicals like 'I' or 'you' as token-reflexive rules, which, given a particular token, fix its referent relative to some contextual property: being the speaker who produced it, or its (most salient) addressee. This provides a descriptive (but not purely general) conception of the referent; in the case of the samaritan utterance of 'you are making a mess', we have a token-reflexive conception associated with the particular case of 'you', *the addressee of that token*.<sup>3</sup> Both the samaritan shopper and Perry can share this way of representing him. So we have here an ordinary content, determining a traditional proposition, which is communicated from one to the other: the one we could explicitly articulate with 'the addressee of that token of 'you' is making a mess'.

Perry 1993 accepts that, for the kind of consideration about informational content that Stalnaker pointed out, these token-reflexive contents provide a better representation of the significance of belief-states than the one he had earlier suggested in terms of Kaplanian characters. As Perry 2006 explains, however, this refined version of his account can be taken in the proper way if it is to provide an at least *prima facie* successful account for *de se* thoughts. On this interpretation, the proposal is just a refined way of understanding the significance of belief-states; but an adequate account of *de se* contents (hence of the nature of attitudes and speech acts in general) still re-

<sup>3</sup> I have discussed the role of these contents in detail elsewhere (1998, 2000, 2006a).

quires the distinction between belief-contents and belief-states (ways of accessing the content). The modification of Perry's original proposal lies only in that now the significance of belief-states is characterized in the traditional propositional way that token-reflexive contents afford.

This still leaves us with the task of explaining the nature of states and contents and their interrelation. Perry has an account on which states are mental particulars that may be classified by their 'official contents' (the coarse-grained singular propositions) and also by a plurality of other finer-grained propositional contents, useful for different explanatory purposes. In my view, the appeal to the state/content distinction in the case of *de se* thoughts is just a particular case of the proper way to understand a Fregean view on the attitudes, which I (2000, 2006a) have argued requires ascribing a presuppositional nature to reference-fixing senses. I cannot elaborate on the details of my own view of *de se* senses here.<sup>4</sup>

Recanati (2012a: 211-18) provides an interesting account of the communication of *de se* contents that is compatible with this. On his proposal, the concepts/mental files that the speaker (the samaritan shopper in the variation on Perry's original story above) expresses and the hearer (Perry) comes to entertain as a result differ, as it should be, for Perry's is his own SELF concept, while this is not the one in the thought that his informant gives voice to. However, the latter evokes the former, because they share something: the linguistic sense of the token indexical that the speaker uses, *the addressee of this very token of 'you'*. I will come back to this below when I consider the consistency of Recanati's perspectival content account of *de se* thoughts with his views on the SELF file.

<sup>4</sup> Peacocke (1983: Chapter 5; 2008: Chapter 3; 2012), Higginbotham 2003 and Howell 2006 defend different proposals I am sympathetic to. On all of them, as Peacocke (2012: 145) puts it, it is constitutive of the SELF concept as it occurs in a *de se* attitude-state that it refers to the thinker of the attitude. A simple version of this suggestion assumes a language of thought; the difference between the state individuated by a sentence corresponding to 'I am making a mess' and another individuated by 'the addressee of that token is making a mess' is that only the former includes an expression whose reference rule aims to pick out its subject.

## 2 *De se* thoughts and immunity to error through misidentification

Recanati 2007 argues for a (moderate) relativist account of some contents; in particular, he argues for a perspectival content account of ‘basic’ or ‘implicit’ *de se* thoughts, on which their possible-world-contents must be given by *centered* worlds, along the lines of Lewis’s. Recanati offers a new argument for this sort of account; he defends it on the basis of observations about the phenomenon that Shoemaker characterized as *immunity to error through misidentification* (‘IEM’ henceforth):<sup>5</sup>

‘to say that a statement ‘*a* is *j*’ is subject to error through misidentification relative to the term ‘*a*’ means that the following is possible: the speaker knows some particular thing to be *j*, but makes the mistake of asserting ‘*a* is *j*’ because, and only because, he mistakenly thinks that the thing he knows to be *j* is what *a* refers to.’ (Shoemaker 1968: 557)<sup>6</sup>

I will argue that IEM does not support the perspectivalist view, and suggest that rather the opposite is true. In more recent work, Recanati (2009 and 2012b) acknowledges some of the points that I will make, but he still defends the perspectivalist proposal on the basis of considerations about IEM. I will argue that they are unconvincing.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, I will argue that the Mental Files take on the SELF concept and proto-concept is in tension with the account.

Consider the moment in Perry’s story when he sees what in fact is his image in a mirror with a torn sack. Imagine another variation on the story, in which this is in fact the ground for Perry’s epiphany, because this time he recognizes himself in the mirror; suppose then that he judges on this basis what he would express by ‘I am making

<sup>5</sup> Shoemaker suggests that IEM captures some of Wittgenstein’s points about uses of ‘I’ ‘as subject’ vs. uses of ‘I’ ‘as object’ in the *Blue Book*.

<sup>6</sup> Pryor 1999 offers an alternative propositional characterization, free from concerns that this linguistic characterization — useful as a starting point — might raise. Pryor’s characterization also highlights the relativity to ways of reaching the relevant judgment and to normal circumstances that, as the examples below will make clear, any proper characterization should contemplate: a judgment can be IEM if made on a given epistemic basis in normal circumstances, and not if made on different bases or under abnormal conditions.

<sup>7</sup> Stanley (2011: 91-3) and Morgan 2012 make related objections to Recanati.



a mess'. Made on such epistemic grounds, the claim is exposed to the error that Shoemaker identifies: Perry might have been wrong in identifying himself with the person whose back is reflected in the mirror; he would then be right that someone is pushing a cart with a torn sack and is thus making a mess, but wrong to think that it is he who is making a mess. In the original version of the story, the epiphany comes instead from Perry seeing that he is pushing a cart with a torn sack. Consider Perry's physical self-ascription, 'I am pushing a cart with a torn sack', made on the basis of his visual perception of the scene around him; or his psychological self-ascription, 'I see that I am pushing a cart with a torn sack'. Neither of these claims appears to be open to that sort of error; nor is the thought he expresses by 'I am making a mess', when based on such epistemic grounds.

These examples show that, if there is a connection between *de se* thoughts and IEM, it must be indirect; for the thoughts Perry expresses by accepting 'I am making a mess' in both cases are *de se*. The subtler connection might be this: 'I'-thoughts that are IEM are *fundamentally de se*; those that are not are only *de se derivatively*, in that, in making them by using the first-person concept, the speaker identifies himself as the object of other, *fundamentally de se* thoughts. Recanati's claims based on IEM on behalf of the property account of *de se* thought concern only the *fundamentally de se*. He (2007, 177) thus distinguishes *explicit* from *implicit de se* thoughts. The former are attitudes to traditional, full-fledged propositions, the latter to truncated perspectival propositions.

Various writers including John Campbell, Christopher Peacocke and Crispin Wright have developed an account of IEM suggested by Evans that Wright 2012 calls 'the Simple Account'. On the Simple Account, non-IEM thoughts are (roughly) thoughts the structure of whose epistemic justification depends on an identity claim;<sup>8</sup> thus, for instance, Perry's judgment 'I am making a mess' in the first version of the story in the second paragraph of this section, which was not IEM, depends on Perry's identity judgment, *I am that person reflected*

<sup>8</sup> I say 'roughly' because there are further cases that are also not IEM but whose justification exhibit a more complex inferential structure, including the cases that Pryor 1999 calls 'which-misidentification'; cf. also Recanati 2012 and Wright 2012.

*in the mirror*. This is why he might coherently consider that, although the existential ‘part’ of his claim — that someone is making a mess — is correct, he is mistaken in the identification, and it is not in fact he himself but someone else who is making a mess. On the Simple Account, IEM thoughts are negatively characterized as those that are not thus dependent on an identity claim.

This account crucially relies on the notion of *doxastic* justification, hence on the problematic *basing* relation. There are well-known discrepancies among contemporary epistemologists that have immediate resonance for our present issue. Certainly, that a judgment A is epistemically based on a certain claim B cannot require that the subject phenomenologically experiences his coming to judge A as a result of an inference in part from B; for Perry might well lack such inferential phenomenology in the above example of non-IEM thought. Consider Moore’s (in-)famous inference, (i) here are two hands, (ii) if there are hands, there is an external world, hence (iii) there is an external world. Given its validity, someone who judges (i) is thus rationally committed to (iii); but there are different ways of understanding such commitments. Pryor 2004 distinguishes two epistemological attitudes we may have with respect to them, a *liberal* and a *conservative* one. On the conservative attitude, having *prima facie* justification to believe (i) requires antecedent justification to believe (iii); the liberal denies this, even though he agrees that evidence against (iii) would defeat our justification to believe (i). I would further distinguish two versions of the conservative attitude; on the most straightforward conservative-conservative version, justification for (i) would require a priori or empirical evidence for (iii); on a liberal-conservative one along lines explored by Wright (2004), it is enough if (iii) is a presupposition that one is entitled to make by default.

These views carry over to the status of identity claims that one might discern in the justificatory structure of our singular thoughts. The conservative-conservative attitude is the proper one concerning Perry’s identification with the person whose back he sees in the mirror. Consider, however, the judgments mentioned earlier as examples of IEM: Perry’s physical self-ascription that he is pushing a cart with a torn sack, made on the basis of visual perception, or his psychological self-ascription that he sees that he is pushing a cart

with a torn sack. Shoemaker would consider them as cases of *circumstantial*, not *absolute* IEM; they are *de facto* IEM but under weird circumstances they could be subject to error through misidentification. Imagine, for instance, that the science fiction technologies that films like *Avatar* contemplate could allow to block our own visual impressions and receive instead those coming from another body.<sup>9</sup> Under those circumstances, Perry's judgments might be wrong because of the mistaken identification of himself with the body that is the source of the relevant visual impressions. We can interpret this in terms of the distinction between the liberal-conservative and the conservative-conservative attitudes. Even if the subject reasonably and in fact correctly took for granted in the context the identity premise, so that the judgment did not depend on it, there are contexts in which epistemically the judgment must be taken as made on the basis of the identity premise, for a circumstance in which it fails is a relevant alternative.

On this proposal, the commitment to identifications that ordinary self-ascriptions based on visual perception in fact carry are understood along the lines of the liberal-conservative proposal above, as opposed to the conservative-conservative view that suggests itself as more appropriate for the mirror example: these identities are in normal contexts presuppositions to which we are entitled by default, without the need to have ordinary *a priori* or empirical evidence for them.<sup>10</sup> We do not need to go into these issues any further. Note just that the explanation that the Simple Account affords appeals to the absence of an identity claim in the justificational structure; Recanati's explanation appeals instead to the absence of a conception of the self in the content of the IEM judgments. The Simple Account helps us to distinguish two senses for a thought to have an identification component. In the first sense ('identification<sub>p</sub>'), the epistemic grounds for the thought include an identity-premise. In the second sense ('identification<sub>c</sub>'), the thought includes a concept that identifies what it is about. On the Simple Account, having an identification<sub>c</sub> component is compatible with a thought being IEM; for being

<sup>9</sup> Dennett 1978 imagines such a scenario.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Coliva 2006, 2012 and Wright (2012: Sections 7-8); cf. also Peacocke (1983: 139-151) and Peacocke (2008: 92-103).

IEM is *lacking* an identification<sub>p</sub> component, and thoughts having identification<sub>c</sub> components may well be identification<sub>p</sub> free — they might even be epistemically basic. In contrast, Recanati's account explains IEM by the absence of an identification<sub>c</sub> element.

The Simple Account opens the possibility of thoughts including identification<sub>c</sub> components, which are nonetheless IEM with respect to them. And it seems to be the case that there are such thoughts. Wright 2012 offers as examples 'you are very close' and 'he is a long way off', both based on observation; Peacocke 2008, 'this keyboard is black', again based on observation. Hence, Recanati's 2007 account of IEM will not do. Recanati 2009, 2012b accepts this; he accepts it even for some first-personal IEM thoughts. Thus, a thought expressed by 'my legs are crossed', based on proprioceptive evidence, is IEM on his original account because the content is just the property of having crossed legs, which the subject self-ascribes. However, the thought expressed by 'it is my legs, not my neighbor's, that are crossed' cannot plausibly be considered as not including the concept of the thinker's leg. Nonetheless, it is still (circumstantially) IEM. Recanati suggests (2009: 259; 2012b: Sections 2.2 and 2.3) that this is only so because the 'subject-explicit' thought is derived through a process he calls 'reflection' from a 'subject-implicit' property-ascription, and thus has the same grounds as the latter, lacking an identity-premise:

'a judgment is immune to error through misidentification if it is implicitly *de se*, that is, if the subject is not represented in the content of the judgment but his or her involvement is secured by the mode of the grounding experience; yet an explicit *de se* thought may *also* be IEM if it has the same grounds as an implicit *de se* thought.'

But how could this work for demonstrative thoughts? Recanati (2012b: Section 3) justifies the extension of the proposal to that case, but Wright 2012 raises serious concerns.

It thus seems that the perspectival content account of first-personal thoughts is no better placed vis-à-vis IEM than the token-reflexive proposal outlined in the previous section. On the contrary, the failure of Recanati's attempt to extend his proposal to explain the IEM character of explicit (SELF concept involving) *de se* thoughts to IEM thoughts relative to demonstrative concepts in general suggests that the explanation of the IEM character of a thought (if there

is one) must be compatible with its having a full traditional proposition as content. Such an explanation, I submit, should come from the broadly token-reflexive nature that the alternative to the perspectival content view presented in the previous section advances, i.e., of the relevant identification<sub>c</sub>. Here is the core of a suggestion. Deployment of individual concepts takes for granted reference-fixing information. A thought of the form *A is P* is IEM when the ascribed property *P* is already ascribed to the referent of the concept *A* as part of its background reference-fixing information.<sup>11</sup> On this suggestion, when *being P* is individuative, the identity *A is the P* is not a premise in the justificational structure of the judgment, but is rather (either *de facto*, i.e., merely circumstantially, or *de jure*) taken for granted in deploying concept *A*.

At first sight at least, to me a token-reflexive account of *de se* thoughts incorporating the kernel of an account of IEM just outlined fits Recanati's 2012a views on the SELF concept better than the perspectival content account. Simply put, mental files are individual concepts, and concepts are ingredients of contents. If the account of *de se* thoughts is that they deploy the SELF mental file, then the contents of *de se* thoughts have this concept as an ingredient. Recanati's account of the communication of *de se* contents, outlined in the previous section, appears to assume the same. In the terminology used above, Recanati's account of *de se* thoughts and their communication appears to involve an identification<sub>c</sub> — the SELF file.

Now, this only applies, I guess, to Recanati's 'explicit' *de se* thoughts. He (2012a: 64) does envisage a SELF\* 'proto-file', which, unlike the full SELF file, 'can only host information gained 'from inside', in the first-person way and hence does not obey Evans's 'Generality Constraint'. I suppose the idea is that proto-files are vehicles for nonconceptual contents, and that it is the SELF\* proto-file that figures in basic, 'implicit' *de se* contents. But this does not help. On the best account I know of the conceptual/non-conceptual distinction (cf. García-Carpintero 2006b, Heck 2007) the difference has to do with the nature of the content-vehicles, in particular with their inferential potential — which is consistent with Recanati's appeal to

<sup>11</sup> For the *de se* case, Peacocke (2012: 148-9) provides two suggestive examples that can be understood along these lines.

breakdown of the Generality Constraint to characterize nonconceptual content. On this view, vehicles for nonconceptual contents still make contributions to contents; hence no justification for the perspectival content account of *de se* thoughts can be gleaned from this either. Contentful states involving the SELF\* proto-file still appear to involve an identification<sub>c</sub>.<sup>12</sup>

I have taken advantage of the occasion of this symposium on *Mental Files* to question Recanati's (2007, 2009) grounds for his Lewisian account of *de se* contents, and also its compatibility with the mental files approach to content-ingredients articulated in the book. In the first section, I have contrasted the Lewisian, perspectival content approach with a token-reflexive elaboration on the Perry-Stalnaker traditional alternative. I presented the communication problem raised in favor of the latter, and I have suggested that Recanati's proposal to deal with it in the book appears to fit better the latter view. In this section I have argued that IEM does not give any advantage to the Lewisian view; rather, the opposite appears to be the case.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. also Peacocke's (2012: 154-6) criticism of Perry's 2002 related view.

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