

Strawson and Kant on Being 'I'

Jan Kuneš

Abstract: Strawson developed his descriptive metaphysics in close relation to Kant's metaphysics of experience which can be understood as a particular version of descriptive metaphysics. At the same time, Strawson rejects the foundations of Kant's version of descriptive metaphysics which, according to him, is a species of psychology. His argument against Kant's conception of subject, or of the 'I', can be found in his conception of person. A closer scrutiny of this conception of Strawson can, however, reveal that it is not comprehensive enough compared with that of Kant. Speaking with Kant, Strawson understands the part of being 'I' which can be known via self-knowledge but he fails to appreciate the second part of being 'I', namely self-consciousness. A comparison of Strawson's conception with Kant's conception of being 'I' reveals its systematic shortcomings that rather support, against Strawson's purpose, Kant's version of descriptive metaphysics as a theory of subjectivity.

Keywords: person, subject, self-knowledge, self-consciousness.

For Peter Strawson the point of connection with the philosophy of Immanuel Kant arises in his project of descriptive metaphysics that he presented in his book *Individuals* (Strawson 1959, 11). He understands this metaphysics as an attempt "to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world" (*ibid.*, 9). Written as it was in mid 20th century, it's not surprising that it should rely "upon a close examination of the actual use of words", though without being based on it (*ibid.*).

For when we ask how we use this or that expression, our answers, however revealing at a certain level, are apt to assume, and not to expose, those general elements of structure which the metaphysician wants revealed. The structure he seeks does not readily display itself on the surface of language, but lies submerged. (*ibid.*, 10)

But while Strawson's descriptive metaphysics is an irreducibly philosophical enterprise, that enterprise is not to be understood as "an instrument of conceptual change, a means of furthering or registering new directions or styles of thought" (ibid.).

Similarly to how Kant would protect his metaphysics of experience against the Marburg School Neo-Kantians, Strawson's descriptive metaphysics is concerned neither with systematization of new achievements of some specific science, nor with the manner in which ordinary speech reflects them. It focuses rather on "the commonplaces of the least refined thinking; [which] are yet the indispensable core of the conceptual equipment of the most sophisticated human beings" (1959, 10). These "commonplaces" are thus involved in both ordinary and scientific thinking. As such, they are presupposed in any scientific revolution as well as in any change of philosophical theory which occurs, because it "reflects both the age's climate of thought and the individual philosopher's personal style of thinking" (ibid., 11). Descriptive metaphysics has to go beyond all that change: it has to display the "massive central core of human thinking which has no history", for "there are categories and concepts which, in their most fundamental character, change not at all" (ibid.).

There is a general agreement that Strawson's project of descriptive metaphysics can in fact be discussed in close relation to Kant's metaphysics of experience as Strawson himself did in *The Bounds of Sense* (Bird 2003, 67 – 86). Strawson's search for logically primitive concepts which are the unchangeable general elements of our conceptual scheme and which operate in our world view is indeed comparable with Kant's quest for the *a priori* conditions of empirical objective knowledge. Kant calls the knowledge of these conditions *transcendental knowledge*. Transcendental knowledge is not knowledge of objects, but of the way in which we know objects, insofar it is *a priori*, i.e. insofar this way constitutes all possible objective knowledge and depends only on us, the knowers (Kant 1998, 82; B 25). This is why it's not misleading that John McDowell takes the Kantian conditions to be the principles of our "having the world in view".¹ However, there are also differences between the

¹ McDowell (1996) and McDowell (1998). McDowell follows Sellars who takes the Kantian project to be the inquiry into the general forms or uniformities (in the sense of "ought-to-be's") our empirical knowledge and, thus, possible speech about the world is based on. Focussing on "the functioning of language as a cognitive instrument", he

two projects. One such important difference concerns the issue of the subject of knowledge which Kant takes to be the core of our being 'I'. Kant's attempt to interpret the transcendental conditions of our empirical knowledge as elements of our subjectivity is in Strawson's view only a piece of psychology that does not contribute anything relevant to descriptive metaphysics.

We can focus on this point of disagreement between the Kantian and Strawsonian version of descriptive metaphysics by comparing Strawson's and Kant's understanding of being 'I'. In this paper, I will first consider Strawson's view which he holds already in *Individuals*. By applying it later to the Kantian conception, Strawson enters into a dialogue with Kant on the issue of being 'I'. In presenting this virtual dialogue I wish to show that, while Strawson shows the concept of the person to be an important concept in descriptive metaphysics, he fails to appreciate the significance of 'I', understood as subject. In exploring this I hope to show that Kant's treatment does not only avoid some of the worries raised by Strawson, but also gives us a more comprehensive conception of being 'I' than the one Strawson proposed in his critical response not only to Kant's 'pure I', but also to Descartes' *ego cogito* and to Wittgenstein's subjective use of the word 'I'. In the final section of my paper I wish to show how the Kantian 'I', understood as subject, can serve as a starting point for descriptive metaphysics without being conflated with person, i.e. with an individual existing in the world among other individuals.

Strawson on Being 'I'

It is broadly acknowledged by the interpreters of Strawson that in his systematic conception as well as in his interpretation of Kant, he claims that to be self-conscious one must first of all conceive oneself as one corporeal object among others.² "In actual practice", Strawson argues, "this condition is satisfied by the fact that each of us is a corporeal object among corporeal objects, is indeed man among men". Under this condition "our personal pronouns, the 'I' included, have an empirical refer-

claims that epistemology understood in the Kantian manner "becomes the theory of this functioning - in short *transcendental linguistics*" (Sellars 1974a, 59).

² Recently T. Rosefeldt supported this view of Strawson's also in respect to Kant - Rosefeldt (2003).

ence" (1966, 102). It is thus obvious how Strawson understands self-consciousness: he connects it with the concept of a person identifiable through "that which one calls one's body" and which is "a material thing". For only such material thing "can be picked out from others, identified by ordinary physical criteria and described in ordinary physical terms" (1959, 89). Thus only by having the body as the material point of reference can one be what one understands by the personal pronoun 'I' or its derivatives such as the pronoun 'mine' which is operative in the speech of the self-ascription of inner states.

Strawson claims that only by being a person can one have self-consciousness: only of a person can one say *who* the corporeal qualities and the inner states belong to. Strawson defines the concept of person in the following way:

What I mean by the concept of a person is the concept of a type of entity such that *both* predicates ascribing states of consciousness *and* predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation &c. are equally applicable to a single individual of that single type. (1959, 101 - 102)

Person so understood is, Strawson argues, a logically primitive concept, one that cannot be analysed further, but can only serve as one of the basic elements of our conceptual scheme. In this way its role seems to be that of Descartes' simple natures (*naturae simplicissimae*, or *res simplices*) within his *mathesis universalis*, especially one in particular—the *cogito ergo sum* (Marion 1999). Yet Strawson's concept of person shows a rather strong disagreement with Descartes.

Descartes' conception is in fact one of the two main philosophical theories that Strawson argues to violate the concept of the person as the logically primitive one. It does so by introducing a division between individual consciousness and individual body. The second theory Strawson argues against is what he calls the no-ownership theory. Its origin is to be found in Wittgenstein's differentiation of the use of the pronoun 'I' into subjective and objective one. Only in its objective use do I refer to myself as one object among others, as for instance in the description 'I am 180 cm tall' or 'I have a bad tooth'. This is not the case in the subjective use of the pronoun 'I' in sentences expressing the inner states such as 'I have a toothache'. As Wittgenstein puts it:

We feel 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 we said, 'Cogito, ergo sum'. (1978, 69)

Wittgenstein denies the conception of the bodiless being and along with it the Cartesian position as he understands it. He holds, however, that in using the pronoun 'I' subjectively we speak about inner states without referring them to a particular person whose identity is secured by distinctive bodily characteristics and which, consequently, can be said not to refer to anybody or to anything. And exactly this point could lead to the no-ownership theory.

In *Individuals* Strawson denies both the Cartesian and the no-ownership theory. He does so by criticizing the presumption "that there are two uses of 'I', in one of which it denotes something which it does not denote in the other" (1959, 98). The personal pronoun 'I', he argues, can only be used to denote person which is identifiable as a material thing. As he puts it, one knows oneself as "'I' or 'Smith'" (1959, 105), only if one ascribes both bodily qualities and inner states to oneself *qua* single subject which is to be identified as one corporeal, i.e. material thing among others. Strawson argues for his conception by considering the logic of ordinary speech. Although having inner states is for each person a private occurrence, which can be verified only by one's own inner experience, we nevertheless always refer these inner states to some person whom we conceive also as a corporeal object among corporeal objects. This is the case also in speaking of *myself* as having inner states. In this situation I give a report of myself and I understand what it means to give such a report to another person. Speaking to him I understand that for him I too am a 'he'. This means that my report 'I φ ' includes the self-understanding from the standpoint of the outside observer, i.e. of the third grammatical person, and that means that it includes the view of the person as a corporeal thing.³ The same is true of my own understanding of my inner states as my *private* experiences, because the use of the pronoun 'I' or 'mine' functions in the same way. And that means that if I want to understand my inner states *as private*, I must refer them to

³ Strawson argues that the situation of such a report is the primary one also inasmuch as all possible problems connected with the sentences like 'I have toothache' told from the standpoint of the first person and having private verification in opposition to sentences like 'I have a bad tooth', which are objectively verifiable as true or untrue from the standpoint of the third person, "answers itself as soon as we remember that we *speak* primarily to others, for the information of others" (Strawson 1959, 100).

myself *qua* single person distinct from others in a way in which only corporeal beings can be.

Proceeding from this last point, Strawson develops his argument against both the Cartesian and the no-ownership theory. He argues that a Cartesian philosopher, who conceived a consciousness which did not contain knowledge of oneself as a corporeally identified subject, could not claim the privateness of the states of consciousness. He could in fact make no sense of the privateness of inner life which is crucial for establishing his position. For this reason, the Cartesian philosopher has to admit that the inner life of the person must be ascribable to the corporeal subject who knows and speaks of himself as 'I' or 'Smith'. Similarly, the no-ownership theorist who denies such ascription and says that inner states are "no one's" (1959, 100) can simply not say that inner states are his. For this reason, according to Strawson, "Lichtenberg's dictum that, instead of saying 'I think', we (or Descartes) ought to say 'There is a thought' (i.e. 'Es denkt')" is applicable also to the no-ownership theorist (1959, 95, note 1), and Lichtenberg's criticism of Descartes' *ego cogito* applies equally to Wittgenstein's conception of inner occurrences such as toothache. Strawson thus could have concluded that unless inner states refer to a materially identified person, i.e. unless a purely subjective use of 'I' is connected with some objective use of 'I', we cannot say 'I have a toothache', but only 'There is a toothache'.⁴

Only by developing Strawson's conception thus far can one understand the strongest argument he makes against the no-ownership theory. In section 3 of the chapter "Persons" he claims that given that inner states are to be conceived as particular entities they

owe their identity as particulars to the identity of the person whose states or experiences they are. From this it follows immediately that if they can be identified as particular states or experiences at all, they must be possessed or ascribable in just that way which the no-ownership theorist ridicules... (1959, 97)

That means that the identity of our inner states can be secured to them only by our ascribing them to a person *qua* corporeally identical entity. Without referring them to this corporeally defined subject there would be no point of reference which would allow us to understand them as

⁴ Wittgenstein himself thinks this way when he reformulates the sentence 'I have toothache' into the sentence 'It is toothache', or the sentence 'I think' to the sentence 'It is thinking' (Moore 1963 - 1964) - I am grateful to P. Kořátko for this reference.

distinct beings. From this it follows that neither as a no-ownership nor as a Cartesian theorist could I understand the privacy of my inner life as one individual life among others; nor could I understand this inner life as a process in which I have *many* distinct states and experiences. For it's only because I understand each of them as mine that I can distinguish one from the others, something which is presupposed in my understanding them as a plurality of distinct entities which my inner life consists of.

On this point Strawson agrees with Hume, namely that in the context of a process in which one can only have inner states it is impossible to establish a unified pure ego, i.e. the ego-substance. He excludes from the beginning the possibility of any ego which would understand his identity without taking into account the identity of person. For that reason the mineness of the inner states can be established only via an ascription to the person as a material thing. Strawson's claim against the possibility of the pure ego is an attempt to criticise not only Descartes, but also Kant, specifically Kant's "'I think' which accompanies all my perceptions" (1959, 103). Strawson attacks the fundamental role of the Cartesian and the Kantian conception of the 'I', claiming that if anything like the pure ego could be established, it could be derived only as the "logically secondary" concept from the logically prior concept of the person (1959, 103). This would have undesirable consequences for Descartes' and Kant's concept of self-consciousness, if Strawson were finally right in showing that "the word 'I' never refers to... the pure subject" (1959, 103), but only to the person.

Kant on Being 'I'

As we can see Strawson's idea is quite straightforward: self-consciousness is the ability to ascribe my corporeal qualities and inner states to myself *qua* single individual of the type 'person'. Doing this does not differ in any fundamental way from the way we ascribe qualities and states to other individuals, since the general presupposition of any such ascription is the identification of the individual as a material body and a physical process. The individual identified in this way can be referred to by means of a name or another singular term. If the singular term is the pronoun 'I', then the reference is secured if and only if the empirical criterion of such reference is some successful identification.

As Strawson puts it, if I can identify myself as an individual then I can understand myself as "I, or Smith". However, it is precisely this

result that shows, I believe, the rather unsatisfactory character of his account, insofar as it purports to be an account of what self-consciousness consists in. This is because, while such an account can explain the empirical conditions under which the pronoun 'I' can refer to one individual called 'Smith', it cannot explain the referring power of the self-consciousness which is a necessary, even if not a sufficient condition of our use of the pronoun 'I'. Put simply, from knowing such an individual as 'Smith' it does not follow that if I am really Smith then I know that I am that Smith. This situation is not improved by the fact that I as Smith have not only corporeal qualities, but also inner states, since all that does is to include inner states among the properties which I, as Smith, have. But again: How do I know that I am that Smith? We saw in interpreting Strawson that neither can self-consciousness result merely from having inner states, nor can merely having inner states already involve self-consciousness. These inner states should really be expressed in sentence like 'There is a toothache'. That is to say that what Strawson explains is always the self-knowledge of me as person, but not how that self-knowledge becomes my *self-knowledge*; what he does not explain is my knowing myself as a distinct individual which in knowing itself is something *for itself*, i.e. the 'I'. But this means that he doesn't explain that which is traditionally understood as self-consciousness. To use a more recent expression, Strawson's conception fails to account for the ability of persons to occupy the standpoint of the first person, where the correct use of the personal pronoun 'I' only proves the ability to occupy this standpoint.⁵

This ability is something that can be explained neither from self-knowledge, nor from the proper use of the personal pronoun 'I', which is already operative in speech expressing contents of the self-knowledge. Rather, they both presuppose it, if the person is to be able to understand the self-knowledge and to express it as his own. Traditionally, self-consciousness is connected with the very essence of persons as thinking beings. Persons are the individuals that know, in their thought, both the world and themselves, as particulars of the world. As such beings, they lead their lives in a way different from that of other beings, beings which

⁵ Dieter Henrich shows in relation to recent philosophy of language and its standard explanation of the use of the pronoun 'I' in its complex connection with other personal pronouns, especially the pronoun 'he/she', that self-consciousness, i.e. the being 'I' or, as Kant puts it, 'I as the subject, is presupposed in it (Henrich 1989).

are just parts of the world without having the world and themselves as particulars of the world in view. It is an obvious result of this elementary reflection that if persons have the world in view, which they are at the same time particulars of, they have a twofold approach to themselves. First, they know themselves as individual beings among others in the world. But second, and in fact first of all, they are aware of themselves as being the knowers who have the world in view including themselves as part of that world. Qua aware of themselves as knowers of the world, persons are self-conscious. Self-consciousness cannot be equated with self-knowledge, precisely because awareness of persons as knowers can never be objective: if the self-awareness of persons as knowers is presupposed in every objective knowledge, then the self-awareness can never itself be reached via objective knowledge.

As a self-conscious knower, each person is a *subject*, and being a subject is in no way secondary to being a person. Rather, it is what *makes* one a person. It is internal to the very concept of human being that corporeal qualities and inner states involve being a self-conscious subject which in turn is the very core of being a person. Corporeal qualities and inner states, to be known as *self-knowledge*, have to be ascribed to a singular being which understands itself as the thinking subject 'I'. This point takes us already to Kant. But it must be made, if we are to show that Strawson's thesis about self-consciousness is only a part of the broader Kantian story of what it means to be a person and not merely a particular object among other objects—i.e. not only an object, called by some name, but an I. Already in his treatment of self-knowledge, that is aside from the more complex story of self-awareness and its involvement in self-knowledge, Kant offers an argument in many respect similar to that of Strawson.

In his argument against Cartesian scepticism,⁶ Kant shows that to have a coherent interpretation of inner experience, persons must be related to some material thing. For inner experience contains only ever-changing inner states in time, such that for time unit 1 there is an inner state A, for time unit 2 there is an inner state B and so on. Now, if one's inner states have to be understood as distinct beings having a distinct identity, they also have to be related to one another. But in inner experi-

⁶ In the chapter where he deals with the refutation of this version of sceptical idealism - Kant (1998, 320 - 324; B 274 - 279).

ence there is nothing permanent, only permanently changing states. If two or more states are to be related to each other – which is the condition of knowing them as different – then they have to be related to some material thing in space. A special case of such a material thing is the human body which Kant views as that which can be described as one thing among others. We see here Strawson's argument against both Descartes and the no-ownership theory being made within Kant's own framework. It seems in fact that Strawson owes much to this part of Kant's account.

But Kant goes beyond Strawson in showing that self-consciousness does not follow from knowing myself as a material body among other material things plus inner states. In contrast to self-knowledge, Kant interprets self-consciousness within the tradition of the Cartesian self-certain *ego cogito*, as the 'I think' understood as that which is involved in any experience I have. Qua 'I think' I am conscious of myself as a thinking being which can know all objects given to me in space and time. The identity of 'I think' is not based on any knowledge, but rather on its connection with the conditions of knowledge, i.e. on knowing oneself as the subject of the invariant *procedure* of knowledge employed in experience. To this condition the categories belong as the concepts pertaining to object-related thinking as such.⁷ These concepts provide the basic framework for any objective knowledge in their relation to space and time as outer and inner intuition. It is thus obvious that qua object of self-knowledge I am only one particular object among others. Kant concludes that, as the object of self-knowledge, I am to be understood as 'I qua object. By contrast, qua 'I think' I know myself as subject of all knowledge, including self-knowledge, on the relation to the invariant procedure I employ in it (Kant 1968a, 601 – 602). As such subject I am not an object of any possible knowledge, but can only be aware of myself *via* consciousness, or rather *via* self-consciousness (Kant 1900b, 318 – 319).

The difference between the 'I' as subject and the 'I' as object marks the difference between self-consciousness and self-knowledge. In contrast to Strawson, Kant distinguishes between person as an *object* of both

⁷ W. Sellars shows that "the core of Kant's 'epistemological turn' is the claim that the distinction between epistemic and ontological categories is an illusion" (Sellars 1974a, 46). According to his view, "Kant's revolutionary move was to see the categories as concepts of functional roles in mental activity" (Sellars 1974b, 69). Now, the categories function *qua* general patterns of experiential judgment. The thinking subject understands its identity in connection with them (Kant 1998, 216; A 108).

outer and inner self-knowledge on the one hand, and the person as self-conscious 'I', as *subject*, on the other. He would agree with Strawson that self-knowledge provides empirical conditions for knowing myself as one individual which allows me to pick myself out from the others. In opposition to Strawson though, he would insist that as person I have to be understood first of all as the self-conscious 'I' and thus as the subject of knowledge. Being this self-conscious subject is a necessary, even if by itself yet a sufficient condition of my being a person, and as such is intrinsically connected with my being a person.⁸ In the same line of thought, Kant criticizes Descartes for his dualistic conception which would distance the self-conscious 'I' understood as an immaterial substance from the person as an extended entity. Rather, we have to learn to understand "that *men* think, that is, that the very same being which, as outer appearance is extended is, in itself, internally a subject" (1998, 478; A 359). This means that the division into the 'I' as subject and the 'I' as object cannot imply dualism and Kant insists that any dualism would be committed to something it cannot fulfill, i.e. to explaining how they could ever be separated as different beings. For this reason, the twofold 'I' marks two different ways of looking at one human being, rather than two beings or "double personality" as Kant puts it (1968a, 601).

Kant believes it is impossible to explain much less than such dualism. He says:

How is it possible that 'I' who I think can become an object (of intuition) for myself and, in this way, divide myself from myself remains ultimately inaccessible to any possible explanation, although it is an indubitable fact...
(1968a, 601)

In this way, Kant endorses the unity of human being in the double respect in which that being understands himself. He reaches the concept not of a person, but of a man who is capable of understanding himself both as one distinctly identifiable individual among others via self-knowledge *and* as the 'I', i.e. capable of *self*-identification, via self-consciousness. Yet not only does he not explain how self-consciousness (being 'I' as subject) cooperates with self-knowledge (being 'I' as ob-

⁸ "Daß der Mensch in seiner Vorstellung das Ich haben kann, erhebt ihn unendlich über alle andere auf Erde lebende Wesen. Dadurch ist er eine *Person* und, vermöge der Einheit des Bewußtseins, bei allen Veränderungen, die ihm zustoßen mögen, eine und dieselbe Person, d. i. ein von Sachen [...] ganz unterschiedenes Wesen" (Kant 1968b, 407).

ject), but as we saw he argues that this question “remains ultimately inaccessible to any possible explanation”. Only both together can allow me to know myself not only as Smith but as myself and to understand my corporeal qualities and inner states not as Smith’s but as mine. Only self-consciousness or, as Kant puts it, the “having one’s own ‘I’ in thought” (1968b, 407), enables the person to use the pronoun ‘I’ or ‘mine’ which proves he is not just any individual—for instance a stone—but a person.

Kant is thus no dualist but what could be called a distinctionalist and integrationist. He doesn’t conflate self-consciousness with self-knowledge but integrates and connects both within one indivisible concept of human being which must be seen as *logically primitive*. He claims that insofar as self-knowledge is concerned, it is only under the presupposition that man is aware of himself as ‘I’, i.e. as the subject and agent of knowledge, that he is able to say whose self-knowledge it is. Moreover, the proper use of the pronoun ‘I’ in sentences that express the self-knowledge is based on the self-consciousness. The ‘I’ qua subject is the very condition which enables one to learn the proper use of the pronoun ‘I’ and to understand it—“inasmuch as all languages, if they use the first person, must indeed think it, even if they don’t express this I-ness by a special word”.⁹ This use of the ‘I’ as the subject can be seen to differ also from Wittgenstein’s subjective use of the pronoun ‘I’, insofar as it doesn’t refer to the human being in terms of the process of having inner states, that being only one of the ways in which human being knows himself as an object.

It was neither Wittgenstein nor Strawson, but Martin Heidegger who in the 20th century recognized this complexity of human being, recognized him as that being which is in his existence one entity among others *and* yet understands all those entities—including himself—in their being in the world (1991, 227). Following Kant in this respect he shows that self-consciousness in the Kantian sense is presupposed in the use of ‘I’ and in the use of other personal pronouns if they are to refer to persons, i.e. to human beings. In every you- or he- or she-clause we understand

⁹ “...selbst wenn er [sc. der Mensch] das Ich noch nicht sprechen kann; weil er doch es in Gedanken hat: wie es alle Sprachen, wenn sie in der ersten Person reden, doch denken müssen, ob sie zwar diese Ichheit nicht durch ein besonderes Wort ausdrücken.” (Kant 1968b, 407)

the you-I, or the he-I or she-I (Heidegger 1978, 242). Only in this way is intersubjectivity possible. We conceive other persons as human beings that is as the same original sources of understanding the world as we are (ibid., 172). In addition, Heidegger extends the Kantian insight that to be self-consciousness does not imply any self-knowledge—neither outer, nor inner—and argues that this very core of human being cannot be delivered by the sciences such as psychology, anthropology or sociology, because such sciences can only understand and describe the human being as one already-known object among others. Only philosophy can make sense of human being as a being centred in his being a self-conscious subject in the above complex way. Sciences, by contrast, objectify subjectivity—treat it as something to be known in a descriptive or objective way. This conception might have helped Strawson in establishing what he wanted to understand by the so-called P-predication, i.e. predicates speaking of persons as the original sources of activities such as acts of knowledge and volitions.¹⁰

'I' *qua* Subject

The Kantian conception of human being might also be discussed in relation to what Strawson suggests as

the general theoretical position that the identification of particulars rests ultimately on the use of expressions with some demonstrative, or egocentric, or token-reflexive, force.¹¹

Strawson believes that the identification problem has to be solved for the spatio-temporal world, which means that “demonstratives must have a spatial as well as a temporal force”.¹² Such identification is possible only

¹⁰ Strawson (1959, 104). In his treatment of P-predicates Strawson follows the direction proposed by Kant, but without explaining in what sense a person is not only the logical subject of physical and psychological properties, but also the knower and the agent. His examples of P-predicates, such as ‘is smiling’ or ‘is going for a walk’ show that he is concerned with agency. He always uses examples where the decided action is combined with some bodily exercise of it. This proves again his attempt to eliminate some ‘pure’, bodiless ego.

¹¹ Strawson (1959, 117) and Tugendhat (1978, 76).

¹² Strawson (1959, 119). He claims “that no system which doesn’t allow for spatial or temporal entities can be a system which allows for particulars at all, or at least can be

if each of us is located in the spatio-temporal world. When we utter deictic sentences beginning with pronouns like 'there' or 'then', we express ourselves as beings in space and time. In showing 'there' and in saying 'then' we mark ourselves as zero points of the spatial and temporal pointings in question (Tugendhat 1978, 77). But other persons also understand us in this way because the pointings expressed in the deictic sentences only make sense to them if we are such zero points for them too. They can see us as zero points of the time and space coordinates and understand our deictic sentences if they too are such zero points of possible deictic pointings. We understand this when we use deictic sentences and such understanding is common to us and basic for our world view. Each of us has in view also himself among other persons, as all the zero points of the possible deictic expressions. This proves that our having the world in view is never to be reduced to a singular perspective on the world we have. To see this is to recognize that we can never think that our individual standpoint, with a singular perspective on how things are, is a privileged one compared to the standpoints of other individuals with their perspectives.

This already shows that having the world in view we have, in fact, another point of view than the strictly personal one. Rather, this view contains the knowledge of one's own person as an individual with its perspective on the world among other persons with their perspectives and among other things. This last point, made in recent philosophy by Thomas Nagel, is helpful in elucidating the *ego cogito* and the Cartesian project, if Descartes be taken as the one who began the so called "epistemological revolution" in metaphysics and thus as the first one who offered a sketch of descriptive metaphysics of the Kantian type (Marion 1999, 47). For this ensures that the standpoint of the subject of knowledge which is in question in such a project cannot be conflated with the standpoint of the person. As Nagel puts it, being the subject of the knowledge of the world "I can't be a mere *person*" (1986, 55). If a person, as one individual among others, is at a specific time and, above all, at a specific location, then he can be the center or the zero point of an individual personal perspective. In opposition to this, the view of the 'I' qua subject of the knowledge of the world is itself "centerless", taking in

understand by us as such. This point is the same as that made by Kant in saying that space and time are our only forms of intuition."

that very person with his individual perspective: it is the "view from nowhere". In this sense Nagel speaks about the "true self" as "a subject that apprehends the centerless world" (ibid., 94). Nagel's conception can serve as a good recent introduction to how Kant understands the 'I' as subject. If it is only the 'I' known as an object that can be placed in space and time among other objects, then in contrast to it—and in agreement with Nagel's "view from nowhere"—Kant speaks about the 'I' as the subject, as the "intellectual representation without a specific location in time or space, i.e. not empirical".¹³ Because only being 'I' *qua object* is to be known as an object at a specific location in time and space in relation to other objects.

Now, we understand in a broader perspective why Kant thinks that being 'I' *as subject* cannot be simply identified with being 'I' as object. As 'I' *qua subject*, I am the subject to the procedure of knowing, whose identity can be secured only in relation to the invariant conditions of empirical knowledge. I cannot interpret this identity in any descriptive way, but my identity as the subject must be, if at all, established as the identity of the knower only. In this way we can see that there is something to what Wittgenstein tells us about the subjective use of the 'I'. We saw this suggestion to be problematic. But his intention can be understood if he, in thinking of the *cogito ergo sum*, had self-consciousness in mind. Because in self-consciousness I have in view neither myself as an object of self-knowledge, including the specific perspective in the world which implies my location in it as an object, nor have I here in view myself together with other persons as objects of knowledge with the corresponding perspectives. Rather, I have in view only myself as the subject which can stay invariantly aware of itself if the procedure of his thinking, as related *a priori* to the basic form of intuition, remains unchanging in all knowledge and all possible understanding of speech.¹⁴

This demonstrates the very possibility of transcendental philosophy. In our being 'I' as the subject, it is open to us to analyse the procedure of

¹³ "...intellektuelle Vorstellung ohne irgendwo und irgendwann, also nicht empirisch" (Kant 1900c, 39).

¹⁴ A similar point is made by W. Carl who tried to show in what sense Wittgenstein's distinction between the subjective and objective use of 'I' draws an analogy to the comprehensive conception of human being by Kant - Carl (1998, 106). However, the difference between the Wittgensteinian subjective use of 'I' and the Kantian conception of 'I' as the subject shows the limits of the analogy drawn by Carl.

knowing all possible objects of our knowledge.¹⁵ From the resulting framework we get the elements of our world view as such. It enables us, within the standpoint of modern metaphysics, to realize in a new way that which metaphysics, since Aristotle, is committed to—to deliver a general understanding of the world. Once again, this does not mean that the modern metaphysics must analyse a privileged singular approach to the world. Rather, by having the world in view the personal perspective is always transcended from the standpoint of the ‘I’ as the subject. Consequently, there can be a Kantian “study of the subject”¹⁶ in which having the world in view can be formally analysed within a single conception of the world. It seems that this result offers a more complete and satisfactory conception than we find in Strawson’s version of descriptive metaphysics.¹⁷

Institute of Philosophy
Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic
 Jiřská 1
 110 00 Praha 1
 kunes@flu.cas.cz

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¹⁵ Sellars speaks here about the analysis “in a tough sence”, because “it must in a tough sence be an *analytic* truth that objects of empirical knowledge conform to logically synthetic universal principles” (Sellars 1974a, 46).

¹⁶ Kant (1900a, 558).

¹⁷ I am grateful to Marina Barabas for helpful comments.

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