

# **The Inessential Indexical**

**On the Philosophical Insignificance of Perspective and the  
First Person**

**Herman Cappelen and Josh Dever**

## **Acknowledgements**

Philosophizing is best done in the company of others. We have been extraordinarily lucky in having a very large number of generous and insightful philosophical companions to help us think about the issues in this book. We are particularly grateful to three people. Andy Egan is as close to a co-author of this book as one can be without having written any of it and disagreeing with most of it. He gave us detailed comments on every page of the book, many of which triggered radical changes along the way. Conversations with (and the work of) Dilip Ninan motivated our decision to write this book and helped us understand these extraordinarily difficult issues. Seth Yalcin gave constructive detailed comments on the entire manuscript and crucial critical feedback on and off over the last three years.

We are grateful for conversations with and feedback from: Pranav Anand, Derek Ball, Berit Brogaard, Ray Buchanan, David Chalmers, Cian Dorr, Olav Gjelsvik, Michael Glanzberg, Jeremy Goodman, Patrick Greenough, John Hawthorne, Torfinn Huvenes, Hans Kamp, Peter Ludlow, John MacFarlane, Ofra Magidor, Ruth Millikan, Daniel Morgan, Michael Murez, John Perry, Simon Prosser, François Recanati, Susanna Schellenberg, Anders Schoubye, Jason Schukraft, John Searle, Susanna Siegel, David Sosa, Robert Stalnaker, Jason Stanley, Rachel Sterken, Andreas Stokke, Margot Strohminger, Sergio Tenenbaum, Mike Titelbaum, Michael Tye, Brian Weatherson, Timothy Williamson, and Juhani Yli-Vakkuri. Ephraim Glick provided insightful comments on the entire manuscript that helped us avoid mistakes and obscurities on several important points.

An early version of this material was presented at a conference organized by CSMN at the University of Oslo in June 2010. It was also presented as a series of lectures at Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro in March 2011, and then as a series of lectures at the Institut Jean Nicod in Paris in April 2011. Parts of this material were presented as talks in many locations around the world including Oxford, the University of Texas at Austin, the Arché Centre at the University of St Andrews, and UC Berkeley. We are grateful to audiences for feedback on all these occasions.

Our research assistants, Margot Strohming and Jason Schukraft, corrected an almost infinite number of typographical, editorial, and substantive mistakes in early versions of the manuscript.

Our editor, Peter Momtchiloff, generously provided encouragement, support and advice during the three years we worked on this book.

Finally, we should highlight that most of our work on this book was made possible by two fantastic philosophical research centres, CSMN at the University of Oslo and Arché at the University of St Andrews.

## Contents

### Acknowledgements

1. Introductory Overview: The Role of Indexicality, Perspective and the *De Se* in Philosophy
2. Preliminaries: Language-Mind, Super Indexicals, and Opacity
3. Indexicality, the *De Se* and Agency
4. Indexicality, Opacity and Fregeanism
5. Lewis on the *De Se*, Self-Ascription and Centered Worlds
6. Functionalism to the Rescue?
7. Indexicality and Immunity to Error
8. A Brief Note on Perceptual Content and the *De Se*
9. The *De Se* and the Semantics of PRO Constructions
10. The View From Everywhere

## Detailed Contents

1. Introductory Overview: The Role of Indexicality, Perspective and the *De Se* in Philosophy
  - 1.1 Perspective and Indexicality: Deep or Shallow?
  - 1.2 Our Target: The Almost Universally Accepted View that Indexicality Is Philosophically Deep
  - 1.3 On the Immense Impact of Essential Indexicality: Illustrative Quotes
  - 1.4 A More Systematic Presentation of Alleged Repercussions of Essential Indexicality Throughout Philosophy
  - 1.5 More Precise Articulation of Our Target: Essential Indexicality Theses and the Alleged Explanatory Roles of Indexicality
  - 1.6 Basic Kaplanianism and the Goals of this Book
  - 1.7 Some of the Many Issues We Will Not Address
  - 1.8 How to Read This Book
2. Preliminaries: Language-Mind, Super Indexicals, and Opacity
  - 2.1 Essential Indexicality: Language or Mind?
  - 2.2 Are All Indexicals Equal or Are There Super Indexicals?
  - 2.3 Opacity and Essential Indexicality
3. Indexicality, the *De Se* and Agency
  - 3.1 Perry on the Opacity of Explanation Contexts
  - 3.2 Causation, Explanation, Motivation, and Rationalization
  - 3.3 Impersonal vs. Personal Action Explanations/Rationalizations
  - 3.4 Preliminaries: Some Weaker Theses and Why We Focus on IIC
  - 3.5 Motivation 1: Judgments about Cases
  - 3.6 Motivation 2: Bodily Movements Require Indexical Thought
  - 3.7 Motivation 3: Generalizations about Actions
  - 3.8 Motivation 4: Anti-Generalizations about Actions
  - 3.9 The Selection Problem and a Positive Proposal: The Action Inventory Model
  - 3.10 Clarifications, Objections and Replies
  - 3.11 Brief Summary of This Chapter
4. Indexicality, Opacity and Fregeanism
  - 4.1 Puzzle Cases Involving Indexicals With Frege Counterparts
  - 4.2 Some Irrelevant Cases
  - 4.3 Two Confusing Cases: Prior's 'Thank Goodness That's Over' and Lewis' Two Gods
  - 4.4 Preliminaries 1: Scope Restriction and Why Non-Fregeans Can Skip the Rest of This Chapter
  - 4.5 Preliminaries 2: Robust Fregean Senses vs. Descriptive Fregean Senses
  - 4.6 Claim 1: Fregeans Have a Problem With Indexicality, but It Has Nothing to Do With Opacity

- 4.7 Claim 2: Perry's Famous Anti-Fregean Arguments Have Nothing Specifically to Do With Indexicality
- 4.8 Taking Stock
- 4.9 Objection 1: You Haven't Refuted Fregeanism
- 4.10 Objection 2: You Haven't Solved the Problem of Opacity
- 4.11 Objection 3: To Refute Essential Indexicality You Need a Theory of Content, and to Have a Theory of Content You Need a Theory of Opacity
- 4.12 Brief Summary of This Chapter
  
- 5. Lewis on the *De Se*, Self-Ascription and Centered Worlds
  - 5.1 Lewis on Propositions and Properties
  - 5.2 Response 1 to the Two Gods: Don't Be Seduced by Metaphors
  - 5.3 Response 2 to the Two Gods: Disentangling Propositions vs. Properties from *De Dicto* vs. *De Re*
  - 5.4 Response 3 to the Two Gods: It's Still All Frege Puzzles
  - 5.5 Response 4 to the Two Gods: Worlds Are Not All There Is
  - 5.6 The Role of Self-Ascription
  - 5.7 Brief Summary of This Chapter
  
- 6. Functionalism to the Rescue?
  - 6.1 Attack vs. Defense
  - 6.2 Problems for Attack
  - 6.3 Two Problems for Fancy Functionalism
  - 6.4 Back to Defense
  - 6.5 Brief Summary of This Chapter
  
- 7. Indexicality and Immunity to Error
  - 7.1 Thesis 1: There is No Immunity to Error Through Misidentification
  - 7.2 Thesis 2: Immunity Does Not Track Indexicality
  - 7.3 Thesis 3: Indexicality Does Not Explain Immunity
  - 7.4 Brief Summary of This Chapter
  
- 8. A Brief Note on Perceptual Content and the *De Se*
  - 8.1 No New Arguments for *De Se* Contents
  - 8.2 Addendum: Brogaard and Chalmers on Perceptual Content
  - 8.3 Brief Summary of This Chapter
  
- 9. The *De Se* and the Semantics of PRO Constructions
  - 9.1 Some Background: With Chierchia the *De Se* Moves From Philosophy to Linguistics
  - 9.2 Some Linguistic Phenomena that Allegedly Require Distinctly *De Se* Interpretations
  - 9.3 Our Central Concern: What's the Philosophical Significance?
  - 9.4 Brief Digression: Higginbotham on Self-Reflexivity

- 9.5 Challenging the Data
  - 9.6 Warm-Up: Familiar Frege Puzzles
  - 9.7 'Expects To' Without the *De Se*
  - 9.8 'Admits To' Without the *De Se*
  - 9.9 'Remembers' + Gerund Without the *De Se*
  - 9.10 'Only' Binding Without the *De Se*
  - 9.11 Dream Reports Without the *De Se*
  - 9.12 A Sketch of a Pragmatic Account
  - 9.13 Brief Summary of This Chapter
10. The View From Everywhere