Second Persons and the Constitution of the First Person[*]

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Love is just like breathing when it's true;
And I'm free in you. The Indigo Girls

Philosophers and Cognitive Scientists have become accustomed to distinguishing the first person perspective from the third person perspective on reality or experience. This is sometimes meant to mark the distinction between the "objective" or "intersubjective" attitude towards things and the "subjective" or "personal" attitude.[1] Sometimes, it is meant to mark the distinction between knowledge and mere opinion. Sometimes it is meant to mark the distinction between an essentially private and privileged access to an inner world and a merely inferential or speculative access to that world. No doubt there are other uses as well. But this dichotomy is not the topic of this essay.[2]

Instead, I want to call attention to the central role of the less often acknowledged grammatical and phenomenological category, that of the second person. This

[1] The literature on this putative distinction is vast. See Gallagher (2012), Kriegel (2009), Thompson (2014), and Zahavi (2008) for good examples.
[2] See Garfield (2015), chapter 6 for my critique of this distinction.

category is essential not only for understanding the development of self-understanding, but also for the development of the moral sense that allows us to participate in the societies that constitute us as persons. The task of moral education is the cultivation of care for second persons. But we do so by extending not self-regard (for that is inextensible—others are not oneself), but by extending the spontaneous caring response we have for those with whom we immediately interact—second persons. Our moral lives, I will argue, like our cognitive lives, cannot be understood without understanding the special nature of second person relationships. In short, I will argue that the second person perspective is in fact essential to the constitution of human subjectivity, and that it permeates all forms of interpersonal consciousness and even self-consciousness.

I will first review some important developmental evidence for the special role of second persons before turning to some cross-cultural and phenomenological perspectives on this question. I will conclude with attention to the ethical dimensions of the second person perspective.

1. Some Developmental Evidence for the Importance of the Second Person

Vasudevi Reddy has done more than any other recent developmental psychologist to demonstrate that second person engagement is foundational to the origins of subjectivity. Her empirical work and her reflection on that work provides compelling evidence regarding how early human infants recognize second persons, and how central that recognition is not only to their later recognition of third persons, but, more importantly, to their own self-conception as first persons.

In (2003) Reddy asks, "what does it take to be aware that someone is attending to you?" (397) This apparently simple question raises two others that constitute the focus of the studies she reports in this piece: first, what does it take to recognize another's attention?; second, what does it take to recognize oneself as the object of that attention. One might think that these two are independent, and indeed, she notes, many have argued that self-representation arrives in the second year, as

measured by mirror self-recognition, while awareness that others have mental states does not emerge until the fourth year when theory of mind tasks are passed.

Reddy argues that this deconstruction of a single question into two is misguided, and that self-and-other recognition, or recognition of the first person in the context of the second, co-emerge very early. A she puts it, "… the awareness of self as the object of others' attention…must lead to, rather than result from, representations of self and other as psychological entities. This perspective assumes what one might call a 'second-person' approach to the developing awareness of self and other." (*Ibid.*) That is, Reddy argues, our awareness of ourselves as subjects is coeval with our awareness of those who address us and who we address: first-person and second-person are co-emergent, and are ontogenetically prior to the third person. We will find reason to complicate this picture somewhat a bit later.

Reddy provides evidence for this co-emergence through observation of infant-parent interactions in first two years of life. By age 2-4 months, infants respond to another's gaze with pleasure or fear, and attempt to engage attention and gaze. By 6-8 months, they monitor the gaze of others and orient their own gaze in response. Importantly, this monitoring, she argues, includes affective awareness. As early as two months of age, she shows, infants show coyness, embarrassment, pride, and pleasure and respond to the affective states of those with whom they interact. The affective and the cognitive co-emerge, and emerge essentially in these dyadic contexts. In short, the emergence of subjectivity is inextricably bound up with the recognition of another's attention and mood, and so with the primitive awareness of oneself as object for another subject. The second person is inextricably bound up with the first.

This picture is enriched in Reddy (2016). In that essay she argues persuasively for two important theses: first, early dyadic infant-parent interactions involve the spontaneous perception of action as intentional on the part of the infant; second, these interactions are often dialogical, and so involve the explicit representation of subjective *difference* between the participants; that is, even pre-linguistic infants

represent the difference in perspective between themselves and those with whom they interact, and the distinct roles each takes in dyadic interactions.

The first point is straightforward—even obvious—but profound in its implications. Infants interact with their caregivers not through language, but through non-linguistic actions. Those actions, whether playful or protesting, are *interpreted*. A parent reaches for an infant, and the infant prepares her body to be lifted; she interprets the gesture as a reaching for her. A parent plays peekaboo, and the infant interprets the covering and revealing of the face as an enticement to play, etc. The infant makes facial expressions or gestures to attract the attention of the caregiver or to engage him in interaction. The infant is hence immediately attributing intentionality, interest, and subjectivity to the other, taking the second person to be a person capable of experiencing her own actions and with intentions of his own.[3]

And herein consists the recognition of difference, a phenomenon equally important to appreciate if we are to understand the significance of the second person. For these interactions are not only *dyadic*; they are *dialogical*, with each participant taking a different role. The infant recognizes the difference in perspective, in intention, and in capacity of the second person. Subjectivity is hence understood, from the beginning of human life, not as homogenous, but as heterogeneous; the infant's own subjective states, intentions and experiences are not simply projected onto the dialogical partner; they are differentiated from them. Minds constitute a multiplicity, with many different instances. And this long before "theory of mind" emerges in the fourth year of life, as measured by passing false belief tasks, and well before the acquisition of competence with the semantics or syntax of sentential complement clauses that enable children to succeed at these tasks, suggesting an important dichotomy between implicit and explicit theory of mind. (de Villiers and de Villiers 1999; Garfield, Peterson and Perry 2001; Fenici 2012, 2017a, 2017b)

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[3] See also Carpendale and Lewis (2004, 2006, 2010) for additional evidence for these phenomena. Carpendale and Lewis also emphasize the importance of early dyadic interactions for the development both of social intelligence and of self-understanding.

In (2007) Reddy extends this picture to the third and fourth years of life, examining the onset of deception. Deception is, by definition, the attempt to produce a false belief in the mind of another. One might think, then, that a child could not practice deception until she masters Theory of Mind. But this is simply false. As Reddy shows, children tell falsehoods deliberately, knowing them to be false, and often with the clear intent to convince a conversation partner of their truth, well before they can pass Theory of Mind tasks. Deception, like any communicative act, is initially dyadic. And children learn to deceive as they learn to tell the truth, in conversation with others they take to be gullible, and so whose beliefs and intentions they must recognize as different from their own, but as sensitive to what they say. If Theory of Mind is the capacity to attribute false belief to third persons, it is scaffolded in part by the ability to attribute them to second persons.

Reddy (2018) draws these insights together into a comprehensive account of the origins of social cognition in the second-person perspective. She writes:

> The typical development of social cognition… originates in… second-person engagements that irresistibly involve the infant, changing not only the infant cognizer's capacity to cognize, but also that which develops to be cognized. The emotional involvement of persons, in particular those most salient of emotional involvements that occur in second-person engagements where the infant is directly addressed or responded to by another, becomes the crucible of cognition. (433-434)

But if cognition and affective maturation begin in early-childhood second-person interaction, the second person does not lose importance once one becomes explicitly aware of third persons and of oneself as part of a community of second and third persons. Second persons remain important, Reddy emphasizes, through adulthood. Reddy continues:

> Both types of experiences, second-person involvements and third-person observations, must influence each other and both may be necessary even for stable pre-inferential perceptions of other minds. … But being addressed as a You and addressing the other as a You arouses emotional responses differently from watching someone else being addressed, and engenders—even if briefly—a mutuality and

> suspension of separateness. The other becomes a person to you, someone who knocks you off balance or enters your consciousness in a more fundamental way than when you are largely untouched by the other, or just watching them. (438)

We respond in special ways—with distinct neural signatures—to being addressed by our names, or even as "you," and our affective arousal is higher when in dyadic interactions than when observing others.[4] We not only become who we are in early second-person interactions, but we manifest who we are in these interactions in maturity.[5]

Reddy (439-442) argues that such engagement requires a complex co-constituted intentional situation: first, we must be open to engage with others. To be open in this sense is to see others as persons, as subjects in their own right. We do not address trees or tables as *You*, only persons. And address presupposes the possibility of uptake. But this is not enough. To address another as a second person presupposes that the other recognizes the addressee as a person. I do not take myself to be addressed by the sound of the surf or thunder, or by birds. Address requires that I find myself in a dyad in which I not only recognize the other's personhood, but in which I am also respected by the other as a person. This constitutes a kind of two way street.

But there is a higher-level requirement as well. If I am truly to address you, whether as an infant or as an adult, I have to be able to recognize the fact that you recognize

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[4] There are dozens of studies that confirm this result. Here are a few. Grossman, Parise and Friederici (2010), using near infrared spectroscopy (NIRS), found that specific adjacent areas of the prefrontal cortex are active in infants in response to communicative intention from adults, one that responds to eye contact and one to the use of the infant's name; this response is subserved by a common area in older children and adults. Farroni, Csibra, Simion and Johnson (2002) used an ERP study to show that specific neural activity responds to eye contact in 2-5 day old infants. Grossman, Johnson, Farroni and Csibra (2007) show that specific gamma band oscillation in infant brains responds to eye contact from human faces. Turning to adults, Kamp, Frith and Frith (2003) find that hearing one's own name activates the paracingulate cortex and temporal poles, areas closely associated with the attribution of mental states to others; Hietanen and Hitanen (2017) find that eye contact with a genuine interlocutor increases self-awareness and the use of first-person pronouns.

[5] Note, for instance, how effective Śāntideva and Patrul Rinpoche's prose is in virtue of their forceful use of the second person. Thanks to Emily McRae for pointing this out.

me. If I do not, then even if you might take me to be addressing you, I cannot take myself to be doing so. Second-person recognition, even in infancy, is hence an act of higher-order cognition in which I take you to take me as someone whose messages are worthy of uptake. But at the same time, to do so is to see myself as just such a being. Reddy's work (as well as that of others we have cited) hence shows that first person awareness of ourselves as subjects is hence possible in the context of second-person relations.

This developmental story is important because it demonstrates just how co-constituted our subjectivity is. We may take ourselves naively to be independent subjects who accidentally discover others; we may take our access to our own minds to be more fundamental than our access to others; we may take association to be somehow accidental or optional. But we are wrong to do so. We become persons in interactions with second persons; and as persons, we fully manifest who we are only in such interactions. I now leave the terrain of developmental psychology for an examination of adult subjectivity. Here we will see that the second-person perspective is deeply enmeshed with the first- and third-person perspectives.

2. The Second-Person Perspective as Constitutive of Adult Subjectivity

As adults, as members of epistemic communities, and as language users, we are accustomed to claiming a kind of epistemic authority over our own inner states. In the ordinary case, we are manifestly more competent to report on our own inner lives than are others. This *prima facie* first person authority, however, is often used as the thin end of an epistemological and metaphysical wedge in the enterprise of splitting the cognitive subject from its object, and in the enterprise of splitting self-knowledge from the knowledge of others in a more categorial sense. We see this tendency in Indian and Western philosophy alike.

When we drive this wedge too hard, we end up constituting a special domain of inner life to which we have immediate, infallible access, as opposed to an outer world including others to whose own inner lives we have at best inferential, mediate access. Epistemic privilege stands against skepticism, and reflexive knowledge is

valorized while other minds are problematized. The gulf between the first-person and the third-person perspective then leads to a complex metaphysics comprising qualitative properties corresponding to physical properties, possible zombies, etc… This is one face of the subject-object duality that both Madhyamaka and Yogācāra philosophers alike argue that we project onto our experience, distorting it and generating the mass of confusion that Buddhist philosophers argue constitutes samsara. (Garfield 2015)

I will show that re-introducing the second-person perspective offers a way to reconcile these dichotomies. It allows us a different way of conceptualizing self-knowledge as well as the knowledge of other minds that explains the epistemic authority of self-knowledge. It also shows why, nonetheless, self-knowledge is absolutely continuous with our knowledge of others, and implicates neither the duality of inner and outer nor the spooky metaphysics and hyperbolic epistemology those dichotomies entail. To appreciate this requires us to see the degree to which our self-understanding is fundamentally hermeneutical, and the degree to which the acts of interpretation in which we engage are mediated by conversation and address.

We saw above how our subjectivity is constituted developmentally in second-person interactions, and that we can only know ourselves as subjects to the extent that others address us, and that we address others, in the context of a mutual expectation of understanding. Ontogenesis here constitutes ontology. As essentially social organisms, we become constituted as subjects who address one another, and who are worthy of address; as we acquire language, we come to address one another in that medium, and our self-understanding as well as our understanding of others is permeated by the metaphor of linguistic meaning. When we ascribe others beliefs, desires, intentions, hopes and fears, we do so with propositional content; it is less obvious, but no less true that we do the same when we come to understand ourselves. (Sellars 1963) Once language is in the picture, the pre-linguistic innocence that guides our interactions is lost forever. For this is the moment when

we become fully responsible to a norm-constituting community in order to make and to absorb meaning. (See Wittgenstein 1991; Sellars 1949, 1951, 1963, 1969)

In order to explore more deeply this entanglement of self and other, and of self-knowledge with the knowledge of other minds, I now turn to the work of the early twentieth century philosopher, KC Bhattacharyya, perhaps the first philosopher to appreciate fully the importance of the second person in the constitution of first-person consciousness. We will see that his insights anticipate those of many better-known philosophers, and that they provide a compelling frame for the empirical work we discussed above. In *The Subject as Freedom* (1930) Bhattacharyya argues for an intimate connection between the first-, second- and third-person perspectives in the constitution of subjectivity. The first-person pronoun 'I', he argues, is "speakable," but not "meanable." The *meanable* roughly coincides with Kant's knowable. Whatever can be designated intersubjectively as an object falls, according to Bhattacharyya, under the head of the "meanable."[6]

In ¶¶2-3 (87-88), Bhattacharyya explicitly ties meaning to intersubjective agreement and availability of referents for terms. This anticipation of Wittgenstein and Sellars takes him a bit beyond Kant, of course, but the ideas are nonetheless congruent. The *speakable,* on the other hand, is whatever can be spoken of or communicated about through language. It is a broader category than the meanable, since there may be some things we can communicate—that are not nonsense—even though we cannot assign them meanings. So, we can talk about ourselves, even though there is no term that can *mean* the self.

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[6] This distinction is drawn in the first paragraph of *The Subject as Freedom:*

> 1. Object is what is meant, including the object of sense-perception and all contents that have necessary reference to it. Object as the meant is distinguished form the subject or the subjective of which there is some awareness other than meaning-awareness. The subjective cannot be a *meaningless* word: to be distinguished from it, it must be a significant speakable and yet if it be a meant content, it would be but object. It can thus be neither asserted nor denied to be a meant content and what cannot be denied need not be assertable. Apparently, the significant speakable is wider than the meanable: a content to be communicated and understood need not be meant. (87)

The subject cannot be taken to be *meant*, for it is not intersubjectively available as the referent for *I.* Nobody but me, Bhattacharyya argues, is aware of my own subjectivity in the way that it is present to me as subject, and so there is no way to establish a convention of reference or meaning for the *I* that designates it in that mode of presentation.[7] But he argues, the first person pronoun has a unique role in designating the self. Were I to refer to myself using a name or a description, in the third person, the possibility of error through misidentification intrudes.[8] But the first-person indexical gets immediately, directly, at the speaking subject, and is so understood by addressees as well as by the speaker. So, although the word *I* has no *meaning* in this strict sense, it is not *meaningless.* It conveys something, and is understood; indeed, it is indispensible. It is therefore speakable, but not meanable.

But even a non-meanable speakable gets its point only in discourse, or address. And, as we have seen, whenever we speak, we address one another as subjects in dialogue with one another. In this discussion at the close of *The Subject as Freedom,* Bhattacharyya recurs to an important insight he defends near the beginning of the book: to take oneself as the referent of *I* is to take addressees as *you,* others as *he* or *she.* In short, he argues in the first chapter of the book, the possibility of speech— and hence subjectivity—is conditional upon intersubjectivity, simply because speech presupposes both addresses who can be expected themselves to be subjects capable of self-reference, and meaning-constituted conventions instituted by others whose subjectivity we also presume. He deploys that insight at the denouement of the discussion to argue that to understand oneself as a subject is to understand oneself as a member of a class of those capable of introspective self-awareness:

> 120. The realization of what a speaker means by the word *I* is the hearer's awareness of a possible introspection. Such awareness is as much knowledge as actual introspection. The speaker calls himself *I* and may be understood by the hearer as *you.* As thus understood, the

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[7] Compare to Wittgenstein's discussion of discourse about inner states in *Philosophical Investigations.*

[8] As Sidney Shoemaker was famously to point out in (1968), an insight developed further by John Perry (1979). So, I might erroneously believe myself to be John Perry. I would then misidentify John Perry as the person thinking this thought. I cannot, however be wrong about the fact that *I* am thinking this thought.

introspective self is individual, not an individual being—for introspection is not a subjective *being* like feeling—but the function of addressing another *self.* The speaker does not understand himself through the meaning of the word *I:* his introspection is through the word and not through its meaning and is less a self-knowing than a self-revealing, revealing to a possible understander of the word *I.* Yet as the addressing attitude is only implicit, it is to him accidental and posterior to his self-knowing. To the understanding self, however, although he understands the speaker's self-knowing because he is himself self-knowing, his understanding of the other *I* is primary while his own self-knowing is accidental and secondary. The speaker knows himself in implicitly revealing to the hearer and the hearer knows the speaker in implicitly knowing himself. ... There are thus two cases—self-intuition with other-intuition implicit in it and other-intuition with self-intuition implicit in it. Both are actual knowledge... Because the word *I* is at once the symbol and the symbolized, it cannot be said to have simply the symbolizing function.... (161-162)

121. Actual introspection is implicitly social, being a speaking or addressing or self-evidencing to another possible introspection or self... (162)

In virtue of the role of *I* as a vocable, but non-denoting term (here note as well the anticipations of Anscombe on the first person),[9] this speaking of the self, and hence fully-fledged adult self-consciousness itself, Bhattacharyya argues, is parasitic on the very possibility of language, and so the existence of addressees who are also capable of using the first, and the second person pronouns. So, self-knowledge and therefore also genuinely human subjectivity, are essentially intersubjective phenomena, not private.[10] Bhattacharyya hence shows that there is no knowledge of subjectivity whatsoever outside of the context of social interaction and discourse.

So, Bhattacharyya, like Reddy, emphasizes the special role of second persons, in virtue of the facts that speech presupposes address and that we become reflective subjects in the context of address. Moreover, Bhattacharyya argues, we can only

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[9] Balslev (2013 pp. 136-137) also notes the anticipation of Anscombe.

[10] For more on why this is the case regarding propositional attitude attributions, see Garfield, Peterson and Perry, *op. cit.*; for a more extended discussion of the social dimensions of personhood and self-knowledge in the context of Hume's philosophy, see Garfield 2019.

fully understand ourselves and our interlocutors each as addressees and as addressors to the extent that we recognize and follow the meaning-constituting linguistic rules and conventions that are grounded in the practices of a community of third persons. Otherwise, we cannot take our own statements or thoughts to be meaningful at all. So, just as the first-person perspective is entirely bound up with the second-person perspective—ontogenetically, subjectively, constitutively and phenomenologically—the second-person perspective comes, as a result of language acquisition and entry into a linguistic community, to be, for adults, entirely bound up with the third.

The point of joining Reddy's and Bhattacharyya's accounts is that when we do so, we can see that we could never first encounter ourselves, then our immediate interlocutors, and then others, building our understanding of our conspecifics by analogy in an ever-widening circle. Instead, we come in infancy to understand ourselves and our interlocutors together; this understanding becomes articulate and reflective through the mediation of language and a raft of other social conventions, and again is possible only in the context of a seamless understanding of the community in which we participate and of our mutual relations to one another in that community that constitute the normativity that makes understanding possible. For, as I noted above, to perceive someone—whether myself, my partner, or a stranger—as making sense, or as having an inner life, is always an interpretative act, whether that interpretation is explicit or immediate in the perception of intentionality. The sapience in adult *Homo sapiens* is always hermeneutic, and so always beholden to norms, and so always collective. In taking myself to be a person, I take you to be a person; in taking you to be a person, I take them to be persons; that is, I take all of us to be committed and responsible to norms of hermeneutical rationality. I also take us all to be collectively committed to the constitution of a rule-governed linguistic community in the context of which meaning can be constituted, and so in which fully articulate address is possible.

This has deep ramifications for the nature of introspection, for privileged access, and for our understanding of the minds of others.   Introspection, on this model, is

not inner perception, but self-interpretation. First person authority is not infallible perceptual access to our inner states, but rather, as Sellars argued so forcefully in (1963), reflects the skill we have in understanding and predicting our own behavior. We are better at this than we are at interpreting others, but we are fallible; and we are better at interpreting others than we might think. First person-third person asymmetry in the knowledge of minds is, then, a matter of degree, and not of kind.[11]

When we assign mental states to others, we might take it that our attributions are true or false depending on the presence of absence of independently existent inner states that are truthmakers for these claims. To think this way, as Wittgenstein argues in (1991), is to work one's way into the "problem of other minds." The problem of other minds so posed is a double problem, with both an epistemological and a semantic face. Epistemologically, the problem is that we can have at best only inferential knowledge of the minds of others, and no good inductive reasons for thinking that others have minds at all. After all, the only minds we have ever directly experienced, on this view, are our own. Semantically, since, on this account, we can in principle never have access to the truthmakers of our attributions of inner states, we literally have no idea what it would be for these attributions to be true or

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[11] A few qualifications are in order here. First, the hermeneutical story I tell about intentional interpretation is certainly not the only alternative to a classical model according to which we have immediate access to our own minds and only inferential access to others. One might have a perceptual model of mental knowledge, for instance. (See Gallagher 2012 and Zahavi 2008, for instance.) But my point in the present essay is to press the case for the plausibility of this model, and to demonstrate its advantages as an account of the development of our understanding of the mental. Carruthers (2011), despite the fact that we disagree regarding much of the broader landscape, defends a similar position regarding privileged access.

I should also point out that there is an important asymmetry in certain kinds of reports of mental states between the first and the third person cases. We often "report" our own mental states not as a consequence of introspection or reflection, but rather as *professions,* effectively *actualizing* what Sellars liked to call "short-term propensities to speak out loud" by in fact speaking out loud, producing candid utterances that manifest our beliefs, desires, or even sensory experiences. It is the possibility of this kind of expression that often underlies the suspicion of a deep asymmetry between first- and third-person knowledge of the mental. But these are not cases in which we express *knowledge* of our own minds, but rather in which our states of mind are manifested, both to ourselves and to others. See Garfield (1989).

false. And in that case, we literally have no idea what we mean when we ascribe psychological states to others.

This apparent problem arises from the supposed asymmetry between first-person and third-person attribution. If our own mental states are immediately available to us, but those of others are invisible, there is no possibility of understanding mental state ascription, or knowing the minds of others; but also no possibility of knowing our own, as to know our own states is to know them as instances of kinds. The second-person perspective, and its hermeneutic model of understanding shows the way out of this particular fly-bottle. For on this model, ascriptions of mental states are not hostage to independent truthmakers in any case; they are acts of interpretation, and like all such acts are answerable only to the hermeneutical norms, not to correspondence. (See also Kusch 1997 and Garfield 2015 for a defense of the hermeneutical account of self-understanding.)

This is not, however, an anti-realist, or an eliminativist view of the mental. For the absence of *truthmakers* does not entail an absence of *truth*. Interpretation, on this view, does not reflect, so much as constitute, the reality of our cognitive lives. Interpretation, that is, is constitutive, when taken as a whole; not reflective of pre-existing psychological reality, although any single attribution stands or falls on the grounds of its harmony with all others. That is, while the entire ensemble of social and hermeneutic conventions in which we participate may *constitute the context* in which it is true that I believe that Oslo is the capital of Norway, once that context is in place, there is a clear fact of the matter regarding whether or not I hold this belief. This is like so many norm-constituted institutions. We do not discover money, but create it by interpreting various bits of paper, metal and states of computing machinery as monetary; but this does not mean that there is no truth of the matter regarding whether a particular note is a dollar note, or what my bank balance is. The whole is created; but it creates a context in which particular statements can be true or false in virtue of the interpretations already assigned to others.

For this reason there can be no "problem of other minds" any more than there can be a "problem of other dollars." To be a mind is not to house hidden inner particulars; it is to interpret and to be interpreted; to address and to be addressed; to participate in the complex human conversation. We each know immediately that we are minds not through introspection, but through participation. We know that others are minds not through inference and not through clairvoyance, but through co-participation. To allow ourselves to be addressed by, or to address, another is to take her to be a person, to have a mind; it is at the same time to take ourselves to be persons. This phenomenon of address requires neither reflexive self-consciousness, qualitative experience, behavioral evidence, nor any of the other supposedly empirical markers of the mental proposed by those who take this to be an empirical, rather than a normative, matter.

If we turn to an Indian Buddhist context, this second-person, hermeneutical approach to subjectivity and intersubjectivity gives us another perspective from which to see why persons are conventional, or *lokavyāvahāra* entities, as opposed to independently existent selves or *ātman*, replete with independently inherent intentional and qualitative properties. To say that we are socially constructed is not just to say that some superficial properties, such as our social status, or occupations, are constructed socially, or that some of our preferences and habits reflect our cultures. All of that is true, but it only scratches the surface. Once we adopt the perspective I am suggesting here, we also see that, inasmuch as to be a person is to be an addressor and an addressee, and is to be one who takes oneself and others to be the subjects of intentionally characterized states, that status is one only achievable, and only comprehensible, in a social context. Our very being, like the institutions in the context of which we function, is socially constructed. As Mandeville and Hume also saw clearly, we are essentially social animals, complicated bees. One does not come to understand a beehive by studying

individual bees and scaling up; one understands an individual bee by understanding how a hive works, and what that bee's role is therein.[12]

This may also helps us to illuminate an idea advanced by Śāntaraksita in *Ornament to the Middle Way (Madhyamakālaṃkāra)* when he claims that reflexive awareness is what distinguishes consciousness from insentient matter.

> 16. Consciousness arises as diametrically opposed
> In nature to insentient matter.
> Its nature as non-insentient
> Just is the reflexivity of its awareness.

In context, it appears that Śāntarakṣita is simply making the point that to be genuinely conscious is to be self-conscious, distinguishing our awareness of the sun's position from, say, that of a sunflower or a sundial: ours is conscious because we are aware that we are aware; theirs is not because they are not so reflexively aware. I have criticized this argument elsewhere. (2006) But we might adopt an alternative reading of this verse (perhaps more charitable, perhaps more tendentious, perhaps simply a creative vamp on Śāntarakṣita in a conversational mood): to be genuine subjects, we can imagine Śāntarakṣita saying, is to represent ourselves as subjects; and, we might then add, to represent ourselves as subjects is only possible in an intersubjective context. So, on this reading, Śāntarakṣita is pointing us towards the necessary intersubjectivity of subjectivity, even if this was not his original intention. This is then a useful adumbration of the idea of the person as a conventionally constituted entity, involving a creative dialogue with a classical text.

Note that it also allows anti-reductionist Buddhist philosophers such as Śāntarakṣita a way of understanding the irreducibility of mind to the body *without a substance dualism*: we might note that even if we can tell a purely physical causal story about our bodies, we need a very different kind of story about our intentionally characterized lives. That story will be hermeneutical, and will rely on social

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[12] For more on Hume and Mandeville on the social dimension of personhood, see Garfield (2019).

conventions and processes. It will be as irreducible to the physical story as economics is to metallurgy, or aesthetics to geometry. It is the suggestion that for human beings, *Mitsein* is ontologically as well as phenomenologically and epistemologically prior to *Dasein.* And it will be a story according to which mutual recognition lies at the heart of our conscious lives.[13]

Buddhist philosophers had no monopoly in India on the idea that the second person is indispensable to self-understanding. As Chakrabarti (2011, p. 31) shows, the Kashimir Śaiva philosopher Abhinavagupta's refutation of Dharmakīrti's analysis leads directly to a recognition of the primacy of the second person in our subjectivity. Dharmakīrti argues that since as I observe that my own speech is always preceded by thoughts and intentions, I can conclude that all speech is preceded by thoughts and intentions, and apply this entailment to the speech of others, concluding that their speech, too is always preceded by thoughts and intentions, and so that they have minds. The argument is cast in the standard Indian probative inference form, involving a subject (speech), a property (preceded by thoughts and intentions), an observation of universal concomitance that justifies the assertion of an entailment, and the extension to a new case (the thought of others).

Abhinavagupta demonstrates (as would Wittgenstein 900 years later) that this argument is straightforwardly fallacious.[14] The only entailment to which my observation of the concomitance of intention and speech in my own case entitles me is that *my own speech* is preceded by *my own intentions.* This does not validate the claim that *others' speech* is preceded by *others' intentions.* The only alternative for

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[13] It is also worth noting that while this way of reading Śāntarakṣita, may not be *historically* accurate—for one thing, Śāntarakṣita is committed to reflexivity as a primitive character of all consciousness, human and non-human; for another, he is an individualist, not a collectivist regarding conscious experience and subjectivity—it is a plausible way to place him in dialogue both with his contemporaries and near-contemporaries in India, and with us. It also suggests that Śāntarakṣita provides the Buddhist tradition with the tools to refute the Dignāga-Dharmakīrti view that we know the minds of others only inferentially, on analogy with our own, a refutation that—while never developed within the Buddhist world—was advanced with great force by the Kashmiri Śaiva philosopher Abhinavagupta.

[14] *Īśvara-Pratyabhijñā-Vimarśīnī* 216, as translated in Chakarabarti 2011

the Buddhist, Abhinavagupta suggests, is to assume that others' speech is a case exactly like my own, which is what is to be proven.

Instead, Abhinavagupta, as Chakrabarti puts it, "finds the You to be a foundational middle-reality between the pure Self and the apparent Non-Self in contrast and community with which the Self discovers its own playful knower-hood." (32) Abhinavagupta puts the point this way:

> The sense in which the addressor and the addressee, though different, become one in the addressing is indicative of the *parapara* Goddess, whose characteristic is identity in difference. (*Ibid.*)[15]

That is, it cannot be the case that we *discover* that others have minds by considering the causes of their speech and behavior. For to do so, we already must presuppose that that speech and behavior is meaningful—that it is apt for interpretation. And to suppose that is already to suppose that they are persons with minds, different from us in perspective and perhaps in beliefs and desires, but identical to us nature, as co-participants in the community that constitutes meaning in the first place, players on the same team, occupying different positions. Just as I cannot be a halfback without a football team, I can't be a speaker without a community of others to address and by whom to be addressed. The "problem of other minds," Abhinavagupta suggests, must have been already solved in order even to be posed.

3. The Broader Social Dimension of Subjectivity

This broader social and normative dimension in the story of the structure of human subjectivity sets accounts of self-knowledge and self-consciousness such as those of Bhattacharyya, Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Sellars apart from those of more individualistic philosophers such as Husserl or Zahavi, who take first person subjectivity to be pre-reflectively given, and take the recognition of others to be the automatic, preflective extension of something we know from our own side to them. Husserl and Zahavi, to be sure, recognize the essential role of second persons in discourse, in ethics, and in our articulate self-understanding. Zahavi writes:

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[15] *Īśvara-Pratyabhijñā-Vimarśinī* 70-71.

> The second-person pronoun is *you.* This suggests that to adopt a
> second-person perspective on somebody is to relate to that person as
> a you*,* rather than as a he or she…. [R]eciprocal engagement is a
> crucial and distinctive component. For me to relate to another as a
> you is to relate to someone, an I, who is in turn related to me as a you.
> Second-person engagement is a subject-object (you-me) relation
> where I am aware of and directed at the other and, at the same time,
> implicitly aware of myself in the accusative, as attended to and
> addressed by the other. Second-person engagement consequently
> involves not merely an awareness of the other, but also, and at the
> same time, a form of interpersonal self-consciousness. (2016, p. 5)

Zahavi then quotes Husserl on this point:

> *The origin of* personality is found in empathy and in the further *social
> acts* that grow out of it. For personality, it is not enough that the
> subject becomes aware of itself as the center of its acts; rather,
> personality is constituted only as the subject enters into social
> relations with others. (1973, p. 175, translated and quoted at Zahavi
> 2016, 5)

Husserl and Zahavi argue that to see oneself as an addressee is to see oneself as a

subject and as someone recognized as a subject; to address another is to take that

other as a subject.[16] To this point, they are in complete agreement with the

perspective we have been exploring. But there is a hairsbreadth of difference, and

that hair is worth splitting in this context. The question concerns epistemic and

ontological priority. Husserl and Zahavi take subjectivity to be primordially given to

us in first-person experience, and then extended to the second person;

Abhinavagupta, Bhattacharyya, Chakrabarti, Reddy, and I (and one might add Hume

and Heidegger to this mix) take the recognition of second persons to be primordial

and constitutive of first-person subjectivity.

We end up in the same place in our account of mature subjectivity, but we differ

regarding the route. And in particular, we agree that in the second-person

perspective, we do not see ourselves from the standpoint of the other, but rather see

that the other has a distinct perspective of her own. Zahavi also makes a nice point

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[16] And, as Emily McRae notes (personal communication), withholding the second person,
and referring to another by the third person in her presence, is a potent way to convey
disrespect.

when he argues for the priority of the second person over the third, contrasting the intimate "we" of dyadic engagement with the anonymous "we" of identification with a large class of third persons. (2016, pp. 63 ff) I agree entirely with that contrast, and with the priority of the second person over the third. On the other hand, I take it that the argument I have offered so far defends the primordiality of the second person over the first.

Indian and Western philosophers are not alone in this field. There is also a classical Chinese source of insight into this matter, and that is Zhuangzi's discussion of the "Happy Fish." Here is the relevant passage:

> One day, Zhuangzi was strolling beside the river with Huizi. Huizi, a man of erudition, was fond of arguing. They were just crossing a bridge when Zhuangzi aid, "The fish have come up to the surface and are swimming about at their leisure. That is how fish enjoy themselves." Immediately Huizi countered this with: "You are not a fish. How can you tell what a fish enjoys?" "You are not me," said Zhuangzi. "How do you know that I can't tell what a fish enjoys?" "I am not you," said Huizi triumphantly. "So of course I cannot tell about you. In the same way, you are not a fish. So you cannot tell a fish's feelings. Well—is my logic not unanswerable?" "Wait, let us go back to the root of the argument," said Zhuangzi. "When you asked me how I knew what a fish enjoyed, you admitted that you knew already whether I knew or not. I knew, on the bridge, that the fish were enjoying themselves." (Yukawa 2015, p. 27)

There is a wealth of commentary and a mountain of disputation regarding this passage. (See Ames and Nakajima 2015 for a good sampler.) This is not the place to enter into those extensive interpretative controversies. I focus in reading this passage (as I often do when reading Zhuangzi) on the final lines. Zhuangzi points out to Huizi that even to have this conversation, Huizi must treat Zhuangzi as a second person: someone with a perspective different from his own, an object of address, and one who can himself address; but more than that, someone who is interpretable, whose cognitive states can be known, and whose utterances can be understood. Otherwise, even disagreement is impossible, let alone agreement. Conversation, and hence understanding itself, and hence humanity itself, rely on this second-person engagement. The fish are nothing but a metaphor for this point.

Zhuangzi engages with the fish as (reduced) second persons. Whether he is right or wrong to do so across species lines, his point is that immediate second-person engagement is essential to who we are. Huizi's challenge is too strong (and again, this is not to say that there is not a weaker, fallibilist challenge available to him): it suggests that any subjective difference, any difference in experience or perspective makes understanding impossible. That has to be wrong; and it is Zhuangzi's point that that difference in perspective is what makes second person engagement possible, and hence understanding itself presupposes not identity but difference.

4. The Ethical Dimension: Responsiveness vs Reactivity

As I noted at the outset, this recognition of the importance of the second person in Indian and in Western philosophy has an important ethical dimension. In ethical discourse we are often asked to take a disinterested perspective, whether in order to be fair, as in a Kantian framework, to be agent-neutral, as in a Utilitarian framework, to take up the disinterested point of view in Humean terms, or to cultivate *upekṣa* as in a Buddhist framework. In each case, we are asked to develop equal regard and concern for all persons, no matter how or whether they are related to us. This is a demand to treat *third* persons as we would treat ourselves or our second-person intimates; to elide the difference between the intimate and the anonymous "we," in Zahavi's terms. Does this undermine the special regard that seems to be implied by the primacy of the second person?

I think not, and indeed that second-person primacy helps to understand how this perspective can be achieved. It would be one thing to understand this as a demand either to move directly from the first person case to the third person case, as the so-called Golden Rule might be interpreted to suggest, or to be asked to treat all second persons as third persons, as some Kantians might suggest. In the first case, we are asked to extend egoistic regard to all persons, which is incoherent on its face; on the second, we are asked to treat intimates as strangers, which is equally morally and psychologically problematic. But these are not the only options. The other possibility is to treat third persons as second persons, and to extend the natural *non-egoistic* regard and affection we have for intimate interlocutors to others. This

is the work of moral cultivation. Hume suggests as much when he discusses the ways in which we widen the circle of those to whom we feel intimately related by the use of the moral imagination.[17] In the Buddhist contexts, this is the point of imagining all sentient beings as one's mother.

Note that the moral exercise is *neither* to think of all sentient beings as *oneself, nor* to think of one's mother as just like any other sentient being. Rather, the special second-person relation one has to one's mother is what is to be generalized in the moral attitude. The second person has pride of place here, and is the starting point for moral consciousness. In cultivating moral impartiality or non-egocentricity (*upekṣa*)*, we* do aim to attain a kind of de-centeredness in moral vision, in which we no longer stand at the center of our moral universe, but we do not aim at complete anonymity in that universe, but rather extended intimacy with it, and that is enabled by our second-person relationships and our ability to generalize them. Instead of seeing a You as one of many, we aim to see the many as instances of You.[18]

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[17] Stephen Darwall in (2006) argues for a version of second person ethics. His approach is related to that I develop here. Darwall relies on the idea that moral engagement involves making claims on others, having obligations towards others, and recognizing others as making claims on us and having obligations towards us. This idea is grounded in Strawson's (1968) discussion of reactive attitudes. (See Darwall 2013a, xi). Nonetheless, Darwall also notes (2013b, 92) that special relations, and in particular, intimate relationships, require that "genuine care for others is an attitude towards them as particular individuals and not just as "generalized others." And endorsing Buber's critique of Heidegger, Darwall notes that intimate second-person relationships require a special kind of access to oneself shared with the other. (*Ibid.,* 112) He also notes the primacy of parent-child relationships in establishing the ability to be with another. (130)

On the other hand, despite his nods to Hume, Hutcheson and Smith in this context, Darwall's position is important different from that I defend here, and this in at least two important respects. First, Darwall takes second-person ethical relations to fall out of more general principles of autonomy, justice and rights, that are independent of *special* dyadic relations; I take these special dyads, and the intimacy they afford to ground the more general moral perspective. Second, Darwall takes the moral point of view to be independent of affect; I take it to be essentially affective. Third, Darwall sees our identity as constituted independently of the second person relationships into which we enter; I see the second person as essential to constituting our identities. So, while we share a commitment to the second person perspective as essential to moral life, we do so for different reasons, and we connect that perspective to personhood in very different ways.

[18] This position also has deep affinities to Stoic ethical thought, and in particular, Hierocles' insistence that ethical sensibility involves both widening our circle of concern from our

This is made possible by the ultra-sociality of our species. We are biologically tuned for cooperation, including cooperation with passing acquaintances. We see this in our everyday life and in our regular interactions with strangers, whether in commerce or casual meeting. This ultrasociality is essential to our being—to our *Dasein* as well as our *Mitsein.* If we are to thrive, we must thrive in a social context, and if we are to thrive in a social context, we must be both trusting and trustworthy. Moreover, to thrive in a social context, we must be both good at interpreting others, and we must ourselves be interpretable. If we fail in trust, in trustworthiness, in interpretation, or in transparency, we fail to be social, and if we fail to be social, we fail to be fully human. It is the context of second-person interactions in which these skills are cultivated; and what they enable is the cultivation of more, more mature, and more varied and interlocked second-person relations.[19]

We know ourselves and our fellows in many guises: as knowers and inquirers; as moral and political actors; as friends; as competitors; as lovers and as enemies; as seekers and as teachers. Bur first and foremost, we know each other as addressees and addressors, and so as second persons. Together we improvise the everyday world in which we interact—*lokavyāvahāra*—that is the only context in which human life can have meaning.

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immediate family to our clan, to our state, to all of humanity, and then narrowing that circle to bring as many as possible into close relation, an idea that we see (Garfield 2019) developed in Hume's ethical thought as well. I thank Amber Carpenter for drawing this connection to my attention.

[19] See Roughley and Bayertz (2019) for a collection of superb essays from biology, anthropology, ethology, psychology, and philosophy that together make an overwhelming case for this evolutionary perspective on our ultra-sociality.

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